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RESEARCH

STRATEGIES FOR REPRESENTING SOCIAL ACTORS: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract: The study explored the strategies used for representing the two social actors, Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton as a case-study. Data was the transcript of the speech delivered at the 2016 Democratic National Convention (DNC) by President Obama. Grounded in the view that an actor is defined in terms of who he is and what he does, the study adopted a combined approach drawn on van Leeuwen's social actor representation framework (SAR) and Halliday's transitivity analysis. Findings reveal the speaker deployed selected strategies to support, to identify with Clinton, and to other Trump at the same time. The use of van Dijk's ideological square showed how the *Us vs. Them* characterization functioned as a strategy to further legitimation or de-legitimation of social actors. The study suggests that representations are potentially biased. However, it implicitly recognizes a more powerful role of non-discursive social practices. Implications and suggestions for future research are offered.

Keywords: representation, social actor, transitivity, legitimation, ideological square

1. Introduction

1.1. The US 2020 Presidential Election

The US 2020 presidential election unfolded like a surreal story. Losing his re-election bid, President Donald Trump was allegedly responsible for all the dramas involved. It suffered from Trump's allegations of fraud, failed law suits, and a kind of "surreal" drama with rioters storming the US Capitol and five deaths as electoral votes were being counted and certified by Congress. Trump was impeached by the House of Representatives the second time, but was acquitted. A Republican leader said on Fox News "*There*

is no question that the President formed the mob. The President incited the mob, the President addressed the mob. He lit the flame". This incident inspired my interest to find out who Trump really was. I hoped the part of the answer would lie in his representations in political discourse or the media. Data was the transcript of the speech delivered at the 2016 Democratic National Convention (DNC) by President Obama in support of Clinton's bid for the White House. This speech represents both Trump and Clinton in a way that enabled the use of referential choices to create opposites (van Dijk, 1993). The benefits are obvious. First, I was able to study how representation

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strategies were deployed in the speech. Second, it was possible to identify contrastive patterns in a single text. The race for the White House in 2016 was not just one between the two candidates, but it could be framed as one between a man and a woman, who famously described the tough challenge of fighting sexism and gender inequality in America in her concession speech in those words "*To all the women and especially the young women who put their faith in this campaign and in me, I want you to know that nothing has made me prouder than to be your champion. Now, I know, I know we have still not shattered that highest and hardest glass ceiling, but someday, someone will.*" As Obama was a powerful politician famous for his rhetorical skills, a focus on the discursive strategies deployed in his speech to support, identify with, and legitimate or delegitimate, social actors will further understanding of the use of representation patterns that function to serve political goals. The represented actors, Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton are also worth looking at because they represent not only ideological differences but also the social problems of sexism and gender equality in America. With this in mind, the purpose of the research was to explore strategies that could be used to represent and construct social actors. The analysis was modelled on Power et al's study (2020) as it adopted Halliday's transitivity analysis (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) and van Leeuwen's social actor framework (van Leeuwen, 2008) to document the types of performances ascribed to Trump and Clinton, as well as the labels used to portray them, respectively. But it expanded by incorporating the polarization of characterization in van Dijk's ideological square to investigate the possible occurrence of legitimation and bias in representation of social actors. This combined theoretical approach is expected to bring about a full account of the construction of social actors. In light of the above, the paper addressed the following research questions:

a. What strategies were employed to represent the two social actors?

b. Did the representations exhibit evidences of legitimation and bias?

Of the two RQs, research question one actually explored the strategies that ascribed the category labels and performances to the actors as answers to the two sub-questions: how were the actors represented? and what performances were ascribed to them? Using this combined framework as the research methodology, this study can provide empirically grounded explanations for a range of social practices in representing and constructing social actors in political discourse. Learning to develop this type of discursive practice involves the ability to use language effectively in tandem with our communicative goal, ideology, cognition, and knowledge of the socio-political context. Apart from assisting critical readings of texts, this research could put CDA on a robust linguistic footing. It makes us aware that a speaker's communicative or political goal might be the key influencer of the choice of discursive strategies.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Overview

Representing people and things has long been the concern of linguistics and sociolinguistics. Traditional grammar addresses it through such concepts as subject, object, agent, nominalization, and voice (Quirk et al., 1972). Systemic functional grammar (SFG, Halliday, 2004) approaches this issue in terms of transitivity and grammatical metaphor. Influenced by symbolic interactionalism, a model called "Dramaturgy" to explain first how the self,

and later social participants in general, can be cast in human social interactions was developed (Goffman, 1959) and applied by Morgan (2020). An individual would construct a performance to provide others with "impressions" that are consonant with the desired goals of the actor (Goffman, 1959, p. 17). Critical discourse analysis (CDA), which emerged in the early 1990s and now exists in a range of approaches, is also interested in representing people, identities and things (van Leeuwen, 2008). The combination of social actor framework and transitivity characterizes a number of studies on representation (see Koller, 2008; Power et al., 2020).

Literature on the representations of social actors has revealed the adoption of the either or both of the van Leeuwen's social actor and Halliday's transitivity analysis to varying extents. For example, a functional grammar-based framework was developed involving transitivity analysis, thematic analysis, cohesion, schematic structure to explore how Vietnamese immigrants were represented in Australian media (Teo, 2000). This study shows Vietnamese immigrants were generally constructed as the bad guys, harmful and immoral people in Australia. van Leeuwen's social actor theory as a model for representing people was discussed by Machin and Mayr's (2012). The same model exploring how two South African mining companies were represented as social actors in their corporate social responsibility (CSR) and Integrated Annual (IA) reports was used by Bernard (2018). The findings show that these companies constructed themselves as having positive human qualities and active participants who were willing to engage in a dialogue with their stakeholders. van Leeuwen's social actor framework and van Dijk's Ideological square were used to uncover how Megawati Soekarnoputri, leader of the Indonesian

Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) was represented as an icon of ideological contestation during the 2014 presidential election (Ahlstrand, 2020). The analysis reveals a pattern of strategically ambiguous representations of Megawati, which invited the readers to read between the lines to determine in-group and out-group memberships. Intergroup bias was discovered by another research (Aliaa & Nasir, 2019) in representing M 370 Flight disaster-related social actors, drawing on van Dijk's ideological square and Reisigl and Wodak's discursive strategies. Koller (2008) adopted both transitivity analysis (TA) and van Leeuwen's social actor framework to explain how the construction of female executives and entrepreneurs in lesbian and business magazines was designed for two different types of audiences. Power et al. (2020) in a study on the representation of women in business media also used Hallidayan transitivity analysis and van Leeuwen's social actor framework. The key findings from this research show that women were under-represented but not mis-represented in the leading North American business magazines in question. And a full range of behaviors is ascribed to them, emphasizing "what they can do" rather than "what they might be said to be", and the category labels "highlight their humanity" and "accord them respect" (Power et al., 2020, p. 19). Another approach involves the "social drama" pioneered by Goffman, which was applied to analyze how the UK Government managed the Covid-19 outbreak as a social actor (Morgan, 2020). The analysis shows that this "social drama" was able to show, among other things, "how to cast actors in their proper roles, and to plot them together in a storied fashion under a suitable narrative genre." (Morgan, 2020, p. 1). KhosraviNik (2010) carried out a study on the representation of out-groups (i.e. immigrants) adopting the Discourse-

historical approach and Socio-cognitive approach. In what follows, the three selected frameworks which guided this study are presented.

2.2. The Social Actor Framework

The social actor framework is predicated on three dimensions: Foucault's concept of discourse as "semantic constructions of specific aspects of reality that serve the interests of particular historical and/or social contexts" (see van Leeuwen, 2008, p. vii), Bernstein's (1981) view of discourse as a recontextualization of social practice, and a social semiotic theory of communication based on the work of Halliday (1978). The framework acknowledges the lack of a fit between sociological (the concept of agency) and linguistic categories (the linguistic realization of this agency) and recognizes that meaning is culturally based. The main categories of analysis are nomination and agency (sociological categories) rather than nouns or passive sentences as linguistic categories. The concept of agency can correspond to "agent", "patient" or "beneficiary" in grammar. Combining the two, van Leeuwen offers a "socio-semantic" inventory of social actor representation strategies. A strategy is viewed as "a more or less intentional plan of practices (including discursive practices) adopted to achieve a particular social, political, psychological or linguistic goal" (Reisigl & Wodak, as cited in Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 94). The speaker's goal affects the choice of strategies, which in turn involve the selection of linguistic resources. Representations enable the conceptual construction of actors in discourse. This is the link between concepts and language which enables us to refer to either the 'real'

world of objects, people or events or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional objects and events" (Hall, 2003, p. 7). However, it should be emphasized that there is no neutral way to represent a person or a participant, or a thing (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Some actors can be marginalized while others can be highlighted in terms of certain aspects of identity. This means that representation is ideological and involves a degree of perspectivation.

Framed in the spirit of social semiotic (Halliday, 1978), van Leeuwen's framework reflects a shift from viewing language as a system to seeing it as a meaning potential or a system of meaning-making resources. We are more interested in how a speaker uses the semiotic resources available to him, why they are used, and what possible ideological goals they may serve. In a social semiotic view of communication, choices of resources do not just represent the social world but also constitute it. The choice of resources allows us to represent and highlight certain aspects of identity we wish to draw attention to or omit (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Representations, thus, do not just neutrally reflect our world, identities and social relations, but rather, they can create, sustain, or change them.

van Leeuwen distinguishes two broad strategies to achieve the communicative goals of the speaker: exclusion and inclusion. Exclusion refers to the deliberate act of excluding social actors from discourse, and inclusion refers to strategies that involve the inclusion of social actors in discourse. From van Leeuwen's framework (2008, p. 52), the following strategies were selected as they are relevant to our data analysis.

Figure 1

Selected Representation Network (adapted from van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 52)

Categorization: social actors can be represented in terms of identities and functions they share with others (ibid, p. 40)

Personalization occurs when social actors are represented as human beings, as realized by personal or possessive pronouns, proper names or nouns (sometimes adjectives, as, for example, in 'maternal care') whose meaning includes the feature 'human' (ibid, p. 46).

Nomination: Social actors can be represented either in terms of their unique identity, by being **nominated** (realized in proper names) (ibid, p. 40).

Overdetermination occurs when social actors are represented as participating, at the same time, in more than one social practice, a teacher and politician, for example (ibid, p. 47).

Impersonalization which occurs when social actors are impersonalized, represented by other means, for instance by abstract nouns, or by concrete nouns whose meaning does not include the semantic feature 'human' (for example, when people are described as problem) (ibid, p. 46).

Objectivation: social actors are represented by means of reference to a place or thing closely associated either with their person or with the action in which they are represented as being engaged (ibid, p. 46).

2.3. Transitivity Framework

Transitivity is a key concept in Systemic Functional Grammar, described by Halliday and Matthiessen's (2004) as the system that construes the world into a set of processes. This system is linked to agency and responsibility for actions (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Transitivity is basically about who does what and to whom, thus serving as a set of resources to foreground the attribution of agency to participants. Within the ambit of CDA, an investigation of transitivity can reveal how cultural, political,

social, or ideological variables can influence the way a process is expressed in context. In this study, this well-established framework was used to identify, count and categorize the processes in relation to which the two social actors in the data are positioned as agentive. Identifying and counting these phrases was carried out manually, and content analysis was applied to interpret and make sense of them in context. Identifying and interpreting the phrases, in our view, happened simultaneously, not separately. A brief description of each of the process types is given in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Process Types

Process types	Illustrative example
Material: the process of doing-and-happening which has an Actor-participant, and some processes have a Patient-participant (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 179).	We <u>battled</u> for a year and a half.

Mental: the process of sensing which has a Senser-participant, and a Phenomenon-participant. (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 197).	She <u>knows</u> what's at stake in the decisions our government makes for the working family, the senior citizen, the small business owner, the soldier, and the veteran.
Relational: the process of being and having which has a Carrier-participant. (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004, p. 210).	Hillary's <u>got the tenacity</u> she had as a young woman.
Behavioral: the process of physiological and psychological behavior which has a Behaver-participant. (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 248).	Even in the middle of the crisis, she <u>listens to people</u>, and <u>keeps her cool</u>, and <u>treats everybody with respect</u>.
Verbal: the process of saying which has a Sayer participant and a verbiage participant. (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 252).	As Secretary of State, she sat with me in the Situation room and forcefully) <u>argued in favor of the mission</u> that took down bin Laden.
Existential: the process of existence which has an Existent-participant. (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 256).	And then there<u>'s Donald Trump</u>.

2.4. *The Ideological Square*

van Dijk (1998) posits that polarization between Us and Them is a common practice in intergroup relations for purposes of self-representation, self-defense, legitimation, persuasion (a form of power), and other-representation. van Dijk (1998, p. 44) offers a four-dimensional scheme, known as "Ideological square", and presented below:

- Emphasizes positive things about us.
- Emphasizes negative things about them.
- De-emphasizes negative things about us.
- De-emphasizes positive things about them.

It is fairly obvious that a speaker/writer will emphasize the negative aspects of "Them" and emphasize the positive dimensions of "Us". Van Dijk summarizes these strategies as Positive self-presentation and Negative other-presentation. Van Dijk suggests that this scheme can be applied to all levels of discourse structure, and in terms of content, to semantic and lexical analysis. This means that we can analyze the expression of ideology at multi-levels. Considered in this light, van Dijk's scheme was integrated at semantic and lexical levels in the analysis of the category labels and performances ascribed to these two chosen participants.

3. Methodology

A critical qualitative research design was deployed in this study. The conceptual approach of this study deployed van Leeuwen's (2008) social actor framework, Halliday's transitivity system and van Dijk's (1998) ideological square. Van Leeuwen's selected strategies (figure 1) were employed to identify and interpret the referring expressions for the two social actors, Trump and Clinton. Halliday' transitivity system provided a roadmap to identify the types of processes, which are recognized by many critical analysts (Hart, 2014; Bernard, 2018) as a means of uncovering the links between language and ideology, and which meanings are foregrounded, backgrounded, or excluded in a text. Adopting Van Dijk' framework, specific attention was paid to properties that seem to demonstrate conflicting ideas, values, views, or beliefs in the representations (i.e. category labels) and performances (i.e. processes) ascribed to the

social actors, and in word-meanings.

The speech is 4161 words in length and covers many issues, and there are a number of other social actors represented and constructed therein, but this study focused only on the part that refers to the two opponents, Republican Donald Trump and Democrat Hillary Clinton. Readings of the speech shows that the speaker devoted much of his speech to Clinton than to Trump, which is understandable as he was under an obligation to represent Clinton in the most favorable light so that it could help her to win the race, and Obama had someone to continue his legacy. This fact would not impact the thrust of this study, which was to discover what strategies could be employed to represent and construct social actors. The speaker Obama was rooting hard for Clinton, knowing that much of his legacy was at stake in the election: the Obamacare, the Iran Deal, the Paris Climate Change Agreement and the Trans-Pacific Partnership was on the line.

For this case study, I identified all the referring expressions of the two social actors, and the verbal phrases expressing the processes ascribed to them, going line by line. Referring expressions are typically realized by nominal phrases, the head of which is a nominal element, modifiable by attributes, and processes are realized by verbal phrases which always involve a verb as their head. The number of mentions of each of the two actors was carried out to see if there is any significant difference in the frequency with which these social actors were mentioned. I was able to identify about forty five mentions of Trump and seventy eight mentions of Clinton. Of these, twenty eight and fifty three are connected with some types of Trump-ascribed processes and Clinton-ascribed processes, respectively. I was not able to make any statistically significant claims based on the difference in the number of the mentions because of the small size of the data. Understandably,

Clinton enjoyed more visibility in the speech than Trump. The frequency of occurrences of processes, and the counts of mentions were calculated manually.

4. Findings

This section reports on findings for the two research questions (RQ) of this study:

a) What strategies were employed to represent the two social actors?
b) Did the representations exhibit evidences of legitimation and bias?

The findings reveal the following themes.

4.1. Categorization and Nomination Foreground Us Vs. Them Representation

The first key theme that emerges from the analysis is the foregrounding of *Us* vs. *Them* polarization. The speaker lavishly represented Clinton as "one of us" with vision, knowledge, judgment, and toughness while Trump was othered and cast as impulsive, arrogant, guided by emotion rather than reason. Our findings reveal a clear bias in the *Us vs. Them* construction of actors in terms of lexicalization strategies. In so portraying, Obama supported his justification of Clinton as the "choice", and forcefully dismissed Trump. Another factor is the amount of language to define these actors. The data shows a much less amount to describe Trump against a much significant number of words to characterize Clinton. But it should be emphasized that since we were just examining the data face-value, the results should be taken as indicative rather than definitive. Categorization and nomination were the main strategies to represent the two social actors. According to van Leeuwen (2008), categorization takes three forms: functionalization, identification, and appraisement.

Functionalization occurs when social actors are referred to in terms of an

activity, in terms of something they do, for instance an occupation or role (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 42). E.g.:

- As <u>Secretary of State</u>, she sat with me in the Situation room and forcefully argued in favor of the mission that took down bin Laden. (of Clinton).

- He calls himself <u>a business guy,</u> which is true, but I have to say, I know plenty of <u>businessmen and women</u> who've achieved success without leaving a trail of lawsuits and unpaid workers, and people feeling like they got cheated. (of Trump)

There is a clear stylistic difference between describing someone using the official role as "*Secretary of State*", and the other simply as "*business guy*".

Identification occurs when social actors are defined, not in terms of what they do, but in terms of what they, more or less permanently, or unavoidably, are, (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 42), e.g.:

- And there is only one candidate in this race who believes in that future, has devoted her life to that future; <u>a mother and grand mother</u> who'd do anything to help our children thrive. (of Clinton).

Appraisement: social actors are appraised when they are referred to in terms of which evaluate them as good or bad, loved or hated, admired or pitied (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 45), e.g.:

- Then there is Donald Trump. He is not really a plans guy. Not really a facts guys, either.

Nomination occurs in four forms in van Leeuwen's framework (2008): formal, semi-formal, formal and honorific. *Formalization uses* surname only, with or without honorifics (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 41). Our data does not contain any instances of formal nomination. Semi-formalization uses a given name and a surname (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 41), e.g.:

- I promise you, our strength, our greatness, does not <u>depend on Donald Trump.</u> (of Trump)

- If you want someone with a lifelong track record of fighting for higher wages, better benefits, a fairer tax code, a bigger voice for workers, and stronger regulations on Wall Street, then you should vote for <u>Hillary Clinton</u>.

Trump was semi-formalized more often than Clinton. The predominance of informalization might signify some social distance that Obama wanted to create between himself and Trump, furthering the connotation of "being othered".

Informalization uses given names only (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 41). Informalization of Clinton occurs at quite a high rate (18 mentions, according to our manual count), but I did not find any instance of Trump being informalized using given name. It should be noted that informalization in this context did not signify a lack of respect or potentially refers to "less powerful actors" (Hart, 2014). Quite on the contrary, it connoted a sense of closeness, in-group membership, and being one-of-us. In the speech under question, informalization can involve other words, and potentially indicates a lack of respect. For instance:

- She got her share of critics, she's been caricatured… that's what happens when we try. That is what happens when you are the kind of citizen Teddy Roosevelt once describes… <u>Hillary</u> is that woman in the arena.

Honorification in our data mainly involves "functional honorifics" (Machin &

Mayr, 2012, p. 82). Trump was not "honorificalized" whereas Clinton was, via the use of "senator", or "secretary of state". This may add a sense of respect and authority, e.g.:

- As <u>Senator from New York</u>, she fought so hard for funding to help first responders.

- As <u>Secretary of State</u>, she sat with me in the Situation room and forcefully argued in favor of the mission that took down bin Laden.

Our findings reveal the use of overdetermination that occurs when social actors are described as participating, at the same time, in more than one social practice, (a teacher and politician, for example), (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 47), with the effect being to implicitly evoke the positive characteristics and identities associated with those social practices: a leader is someone with *vision, experience…* ; a mother is *caring*, e.g.:

- And there is only one <u>candidate</u> in this race who believes in that future, and has devoted her life to it; a <u>mother and grandmother</u> who'd do anything to help our children thrive; a <u>leader</u> with real plans to break down barriers, blast through glass ceilings, and widen the circle of opportunity to every single American – the next <u>President of the United States</u>, Hillary Clinton.

Impersonalization takes the form of abstraction or objectivation. Our analysis reveals the occurrence of objectivation, which occurs when social actors are represented by means of reference to a place or thing closely associated either with their person or with the action in which they are depicted as being engaged. The use of the metaphorical "choice" to refer to Clinton was ideologically significant because it could potentially legitimize Clinton as the only person who Americans should choose to lead the nation. E.g.:

- And if you're concerned about who's going to keep you and your family safe in a dangerous world – well, <u>the choice</u> is even clearer.

By contrast, Trump was designated as a non-choice in the rhetorical question below:

- Does anyone believe that a guy who's spent his 70 years on this Earth showing no regards for working people is suddenly going to be your champion? <u>Your voice</u>?

All these lexical resources deployed by the speaker Obama helped define the two social actors in terms of who they are. But the picture of these two actors was not complete without a characterization in terms of what they did or performed, which is discussed through analysis of processes below.

4.2. Process Types Portray Clinton Engaged in Performances That Typically Characterize Leadership Whereas Trump was Ascribed Unworthy Behaviors

Findings show that Clinton was depicted as agentive in relation to a full range of performances especially through material actions, paying attention to what she can do. The role of material processes is to represent one as both "dynamic" and "forceful" (van Leeuwen, 2008), and a can-do-type via the projection of behaviors that are traditionally found in a leader. This is consistent with Koller's research (2008). By contrast, Trump was depicted as just a bombastic talker, careless with deplorable through verbal actions. The following table presents performances assigned to the two social actors. I found no existential process ascribed to Clinton.

Table 2

Percentages of the Ascribed Processes

Process types	Trump-ascribed	Clinton-ascribed
Material	20%	35.5%
Mental	10%	27.6%
Relational	20%	26.3%
Verbal	40%	6.5%
Behavioral	6.6%	4.0%
Existential	3.3%	0%

Our findings show Clinton's performances were mostly represented via the three principal processes (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 248): *material* processes (35.5%), followed by *mental* processes (27.6%), and *relational* processes (26.6%). Taken together they accounted for quite a high percentage (89.4%). *Verbal* and *behavioral* processes were also deployed, but at much lower rates (6.5% and 4.0%, respectively). We did not find any instance of *existential* process in our data. Interpreting the *material* processes shows that a predominance of material processes represents performances or doings that are not stereotypically feminine (e.g.: related to house-keeping, family, housework), but things expected of someone in a top leadership position. E.g.:

- Has worked closely with our intelligence teams, our diplomats, our military to keep you and your family safe in a dangerous world.

- I know Hillary won't relent until ISIL is destroyed. She'll finish the job – and she'll do it without resorting to torture, or banning entire religions from entering our country.

The *mental* and *relational* processes appeared with high frequencies. *Mental* processes ascribed to Clinton portrayed her as someone with knowledge and experience, and these traits are hardly feminine, but qualities of a leader. E.g.:

- She <u>knows</u> that for progress to happen, we have to listen to each other, and see ourselves in each other, and fight for our principles but also fight to find common ground, no matter how elusive that may sometimes seem.

- She <u>knows</u> we can work through racial divides in this country.

- She <u>knows</u> that acknowledging problems that have festered for decades isn't making race relations worse.

By contrast, the *mental* processes that were assigned to Trump depicted him a negative light implying a lack of knowledge or displaying an attitude of carelessness. For example:

- (He) doesn't <u>know the men and women</u> who make up the strongest fighting force the world has ever known. (lack of knowledge)

- It <u>doesn't matter to him</u> that illegal immigration and the crime rate are as low as they've been in decades, because he's not offering any real solutions to those issues. (attitude of carelessness).

The *relational* processes assigned the same attributes to Clinton, but what is

striking is that they did not portray traditionally feminine characteristics and specific identities, but leadership-related qualities. E.g.:

- Hillary's <u>got the tenacity</u> she had as a young woman.

- She has <u>got specific ideas.</u>

- Now, Hillary <u>has real plans to address the concern</u> (she's heard from you on the campaign trail.)

- (and she) <u>has the judgment and the experience and the temperament</u> to meet the threat from terrorism.

- She's <u>been in the room.</u>

- She has <u>been part of those decisions</u>

Intensive relational processes appeared to play a very important role in tandem with the meanings of the words which are used to help to characterize Clinton as someone fit for the job, and trustworthy. She was implicitly described as "*the choice for president*" because she had the critical qualities such as "judgment, temperament, experience, the care for others, intelligence, discipline". These are the attributes and traits we can find in men who are in leadership position: they need to be visionary, experienced, tough, and having sound judgment.

Trump's performances were mostly represented via *verbal* processes (40%, a subsidiary process, Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 248), followed by *relational* processes and *material* processes. *Behavioral* and *existential* processes appeared at extremely lower rates (6.6% and 3.3%, respectively). The dominance of *verbal* processes might suggest Trump was much of a talker, rather than a doer. As we looked more closely into the semantics of those processes, we found that these processes not only portray Trump as a talker, but in a very negative light as well. E.g.:

- Meanwhile, Donald Trump <u>calls our military a disaster.</u>

- He <u>praises Saddam Hussein.</u>

- He<u>'s just offering slogan</u>s, and he<u>'s offering fear</u>.

There was a scarcity of *behavioral* processes (6.6%) and *existential* processes (3.3%). However, factoring in the meanings of specific words realizing the process, Trump was cast in a very negative light as someone "*who shows no regards for working people*" and "*cozies up to Putin*". There was a sense of irony, too, in the following utterance:

- Does anyone believe that a guy who's spent his 70 years on this Earth showing no regards for working people is suddenly going to be your champion? your voice?

Trump was further depicted via the behavioral process of "*He cozies up to Putin*". The name of Putin might evoke strong negative reactions as he was perceived as a dictator in the West. Behavioral processes were also assigned to Clinton, but the contrast was quite pronounced. Clinton was cast as someone who "*listens to people*", "*keeps her cool*" and "*treats people with respect*", which are must-have traits of leaders. E.g.:

- Even in the middle of the crisis, she <u>listens to people</u>, and <u>keeps her cool</u>, and <u>treats everybody with respect</u>.

Existential processes are not related to agency, and therefore, should not be subjected to our analysis. However, I located one significant *existential* process ascribed to Trump "*Then there is Donald Trump. He is not really a plans guy*". This *existential* process was significant as it reinforced the sense of othering Trump.

4.3. Representation Patterns Offer Evidences of Social Actor Legitimation and Reveals a Potential Bias

The key theme here is Obama was supporting and defending Clinton's

candidacy by legitimating, or seeking the "social approval" (Hart, 2014, p. 7) of his choice, Clinton while delegitimating Trump. Based on the analysis of data, it can be inferred that the "One of us" vs. "Other" portrayal represents a potent embodiment of legitimation (van Dijk's, 1998) through a positive self-representation and negative other-representation, which is a structure of mutual oppositions. The speaker cast Clinton as "one of us" with vision, knowledge, judgment, and toughness. These traits define leadership and are aligned with American expectations of someone who will lead their country (Rath & Conchie, 2008; Garcia, 2019). Clinton was overdetermined as "candidate, a mother and grandmother, a leader, senator, secretary of state, commander-in-chief, and the next President of the United States", so that a sense of owning desirable qualities associated with these job titles, and legitimacy could be evoked (Machin & Mayr, 2012). By contrast, categorization and nomination put Trump in a negative light, and othered him as "*a self-styled savior*" in "*Our power doesn't come from some self-declared savior promising he alone can restore order*" or as the "bombastic" talk-the-talk guy, not to trust through the abundance of verbal processes. The evidences that emerge out of our label ascriptions and transitivity analysis are seen as indicative of Obama's bias in his representation of the two actors. It can be inferred that Obama perceived and stereotyped Trump and Clinton the way he did as a result of his experiential contacts and cognitive processing. Obama foregrounded those attributes and identities of Clinton that he saw fit for his political goals, and might on purpose mis-represent Trump. Therefore, it is important to be critical about what we read or what we hear to be fully aware of the ideology or hidden agenda of the speaker (Irwin, 1996).

5. Discussion

The main objective of this study was to explore Obama's use of social actor representation strategies. Findings reveal that he selectively employed strategies, and his choice was influenced by his political goal, ideology, perspective, cognition, and social context. First, as widely reported in the media, Obama did not only realize the urgent need to protect his legacy (the Obamacare, the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP), the Iran Deal, the Paris Agreement on climate change), but also was cognizant of the negative labels ascribed to his candidate such as "*crooked*", (coined by Trump), "*dishonest*", "*power hungry*", etc. Second, as president, he was well recognizant of the qualities expected of this top leadership position. A combination of factors enabled him to represent Clinton in a positive light and Trump negatively in order to ensure a Clinton win, protect his legacy, and save the social structure he was part of. That was the key part of his strategic goal in the election. It is found that Obama used categorization, nomination, material and verbal processes to ascribe labels and performances to Trump and Clinton in ways that betray a distinctly ideological purpose. They form an ideological mechanism to control the discourse. As remarked by Gall (1989), control of discourse or representation of reality is a form of power.

The analysis of representation patterns is also indicative of the link between representation and legitimation. This is made possible by the positive self-representation and negative other-presentation. While the linguistic evidences are not definitive of a bias, there is reason to infer that there is. First, Obama might have a cognitive bias commonly understood as "a tendency to view another person as consistent, especially in an evaluative sense…", according to Freeman et al. (1981, p. 89, as cited in Teo, 2000). One can delve

into how the social world is defined, based on our ideology, worldview, our values, and practices as the frames of reference. This ethno-centric and ego-centric view prevails and "helps us define ourselves and others" (Teo, 2000, p. 41). In all likelihood, he was ideologically wired to see these social actors in this particular way. This suggests that the "Us vs. Them" or "In-group vs. Out-group" identity negotiation is a common practice in social construction of subjects, identities and social relations. Obama may have judged and evaluated the two social actors based on his ideology, his social and institutional political views. This study lends further support to the argument that people are normally engaged in a social practice to maximize positive things about *Us*, and maximize negative things about *Them* (van Dijk, 1998). This practice can result in shaping opinions and values, and perpetuating social prejudices, possibly leading to discriminatory practices. Discursive representations, therefore, are potentially biased.

Findings of this research implicitly recognizes the crucial role of non-discursive social practices. While the study did not negate the role of discursive practices, it should be recognized that non-discursive social practices play a more powerful role in creating social effects and effecting social change. However, it should be noted that in positing "power relations are discursive" (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 272), Fairclough and Wodak appear to make the assumption that discourse is equivalent to social power, or that "all power is expressed in texts" (Rampton, 1995, p. 243). If this was the case, then Obama might have succeeded in persuading the voters to get Clinton into the White House. Clinton (2017) admitted her loss was probably due to some of the social forces going against her such as "a historic wave of angry, tribal populism" (p. 388), "the Comey effect and the Russian attack" (p. 407), or "economic anxiety or

bigotry" (p. 410), or "voter suppression" (p. 418). Therefore, it is critical that one should be aware of the limited impact of discursive practice in general on creating social effects. This fact is significant as it suggests that discursive representation has its limits, and is not equivalent to social power as one may be led to believe by Fairclough and Wodak's assumption that it is.

It needs to be pointed out that discourse interpretation should not be limited to what is in the text; one needs to move beyond the boundary of text and make sense of meaningful absences (for example, the significance of contextual information about Putin helps to interpret "*cozies up to Putin*"). It entails exploring implicit or indirect meaning (van Dijk, 2001), or reading between the lines to identify an argument being made, (KhosraviNik, 2010), or identity and ideology reflected. The ability to use language effectively and appropriately in social contexts becomes an imperative for discourse producers and interpreters.

Finally, this study recognizes that representing a social actor in terms of both the social actor framework and transitivity analysis is simply not enough. Attention should be paid to words at the lexical and semantic levels (van Dijk, 1998) because representation is in the final analysis about the production of meaning. People do not just rely on the grammatical structure of language to construct representations; they constantly make use of meanings. This resonates with what van Leeuwen (2008) has remarked about the cultural basis of meaning.

6. Conclusion

Revisiting the aim of the study and research questions, it is found that there exists a dialectical relationship between a speaker's political goal, ideology and social context and representation strategies.

Implementing a critical analysis of the actor labels and performances ascribed to the two social actors, it is found that selected strategies were deployed by the speaker to ideologically represent these social actors in a contrastive manner. The study re-affirms that van Dijk's *Us vs. Them* characterization is a strategy to further legitimation, which functions to secure social approval of actors (Hart, 2014) and ideology, and as such, it is potentially biased. Polarization can operate as a speaker's strategy to identify with social actors. As the study implies, one should not put discursive practices on the same plane as non-discursive practices because doing so would elide the distinction between ideology, power and social reality (Rampton, 1995). Clinton's failure to capture the White House in spite of Obama's whole-hearted support is the best evidence of the limits of discursive representations. This study especially emphasizes the significant role of the words, which are the "most sensitive index of social change" and potentially a "fully-fledged ideological product" (Voloshilov, 1973, as cited in M. Holborow, 2015, p. 124) in the representation and construction of social actors. It is a fact often ignored. This means a combination of the selected frameworks and semantics may offer a window into how discursive representations of social actors are created and interpreted.

This research contributes to the growing field of CDA by deepening our understanding of the application of grammars (Halliday, 2004) or frameworks in discourse analysis, and motivating linguistically-based research into representation of social actors. A point worth noting is the observation made by Dunmire, "CDA, so far, has been "insensitive to non-Western societies and what analysis of them can tell us about discursive practice in an era of globalization" (Dunmire, 2012, p. 740). It is argued that this study may inspire research into similar issues happening in non-Western societies from a CDA perspective. Studies outside Western societies can produce quite different patterns of representation. Further consideration could go to other representation strategies (van Leeuwen, 2008). One could examine the role metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) can play in the crucial "articulation of ideology in language" in discourse (Gramsci, 1971, as cited in M. Holborow, 2015, p. 2). Another interesting possibility for research is to examine the role of such constructs as worldview, cultural values, and psycho-cognitive variables involved in social actor representation and construction.

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CHIẾN LƯỢC THỂ HIỆN VAI XÃ HỘI:
MỘT NGHIÊN CỨU TRƯỜNG HỢP

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Tóm tắt: Bài viết là một nghiên cứu về chiến lược thể hiện (representation) vai xã hội (social actor) trong bài diễn văn của Tổng thống Mỹ Obama tại Đại hội Toàn quốc của Đảng Dân chủ năm 2016. Nghiên cứu áp dụng khung kết hợp dựa trên lý thuyết thể hiện vai xã hội của van Leeuwen (2008), chuyển tác của Halliday (2004), và "khung tư tưởng - ideological square" của van Dijk (1998). Kết quả cho thấy người nói đã lựa chọn chiến lược thể hiện vai xã hội theo mục đích, tư tưởng, nhận thức của mình. Khung tư tưởng cho thấy tính tương phản giữa "Ta" và "Họ" là một chiến lược tạo ra sự "chấp thuận" hay tính "chính danh" cho các vai xã hội. Nghiên cứu cho thấy sự hiện hữu của tính thiên vị, không khách quan trong thể hiện vai xã hội. Kết quả cũng cho thấy các tập quán/hành động xã hội dường như có vai trò to lớn hơn diễn ngôn để tạo ra hiệu ứng hay thay đổi xã hội. Một số hàm ý và gợi ý nghiên cứu hữu ích được đưa ra dựa trên kết quả của nghiên cứu này.

Từ khóa: thể hiện/tái hiện, vai xã hội, chuyển tác, khung tư tưởng, chính danh/chấp thuận

LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING
IN EMERGENCY REMOTE TEACHING:
ARE LEARNERS REALLY ENGAGED?

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Abstract: This study analyzed the students' engagement in emergency remote teaching (ERT) environment as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The subjects were 49 business-majored students at a university in Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam. The research was drawn upon Moore's interaction framework with the adoption of a 5-Likert scale questionnaire to examine learner-content, learner-learner and learner-instructor engagement. Open-ended questions at the end of the survey and videos synchronous classroom observations from four lessons provided insights into students' perceptions and behaviors. The quantitative result reveals learner-instructor engagement to be the strongest among the three categories, and the lack of interaction with their peers was the most frequently observed and reported. The fundamental cause lies in the loss and lack of human interactions. The engagement of both learner-learner and learner-instructor were dwarfed by superficial interaction in synchronous learning platforms. The paper ends with some recommendations to increase students' learning engagement in the uncertain times of ERT.

Keywords: emergency remote teaching, engagement, synchronous teaching

1. Introduction

The spread of Covid -19 has caused a global hazard to all facets of society, including the education system. This threat has resulted in the lockdown or social distancing crisis in many nations. Therefore, educators and parents are forced to devise new teaching methods to keep their students engaged. Sharing the similar belief, Hodges et al. (2020) claim that Covid-19 has forced colleges and universities to decide how to continue with their programmes while keeping their staff, faculty and students safe from the pandemic. As a result, these institutions have opted to cancel their face-to-face classes and move to online platforms. This sudden change is known as Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT). ERT is an alternative, temporary method of teaching that is evolved in response to a specific crisis situation and thus strictly differs from typical distance education (Wang et al., 2020).

In Vietnam, even though it is considered a notable case study of instantaneous and conspicuous collaboration between the government and society to minimize the cases of Covid-19 (La et al., 2020), the shift in the educational system was unforeseen and caused significant side effects (MOET, 2020). During the

pandemic, Vietnam enforced a national lockdown, and educational institutions were the firsts to face closure at a short notice from the government. Schools closed from January to May in the first lock down in 2020, then at the beginning of a new academic year, institutions were forced to close for the second half of August, 2020. The situation continued to the year 2021. Administrators, faculty, and students have been adapting themselves to the novel online learning and stumbling upon unpredictable obstacles, varying from digital literacy and digital divide to digital readiness (Shim & Lee, 2020).

In online learning, engagement is crucial as it is the indicator of student motivation, satisfaction and performance. Student engagement plays a crucial role in students' learning and satisfaction in distance education (Martin & Bolliger, 2018). It is even more important during the time of lockdown and social distancing when social isolation and the lack of interactivity is inevitable. In an online learning environment, interactions that students have with materials, peers and teachers ensure positive learner experience and thus engagement becomes the indicator of successful online teaching.

During ERT, several factors played their roles in the level of student engagement. In the context of Saudi Arabia, interaction with teachers and peers were evident with a high level of satisfaction and engagement in a research by Oraif and Elyas (2021). In other contexts, the results were rather mixed. Deka (2021) conducted a quantitative analysis with Indian tertiary students and concluded that the strongest influence on online engagement was related to instructor characteristics. In addition, Ali, Narayan, and Sharma (2020) revealed through New Zealand teachers' reflective statements that the use of synchronous and asynchronous channels proactively supported learning, yet frustrations with online technology and insufficient inter-personal connection hindered students' engagement level.

To follow the guidance from the Ministry of Education and Training, which can be translated as "Suspending Classes without Suspending Learning" (MOET, 2020), all language classes have been moved online. In Vietnam, the situation was rather less satisfying. Language students showed dissatisfaction towards ERT in terms of teaching methodology (Thach et al., 2021), and limited interaction (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2021). This study aims at providing further details towards student engagement in synchronous learning in one class during ERT by analyzing a wide range of instruments including a questionnaire, online classroom observation notes and in-depth interviews. The research question that guided this study is:

How engaged were students in learning English as a second language in emergency remote teaching?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Online Learning vs ERT

During national lockdown, many Vietnamese educational institutions have opted to implement the quick transformation of face-to-face classes to an online learning platform which is known as emergency remote learning. However, online learning and ERT are different in terms of instructional design and course design. Online learning is characterized by careful instructional design and planning and systematic models for design and development (Branch & Dousay, 2015). Hodges et al. (2020) emphasized the design process and careful consideration of different design decisions which have an impact on the quality of the instruction; therefore, types of interactions – namely student-content, student-student, student – instructor are the more robust bodies of

research in online learning.

ERT, to some extent, differs from online learning. ERT is a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances, which is in contrast with experiences that are well planned from the beginning and designed to be online (Hodges et al., 2020). These authors assess ERT with the terms of delivery modes, methods, and media.

In May, 2020, Shisley published his research paper influenced by Hodges et al. (2020), Craig (2020) and Manfuso (2020) on major differences between online learning and ERT. Technology integrated in ERT might be limited. This can include both the lack of access to computers or a stable internet connection and/ or educational software or learning management system. The users – teachers and students alike – possess minimum technical skills and run short of digital literacy training prior to online learning. Learning activities are often the imitations of what happens in a face-to-face learning environment and teachers have no training in online teaching methodology as well as have little time for preparations. All aforementioned issues may result in less-than-optimal engagement and interaction circumstances.

In short, although emergency remote learning may take place online and share similar components as online learning, it differs from its counterpart regarding purposes, design, teaching modes, technological competence and level of interactions.

2.2. Learners' Engagement and Online Learning

Engagement is an emerging variable of interest that captures the attention of researchers in both learning psychology and language education. As motivation, engagement and achievement are closely linked together, improving learner engagement becomes a fundamental process of teaching and learning. Engagement is defined as "the extent to which students are interested in, committed and curious about what they are learning" (Finn & Zimmer, 2012, p. 18). Engagement is outward manifestation of motivation (Skinner et al., 2009), which is linked to generally improved attention, participation and involvement in language learning (Liu, 2021) and mediated positive correlation between classroom emotional climate and grades (Rivers et al., 2013).

Engagement and online learning is particularly important as it is harder for the teachers to control or observe students' behaviors. Successful student engagement is presented via their personal involvement with their peers, their teachers and the materials. With the use of synchronous online environments, students now can learn from anywhere, however, at the cost of losing contact with their classmates and teachers. Technological advancement has allowed several functions to ensure more meaningful interaction such as archiving the session, viewing the webcam, text chat, then a voice component during synchronous meetings compensate for delayed student–student and student– instructor interaction of asynchronous discussion. Synchronous classrooms, together with text chat are believed to increase opportunity to interact and support learning (McBrien et al., 2009; Nguyen & Pham, 2021).

During emergency remote teaching period, student engagement in the form of collaboration and community becomes pivotal in the teaching process. Yet, it becomes exceptionally challenging for educators to track and control student's engagement in online teaching and learning. Both teachers and students were struggling in maintaining the level of engagement during the COVID-19 crisis due to several challenges and obstacles in the process of switching from face-to-face delivery to

online synchronous platform in a relatively short time (Lie et al., 2020).

2.3. Engagement Framework

One of the major models that defines interactions in distance education is Moore's interaction model which proposes three interaction categories: learner–content, learner–instructor, and learner – learner (Moore, 1989). Using Moore's model as a guide, the authors investigated students' perspectives on their engagement in ERT. Moore's model can be adapted to a crisis scenario and provides the bare minimum of interactions required for successful learning while recognizing learning as a social and cognitive process.

Learner - Content interaction

This type of interaction refers to the process of engaging with material intellectually to produce improvements in the learner's comprehension, perspective, or cognitive structures. Moore (1993) emphasizes that learner-content engagement should focus on the process of interacting with the content to better change a learner's understanding and improve critical thinking. Individualized learning is the subject of this relationship. Student-content interaction can also occur through watching videos, interacting with multimedia, using search engines, such as Google Scholar or online libraries and dictionaries (Banna et al., 2015).

Learner - Instructor interaction

Moore (1989) claims that this type of interaction is highly desirable by many learners. Instructors strive to pique or sustain a student's interest in what is being learned, to encourage the student to learn, and to improve and maintain the learner's interest, including self-direction and self-motivation. The instructors then make or cause presentations to be made. This may be in the form of informational presentations, skill demos, or role modeling of such attitudes

and values. Following that, teachers attempt to coordinate students' implementation of what they've learned, whether it's practicing skills that have been taught or manipulating knowledge and ideas that have been introduced. Instructors perform tests to see whether students are progressing and to determine whether or not they can change their strategies. Regarding the same topic, Sher (2009) stated that learner-instructor interaction can be accomplished by the instructor delivering information, encouraging the learner, or providing feedback. In addition, learners may interact with the instructor by asking questions or communicating with the instructor about course activities. Dixson (2010) and King (2014) both believe that in order to promote online student engagement, students and instructors in online courses must cooperate and collaborate.

Learner - Learner interaction

Sher (2009) defines learner-learner interaction as the exchange of information and ideas that occurs among students about the course, whether the instructor is present or not. This type of interaction can take the form of group projects, group discussions, or other activities. Through student collaboration and knowledge sharing, learner-learner interaction can promote learning. Moore (1989) also regards it as an interaction between individual students or among students working in groups. Interaction is beneficial for cognitive and motivational reasons, but it is especially threatened in online education because students might not be aware of the identities of their classmates. Student-student interaction can be done in various ways through videoconferencing, instant chat and discussion boards (Banna et al., 2015; Martin & Bolliger, 2018).

Overall, Moore's classification of three types of interaction establishes a framework for assessing the relative

importance of various forms of contact in an emergency remote teaching scenario.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Context

The course was designed initially to be delivered face-to-face; however, because of the Covid-19 pandemic, it was forced to be switched into online mode. One week before the beginning of the course, students were informed via email the time, date and mode of delivery, including a code for Zoom ID and a code for Google Classroom. Each student was asked to prepare in advance a working laptop with Internet connection, a working micro and a webcam. During two weeks of social distancing, four lessons in total were delivered online via a synchronous tele-conference application named Zoom.

3.2. Sampling and Participants

Voluntary response sample was a class of 49 students at pre-intermediate level at a university in Hochiminh City, Vietnam. They were international business majors, and the English course had a specific focus on Listening and Speaking skill. The first national lockdown and school closure was in February, 2020 and since then, the country's education system has faced several more closures at irregular intervals. Since 2020, participants in this study have had experience of ERT lessons. This research was conducted through two-week closure at the beginning of 2021.

3.3. Instrument Development

In distance education, interaction is characterized as a perplexing component of distance education, and Moore (1989) has conceptualized and classified the term into three types of interaction: learner-to-learner, learner-to-instructor, and learner-to-content. This research deployed the work of Moore to draw a clear distinction among three types of

interactions in real-time interaction class and analyzed upon that. 23 Likert-type items in the survey together with open-ended questions at the end were obtained to collect the data. The survey was piloted with two students, then added Vietnamese translation with the original English version for full comprehension. Modifications regarding the use of words, deletion of unnecessary questions and re-categorization of questions were made.

Classroom observation was adopted via synchronous classrooms' recordings. The researchers developed an observation protocol for online lessons to explore how students engaged in online activities and discussions. The development of the online classroom observation was based on different previous studies including Wheeler et al. (2019) and Topçu et al. (2018) studies. Four online lessons (40 minutes each) were observed. Observation field notes were taken including the types of activities in the online class, how teachers delivered instruction, encouraged students to participate in class activities and how students participated and interacted with their peers and their teacher. Technical or instructional issues were also recorded for analysis.

Finally, an in-depth interview was used as triangulation. Two students agreed to participate in a 15-minute interview for insights into the lessons.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

Noticing the emergence of ERT, the researchers contacted the teacher and students of the class for the granted permission to record and deliver a survey at the end of the ERT period. As students returned to schools, the researchers came to deliver the survey and collect the data in person. All four lessons were recorded by the instructing teacher and later watched and analyzed by the researchers.

3.5. Data Analysis Procedure

Descriptive analysis of survey data was provided and thematic analysis is used for qualitative data. Field notes data were analysed following the guidelines of thematic analysis Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 6) that suggest "thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data". The field notes were collected systematically in the form of participant observation memos. In the process of data analysis, the common themes emerging from the observation field notes and interviews were triangulated to make sense of student engagement in online teaching and learning.

The interview was conducted via Zoom Meeting room.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Learner-Content Interaction

Regarding learner-content factor, the result from the survey (Table 1) reveal the relatively high mean score for the issues surveyed, among which, the item confirms that students will earn a good grade in the course, gets the lowest mean score (Item 15, M=3.16, SD=1.06), while the highest mean goes for the item saying that the instructor provides a well-organized course (Item 14, M=3.59, SD=1.24).

Table 1

Learner-Content Engagement in Emergency Remote Teaching

Items	Mean	SD
LC6: I complete all the assigned class work	3.27	1.16
LC7: I visit the course website/ google classroom regularly	3.55	1.23
LC11: I truly desire to learn the course material	3.39	1.10
LC12: I give a great deal of effort to the class	3.37	1.02
LC13: I am well organized in my learning	3.37	1.10
LC14: My instructor provides a well-organized course	3.59	1.24
LC15: I will earn a good grade in the course	3.16	1.06
LC16: I stay caught up on learning after class.	3.16	1.06

The lowest mean score belonged to the grade (Item 15, Mean=3.16, SD=1.06). Because of the unexpected swiftness to online learning, students are not certain about the learning outcome of the course, which also leads to a controversial discussion among researchers of whether learner – content interaction affects their learning outcome. While the recent studies by Wei et al. (2015) and Zacharis (2015) claim the impact of the student-content interaction is low in comparison with other types of interaction, Kayode and Teng (2014) assert that this factor has the greatest impact on learning outcomes.

The highest mean score for the well-organized course, can be affirmed by the notes from class video observations. In each class, the teacher uniformly classified learning activities into three stages. In Pre-listening, the instructor introduced the topic of a video or recording. While-listening stage included students' individual work of listening to assigned video and group work of some reflective or discussive questions. For individual listening practice, the instructor adopted Edpuzzle twice as an interactive platform for students to listen and answer comprehensive questions at the same time. In the final stage of post-listening, the instructor invited students to share the answers and group discussion and provided further explanation. It is also clear that they can interact with the material better in online learning. As students answered in the open-ended questions:

" I can hear better and repeat the part as I want"

" I can access the full collections of learning materials"

The interviewee expressed her preference of Edpuzzle over in-class listening activity, in which the teacher played and stopped the recording herself. She stated:

"I can play, stop or play back at my own time. It's like personalized learning and I find it more effective."

4.2. Learner-Instructor Interaction

With reference to the respondents' perceptions of learner-instructor engagement (Table 2), the item of the instructor handling inappropriate in-class interactions had the lowest mean score of the cluster (Item 10, Mean=3.39, SD=1.26). This can be explained by the lack of interaction and interference of the instructor during group discussion. Giving insights to the open-ended questions, a respondent said that she could approach the technology but she wanted to interact with her teacher and friends. Other students commented that although learning online was something new, interesting, the contact between teacher and students was less. Another participant answered that he could not interact and communicate much with the teacher.

Table 2

Learner-Instructor Engagement in Emergency Remote Teaching

Items	Mean	SD
LI2: The course rules are clear	3.53	1.20
LI3: My instructor is present and active in class discussions	3.80	1.05
LI5: My instructor is responsive to me when I have questions	3.65	1.30
LI8: My instructor is consistent about enforcing course rules	3.57	1.03
LI9: I know that I can contact my instructor when I need to	3.61	1.27
LI10: I trust my instructor to handle inappropriateness in class interactions	3.39	1.26
LL23: I feel isolated in the class	2.92	1.16

Observation reveals that students were not willing to respond to teacher's structuring questions *("Are we ready to continue?"* or *"Are you following me?"),* and the teacher ended up asking many times before someone answered. It was not until the third lesson, students started to respond when they did not understand. This lack of engagement can be explained by the answer from the interviewee:

"I was just lazy to turn on the microphone just to answer "yes". We often wait for the class monitor to answer that for the whole class."

This finding is in line with Ryan and Deci (2000) in which researchers found that in reality, many language-learning contexts are inhabited by learners who are both disengaged and passive. They display little autonomy and, at best, show only fairly low levels of extrinsic motivation. Ideally, they must contribute to the learning process, participate, give prompt feedback and assume responsibility for the accompanying circumstances rather than waiting to be asked by the instructor. This passive tendency in ERT can be explained by the teacher's mode of delivery. Learning activities were designed to aid learners in achieving course objectives in a face-to-face learning environment, they might not effectively promote active learning online, and students suffered a lack of connection with their peers and teacher (Shisley, 2020). This resulted in students' unwillingness to speak up. This finding is also consistent with the remarks by (Nguyen, 2011). In his research paper on computer-mediated communication language classrooms, Vietnamese students usually remain silent in

class and wait until called upon by the teacher, instead of volunteering to answer questions. The root of this trait may have originated in the Confucian heritage culture of Asian culture where students are supposed to be "passive, reproductive and surface" (Jones, 1999). Similar observation can be made in the context of Japan, King (2013) inferred silence in the classroom to the causes of disengagement or apathy, which often emerge with compulsory teacher-centered English classrooms for non-language majors.

Some students reported Internet disruption and technical issues, namely "background noise from teacher's microphone". As a result, they could not hear the instructor clearly. This expected problem is also addressed in Shisley's study (2020) indicating that limited technology may result in less-than-ideal engagement and interaction circumstances. Some students used a smartphone during the lessons with non-optimized digital content due to a shortage of proper digital devices. While mobile learning offers the possibility of prevalent computing, there are a number of technical drawbacks related to the inferior functionality involved compared to desktop computers (Alessia & Fernando, 2009).

On the other hand, some students also reported positive opinions towards the presence of the teacher during the online class. Statistically, the highest mean score (Item 3, Mean=3.80, SD=1.05) indicated that students appreciated the instructor's active presence and support in-class discussion. As students answered in the open-ended questions:

"I feel good and the teacher takes care of us much."

"I think learning with the instructor provides me so much power."

"My online teachers are very enthusiastic and supportive."

"I was more confident when

answering any questions from teachers, and maybe I could ask some questions in the meeting chat about the matter I was confused."

Wang and Degol (2016) and Rubie-Davies et al. (2016) also conclude that when students experience positive, constructive and warm relationships with their teachers, they are more likely to follow the rules of their classroom; and become more motivated and engaged within a learning-oriented environment (Kaufmann et al., 2016). Additionally, instructor's confirmation behaviors, such as answering students' questions, can be linked to positive student emotion and learning outcomes (Goldman & Goodboy, 2014).

However, although some students admitted that the teacher's presence and support were appreciable, more assistance from the teacher in group discussion was still expected in a Speaking lesson. As Finn and Schrodt (2016) highlighted in their study, how instructors facilitate class discussions exert an impact on students' level of interest, engagement, and understanding of course content. From the observation, the teacher in this case did not join group discussions, instead she asked students to choose a suitable platform for group discussion. The teacher then waited for about 10 minutes and collected group answers on Padlet to elaborate, which partly explained the low level of student engagement.

Overall, although learners showed the lack of autonomy and some criticism towards teacher's facilitation as well as technical accessibility, they still acknowledged and appreciated the value of teacher's active presence in the virtual learning environment.

4.3. Learner-Learner Interaction

The questions (Item 4, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23) on whether the students would interact, communicate or assist their

classmates elicited a predominantly unfavorable attitude towards online learning with mean scores from 3.08 to 3.57 (Table 3). These questionnaire findings coincided closely with the interview data. As explained further in the open-ended questions, 13 out of 49 respondents reported *"poor interaction", "difficult to interact"* or *"not enough interaction"* with peers. With reference to the participants' perceptions of personal direct connection with peers, the

mean score of the cluster was 3.08, this score indicated the lowest mean overall in the survey. Giving insights to the survey, the interviewee reported:

"I chat with my friends during group discussion. Some of my classmates don't have a working microphone or at home, the surroundings can be noisy because of other family members. Chatting is the only option."

Table 3

Learner-Learner Engagement in Emergency Remote Teaching

Items	Mean	SD
LL1: I participate actively in online discussions	3.57	0.93
LL4: I ask questions in discussions when I don't understand	3.33	1.08
LL17: I interact with classmates on course material	3.20	1.11
LL18: I connect personally with classmates	3.08	1.07
LL19: I enjoy interacting in my class	3.33	1.00
LL20: I help my fellow classmates	3.14	1.01
LL21: I share personal concerns with others	3.22	1.00
LL22: I am committed to working with my classmates so that we can help each other learn	3.35	1.04

To facilitate and collect opinions in post-listening activity, the instructor adopted Padlet to collect answers from students after their group discussion. In the first class, 44 out of 49 students shared their viewpoint on the interactive discussion board. The next three collected 34, 47, 22 shares respectively. This data confirmed students' preference of online discussion, which can be found in other papers of Revere and Kovach (2011) and Banna et al. (2015). Conclusion can be drawn that discussion boards or chat sessions have served well in promoting student-to-student interaction in online courses.

Regarding quantitative data, the highest mean score in learner-to-learner engagement category showed that students participated in virtual discussion at a relatively active level with cluster mean scores of 3.57 (Item 1, Mean = 3.57, SD=0.93). Participants seemed to discuss openly online; however, they discussed

asynchronously through the discussion board, rather than communicated verbally to their peers. This tendency was supported by Nguyen and Pham (2021), in which participants stated that they would prefer online written chat to oral direct discussion. The reasons for preference of online group chat included sufficient time to process input, self-paced edited comments and anonymity. During the group chat, students were supported with digital artefacts, for instance, electronic dictionaries or search engines, which helped students build confidence as they had more ideas to contribute to the discussion without worrying about "losing face" because of stumbling words or mispronunciations as oral discussions.

While asynchronous discussions were supported by a number of scholars, one response from the open-ended questions yielded another issue related to L2 use. During ERT, the teacher divided students

into groups and used breakout rooms for group members to discuss on a pre-assigned topic. Though the detail of the discussion in each break-out room remained to be unknown, the nature of the discussion was revealed during the open-ended questions. A participant reported L1 use as "we divide the task of group work and complete it individually". This can be correlated with the research of Xiao (2007), in which the researcher attributed the causes for reduced student's L2 use to a high number of students in class (N=49) and students sharing the same L1, and thus, "feeling communication is not authentic." Vuopala et al. (2016, p. 34) also reported a "fairly superficial level" of student interaction in the online environment. In another research, group work during online teaching was rated as the least valuable strategy and that they did not enjoy collaboration (Martin & Bolliger, 2018). The above reasons may explain why some students rated Item 18: "I connect personally with classmates" at a relatively lower score (Mean=3.08, SD=1.07).

5. Conclusion

Results from the surveys and online classroom observations in this study offers a detailed description of student engagement during the emerging situations of emergency remote teaching in the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite evident interaction between learner and instructor, the lack of interaction with both the teacher and their peers was the most frequently reported. On the one hand, students generally complimented on the convenience of technology advancement and method of delivery, appreciated the instructor's effort to be present and support students from a distance and managed to hold discussions with peers regardless of technological struggles. On the other hand, participants showed demotivation due to the lack of a sense of community, frustrations towards the digital divide and infrastructure

failure. The fundamental cause lies in the loss and lack of human interactions. Both learner-learner engagement and learner-instructor were dwarfed by superficial interaction in synchronous learning platforms. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the instructor with their limited knowledge about online education use direct transmission without significant changes in their classroom practices, hindering the creation of a learning environment where students' engagement levels are high.

Results from this paper could benefit both instructors and administrators who are looking for ways to improve the quality of teaching and learning during the pandemic and to build engagement in the online learning environment. Higher education institutions should develop an online teaching-learning strategy that governs the learning process. Universities, for example, could tighten their attendance policies and camera policies. Instructors and students may be able to communicate more effectively as a result of this. Body language and facial expressions are key in communication, and voice and speech rate modulation could help (Bao, 2020). This problem may be solved by enforcing the use of cameras. Instructors should also be provided with professional development opportunities for online teaching in the following areas: techniques for (synchronous and asynchronous) online classroom management; skills and tactics for interactive learning and online interactions with students; methods and tactics for engaging students in learning, approaches for providing relevant feedback; the use of instructional technology in teaching and learning, particularly software for mini-lecture creation (Zhang, 2020).

Creating and maintaining online professional networks may be a great source of motivation and support for instructors. Once instructors have increased the awareness of the importance of digital

literacy, students should develop learning strategies and plans that empower them to take charge of their education. Finally, students are encouraged to seek psychological and pedagogical help from their instructor and administration because though academic achievement is important, a sense of community, and most significantly, socio-emotional support is helpful more than ever during an uncertain time of the global pandemic.

There are some limitations to this research. Although classroom observation was adopted as one instrument, insights into group discussions in which students collaborated were missed. In addition, since the Emergency Remote Teaching continues to last, though intermittently, such a short period of class observation time might not fully reflect the whole picture of engagement. Therefore, it is recommended to conduct more in-depth interviews with both students and teachers to understand their behaviors and motivations during emergency remote class. Future research could also shift the focus towards instructors' perspectives of emergency-forced distant education, concentrating on the effects on their professional growth as a result of this abrupt transition.

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Appendix A

Survey on Student Engagement in Emergency Remote Teaching

Dear respondents,

Thank you for your participation in this research. Please complete this short 3-minute survey to let us know how engaged you are during the time of Emergency Remote Teaching due to Covid-19 outbreak. All responses are recorded anonymously so feel free to provide honest feedback. The information you share with the researchers would be kept confidential and be used only for the specific objectives of this work without any identification.

Your responses will facilitate the research and improve Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning of English.

Rate your level of agreement with each statement with
(1) = Strongly disagree
(2) = Disagree
(3) = Neutral
(4) = Agree
(5) = Strongly Agree

Items	1	2	3	4	5
LL1: I participate actively in online discussions.					
LI2: The course rules are clear.					
LI3: My instructor is present and active in class discussions.					
LL4: I ask questions in discussions when I don't understand.					
LI5: My instructor is responsive to me when I have questions.					
LC6: I complete all the assigned class work.					
LC7: I visit the course website/ google classroom regularly.					

LI8: My instructor is consistent about enforcing course rules.					
LI9: I know that I can contact my instructor when I need to.					
LI10: I trust my instructor to handle inappropriateness in class interactions.					
LC11: I truly desire to learn the course material.					
LC12: I give a great deal of effort to the class.					
LC13: I am well organized in my learning.					
LC14: My instructor provides a well-organized course.					
LC15: I will earn a good grade in the course.					
LC16: I stay caught up on learning after class.					
LL17: I interact with classmates on course material.					
LL18: I connect personally with classmates.					
LL19: I enjoy interacting in my class.					
LL20: I help my fellow classmates.					
LL21: I share personal concerns with others.					
LL22: I am committed to working with my classmates so that we can help each other learn.					
LL23: I feel isolated in the class.					

Generally, how do you feel about learning online? What do you like and dislike about it?

Appendix B

Field Notes Lesson Observation

___date___
Observation of __[teacher name]___
Observer: _[initials]_____
Class: _____
Lesson time (start and end): _____
Type of lesson: Listening and Speaking
Unit: _____
Platform: Zoom
Instruction mode: synchronous

Time	What happened	Observations	Comments

Suggested questions to consider
What activities happen in online class?
How teacher encourages students to participate in the activities in online class?
How teacher provides provide feedback to student's participation and interaction?
How students interact with peers and the teacher?
Report any technical issues in the online class!
Note: Remember to include approximate time stamps (by the clock), brief notes on what happened and any observations relevant to the project, teacher development, students responses, excerpts to choose for transcription.

ĐÁNH GIÁ SỰ TƯƠNG TÁC CỦA SINH VIÊN
TRONG GIỜ HỌC NGOẠI NGỮ
THỜI KÌ GIẢNG DẠY TỪ XA KHẨN CẤP

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Trường Đại học Ngoại thương - Cơ sở II tại Tp. HCM,
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Tóm tắt: Nghiên cứu này phân tích sự tương tác của sinh viên trong thời gian giảng dạy từ xa khẩn cấp do đại dịch Covid-19. Đối tượng nghiên cứu là 49 sinh viên ngành kinh tế tại một trường đại học ở Tp. Hồ Chí Minh, Việt Nam. Bài viết dựa trên khung nghiên cứu của Moore về ba loại tương tác trong lớp học: người học với nội dung học liệu, người học với giáo viên và người học với người học. Thiết kế nghiên cứu bao gồm bảng hỏi, dự giờ lớp học và phỏng vấn sâu. Kết quả cho thấy tương tác giữa người học và giáo viên là mạnh mẽ nhất, cùng với đó là sự thiếu tương tác giữa các sinh viênvới nhau thường xuyên được quan sát trong kết quả nghiên cứu định lượng. Nguyên nhân chính là do sự thiếu tương tác trực tiếp, điều này khiến cho tương tác giữa người học và giáo viên cũng như người học và người học bị hạn chế do những tương tác "giả" khi dạy và học đồng bộ. Bài nghiên cứu cũng đề xuất một số nội dung để tăng tính tương tác trong lớp học trong thời gian giảng dạy từ xa khẩn cấp này.

Từ khoá: giảng dạy từ xa khẩn cấp, tương tác, dạy học đồng bộ

USE OF RESOURCES AND ACTIVITIES
FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM
BY ENGLISH-MAJORED STUDENTS
AT A UNIVERSITY IN VIETNAM

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Abstract: This paper was part of a large-scale research into the use of resources and activities for English language learning after class time by English-majored students at a university in Vietnam. To explore the range of resources and activities frequently used by the researched students, a survey questionnaire was delivered online to 200 respondents via Google Form. The results revealed that *online/computer-based/mobile-based* and *traditional broadcast materials* were the most preferred resources for English language learning outside the classroom, whereas *Watch YouTube*, *Listen to songs*, *Surf the Internet,* and *Use social media* were the activities with the highest frequency of use. In addition, the *self-directed naturalistic language learning* activities were prevalent among the subjects, followed by *self-instruction* ones. By contrast, the studied participants tended to avoid taking part in activities that involved *naturalistic language learning*.

Keywords: language learning beyond the classroom, resources, activities, tertiary English-majored students

1. Introduction

The exponential growth of the Internet, streaming media, networking tools and channels for learning English, as well as interactive social networks in today's century, in fact, supplies language learners with numerous resources for practical and accurate language use outside the classroom. It is generally believed that these learning experiences are more immersive, social, and multimodal than boring and obsolete English textbooks. Using the afore-mentioned platforms and tools, learners can converse in English with individuals throughout the world. Specifically, English learners can communicate with other language learners or native speakers in their own time with the help of a chat room. Besides, they can either watch an English-language TV show or movie with captions/subtitles if appropriate or utilize gaming sites to find games that enable them to use English. In addition, customized applications featuring various language learning aspects are available for download

and use at any time and anywhere. In non-English speaking countries like Vietnam where learners' contact with English happens mostly in the classroom, the concept of language learning beyond the classroom (LLBC) provides a viable solution for overcoming some of the pitfalls of conventional classroom-based learning. LLBC, therefore, emerges as a field ripe for the development of new research agendas (Nunan & Richards, 2015).

In view of the growing range of affordances and resources available to support LLBC, this paper aimed to explore the range of LLBC resources and activities frequently used by English-majored students at the university under study.

Question 1: What are the LLBC resources frequently used by English-majored students at the university under study?

Question 2: What are the LLBC activities frequently used by English-majored students at the university under study?

2. Literature Review

Benson (2011) noted that classroom learning is merely one of several forms of learners' engagement with language. In fact, consistent findings from research have shown that most learners attribute their language achievements to active use of resources and activities for language learning outside the classroom. Since then, educators have called for further research to better understand how learners' encounters with different resources and settings may enhance coherent sense making. The seminal and timely contribution *Language learning beyond the classroom* (Nunan & Richards, 2015), fortunately, sheds light on the topic of LLBC by promoting autonomous learning as a feasible way of exploring and expanding our understanding of LLBC.

2.1. LLBC Resources

In her study on English learning strategies of Vietnamese tertiary students, Nguyen (2013) put forward the Regulating category based on the Meta-cognitive category in Oxford's (1990) well-known Strategy Inventory for Language Learning and the Management category in Wen's (1996) English Learning Strategies. In this category, she suggested strategies for manipulating diverse resources to create learning opportunities in the target language. Six main types of learning resource that she found available for learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Vietnam are:

1. Academic print materials (textbooks, reference books, lesson notes)

2. Non-academic print materials (newspapers, journals, novels, stories)

3. Traditional broadcast materials (shows/movies on TV, radio programs)

4. Recorded materials (audio/video tapes, CDs)

5. Online/computer-based materials (e-books/journals, software, webcast)

6. Monolingual (English-English)/Bilingual (English-Vietnamese) dictionary

These resources, as a matter of fact, can also be used for LLBC. What truly matters lies in how EFL learners exploit such resources to create learning opportunities for LLBC activities. Besides, with the rapid development of materials and applications for language learning on mobile devices (e.g., mobile phone, tablets, etc.), mobile-based materials were added to *Online/computer-based materials* in order to suit the current situation.

2.2. LLBC Activities

According to Benson (2011), LLBC has been broadly defined as "any kind of learning that takes place outside the classroom and involves self-instruction,

naturalistic learning or self-directed naturalistic learning" (p. 62). His

categorization of LLBC activities is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

Categorization of LLBC Activities

Category	Definition	Example
Self-instruction	Learners deliberately plan to improve the target language and search out resources to help them do this.	Using self-study grammar books to improve their grammar
Naturalistic language learning	Learners learn mainly unintentionally through communication and interaction with the target language group.	Engaging in discussions with English speaking classmates or colleagues.
Self-directed naturalistic language learning	Learners create or seek out a language learning situation but may not focus directly on learning the language while they are in that situation.	Subscribing to an English newspaper everyday with the underlying aim of improving their vocabulary but may read it mainly for the news without undertaking any specific learning activities.

Based on Benson's categories as shown in Table 1, the following section will examine types of LLBC activities in greater detail.

2.2.1. Self-Instruction

a. Self-study

It has been revealed from previous studies that learners engaged in a variety of activities as part of their habit of seeking chances to use English outside the classroom (Pickard, 1996). These activities ranged from reading and listening to second language (L2) authentic materials, such as reading English newspapers, novels, magazines, poems, and letters, reading signs and instructions, reading advertisements, reading and writing personal letters, reading and filling out forms, reading and writing notes to friends or workers; listen to music, listening to the radio or tapes, listening to a conversation between other speakers, listening to announcements and requesting information in public places, watching English television programs; and attending theaters, lectures, and films, to writing and speaking in L2.

b. Learning through technology

It is undeniable that new generations of students, especially those living in developing and developed countries, are becoming more and more comfortable infusing technology into their daily lives for a variety of purposes, one of which is language learning through technology, or the use of new technology as support in the process of teaching and learning L2 (Nomass, 2013). Therefore, EFL language learners seeking opportunities to improve their English proficiency outside the classroom, in turn, can benefit from learning through technology such as CD-players, tape-recorders, computers, broadcasting, etc.

c. Learning through television

Television is frequently cited as a powerful learning environment by successful language learners Television viewing, therefore, has long been recognized by language learners as a valuable resource for LLBC (Nunan & Richards, 2015). The biggest benefits of television viewing lies in its capacity to provide a massive quantity of L2 spoken input, which makes a contribution

to the development of vocabulary, listening comprehension, as well as other elements of L2 learning (Webb, 2014). Besides, viewing L2 movies and other television programmes may assist language learners in meeting their demands for a greater amount of L2 input.

2.2.2. Naturalistic Language Learning

a. Interacting with native speakers of the target language

Interacting with a 'native speaker', or a monolingual individual who still speaks the language learnt in childhood, is hence considered one of the essentials of the process of learning a foreign language. In reality, there are numerous activities providing chances for EFL learners to develop their English language proficiency through face-to-face interaction with native speakers outside the classroom. The most popular ones include finding native speakers of English to practice conversations, finding a pen pal for writing to each other in English, or visiting English-speaking countries (Pickard, 1996). In addition, EFL learners now have a variety of ways to engage with native speakers thanks to the availability of various platforms enabled by modern technology. Electronic mail, a method of creating and delivering messages through the Internet, is often regarded as a very efficient way to enhance one's writing skills. Another way for EFL learners to engage in real communication with target language speakers is through virtual contacts informally established via 'social media'. Since social media sites, such as Facebook or Twitter, play an important role in daily lives of most people including language learners, there is great potential for using them as facilitating tools for language learning. In fact, social media has been adapted to enrich language learning experiences for EFL learners, especially those living in monolingual communities where the cost associated with having a target-language teacher in the classroom is prohibitive and the presence of native speakers outside the classroom is rare (Nunan & Richards, 2015).

b. Interacting with other L2 learners

In particular, using English in social contexts with other L2 learners is another important way for learners to maintain and increase their language proficiency, apart from communicating with native speakers. As a matter of fact, there is a variety of activities that involve social interaction available for EFL learners who seek to enhance their language proficiency, including participating in a conversation with one or more speakers of L2 outside the classroom (i.e. friends or/and teachers at school or family members at home), writing letters to friends with 10 deliberate mistakes and asking them to underline the mistakes, recording a dialogue together, practicing a scene together, trying to work out a foreign language text together. Additionally, Hyland's (2004) study conducted at a university in Hong Kong revealed that participating in an English club was preferred by EFL students in an attempt to immerse themselves in an English-speaking environment. In addition to providing opportunities for participants to develop their social interests and skills, English club activities also allow members to learn how to act as a part of a group, thus are generally believed to be crucial in developing interpersonal skills, perseverance as well as leadership qualities.

2.2.3. Self-Directed Naturalistic Language Learning

a. Extensive reading

Extensive reading, an instructional strategy that encourages language learners to read in huge quantity, has constantly grown in popularity and reputation in the realm of L2 reading pedagogy. Besides the main goal of extending background knowledge based

on what is read, the additional aims of extensive reading include developing language learners' reading habits, increasing their vocabulary and grammar, as well as instilling a passion for reading (Richards & Schmidt, 2002).

b. Extensive listening

Extensive listening, another effective instructional strategy for enhancing language learners' listening fluency and general listening abilities, includes all forms of listening practice that enables language learners to gain a large amount of comprehensible and enjoyable listening input (Renandya & Farrell, 2011). Instead of explicit learning, extensive listening aims at enhancing implicit learning of vocabulary and grammar through repeatedly listening to texts or news, and re-exposure to words and grammatical structures in specific contexts (Matsuo, 2016).

c. Extensive viewing

Extensive viewing, an activity that involves regular silent uninterrupted viewing of media both inside and outside the classroom, proves to be an effective method of improving vocabulary and listening comprehension (Webb, 2014). He further explained that language learners could enjoy the benefits in proportion with the viewing time, which means that their comprehension and vocabulary learning improve to a higher extent provided that the viewing time is extended. This is because when language learners watch extensively on a regular basis, the vocabulary development can occur through the acquisition of new words and the improvement of recognition of spoken forms of words, whereas comprehension can take place via the creation of glossaries that list key words, as well as materials that provide background information on the characters and storyline. Besides, repeated readings of the same text are proven to help enhance comprehension and vocabulary learning

(Webb & Chang, 2012). With the introduction of YouTube, a multidimensional resource that provides content in all fields of knowledge, language learning through EV has never been easier. Language learners now can access massive numbers of videos which serve as authentic material for the mastery of all four macro skills in English (Faizi, 2018).

d. Music and songs

With their appeal and ubiquitous presence in everyday lives of most people, music and songs meet all the criteria for being an excellent resource for language learning (Bokiev et al., 2018). To begin with, numerous research have demonstrated that music and songs play a facilitative role in fostering a low-anxiety non-threatening atmosphere that arouses positive emotions in language learners, which is a prerequisite for the successful acquisition of L2. Along with creating a positive learning environment, and increasing learners' motivation, music and songs provide a realistic context for the development of all the four language skills and are also helpful for teaching pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar (Abbott, 2002). Additionally, music and songs have been shown to improve retention and memory of words, phrases, and longer texts (Coyle & Gómez Gracia, 2014). Besides developing students' linguistic competence and memory, music and songs can also raise their cultural awareness, for they are accurate representation of the society from which they originate (Jones, 2008).

2.3. Previous Studies

Numerous studies have extended our knowledge of the variety of LLBC resources and activities, as well as their associated affordances and constraints for language learning. For example, Freeman's study (1999) found out that ESL/EFL language learners spent most of their time engaging in

a variety of LLBC settings in an active manner, hence demonstrating their strong preferences for LLBC activities over in-class ones. In addition, Pearson's survey (2003) with Chinese international students at a university in New Zealand revealed that most ESL/EFL learners utilized a variety of LLBC resources, such as magazines and newspapers, TV series, movies, the radio, the Internet, as well as the interaction with their classmates to improve their English proficiency. The students further reported that these LLBC brought them much more enjoyment in learning.

Consistent findings about EFL students' active participation in LLBC have been also reported by other studies. For instance, certain LLBC activities were found common among EFL learners at an Indonesian junior high school (Lamb, 2004a). At universities in various regions such as Hong Kong (Spratt et al., 2002) and Taiwan (Shen et al., 2005), in addition, EFL learners reported that they engaged in a similar range of LLBC resources and

activities, regardless of small differences in frequency of use. These various accounts of different population groups from all over the world have shown that EFL learners are actively engaging in LLBC.

In Vietnam, Vo's (2017) study into LLBC shed light on the correspondence between Vietnamese university students' perception of the helpfulness of LLBC activities with their actual practice in Vietnamese EFL contexts. That being said, the study was conducted with only 40 third-year English majors, which is quite small in scope within the purview of an EFL context. Hence, there is still a gap for a study on a larger scale into the range of LLBC resources and activities that are available to English-majored students at the university under study.

2.4. Theoretical Framework for the Study

Benson's (2011) model provides the basic theoretical framework for analyzing dimensions of LLBC in this study.

Table 2

Dimensions of LLBC

Dimensions	Description	Example
Location	Where and when the learning takes place	out-of-class, after-class, extra-curricular, self-access, out-of-school, distance
Formality	The degree to which learning is linked to educational qualifications or structured by educational institutions	informal, non-formal, naturalistic
Pedagogy	The degree to which teaching is involved	non-instructed, self-instructed
Locus of control	How decisions are distributed between the learner and others	autonomous, independent, self-regulated

Table 2 shows that *location* is only one of several dimensions of LLBC, although LLBC essentially refers to location. After identifying the *location* in which learning occurs, it is possible to determine language learning as either 'informal' or 'formal', 'non-instructed' or 'instructed', 'self-directed' or 'other-directed'.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Instruments

A mixed method design which included both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods was employed in the large-scale study into LLBC. However,

within the scope of this paper, the quantitative approach was adopted to find out the range of LLBC resources and activities frequently used by English-majored students. For reasons of efficiency and convenience in coding and statistical analysis, a combination of closed-ended items, open-ended items, and 5-point Likert scale items was employed in the design of the questionnaire. There are 2 main sections in the questionnaire. The first component includes 3 closed-ended items on learner variables, such as gender, major and self-rated proficiency in four English skills. The

second part consists of 1 closed-ended item, 2 open-ended items, and 25 5-point Likert scale to find out the range of LLBC resources and activities frequently used by participants. In the questionnaire, the 5-point Likert scale items on the range of LLBC resources and activities used by English-majored students are respectively arranged according to the mediation and linguistic dimensions. Besides, the 5-point Likert scale items on LLBC activities can be categorized into self-instruction, naturalistic language learning, self-directed naturalistic language learning, as in Table 3.

Table 3

LLBC Activities in Category

Category	Number of items	Items
Self-instruction	5	I8, I9, I11, I13, I23
Naturalistic language learning	6	I16, I17, I18, I19, I20, I21,
Self-directed naturalistic language learning	6	I10, I12, I14, I15, I22, I24

3.2. Research Subjects

The population targeted in this study included English-majored students at the university under study, which was estimated by the Office of Student Affairs to reach 2718. Under the time constraints, however, the probability sampling, such as random sampling, could hardly be employed. Instead, non-probability sampling would best suit its purpose and the given circumstances. To be more specific, opportunity or convenience sampling was employed to recruit the participants for the quantitative phase of this study. As defined by Brady (2006), opportunity or convenience sampling is a technique for selecting data sources, where researchers "identify a sample, for example, using a researcher's local knowledge of an area on which to base a study or using a researcher's past experiences to contact participants" (p. 205). Approaching the most convenient

and easy-to-find members of the population, opportunity sampling or convenience sampling is considered the most common type of non-probability sampling (Weathington et al., 2010).

Subsequently, the sample size is considered a crucial factor from which certain inferences can be made about a population. With a view to achieving sufficient statistical power for this study, initial calculation of the sample was conducted, and it was determined that with a population of around 2718, a sample size of 183 was required at the confidence level of 95%. In practice, during the quantitative data collection process, 200 valid questionnaires were collected and this sample of 200 (>183) in the quantitative stage was considered statistically adequate to identify patterns of LLBC resources and activities used by students and substantial enough to capture significant association between variables.

In this study, 200 second-year English-majored students were chosen as respondents to be included in the sample. This was since they had an adequate amount of time to familiarize themselves with the EFL teaching and learning methods at university, thereby being aware that in-class language learning might not be sufficient to meet the increasing demands for English graduates. Besides, this study was taken at the time when second-year English language studies majors, accounting for most English-majored students at the university under study, were preparing to be placed in their specialized academic majors in the first semester of the third year based on the grades of their English skills. Hence, they were more motivated than others to take advantage of LLBC resources and activities to enhance their English proficiency in four macro skills.

The female respondents to the survey questionnaire in this study outnumbered their male counterparts. In particular, the percentage of female respondents (79.5%) quadrupled that of male respondents (20.5%). The involvement of both male and female participants in this research, however, is believed to allow for the generation of data that were non-gender biased among the targeted population. Besides, most participants (80%) majored in English language studies, whereas only 1/5 of them (20%) were English language teaching majors.

The surveyed respondents were also asked to rate their four English skills, namely listening, reading, speaking, and writing on a four-level proficiency scale of "Limited", "Fair", "Good" and "Very good". This four-level scale was chosen to match the current English proficiency level being adopted in the regular curriculum in Vietnam at various educational levels, including tertiary one. The familiarity with

this assessment scale was believed to produce more accurate judgement of their English proficiency among the respondents. Approximately half of the researched students rated themselves as "Fair" learners of English across the four skills. Specifically, "Fair" level was chosen by 52.0% of the respondents in reading skill, 46.0% in listening skill, 49.0% in writing skill, and 43.5% in speaking skill. "Fair" level accounted for the highest percentages in all four English skills of the studied participants. Another significant finding regarding self-rated English proficiency was that those participating in the research were least confident with their listening skills, with 36.0% indicating "Limited" level. In contrast, 28.5% of the respondents rated their speaking skills as "Very good", accounting for the highest proportion in all four English skills.

4. Findings

4.1. Participants' Reported Frequency of Overall LLBC Resources and Activities Use

As mentioned earlier, the frequency of LLBC resources and activities use was measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "1 = Never (N)", "2 = Rarely (R)", "3 = Sometimes (S)", "4 = Often (O)", and "5 = Always (A)".

To allow for a convenient synthesis of the findings at this stage, the frequency of LLBC resources and activities by participants was categorized as "low use" (mean frequency scores in the range of 1.00 to 2.49), "medium use" (mean frequency scores in the range of 2.50 to 3.49), and "high use" (mean frequency scores in the range of 3.50 to 5.00).

The overall mean frequency scores across all LLBC resources and activities reported by the 200 English-majored students at the university are illustrated in the following Table 4:

Table 4

Frequency of Overall LLBC Resources and Activities Use (n=200)

Category	Mean (M)
Overall	2.95
LLBC Resources	3.18
LLBC Activities	2.87

Table 5

Frequency of Individual LLBC Resource Use (n=200)

Resources	N	R	S	O	A	M	SD
I1. Academic print materials	2.0%	33.0%	46.0%	15.5%	3.5%	**2.86**	**.829**
I2. Non-academic print materials	3.0%	34.5%	52.0%	9.0%	1.5%	**2.72**	**.732**
I3. Traditional broadcast materials	1.0%	8.0%	30.0%	56.5%	4.5%	**3.56**	**.748**
I4. Recorded materials	3.0%	40.0%	45.0%	10.0%	2.0%	**2.68**	**.775**
I5. Online/computer/mobile-based materials	1.0%	7.5%	23.0%	37.0%	31.5%	**3.91**	**.965**
I6. Monolingual/Bilingual dictionary	2.5%	12.5%	46.0%	27.0%	12.0%	**3.34**	**.931**

The mean frequency of around 3 ("Sometimes") indicated that the participants in the study reported a moderate frequency use of LLBC resources and activities, suggesting that the researched students were moderate users of LLBC resources and activities.

4.2. Participants' Reported Frequency of Individual LLBC Resource Use

As seen in Table 5, the individual mean scores showed that 4 out of 6 LLBC resources fell within the frequency level of medium use (Mean frequency scores in the range of 2.50 to 3.49). Specifically, the surveyed respondents are moderate users of the following LLBC resources:

- I1: Academic print materials;
- I2: Non-academic print materials;
- I4: Recorded materials;
- I6: Monolingual/Bilingual dictionary.

In addition, the findings suggested that the remaining two LLBC resources were employed with a frequency level of high use. Notably, the highest mean frequency scores were found with the two LLBC resources, including *I5: Online/computer/mobile-based* (**M = 3.91, SD =.748**) and *I3: Traditional broadcast* (**M = 3.56, SD =.748**).

A closer look at the results in terms of percentages demonstrated that the majority of 68.5% and 61.0% of the survey students reported using these two LLBC resources respectively on an "often" or "always" basis.

4.3. Participants' Reported Frequency of Individual LLBC Activity Use

There were totally 17 LLBC activities employed by participants to improve their English proficiency in four skills, namely listening (from I8 to I12), reading (from I13 to I15), speaking (from I16 to I19), writing (I20 and I21). Meanwhile, the remaining three LLBC activities (from I22 to I24) could be used to enhance different English skills, depending on how participants took advantage of the learning opportunities created by these activities.

Table 6

Frequency of Individual LLBC Activity Use (n=200)

Activities	N	R	S	O	A	M	SD
I8. Watch TV programs	0.5%	23.0%	46.5%	23.5%	6.5%	**3.13**	**.856**
I9. Watch movies	0.5%	22.5%	44.0%	25.0%	8.0%	**3.18**	**.888**
I10. Watch YouTube	0.0%	1.5%	16.5%	54.5%	27.5%	**4.08**	**.704**
I11. Listen to the radio	6.5%	37.5%	44.5%	10.0%	1.5%	**2.63**	**.811**
I12. Listen to songs	0.0%	4.0%	27.0%	45.5%	23.5%	**3.89**	**.809**
I13. Read academic books and articles	2.5%	35.0%	49.5%	11.5%	1.5%	**2.75**	**.750**
I14. Read newspapers and magazines	3.5%	36.0%	48.5%	10.5%	1.5%	**2.71**	**.762**
I15. Read novels	10.5%	36.0%	44.0%	9.0%	0.5%	**2.53**	**.820**
I16. Participate in English clubs	13.5%	39.0%	38.5%	7.5%	1.5%	**2.45**	**.872**
I17. Speak with other colleagues/ fellow students in English	6.0%	31.5%	48.0%	11.5%	3.0%	**2.74**	**.852**
I18. Speak with family members in English	42.0%	42.0%	11.0%	3.0%	2.0%	**1.81**	**.893**
I19. Speak with foreigners	9.0%	44.5%	39.0%	5.5%	2.0%	**2.47**	**.814**
I20. Write emails	31.5%	43.5%	18.5%	6.5%	0.0%	**2.00**	**.874**
I21. Write to pen-pals	38.0%	41.5%	16.0%	4.5%	0.0%	**1.87**	**.841**
I22. Surf the Internet	1.5%	4.5%	19.5%	60.0%	14.5%	**3.82**	**.790**
I23. Use computer/mobile-based learning software	3.5%	12.5%	57.5%	19.0%	7.5%	**3.15**	**.859**
I24. Use social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	4.0%	6.5%	29.0%	45.5%	15.0%	**3.61**	**.955**

The results related to the individual mean scores of the LLBC activities from Table 6 indicated that the researched respondents made use of a wide range of LLBC activities with a varying degree of frequency level. Among these LLBC activities, the four highest uses include *I10: Watch YouTube* (**M=4.08, SD=.704**), *I12: Listen to songs* (**M=3.89, SD=.809**), *I22: Surf the Internet* (**M= 3.82, SD=.790**)*,* and *I24: Use social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)* (**M=3.61, SD=.955**). An examination of the percentages and counts revealed that these high use LLBC activities were reported to be often or always employed by a respective percentage of

82.0%, 69.0%, 74.5%, and 60.5% respondents. On the contrary, the lowest mean frequency scores were found with 5 LLBC activities, namely *I18: Speak with family members in English* (**M = 1.81, SD =.893**)*, I21: Write to pen-pals* (**M=1.87, SD=.841**), *I20: Write emails* (**M=2.00, SD=.874**)*, I16: Participate in English clubs* (**M= 2.45, SD =.814**), and *I19: Speak with foreigners* (**M=2.47, SD =.814**). These low used LLBC activities were respectively reported to be never or rarely employed by the majority of 84.0%, 79.5%, 75.0%, 53.5% and 52.5% of the researched participants.

Specifically, the respondents were reported to be "moderate" to "high" users of

the LLBC activities that could assist them in honing their listening skills, including *I8: Watch TV programs*; *I9: Watch movies; I10: Watch YouTube*; *I11: Listen to the radio*; and *I12: Listen to songs*. Apart from that, LLBC activities related to reading also fell into the medium frequency range, namely *I13: Read academic books and articles*; *I14: Read newspapers and magazines*; and *I15: Read novels*. In contrast, 5 out of 6 LLBC activities related to productive skills (speaking and writing) were reported to be infrequently used by participants, except for only one LLBC speaking activity which was reported to be moderately used (*I17. Speak with other colleagues/ fellow students in*

English). Additionally, the open-ended item in the questionnaire also revealed that "playing games" was considered by two respondents (one male and one female) as the activity that they often conducted to improve their English proficiency outside the classroom.

4.4. Participants' Reported Frequency of Individual LLBC Activity Use in Category

Table 7 showed the frequency of individual activity use in three categories, namely self-instruction, naturalistic language learning, and self-directed naturalistic language learning.

Table 7

Frequency of Individual Activity Use in Category (n=200)

Category	Number of items	Activities	M	SD
Self-instruction	5	I8. Watch TV programs	3.13	.856
		I9. Watch movies	3.18	.888
		I11. Listen to the radio	2.63	.811
		I13. Read academic books and articles	2.75	.750
		I23. Use computer/mobile-based learning software	3.15	.859
Mean of the category			**2.96**	**.832**
Naturalistic language learning	6	I16. Participate in English clubs	2.45	.872
		I17. Speak with other colleagues/ fellow students in English	2.74	.852
		I18. Speak with family members in English	1.81	.893
		I19. Speak with foreigners	2.47	.814
		I20. Write emails	2.00	.874
		I21. Write to pen-pals	1.87	.841
Mean of the category			**2.22**	**.858**
Self-directed naturalistic language learning	6	I10. Watch YouTube	4.08	.704
		I12. Listen to songs	3.89	.809
		I14. Read newspaper and magazines	2.71	.762
		I15. Read novels	2.53	.820

	I22. Surf the Internet	3.82	.790
	I24. Use social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	3.61	.955
Mean of the category		**3.44**	**.807**

The self-instruction category consisted of five LLBC activities conducted by the researched students for the purpose of direct learning and practicing of English, including I8, I9, I11, I13 and I23. In addition, the naturalistic language learning category covered a total of six LLBC activities, which could be subdivided into two main subgroups in terms of the productive skills involved in the language learning, namely speaking (from I16, I17, I18, and I19) and writing (Q20 and Q21). Meanwhile, the self-directed naturalistic language learning category comprised of six LLBC activities, in which four LLBC activities involving the practice of receptive skills (I10, I12, I14, I15) whereas the remaining two (Q22 and Q24) could be used by participants to improve different English skills or language. Concerning the first category of LLBC activities, the results indicated that all LLBC activities in the self-instruction category were done with a medium frequency level (Mean frequency scores in the range of 2.50 to 3.49).

Regarding the second category of LLBC activities, it was important to note that 5 out of 6 LLBC activities fell into the frequency level of low use (Mean frequency scores in the range of 1.00 to 2.49). Specifically, two low use activities (I20 and I21) were related to enhancing writing skills via written exchange (letters or emails) with other L2 learners or pen friends. The other three low use LLBC activities were in relation to the learning and practicing of speaking skills through verbal exchange with members of an English club (I16), family members (I18) or native speakers (I19). By contrast, only one LLBC activity in this category was reported to be

moderately used by the students (**M=2.74, SD=.852**), which was *I17: Speak with other colleagues/fellow students in English.*

Respecting the third category of LLBC activities, the findings related to the individual mean scores indicated that the LLBC activities in this category were carried out with a frequency level of medium (Mean frequency scores in the range of 2.50 to 3.49) or high use (Mean frequency scores in the range of 3.50 to 5.00). This finding was highly indicative of the utilization of the self-directed naturalistic language learning category in English learning among participants in this study. Specifically, the respondents were reported to be moderate users of the two LLBC activities related to reading, including Q14 and Q15. Meanwhile, the other four LLBC activities that fell into the frequency level of high use were related to listening (I10 and I12) and various English skills (I22 and I24).

5. Discussion

In line with several research findings to date, the results of this study indicate that English-majored students at the university took part in a wide range of LLBC resources and activities. Interestingly, the findings of this study revealed that second-year English majors at the university under study used LLBC resources and activities only to a moderate extent. In the current EFL context of Vietnam, this could be attributed to the following factors. Firstly, the subjects were just in their second year of university and had not developed into autonomous language learners. Secondly, even though the researched students wanted to use LLBC resources and activities, they still had limited access to such things due to lack of

educational facilities and materials. Finally, the widespread of COVID-19 pandemic had changed the traditional way of teaching and learning EFL, causing students to spend most of their time participating in online classes and completing assignments given by teachers. Therefore, they had very little amount of leisure time to conduct LLBC.

Meanwhile, the LLBC resources frequently used by participants were *Online/computer/mobile-based materials,* and *Traditional broadcast materials.* The fact that the majority of researched students favored these two resources for LLBC reflects the current trend of integrating technology into teaching and learning English. Since students have recently been instilled with technology in their daily lives, the usage of various forms of technological tools such as the Internet, learning software, streaming movies and videos, as well as online music has become as common as the utilization of traditional textbooks.

In the meantime, the most common LLBC activities either belonged to the self-instruction categories or self-directed naturalistic language learning categories whereas participants tended to avoid LLBC activities that involved interaction with other L2 learners or native speakers. It can be due to the fact that the researched students are living in a non-English speaking country, which makes them hesitant to communicate in English. Moreover, some students do not feel comfortable to speak English owing to their language proficiency (Spratt et al., 2002), their personality (Pearson, 2003). To make matters worse, the alternatives given are not applicable for learners' everyday utilization. The reason may lie in the fact that talking with native speakers or writing to a pen pal is challenging, for learners do not have the chance to get in contact with them daily. Even among their peers, it can be difficult for students to find a companion to regularly speak English with. As a result, they feel that their time is being wasted since

anytime they speak English, their buddies would merely respond back in their native tongue. This could lend support to Hyland's finding (2004) which indicated the prevalence of activities in the private domain among students in Hong Kong. It can be argued, however, that the students in this study expressed their preferences for private activities over the 'public' ones largely due to the restricted availability of resources, which was worsen by the complicated developments of COVID-19 pandemic across Vietnam during the research period, rather than the negative social connotations associated with those using English in a Vietnamese-speaking community.

6. Conclusions and Implications

6.1. Conclusions

It can be concluded that English-majored students at HU-UFL are generally medium users of LLBC resources and activities. Specifically, the LLBC resources with highest frequency of use are *Online/ computer/mobile-based materials*, and *Traditional broadcast materials* while the most favorite LLBC activities include *Watch YouTube*, *Listen to songs*, *Surf the Internet,* and *Use social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.).*

Besides, LLBC activities belonging to the self-directed naturalistic language learning category are prevalent among English majors at the university, followed by those included in the self-instruction group. By contrast, the students tend to avoid taking part in LLBC activities that involve naturalistic language learning.

6.2. Implications

The positive feedback from the research participants have proven the importance and effectiveness of LLBC resources and activities in improving their English proficiency, which may carry the following implications for EFL students and teachers.

The findings indicated that English majors at the university under study were moderate users of LLBC resources and activities, with a tendency for frequent usage of a diverse variety of such resources and activities. However, given the prevalent usage of online/computer/mobile-based materials as LLBC resources and self-directed naturalistic language learning category as LLBC activities, it would be advisable for students to investigate and embrace more LLBC resources and activities. While each LLBC resource and activity is meant to serve a learning purpose, it is critical for students to develop an awareness of the appropriateness of all LLBC resources and activities. A thoughtful manipulation of the different LLBC resources and activities would benefit students' language learning process.

The study's findings shed insight on the low use of LLBC activities in naturalistic language learning category. It is suggested that students become more active and confident in their search for an English-rich environment outside the classroom by participating in more meaningful contacts with other L2 learners or native English speakers. Also, the results of this study revealed a preference among English-majored students at the university under study for online/computer/mobile-based materials as the primary LLBC resource. As a result, it would be recommendable for teachers to assist students in expanding their repertoire of newly formed LLBC affordances driven by technology advancement.

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NGUỒN HỌC LIỆU VÀ HOẠT ĐỘNG HỌC TẬP ĐỂ HỌC NGÔN NGỮ BÊN NGOÀI LỚP HỌC CỦA SINH VIÊN CHUYÊN NGỮ TIẾNG ANH TẠI MỘT TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC Ở VIỆT NAM

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Tóm tắt: Bài báo này là một phần của một nghiên cứu với quy mô lớn hơn được thực hiện nhằm tìm hiểu việc sử dụng các nguồn học liệu và hoạt động học tiếng Anh sau giờ lên lớp của sinh viên chuyên ngữ tiếng Anh tại một trường đại học ở Việt Nam. Để tìm ra những nguồn học liệu và hoạt động học tập thường được những sinh viên được khảo sát sử dụng, một bảng câu hỏi khảo sát đã được gửi theo hình thức trực tuyến đến 200 đối tượng điều tra thông qua ứng dụng Google Form. Kết quả cho thấy các *tài liệu trực tuyến/trên máy tính/trên thiết bị điện tử* và *tài liệu truyền hình truyền thống* là các nguồn học liệu được yêu thích nhất, trong khi đó *Xem YouTube*, *Nghe nhạc*, *Lướt Internet*, và *Sử dụng mạng xã hội* là những hoạt động học tập được sử dụng với tần suất cao nhất. Ngoài ra, các hoạt động *học ngôn ngữ tự nhiên một cách có định hướng* là phổ biến nhất đối với khách thể tham gia nghiên cứu, tiếp theo là các hoạt động *tự nghiên cứu*. Ngược lại, sinh viên tham gia nghiên cứu này có xu hướng tránh tham gia các hoạt động *học ngôn ngữ tự nhiên*.

Từ khóa: quá trình học ngôn ngữ bên ngoài lớp học, nguồn học liệu, hoạt động học tập, sinh viên chuyên ngữ tiếng Anh

TEACHING DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS
AS REFLECTED AND SHARED ON FACEBOOK

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Abstract: As in many countries worldwide, the COVID-19 pandemic requires Vietnamese teachers to adapt to online teaching. A particular challenge has been the urgent and unexpected requests for the immediate shift from face-to-face to online teaching. This research focuses on how teachers at a university reacted and adapted to the change, as reflected and shared on their Facebook pages. 96 Facebook posts of 56 university lecturers during the online teaching phases in 2020 and early 2021 were screen-captured and then thematically analysed. Main factors causing difficulties and teacher stress and burnout were identified. The findings suggest that the toughest challenges were two aspects: the difficulties in controlling the dynamics and interactions in the class, and the difficulties in arranging workload in school curricula filled with online classes. The findings show that teachers' attitude toward this sudden change slowly improved as their efficacy for teaching online and sense of accomplishment increased. The paper also discusses the future changes relevant for sustainable online education. Finally, the paper ends with some reflection on helping teachers survive a crisis by nurturing a positive attitude and resilience.

Keywords: COVID-19, online teaching, social media

I. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented an urgent need to education systems at all levels to find alternatives to face-to-face, campus-based teaching and learning. As a result, online teaching and learning has been deployed by teachers and students worldwide on an unprecedented scale. In Vietnam, students have had their education seriously disrupted by repeated school closures and re-openings, and the transition to online learning in-between. Online teaching has been conducted as an emergency response and credible solution whenever social distancing and lockdowns were implemented since 2020. Respectively, the first phase of online learning began on March 2, 2020, with extension of school closures until the end of April. The second phase started in early July until mid-September. The third phase of COVID-19 started on January 28, 2021 and lasted for one month. Finally, from May 2021, students started learning online during the last few weeks of the academic year. In the time of COVID-19, educators and students understand the need for remote teaching and learning to continue their education and ensure their safety, and they are motivated to adopt and adapt to online teaching-learning

platforms in fulfilling the current educational demand (Mishra et al., 2020).

On the one hand, an advantage of the transition to online teaching and learning is that many teachers and students are already highly adept in using technological and social media apps, such as Facebook, Instagram, Skype, and Zalo, which facilitates a seemingly smooth implementation of online educational platforms such as MS Team or Google Meet. On the other hand, there are profound differences between classroom teaching and remote instruction. The lack of preparation, the discrepancies between online teaching design and delivery and face-to-face teaching and learning, and additional technological complexities have put additional stresses and workloads on teachers, who were already struggling to balance teaching, research and other service

and personal obligations (Rapanta et al., 2020).

This present study focuses on how faculty members at an English department in a university in Hanoi have reacted to the digital transformation during the COVID pandemic as reflected and shared on the social media platform Facebook. Factors that lead to their stress and burnout are identified and discussed.

II. Literature Review

2.1. Context of Online Learning During COVID-19 Global Pandemic

The challenge of implementing online education is a topic that long preceded COVID-19 pandemic. In an Indonesian case study and quantitative research by Rasmitadila et al. (2020), the impact of online learning was conceptualized into a framework as follows:

Figure 1

Conceptualized Classroom Teachers' Perceptions of the Impact of Distance Education During the Lockdowns Due to COVID-19
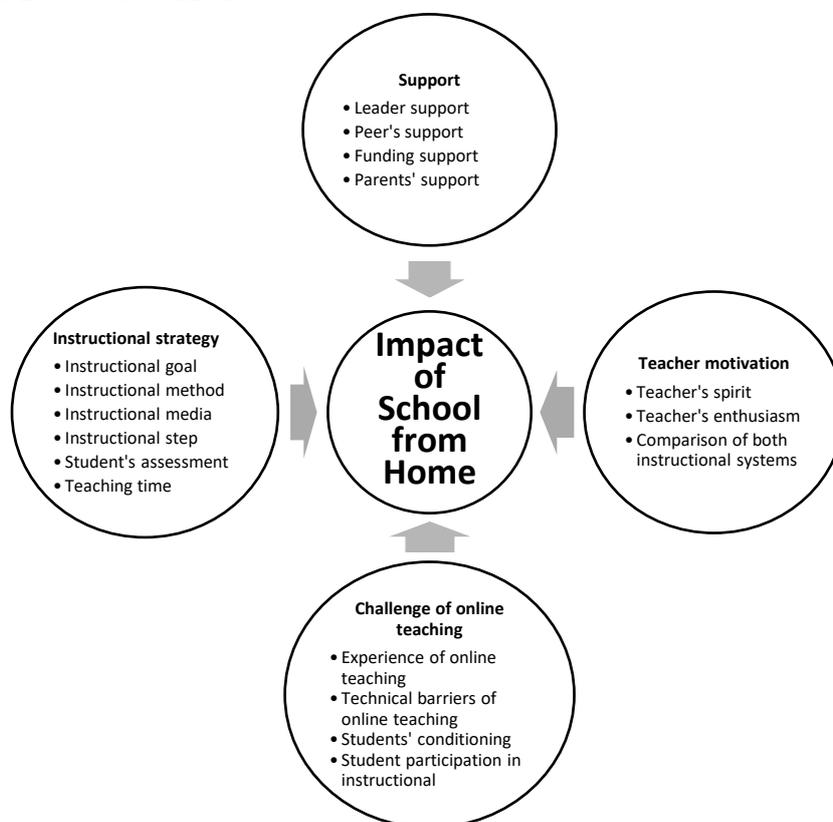
As the figure illustrates, the quality of education provided when teaching-from-home as the only option is reliant on several major factors: pedagogy (instructional strategy), support for learners, educators' drive to overcome the transition difficulties, and other challenges (Rasmitadila et al., 2020). In this section, these factors will be reviewed using academic evidence worldwide related to online learning, educators' strategies and institutional or governmental approach to addressing the contemporary challenges of online teaching and learning.

2.1.1. The Challenges of Implementing Online Education

Rapanta et al. (2020) defined online learning as learning that is mediated by the Internet. It refers to a type of teaching and learning situation in which (1) the learner is at a distance from the instructor; (2) the learner uses some form of technology to access the learning materials; (3) the learner uses technology to interact with the instructor and with other learners; and (4) some kinds of support are provided to learners (Anderson, 2011, as cited in Rapanta et al., 2020). Online learning can be undertaken (1) without the presence of a teacher, where students work online at home while the teacher assigns work and checks it digitally, and (2) with the presence of a teacher. The former scenario can be referred to as "distance learning", which is the "traditional" self-study course, also known as "correspondence course", where materials and learning resources are sent to students via post or emails, and students must complete the set tasks according to the course schedule (Rapanta et al., 2020). On a distance learning course, often the only interaction with a teacher is when assignments are submitted for marking. Students can flexibly set their own pace and timetable of study, and rarely interact with fellow students. For the purposes of this article, online learning refers to the latter one, in which students are together in the virtual classroom with a teacher who delivers their lecture online.

Online education presupposes an existing organizational infrastructure which serves the purposes of online teaching and learning. In contrast, the "emergency remote teaching" required by COVID-19 is almost merely the unplanned and sudden shift from the traditional form of education into a remote one following the state of emergency in different countries due to the outbreak of COVID-19. In this forced online learning, the course design, assessment and teaching strategies used are originally designed for face to face teaching. Indeed, both students and instructors are not well-prepared for such an unplanned and sudden shift.

Recent research on online learning mostly focuses on the perceptions of teachers and students on online teaching-learning modes (e.g., Mishra et al., 2020; Sokal et al., 2020a; Konig et al., 2020); teachers' attitudes towards change (Sokal et al., 2020a); teachers' perceptions of the differences between online and face-to-face teaching (Rapanta et al., 2020). Research findings of Mishra et al. (2020) and Konig et al. (2020) have highlighted that successful online learning involves a diverse array of tools, resources, study materials such as free access to e-books, pedagogical approaches, organizational arrangements, forms of interactions, monitoring and support, as well as other technical requirements such as stable Internet connection, Wi-Fi, access to a standard account on Zoom. The teachers in these studies perceived proficient computer knowledge and clarity of expression as crucial online teaching skills and techniques. Additional skills in order to manage online teaching process include virtual classroom experience, patience, empathy, proper handling of teaching-learning tools available with user-friendly features. Rapanta et al. (2020) also pointed out that while face to

face learning relies on direct personal interactions through discussions or presentations, online learning is more materials-based and should integrate more media such as videos or readings. As such, online instruction requires the design of learning activities with certain characteristics that are suitable for its purposes.

The forced online teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has posed huge challenges to teachers since many of them have no or limited experience with online teaching. Online courses have often been "improvised rapidly", without a common pedagogical framework for online teaching and learning and with limited available resources (Lederman, 2020). As claimed by Mishra et al. (2020), another difficulty in the implementation of the change process is that teachers may not be technologically competent enough and many have to use tools that they have not fully mastered. As a result, teachers must prepare and train themselves to be accustomed to the online learning-teaching modes. In a way, this appears to add an unsolvable loop to the already challenging problems of the education crisis: there is already a shortage of teaching inputs and learners' support during the pandemic and now many teachers themselves are also in need of further education and training in order to work more efficiently.

The major challenges to teaching online as perceived by the teachers in various studies (e.g., Mishra et al., 2020; Konig et al., 2020) involve unstable network connection and lack of meaningful interaction – since teachers are unable to read the face and mood of students; therefore, they have difficulties in changing the teaching pattern. There are also activities and instructions that need real face to face interaction for complete understanding. Moreover, management of students' behavior in an online environment is different from that in physical classrooms. For example, teachers cannot be sure whether the students are present at the moment or sitting somewhere. Some student participants in the study conducted by Mishra et al. (2020) stated that they are assigned with household chores when studying at home; thus, their study is adversely affected. There is also a consensus among the researchers that relying on online learning is not wholesome for the eyes and general body health. It appears that without the (conventional) physical segregation of educational activities, the activities of online learning can be interfered with by many sources of influence and currently there is no common framework to help either teachers or learners to make time and reserve space for online learning appropriately.

2.1.2. Teachers' Attitudes Towards Change

Kin and Kareem (2018, as cited in Sokal et al., 2020a) discussed three dimensions of attitudes towards change in teachers. First, cognitive responses to change are defined as teachers' beliefs about the significance and necessity for change. Second, affective responses to change refer to teachers' feelings about the change, specifically the feelings linked to satisfaction or anxiety about the change. Third, behavioral reaction to change is viewed as the actions to support or resist change. Sokal et al. (2020a) noted that while teachers may understand the need for remote teaching at a cognitive level, they might resist it emotionally. Various reasons for the negative thoughts about the change to online learning can be stemmed from the fact that teachers are skeptical and "less convinced" about the merits of remote teaching as an alternative to face-to-face classes. Being out of the comfort zone to switch to the novel context also causes teachers to feel negative about the changes. Furthermore, an individual teacher might have high efficacy

in one teaching context but not in another (Tschannen et al., 1998, as cited in Sokal et al., 2020a). The term "technostress" coined by Al-Fudail and Mellar (2008) is used to describe the state of teachers who were required to use technology in their teaching but received neither internal (e.g. skills and experience) nor external support (e.g., training and technical support). Therefore, as claimed by Sokal et al. (2020b), when teachers do not have the resources they need and especially when job demands are high, teachers experience chronic stress – and eventually burnout.

This article supports Kim and Kareem's (2018) model that defines teachers' attitudes towards change and focuses on the *affective responses* to changes, i.e., the feelings about the change among the teachers surveyed, and their *behavioral reaction* to change, that is, the actions towards the change as they have adjusted and tried out different technologies to enable better interaction with students and ways to keep students engaged in online lessons. Their skepticism of change in pedagogy and other methods to connect with students is also shared by their teaching peers around the world. Henriksen, Creely, and Henderson (2020) documented the replicability of face-to-face standard methodologies in teaching and managing a classroom as a "benchmark" point of reference, then compared the same data collected on efficacy and students' results/feedback with those of online classes. In doing so, these researchers have identified discrepancies which through further qualitative investigation were associated with the educators' lack of familiarity with the tool set provided to them to transition towards online teaching. To put this reasoning into perspective of long-term pedagogy research, the works by Wieland and Kolias (2020), as these researchers have followed the state of the science in online learning from even before COVID-19

pandemic, have contributed tremendous help in recognizing that the difficulties of the pedagogical transition are not only due to constraints of time or resources during emergency response. The crucial distinction between efforts made to transition towards online learning pre-COVID and the same efforts during and after the pressure from the pandemic is the identification of stakeholders to this educational venture (Wieland & Kolias, 2020). Before COVID, online learning was primarily (but not exclusively) marketed to educational institutions under the investments from private sectors and innovative companies that attempt to heed the future of educational needs. On the other hand, during the outbreak of COVID-19 and even after the peak-periods of the danger from pandemic have appeared to subside, the interests and investments reserved for online learning technologies and implementation of online learning have been genuinely a large-scale social trend, in-line with the work-from-home movement (Wieland & Kolias, 2020).

2.2. The Importance of Cultivating Motivation in Conducting Online Teaching

The prerequisite of attention, activity and active involvement in learning is often considered as having something to do with motivation. The identification of motivation can give a rhetorical answer to why people do anything, be anywhere, and act in any manner. Motivation is also considered most influential on the intensity of people's attention, focus, and perseverance on any activity they have participated in (Guo, Xu & Xu, 2020). In the context of learning and especially online learning, motivation is a highly important predictor of a learner's attention on class activity and their active participation in the learning activities, such as pair or group work, and discussions in class. Dwijuliani, Rijanto, Nurlaela and Basuki (2021) suggested that motivation is directly representative of the students' desire

to learn, and partly explaining the very reason why students are present in the classroom in the first place. However, it is not a definite conclusion that a student who was motivated enough to get to class, will be also motivated enough to actively participate and make contribution to class activities. This begs for a distinction between learning at a physical institution and learning via online media. Conventionally, the fact that a student could get up early, get to school in time, follow school rules and dress codes, and actively greet their teacher and fellow students can be considered a "buffer" that helps build up on the original motivation at every step of the way until a class begins. In contrast, the presence of a student in an online classroom speaks nothing about this development, as the student might have just woken up five minutes before and barely managed to get together the minimum requirements to "be in class". Dwijuliani et al. (2021) suggest that teaching activities are best prepared to prime the students' motivation by:

- Making the goals and learning objectives clear and readily understandable;
- Raising the students' interest in the subject at hand;
- Preparing a pleasant environment that is suitable for learning;
- Giving the students instant recognition and assessment (preferably positive);
- Giving comments and linking remarks to the students' input in class and submitted work;
- Introducing the element of competition and/or collaboration when possible.

(Dwijuliani et al., 2021)

2.3. Implementation of Online Teaching and Learning in Vietnam

In a report on the impact of the interruption of education due to Covid-19 in Vietnam, MOET (2020) stated that there are 1.5 million of teachers, and 24 million of students across the nation suffering from the disruption in education. Teachers are in the front line of the implementation of online education, yet they often complain about the lack of sufficient guidance, training and resources. Apart from the fear of being exposed to the virus that jeopardizes teachers' physical health, there is also a fear of losing salaries and benefits. A few countries did not pay teachers or delayed salary payments (UN, 2020), since teachers were unable to teach remotely due to the lack of ICT infrastructure and parents stopped paying fees. In addition, coping with increased workloads might lead to teacher burnout, resulting in higher rates of staff turnover in some educational institutions. These strains not only affect teachers' livelihoods, but also the quality of education. The crisis has been a reminder of the essential role of teachers as a result, and that governments and administrators should provide support for these education stakeholders, including teacher training on online pedagogy.

Up to the present time, online learning has been applied across 240 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Vietnam (Nguyen & Pham, 2020). Nguyen and Pham (2020) categorised online learning implementation in these HEIs into two groups: those *with* a learning management system (LMS) and those *without* an LMS. Those without an LMS have only used online learning support tools such as recorded or live video communication and communication tools such as Google Hangouts, MS Teams, Zoom, Skype, emails, social media (Facebook), Zalo for communication between teachers and students. The group with an LMS can be further divided into (1) the "fully developed" group with adequate online teaching resources, fully equipped studios and

modern infrastructure, and highly capable online training staff, (2) the "developing" group which has just started to deploy an LMS, and is still developing these systems and building online learning resources, and (3) the "beginner" group which has only used online systems for class management and for uploading teaching content.

Although some recent research has been conducted over online teaching-learning and its effectiveness, or the difficulties and challenges in implementing online education, there is a lack of studies in the Vietnamese context which investigate teachers' attitudes towards the shift to online education, especially as expressed on social media platforms. Hence, the current research investigates the following research questions:

(1) What are EFL teachers' perceptions of online teaching-learning during COVID-19 pandemic as reflected and shared on their Facebook pages?

(2) What are the major factors that contribute to teacher stress and burnout during online teaching?

III. Research Methodology

This research employs both quantitative and qualitative methods to answer the research questions. Data collection happened during the different phases of online teaching starting in March 2020 and concluded in February 2021. 56 participants were randomly sampled for the research with the only criterion being that they are lecturers working at an EFL teacher training university in Hanoi. Demographic information regarding the participants' age, education and teaching experience were collected from their Facebook profiles. Most of the participants (82%) were female and (78%) were under the age of 40. Among them, 71% had fewer than 10 years of teaching experience.

Data were collected from the participants' personal facebook pages, where they are most comfortably sharing their thoughts with their chosen friends and family members. The teachers' posts and comments were screen-captured. The number of words for each Facebook post ranges from 12 to more than 250 words, with the majority being between 20 – 250. There are 21 posts (22%) of over 250 words. Most of the Facebook posts (82%) are in Vietnamese, and the rest are in English. As the posts invited further discussions on online teaching from colleagues and the public, related comments under the posts were also collected in order to enrich and further explain the data. Unstructured interviews were conducted with the participants in the teacher common area during break-time. The interviews were informally, allowing the participants to explain more about their posts. The data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data. Table 1 represents data of teacher participants with their age, gender and teaching experience while Table 2 provides details on the collected Facebook posts.

The teachers' posts were coded by the two researchers before being grouped into emerging themes. Based on the findings of previous studies, a pre-defined set of factors leading to teachers' burnout during online teaching was developed, including categories such as technical complexities, lack of classroom dynamics, distractions, limited interaction, heavy workload, negative impact on teachers' well-being. Other codes were flexibly added through the coding process as the researchers read and analysed the participants' Facebook posts. Words and phrases that explicitly state or imply similar ideas and concepts were then grouped into these categories. The

connotation of the words and phrases the participants used in their Facebook posts was used to decide whether a post is negative or positive. For example, words such as "demotivating", "boring", "stressful", "detrimental", distracted" which connote negative meanings, were grouped under the "negative perception" categories. Complaints and rants also implied "negative perceptions". To ensure the validity of the coding process, the two researchers coded the data separately, then compared, discussed, and reached agreement on the emerged categories and themes. To calculate the frequency of a theme or concept, the researchers counted the number of times a concept appeared in the collected data.

Table 1

Demographic Information

Number of participants	56
Number of Facebook posts	96
Age	
Under 25	6
26 – 30	12
31 – 40	26
> 40	12
Gender	
Male	10
Female	46
Teaching experience	
< 1 year	0
2 – 5 years	10
6 – 10 years	30
11 – 15 years	12
> 15 years	4
Education	
BA	6
MA	48
PhD	2

Table 2

Data on Teachers' Facebook Posts

Number of Facebook posts	96
Number of words	
< 20	22
20 – 50	26
50 – 100	18
100 – 250	9
> 250	21
Number of comments	
0 – 20	60
21 – 50	34
> 50	2
Language	
Vietnamese	80
English	16
Posting time	
2020	70
2021	26

IV. Findings

This section highlights and discusses how teachers reacted to the changes, by presenting major factors that caused difficulties and teacher stress and burnout and categorizing them into different themes.

4.1. Teachers' Perceptions of Online Teaching and Learning

The results of data analysis show that most of the posts (79%) express a negative perception of online learning and teaching, with 82 out of 96 Facebook posts voicing teacher burnout over online teaching, while only 14 posts (13%) are positive.

The lack of classroom dynamics and limited interaction in online classes, both making up for 22%, are claimed by teachers as the main factors that lead to teacher stress. Heavy workload comes next as shared in 17% of the total Facebook posts. Some teachers also believed that online teaching

may negatively affect their physical and mental health and were irritated by certain technical problems such as slow Internet speed and software robustness, with the former found in 11% and the latter in 9% of the posts. The results also show that working from home with family responsibilities makes remote instruction a daunting task for many teachers, as revealed in 4% of the posts.

The few positive posts focus on the

exploration of the varied strategies for online teaching as teachers made use of new tools such as Nearpod, Padlet or Canva. The findings in this study seem to support findings of the research previously discussed in the review of literature (i.e. Rapanta et al., 2000; Sokal et al., 2020; Mishra et al., 2020), with reference to the framework on impacts of school from home (Figure 1) by Rasmitadila et al. (2020).

Table 3

Teacher Burnout Factors During Online Teaching Period (89)

Factors	Number of FB Posts	Percentage
lack of classroom dynamics	21	22%
limited interaction	21	22%
heavy workload	16	17%
negative effects on physical & mental well-being	11	11%
technical glitches	9	9%
distractions due to family duties	4	4%

4.2. Major Factors Contributing to Teacher Stress and Burnout During Online Teaching

The most challenging factor, as emerged from the data analysis, is that there was a lack of classroom dynamics or even are devoid of classroom non-verbal and verbal communication. Lack of classroom dynamics and limited interaction in online classes were both shared by 22% of the participants' Facebook posts. Students on Zoom often had their cameras off and microphones muted, leaving teachers to lecture to the black screen, and hence, making it hard to engage and connect with them. One teacher explained in a post comment that:

> "It feels like I am talking to myself and to the computer. I want to see them [students] nodding and smiling when they understand a point or two. I miss the classroom vibe, the settings, the way we dress when we

meet one another in person – a sense of "pure alienation" [when teaching online]". (Translated from Vietnamese)

This finding is similar to that of Mishra et al. (2020) in a research conducted at an Indian university. The teachers in their study reported that due to unstable network connection, the videos and audios of the students were kept off. The connection would remain more stable, but that mode of teaching seems like they were teaching to a "blank wall".

The teachers also complained that they frequently did not receive immediate responses from students, or there were long pauses. Some mentioned that they felt frustrated and tired of posing a question to "the void". This supports the findings of the studies conducted by Mishra et al. (2020) and Konig et al. (2020) as those researchers claimed that online teaching renders interaction limited and impersonal as

teachers are unable to read the face and mood of students.

For classes to be interactive and engaging, teachers need to rely on diverse interaction, group discussions, class presentations, debates, pair or teamwork, role-play, pronunciation practice, etc. Similar to Mishra et al. (2020) and Konig et al. (2020), we found that our participants stated that there are activities and instructions that need real face to face interaction for complete understanding. One teacher explained that:

> "Online learning is dispiriting and demotivating; my students deserve a "proper classroom experience" with diverse interaction. […] I cannot constantly ask my students to work in pairs or groups, discuss questions or compare answers as I do in face-to-face classes". (English)

Secondly, there were technical difficulties, as many teachers reported that they had trouble focusing. Bad Internet connection, power blackouts, and technical glitches such as faulty microphones or cameras, are among factors that impede enjoyable online teaching and learning. In addition, while working from home, teachers are surrounded by many distractions including home comforts, noises, and other administrative tasks. One teacher shared that:

> "There are chat pop-ups from my students, asking to leave class early, reporting their technical problems, or asking me to speak louder, which keeps me switching my attention on something else, rather than totally focusing on the lecture". (Translated from Vietnamese)

The third major challenge is the additional workload of adopting a new delivery mode. Many teachers had to do long class sessions (3.5-4 hours) or taught different classes on the same day. One teacher wrote about added workloads that:

> "At the initial stage of the epidemic, I kept reassuring my students that online classes are only temporary, partly because online learning was not formalized at my university at that time, and we thought that the pandemic would be over soon. It clearly took a lot of work and time to adjust my PowerPoint slides so students could follow, upload more teaching materials, contact students through various platforms: Facebook or Zalo group chats, Google Classroom, Google Drive, emails, and try out different e-learning and teaching methods, as well as technologies to keep students engaged." (Translated from Vietnamese)

The challenges were greater for mothers when their kids were also at home due to school closure. Female teachers claimed that they had to juggle between teaching their own students, doing housework, and looking after their small children, or watching those who need adult supervision for their own virtual schooling.

In addition, the increasing workload negatively affects teachers' well-being. Sitting for hours in front of the computer is detrimental to the eyes and back, and general body health. One teacher claimed that online teaching is "*not good for [his] mental well-being*" and further explained:

> "At school, teachers can rely on their colleagues for professional and emotional support, spontaneously though, during some quick break-time chats". (Translated from Vietnamese)

This finding reconfirms the assertion of previous authors (e.g. Rapanta et al.,

2020) that teaching and learning are social, so being isolated may worsen both teachers' and students' mental well-being. The teachers in the study of Mishra et al. (2020) advocated proper counselling services provided by their university in order to maintain the mental health of teachers and students during the isolation period in this pandemic, as they face several challenges such as socio-emotional imbalance, personal adjustment to daily life activities at home, financial burden and others.

Lastly, another conundrum is that exams and course assessments are hard to be implemented online, especially closed book tests and interviews. Following is a quote of one of the participants:

"We had to stay up late (even to 2 a.m.) for several teachers' meetings on Zoom to discuss possible techniques for conducting online tests. We had all the sophomore students in the department join the pilot test. It took a lot of work to adjust test design to suit the online format and much time to try out different options. I did find the transition extremely stressful." (Translated from Vietnamese)

This finding is in line with the results of previous studies (e.g. Rapanta et al., 2020; Konig et al., 2020). These authors pointed out that continuous formative assessment, rather than "traditional" or standardised exams and tests, is a key factor ensuring success in online education.

Overall, on the one hand, the teachers raised concerns about online education and the potential negative impact on the overall education quality, as put forward by a teacher that [online learning] is *"not beneficial for students' learning process"*. They prefer traditional classes to which they are accustomed. Many blatantly opined that they *"do not wish to go back to*

online teaching". On the other hand, the picture of online teaching is not always disheartening. As online education has admittedly become "a new normal" for the time being, the teachers have gradually worked out ways to adapt to the new context. A positive finding is that as the teachers gradually adapted to the changes by exploring different strategies to teach online, they also shared and made them accessible to colleagues and the public on their Facebook pages. For example, the following quote reveals the teacher's excitement about the use of whiteboard in his online class:

"Whenever a whiteboard is required in an online class, a number of items/ platforms can be utilized. This certainly is the most interesting and thought-provoking dimension of online teaching. Teaching that actively employs computers in innovative and fruitful ways makes us engrossed in the lessons. Furthermore, there seems to be a discernible influence on how we teach and study later." (English)

One teacher believed that the *"most appealing dimension of online teaching"* is the utilization of a number of platforms; and teaching that *"actively employs computers in innovative and fruitful ways"* makes lessons more engaging. Another teacher compares the online learning and teaching system in Vietnam and those in other countries as follows.

"Students in Vietnam do not realize the benefits they are enjoying. Online courses in other countries rarely require the teachers to be online with students in all lessons. Students are required to watch recorded videos and participate in forum discussions instead. I have studied in some courses like that, and I felt so bored. So the current form of

online courses we are providing with Zoom conversation and meaningful exercises is one of the highest levels of online education available." (Translated from Vietnamese)

Above all, the most positive signal from the finding is the function of Facebook as a platform for professional development and a safe environment for teachers to share and voice their opinion while seeking emotional support or showing empathy toward colleagues during the pandemic. In this way, Facebook functions as a community of practice, nurturing teachers' resilience during the transition to online teaching and learning.

V. Discussion and Conclusion

The transformation of the education system that we are witnessing has come in a rather forced manner: many institutions and teachers did not wish for this transition to online teaching and learning, but there was currently no better alternative during the lockdowns necessitated by the deadly pandemic in the country. Online classes, online examination and online small group or even 1-on-1 tutoring have been adopted as an urgent solution to make up for the inability to continue conventional education as it was before COVID-19. This forced nature of the transition has certainly caught many off-guard, because not all institutions and teachers had the same level of preparedness or mastery of modern technologies used to assist education activities. The literature we have reviewed on the topics of online learning and the findings of this study confirm that the key problems for education during the social distancing period mandated due to COVID-19 include the factors of:

- Barrier of distance
- Technology and complexity of tools
- Active, individual support (emotionally and technically)
- Interactions and social activities

(Konig et al., 2020; Mishra et al., 2020; Rapanta et al., 2020)

The disruption caused by COVID-19 was disastrous, but since the damage has been done and education has already embarked on the migration to online learning, there is opportunity for institutions and teachers to complete this transition with a growth mindset and more professionalism. Policy makers and teachers must approach the situation with a more holistic approach, acknowledging that the new situation requires both new knowledge about and skills to conduct online teaching as well as a new mindset to online education. Teachers should strive to embrace technology and the benefits that it has to offer so that they can meet the needs of their "tech-savvy" students while being lifelong learners, especially in developing skills to use technology in teaching. We believe teacher's eLearning pedagogy must include this flexible and growth mindset.

What we have seen, in research from even before COVID-19 and during the social-distancing periods, is that teachers have not invested much in honing their skills in teaching online classes. The immediate switch to online learning has come from the necessity of our time and a logical progression made possible by a myriad of educational technologies that date back decades. The occasion may not be optimal, but said necessities can also be considered opportunities for a large-scale advance in general pedagogy and applications of technologies in education. Platforms such as Canvas, Moodle, Microsoft Team, or Google Classroom, have improved significantly and while many teachers have found difficulties adapting their existing skill set to the new technological platforms, the transition is still methodologically possible.

Our findings suggest that the toughest challenges most surveyed teachers have perceived can be narrowed down to two aspects: the inability to control the dynamics and interactions in the class; and the inability to arrange workload in school curricula filled with online classes. Theoretically speaking, the second problem can be more readily alleviated with support from school administrators, as this is more of a time and workload management than teaching methodology. A small number of online classes during COVID-19 in Vietnam have the presence of teaching assistants (e.g., in expat EFL classes at primary and secondary levels) whose main tasks are to coordinate and manage students' participation and to solve technology-related problems. Online classes at tertiary level do not have this luxury in human resources as institutions tend to try to pack schedule and workload to maximize work capacity to make up for any delay in curricula due to the ongoing pandemic. This means the teacher might be the sole person responsible for all of the roles expected of the education institution: managing and coordinating the class, solving IT-related issues, while at the same time imparting knowledge and expertise to students via a new mode of teaching. This might be the reason why many teachers in our study have perceived a drastic increase in workload which some of them feel overwhelming.

Solutions for this situation of mixed-up roles for teachers in online classrooms can surely addressed. The easier approach would be to relieve the teacher of unrelated roles by employing more online class "admins" who will assist teachers and students alike on any issue outside of the academic matter, including technical issues (related to computers, Internet connection, audio/visual features, and software features). Another approach is to have teachers adopt new skills while relearning or developing new teaching pedagogy suitable for an online environment.

Concerns over the design and content of learning activities that are suitable for online teaching have attracted wide-ranging discussions. They include the use of flipped classroom teaching, inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, etc.

A successful online course must adopt a student-centred approach in which the teacher role is shifting from a lecturer to a facilitator (Rapanta et al., 2020). Students are the owners of their learning process and must be autonomous. What makes online learning successful relies heavily on students' ability to set goals and avoid distractions. Teachers therefore should promote peer interaction among students, facilitate online discussions focusing on problem-solving in case studies or group projects. Teachers can assign students to post and share ideas, papers and assignments on collaborative platforms (e.g. Miro, Padlet, Jamboard, etc.), which otherwise cannot be directly used in offline classes). Teachers must also listen to what students say about their experiences, regarding what is working well for them and what is not. Encouraging students to co-design learning activities and facilitating discussions are among ways that get students engaged and simultaneously, help reduce the burden of teacher workload. This development of new pedagogy and change of mindset is investment-intensive, time consuming, and a challenging approach to take, but it can yield a long-term solution and help advance our education system.

In the final analysis, the digital transformation created by this pandemic presents an opportunity to imagine a different future for our education. Online teaching should not be taken as an emergency remedy but as a way of enriching and extending the educational possibilities open to all universities. To ensure that our students get the best education possible both during online learning and when returning to classrooms, supporting teachers and

listening to their voices is important to nurture their positive attitudes and resilience. The findings have showed that while the switchover to online classes is perhaps temporary and physical classrooms will remain valuable and irreplaceable once the pandemic is over, online education can be made more useful if fully exploited and integrated to facilitate effective teaching and learning.

Facebook has created a great platform for social interaction where people can keep up with friends, document events and most of all, express themselves and their opinions. With social media providing a new channel to express public opinions, on the one hand, policy makers will now need to involve the public and consider their ideas expressed via social media in the policy making process. On the other hand, the public can also participate in the decision-making process by providing information to the authorities via social networking sites. In the same vein, teachers also use Facebook as the tool for academic communication with their colleagues and students by uploading videos, sharing teaching materials, voicing about their teaching job, building online communities and supporting each other. In the context of social sciences research, the employment of data from social media enriches and diversifies research data that are conventionally collected.

Notwithstanding the merits of collecting data from social media, there are some caveats for improving the current study. First, this study only investigates the ways EFL teachers at a university reacted and adapted to online teaching. Future studies of this type might involve members of various Facebook groups and communities not only at higher education institutions, but also at other levels of the education system. Second, while this study focuses on major factors that cause teacher burnout during the COVID-19 outbreak, it overlooks the differences among the

participants as to how their age and teaching experience may affect their perceptions of online teaching. Future attempts on this topic might investigate the perceptions towards online teaching of different groups of teachers coming from different backgrounds and at different stages of their professional career.

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CHIÊM NGHIỆM VÀ CHIA SẺ CỦA GIÁO VIÊN
VỀ DẠY HỌC TRỰC TUYẾN TRONG ĐẠI DỊCH COVID-19

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Tóm tắt: Cũng như nhiều quốc gia trên thế giới, đại dịch COVID-19 đòi hỏi giáo viên Việt Nam phải thích ứng với việc dạy học trực tuyến. Thách thức chính đối với giáo viên là những yêu cầu cấp bách của việc chuyển đổi từ giảng dạy trực tiếp sang trực tuyến. Nghiên cứu này tìm hiểu và phân tích việc các giáo viên tại một trường đại học phản ứng và thích nghi với việc chuyển đổi sang hình thức dạy học trực tuyến, thể hiện qua các chiêm nghiệm và chia sẻ của họ trên mạng xã hội Facebook. Các bài chia sẻ trên Facebook thể hiện quan điểm của giáo viên về giảng dạy trực tuyến tương ứng với các giai đoạn thực hiện giãn cách xã hội do đại dịch COVID-19 của năm 2020 và đầu năm 2021 ở Việt Nam được thu thập, sau đó được mã hoá và phân tích để xác định những khó khăn và thách thức mà giáo viên gặp phải trong quá trình dạy học trực tuyến. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy, dù gặp nhiều bất cập khi giảng dạy trực tuyến, thái độ của giáo viên về dạy học trực tuyến đã được cải thiện khi họ có nhiều nỗ lực đổi mới sáng tạo để phù hợp với tình hình thực tế. Nghiên cứu này cũng thảo luận về những thích ứng của việc giảng dạy trong tương lai nhằm hướng tới một mô hình giáo dục trực tuyến bền vững. Các tác giả cũng đưa ra một vài chiêm nghiệm và gợi ý về việc giúp giáo viên vượt qua khó khăn trong đại dịch bằng cách giúp họ nuôi dưỡng và duy trì một thái độ tích cực và kiên cường.

Từ khoá: COVID-19, dạy học trực tuyến, mạng xã hội

THE INTERCULTURAL DIMENSION
IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING:
VIETNAMESE UNIVERSITY ENGLISH TEACHERS' VOICES

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Abstract: In recent decades, there has been increasing interest in implementing the intercultural dimension (ID) in foreign language teaching to enhance students' intercultural communicative competence (ICC), the capability to interact across linguistic and cultural boundaries. This article reports on a study that examines the English language teaching (ELT) of two Vietnamese university English teachers (VUETs) to investigate if and how they implemented the ID in their teaching. Situating the study within a qualitative case study approach, we collected data from interviews, classroom observations, and documents. Findings of this study show that these two teachers have not yet fully implemented the ID in their lessons. More specifically, they could transmit intercultural knowledge to their students; however, they could not develop their students' intercultural attitudes, skills, or awareness. When providing cultural knowledge, they primarily relied on the prescribed textbooks' cultural content and their understanding. The article sheds light on influential factors for VUETs' ELT practices and offers implications for enhancing Vietnamese students' ICC.

Keywords: intercultural communicative competence (ICC), intercultural dimension (ID), English language teaching (ELT), teachers' practices, Vietnamese higher education (VHE)

1. Introduction

In an era of globalisation, the role of culture in language teaching has become more urgent than ever. Globalisation has created greater intercultural interactions among people of different cultures. In ELT, learners study English to communicate with English-native speakers and people from other cultures. Therefore, ELT aims to develop these learners to become effective communicators and intercultural mediators who understand and mediate the differences and otherness across cultures. In other words, the native-speaker model needs to shift into the intercultural-speaker model (Byram, 1997; Byram & Wagner, 2018).

Due to the significance of ICC to language learners in the globalised world, the ID has become a significant area of interest within language education. Within this dimension, culture is integrated into language teaching to help learners see the connection between the target language and culture, and their own language and culture, as such, developing their ICC for the success

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of intercultural communication (Byram et al., 2002; Newton et al., 2010).

In response to the upsurge of the ID in language teaching, numerous studies have been conducted globally to demonstrate the effectiveness of the ID in language teaching. These include studies in Australia (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Naidu, 2018), in New Zealand (East, 2012; Tolosa et al., 2018), in China (Tian, 2016), and in Europe (Byram et al., 2002; Barrett et al., 2014). In Vietnam, few studies have investigated if the actual practices of VUETs focus on the ID. This study was undertaken to address this gap by examining how two VUETs teach English through the ID lens. It is expected that a deeper understanding of VUETs' current practices might provide implications for language policy and planning, teachers' professional development, and materials development in Vietnam and broader similar contexts.

2. ICC and ID in Language Education

Conceptualisations of ICC

In this study, ICC is defined as one's ability to communicate appropriately and effectively with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Barrett et al., 2014; Byram, 1997). In this article, Byram's (1997) model of ICC is used as it is regarded as one of the most influential, best known, and most cited models that guide language teachers to enhance students' ICC in their language classrooms (Galante, 2015; Gu, 2016). Moreover, in his model of ICC, Byram (1997) clearly explained what comprises ICC and defined each component of ICC. According to Byram (1997), ICC consists of five savoirs (knowings). *Savoir être* (know how to be/attitudes) is expressed via the willingness to relate one's own values, beliefs, and behaviours to others' who are culturally different. They can be the attitudes of curiosity, willingness, empathy, or openness to cultural differences from

other cultures. *Savoirs* are the knowledge of one's own and others' culture and the communicative techniques for a successful interaction. *Savoir comprendre* (know how to understand/skills of interpreting and relating) is the ability to interpret, explain, and relate others' culture to one's own culture. *Savoir apprendre/faire* (know how to learn or do/skills of discovery and interaction) is the ability to acquire new knowledge from others' cultures and operate one's cultural knowledge, attitudes, and skills into actual intercultural situations. *Savoir s'engager* (know how to engage/ critical cultural awareness) is referred to as "the ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices, and products in one's own and other cultures and countries" (Byram, 1997, p. 53).

ICC and Language Education

In today's globalised world, the interactions among people of different cultures increase via using English as an international language (Kachru, 1992; McKay, 2002). In such a context, the rise of international cooperation in economics, politics, internationalisation of education, immigration, and technological innovation has promoted intercultural interactions (Block & Cameron, 2002; Crystal, 2012). Thus, students' ICC should be developed to interculturally interact with people of different cultures in the global community (Byram, 2015; Byram & Wagner, 2018).

Any communication success depends on the efficiency of information exchange and relationship establishment and maintenance (Byram, 1997). Furthermore, cultural differences can lead to divergent interpretations among communicators from different cultures, which might cause misunderstandings in their interactions. Byram (2012) explained, "being intercultural and the state of 'interculturality' may follow from acting

interculturally" (p. 86). In other words, they can act and relate comfortably between their own culture(s) and others' culture(s). Consequently, it is the role of language teachers to enhance their students' ICC by helping them see the connection between their own culture(s) and others' culture(s) (Byram, 1997, 2009).

ID in Language Education

Several terms have been used to address the ID in language teaching. Terms such as, intercultural language learning, intercultural communicative language teaching, intercultural language teaching and learning, intercultural language teaching, and intercultural learning, have been used. Despite using different terms, the ID aims to refocus language learning and teaching on the intercultural focus. More specifically, the goal of language teaching has been shifted from communicative competence to ICC (Newton et al., 2010). It is to "prepare them [learners] for interaction with people of other cultures to enable them to understand and accept people from other cultures as individuals with other distinctive perspectives, values and behaviours" (Byram et al., 2002, p. 6).

In recent decades, the implementation of ID has received increasing interest in language teaching. The concept of ICC and the ID have been included in national language policies and curriculum frameworks globally. For example, Byram's (1997) ICC components were included in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2001), which has significantly influenced the aims and methods of language teaching across Europe and other parts of the world. The ID was also incorporated in the National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project (1996) used in the United States with the overall goal to "educate students who are linguistically and culturally equipped to

communicate successfully in a pluralistic American society and abroad" (p. 2). In Australia and New Zealand, the ID has been integrated into national language curricula that guide language learning and teaching across the two countries (Harbon & Browett, 2006; Tolosa et al., 2018).

There are various ways for language teachers to implement the ID in language lessons with the aim of enhancing students' ICC. For instance, language teachers can offer students opportunities to come into contact with other cultures and/or realistic situations they might deal with when communicating with people from different cultures (Aguilar, 2007). One of the most effective ways is the use of other cultures' communities as resources through ethnographic studies or fieldwork (Aguilar, 2007; Byram et al., 2002; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). With this strategy, students are sent into the target community to have more opportunities to learn about the target culture and communicate with people of the target culture, for example, via academic exchange programmes (Norvilienė, 2012). However, residing in foreign cultures or immersing themselves in different cultures is not enough to increase ICC. Active reflection on different cultures in conjunction with immersion seems to create more understanding (Gregersen-Hermans, 2015; Liu, 2014). Within the framework of language classrooms, teachers can create opportunities for students to get in touch with other cultures by utilising authentic sources from the target community (Kennedy, 2020; E. Peterson & Coltrane, 2003; Savignon & Sysoyev, 2005). These sources can be films, documentaries, news, television shows, printed materials, websites, or travel brochures. Another useful strategy mentioned by several scholars (e.g., McConachy & Hata, 2013; E. Peterson & Coltrane, 2003) is the use of role play in which students can act out a misunderstanding that can arise due to

cultural differences between countries. In reality, such situations often lead to communication breakdowns and the feeling of embarrassment or discomfort between the interlocutors. The role of technology in intercultural education is also emphasised (Davis et al., 2005) in which teachers can foster students' ICC using telecollaboration, particularly virtual or network-based exchange (Godwin-Jones, 2019; Kurek & Müller-Hartmann, 2018; Peiser, 2015). Using teachers' personal stories to facilitate discussions about subjective and historical perspectives is also encouraged in foreign language classrooms. According to Kramsch and Zhang (2018), this technique might bridge the cultural gaps between the students and their foreign language teachers, who are multilingual instructors. Some other techniques for teachers to add to their teaching practice for developing students' ICC include, but are not limited to, cultural comparisons, intercultural explorations, using proverbs, culture capsules, poster presentations, intercultural interview-discussions, culture quizzes, culture clusters, explicit teacher questioning, reflective writing, research papers, or portfolios (McConachy & Hata, 2013; Neff & Rucynski, 2013; Reid, 2015; Savignon & Sysoyev, 2005; Trinh, 2015).

Although the ID has become part of curriculum frameworks in numerous countries, language teachers struggle to implement it in their practices. Biebricher et al. (2019) found a mismatch between the aims within the *New Zealand curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007) and elementary school teachers' capacity to enact those aims. Teachers faced challenges in 'teaching' stereotypes, finding a balance between the use of the target language and students' language, and finding a balance between culture and language when implementing the ID into practice. In a similar context where ICC was one of the goals in the language curriculum

requirements, Australian language teachers showed high levels of uncertainty about implementing the ID in their everyday practices. Hence, they still faced several obstacles in making ICC their lesson focus (Díaz, 2011; Harbon & Browett, 2006). The underlying reasons for such challenges might be explained by a lack of time (Castro et al., 2004; Vo, 2017), lack of curricular support and suitable textbooks, and lack of ICC assessment (Gu, 2016; Young & Sachdev, 2011), or an absence of teacher professional learning and development regarding ICC (Bickley et al., 2014; Oranje & Smith, 2018).

Concerning language teachers' practices towards the ID, a plethora of research has found that teachers preferred traditional teacher-directed approaches to increase students' cultural knowledge (savoir) rather than to boost students' attitudes (savoir être), skills (savoir comprendre or savoir apprendre/faire), and awareness (savoir s'engager) (e.g., Luk, 2012; Tian, 2016). When touching upon cultural knowledge, they tended to provide cultural facts or artefacts, which would create stereotypes and prejudices towards other cultures (Young & Sachdev, 2011). In some other studies, teachers depended on culture-related topics from the textbooks to integrate culture in their language classrooms (Osman, 2015; Tian, 2016). Some teachers also expressed that they did not regard culture and ICC as the key lesson goals and implemented the ID incidentally (Luk, 2012; Osman, 2015) or rather than by a purposeful design (Tian, 2016).

3. The Vietnamese Context

English has gained a dominant position in the Vietnamese education system since Vietnam opened its door to other countries in all aspects marked by the economic reforms in 1986 (*Đổi Mới* in Vietnamese). English has become one of the

compulsory subjects taught at all school levels (from year 3) across Vietnam (S. T. Le, 2011). It is one of the entrance examinations for middle schools (Bui & Nguyen, 2016) and one of the six examinations for senior secondary school students to get their Secondary School Education Certificate (Hoang, 2010; V. C. Le, 1999). Having good English proficiency is also "an important key to employment, promotion and further studies" for Vietnamese people in today's world (N. Doan et al., 2018, p. 114). English is used in daily activities between Vietnamese people and foreign tourists or a code-mixing between English and Vietnamese language among Vietnamese people (N. Doan et al., 2018; Phan et al., 2014). Consequently, enhancing Vietnamese students' ICC should become the crucial goal in ELT to prepare for their intercultural interactions.

However, ICC is not yet explicitly included in national language policies in Vietnam. The ID was implicitly incorporated in the current national project, *Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages in the National Education System, Period 2008 to 2020* (hereafter, Project 2020). The project aimed to help Vietnamese youth gain the capacity to use a foreign language independently in communication and further their chance to study and work in an integrated and multi-cultural environment (Government of Vietnam, 2008). Yet, throughout Project 2020 and the circular on its enactment (Ministry of Education and Training, 2014), no reference indicates the ICC concept, its components, nor the significance of culture in language teaching (L. Nguyen, 2014). Hence, there is a gap between what national language policies expect and how VUETs teach English in VHE. L. Nguyen (2014) also found that poor communication between policy-makers and VUETs led to conflicting beliefs within VUETs. On the one hand, they thought that ICC was essential for Vietnamese students in today's world. On the other hand, they felt that they were not required to enhance students' ICC.

Additionally, the ID has not yet become a popular approach to tertiary education in Vietnam. Currently, culture is merely integrated via cultural subjects such as British-American culture or cross-cultural studies in English-major but not in non-English major programmes (T. T. Le, 2017; M. H. Nguyen, 2011). Culture is regarded as a marginalised segment of language teaching for the majority of VUETs (Ho, 2011; L. Nguyen et al., 2016). While the exam-oriented education system significantly influences VUETs' practices, almost all current English tests and exams aim only to assess students' English linguistic competence (L. Nguyen et al., 2016; Vo, 2017).

4. The Present Study

The study reported here is part of a larger project that explored how VUETs understand and implement the ID in their ELT to enhance their students' ICC in VHE. The project was situated within an interpretivist research paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) with a qualitative case study approach (Stake, 2005). Data within the larger project were obtained through five data collection methods: an open-ended questionnaire, interviews, classroom observations, field notes, and documents such as lesson plans, textbooks, course outlines, and national language policies.

The study had two distinct phases. Phase 1 aimed to obtain a general understanding of VUETs' beliefs about ICC. Data were collected from 107 VUETs teaching general English (basic English; GE) at 35 public universities via a web-based questionnaire. In Phase 2, 6 participants were chosen from Phase 1 participants to be interviewed twice (prior and post-observation), observed their three or four

lessons, and gathered their teaching documents. This phase endeavoured to understand how VUETs implemented the ID to enhance students' ICC, the relationship between their ICC beliefs and practices, and influential factors underlying that relationship.

This article investigates the current practices of two VUETs, Viet Bac and Thu Hang (pseudonyms), selected from the six Phase 2 participants. They were chosen because of their similar approaches to enhancing their students' ICC although they had notable differences in personal backgrounds, teaching contexts, and overseas experiences. Two research questions were addressed: (1) to what extent do the participants implement the ID in their GE teaching? and (2) how do they intend to enhance their students' ICC?

Context

In VHE, non-English majors study GE as a compulsory subject in the first two years. Apart from GE, they do not have any subjects related to English-speaking countries. Public universities have the right to choose their GE textbooks and design their course outlines; however, they have to ensure that their students pass the outcome-standard exam or achieve a required English proficiency level before graduation. University students have to reach the B1 level (CEFR) to be eligible for graduation. In each university, VUETs have to follow prescribed GE textbooks during the course because the tests and exams are designed based on the knowledge that students have learned from the textbooks.

Participants

Viet Bac and Thu Hang have a Master's degree in ELT and teach GE to non-English majors at a public university. Their profile is described as follows.

Viet Bac is a 45-year-old-male VUET with 22 years of teaching experience.

He worked as the head of the English department and an English teacher at a university in Hanoi. He started learning English at the age of 16. He travelled to Singapore and the Philippines to undertake training courses about ELT methodologies, spending one week in each country. Apart from these experiences, his opportunities to interact with people from other cultures were limited. He did not receive any intensive training in ICC or the ID implementation in ELT. He only learned culture via several cultural subjects when he was a student at university.

Thu Hang is a 31-year-old-female VUET with 7 years of teaching experience. She was teaching GE to non-English majors at a university in Ninh Binh. She started learning English at the age of 12. Though she had never been to any countries outside of Vietnam, her opportunities to interact with other cultures were ample. After graduating from university, she worked for a Korean company for two years in Hanoi. During that time, she used English to communicate and learned a lot about Korean culture. She regularly communicated with international visitors who came to her hometown, one of Vietnam's most attractive places. She also often talked with her English-speaking neighbours. Like Viet Bac, Thu Hang learned culture separately from language via cultural subjects when she was at university.

Data Collection and Analysis

The interviews and classroom observations were conducted from September 2018 to February 2019. Specifically, the participants were interviewed for the first time before classroom observations to gather their views about the ID and how they understood their ID implementation into practice. Afterwards, Thu Hang was observed in three 50-minute lessons, and Viet Bac was observed in four lessons to explore their ELT practices. After all classroom observations

were completed, they were interviewed for a second time. This interview aimed to elicit their rationale for their chosen teaching approach. All interviews and classroom observations were scheduled conveniently for the participants. Participants chose the time and content for the classroom observations based on their availability. The interviews were conducted in Vietnamese, audio-recorded, transcribed, and translated. The classroom observations were audio-recorded and documented with the help of field notes.

All the teaching materials relating to the participants' observed lessons were gathered during the fieldwork. They were the teaching contents of the lessons that the participants needed to complete within the observed lessons, course outlines, lesson plans, and/or PowerPoint slides of the observed lessons. National language policies and curriculum frameworks for English majors and non-English majors at several public universities were also collected, in order to understand the current status of ELT in VHE. Using various documentary sources makes the data more reliable and provides a "thick description" of the phenomenon under investigation (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Documents were used as secondary data to obtain an in-depth understanding of the institutional and sociocultural factors that might affect VUETs' ICC beliefs and practices. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to analyse the data from each data source. Emergent themes were then cross-analysed to triangulate and build up common categories to report the study findings.

Findings

In this section, each case is presented separately and then merged to discuss the primary approaches they used to implement the ID in their ELT practices.

Viet Bac

Approximately 40 non-English majors specialising in philosophy or public policy were in Viet Bac's observed class. During the pre-observation interview, Viet Bac emphasised the ICC significance to Vietnamese students. In his opinion, they needed ICC to become global citizens because a global citizen needed to use English to communicate effectively with people of other cultures. He indicated, "language is a reflection of a country's culture," so language cannot be taught separately from its culture. He also reported that VUETs had not received sufficient support to implement the ID into practice. Nevertheless, he stated that he was trying his best to make it possible, saying "if you don't have the best thing, make the best thing from what you have."

During four observed lessons, Viet Bac attempted to encourage his students to learn about, and reflect upon intercultural aspects. In the first lesson, he asked students to find four adjectives to describe themselves. After calling some students to speak out their answers, he raised questions, "What do you say about the differences between Vietnamese students and students abroad, English-speaking countries, for example?" Although he did not ask his students to give their own opinions about this question, by raising the question, Viet Bac prompted his students to think and relate the differences between Vietnamese students and students abroad, especially in terms of characteristics.

When the second lesson was about what to say and do during the first meeting, Viet Bac asked his students, "is it possible to ask a Vietnamese person to spell their Vietnamese name as in English?" When some students answered "yes," he said they did not understand the differences between the two linguistic systems, English and Vietnamese. In order to help his students

understand, he compared the two linguistic systems. He explained that Vietnamese is an unmodified and monosyllabic language, so reading and writing are the same, but English is the opposite. Hence, Vietnamese people do not ask others to spell their names during the first meeting. It is significant to note that there is a consistent relationship between pronunciation and spelling in Vietnamese. In other words, one sound is normally represented by one or a fixed combination of letters in Vietnamese. For example, the sound /a/ is written into /a/ or the sound /i/ is written into /i/ or /y/. This explains the fact that when a Vietnamese person hears a sound in Vietnamese, he/she can know how to write that word or letter. During the lesson, Viet Bac mostly focused on vocabulary and grammar to support students' linguistic competence. When the lesson was about how people use their time, he sometimes provided some cultural information about Vietnam, such as working hours, doing housework before Tet (i.e., Lunar New Year), and nap-after-lunch culture. To explain some geographical terms in the reading passage, he showed a world map on the screen to help students differentiate between the United Kingdom and England.

When the third lesson was about vocabulary to address people around, Viet Bac prompted students to identify several words for relatives in English and Vietnamese. For example, *aunt* can be translated into *cô*, *thím*, *mợ*, *bác*, or *bá* in Vietnamese based on the relationship among the interactants and the region where they live. He helped them understand the complexity of kinship terms in Vietnamese that often confused Vietnamese people in different parts of the country.

In the fourth lesson, he only focused on different uses of present simple and present continuous. He used a short video clip in which one person talked about his daily routines. After the clip ended, he asked, "is it similar or different between school life in Vietnam and Britain?" While some students answered "different," he did not ask them to discuss the differences between the two educational systems.

Reflecting on the observed lessons, Viet Bac indicated that whenever the lessons touched on cultural aspects, he would grasp the opportunities to talk about them by providing further cultural information about Vietnamese cultures and other cultures based on his knowledge. He further stated that he often used video clips or photos to introduce other cultures as he said they were "reliable" and "authentic English." He spent much time on vocabulary and grammar and missed some chances to integrate intercultural aspects during observed lessons. He explained that English was a subject focusing on fundamental aspects of language, that language had to be prioritised over culture. Further, he thought that culture should only be a catalyst for students' language practices.

As noticed during the observed lessons, Viet Bac did not give students sufficient time to discuss the triggering questions and reflect upon what they had known about those cultural aspects. He explained that he did not have enough time to highlight every detail of the lesson. Moreover, his students' English linguistic competence was low, so he needed to develop their linguistic aspects. In his perspective, students' limited linguistic competence also led to a lack of discussion tasks and the frequent use of Vietnamese during his lessons.

When reflecting on the imbalance between language and culture in his lessons, Viet Bac explained that he had to prioritise linguistic aspects to ensure the curriculum requirements and the course objectives. He mentioned the personal factors that hindered his ID implementation. These included his limited knowledge of culture, of ICC, and of

the ID. He also stated that he did not have many opportunities to engage in intercultural interactions and professional development in ICC and ID in his teaching career.

Thu Hang

About 30 non-English majors specialising in early childhood education and primary education attended Thu Hang's observed lessons. Like Viet Bac, Thu Hang realised the importance of ICC to her students, especially in a globalised world and in a province with developing tourism. She indicated that she strived to integrate the knowledge she gained through learning, experiencing, or reading different resources to share it with her students. Therefore, they can use this knowledge for their language use, especially for their future career.

During the three observed lessons with the topic *holidays*, Thu Hang found different ways to help her students learn about and reflect upon popular holidays worldwide and what people often do during those holidays. In the first lesson, she showed some photos of Christmas, Halloween, and New Year on the screen and provoked students to talk about them. To engage students in discussions, Thu Hang used questions, for example, "what holiday is it?", "what do people often do on Christmas?" She also asked some questions to make students relate to Vietnamese culture, for instance, "do we celebrate Christmas in Vietnam?" Her students were eager to join in discussions. However, they sometimes kept silent because they did not know the answers to several questions. At that point, Thu Hang provided cultural knowledge that she had prepared before the lesson. Such knowledge was primarily about facts of a specific culture, for instance, Santa Claus, what children often do with their socks on Christmas Eve, or trick-or-treat practice on Halloween. In this lesson, she also prepared some cultural questions about giving and receiving gifts in some countries,

for example, "opening gifts immediately is impolite in China and Japan." This culture quiz was designed in multiple-choice options. Thu Hang showed each question and asked students to choose the best options before giving the suggested answers.

In the second lesson, Thu Hang applied the same approach to introduce some famous places in the world, such as Eiffel Tower, Great Wall, or Mount Fuji. She used photos to introduce these cultural artefacts; however, she sometimes made mistakes in providing their information. Notably, she showed a picture of the Tower Bridge but told students it was London Bridge or said the Colosseum is in Greece. Reflecting on that point, she explained it might be because of her limited cultural knowledge.

Reflecting on the observed classes, Thu Hang indicated that she would expand the lessons towards the ID based on their topics to boost her students' understanding of other cultures and Vietnam. She further stated that apart from American and British cultures, she also developed their knowledge of Asian cultures. In her opinion, they would have more interactions with people from neighboring countries than Western countries. It was apparent that Thu Hang could create several culture-related activities to enhance her students' savoirs (knowledge). Yet, a lack of discussion and group-work tasks during her lessons inhibited students' development of other ICC components (i.e., skills, attitudes, and awareness). She pointed out several constraints affecting her practices such as large class size, students' limited linguistic competence, a lack of intensive ICC training, or curriculum requirements.

Discussion

VUETs' Current Practices of ELT: Towards the ID or Not?

In a context where ICC and the ID are not yet overtly included in national

language policies and curriculum frameworks, this study revealed that Viet Bac and Thu Hang attempted to take the first steps to implement the ID in their ELT current practices. According to Byram and Wagner (2018), language teachers play a crucial role in developing students' ICC as they need it to become "intercultural citizens" who are "able to engage in intercultural communication, to think and act critically, and to negotiate the complexities of today's world" (p. 141). Nevertheless, in this study, Viet Bac and Thu Hang primarily emphasised linguistic aspects to ensure students' good exam results. When they integrated culture into their lessons, they tended to provide new or 'unfamiliar' cultural knowledge (savoirs) to their students rather than develop their cultural attitudes (savoir être), skills (savoir comprendre or savoir apprendre/faire), and awareness (savoir s'engager). For example, Thu Hang provided her students the cultural practices about Christmas and Halloween in Britain without asking students to compare these cultural practices in other cultures. This way of teaching practice might increase her students' stereotypical thinking. Findings of this study align with those of several studies (e.g., Sercu et al., 2005; Tian, 2016; Young & Sachdev, 2011) in which language teachers view their role as the transmitters of cultural knowledge in language classrooms.

In Vietnam, the transmission of cultural knowledge in the ID implementation is also evident in several studies (e.g., Ho, 2011; V. C. Le, 2015). This might be explained by the fact that VUETs were not taught or trained to teach English, focusing on the ID in their professional learning and development. Thus, they did not know its principles or what effective strategies they should use to do so. The lack of ICC training and its constraints on teachers' ICC practices have also been well documented in the literature (Ghanem, 2017; Young &

Sachdev, 2011). Findings from this current study and previous studies showed that teachers' professional development regarding ICC and the ID plays a pivotal role in enacting their ICC beliefs into practice. In this study, Thu Hang and Viet Bac expressed that they felt unprepared to implement the ID in their GE lessons without any pre-service and in-service ICC training courses.

The cultural knowledge integrated into the observed classes was primarily cultural facts/artefacts such as photos, maps, video clips, or cultural quizzes, suggesting the teachers viewed culture as static rather than dynamic. Integrating culture into language teaching in this way often stems from the belief that culture can be taught separately from language. Also, integrating culture in language classes by providing cultural facts can potentially create more stereotypes about cultures that students might not have been aware of before (Biebricher et al., 2019). This method of developing students' ICC has been suggested to be avoided (Byram et al., 2002; Byram, 2009). Nonetheless, a plethora of research has found that enhancing students' ICC by providing cultural facts is still prominent across countries, for instance, in China (Tian, 2016), in Spain (Castro et al., 2004), in Canada (Bickley et al., 2014), in the USA (Ghanem, 2017; Klein, 2004), and in New Zealand (Biebricher et al., 2019; East, 2012).

While our research findings indicate that VUETs have not adopted the ID in their current practices, they show several positive changes in their ICC beliefs and practices. This study uncovered that Viet Bac and Thu Hang created several tasks and activities to boost their students' ICC, albeit mostly savoirs/knowledge. While their personal backgrounds, teaching experiences, and teaching contexts varied in many ways they appeared to apply similar teaching strategies. Two key teaching strategies are selected to present and discuss in the following sections.

Using Personal Knowledge as the Main Source

Viet Bac and Thu Hang both chiefly integrated culture in their English lessons via using their knowledge. They frequently told their students what they had known, heard, or experienced about the cultural aspects of their lessons. In most cases, they first raised triggering questions to provoke students' thinking and then provided the suggested answers if students could not answer them. In some cases, they used technology to introduce new cultural knowledge via video clips, photos, or games. Using personal knowledge as the primary source to incorporate culture and ICC in language lessons is also documented in several studies (e.g., Aleksandrowicz-Pędich et al., 2003; Tian, 2016).

Relying on teachers' knowledge to implement the ID in language lessons often hinders their practices due to their limited cultural knowledge. In this study, the wrong information was detected during Thu Hang's lessons. Both Thu Hang and Viet Bac also indicated that they felt unconfident including intercultural aspects in their lessons because of their limited knowledge. They further stated that they were not systematically taught about culture, ICC, and the ID in their pre-service education programmes. Moreover, they did not receive any training programmes for their in-service professional development. A lack of teacher professional learning and development hindering language teachers in implementing the ID is also evident in the literature. For instance, in Ghanem's (2017) study, German teachers articulated that they were not taught or trained regarding ICC; therefore, they were not familiar with its theories or principles, leading to their poor implementation of the ID into practice.

Adhering to the Content of the Prescribed English Textbooks

Another common strategy Viet Bac and Thu Hang used was exploiting the prescribed textbooks' lesson topics. During the interviews, both teachers expressed that they often used cultural knowledge in the textbooks to encourage their students to talk about it or provided new cultural knowledge. For instance, with *holidays* topic in Thu Hang's observed lessons, students were asked to name popular holidays, talk about the activities that people often do during those holidays, and discuss the commonalities and differences between those cultural practices in Vietnam and other countries. Both teachers further explained that they had to strictly comply with the textbooks' content because it was used to design the curriculum frameworks and the test content.

Textbook dependence to integrate culture in language teaching is also found in several other studies conducted in Vietnam. For instance, L. Nguyen et al. (2016) and Ho (2011) found out that VUETs frequently used the lessons' cultural topics to incorporate culture in their lessons. These teachers reported that they needed to follow the mandated textbooks and curriculum frameworks for students' good academic performance. Findings of this study and previous studies reiterated the impacts of the exam-oriented educational system on VUETs' ELT practices. In Vietnam, assessment is used for the sole purpose of high-stakes accountability. Testing to get the certificates becomes more critical than testing to assess students' competence; thus, exam failure is viewed as academic incompetence for both teachers and students (V. C. Le, 1999). Furthermore, relying on textbooks' content to implement the ID in practice might also be caused by teachers' lack of pedagogical skills. From the findings, it seems that textbook use still

dominates VUETs' ICC practices, especially in the context of VHE.

5. Conclusions and Implications

Findings of this study indicate that Viet Bac and Thu Hang have not yet fully implemented the ID to enhance their students' ICC. Their ELT practices might not help students develop all ICC components (especially skills, attitudes, and awareness); however, they strived to enhance student's cultural knowledge in many ways. Findings also uncovered limitations in their current practices towards the ID. Notably, they mostly used their knowledge and cultural topics in the prescribed textbooks when developing students' cultural knowledge.

Albeit a small sample size, the current study offers valuable insights into the betterment of the popularisation and the implementation of the ID in ELT in Vietnam. Firstly, this study suggests that there should be a formal inclusion of ICC and ID in the national language policies and curriculum frameworks in Vietnam. This could be done via explicit statements about how ICC should be taught or assessed at different education levels. In this study, Viet Bac and Thu Hang indicated that they did not see their role in developing their students' ICC because they were not required to do it. The document analysis also revealed that the role of culture and ICC was not mentioned explicitly in the national language policies and curriculum frameworks of the research sites. If ICC and the ID were included formally and explicitly in the national language policies and curriculum frameworks across universities, curriculum designers might understand that they should adopt more interculturally-informed curriculum platforms during the curriculum development process. As a result, language teachers might realise their responsibility for enhancing their students'

ICC in each of their lessons, thereby striving to achieve that goal in their teaching practices.

Secondly, the research findings indicate that an integrated system of ICC training programmes is paramount for teacher professional learning and development in Vietnam. In this study, both teachers relied on their cultural knowledge and understanding of ICC to implement the ID in their ELT. However, they had not received any systematic ICC education during their teaching career. Their limited knowledge of culture and the ID implementation led to limitations in their ICC practices. Therefore, more training should be provided for both pre-service and in-service language teachers to support their ongoing ICC development and ID implementation in their ELT.

Finally, both teachers showed their reliance on prescribed textbooks for the content and teaching methods they used in their lessons. Sercu (2006) also stated, "textbook authors have an important role to play in evolving teachers' implicit theories and in reshaping teaching practice" (p. 70). This study and Sercu (2006) recommend that textbook designers should have a clear notion of integrating ICC when compiling the textbooks. They should design intercultural tasks in each unit of the textbooks, which could help teachers operate language-and-culture teaching. In doing so, textbooks will no longer be a hindrance for implementing the ID to language teachers. We hope that with the findings of this study and its implications, the implementation of the ID in ELT to enhance students' ICC will become an achievable goal for VUETs and English teachers in similar contexts at large.

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ĐƯỜNG HƯỚNG LIÊN VĂN HÓA
TRONG GIẢNG DẠY TIẾNG ANH:
TIẾNG NÓI TỪ GIẢNG VIÊN TIẾNG ANH TẠI VIỆT NAM

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Tóm tắt: Trong những thập kỷ gần đây, ngày càng có nhiều sự quan tâm đến việc triển khai đường hướng liên văn hóa (ĐHLVH) trong giảng dạy ngôn ngữ để nâng cao năng lực giao tiếp liên văn hóa (NLGTLVH) của học sinh, khả năng tương tác qua các ranh giới về ngôn ngữ và văn hóa. Bài báo này cung cấp kết quả của một nghiên cứu về việc kiểm tra thực hành giảng dạy tiếng Anh (GDTA) của hai giảng viên tiếng Anh (GVTA) tại Việt Nam nhằm điều tra xem họ có triển khai ĐHLVH trong việc giảng dạy của họ hay không và họ thực hiện việc đó bằng cách nào. Nghiên cứu được thực hiện theo phương pháp nghiên cứu trường hợp định tính. Dữ liệu được thu thập từ các cuộc phỏng vấn, quan sát lớp học và văn bản. Kết quả của nghiên cứu cho thấy hai giảng viên này chưa thực sự triển khai ĐHLVH trong các bài giảng của họ. Nói một cách cụ thể, họ có thể truyền tải kiến thức liên văn hóa cho học sinh của mình; tuy nhiên, họ không thể phát triển thái độ, kỹ năng hoặc nhận thức liên văn hóa của học sinh. Khi cung cấp kiến thức văn hóa, họ chủ yếu dựa vào nội dung văn hóa trong sách giáo khoa và sự hiểu biết của họ. Bài báo làm sáng tỏ những yếu tố có ảnh hưởng đến việc thực hành GDTA của GVTA tại Việt Nam và đưa ra những đề xuất trong việc nâng cao NLGTLVH của học sinh Việt Nam.

Từ khóa: năng lực giao tiếp liên văn hóa, đường hướng giảng dạy liên văn hóa, giảng dạy tiếng Anh, thực hành của giáo viên, giáo dục đại học Việt Nam

TRANSITIVITY ANALYSIS OF THE VIETNAMESE ECONOMIC CONTRACTS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR

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Abstract: The economic contract is a typical type of discourse that depends on the agreement between parties. This paper adopted the theoretical framework of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) to carry out a transitivity analysis of the ideational function in the Vietnamese economic contract in order to explore the features of this genre, a type of legal discourse. In the economic contract, there are six processes, among which the material process and existential process are dominantly used while the relational process, mental process, behavioral process, and verbal process, each just accounts for the small percentage. These processes are employed in order to express the parties' experience through legislation of rights, duties, obligation, remedies that they reach during the negotiation. The dominance of such specific processes reflects some features of legal discourse such as conciseness, clearness, exactness.

Keywords: process, transitivity, SFG, economic contracts

1. Introduction

The economic contracts have been playing such an important role in business activities of companies and the language employed in drafting contributes to the success of the contracts. However, up to now, according to Athukorala (2019), most of the researches about economic contracts mainly focus on legal aspects and then give suggestions of improvement of drafting contracts in terms of legislation. The study by Tran (2015) demonstrated that the researches about linguistic features in this field are quite limited. For that reason, we choose to analyze the transitivity process in the economic contracts with the aim of exploring the language features of economic contracts regarding transitivity.

Additionally, the application of Halliday's theory of transitivity in analysing Vietnamese discourses, especially legal ones is still limited. For that reason, the research is not only meaningful in investigating the linguistic features of the Vietnamese contract discourse genre, but also in drafting and comprehensing the contents of the contract. The study is expected to be useful for linguistic scholars as well as legal experts in completing language's features in the economic contracts in order to limit ambiguity and reduce disputes associated with contract performance.

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2. The Purposes of the Study

This research employed the transitivity analysis in Systemic Functional Grammar approach developed by Halliday to explore the linguistic features of transitivity processes and their pragmatic functions in the economic contracts. Specifically, the study raised two research questions:

(1) What are transitivity processes employed in the selected economic contracts?

(2) What are the most and least transitivity processes utilized in these contracts and why?

3. Theoretical Framework and Related Previous Studies

3.1. Theoretical Framework

According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), language is a systemic functional semiotic to conduct certain functions. He indicated that there are three functions or meta-functions including the ideational function, the interpersonal function, and the textual function. The ideational function is to convey the new information, to describe the world, and to communicate. The interpersonal function is to reflect social and personal relations. Finally, the textual function is to express devices employed to create the coherent and unified text.

The ideational function refers to language as a semiotic system to express people's perceptions and their own consciousness of the world. It can be categorized into two sub-functions: the experiential that is largely concerned with ideas or content and the logical one related to the relationship between ideas. The transitivity system interprets the experience into a manageable set of process types which is composed of three semantic categories: the processes, the participants and the

circumstances (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). According to Halliday and Matthiessen, the clause is to reflect, to impose order on the endless variation and to flow of events which are achieved by transitivity through a set of process types (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 169).

In the English transitivity system, there are three main types of process: **material**, **mental** and **relational** one. On the borderline between 'material' and 'mental' are the **behavioral** processes which represent processes of consciousness and physiological states. Between 'mental' and 'relational' is the **verbal** process which symbolizes human consciousness and is enacted in the form of language. Similarly, between the 'relational' and the 'material' is the **existential** one which concerns with existence, the existential, or happening (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 171).

3.1.1. Material Process

The material process is involved with clauses of "*doing*" or "*happening*". It construes "*a quantum of change in the flow of events*". In this flow, the "*doer*" is called Actor and the second participant who is "*affected*" or "*being done to*" is called Goal. The Actor might be an abstract entity or an inanimate one and the Goal might be human or non-human. Its structure may be [*Actor + Process (material) + Goal*] (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). According to Hoang (2019), the material process in Vietnamese can be distinguished from the mental and the relational ones based on three criteria: participants, co-verb of direction and the probe. Specifically, the material process might have one or two participants acting as Actor and Goal. The participant might be either animate or inanimate. In terms of co-verb of direction, the material process is often associated with directional pro-verbs such as off, up, down, in, into... As for the probe, the material process can be recognized by asking questions: "*X đã làm*

gì Y? (What did X do to Y?) and *"Y làm sao thế?"* or *"Cái gì xảy ra với Y thế?"* (What happened to Y?) (Hoang, 2019, pp. 126-129).

3.1.2. Behavioral Process

The behavioral process is the one between material one and mental one, so it has similarities with these processes. It reflects behaviors of both physical and physiological states such as crying, smiling, breathing, dreaming, starting… It has one animated participant who is behaving is called Behavior. In some clauses, it might be characterized by another apparent participant acting as complement, the Range, which typically adds specification to the process. Its structure may be [*Behaver + Process (behavioral) ± Range*] (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). According to Hoang (2018), in case there are two participants, they are Behaver and Range or Phenomenon respectively.

3.1.3. Mental Process

The mental process is concerned about the process of sensing. It might be subcategorized into Cognition (thinking, understanding), Affection (liking, hating), and Perception (hearing). One of the features of the mental process that distinguishes metal process from others is that mental process always involves at least one human participant. Its structure may be [*Senser + Process (mental) + Phenomenon*] (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

According to Hoang (2019), the mental process is related to "human consciousness" and "the activities of the mind". He also showed six criteria to recognize the mental process in Vietnamese, including the participants, the probe, the manner circumstance, the senser, the phenomenon and the projection. The participants in the mental process are some entity or someone that "senses". The mental process might be recognized by asking *X nghĩ / cảm thấy / biết gì về Y? (What does X feel / think / know about?)*. In addition, the mental one may be distinguished from other processes by circumstantial manner of degree such as *rất (very), rất lắm / nhiều lắm (very much/a great deal)*. Besides, the Senser in the mental process is one with human features or non-human nominal Senser in fairy stories. Additionally, the phenomenon in this type of process may be a "thing" or a "fact". In case it is a "fact", it can be realized by an embedded clause (Hoang, 2019, pp. 175-184).

3.1.4. Verbal Process

The verbal process, which is considered intermediated between mental and material ones, is a process of *"saying"* in order to transfer a message. The person who acts as a speaker in the clause is called *Sayer*. Its structure may be [*Sayer + Process (verbal) ± Target + Verbiage*] (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

Based on the study by Hoang (2019), there are some criteria to distinguish verbal process from other ones in Vietnamese. They are participant relationships and the circumstance of matter. In the verbal process, the participant who says something is called the Sayer. The Receiver is some entity or someone else to whom the Verbiage may be directed. In addition, one of the criteria that distinguishes the verbal process from others is the appearance of the collocational patterning of Process: verbal and the circumstance of matter (Hoang, 2019, pp. 205-213).

3.1.5. Relational Process

The relational process is a process of "being" or a related category of existential clauses. In this type of process, there is a relationship established between two separate entities or something is being said to be something else. Based on the systematic construction, relational processes consist of three main types: (a) intensive: x is a; (b) circumstantial: x is at a; (c) possessive:

x has a and two modes (1) attributive: a is an attribute of x (2) identifying: a is the identity of x (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). For example:

Table 1

The Principal Categories of Relational Clause (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 216)

Types	(1) attributive: 'a is an attribute of x'	(2) identifying 'a is the identity of x'
(1) intensive 'x is a'	Sarah is wise	Sarah is the leader; the leader is Sarah
(2) possessive 'x has a'	Peter has a piano	The piano is Peter's; Peter's is the piano
(3) circumstantial 'x is at a'	The fair is on a Tuesday	Tomorrow is the 10th; The 10th is tomorrow

If it is attributive, its structure may be [*Carrier: possessor + Process (relational) + Attribute: possessed*]. If it is identifying, its structure may be [*Identified + Process (relational) + Identifier*]. As mentioned by Hoang (2019), the relational process is quite complex to identify in Vietnamese. He also indicated that the relational process expresses "*states of being of various kinds*", which is used to distinguish it from material and mental processes. In terms of grammar, the relational process cannot take the imperative form and cannot project (Hoang, 2019, pp. 223-234).

3.1.6. Existential Process

The existential process construes that something is happening or existing or the existence of any entity. In this existential one, there is only one participant called Existent which labels the entity or event which is being said or mentioned. In other words, Existent can be construed as action, event, thing, person, object, institution, abstraction… Its structure may be [*Process (existential) + Existent*] (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

According to Hoang (2018), in Vietnamese, the existential process can be identified by some criteria related to the participants, the verbs, and the semantic and grammar structure. Specifically, there is only one compulsory participant who is called the Existent, which may be a person, an object or an event etc. Besides, the existential process may be associated with a distinct circumstantial element of time or place. The existential process is also identified by verbs such as *tồn tại* (exist) and *còn* (remain/exist), *treo* (hang), *ngồi* (sit), *nổi lên* (emerge), *xuất hiện* (appear)… (Hoang, 2018). In terms of grammar, the expressions of modality, modulation as well as Circumstantials of quality and means cannot exist in the clause. Furthermore, these verbs are often followed by a clause to form a clause complex (Hoang, 2019, pp. 274-283).

3.2. Related Previous Studies

Regarding Halliday's theory, there are few researches in linguistic fields which have been associated with its application in analyzing discourse (Bloor & Bloor, 2013; Thompson, 2013). In terms of transitivity analysis, the previous studies focus on the distribution of transitivity processes and give explanations about the intention of the employment. These studies by Anggraini (2018), Naz et al. (2012) and Zhang (2017) focus on application of transitivity into analysis of political discourses. Other studies emphasize on other types of discourses such as movies, songs, novels, normal speeches like studies by Ali (2019), Sihura (2019), Zahoor and Janjua (2016). Some of the studies focus on daily conservations or media discourse such as

studies by Darani (2014) and Riris (2019).

In Vietnamese, Hoang (2005) applied SFG in analyzing the grammar of material processes in Vietnamese. Similarly, Diep (2005) also mentioned transitivity in a project of Vietnamese grammar. Later, Hoang (2020) applied SFG into transitivity analysis of Vietnamese School Science Textbooks in order to explore linguistic features of this genre in terms of types of process, circumstances, participants, and lexical density. These studies together with SFG by Halliday are considered to be a framework for us to apply in analyzing the Vietnamese economic contracts. However, application of SFG in exploring Vietnamese in general and in genre of legal discourse is quite new and thus has many gaps for further researches.

From an overview of related studies, it can be said that there is no research associated with application of transitivity processes in order to analyze legal documents. Therefore, an analysis of transitivity processes in the economic contracts is necessary in order to explore the characteristic of this genre in terms of transitivity. For that reason, we chose to research "*Transitivity analysis of the economic contracts from the perspective of systemic functional grammar*". This paper aims at exploring transitivity processes and their distribution in the discourse of the economic contracts. Through the analysis, we aim at generalizing the features of this type of discourse as for transitivity and give necessary explanations.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Data and Data Collection

The data for the research is five economic contracts in the below table:

Table 2

The Data for the Research

Acronym	Contract
T1	Contract on barge repair between DVTVTC Co., Ltd and MH. Mechanical One Member Co., Ltd
T2	Contract on paint transportation service between SJT VN Co., Ltd. and MPC Trading and Service Co., Ltd
T3	Contract to buy batteries of all kinds between SB VN DVMD One Member Co., Ltd and PAQ MN Joint Stock Company
T4	Contract on office lease between GEMADEPT Joint Stock Company and Commercial Bank BV
T5	Contract on provision of daily cleaning services between Private Enterprise SH and BIDV DK

Source: The contracts collected from the companies by the author

These data are collected from companies that have commercial activities conducted through economic contracts. These are commercial contracts collected from five Vietnamese separate companies, which ensure the variety of the selected contracts. Each contract has five to ten pages with an average of 6000 words per a contract. They are economic contracts associated with goods purchase, service provision. For the convenience of presentation, we prescribe the presentation as follows: T stands for contract, C for clause, A for article, I for appendix. For example: C1A2I1T4 means clause 1, article 2, and appendix 1 of the contract 4.

According to Article 385 of the Vietnam Civil Code 2015, "a contract is an agreement between parties on the establishment, change or termination of civil rights and obligations" (The National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2015, p. 106). The above concept shows the voluntary nature of the parties to the contract, but it creates binding on legal rights and obligations. Up to now, there is no official document in the legal documents still valid to define the economic contract. However, based on Clause 1, Article 6 of the 2005 Commercial Law, it is defined: "Commercial activities are activities of traders for profit purposes" (The National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2005, p. 7). Pursuant to Clause 21, Article 4 of the Enterprise Law 2020: "Business is the continuous performance of one, several or all stages of the process from investment, production to consumption of products or provision of services on market for the purpose of making a profit" (The National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2020, p. 8). Therefore, an economic contract can be defined as follows: An economic contract is an agreement between traders for the performance of business activities for profit purposes.

Basically, economic contracts, besides the characteristics of contracts in general, also have specific characteristics such as the contracting parties being business entities; the content of the contract related to the actual conduct of business by business entities; signed on a voluntary and equal basis; the purpose is profitable; The form of a contract may be oral, written or its equivalent in writing. However, within the scope of this study, we only refer to the corpus as written contracts. There are two basic characteristics that distinguish economic contracts from civil contracts, specific to the subject and purpose of signing the contract. In other words, economic contracts are signed by business entities, while civil contracts are signed between individuals. The purpose of an economic contract is a business or profit-making purpose, while a civil contract is to serve the daily needs of organizations and individuals.

The economic contract belongs to the legal genre so it has distinctive features. In terms of lexicon, Mellinkoff (1963) mentioned the peculiarity of this type of genre that legal language is characterized by some special features such as its formality, the usage of common words with uncommon meanings, archaisms, Latinism, Old French and Anglo-Norman words, terms of art, argot, formal words, expressions with flexible meanings (Mellinkoff, 1963).

4.2. Data Analysis

The determination of six processes is based on the probes mentioned in the theoretical framework. They are probes suggested by the author Hoang Van Van when he determined the types of transitivity processes in Vietnamese. For example, as for the material process, it can be recognized by asking questions: "X đã làm gì Y? (What did X do to Y?) and "Y làm sao thế?" or "Cái gì xảy ra với Y thế?" (What happened to Y?)" (Hoang, 2019, pp. 126-129). We determined that this following clause belongs to the material process by asking the question: What did Party B do to Party A?

Bên B cung cấp toàn bộ năng lượng, vật tư phụ và điện năng trong suốt quá trình thi công. (Party B provides all energy, supplementary materials and electricity during the construction process.) (C3A5T1)

Distribution of six processes in the selected economic contracts can be summarized in the below table:

Table 3

The Frequency of Processes in the Economic Contracts

Contracts Process	HĐ1	HĐ2	HĐ3	HĐ4	HĐ5	Total	Average
Material	42	290	16	198	14	560	112
	40%	46%	24%	37%	27%	174%	35%
Mental	6	34	5	38	3	86	17.2
	6%	5%	7%	7%	6%	31%	6%
Relational	5	85	14	45	5	154	30.8
	5%	14%	21%	8%	10%	57%	11%
Behavioral	9	29	8	47	7	100	20
	9%	5%	12%	9%	13%	47%	9%
Verbal	9	42	5	49	2	107	21.4
	9%	7%	7%	9%	4%	36%	7%
Existential	34	147	20	155	21	377	75.4
	32%	23%	29%	29%	40%	155%	31%
Total	105	627	68	532	52	1384	276.8
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	500%	100%

5. Results and Discussion

The economic contracts are composed of legally binding clauses negotiated and agreed by the related parties. These clauses are realized in the real business activities thanks to the parties' commitments and the contract legislations of the government. For that reason, the content of the contracts is mainly about the rights and duties of the parties as consent. In other words, the contract is a type of legal discourse that is legally binding with the aim at ensuring its feasibility and practicality. Therefore, the language used in the contract must be clear, concise, and specific. Table 3 demonstrates that the material process is the most dominantly used, accounting for about 35%, followed by the existential process (31%). Other processes, including relational, verbal and mental processes account for the smaller percentage.

5.1. Material Process

Table 3 indicates that the material process is the most dominantly used in these contracts, taking up an average of 35% in total. The data demonstrates that the material process is presented through verbal groups that regulate the rights, obligations, responsibilities or duties of the related parties. These verbal groups might consist of such verbs: *cung cấp (provide), bảo vệ (defend), bồi thường (damage), bố trí (arrange), báo cáo (report), kiểm tra (inspect), yêu cầu (request)…* In other words, according to these material processes, the parties in the contracts know how to behave legally in accordance with the content agreed in the contracts. For example:

(1) *Bên B cung cấp toàn bộ năng lượng, vật tư phụ và điện năng trong suốt quá trình thi công. (Party B provides all energy, supplementary materials and electricity during the construction process.)* (C3A5T1)

Bên B *Party B*	cung cấp *provides*	toàn bộ năng lượng vật tư phụ và điện năng *all energy, supplementary materials and electricity*	trong suốt quá trình thi công. *during the construction process*
Actor	***Process***	***Goal***	***Circumstance***

In the above example, one party bears the responsibility for supplying materials for the other to complete the agreed regulations. In contrast, the other has the right to be provided materials for its work. In the contracts, one party's duties are the other's rights and vice versa. Additionally, the data also indicates Actors and Recipients are business entities participating in the economic contracts as the parties. They are often companies or enterprises completing business registration and conducting commercial activities for profits. The process is often realized by verbal groups in active or passive forms. Besides, there are also circumstances setting conditions of time, range, manner in which the agreements between the parties become effective.

5.2. Behavioral Process

In the analyzed economic contracts, it can be demonstrated that the behavioral processes are reflected through verbal groups such as *bàn bạc (discuss), giải quyết (settle), có quyền (be allowed to/ have the right), thiện chí, cố gắng (try), cam kết (commit), bàn bạc (discuss)...* They are regulations associated with behaviors between business entities that might happen in the future. In addition, they also reflect the agreements' legal binding effectiveness which legislate rights and responsibilities of the parties in the contracts. The below article is an instance:

(2) *Chi phí thuê hai bên sẽ **thỏa thuận** trên cơ sở giá cả thị trường chung của các tòa nhà đồng hạng tại TP HCM thời điểm BVB có nhu cầu. (About rental cost, the two parties will **agree** on the basis of the common market price of similar buildings in Ho Chi Minh City when BVB has demand.)* (C2IET4)

Chi phí thuê *About rental cost*	hai bên *the two parties*	sẽ thỏa thuận *will agree*	trên cơ sở giá cả thị trường chung của các tòa nhà đồng hạng tại TP HCM *on the basis of the common market price of similar buildings in Ho Chi Minh City*	thời điểm BVB có nhu cầu. *when BVB has demand*
Range	***Behaver***	***Process***	***Circumstance***	***Circumstance***

Similar to material process, in these contracts, Behavers are often parties who are responsible for behaving in such a certain manner as regulated in the contracts. The process is realized by verbal groups that reflect the negotiations of contract drafters and the range is about the duties that must be done. In addition, Circumstance is a component that states conditions in which such behaviors shall be conducted as concurred during negotiations.

5.3. Mental Process

From the analysis, it is likely that the mental processes in these contracts are reflected by verbal groups such as: *hợp tác (cooperate), có nghĩa vụ (be obliged to), nỗ lực (make effort to),…* In addition, two main types of the mental processes in the contracts are perception and cognition. There is no room for material process that is associated with personal emotion as in other types of the discourse. It is helpful for contract-

makers to create objectiveness and transparency in the contracts. The material processes employed in the contracts reflect the parties' attitudes as well as their willingness in realizing agreements in the contracts. In other words, the economic contracts are places where business entities demonstrate their goodwill in the contracts' completion. For example:

(3) *Mỗi bên sẽ **nỗ lực cao nhất** để bảo đảm rằng các nhân viên của mình không tiết lộ các điều khoản của Hợp Đồng này cho bất kỳ bên thứ ba nào dù bằng lời nói hay bằng văn bản. (Each party will use its best efforts to ensure that its employees do not disclose the terms of this Agreement to any third party either orally or in writing.)* (C10A12T4)

Mỗi bên / *Each party*	sẽ nỗ lực cao nhất / *will use its best efforts*	để bảo đảm rằng các nhân viên của mình không tiết lộ các điều khoản của Hợp Đồng này cho bất kỳ bên thứ ba nào / *to ensure that its employees do not disclose the terms of this Agreement to any third party*	dù bằng lời nói hay bằng văn bản. / *either orally or in writing.*
Sensor	**Process**	**Phenomenon**	**Circumstance**

5.4. Verbal Process

According to table 2, the average frequency for verbal process is quite modest (21.4 times), accounting for 7% in total. This can be predicted because the contracts often exist in static forms, which have been all negotiated by parties before and the contracts are just places where negotiations have been recorded. Thus, the verbal process is the second lowest in processes that occur in the contract.

The data also demonstrates that in these contracts, the verbal processes are reflected through verbal groups such as *thông báo (notify/inform), trao đổi (exchange), cam đoan, cam kết (commit to)*… In addition, both *Sayer* and *Receiver* are parties, who have the equal status in the negotiated contracts. In other words, through using verbal process, the parties express their attitudes, duties as well as commitments that have been absorbed into the contracts during the drafting process. More importantly, the verbal process or verbiage is associated with rights and duties of the parties in the contracts. In other words, through this process, they know how to behave legally as negotiated because these verbal groups themselves express compulsion. For example:

(4) *Trong thời hạn bảo hành, Bên A **thông báo** cho Bên B về những hư hỏng liên quan tới công trình do lỗi của Bên B gây ra. (During the warranty period, Party A **informs** Party B of the damage related to the work caused by Party B's fault.)* (A9T1)

Trong thời hạn bảo hành / *During the warranty period*	Bên A / *Party A*	thông báo / *informs*	cho Bên B / *Party B*	về những hư hỏng liên quan tới công trình do lỗi của Bên B gây ra. / *of the damage related to the work caused by Party B's fault*
Circumstance	**Sayer**	**Process**	**Target**	**Verbiage**

5.5. Relational Process

In the collected economic contracts, in spite of the fact that the relational process just takes up the low frequency with an average of 30.8 times, and accounting for

11% in total, it has played such an important role in these contracts. Specifically, it is employed to establish the relationship between described entities or something is being said to be something else. In these relational processes, **a** acts as *Identified/Token* and **x** is *Identifier/Value*, for example:

Bên Thuê *The Lessee*	**là** *is*	một công ty hoạt động trong lĩnh vực ngân hàng, đang có nhu cầu thuê mặt bằng để làm văn phòng làm việc và phòng giao dịch ngân hàng. *a company operating in the banking sector, and is in need of renting space for offices and banking transaction offices.*(A1T4)
Identified/ Token	***Process (relational)***	***Identifier/Value***

Bên Thuê *The Lessee*	có *has*	quyền sử dụng tối thiểu bốn (04) chỗ đậu xe hơi *the right to use a minimum of four (04) car parking spaces*	trong suốt thời hạn thuê. *during the lease term.*
Carrier: possessor	***Process: possession***	***Attribute: possessed***	***Circumstance***

*Bên thuê **có** quyền sử dụng tối thiểu bốn (04) chỗ đậu xe hơi trong suốt thời hạn thuê. (The Lessee **has** the right to use a minimum of four (04) car parking spaces during the lease term.)* (A11IAT4)

There are all types of relational process that happen in the contracts including both attributive and identifying relational processes.

Table 4

Some Examples of Relational Processes

	(i) attributive 'a is an attribute of x'	(ii) identifying 'a is the identity of x'
(1) intensive 'x is a'	Bên nào [không thể thực hiện đầy đủ nghĩa vụ của mình do sự kiện bất khả kháng như vậy], **sẽ không bị coi là** vi phạm các quy định của Hợp đồng này. *Any party that is unable to fulfill its obligations due to such Force Majeure Event shall not be deemed to be in breach of the provisions of this Agreement.* (C1A7I1T2)	Phán quyết của tòa án **là** quyết định cuối cùng. *The court's judgment **is** the final decision.* (A10T1)
(2) possessive 'x has a'	Trong trường hợp bên B giao hàng không đảm bảo chất lượng Bên A **có** quyền từ chối không nhận hàng. *In the event that Party B does not deliver the qualified goods, Party A **has** the right to refuse to receive the goods.* (C2A5T3)	Bên Thuê **có** quyền sử dụng tối thiểu bốn (04) chỗ đậu xe hơi trong suốt thời hạn thuê. *The Lessee **has** the right to use a minimum of four (04) car parking spaces during the lease term.* (A11IAT4)

| (3) circumstantial 'x is at a' | "Ngày bắt đầu dịch vụ" nghĩa **là** vào ngày mà LSP bắt đầu cung cấp dịch vụ cho JOTUN.
 *"Service Start Date" **is** on the date that the LSP commences providing services to JOTUN.* (C1A1I1T2) | Thời điểm kết thúc của một tháng **là** vào ngày cuối tháng.
 *The end of a month **is** on the last day of the month.* (C2A3T5) |

5.6. Existential Process

In the contracts, the existential process plays an essential role in expressing experience of the parties. For that reason, it occurs 75.4 times on the average, and accounts for the second largest percentage (31%) in total. This can be explained that it is employed to describe the existence of any entity by employing mainly two verbal groups: *có (has), phát sinh (appear)*. The existential clauses are conveyed to predict circumstances that are likely to happen in reality in the scope of the economic contracts. These clauses are beneficial for the contract-drafter to ensure the transparency, accuracy, specificity. In other words, the contracts regulate obligation, responsibility, rights, and duties of the related parties to make sure that they conduct business activities in accordance to the agreed contracts. Through establishing regulations, the parties realize their power and attitudes by expressing their wish, intention. At the same time, they also estimate situations that can occur in real business through employing existential clauses. For example: *Trong trường hợp có tranh chấp, hai Bên có quyền chuyển toàn bộ các hồ sơ liên quan lên tòa án kinh tế, thuộc tòa án Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh để giải quyết. (In case of a dispute, the two Parties have the right to transfer all relevant documents to the economic court, under the court of Ho Chi Minh City for settlement).* (A10T1)

Trong trường hợp *In case there*	**có** *is*	tranh chấp *a dispute*	hai Bên có quyền chuyển toàn bộ các hồ sơ liên quan lên tòa án kinh tế, thuộc tòa án Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh để giải quyết. *the two Parties have the right to transfer all relevant documents to the economic court, under the court of Ho Chi Minh City for settlement.*
Circumstance	*Process*	*Existent*	*Goal*

The material process is dominantly used in the contracts because it is used to express the experience and attitudes of the parties in predicting situations that may happen during conducting the contracts. It also is helpful to determine specific tasks that must be done by parties. Additionally, the existent process which has the second largest frequency is also helpful to describe reality or prediction that may happen and the regulations in the contracts become effective. Thus, the parties must follow and behave in an agreed negotiation. The rest take up a smaller percentage due to the static and formal features of the contracts.

The finding of the study is similar to previous studies in terms of the dominance of material processes that are employed to express ideation of addressers. In comparison with other genres, each type of genre has distinguished features as for kinds of processes and their distribution in the discourse. Some of genres, there are six process types that exist in the discourse while others just have some kinds of transitivity processes. In addition, the

frequency of these processes in each type of genre is disparate. Regarding political speeches, the material process is the most dominant, followed by the relational process and the mental process. The material one is utilised to express the power; the relational process is employed to advocate interests; the mental process is for recovering the audience's confidence. These results are reflected in studies conducted by Anggraini (2018) when conducting research on linguistic features of Donald Trump's speeches. Additionally, these features are also reflected in the research by (Zhang, 2017).

As for textbook genres, Hoang (2018) demonstrated that material and relational processes are the most prominent while mental, verbal and existential processes are low and there is no room for behavioral process. This feature explains the feeling of alienation among students caused by the language of school science textbooks (Hoang, 2020). When it comes to entertainment work, researches showed that six processes are stated in these discourses. The material processes are dominantly used in order to express the ideation. One of the distinguished features of this genre is the high frequency of mental processes to convey emotional expressions. The rest just account for the small percentage. These results can be found in the studies about movies by Sihura (2019); about songs by Zahoor & Janjua (2016).

6. Conclusion

According to an analysis of the contracts, all the six process types are found to have occurred in this kind of discourse. As shown in Table 3, the material process is the most frequently used process type with a total occurrence (112 times and 35% on average). The reason is that the economic contract is to reflect experience, information. Therefore, employment of the material

process is useful for the contract-makers to estimate circumstances that will happen in business activities. In addition to material processes, the existential process and relational ranks the second in the frequency with an average of 31% in total. It is useful to regulate rights, duties of related entities. In the economic contracts, the contract-drafters tend to give estimations about what is likely to happen in order to guide parties to do or avoid or restrain them in accordance with the agreement. The others only take up a small percentage in total. This can be explained that the contracts are documents that recorded negotiation and agreement of parties during the drafting process. Thus, they exist in a static state and there are few chances for drafters to use other processes such as behavioral, verbal, and mental ones.

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PHÂN TÍCH HỆ THỐNG CHUYỂN TÁC TRONG CÁC HỢP ĐỒNG KINH TẾ TIẾNG VIỆT TRÊN CƠ SỞ LÝ THUYẾT NGỮ PHÁP CHỨC NĂNG HỆ THỐNG

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Tóm tắt: Hợp đồng kinh tế là một thể loại diễn ngôn pháp lý được hình thành dựa vào sự thỏa thuận giữa các bên. Bài báo này đã áp dụng khung lý thuyết Ngữ pháp chức năng hệ thống (SFG) để thực hiện việc phân tích hệ thống chuyển tác trong hợp đồng kinh tế tiếng Việt nhằm khám phá những nét đặc trưng thể loại của diễn ngôn pháp lý này. Trong hợp đồng kinh tế, có sáu kiểu quá trình, trong đó quá trình vật chất và quá trình hiện hữu được sử dụng chủ yếu, còn quá trình quan hệ, quá trình tinh thần, quá trình hành vi và quá trình lời nói, mỗi kiểu quá trình chỉ chiếm một tỷ lệ nhỏ. Các quá trình này được sử dụng để thể hiện kinh nghiệm của các bên thông qua các quy định về quyền, nghĩa vụ và các biện pháp chế tài mà họ đã thỏa thuận được trong quá trình thương lượng hợp đồng. Sự chi phối của các quá trình cụ thể như vậy phản ánh một số đặc điểm của diễn ngôn pháp lý như ngắn gọn, rõ ràng, chính xác.

Từ khóa: quá trình chuyển tác, SFG, hợp đồng kinh tế, diễn ngôn pháp lý

THE CONSTRUCTION AND PERFORMANCE
OF YOUTH IDENTITY THROUGH RAP: A CASE OF RAP VIET

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Abstract: This research is placed within a critical discourse analysis perspective that assumes an entangled relationship between discourse and its underlying social meanings. In recent times, rap has gained a stable position in mainstream media, and along with it comes the appearance of vibrant youth subculture onto the screen. Rap music makes it possible for people to tell their stories and others', as well as take on a persona or an alter ego (Sciullo, 2019). Employing Fairclough's framework (1989), together with Kress and van Leeuwen's framework (2006), we study the discourse of Vietnamese rap through its linguistic and visual elements. The study is an attempt to answer the following question: how has rap music contributed to identity construction and performance among Vietnamese youth? The study suggests that Vietnamese youth have constructed and performed their identity as patriots, individuals with dreams and aspirations, and children of their parents. These themes are closely connected and reflect the youth's compliance with the social expectation of mainstream rap.

Keywords: rap, multimodal discourse analysis, youth identity

1. Introduction

In the 1970s in Bronx, New York, rap music appeared with the development of Afro-Americans' hip-hop subculture. While hip-hop refers to culture, language, lifestyle, and behavior, rap music "is the musical form that emerged from this culture" (Myer & Kleck, 2007, p. 142). Rap is one of the four constituents of hip -hop, namely emceeing or rap, DJing, graffiti and breakdancing (Sciullo, 2019). In that way, rap combines linguistic expression, visual representation, movement, and sound, among other elements (Adroutsopoulos, 2009).

Rap is considered as a Western music genre in Vietnam and has been modified to adapt to the context of Vietnamese society and culture. In 2002, XLIM, a Vietnamese rapper, formed a rapper community Da Rap Club, also known as RC, on the Internet (Kami, 2020). Since then, Vietnamese youngsters following rap have established a number of rap organizations in the underground communities throughout the areas in the nation, namely Northside, Midside, Southside and Westside. No matter how vigorous these organizations were, because of its common correlation to violence, gang, racism, misogyny and profanity, rap has remained almost invisible in mainstream culture. The year 2012 marked a milestone for the underground community as the number of underground rappers went mainstream and achieved awards, for

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instance, Karik, who won the best music video in Vietnamese MTV. From this time, more and more Vietnamese underground rappers emerged in the mainstream music industry, collaborated with pop-music singers or signed contracts with major music corporations, thereby gaining more achievements and acceptance from the mass audience. In 2020, two TV mainstream programs started to feature rap music, namely Rap Viet and King of Rap. Within three first episodes, Rap Viet has broken the record of the most-viewed video on Youtube streaming platform with approximately half a million views (Nguyen, 2020).

Rap music is part of Vietnamese modern youth culture. It was increasingly common for Vietnamese youth under twenty-five to produce rap music at home, beatbox or perform breakdancing (Brown, 2014). Doan (2015) suggested that both mainstream and underground rap could stand as a manifesto for youthfulness, creativity, bravery, and rebellion to the conforming society. Jones (2017) also found that Vietnamese youth was testing the cultural boundaries in their rap songs, which deviate from the norm of singing about heterosexual love and nationalism. However, the strict rule of censorship and the expectation of the music industry poses a challenge to young rappers, as any extreme ideologies as well as profanities are filtered. Nonetheless, rap continues to be an instrument for the young Vietnamese to express themselves. Rap is not only about rebellion, but also transformation (Chang, 2005). Through rap, the youth have portrayed themselves as people who have a desire to express their personality and confront the bulk of existing customs or conventional opinions. This inherent characteristic can be observed in rap music in any culture. Through rap, the Vietnamese youth have portrayed themselves through the reference to the culture, life stories, and youth crisis. Yet, currently, there is a dearth of studies on the development of Vietnamese rap music with relation to youth identity.

To address this gap, this research studies Vietnamese youth identity construction and performance through rap performances in Rap Viet, a Vietnamese music TV program on HTV2 channel, based on the framework of visual grammar of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and critical discourse analysis (CDA) introduced by Fairclough (1995).

2. Theoretical Background

2.1.   Identity   Construction   and Performance Through Rap

Both Bamberg, De Fina and Schiffrin (2007) and Taylor (2015) define personal *identity construction* or sense of self as the "talk" in which a person negotiates, sustains, and modifies through discursive activities. Identity construction can be viewed through not only discourses, but also the metalinguistics, gestural and bodily characteristics (Bamberg et al., 2007). Rap provides language for talking about a way of representing knowledge about a particular topic, at a particular time in Foucault's term (Jenkins, 2013). In rap, the "text" itself is rap music which constitutes the rapper's voice and performance as well as the song's lyrics. The rapper's voice denotes the perspective, the right to express it for not only the artist themselves but also the listeners. Hence, rap's lyrics can construct identity.

The position in identity construction can give rise to the performance of discursive activities that culminates in an act of identity (Bamberg et al., 2007). Klein, Spears, and Reicher (2007, p. 30) defined an *identity performance* as an identity-salient strategic action, the "purposeful expression of (or suppression on) behaviors relevant to those norms conventionally associated with a salient social identity." Music, emotional, social, and cognitive ties can imply the

construction and enactment of a social identity and a social memory where the individual and society are linked (Lidskog, 2016). Identity performance through rap is often a way to destroy stereotypical notions of a specific culture, solidify the local communities, as well as empower members of that culture. For example, Perullo (2005) concluded that Tanzania youth constructed their cultural identity as heroes who made rap songs with *ujumbe mkali* (strong messages or criticism of social and political conditions).

2.2. Youth Identity Through Rap

Studying the voices of local youth identity through Chinese local-language rap music, Liu (2014) stated that the relocalization and globalization of hip-hop culture and rap music have been ramified continually through the distinguished languages of youth all over the world. In the study of youth subcultural activities and digital media through the cases of protest rap and illegal graffiti in Portugal, Campos, Nunes and Simões (2016) concluded that the digital media is a useful tool for the visibility and identity performance of the Portuguese youth through these subgenres of hip-hop. Rap is indeed a tool for the youth to project their voices and demonstrate their identity.

The subgenre of rap which is represented the most in the media is mainstream or popular rap (Androutsopoulos, 2009). In mainstream rap, any socially conscious and political-oriented lyrics which is the inherent character of hip-hop was shunned. This happened because of the involvement of major music companies with the rappers. Rappers who are in contract with those companies are expected to produce songs that could appeal to as many people as possible and provide them with entertainment instead of political ideologies. This emergence on mainstream music places rappers in a dilemma in which the adherence

to popularity puts them at an economic advantage, yet supposedly leaves them symbolically disadvantaged as it labels them as capitalism followers and not artists anymore.

Pope (2005), and Kadıoğlu and Özdal (2020) also added that the popularization of rap is supported by the development of communicating platform such as digital media, and it must have gone through a mass reconstructive filtering system such as the company's policies or the government's censorship. It can be concluded that mainstream rappers may become the victims of capitalism and globalism which diminish their capability to express themselves. This generated a heated question about the authenticity of hip-hop referring to rebellion against social norms in mainstream rap (Pope, 2005; Oware, 2014). Pope (2005) viewed mainstream rap as unauthentic and the death of hip-hop culture and pointed out that only underground rap is "pure". On the contrary, Oware (2014) pointed out that the authenticity of both mainstream or underground rap was controversial as underground artists manipulated the border between these two spheres of rap to better their economic condition instead of being driven by the urge to speak up. To avoid controversial issues in the process of rap popularization, it is recommended that rappers put politics aside and rely on their personal experiences (Kadıoğlu & Özdal, 2020) and habitus (Oware, 2014). With the media globalization and commercialization in rap, this art form of hip hop has incorporated both "co-option and rebellion in a creative amalgamation" (Almeida, 2013, p. 320). Moussa (2019) concluded through his study of online rap in Morocco that the interplay of rap and media such as online communication reflected youth aspiration and identities. However, the question of whether or not the commercialization of rap has influenced the personas that young rappers assume, remains open.

There has so far been no qualitative research on youth identity through rap, especially in the Vietnamese context. The above-mentioned previous studies have dealt with identity construction and performances heavily based on linguistics rather than semiotics. This leaves a gap in studying identity through rap as it contains not only lyrics, but also visual elements which involve clothing items, accessories, stage decorations. These elements could make a contribution to identity performance.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

To analyze the linguistics and other semiotic modes in the performances of Rap Viet, we have adopted the framework of visual grammar by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and critical discourse analysis (CDA) introduced by Fairclough (1995), the lyrics of the performances are investigated simultaneously with the visual elements.

2.3.1. Principles of CDA

Fairclough (2013) considered discourse as a social practice. CDA seeks to show the implicit involvement of language in social life, including power and domination relations, as well as in ideology, suggesting possibilities for changes. Unlike some other linguistic approaches, CDA does not confine its research questions within a single discipline but works in a transdisciplinary way: it strives to shed light on the dialectical relations of discourse with other social factors (Fairclough, 2013). Van Dijk (1970) also opined that "CDA is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context" (p. 352).

This study uses CDA to explore identity construction and performance of Vietnamese youth through rap in Rap Viet show for some reasons. First, rap lyrics are an effective instrument to voice out the conflicts, hidden messages from the oppressed against the oppressors. This gives rise to exercising the power relationship between the social classes in which individuals could negotiate, sustain and construct identities through interaction. In the context of Vietnam, although rap is not correlated to any political ideologies, it holds an important position in Vietnamese youth movements. Rap music can give significant insight into how Vietnamese youth construct and perform their identities through their struggles with social norms. Another reason as to why CDA is suitable for studying youth identity through rap is the relocalization of rap in many countries in the world. The distinctive combination depends on that nation's culture and socio- economy, and it is essential that rap is modified to be more appropriate to the context. This can be observed in the rap lyrics in Vietnam as the youth utilize metaphors, ironies and word plays with filtered vernacular of hip-hop creatively to express themselves. In other words, to interpret the youth's identity through rap, it is essential that both textual and semiotic characteristics be put into consideration. For these reasons, CDA is an ideal instrument to study identity through rap.

2.3.2. Fairclough's Three-Dimension Framework of CDA

This study draws on Fairclough's three-dimension framework of CDA, namely description of the text, interpretation and explanation. The first dimension focuses on three aspects: vocabulary (wording), grammar (transitivity, passivization) and text structure (thematic choice, turn-taking system). The second one concerns the relationship between text and interaction. Textual features, context and background assumption of the text need to be taken into consideration when interpreting. The last stage involves the relationship between interaction and social context with the social determination of the processes of production

and interpretation of their social effect, in which the underlying ideological perspectives are exposed.

2.3.3. Kress and van Leeuwen's Framework of Visual Grammar

To make in-depth understanding of the visual elements, the framework by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) can be a useful tool. Adapted from Michael Halliday's metafunctions, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) has glossed the three metafunctions, namely the ideal metafunction, the interpersonal metafunction and the textual metafunction to apply for all the semiotic modes.

Ideational metafunction refers to the patterns of representation or how the experience is visually coded. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) compared two terms in representations, namely conceptual and narrative. While the conceptual ones are concerned with the "represent of participants in terms of their class, structure or meaning", the narrative ones are served to "present unfolding actions and events, processes of change, transitory spatial arrangements" (p. 59). The interpersonal metafunction concerns the relationship between the producer and the receiver of the sign. A number of participants are involved in visual communication, namely represented (depicted) and interactive (real). At this level, the interactive meanings can contain three dimensions called image act, social distance and point of view. The first dimension has a positive correlation to the eye direction of the represented participants which can be directed at the receiver (demand) or not (offer). While demands are likely to find the imaginary relationship with the viewers by facial expressions and gestures or the 'gaze', offers are bound to picture the viewers impersonally as objects for contemplation. In terms of social distance, the varied sizes of frame are taken into consideration, ranging from close-up, media to long shots which indicate the level of relation between the producer and receivers from intimate/personal, social and impersonal. Lastly, as far as the perspective or point of view is concerned, it involves two sections of images, namely the subjective and objective. The former aspect presents everything from a particular perspective, delivered by the image-producer, and objective depicting all there is known about the subject (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The depiction of participants at different angles may give rise to the indication of varied relations. The images can be photographed from frontal and eye level angles which imply the involvement and equality among participants. For instance, the horizontal angle can be frontal which may indicate involvement and show detachment. On the other hand, the vertical angle with high angle can cultivate a sense of assigning power to the participants; the low angle may bring the participants a more powerful representation or the same with the eye level leads to the equal relation.

The textual metafunction refers to the meaning of the text and different compositional arrangements can have different textual meaning (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). It is established by these following systems, namely information value, salience and framing. In terms of the first system, it is positively correlated to the three main visual realms: left and right, top and bottom and centre and margin. The different values can be attributed to the information following varied alignments namely, horizontal axis along with left and right, vertical axis together with top and bottom and centre-margin with the centre. The other essential system in this metafunction is salience which can compare the elements on the ground that some of them may be more appealing than others. The indication of the visual clues are size, sharpness of focus, tonal and colour contrast, placement in the visual field, perspective and

specific cultural factors (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). For the last system, framing makes a connection between the representational meaning to interactive one. This involves frame lines, discontinuity of shape or empty space.

This study focuses on both linguistic text and visual text, with the latter including *clothing items, accessories, stage decorations.* The reason why these factors are chosen in analyzing the rappers' performances is that the rappers can consciously and purposefully make decisions about these factors when presenting themselves on stage. This is in line with the view we subscribe to in this study: *identity performance is* a conscious and purposeful process of showing one's self in a social interaction. The visual text is considered and analyzed in its relations with the three metafunctions in Kress and van Leeuwen's framework of visual grammar (2006).

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Data Collection

The data of the study consists of 39 performances which were aired during Rap Viet from September to November in 2020. Each performance lasts from four minutes to five minutes. The performances feature the rappers and the stage. The 39 performances are numbered and coded arbitrarily from PD 1 to PD 39 (e.g., PD 1: performance number 1). The list of the synopses of all performances are presented in the appendix of this study.

3.2. Data Analysis

To analyze the linguistics and other semiotic modes in the performances of Rap Viet, we adopted the framework of visual grammar by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and critical discourse analysis (CDA) introduced by Fairclough (1995), the lyrics of the performances are investigated simultaneously with the visual elements.

This research follows this integrated framework with three levels as follows:

Discourse description: The first layer draws on how the discourse is designed and depicted linguistically and visually simultaneously. As for linguistic elements, this step analyzes grammar, vocabulary, and textual structures with lists of questions proposed by Fairclough (1989) for textual analysis. Regarding visual elements, this level focuses on clothing items, accessories, stage decorations.

Discourse interpretation: this section explores how youth identity is constructed and performed through rap. In this stage, discourse processes are analyzed based on background common-sense assumptions (Fairclough, 1989). Textual features have social meanings only when they are embedded in social structures, produced and interpreted based on common knowledge.

Social explanation: this section attempts to uncover how youth identity through rap is influenced by social structures. This stage illustrates how discourse "is determined by social structures, and what reproductive effects discourses can cumulatively have on those structures, sustaining them or changing them" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 135). In this study, this stage explains how rap as discourse is part of the youth's social struggle.

The procedure to inspect a rap performance includes two main steps. Firstly, each rap performance is analyzed on the two frameworks of Fairclough's CDA model (1995) and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) meta-functions of visual images. The results will be categorized into themes based on latent thematic coding.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Youngsters as Patriots

A recurrent theme in terms of how the young rappers represent themselves is patriots. It is immediately obvious that four young rappers in three performances (PD 15, PD 22, PD 33) dressed themselves in traditional clothes or had imprinted cultural patterns on a piece of clothing. A prime example of this is that in PD 15, their rap song is a modified version of a well-known Vietnamese legend *Sơn Tinh Thủy Tinh (The spirit of the Mountains and The Spirit of the Seas)*. In this performance one of the young rappers was dressed in modernized *áo dài* and the other in a shirt with patterns of Vietnam's mountains. This new application of traditional costumes demonstrates how the young and dynamic Vietnamese generation has appreciation for their culture. Moreover, the stage with the image of *trống đồng (the bronze drum)* refers to the thriving era of *Văn Lang (the first national name of Vietnam)*, which held an important position in ancient Vietnamese people's spiritual life. Another cultural icon, *nón lá (the Vietnamese conical hat)* can also be seen in PD 22. In this performance, the rapper had

added two strings to the hat to be more suitable for his stage name *Dế Choắt (The Little Cricket)*. *Nón lá* is not only a common object in Vietnamese households, especially in the countryside, but also an artistic symbol in Vietnamese literature and music. Therefore, the use of this significant object has shown the young's respect for the nation's cultural values. The performance with the most prominent cultural features that can be seen from the show is PD 33. In this performance, the rapper wore the traditional male *áo dài* and sat on the bamboo bed while all the children who were back-up dancers were dressed in *áo bà ba (Mrs. Ba shirt)* and black wide pants surrounding him. This can be interpreted that the rapper was the teacher and the dancers were the students in the feudal time in a rural area. In addition, not only is bamboo a common tree for the manufacture of handicrafts or furniture in Vietnamese villages, but its durability also reflects Vietnamese resilience. This stage arrangement also indicates a deep-rooted Vietnamese tradition named *tôn sư trọng đạo (honoring the teachers and respecting their teaching)*, which shows the young's acknowledgement and commendation for the Vietnamese customs.

Figure 1

The Traditional Male Áo dài

Linguistic evidence of young rappers as patriots also can be seen in data as well. What stands out the most is the use of idiomatic expressions such as *rồng rắn lên mây (follow my leaders)* in PD 19, *có chí thì nên (there is a will, there is a way)* in PD 29, and *vạn sự khởi đầu nan (the beginning is always the hardest)* in PD 23. These idiomatic expressions have highlighted some Vietnamese cultural values such as resilience and solidarity. To be specific, the idiom *rồng rắn lên mây* in PD 19 refers to the children's game which the first person or the leader on the queue has to protect the people behind him or her against the opponent while chanting, and the people behind need to cooperate with the movement of the leader to avoid being caught. This implies the cooperation between a group of people to the same goal which is one of key features in Vietnamese collective culture. This culture fosters a strong bond between members in the group, be that a family, an extended family, or an extended relationship; moreover, it likely puts community concerns in priority. These latter two idioms convey a positive message which encourages people to make efforts to overcome hardship and obstacles. It is also noticeable that implicit speech acts are used in the performances through the use of folk tales, legends, and modern literary works. This can be seen in PD 15, the well-known legend *Sơn Tinh Thủy Tinh (the Spirit of Mountains and the Spirit of the Seas)* was retold by the rappers who mentioned Vietnam's famous geographical features such as Ha Long Bay or Vietnam's major historical events such as the historic Bach Dang Battle. Likewise, PD 29 presented the historical tale of Tran Quoc Toan crushing the orange in the debate before a foreign invasion of Vietnam. Meanwhile, PD 36 told the story of the national hero *Gióng* protecting the country. These references indicate the admiration of the young rappers for the natural scenery and the history of

Vietnam, as well as the strength, intelligence and patriotism of the Vietnamese.

Rap came to Vietnam through the exposure of Vietnamese youngsters to the Internet. It has affected Vietnamese youngsters in many aspects ranging from outfits to perspective, such as wearing baggy outfits, heavy golden chains and having distinct individuality. That may hold a different ideology from a collective country like Vietnam. Therefore, youngsters who are influenced by a western culture such as Hip-hop culture are often labelled as people who are westernized and lose their roots (Thi, 2014). However, the analysis of the rap performances above suggests otherwise. The rappers have also tried to include the Vietnamese cultural or national features in their song and their stage. In addition, according to Nguyen (2020), every musical genre is highly likely to be modified to easily blend in a new culture; therefore, rap is adjusted to be welcome in the social context of Vietnam. That is why the young Vietnamese rappers for several generations have made great efforts to make rap more Vietnamese.

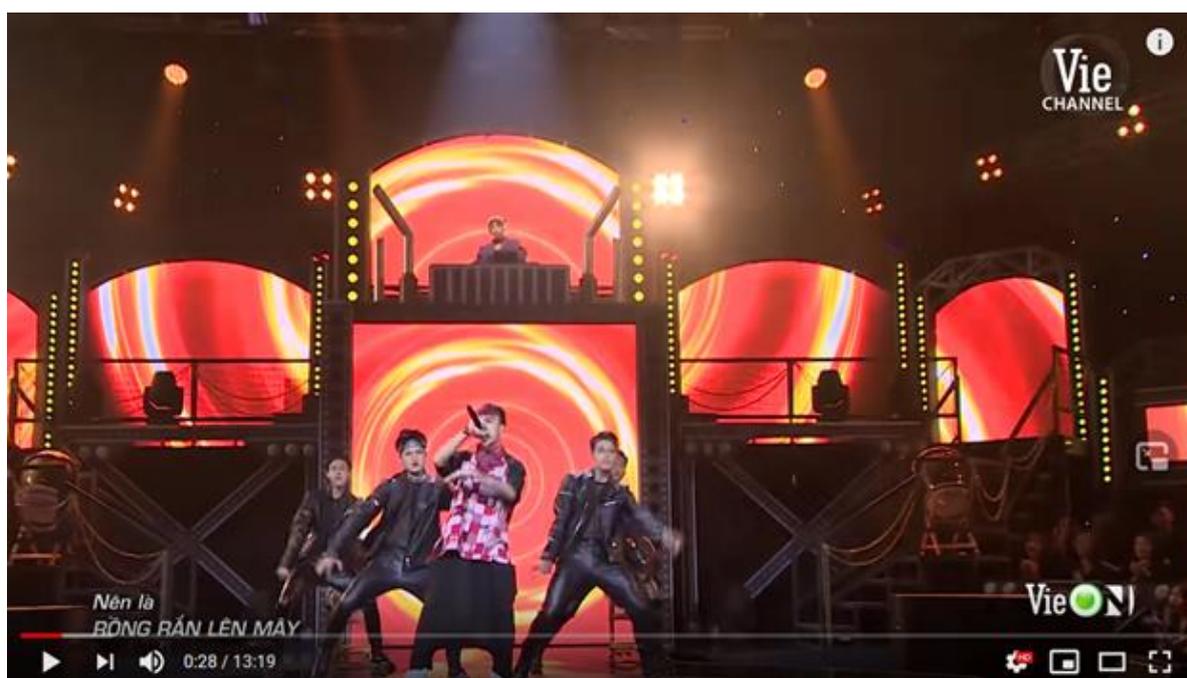### 4.2. *Youngsters as Individuals With Dreams and Aspirations*

A recurring theme that can be seen from the data is individuals with dreams and aspirations. It is apparent from the data that the young rappers dressed in signature extravagant hip-hop outfits such as spark jersey (PD 11), high-end trainers (PD 11, PD 2), heavy golden or silver necklace (PD 11, PD 31, PD 3, PD 6), and luxurious watch (PD 8, PD 16) or the accessories such as heavy chains (also known as bling bling) (PD 1, PD 2, PD 3), oversized suits (PD 16), high-brand sneakers (PD 1), baggy pants (PD 19), sparkle jackets (PD 3) and sport-wear clothes or jerseys (PD 26). Each of these garments and accessories expressed not only the individuality of the young rappers, but also their desire for an opulent

life. It also cultivates a sense of edgy and highlighted appearance for the rappers which complements the expressions and attitudes of hip-hop. This usually seems to be considered unbridled creativity in the face of challenge, outfighting the opposition. What should also be noticed is that some rappers have visible tattoos such as sleeve arms tattoos in PD 8 and PD 19 and even face tattoos in PD 22. This type of body painting commonly holds a negative connotation in Vietnamese society as people associate them with violence, gang and crime. However, in the realm of progressive rap, the majority of that body or face painting indicates an unforgettable individual story or rigorous endeavor to their dream. It is also worth noticing that the majority of the performances were in red stage light (PD7, PD 25, PD 28, PD 23) or had a segment red color in the stage screen (PD 6, PD 9, PD 16, PD 19, PD 23). This significant color can be interpreted as the positive attitude of the young towards challenges and hardships, since it is said to

correlate closely to courage, determination, passion (Cerrato, 2012). Notably, their unshakeable self-confidence together with the solemn face expression in the performances also indicates their determination in the pursuit of their dreams. Going mainstream, rappers have their skin attached for self-expression, rebellion against the oppressors, artistic freedom, or a visual display of personal narrative in contrast to the tattoos related to criminality in the past. Notably, the rappers in most of the performances are gazing directly at the camera, mostly in frontal and medium shots, which allows them to gain more power, facilitate direct communication, and put them in a position to engage with the audiences. Moreover, the scenes not involving the rappers such as viewing the judges, or the audiences are taken through "offer" which is long shots. These scenes can be considered as a symbolistic attribute for the ideals of ambition, prowess, and exclusivity.

Figure 2

Sleeve Arm Tattoos and Baggy Pants

Linguistics of individuals with dreams and aspirations also can be noted in the data. The figure of speech that most of the rappers used is metaphors. For example, in PD 11, the rappers have used several metaphors to talk about their dreams as follows:

Đường dài và còn ngàn vạn trùng để một ngày trong tương lai khao khát vẫn còn cháy nồng

(There is a long way with hardships, one day in the future, his ambitious is still on blaze)

Càng ngày càng lên cao hơn rồi một ngày chạm đỉnh Pentagon

(Each day he reaches higher then one day he reaches Pentagon peak)

While *đường dài và còn ngàn vạn trùng* implies the long future with multiple obstacles, "Pentagon," the highest position of shapes, refers to his yearning for success. The classic motif of utilizing metaphors to talk about aspiration and challenges is reiterated in PD 23. In this performance, the rappers also employed the metaphors, *ngàn vết xước (a thousand cuts)* and *câu chuyện (the story)*.

Để khiến ngàn vết xước của ta

(Let my thousand cuts)

Sẽ viết nên câu chuyện

(Write a story)

Although the rappers talked about their dreams to be successful, wealthy, and renowned, they also mentioned how these materialistic aspects can corrupt people. For instance, in PD 11, after the young rappers had stated their dream to be renowned rappers with an opulent life, they mentioned how that life made people lose themselves in fame and money by using the opposite metaphors. In that scenario, the properties that they owned would be useless: *Khi mà ta đã vượt xa ở dưới đáy thì mới thấy tiền là giấy cố mà lấy chỉ để không (When I was far away from the bottom, I would see that*

money is just papers that just stays still). Another similar notion can be seen in PD 28 through the phrases *bộ đồ Louis V (Louis V clothes), người đàn ông tham vọng (the ambitious man), lên TV (being on TV), nụ cười fake (fake smile)*, and *từ bỏ lí trí (lose his mind)*.

Being conscious of that materialistic life, the young have made a statement that as long as they work for their dreams because of passion, not of the comfort and opulence brought by money and fame, it would be meaningful. For example, in PD 16 the rappers have made it clear that their goal is to produce great art which has good influence on people: *sống để cống hiến chứ không để rũ bỏ sự bần hàn (live to devote not to leave poverty)*. What should also be noticed is the contradiction between the high-end clothing items and the anti-materialism ideology in their lyrics. Almost half of the performances in the Rap Viet show hold this ideology, at the same time, they state how the opulent lives change people. This paradox may have a positive correlation to how rap is represented in the mainstream media. Generally, one of the "ghetto" characteristics, bling-bling materialism is a common topic of rap in the mass consumption market (Pope, 2005). It refers to the glamorous appearance with high end outfits and lavish accessories, extravagant lifestyle and how rappers boast about their success through excessive financial fortune. This evidences the succumbing to the capitalism of mainstream rappers which seems contrary to the authenticity of rap-rebellion to the social norms. Moreover, the key function of mainstream rap is to provide entertainment; therefore, it is crucial that rappers appear as ostentatious as possible. It can be seen from the data analysis that the young rappers tried to fulfill the mainstream rap's requirements of providing entertainment, but still maintain the authenticity of rap. They voiced their dream or passion of doing the unordinary job

as a rapper with determination and a critical perspective, and they also expressed their disagreement towards materialistic life. In response to the commercialization of rap, Vietnamese young rappers have struggled to portray themselves as individuals with aspirations, dreams, and critical views on life.
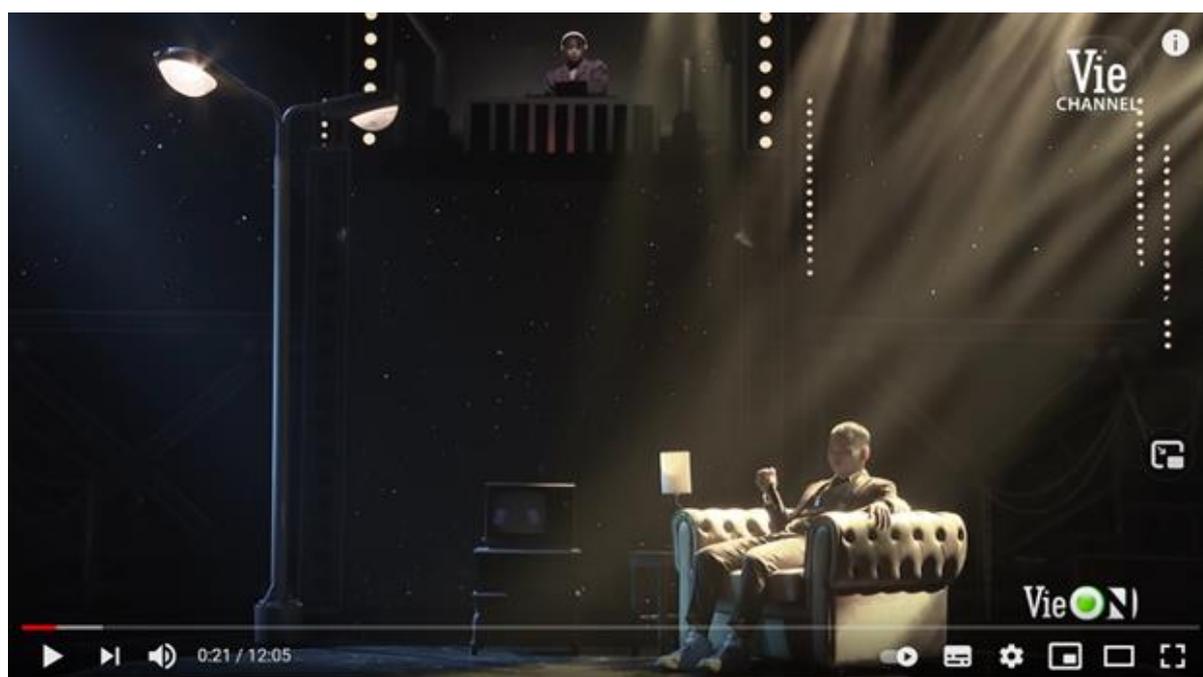
4.3. Youngsters as Children of Their Parents

Another theme in terms of how the young rappers represent themselves is children of their parents. It is clear that the rappers performed with a formal look by wearing suits (PD 1, PD 16, PD 27, PD 28, PD 38). This represents the wish to be more

mature and responsible of the young towards their parents. What should also be noted is that stage arrangement reflects the memory of the rappers' family. To illustrate, in PD 27, there was an old black-white TV, a sofa which represented the home of the rapper. Another highlighted stage arrangement is that in PD 38, where the stage screen was the video of his own mother holding him when he was a toddler, and an oil lamp throughout the performance. The lamp represents the sacrifices of the mother for her child. These particular arrangements cultivate a sense of intimacy and a strong bond between the young and their family.

Figure 3

Suit, Old Black-White TV, and Sofa

Linguistic evidence of how the rappers represent themselves as children of their parents can be observed from the data as well. The speech act type in four out of seven performances includes a representative speech act, which told stories from their memory about their beloved parents, particularly mothers. This implied their love for parents. For instance, in PD 27,

the rapper told the audience his childhood story:

> *Con nhớ những chiều ăn ốc với mẹ ở quán Cây Me*
>
> *(I remember the time eating snails with mom under shop Cay Me)*
>
> *Nhờ chiếc xe Cánh Én, người ôm bà giả bộ say xe*

(By the bike Canh En, I hugged grandma pretending to be bike sick)

Nhớ ngày đầu bên bếp, mẹ dạy con nấu thay mẹ

(Remember the first day in the kitchen, mom taught me how to cook for you)

Nhớ những bài nhạc cổ điển

(Remember the classical music)

Mà hai ba con mình vẫn hay nghe

(That my father and I used to hear)

Con từng ví mình là ngọn cỏ, còn ba mẹ là cả rừng cây

(I compared myself to a small herb, and parents are like a forest)

Xem mình là một chú chim nhỏ, được bao bọc giữa lưng chừng mây

(See myself as a little bird being protected by the cloud)

Chiều ăn ốc (eating snails in the afternoon), xe Cánh Én (Canh En bike), ngày đầu lên bếp (the first day in the kitchen), classical music (âm nhạc cổ điển) are the special memories that helps to create a strong bond between the rapper and his family. Moreover, in this performance, there is a metaphor *ngọn cỏ (a blade of grass)* referring to himself, together with *rừng cây (a forest)* referring to his parents to talk about how the parents loved and took care of him when he was young. Similarly, the metaphors in the next sentence *chú chim nhỏ (a little bird)* and *đám mây (the cloud)* refer to himself and the love that he received, respectively. In the next verse, he expressed his love for his parents explicitly: *thì con biết ông trời đang cướp hai người con yêu nhất đi từng giây (I know God tried take the two people I love the most day by day)*. Another same motif by which offspring showing appreciation towards the parents was in PD 36, *con muốn đứng trên tất cả ôm chặt những người con yêu (I want to hug the people I love)*.

It can be seen from the data analysis that the young rappers' identity as children of their parents holds a positive correlation to their identity as patriots. To justify, filial piety is considered prominent in Vietnamese culture. Moreover, the metaphor *quê hương (home)* in PD 2 can have double meanings. One of which can be the nation while the other is likely to be home or the place where their beloved lives. The practice of Vietnamese culture or the love for the nation of the young rappers was also nurtured in the family through the stories, folktales, and historical facts. The fact that the rappers followed and voiced their dream despite the likely objection from their family evidenced their identity as people with aspiration.

However, it appears that young Vietnamese rappers, instead of swimming against the current as expected, conform to social norms, especially the theme *youngsters as patriots* and the theme *youngsters as children of their parents* which have a positive correlation with each other as they both suggest the compliance with the social expectation of popular rap in Vietnam. This is consistent with findings of Oware (2014) and Kadıoğlu and Özdal (2020) who stated that it is possible that rap critically undergoes a heavy filtered system to be welcome in mainstream culture. This system eradicates any extreme ideologies or languages due to the expectation of the mass music industry to provide recreation. This restriction can also be explained by the fact that in the context of Vietnam, rap has been adjusted through this system as being noted in the data that no profanities emerged. Instead, the young rappers use metaphors with major relation to cultural stories, legends to voice their narratives about life crisis or young love. In other words, they are conforming to traditions and cultural values. This is contradictory to what the people commonly think of rap as a rebellious genre with rappers being framed as gangsters and rapping being a taboo. This assumption perhaps is because the exposure of

mainstream rap is majorly the "ghetto" features that highlight the drug industry encouragement, materialism, gangsterism and misogyny (Oware, 2014). It is also because of how rappers dress in extravagant hip-hop clothes, boast about fame and money while pointing their hands like a gun or throwing their fists in the air like aggressive people (Pope, 2005). In the context of Vietnam, the fact that the rappers perform in accordance with all the commonly exposed features of mainstream rap not only contributes to attracting the viewers, but also signifies themselves as rappers. In other words, they have performed their identity through outfits and body movements which are lineaments of hip-hop culture. This result confirms the definition and function of identity performance that are reported by Klein et al. (2007).

5. Conclusion

5.1. Summary of Major Findings

This study set out to examine the construction and performance of Vietnamese youth identity through rap. The most obvious finding to emerge from this study is how Vietnamese youth have utilized Vietnamese cultural stories, social phenomena together with hip-hop terms and vernacular to express their appreciation to their nation. The second major finding is how Vietnamese youth have constructed and performed their identity as individuals with dreams and aspirations. In this theme, Vietnamese youth have shown their determination and confidence in their competence and what they have undergone to pursue their goals through multiple narratives. This may imply the empowerment of Vietnamese youth in general. One of the other significant findings of this study is how the young rappers have constructed their identity as children of their parents. This shows their strong bonds with their family members, especially mothers

who wielded ideologies such as anti-materialism. This ideology establishes a close connection between the third theme *children of their parents* and the second theme *individuals with dreams and aspirations* because these themes help to portray Vietnamese youth as young people with ambitions and social consciousness. Meanwhile, both the first theme *patriots* and the third *theme children of their parents* suggest the youth's compliance with the social expectation of mainstream rap.

In summary, rap music is a manifestation and embodiment of youth non-social movement and culture. In this movement, art expression and multiple communication have interwoven to produce new discourses that reflect youth identity.

5.2. Limitations

A main limitation of this study is that it did not consider other important aspects of a stage performance such as the rappers' voice, music, gestures, and choreography, which are critical to the construction and performance of their identity. It is also limited by the lack of information on official Vietnamese rap information. Besides, another major drawback of this study is viewing youth's identity in an entertainment show which puts priority on attracting an audience instead of giving the artists freedom to express themselves. This could put a limit on how the youth construct and perform their identity, as well as the diversity of identities that are salient in the show. It is advisable that further research be carried out in order to validate how the young construct and perform their identities through rap in Vietnam.

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Appendix

No	Name of the song and the artist	The link to the song	Upload time
PD 1	Colorless (Không màu) - VVSIX vs Tony D	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rAxToNdc_YY	13/09/2020
PD 2	And me (Và tôi) - JBee 7 vs Lăng LD	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nn9Ib5hHXMs	21/09/2020
PD 3	Shine (Tỏa sáng) - R.I. C vs F	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Qr_Qw2dClA&t=126s	21/09/2020
PD 4	This earth (Trái đất này) - Dế Choắt vs B: Okeh	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zeMs88qA74	22/09/2020
PD 5	Stay (Ở lại đây) - Gill vs Yang	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6ygkW4OuUE	20/09/2020
PD 6	Run (Chạy) - GDucky vs Tez	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-3jXY2YZ-wM&t=114s	20/09/2020
PD 7	Don't (Đừng) - Nul vs Hydra	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBILQY8oop4	20/09/2020
PD 8	M. A. Y - RPT MCK vs Yuno BigBoi vs Duy Andy	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ivZj4iHtjWI&t=75s	20/09/2020
PD 9	The modern moon boy (Bờm hiện đại) - Bad BZ vs Đạt Dope	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2AEWhs4uOM	27/09/2020
PD 10	Traffic congestion (Kẹt xe) - Kuboss vs Lor	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CopCcofY9Yc	27/09/2020
PD 11	Triangle world (Thế giới tam giác) - Tage vs Gừng	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VzDbHeeFgg4&t=148s	27/09/2020

PD 12	Love….Weather (Tình… hình thời tiết) - Tling vs Ak49 vs Hà Quốc Hoàng	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mx0FRw66ir0&t=270s	27/09/2020
PD 13	Meeting each other is Skrrtt (Gặp nhau là Skrrtt) - 16 Typh vs Lee Boo	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lr2TR7YNAS4	04/10/2020
PD 14	Pay back (trả nợ) - Mac Junior - Lil. Cell - Hành Or	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=obqSpBJ66SI	04/10/2020
PD 15	Mountain spirit and sea spirit (Sơn Tinh Thủy Tinh) - R.Tee vs Ricky Star	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nkcfxZXQ3bg	04/10/2020
PD 16	Sand and gold dust (Hạt cát bụi vàng) - RPT Gonza vs Thành Draw	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sBXEB5G0W4I&t=315s	04/10/2020
PD 17	Step (Bước) - Đạt Dope	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ng-Zo6e3_cM	11/10/2020
PD 18	The real picture - Ak49	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hwo8yAMkOJg	11/10/2020
PD 19	Follow-my-leader (Rồng rắn lên mây) - Thành Draw	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=34d9de_S4vw&t=183s	11/10/2020
PD 20	Duong Qua is too stretching, the martial arts festival (Dương Quá căng, Đại hội võ lâm) - Hydra	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1qFi4bWr9o	11/10/2020
PD 21	Who is that? (Người ấy là ai?) - 16 Typh	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r65cn_GA1oU&t=185s	11/10/2020
PD 22	The adventure (Phiêu lưu ký) - Dế Choắt	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y0qHfB5gvIo&t=116s	11/10/2020
PD 23	The beginning is always the hardest (Vạn sự khởi đầu nan) - Duy Andy	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mLD4SFzRUxw	18/10/2020
PD 24	Have an iron constitution (Mình đồng da sắt) - TEZ	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ckWumGMZvdY&t=402s	18/10/2020

PD 25	Don't lower your head when looking down (Đừng cúi đầu khi nhìn xuống) - Tony D	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KWgaLzKwDQM&t=113s	18/10/2020
PD 26	There is too much work in the house (Nhà bao việc) - RTee	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRebHB3d6is&t=193s	18/10/2020
PD 27	If it is love, say so (Yêu là phải nói) - Lor	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VLDiXYIwzoo	18/10/2020
PD 28	What to do with much money (Tiền nhiều để làm gì) - GDucky	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_3fbvQgyzA&t=199s	17/10/2020
PD 29	Where there is a will there is a way (Có chí thì nên) - Hành Or	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_mrzRXDG5c	25/10/2020
PD 30	Seeing is believing (Trăm nghe không bằng thấy) - F	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRXyJT6YTDI	25/10/2020
PD 31	T.A.O (The ambitious one) - Tage	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQnXu16JhaY	25/10/2020
PD 32	Let it be (Mặc sự đời) - TLinh	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_liyxYlKQA&t=63s	25/10/2020
PD 33	Teacher Nam (Thầy Nam) - RPT Gonzo	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c7gU3vbq7OI&t=637s	25/10/2020
PD 34	Rich because of friend, luxurious because of wife (Giàu vì bạn, sang vì vợ) - RPT MCK	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cHpNIZjxzsY&t=47s	25/10/2020
PD 35	Modest (Nết na) - JBee 7	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A0V5cCvZpMA	01/11/2020
PD 36	Sweep it all (Quét sạch hết) - Gill	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5papBnyA-g	01/11/2020
PD 37	Future (Tiền đồ) - R.I.C	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nl7QMC00smw	01/11/2020

| PD 38 | Just leaving from the hometown (Ở nhà quê mới lên) - Lăng LD | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K76fy5IxU08 | 01/11/2020 |
| PD 39 | The good kid from other family (Con nhà người ta) - Ricky Star | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5DC_VWW_S2M | 01/11/2020 |

SỰ HÌNH THÀNH VÀ THỂ HIỆN CĂN TÍNH NGƯỜI TRẺ THÔNG QUA NHẠC RAP: NGHIÊN CỨU ĐIỂN HÌNH VỀ CHƯƠNG TRÌNH RAP VIỆT

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Tóm tắt: Nghiên cứu này liên quan đến lí thuyết về phân tích diễn ngôn phê phán của Fairclough (1989). Trong thời gian gần đây, nhạc rap đã chiếm được vị trí ổn định trong truyền thông chính thống và mang đến màn ảnh truyền hình một văn hóa giới trẻ đầy sôi nổi. Nhạc rap là nơi để người trẻ kể câu chuyện của họ và người khác, cũng như để họ vẽ lên một chân dung khác của mình (Sciullo, 2019). Áp dụng khung lí thuyết của Fairclough (1989) cùng với khung lí thuyết của Kress và van Leeuwen (2006), chúng tôi nghiên cứu diễn ngôn của rap tiếng Việt thông qua các yếu tố ngôn ngữ học và hình ảnh. Nghiên cứu là một nỗ lực để trả lời câu hỏi: nhạc rap đã đóng góp như nào đến sự hình thành và thể hiện căn tính của người Việt trẻ? Nghiên cứu gợi ý rằng người trẻ Việt đã xây dựng và thể hiện căn tính của mình như là những người yêu nước, những cá nhân với ước mơ và hoài bão, và những đứa con của bố mẹ họ. Những chủ đề này có liên kết chặt chẽ với nhau và phản ánh sự tuân thủ của người trẻ Việt với những kì vọng xã hội về nhạc rap chính thống.

Từ khóa: rap, phân tích diễn ngôn đa phương tiện, căn tính người trẻ

THE ENGLISH ABSTRACT IN JOURNAL ARTICLES ON APPLIED LINGUISTICS: LEXICO-GRAMMATICAL FEATURES

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Abstract: This study explores the lexico-grammatical features of the abstracts of research articles (RAAs) in the field of applied linguistics. The data for this study is 30 RAAs from the two journals - *English for Specific Purposes Journal* (ESPJ) and *TESOL Quarterly Journal* (TSQJ). The analysis was based on Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) as an analytical tool and confined to three systems of transitivity, modality and thematisation. The results reveal that regarding transitivity, an overwhelming majority lies with material and relational processes although all types of processes are present. As for modality, most of the clauses are non-modalised. As far as thematic structure is concerned, this genre contains mainly single unmarked topical themes; the use of multiple, interpersonal and textual themes is infrequent. The results of this study hold practical implications for teaching English for Academic Purposes.

Keywords: research article abstract, systemic functional grammar, transitivity, modality, thematisation

1. Introduction

Research articles (RAs) are aimed to communicate new knowledge to members of the academic community and thus persuading them to accept the claims (Hyland, 2000). One of the key parts of a RA is the abstract, which is considered as the point of departure. Hartley (2003) maintains that the abstract tends to be the first part of a journal article to be read because it captures the essence of the whole article. Due to the importance of the communicative appeal of an abstract and given the status of English as a lingua franca, many journals that are published in languages other than English also need the submission of an English version of the abstract (Lorés, 2004). The abstracts written in English, therefore, have been well researched, for both writing and reading purposes. Journal comprehension would be greatly improved if readers could recognize the linguistic signals of the different functions of the abstracts. On the other hand, thanks to the signals which provide a clear guidance to readers, writers can communicate their ideas more effectively.

There has been a growing body of literature that describes the RAA. Researchers have explored the abstracts either in English written by native speakers or from a cross-linguistic perspective. These

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studies investigated the abstracts in different disciplines, such as engineering, finance and surgery (Ge & Yang, 2005), experimental social science (Martín, 2003), protozoology (Cross & Oppenhein, 2006), conservation biology and wildlife behavior (Samraj, 2005), linguistics (Lorés, 2004), linguistics and chemistry (Li, 2011), applied linguistics (Santos, 1996; Pho, 2008), and so on. These researches explored either the macro-structure (rhetorical structure, move-structure, generic structure) and/or micro linguistic features. Several studies have documented the linguistic features such as tense (Chalak & Norouzi, 2013; Cross & Oppenhein, 2006; Li, 2011; Salager-Meyer, 1992; Tseng, 2011), voice (Cross & Oppenhein, 2006; Li, 2011), modality (Salager-Meyer, 1992), or subject and voice (Pho, 2008). These studies, however, have explored the linguistic features in terms of traditional concepts. Such descriptions are unsatisfactory because on the one hand they have been descriptive in nature, failing to take account of the social-cultural features, and on the other hand research on the article abstract has been mostly restricted to one single feature or two. This indicates a need to understand the causal factors underlying these features.

In this paper, we attempt to extend these previous studies by manipulating SFG as an analytical tool. SFG is an internationally influential model of language associated with the English-born linguist Michael Halliday. It enables an in-depth description of lexico-grammatical features interpreted in terms of discourse-semantic features. Because it is unable to encompass the multiple lexico-grammatical dimensions representing the three lines of meaning in SFG in one paper, this investigation focuses on only one dimension in each meaning. This study sought to answer the following specific research questions: (1) What are the typical lexical-grammatical features regarding *transitivity* and how do they represent the *experiential* meaning? (2) What are the typical lexical-grammatical features regarding *modality* and how do they represent the *interpersonal* meaning? and (3) What are the typical lexical-grammatical features regarding *thematic structure* and how do they represent the *textual* meaning?

2. Literature Review

SFG is a social, descriptive theory of language. Rather than a set of rules for specifying grammatical structures, SFG presents language as a resource for creating meanings – the three simultaneously performed meta-functions (Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). The *ideational function* serves for the expression of content. It refers to human experience of the world, including the worlds in minds, to describe events and states, and the entities that are involved in them. The *interpersonal function* refers to the communication roles created and maintained by using language. The *textual meaning* refers to the use of language to organize human's experiential, logical and interpersonal meaning into a coherent whole. In SFG, each metafunction is realized through choices from various systems in the lexico-grammar of a language. The ideational metafunction is realized through transitivity system and logico-semantic types; the interpersonal through mood and modality, and the textual through thematic structure, information structure and cohesion.

According to Halliday, each of the three metafunctions also tends to serve to project one of the three different aspects of context; he sets the following correspondences as a working hypothesis:

Field _____ ideational

Tenor _____ interpersonal

Mode _____ textual

The correlation between context, functions and wordings can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Context, Semantics and Lexico-Grammar (Eggins, 2004, p. 112)
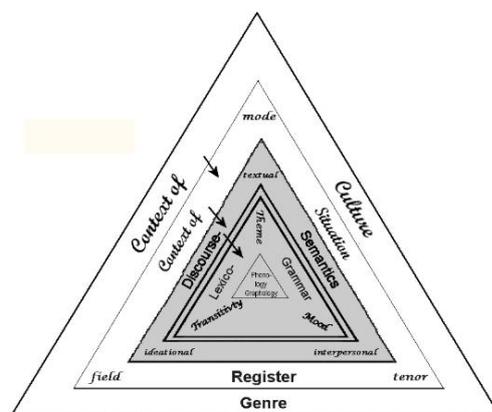
A full account can be contemplated in some widely circulated works on SFG, the most accessible being Downing and Locke (1995), Eggins (2004), and Halliday and Matthiessen (2004).

This study is confined to only three linguistic resources of each line of meaning: we chose to analyze transitivity system for ideational meaning, modality for interpersonal meaning and thematic structure for textual meaning, each of which is briefly presented below.

2.1. Transitivity

The system of transitivity is concerned with different process types and their participants and circumstances (Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

Material process is the process of doing and happening. It might be action or event such as kicking, beating, running, walking, etc. (e.g. *We are all eating now; The lion caught the tourist*). *Behavioural process* is the process of physiological and psychological behaviour such as breathing, crying, drinking, etc. (e.g. *She's laughing*; *Don't breathe!*). *Mental process* is the process of sensing such as thinking, loving, wanting, hoping, etc. It is concerned with our experience of the world of our own consciousness (e.g. *He saw the car; Mary liked the gift.*). *Verbal process* is the process of saying such as saying, telling, speaking, talking, etc. (*John said 'I'm hungry'; They praised her to her parents*). *Relational process* is the process of being, having, becoming, in which a participant is characterized, identified, or situated circumstantially. There are three main types of relation: *intensive*, *possessive* and *circumstantial* (e.g. *Pat is the richest; Peter has a piano.*). *Existential process* is the process of existing, indicating that something or some natural force exists (e.g. *There was a storm; On the wall there hangs a picture.*).

Circumstances are almost always optional augmentations of the clause rather than obligatory components and typically occur freely in all types of process. They are realized by adverbial groups or prepositional phrases. Circumstantial element serves as an expansion of the experiential content of the text instead of standing on its own. The circumstantials consist of nine types including *Extent, Location, Manner, Cause, Contingency,* Ac*companiment*, *Role*, *Matter* and *Angle*.

2.2. Modality

Modality is a complicated area of the different ways with which a language user can intrude on their messages to convey

attitudes and judgment. There are four main kinds of modality: probability, usuality, obligation and readiness. This strand of meaning can be expressed in various ways (summarized in Table 2). There is a difference in the degree to which the speaker seems to be taking responsibility for the assessment or the pressure on the other person. S/he may express his/her subjective view point clearly, or do it in an objective way by making it appear to be a quality of the event itself.

Table 1

Realizations of Modality in English (Martin et al., 1997, p. 70)

Kinds of modality	Congruent realizations			Metaphorical realizations	
	Finite **Implicitly subjective**	Adjunct (mood) **Implicitly objective**	Predicator **Implicitly objective**	Mental clause **Explicitly subjective**	Attributive clause **Explicitly objective**
Probability	can/could may/might will/would should	possibly probably certainly ...		[cognitive:] I guess, I think, I know	it is possible it is probable it is certain
Usuality	ought to, must	sometimes, usually, always...			it is unusual (for him to leave)
Obligation		necessarily ...	be allowed to be supposed to be obliged to	[affective:] I'm willing for... I expect... I want...	it is permitted it is expected it's necessary (for him to leave)
Readiness: inclination		willingly, eagerly	be willing to be keen to be determined to	[verbal group complex] I'd like to leave I want to leave	it'd be lovely to leave
Readiness: ability	can/could		be able to		it is possible for him to leave

2.3. Thematisation

Thematisation is concerned with the organization of information within individual clauses, and through this, with the organization of the larger text, given its purpose and context. The system of Theme is realized via a structure in which the clause falls into two main constituents – a THEME and a RHEME. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) define the point of departure of the message as THEME, and the remainder of the message as RHEME. THEME is the element coming first in the clause, while RHEME is the one providing additional information to the starting point. Theme may be single or multiple, marked or unmarked. A single Theme is one that contains only an

experiential element (topical Theme). Topical Themes are divided into unmarked topical Theme and marked topical Theme. If the first topical element of a declarative clause is the Subject, it is called unmarked theme; non-subject themes are marked. There are also other elements preceding the topical theme which are either textual or interpersonal in function, playing no part in the experiential meaning in the clause. When there is a *topical Theme* plus *textual Theme* and/or *interpersonal Themes* in a clause, the clause has *multiple Theme*. The *textual Theme* almost always constitutes the first part of the Theme. It gives thematic prominence to textual elements with a linking function. It can be realized by conjunctions, relative pronouns, conjunctives and continuatives. The *interpersonal Theme* represents the interpersonal element with which the speaker or writer acts on the listener or reader. It can be a *vocative*, a *modal* or a *comment adjunct*, a *finite verbal operator*, *Wh-element* or *interpersonal metaphors of modality*. Besides, when the speakers/writers wish to give emphasis to a constituent, they can make use of *predicated Theme*. The typical structure of this theme begins with "It is/was...".

3. Research Methods

3.1. Data Collection

Data for this study consist of 30 RAAs collected from two journals in the discipline of applied linguistics - 15 RAAs from *English for Specific Purposes Journal* (ESPJ) and 15 RAAs from *TESOL Quarterly Journal* (TSQJ). These two journals were chosen as they are prestigious and widely circulated. The RAAs chosen as data for this study were confined to the latest issues up to the time when this study began. Another criterion of selection was whether the article is a review of literature or an empirical

study; only the abstracts of the papers which report empirical studies were chosen. The fifteen abstracts from each journal were coded from 1 to 15 (see Appendix); these codes are referred to in parentheses at the end of the examples in Section 4 as the sources from which the illustrations are extracted.

3.2. Data Analysis

The analytical unit was the clause. The initial step involved the division of each abstract into clause complexes (traditionally the sentence), then into clauses. To establish the linguistic features in each meaning, we analyzed the data in terms of transitivity (processes and circumstances), modality, and thematic structure. To determine the prominent characteristic features, we based on the statistical figure of occurrence of each sub-type. Finally, the whole linguistic picture was interpreted in terms of the three corresponding situational variables of field, tenor and mode.

4. Findings

In 30 RAAs, there are a total of 192 clause complexes. Of these, 39 sentences consist of a single clause ('clause simplex'); the remainders are clause complexes, 56 with two, 55 with three, 21 with four, 10 with five, 3 with six, 2 with seven, and 2 with eight clauses, giving a total of 498 clauses in all. No minor clause is found.

4.1. Transitivity

Figure 1 summarizes the analysis of transitivity of 30 RAAs, showing the distribution of the process types. These are shown for all clauses (498 clauses), including those that are embedded, since clauses select freely in the transitivity systems.

Figure 2

Distribution of Processes
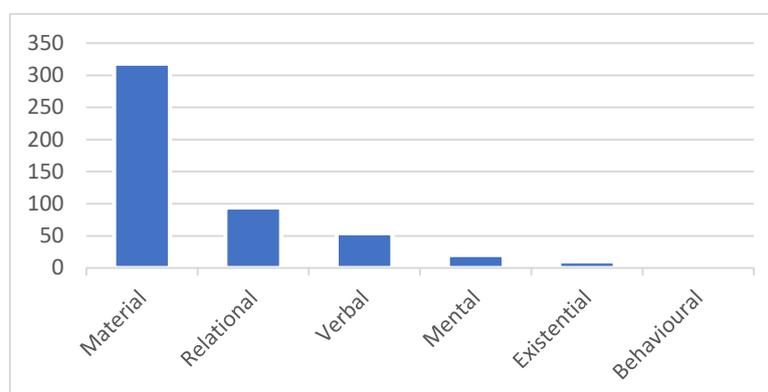
As can be seen from Figure 2, all the six types are found. Among them, Material process is the most predominant (63.86%), accounting for more than three-fifths of the clauses, leaving each of all the other five types a very low proportion. Relational process ranks second (18.88%). Meanwhile, Verbal, Mental, Existential and Behavioural processes are less common, with 10.84%, 4.02%, 2.01% and 0.40% respectively.

As for Material process, those in the abstracts mainly focus on actions. The variety of verbs used in the abstracts such as *examine, investigate, draw, identify, show, describe, develop...* shows that writers perform many different activities, and the writers have a strong tendency toward providing what they did in their studies. Some other verbs are found as signals of this process in these such as *analyze, investigate,* etc. For example,

(1) It <u>investigates</u>, first, how each student <u>participated</u>, and <u>was positioned</u>, in the classroom network of practice, and, second, what kinds of English growth each student <u>experienced</u> between the fall and spring. (TSQJ-9)

Regarding Relational Process, all the three subtypes are found, with the number of intensive relational process being far higher than the others. Although 'be' is the most

common intensive verb used, other synonyms exist in the abstracts like *mean*, for example:

(2) Findings indicate, however, that while centrality and increasingly full participation in the classroom network of practice did <u>mean</u> different ways of interacting, a more central place did not afford greater language growth in measures of vocabulary and syntactic complexity. (TSQJ-9)

The verbs *consist, include, have, involve,* etc... are used as signals of possessive relational processes, whereas circumstantial relational processes are presented by verbs *present, associate, relate.*

(3) These findings illuminate contingencies of an EMI policy bound by a local context which <u>include</u> a shared understanding of the influences of an instructional language on teaching HSS subjects. (ESPJ-12)

Verbal process is just over 10%, *suggest, report, say, conclude, discuss, recommend* being the common verbs. For example,

(4) Post-analytically, the author <u>suggests</u> pedagogical implications of

what the participants' categories <u>say</u> about issues related to the ER teaching principles in an English for academic purposes context. (TSQJ-2)

The proportions of Mental, Existential and Behavioural processes are low. Mental process exists in RAAs with low frequency (4.02 %). *Perceive*, *view*, *want*, *feel*, *expect,* etc. are the verbs commonly employed. Existential and Behavioural processes occupy the lowest rank with only 2.01% and 0.40% respectively. The existential process can be present in the abstracts by verbs such as *persist*, *be*, *emerge* and *appear*; whereas, *observe* describes the behavioural process.

(5) Interestingly, the local language <u>was perceived</u> as crucial to practicing the HSS disciplines and to conducting their professional roles. (ESPJ-12)

(6) Although the federal government has documented that schools are instituting policies of providing only one set of services, such as special education or EL supports, there <u>is</u> little understanding as to why this practice <u>persists</u> in spite of educational laws and policies. (TSQJ-11)

(7) This research adopts a qualitative approach, using data from two groups of participants: a group of nine nurses who participated in interviews and a group of 10 nurses who <u>were observed</u> in the workplace. (TSQJ-4)

Table 2 presents the most common verbs realizing each process in the RAAs analyzed.

Table 2

Typical Verbs Realizing Processes

Process	Verbs
Material	examine, identify, conduct, show, use, analyse, investigate, participate, experience, take, note
Relational	Intensive: be, mean Possessive: consist, include, have, involve, obtain, contain Circumstantial: present, need, associate, support, relate, bound
Mental	perceive, want, feel, expect, consider
Existential	exist, persist, emerge, appear, be, exhibit
Verbal	suggest, report, say, conclude, discuss, recommend
Behavioural	observe

Closely related to the processes are the attendant circumstances, functioning to increase the experiential content by adding specificity to the experiential meanings in these abstracts. They give more details about the descriptions by telling where, when, why, how, or with whom. Overall, circumstances do not frequently appear in every clause, approximately one circumstance per two clauses; nearly all kinds of circumstances appear in RAAs. Among those, the dominant circumstance is that of Location (35.10%). Manner comes second (17.96%), followed by Accompaniment (12.65%). This number signifies that the writers tend to clarify their studies by noting where and how the studies have been implemented. One special thing is

that none of temporal location occurs at all in the abstracts. The proportions of *Role* and *Cause* are nearly equal - 8.57% and 8.16%, respectively. The frequencies of *Angle* and *Contingency* are rare - 0.82% and 0.41%).

The following abstract illustrates how circumstances are used. The circumstances are underlined, followed by the type specified in parentheses.

(8) Technical words are words whose meanings are related to one specific and specialized subject area, such as Business English (BE). Knowledge of the semantic nuances and pragmatic uses of these technical words is crucial to developing one's competence in a particular field [Location]. Thus, developing a list of frequent technical words in a given area is a necessary resource for those who are teaching and learning English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The present study develops such a list of frequently used technical words in the field of finance by adopting a combined method [Manner] (Keyword Analysis and a modified rating scale). The resulting list contains 979 words crucial to finance, which are categorized into 569 word families [Extent]. These 979 words are listed in both the General Service List (GSL) and the Academic Word List (AWL) (413 and 291 words, respectively) [Location]. This study demonstrates that a combined Keyword Analysis-rating scale method can more effectively [Manner] identify high frequency technical words than can either of these methods used alone. Hybrid methods are recommended for creating future BE vocabulary lists to overcome the inherent flaws

of individual analytic methods. (ESPJ-11)

4.2. Modality

The number of modalised clauses is not very high (less than 10%), most of which express probability, and less frequently obligation. The ratio between the modalised clauses to the non-modalised is about one to ten (Figure 3). Because the number of modalised clauses is not very high (less than 10%), we chose not to make further analysis into the various sub-systems of modality.

Figure 3

Distribution of Modalised/Non Modalised Clauses
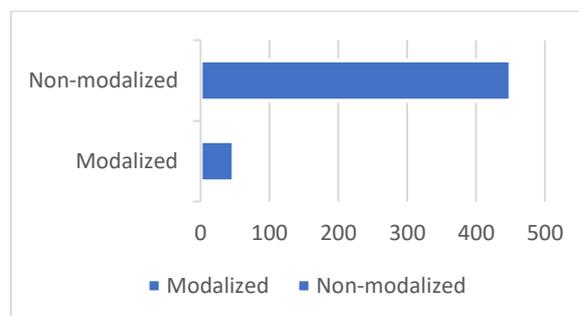
Modality is realized by modal operators such as *can*, *may, could, will, might*. Among them, *can* is used frequently and is often employed in the passive voice, as can be seen in the following examples.

(9) The approach to curriculum development illustrated in this paper can be applied to other ESP topics. (ESPJ-14)

Others such as *may*, *should*, *might*, and the lexical verb *suggest* are employed to convey obligation, or inclination. In these abstracts, inclination is tied to giving suggestions drawn from results of the studies. For example,

(10) Pre-service teacher education courses on subjects such as Biology, Geography or Spanish may include ESP in their curricula. ESP can be taught with a view to reinforcing

content and language integrated learning (CLIL). The purpose of this study is to understand how CLIL and ESP can complement each other. (ESPJ-3)

(11) It <u>should</u> be noted that the EMI experience also interacts with both students' and teachers' L2 motivation. (TSQJ-5)

(12) The study <u>suggests</u> that paraphrasing by these advanced graduate students is a process of smoothly integrating the source information into the new text by syntactically restructuring, interpreting and recounting only the source text with relevance to the new text. (ESPJ-10)

Besides, adjective *likely* are also used to express ability and probability.

(13) This description of how experienced tutors support their trainees' vocabulary acquisition is <u>likely</u> to be of value to new and experienced tutors in trades teaching and beyond. (ESPJ-4)

There is only one Comment adjunct out of 498 clauses, as can be seen in (14).

(14) <u>Surprisingly,</u> interactional metadiscourse shows a marked decline in the discursive soft knowledge fields and a substantial increase in the science subjects. (ESPJ-9)

4.3. Thematisation

In the analysis of thematisation, the embedded clauses are ignored. It is because 'their thematic contribution to the discourse is minimal' (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 100). The result of analysis is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Frequency of Theme Types

Types of theme	Textual Theme	Interpersonal Theme	Topical Theme		Total
			Marked	Unmarked	
No. of instances	108	5	49	231	280
Percentage (%)	38.57	1.79	17.50	82.50	100

As can be seen from Table 2, two things stand out: (1) Interpersonal Themes are rarely used in RAAs, and (2) a predominant proportion of Topical Themes are unmarked.

Firstly, there are only five cases of Interpersonal Themes. This shows that it is not common for RAAs writers to convey their attitudes. For example,

(15) <u>Surprisingly,</u> interactional metadiscourse shows a marked decline in the discursive soft knowledge fields and a substantial increase in the science subjects. (ESPJ-9)

(16) <u>Interestingly,</u> the local language was perceived as crucial to practicing the HSS disciplines and to conducting their professional roles. (ESPJ-12)

Most of Topical Themes unmarked, with over one-fifth (82.50%). This indispensably makes the abstracts become clear and concise.

(17) <u>Results</u> show that <u>the use of authentic materials, a focus on subject matter knowledge and language awareness-based activities</u> had a positive impact on student-

teachers' trajectories as future teachers and foreign language learners. (ESPJ-3)

(18) <u>This study</u> provides insights into language development in a trades training context in New Zealand. (ESPJ-4)

Thematised –*ing*, or –*en* clauses are often used as signals of marked topical themes. According to Downing and Locke (1995, p. 234), they are rather formal and are characteristic of written rather than spoken language.

(19) <u>Extending our diachronic work analysing a corpus of 2.2 million words from articles in the top journals in four disciplines</u>, we show there has been a significant increase in interactive features and a significant decrease in interactional types. (ESPJ-9)

(20) <u>Given that the enactment of EMI varies according to the underlying language ideologies of the educators who implement it</u>, the authors argue for […]. (TSQJ-1)

More commonly used are the circumstances of spatial location.

(21) <u>In this research setting</u>, English language-learning motivation, authenticity and identity played a crucial role. (ESPJ-3)

(22) <u>In this paper</u> we explore whether, and to what extent, metadiscourse has changed in professional writing in different disciplines over the past 50 years. (ESPJ-9)

Textual themes are signaled by conjunctions such as *although*, *and*, *on the one hand*, *on the other hand*, *instead*, *because*, *firstly*, *secondly*, *furthermore*, serving to make RAAs logically expressed.

(23) <u>Furthermore</u>, it examines how these resources shape and were shaped by the classroom community of practice. (TSQJ-14)

5. Discussion

These results are in agreement with those obtained by Gosden (1993), Lorés (2004), Pho (2008) and Salager-Meyer (1992). As for thematic realization, this study produced results which corroborate the features found by Gosden (1993) and Lorés (2004). That a predominant proportion of themes are unmarked topical Themes is similar to the result in Gosden (1993)'s study which reveals that the most common topical Themes in scientific and academic discourse in English tend to be realized in the grammatical category of Subject. In Lorés (2004)' study, thematic analysis was carried out not in isolated sentences but in terms of thematic progression and method of thematic development, that is, how thematic material is linked to the material which comes next in the text and which material is typically used in thematic position. Although analyzed from a slightly different perspective, the finding accords with that of our present study. Lorés (2004) found that Theme was generally realised as the unmarked Theme; the other realisations were 'empty it' and subordinate clauses, textual themes (*however*), which were particularly infrequent. Lores (2004)'s findings were also similar to ours in terms of the circumstantial element as marked Theme. Pho (2008)'s findings concerning the grammatical subjects reveal semantic features of this category, which are, though incomparable to ours, do agree with our major finding that the unmarked topical Themes, traditionally the grammatical Subject, are typical of the English abstracts in applied linguistics. Moreover, comparison of our finding in terms of modality with Salager-Meyer (1992)'s study of modality

usage in medical English abstracts reveals similarity, too. In both studies, modals make up less than 10% of all the verb forms in the abstracts, with 'may' being of the highest frequency, followed by 'can'.

All these previous studies were concerned with the correlations between these linguistic features and the rhetorical moves. Evidence from these studies suggest how the meaning conveyed by these features is related to the communicative function of the different rhetorical stages (moves) of the abstracts. Our present study adopts the SFL approach to genre analysis. This approach perceives genres as goal-oriented social activities that people engage in as members of their culture (Martin, 1984; Eggins, 2004). SFL considers 'realization' as a key notion which helps to describe the dynamic relationship between language features and contextual variables, including *Field*, *Mode* and *Tenor*. Each of these situational variables has a systemic and predictable relation with lexico-grammatical patterns.

This article is narrowed to just three systems - transitivity, modality and thematic structure. The relationship between form, function and context is summarized in Table 3.

As for Field, findings regarding transitivity show that Material process takes the lead, followed by Relational, Verbal process ranking the third; Mental, Behavioural and Existential processes being very infrequent. These findings show that RAAs must describe activities concerning what the researchers have done in order to carry out their studies. The authors' feelings are not expressed in the RAAs. Besides, in order to increase the experiential content of the actions, specificity is added to the information given through a number of Circumstances. Among the nine types of circumstances, Location is the most frequent; Manner ranks for the second. These numbers signify that the writers tend to clarify their studies by noting where and how the studies have been implemented.

Table 3

Relationships Between Situational Context and Lexico-Grammatical Features of RAAs

	Situational context	Lexico-grammatical features	
FIELD	+ Function: to summarize a study; + Subject matters: introducing the study, indicating the method; highlighting the main findings; suggesting some implications.	+ Predominant with Material processes to describe what has been done; + Slightly common with Relational processes to feature findings; + A small proportion of Verbal processes to convey implications; + Rare occurrence of Mental processes due to absence of expression of feelings; + Common use of circumstances of Location and Manner to note the context of a study and how it has been implemented.	TRANSITIVITY
MODE	+ Power relation: unequal, formal Writer: giving information Reader: receiving information + Scientific information is presented without subjective feelings and judgments.	+ Statements only; no minor clauses, questions, exclamations; + Overwhelming majority of non-modalized clauses.	MODALITY

TENOR	+ Medium: written + Code: English + Discourse community: academic	+ Range of structures; + Few Interpersonal themes; + Large number of unmarked Topical themes; + Common use of Textual themes.	THEMES

Tenor - the social relations between the participants - is realized through the grammatical use of the mood system and modality. This study did not analyze mood system as it stands out clear: all the sentences are statements to provide information, namely summarizing the accompanying full-text. Not a single minor clause was found, due to the formal nature of academic context; neither were there questions and exclamations. Regarding Modality, the number of modalised clauses is not very high, just less than 10%. Modality belongs to probability and obligation. A possible explanation for this characteristic might be that the authors tend not to express their attitudes and judgments in this section.

Finally, Mode, which represents the role of language in an interaction, is manifested through the degree of grammatical complexity and thematic structures. The very first stage of the analysis indicated that the most common patterns lie with sentences of two, three clauses (29.1% and 28.6%, respectively) and one single clause (20.3%). Sentences with six, seven or eight clauses are minimal (1.56%, 1.04% and 1.04 %, respectively). This suggests a link with the written medium, where a range of structures are highly appreciated. This situational factor also triggers the typical features of Themes. That there are only few Interpersonal Themes and a large number of unmarked Topical themes can be attributed to the written mode and academic style. This also explains the moderate proportion of textual Themes, which helps to create clarity and logicality between ideas in this concise section of an article.

6. Conclusion

The goal of the current study was to determine the lexico-grammatical features of the English RAAs in applied linguistics. Manipulating SFG as an analytical framework, we analyzed transitivity, modality, and thematic structure of RAAs written in English. This study has identified the typical characteristics, which generally agree with the salient features found in the previous studies. What makes this study significantly contribute to the ongoing research of RAAs in general and RAAs in applied linguistics in particular is the methodological stance, which is firmly based on SFG. Whereas mostly all of the linguistic patterns focused on in the previous studies are the traditional grammatical areas, this study makes use of the SFG terminology. This methodological strength lends the convincing interpretation of the results in close association with the social context in which the genre unfolds.

The results of the study hold some pedagogical implications for under-graduates and post-graduates in the discipline of applied linguistics, especially those from the non-English backgrounds who are learning to write for publication in English. Gee (2008, p. 140) argues that it is through natural exposure to elements of the Discourse and interactions with discourse communities can a Discourse be fully mastered. Gee (2008) also positions that explicit instruction of the genre-specific features of a new Discourse help acquire meta-knowledge and understanding. The theoretical underpinning of this approach is provided by Hyland (2003)'s genre

pedagogy, which is a socially informed theory of language, grounded in research on texts and contexts. The theory is strongly committed to empowering learners to attend to the subtle language to participate effectively in target situations. A heightened awareness of the linguistic features which are characterized by the purposeful social activity of a discourse community, as evidenced from the findings of this current study and the previous studies in the same line, can prepare novice writers for participation in the world of publication. To create well-formed and effective RAAs in English, the non-native English writers need improvement in formal knowledge and understanding of why they are written the way they are. The ESP teacher's role is to assist learners toward a command of this meta-knowledge through systematic and explicit instruction. In addition, repeated decoding of RAAs help learners establish a repertoire of appropriate language for them to be able to exploit to meet their needs. Beside the important practical implication, evidence from the analysis and interpretation serves as methodological reasons to explain why linguistic features should be investigated in sufficient detail if ESP teachers are to provide a pedagogically meaningful meta-knowledge for novice researchers in a particular discipline.

A clear limitation of this study is that the present study focuses on only 30 abstracts of ESPJ and TSQJ. This leads to only tentative conclusions instead of applicable generalizations. The analysis is also confined to only transitivity, modality, and thematic structure. Thus, this study has thrown up many questions in need of further investigation. Further work needs to be done on this genre as follows: an investigation into correlations between Logico-semantic and Move structure of RAAs, and/or an investigation into the same features focused on this study, but with larger data, and/or data written by Viet Nam researchers.

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Appendix: Data sources

(ESP stands for English for Specific Purposes; TSQ for TESOL Quarterly)

Code	Research article (Names of authors have been removed and titles partially omitted for concise presentation)
ESPJ 1	Identity constructions of ESP teachers in a Chinese university. *ESP*, *49*, 1-13.
ESPJ 2	Is ability grouping […] language proficiency development? *ESP*, *49*, 39-48.
ESPJ 3	Learning subject-specific content […] story in Argentina. *ESP*, *50*, 1-13.
ESPJ 4	"We learn as we go": How […] during vocational training. *ESP*, *50*, 14-27.
ESPJ 5	Words for what? Contrasting […] academic vocabulary needs. *ESP*, *50*, 28-39.
ESPJ 6	Strengthening move analysis […] the function-form gap. *ESP*, *50*, 40-63.
ESPJ 7	"As we all know": Examining […] in academic writing. *ESP*, *50*, 64-80.
ESPJ 8	What do nurses say […]: The case of Taiwanese nurses. *ESP*, *50*, 116-129.
ESPJ 9	"In this paper we suggest": Changing […] metadiscourse. *ESP*, *51*, 18-30.
ESPJ 10	Paraphrasing to transform […] graduate student writing. *ESP*, *51*, 31-44.
ESPJ 11	Developing a frequent technical […]: A hybrid approach. *ESP*, *51*, 45-54.
ESPJ 12	Challenges in implementing […] engineering students. *ESP*, *51*, 111-123.
ESPJ 13	Bringing reality to the classroom: Exercises in intertextuality. *ESP*, *52*, 1-12.
ESPJ 14	Proposing and illustrating a […] topics in business English. *ESP*, *52*, 27-46.
ESPJ 15	Modeling Taiwanese adolescent […] word list. *ESP*, *52*, 47-59.
TSQJ 1	Reimagining English-medium instructional […]. *TSQ*, *52*(3), 516-539.
TSQJ 2	New contexts, new challenges for […] instruction. *TSQ*, *52*(3), 540-563.
TSQJ 3	Roles of vocabulary knowledge […] undergraduates. *TSQ*, *52*(3), 564-587.
TSQJ 4	Longitudinal vocabulary […] maths, and science. *TSQ*, *52*(3), 588-610.
TSQJ 5	Speaking anxiety and strategy […] contexts. *TSQ*, *52*(3), 611-633.
TSQJ 6	Assessing English-medium […] disciplines. *TSQ*, *52*(3), 634-656.
TSQJ 7	Teachers' and students' second […] approach. *TSQ*, *52*(3), 657-679.
TSQJ 8	Understanding reading motivation […] focus group. *TSQ*, *52*(4), 772-797.
TSQJ 9	The perks of being peripheral […] of practice. *TSQ*, *52*(4), 798-844.
TSQJ 10	"Because we are peers, […] classroom interactions. *TSQ*, *52*(4), 845-876.
TSQJ 11	Breaking one law to uphold […] with disabilities. *TSQ*, *52*(4), 877-910.
TSQJ 12	Teaching English as […] public school in Spain. *TSQ*, *52*(4), 943-970.
TSQJ 13	Learning vocabulary through […] of the same text? *TSQ*, *52*(4), 971-994.
TSQJ 14	Spanish, Arabic, and […] classroom communities. *TSQ*, *52*(4), 995-1021.
TSQJ 15	Discovering […] design-based research. *TSQ*, *52*(4), 1022-1049.

TÓM TẮT TIẾNG ANH TRONG BÀI BÁO TẠP CHÍ CHUYÊN NGÀNH NGÔN NGỮ HỌC ỨNG DỤNG: NHỮNG ĐẶC TRƯNG TỪ VỰNG-NGỮ PHÁP

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Tóm tắt: Công trình này nghiên cứu những đặc trưng từ vựng-ngữ pháp của phần tóm tắt tiếng Anh trong bài báo khoa học, chuyên ngành ngôn ngữ học ứng dụng. Dữ liệu khảo sát là 30 bài tóm tắt trong 2 tạp chí chuyên ngành quốc tế là *English for Specific Purposes Journal* và *TESOL Quarterly Journal*. Lấy cơ sở lý thuyết Ngữ pháp chức năng hệ thống làm công cụ phân tích, những đặc trưng ngữ pháp-từ vựng được giới hạn ở 3 khía cạnh – hệ thống chuyển tác để tìm hiểu nghĩa kinh nghiệm, hệ thống tình thái để tìm hiểu nghĩa liên nhân, và cấu trúc đề thuyết để tìm hiểu nghĩa văn bản. Kết quả phân tích cho thấy những đặc trưng nổi bật của thể loại tóm tắt trong tiếng Anh. Để diễn đạt nghĩa kinh nghiệm, thể loại này sử dụng đại đa số là quá trình vật chất và quá trình quan hệ; chu cảnh về không gian và thể cách cũng được sử dụng thường xuyên. Thực hiện nghĩa liên nhân, thể loại này không sử dụng nhiều yếu tố tình thái. Để đạt hiệu quả giao tiếp, các tác giả sử dụng thường xuyên đề đơn, không đánh dấu; các loại đề liên nhân và đề văn bản ít được sử dụng thường xuyên. Những kết quả về khía cạnh từ vựng-ngữ pháp được chúng tôi lý giải từ 3 khía cạnh tương ứng của ngữ cảnh. Những kết quả nghiên cứu có những đóng góp đối với thực tiễn dạy tiếng Anh cho các mục đích học thuật.

Từ khóa: tóm tắt bài báo, ngữ pháp chức năng, chuyển tác, tình thái, cấu trúc đề ngữ

A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO THE APPLICATION OF THE CONTENT-BASED INSTRUCTION APPROACH TO LEGAL ENGLISH TEACHING

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Abstract: Content-based instruction (CBI) has been applied widely in teaching English for specific purposes. This study aims to delineate a lecturer's views of teaching legal English using the content-based instruction approach. A narrative frame was employed as the primary data source to gain insights into the perspectives of a Vietnamese lecturer. The participant was invited to write a reflection on different stages of his career from the past to the present and what he plans to do in the future. The data also came from classroom observation and teacher's lesson plans. The findings show that the application of the content-based approach contributed to students' development in legal English. Students have opportunities to learn and use the target language in an environment in which language acquisition takes place through subject-matter knowledge. Moreover, the findings of this study reveal the teacher's concerns about teaching materials as well as the teacher's content knowledge.

Keywords: content-based instruction, legal English, English for specific purposes

1. Introduction

1.1. Statement of Problems

Language learning goes beyond the acquisition of the means to operate communication; learning a new language also means acquiring new perception possibilities (Cammarata, 2016). Ryshina-Pankova (2016) explains:

> Knowing the language in terms of using it in certain instances has to do with being able to deploy language resources to make meaning in these situations about something and for or with someone. In other words, knowing the language presupposes knowing to construct meaningful content through it - the greater the range of contents, the more capable the language user (p. 55).

Therefore, language teachers need to suffice language as well as the subject content to teach language used in a particular area (Butler, 2005). In the case of English for Legal Purposes (ELP), ESP teachers realize legal professions are sacrosanct in teaching legal English. However, most teachers, who are in charge of teaching ESP, hold Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL) qualifications; they are not experts in a professional field (McDonough, 2010; Northcott & Gillian, 2006).

1.2. Purposes of the Study

The present paper explores a lecturer's perspectives on content-based instruction (CBI) in teaching English for legal purposes. Particularly, the research aims to discover a legal English lecturer's viewpoints on teaching English for legal purposes with CBI. Thus, this study gives an overview of the effectiveness and the necessity of the CBI approach.

1.3. Research Questions

This research was conducted to address the following questions: what are the teacher's views on the application of content-based instruction in legal English pedagogy?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Content-Based Instruction (CBI)

Brinton (2013) points out that content-based instruction is applied in both ESP and general English courses. "ESP makes extensive use of content-based approaches" (Basturkmen, 2006, p. 103). According to Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), CBI integrates language learning with natural content from academic subjects. Furthermore, the CBI approach is not predetermined syllabi; this instruction fits with other language teaching methods since the language objectives arise from communicative needs. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), there are two grounded principles of content-based instruction. When using the target language as a means of getting information, people are more successful in learning a second language. Moreover, people learn a second language most efficiently if instruction caters to learners' needs.

For adult learners learning in content-based language classes, the amount of language knowledge they gain is outraced by those who learn in traditional settings (Dupuy, 2000). Students feel self-assured to learn the target language. CBI approach enhances students' language proficiency and makes their language learning experience more enjoyable and satisfying (Dupuy, 2000; Yang & Chen, 2015). Successful learning occurs when learners acquire the target language in an interesting and useful way that fulfills their goals. Learners have more motivation when they learn things other than the language itself such as ideas and opinions. Content-based instruction builds on learners' knowledge and experience as students bring what they know about the subject to the classroom. Content-based language instruction helps students in the long term, and contributes to students' success in their future academic performance (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Song, 2006; Yang & Chen, 2015).

Not only has the CBI approach assisted students in the development of English for specific purposes, but this approach also motivates students and fosters their learning autonomy. Previous scholars have studied the application of CBI in different ESP courses. Juraev and Sobirov (2017), in their study on teaching tourism and economics courses, conclude that CBI is an effective and valuable approach. Students' learning interest is higher as the effectiveness of the flexible and adaptable curriculum. Nguyen (2019) reports on the research into the use of CBI in teaching tourism that this approach boosts students' internal learning motivation and encourages their learning autonomy. This result is in line with Hudson (1991) in the study on the evaluation of a content comprehension approach to reading English for science and technology. Hudson (1991) concludes that students become more independent in their learning. Through the utilization of the content comprehension approach, students' performance on reading in the field of chemical engineering was notably better.

2.2. Teaching Legal English

Grossfield (1985) emphasizes that legal notions would not exist outside language; the power of language, which is creative and comprehending, is important for the law. "The magic of language continues to be a central pillar of law" (p. 803). What makes law special is its concepts, points of law, authority, decision and other aspects, all included in a discourse. When students learn the law, they also learn the language and the pattern of argument (Howe, 1990). Bhatia (1987) asserts that English for Academic/ Occupational Legal Purposes (EA/OLP) is different from other English for specific purposes courses. EA/OLP is described as a narrow-angled approach because there is a close relationship between the language being used in law and the law itself. This leads to the difference in the course inputs in terms of language and activities.

Although contemporary legal English is subdivided into different groups regarding the law areas, both spoken and written legal English, in general, has strict styles, tone, morphology, formality level and structures. Violating these rules would lead to misunderstandings or destroy language uniformity and universality (Shiflett, 2017). In the discussion about problems in teaching and learning English for legal purposes, Northcott (2013) highlights that ESP practitioners are under pressure on the resources and that they have to make use of legal specialists' resources. Northcott (2013) also posits that English teachers without legal training are cautious of entering the field that is considered pivotal for legal specialists who acknowledge themselves to master law and language. ESP practitioners, therefore, can implement need analysis and be involved in discourse analysis.

Studies have been conducted to describe how CBI is applied in language teaching and different aspects and issues of teaching English for specific purposes (Brenes, 2010; Juraev & Sobirov, 2017; Hudson, 1991; Nguyen, 2019; Parkinson, 2000). Many scholars have studied teaching and learning legal English (Candlin, Bhatia & Jensen, 2002; Deutch, 2003; Emelyanova, 2017; Northcott & Brown, 2006; Soroka, 2019). Nevertheless, research on the use of CBI in teaching legal English at the tertiary level is still limited. In 2020, Chendeb evaluated the effectiveness of integrating content and language in teaching legal English. The above-mentioned research is the cornerstone for this study regarding how CBI was adopted in teaching ESP. This study focuses on the teacher's views towards CBI in legal English teaching.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Method and Instruments

According to Barkhuizen, Benson and Chik (2014), narrative inquiry combines storytelling and research. Researchers utilize stories as research data and learn from the produced stories. Narrative inquiry draws on "long-term experiences through retrospection and imagination" (p. 14). Multiple methods of data sources are also adopted in narrative inquiry (Barkhuizen, Benson & Chik, 2014). This study employed qualitative data from (1) an interview and a narrative frame, (2) classroom observation and (3) teacher's lesson plans.

The preliminary interview was to learn about the participant's educational background and his teaching experiences. The narrative frame in the present study was adapted from the conceptual framework for outlining course programmes by Wette and Barkhuizen (2009). The narrative frame included three parts, the first part was about the teacher's experiences of language teaching before ESP teaching and CBI adoption, as well as the initial experiences with the CBI approach, the second part presented the teacher's recent experiences

with CBI, the last part focused on the teacher's projection to improve his teaching. Each part included reflective elements from the four frames by Wette and Barkhuizen (2009) that are second language teaching and learning, research methodology, language curriculum and material development, and assessment in the language curriculum. The narrative frame was structured following three commonplaces of narrative inquiry by Clandinin and Rosiek (2007), including temporality, sociality and place. In the first dimension, events, people and objects in a state of temporal transition are described with a past, a present, and a future. The second dimension of sociality is about personal and social conditions. Finally, the third dimension contains information about the physical locations where the investigation unfolds.

Classroom observation and teacher's lesson plans were employed to find out how ESP lessons were delivered as well as how students participated in the lessons. Data from classroom observations and lesson plans reinforced the teachers' viewpoints on the CBI approach and explored how the CBI approach has been applied in teaching legal English. Observations help the researcher learn participants' points of view and self-interpretations of what they believe and how they behave (Gray, 2004). The third data source was the teacher's lesson plans, in which the researcher could see how the ESP teacher prepared the lessons, what were the lesson objectives, and how the teacher designed the activities to meet the objectives of the lessons. Larsen-Freeman and Anderson's (2011) principles of the application of CBI in English classes were used as a framework for building an observation scheme and analysing data from classroom observation. Moreover, stages of designing lesson plans by Shrum and Glisan (2010) were adapted to evaluate teacher's lesson plans.

3.2. Procedure of Data Collection and Analysis

The interview took place at the beginning of the study. The participant then completed his reflection on teaching legal English using a narrative frame. Particularly, he gave instructional practices when he taught legal English including the teaching approaches, the teaching materials that he used and developed; he also provided information regarding his professional responsibilities and development.

In addition to the interview and teacher's reflection, the researcher observed and examined the lesson plans of four legal English classes, including 2 listening classes and 2 reading classes because those were the available courses he taught during the semester the researcher conducted the study. During classroom observations, the researcher took detailed field notes to understand the teacher's teaching practice. The way the ESP teacher delivered the lesson and the students' engagements in class were recorded. The researcher also took notes on some important aspects regarding the target learners and teaching approach to develop a narrative frame. The field notes could enrich the teacher's story and produce insights into his teaching practice.

The interview, teacher's story and field notes were coded. Thematic analysis was employed to explore and describe the teacher's story. The data obtained from classroom observations were organized and described by key events and settings. The researcher paid attention to the participant's teaching practice, teaching materials, challenges, and learners' differences.

3.3. Pedagogical Setting and Participant's Profile

The research was conducted in a public university based in Ho Chi Minh city. The faculty of languages provided English

training for English-majored students and students taking the advanced programs. For the English-majored students, specialized in legal English, they had to complete legal English skills courses (legal listening, legal reading, legal writing, and legal speaking) before moving on to other courses including legal drafting and translation. The required materials were *Introduction to International Legal English* by Amy Krois-Lindner and Matt Firth, *International Legal English* by Amy Krois-Lindner, and the materials developed by lecturers in the faculty.

In this study, purposeful sampling was used, in which the participant was "selected purposefully to permit inquiry into and understanding of a phenomenon in-depth" (Patton, 2014, p. 104). The participant complied with the following criteria, that is, the teacher was (1) teaching legal English, (2) experiencing the CBI approach in teaching legal English, and (3) acknowledging the importance of the CBI approach in teaching ESP. The participant of the research was one teacher that fit the criteria. The inquiry examines Mr. Trung's narrative of legal English teaching. Mr. Trung (a pseudonym) holds a Master's degree in Education, specializing in teaching English for speakers of other languages (TESOL) from an overseas institution. Mr. Trung has been teaching English for seven years. He undertook the journey of teaching English for Legal purposes in 2019 by the faculty's appointment. He did not have expert knowledge in law. Being shifted to teach Legal English was a challenge for Mr. Trung. He wanted to teach general English first and learn more about legal English before he could officially transform to ESP teaching. However, the faculty needed a lecturer teaching this part of the curriculum. He was young and unmarried, so he had plenty of time to conduct some research on legal English, compared to other candidates who were also accepted as lecturers at that time. Currently, Mr. Trung was in charge of

teaching legal English courses; particularly, he taught language skills, listening, speaking, reading, writing, and a course of legal drafting.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Teaching Story

4.1.1. In the Past

As Mr. Trung shared in his story about teaching general English and Academic English (test preparation), he believed that with the experience of teaching different groups of students, with different levels and at different ages, he was confident when "*presenting and performing*" himself in front of the learners, as well as when he had to deal with new materials. Mr. Trung asserted that he has "*acknowledged what he should do with learners and how to improve their language proficiency.*" However, teaching ESP courses is new for him, and requires him to learn a lot, both the teaching method and the discipline-specific competence. As Hutchinson and Waters (1987) claim that the difference between teachers teaching general English and ESP practitioners, ESP teachers have to adapt themselves to a new environment because they have not been trained with specialized knowledge of the subject.

Mr. Trung was not officially taking any classes in the first semester. He attended classes of the former lecturers in the faculty, learned the way they delivered the lesson, how they set up the activities, and gave explanations to their students. He also read a bunch of materials related to law and legal English, and sought help from other lecturers who had experience in legal English teaching. His supervisor also allowed him to practice teaching several lessons. Although not officially, his very first experience in legal English teaching was legal drafting. This subject, as Mr. Trung said, was the hardest. Talking about the difficulties

Mr. Trung had to face when he started to transform to legal English teaching, he stated: "*...one of the greatest concerns was the specialized knowledge and the teaching strategies to students majoring in Legal English*". Regarding the content matter, Basturkmen (2019) notes that ESP teachers are aware of the importance of the need for disciplinary content knowledge. However, some subjects are much easier to learn than others. A teacher of legal English has to learn a lot regarding the language of the law, when the language is utilized, how a court works and also the legal terminologies. Nevertheless, not all English teachers know these aspects of law very well. As for Mr. Trung, he could not deliver the lessons successfully and sufficiently, making his time in class become stressful and sometimes, there were embarrassing moments. Although he was carefully noted down every term and predicted what students might ask, unexpected situations happened. As a novice ESP practitioner, he sometimes could not handle everything. Mr. Trung posited: "*the explanations of some chapters, related to the legal field, have not been expressed well, satisfied my students' expectations*." Mr. Trung emphasized that did not teach law, he was a teacher of English. Helping students acquire legal knowledge was out of his responsibilities. In this regard, Wu and Badger (2009) state that the content matter is not the responsibility of ESP teachers. ESP teachers, in fact, deal with "the notion of a process and the language used to realize that notion" (p. 21) Atay, Kaslıoglu and Kurt (2010) provide strategies for ESP teachers is to avoid students questions related to the subject matter if they are not sure about the answers. They can state directly that their knowledge in the field is limited. ESP teachers can consult the students for explanations and answers to such questions.

Mr. Trung's students were those who majored in the English language, specialized in Legal English. Not only did they study languages, but they also dealt with law subjects to gain background knowledge supporting them with legal English subjects. Teaching legal English majored students required Mr. Trung to "*enrich the specialized knowledge and update information from various sources*." Furthermore, the difference between the meaning of words in legal English and their meanings in general English is one of the challenges he encountered in his teaching preparation. As Haigh (2009) mentioned, some words used in legal contexts have different meanings as their normal uses. Mr. Trung also admitted that "*the lack of essential materials for professional practice has become the major hindrance in preparation of lessons and projects*." As a result, he had to devote a lot of time to decide the appropriate materials and sources to prepare the lessons; as well as choose the appropriate teaching methodology to make sure that he could successfully deliver the lessons to the students.

Tran et al. (2019) in the evaluation of ESP courses conclude that the teaching practice of teachers in charge of ESP courses did not encourage students' communication. The teacher's lectures took up most of the class time, and activities were all in the coursebook. Thus, this teaching methodology is teacher-centred, not student-centred. During the time of observing and doing research on teaching ESP, Mr. Trung realized that ESP lessons also aimed to help students develop their English skills like in other English courses; therefore, lecturing is not considered an effective way to teach ESP. This is in line with Poedjiastutie's (2017) statement that ESP courses help learners develop not only the ability to read and understand the materials in their fields but also speaking and writing skills. ESP and other forms of English teaching are not different although the contents may vary (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

As the textbook was utilized for four courses and divided into smaller sections for different teachers in charge, the content of one lesson was limited. This requires Mr. Trung to extend the teaching content and prepare more activities for his class. Mr. Trung wanted his students to understand the terms through explanations and examples taken from authentic legal contexts so that they could have more motivation and specific purposes to use their target language. Students, moreover, need more opportunities to produce the language rather than listening to the lectures. Mr. Trung intended to integrate English skills in his teaching although his assigned sections were to focus on one skill. Furthermore, he avoided utilizing the grammar-translation method in his teaching practice. Hence, all of this encouraged him to apply the CBI approach in his teaching. As Pham and Ta (2016) mentioned, the integration of content matter and language in teaching materials engages the learners into the lessons. The combination of legal language and legal system knowledge is important to fulfil the aim of contextualized learning (Husinec, 2011). Through the application of the CBI approach, Mr. Trung found out that his students asked him more questions to "*satisfy their curiosity*" as well as use his explanations as further reference. He noted: "*Sometimes, I had to accept that my students could be one of the valuable sources in search of materials and essential knowledge.*" Students' output plays an important role in their language acquisition. Richards and Rodgers (2001) find that students' knowledge of the subject matter and their previous experience are the foundation of CBI. According to Swain (1985), the output is considered a valuable source that learners create in attempts to produce the correct language to express what they want to say, their ideas. "Comprehensible output is a necessary mechanism of acquisition independent of the role of comprehensible input. Its role is to provide opportunities for contextualized, meaningful use, to test out hypotheses about the target language" (p. 252).

4.1.2. At Present

Mr. Trung's teaching practice has been improved at present. However, difficulties were still there. He tried to guide students to focus on the points he prepared beforehand. He focused on language only and avoided answering questions related to law, which was not his specialized area and also not the objective of the lessons that the students had to achieve. Moreover, the difference between law systems makes the explanation sometimes become challenging. Legal English is "the language of Anglo-American common law" (Frade, 2007, p. 48), while Vietnamese law is based on the civil law system.

Mr. Trung asserted that his challenge was teaching writing skills. This productive skill, for him, is the hardest one. Teaching legal writing was difficult because of the nature of writing in legal contexts, and different types of writing. In the discussion about legal writing material, Candlin, Bhatia, and Jensen (2002) point out that "although most of the books surveyed discuss legal language, they often fail to adopt a principled language-based approach to teaching legal writing" (p. 308). Legal writing materials are presented from a legal perspective, and fail to achieve the logical connection by making linguistical or discursive integration of the materials (Candlin, Bhatia & Jensen, 2002).

Teaching material is also one of the biggest concerns. According to Medreaa and Rus (2012), teaching ESP has to deal with the constant changes in terms of political-economic and social trends; these changes require teachers of legal English to keep up with the ever-changing needs and provide themselves with the requisite skills. Mr. Trung became more flexible in using

teaching materials; he has collected various resources that helped him in his teaching. The materials are from books, a variety of legal documents like contracts, news, making sure students had opportunities to learn with materials including relevant content in real life, equipped them with hands-on experience. Authentic texts assure the success of ESP; for that reason, materials have to make sure that law students achieve cross-disciplinary results (Emelyanova, 2017). Furthermore, learners may have more motivation to learn with specialized materials since they can see the relevance between knowledge and subject matter. However, students may lose their interest if the text is too difficult. Also, the materials must be operated effectively by teachers; otherwise, there is no point to expect that teachers are able to cope with the text. If materials and the knowledge and competence of the teachers in charge are not compatible, those materials should not be utilized (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). It's easier for new teachers of legal English to learn the materials thoroughly and rely on the coursebook. With more experienced teachers, creating their own teaching materials based on the syllabus and students' needs is necessary (Soroka, 2019). Legal English teachers' duty is more demanding because they have to keep up with the changing needs of students as well as with the new and continually changing circumstances (Medrea & Rus, 2012).

Mr. Trung students were both law students and English-majored students. There were some differences between the two groups of students in terms of their law knowledge and their English language proficiency. He emphasized that when teaching ESP for law students, *"CBI played a crucial role over time."* Mr. Trung highlighted that teaching law students was more difficult in comparison to teaching English-majored students. He posited:

"...the experience in law and the specialized content are my limitations when I am working with law students, who have been equipped with law knowledge. Moreover, the law includes a variety of aspects and fields which are divided into units and integrated into their subjects. More importantly, those law subjects are taught in English, so my sessions are to confirm what they have learnt with other teachers and help them to improve their language. Therefore, knowledge of the law, which is not equipped and absorbed in proper ways, has become my great burden over time."

McDonough (2010) posits that teaching students who have expert knowledge would make the teacher's talk more challenging. Teaching materials, therefore, should offer support for teachers. Moreover, Medrea and Rus (2012) indicate that when teaching legal English for learners with expert knowledge, the learners become the most valuable resource. In this case, teachers play the role of learners and learn from the learners themselves to make changes to the materials used.

Teaching English-majored students was a more relieving experience because their knowledge of the law was basic so that the teacher could handle everything better. Mr. Trung noted:

"...teaching Legal English to these learners only provides fundamental knowledge in general. For the expansion of a particular aspect of the law, these students will be absorbed and obtained later in other sessions. Moreover, they are majoring in English and using this language in most of the subjects in

classrooms, so they will have their own skills and techniques in research of all kinds of the materials."

The target learners' backgrounds are also important as to whether the ESP teachers need to have professional content knowledge. Teaching pre-experienced learners requires ESP teachers to have a fundamental knowledge of the subject. Teaching experience students of the field, on the other hand, requires ESP teachers to possess in-depth coverage of different aspects of the field (Robinson, 1991, as cited in Lesiak-Bielawska, 2015, p. 3).

4.1.3. In the Future

Mr. Trung emphasized that collaboration and support from law teachers are vital when applying the CBI approach in teaching legal English. Moreover, he was still in the process of collecting more materials and planned to compile different materials to be suitable for his students. Cammarata (2010) reports that ESP teachers "typically rely on textbooks to prescribe increasingly challenging linguistic content and thus are usually not experts at gauging how to bring learners to higher levels of content and linguistic sophistication by themselves" (p. 109). One of the constraints in legal English education is the lecturers' law training. Mr. Trung also planned to devote time to take a law degree, because his teaching would definitely improve when he received proper law education. As Deutch (2003) stated, whereas legal English lecturers are required to work on highly professional law material, a lot of them have not received law education. Furthermore, the objectives of Mr. Trung's lessons included the development in legal knowledge, since language and the law have a close relationship. Legal English materials aim to develop their language skills within law topics; therefore, students' development in law knowledge is one of the objectives of the courses (McDonough, 2010).

4.2. Observations and Lesson Plans

From the teacher's lesson plans and from what the researcher noticed during classroom observations, students in Mr. Trung's classes engaged in the lesson, they strived through the knowledge and the pieces of language under their teachers' pedagogical scaffolding. Different scaffolding strategies were used to assist students such as asking questions, modelling, and representing texts in different ways. The teachers ask some prompt questions to inquire students to give more details, to explain or to confirm their points towards the topics. The lesson plans present well what the teacher did in class. Careful notes were made so that the teacher could cope with possibly unexpected situations that could happen during the lessons. Materials included not only textbooks, but also other materials (i.e., videos, recordings, legal documents, stories).

In his listening class, students had chances to utilize their disciplinary knowledge and produce the language when they worked together to discuss or solve problems. Authentic materials were inserted into the lessons. The teacher made use of video clips about law and language to design tasks for students. Tasks could be discussions, or listening skills practice such as short answer questions or blank filling. In his legal reading class, students had opportunities to discuss what they know about the topics, the discipline knowledge they had acquired beforehand. Mr. Trung showed the example of teaching legal reading through combining languages and subject matter. The lesson begins with an initial discussion led by the teacher. Language serves as the medium helping them to reinforce and develop their subject content. Then, tasks were divided into a series of steps; an overview of the task was given to students, examples and verbal clues

were provided. Completing the reading activities helped learners not only with their reading skills but also obtain new knowledge. The language study and disciplinary learning were then put into another discussion to link their previous information and the new ones. Interactions among students were encouraged during the discussions. Through classroom discussion, students had opportunities to exchange their ideas with their peers and the teacher, making arguments and commenting on others' perspectives, thus enhancing and reinforcing their knowledge and the language used. As Brenes (2010) indicates, CBI lessons and materials must be student-centred. Learners take the responsibility to expand the subject content, and teachers play the role of facilitators. The teaching practice of the teacher in charge demonstrated the principles and features of content-based instruction by Basturkmen (2006) and Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011). Firstly, teaching was developed from students' previous experience in the disciplinary field. Secondly, the teacher scaffolds students in the language performance process. Also, students learn the target language within authentic texts and tasks. The teacher provides language support as students need when they deal with the subject matter. Next, students approach the target language holistically. Finally, the CBI approach helps students develop communicative competence.

4.3. Discussion

Data gathered from Mr. Trung's answers to the interview questions and his teaching story has indicated that Mr. Trung has a positive view on the utilization of CBI in teaching legal English. His teaching identity is dynamic and became more effective when he started teaching with the CBI approach. From the doubt of himself when transforming to ESP teaching, he now grew to be a successful ESP instructor that

develops students' language competencies and motivates students to use the target language in real-life context with his content-based instruction. So far, Mr. Trung has been applying the reactive approaches in his CBI practice. With reactive approaches, teachers focus on students' language performance. Proactive approaches, on the other hand, require teachers in charge to react to both content and language production (Tedick, 2018).

Data collected from Mr. Trung's teaching story, classroom observation and sample lesson plans has shown that to apply CBI effectively in legal English teaching, the teachers in charge have to consider three main aspects including the subject knowledge of teachers and teaching-learning resources.

The teacher expressed concerns over the unique characters of legal English compared to general English and the difference between legal systems. As Northcott (2013) points out that "legal language is system-bound which means that many legal terms denoting concepts derive their meanings from a particular legal system and can only be understood by reference to the specific legal system" (p. 218). Different legal systems accommodate terms that cannot be compared to another legal system especially when that system is in relation to a common law country where language performs a key role.

The findings of this study also highlight the role of ESP teachers and the dilemma that they have to face when teaching legal English. This confirms the fact that ESP teachers have to make every effort to learn both language and the subject content, which they do not have any experience with beforehand. Many ESP teachers have not received proper training, and they need to adapt themselves to an unfamiliar environment Hutchinson and Waters (1987). They claim that what ESP

teachers need is to pursue fundamental knowledge of the subject matter, not to acquire specialist knowledge. "The ESP teacher should not become a teacher of the subject matter, but rather an interested student of the subject matter" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 163). Applying the CBI approach successfully requires not only a lot of effort from legal English teachers but also support from law teachers.

Teachers have to build up the materials carefully. A single coursebook cannot fulfill all students' needs and equip students with complete training for the future workforce (Medrea & Rus, 2012). Students were also sources of materials as they brought their disciplinary knowledge into the classroom. Their need for language support arose when they encountered problems with the given tasks. Both input-output and output-input strategies were employed in teaching legal English. In this regard, Basturkmen (2006) states that teachers assist students by explaining the way language works, by engaging them in authentic materials and activities. Moreover, students are exposed to situations that urge them to perform the target language. When students produce language, they realize whether their interlanguage is ready for the performance. According to Medrea and Rus (2012), students can provide genuine resources, and teachers, in addition to gaining new teaching abilities, have the opportunity to understand their students.

5. Conclusion

To fulfil the aim of legal English lessons, language knowledge must be supplemented with adequate knowledge of the law. In terms of the benefits of what the CBI approach can bring into legal English classrooms, content-based instruction plays a significant role in developing students' language proficiency, especially the language needed for law careers.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that CBI is a challenge for novice teachers who do not have adequate knowledge of the law. Practicing CBI requires lecturers to prepare not only the language but also the fundamental principles of subject matter knowledge to maximize the effectiveness of engaging students in the lessons. Materials used must be authentic and support both teachers and learners. Proper training must be held to support teachers to be ready for transforming from general English teaching to ESP teaching.

This paper presents some of the issues in terms of the application of CBI in teaching legal English via the teacher's viewpoint during his teaching practice. The researcher acknowledges the limitations of the study with regard to how students feel about this approach and the effectiveness of CBI in comparison to other teaching approaches. Because this is a single case study, the results cannot be generalized. This paper, nonetheless, hopefully, presents a basis from which future works can be developed.

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Appendix

Pre-Interview Questions

1. What is your highest qualification?

2. How long have you been teaching English?

3. How long have you been teaching legal English?

4. Why did you decide to teach legal English?

5. Why did you decide to apply CBI in your teaching?

Narrative Frame for English Lecturer

In the past

When I first started to teach English, _____. When I started to teach legal English _____(how did you feel, what challenges/ difficulties you had, what teaching methodology you employed). My students were _____(law students, legal English students, the different between students). In my teaching preparation, I _____. In my own classroom, I had the power to_____ . I applied content-based instruction because _____. I thought content-based instruction was _____ (the effectiveness of content-based instruction, the difficulties when applying content-based instruction). What I learnt from my teaching experiences was _____. I realized that my limitations were _____ this was probably because _____(your qualification, teaching materials, teaching methods). I felt I needed to _____.

At present

I believe _____ in my teaching (change/ improve/ not improve). My students were _____(law students, legal English students, the different between students). In my teaching preparation, I _____. In my own classroom, I have the power to_____ I apply content-based instruction approach because _____. I though content-based instruction is_____ (the effectiveness of content-based instruction, the difficulties when applying content-based instruction).

I have made _____ changes in my teaching practices. Those changes are _____ (teaching methodology, teaching materials). My challenges are _____. This is probably because_____

In the future

In the future, I am going to try to change _____, learn _____. I will feel _____ when I _____

Criteria for Lesson Plan Evaluation

Stage 1. Identify desired results:

A. Context/Theme/Topic/Idea

B. Objectives

C. Goal Areas/Standards

D. Learners (Information about the learners, background knowledge learners need, adaptation needed to meet learners' needs)

E. Materials

Stage 2. Determine acceptable evidence showing that learners have produced desired results

Stage 3. Plan learning experiences: Activities, teacher's tasks, learners' tasks, teacher-learners interaction

Criteria for Lesson Observation

1. Language competencies work with the content selected.

2. Students' prior experience should be utilized in the classroom.

3. The teacher then creates activities to scaffold the language needed for the study of the content.

4. Learners are motivated to learn when they see the value in their language use.

5. There are contextual hints to help express the meaning of the vocabulary

6. Skills, vocabulary and grammar are integrated into an authentic context.

7. Students receive language support when they deal with the subject matter.

8. Students learn the language with authentic texts and tasks.

9. The discourse organization of academic texts is provided

10. Students participate in the activities actively with the subject matter and target language, use the subject knowledge to learn the target language and vice versa.

11. The teacher corrects student errors either by pointing out their mistakes or helping them make their own correction.

NGHIÊN CỨU TƯỜNG THUẬT
VỀ ỨNG DỤNG PHƯƠNG PHÁP DẠY HỌC NGOẠI NGỮ
DỰA TRÊN KIẾN THỨC CHUYÊN NGÀNH
TRONG GIẢNG DẠY TIẾNG ANH PHÁP LÝ

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Tóm tắt: Dạy học ngoại ngữ dựa trên trên kiến thức chuyên ngành (CBI) đã được sử dụng rộng rãi trong giảng dạy tiếng Anh chuyên ngành. Nghiên cứu này tìm hiểu quan điểm của một giảng viên về việc áp dụng phương pháp CBI trong giảng dạy tiếng Anh pháp lý. Khung tường thuật được sử dụng như nguồn dữ liệu chính để tìm ra quan điểm của giảng viên về phương pháp CBI. Giảng viên được nghiên cứu viết một bài tường thuật về quá trình giảng dạy tiếng Anh pháp lý từ quá khứ đến hiện tại, và dự định sắp tới trong tương lai. Dữ liệu nghiên cứu cũng được thu thập qua quan sát lớp học và giáo án của giảng viên này. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy việc áp dụng phương pháp CBI đã góp phần vào việc phát triển tiếng Anh pháp lý của sinh viên. Sinh viên có cơ hội học và sử dụng ngôn ngữ đích trong môi trường mà việc tiếp thu ngôn ngữ diễn ra thông qua các kiến thức chuyên ngành. Bài báo cũng chỉ ra những vấn đề giảng viên phải đối mặt bao gồm tài liệu giảng dạy và kiến thức chuyên ngành của giảng viên.

Từ khoá: dạy học ngoại ngữ dựa trên kiến thức chuyên ngành, CBI, tiếng Anh pháp lý, tiếng Anh chuyên ngành

DISCUSSION

A QUANTITATIVE STUDY ON EVALUATION OF AN INTENSIVE ENGLISH COURSE: VOICES OF NON-ENGLISH-MAJOR STUDENTS

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Abstract: The preliminary purpose of this study was to investigate how non-English-major first-year students evaluated some aspects of an intensive English course that aimed to improve their English language knowledge and skills. After that course, a total of 453 students participated in the study and completed a self-reported survey questionnaire of 31 items in various types. The quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS version 24. The results revealed that most students who attended the intensive English course held positive views towards the course including content, duration, teachers, materials, teaching methods, and facilities. The students were most interested in some components of the course, such as the teachers, their teaching methods, and the classroom facilities. They thought that their vocabulary and grammar improved the most, whereas teamwork skill witnessed the least improvement. Finally, they expected listening, speaking skills, and pronunciation to be added and reinforced more in the next course. The study offered several implications for future courses and relevant stakeholders.

Keywords: evaluation, intensive English course, non-English-major students

1. Introduction

English has been widely accepted as the global language since the early 21st century, as the language is spoken in every corner of the world (Lam & Albright, 2019). It is used as the prime means of communication across sections, organisations, businesses, or enterprises in different countries and continents, even in the places where English is not the mother tongue (Riemer, 2002). English can be regarded as an effective tool for communication and understanding among people of different races and origins who, however, share the same interests or concerns around the world. In the era of globalization, English has become increasingly essential not only for those who want to become global citizens or want to reside in other foreign countries, but also for those inside a country. In Vietnam, since the open-door policy (Doi Moi) in 1986, there have been more and more locally-based foreign businesses or enterprises that need high quality labour force who are fluent in

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English As the policy was "opening up to the outside world, mostly in terms of foreign investment and the global market" (To, 2010, p. 100), its implementation attracted an increasing amount of capital into the country and strengthened the trend of internationalization (Nguyen & Sloper, 1995; Tran & Heo, 2008; Vu, 2019). Millions of English-speaking visitors, tourists and businessmen decided to choose Vietnam as their destination, making English the most popular foreign language spoken in the country.

For the past few years, the fourth industrial revolution has witnessed a stronger internationalization. The concept of "border" among countries has become blurrier as one can live in a country and study or work in another country. Globalization and the fourth industrial revolution have brought about both challenges and opportunities; however, those who have a good command of English and their professional work can excel themselves and make full use of the opportunities. In this borderless world, English is clearly a passport for these high quality workers to enter the international labour market.

Consequently, English language teaching and learning has been deemed to be important in Vietnamese educational system (Truong, 2021). However, English remains a challenging language for a lot of Vietnamese students, most of whom study English as a minor part of the program (Nguyen & Habok, 2020). At non-English-major universities, English is not considered a means of communication, but a minor subject in the teaching curriculum with the total credit of six to eight for the whole course. At some universities, English is even left out of the curriculum and becomes a conditional subject. Although students have learnt English since high school or earlier, their English is still low and uneven when they enter the university (Lam & Albright,

2019; Mai & Pham, 2019). Urban students who have more opportunities to be exposed to English are said to have much better English proficiency than rural students who have little chance to learn the language (Lam, 2018). The situation of English teaching and learning at Thuyloi University is not an exception.

2. Background of the Study

2.1. Contextual Background

Originally as a technical university specialising in water resources and engineering, Thuyloi university has changed into a multi-disciplinary higher education institution for nearly 20 years. Although English is a minor subject, it has always been a compulsory subject for all students in their teaching curriculum. Before the school year 2019-2020, the exit requirement for graduates was A2 level (following the Common European Framework of Reference – CEFR) and the time allocation for the subject was eight credits (equivalent to 120 periods).

Facing higher and higher requirements from the labour market, since 2019, the university has decided to raise the quality of English teaching and their students' English proficiency level. Graduates are required to achieve B1 level (following the CEFR) before receiving their degrees. Although the certificate is institutionally valued, this decision also requires students to have a more serious thought on the subject. Most of them come from the countryside, and English is one of their weaknesses. According to the statistics of the university's Department of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Education, during the school years 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, the students' marks of English in the entrance examinations were mainly low. The percentages of students having marks under 5 in these 2 years were 69.3% and 75.1% respectively. These percentages

clearly represented the limited English input quality of the students. More surprisingly, while requiring graduates to have a higher English exit requirement, the university has reduced the time allocated for this subject to only six credits for two courses English 1 and English 2 (two compulsory courses for all students starting at pre-intermediate level).

The decision to raise the exit requirement to B1 level has challenged not only students but also course instructors. The problem is how to help students improve their English to one level higher, while the input quality is not better, and the time allocation is reduced to two thirds. After lots of discussion at division and department levels with related parties, some intensive English courses (IEC) were first offered at Thuyloi University so that students' language knowledge and skills would be improved.

The course is placed outside the main program, and is designed as a supportive English course. Students who have marks of English in the entrance examination lower than four are not allowed to register for the compulsory English 1 course. They are encouraged to register in the IEC. As the IEC is not compulsory, the final results of students are not included in their transcripts. At the end of the course, students need a pass in the final exam which tests them vocabulary, grammar, and four skills as a standard A2 exam. When they have a pass in the IEC, they are eligible to register for the compulsory English 1 course. However, these students may not choose to take IEC at the university. Instead, they can improve their English by taking extra courses in other language centers and bring back the legible A2 certificate to fulfill the requirement for the compulsory English 1 course.

As IEC was first offered as a supportive and optional course for students whose English is inadequate and ineligible for the pre-intermediate level, the instructors

made efforts to schedule the course in the most appropriate time alongside with the students' official curriculum. The course consists of six credits (equivalent to 90 periods), which is divided into two 45-period sections: IEC1 and IEC2. The textbook Prepare 1 is used as the main teaching material in IEC1 and Prepare 2 in IEC2. In addition to those textbooks, the course instructors have also prepared two sets of supplementary materials. The supplementary materials include extra exercises in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and all four skills, which support and revise the linguistic knowledge and language skills students are taught in each lesson. The students are expected to get used to the self-study habit with these materials. For most students, this habit is not easily formed, especially when their English proficiency level is still low. Therefore, the course instructors have provided detailed guidance for students' effective use of those materials and monitored their continuous self-study for the whole course.

At the end of IEC1, students take a mock test in the form of A2 level test. This test gets students to familiarise with A2 level test, and at the same time allows them to be aware of their current English proficiency level, based on which they can better plan for the next IEC2 section. At the end of IEC2, students take the real A2 level test in four skills. Those who pass the test and earn 50 points up in four skills are eligible to register for the compulsory English 1.

IEC also receives great attention from the university managing board. In order to serve best for students, the classrooms are well-equipped with facilities such as air-conditioners, multimedia projectors, interactive boards, TV screens, and loudspeakers. Moreover, the number of students is restricted to 25 learners in each IEC class so that teachers are able to apply new teaching methods and best facilitate students' performances. All teachers in

charge of IEC classes are qualified with their Master degrees or higher in TESOL. The university wants to reserve the best conditions for the course to encourage both instructors and students to achieve their goals.

It can be said that IEC has received the best preparation from the instructors as well as the administrative sectors with an aim to provide students with the most support. When the first IEC finished, the course instructors would prefer to examine whether the course was effective in some aspects from the students' perspectives so that they could adapt where necessary. As a result, this study aims at evaluating the content, time allocation, learning condition, learning materials, teaching methodologies, and instructors involved in the course on the basis of the learners' viewpoints.

2.2. Research Background

Course evaluation in general is fundamental for course developers to decide what instructional materials and methods are satisfactory and where change is necessary (Beran, Violato & Kline, 2007; Cronbach, 2000). Course evaluation's purpose is to elucidate the question entitled "Is the course good?"; however, the definition of *good* is subject to evaluators and sources of information and some examples of a good course include learners' satisfaction, much learning, application of cutting-edge knowledge about language teaching and learning, and following principles of curriculum planning (Nation, 2000). The evaluation should include students' study process, proficiency and attitudes and their follow-up study. Therefore, the use of learners' feedback can be considered as a reliable method for course evaluators (Gravestock & Gregor-Greenleaf, 2008).

In language learning and teaching, students are considered as key participants in the evaluation of the program because they are able to provide evidence of their gains in language proficiency. Learners also can give feedback on how the course was taught and what they have learned to their needs (Richards, 2001).

The term "evaluation" varies in different research. Some linguists and language teachers consider it as assessment. From Nunan's perspective, it is broader than assessment which only defines the students' learning outcomes, and sometimes is understood as tests to demonstrate what a learner is able to do in target language. This study uses the term "evaluation" with wider meaning which can assist course designers to decide if a course needs modification or what measures should be adopted to eliminate shortcomings (Nunan, 1991). Therefore, in order to investigate the effectiveness of a language program, Nunan (1991) proposed various aspects including *need analysis, content, implementation methodologies, resources, teacher, learners, assessment and evaluation.* In terms of *content,* whether the objectives and content are appropriate for students is the key question. *Implementation methodologies* and *resources* involve materials, activities and methods employed during the course. Learners can also evaluate their teacher through teacher's classroom management skills.

Besides, several features of a language training course namely *size and intensity* and *instructional materials and resources* should be put in the checklist in the program quality management according to context – adaptive model by Lynch (1990). The *size* here defines the number of students in each class and the total number of classes in the course. Intensity is defined in terms of class hours a week and the length of time to complete the entire course. It is also emphasized in Lynch's (1990) model to evaluate a program that *instructional materials and resources* concerning the available of course books, supplementary materials, audiovisual, technological aids,

basic classroom supplies are critical to make an accurate evaluation of how well a program has operated.

Aspects aforementioned for course evaluation from Nunan's (1991) check list and Lynch's (1990) model were theoretical background to develop the instrument of this study. Because this is a course evaluation sketched out only from the students' perspectives, the opinions from teachers or staffs and social and political climate discussed in Lynch's (1990) context-adaptive model are not mentioned. Other issues such as need analysis, assessment in Nunan's (1991) evaluation criteria are not research areas of this study as well. Due to these contextual factors, we decide to focus on students' evaluation on significant aspects including course content, time and intensity, materials and resources, implementation methodologies and teacher to develop our research instrument.

3. Methods

3.1. Participants

The participants included 453 non-English-major first year students at Thuyloi university who completed the IEC in the first semester of the 2020 academic year. They were studying their majors in different areas such as economics, information technology, water resources and civil engineering.

3.2. Instruments

The research aims at revealing the evaluation of IEC from students' perspectives, so the instrument for this research plays the role of reflection and perception explorer. With undeniable strengths including non-threatening, economical, fast, easy for many participants to complete, the reliable instrument to collect data is a self-developed questionnaire. This tool can easily gather information about participants' background, behaviors, attitudes and feelings (Davis, 2011).

The questionnaire was planned under a staged sequence proposed by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018). Most of the steps mentioned in their guidelines were strictly followed. The primary purpose of this instrument is to explore the students' satisfaction in educational experiences in IEC. Besides, the questionnaire is also used to find out what language knowledge and skills students could improve when the course finished. As this was the first IEC conducted in the educational institution, adopting learners' recommendation for its effectiveness was critical for further courses.

The data collection was firstly targeted at all IEC students so that their voices could be fully considered. However, there were some students who did not attend class regularly. Consequently, they could not experience all training aspects. Their feedback and comments were not reliable indicators. Therefore, students who attended at least 80% of 90 class hours were the target population of the questionnaire.

After the population and sample were decided, the next step was to identify and itemize the issues related to central purposes which included the course content, the course duration, the learning condition, the course materials, the methodologies and the teachers.

In order to collect information of above subsidiary topics from a large size of the sample, a structured and closed questionnaire was recommended. Rating scale and multiple choice were question types to use. The data also aimed at participants' rich responses on course implementation and quality, so some more open questions could help in this case.

The questionnaire has 31 closed questions. The first part consists of 28 Likert scale items which require participants to choose one of the responses to best reflect their opinion: *(1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree,* and

(5) strongly agree. The first three items concern the course content in which participants were asked to clarify their evaluation on course objectives, lesson topics, language knowledge and skills presented in the course. The class time and self-study time were also investigated in items 4, 5, and 6. The next four items in the next subpart focused on learning conditions with classroom supplies and technological aids provided. Specific details of teaching activities, teacher's instructions, class management, ways to approach lessons and instructor's facilitation were generated in the rest 18 rating scale items.

In the second part of the questionnaire, learners could choose their most favorite aspect of the training and reflect their skills or knowledge which were much improved in questions 29 and 30. Students could also express their expectations in question 31.

We also clarified and stated in the questionnaire that students could withdraw from the study whenever they wanted. Furthermore, all participants were guaranteed anonymity and the information they provided was completely confidential and used only for research purpose. We also assured that there were no harms to students' life and learning outcomes.

Back-translation method was exploited at this stage when the questionnaire was translated back into English (see more in Behr, 2017; Sousa & Rojjanasrirat, 2011). The questionnaire was translated into Vietnamese so that all respondents could fully understand the instructions and item content regardless of their English level. It was then evaluated by six academic colleagues who had relevant experiences in doing research, teaching English and course design. The experts panel worked seriously and pointed out some inadequacies in word choice of item 12 and expression of item 29. Some adjustments

were immediately updated in forward translated version. The comments and feedback from the panel members were really useful to improve the content validity. Some minor improvements in word choice were made to avoid ambiguities.

We piloted this questionnaire with five volunteer students before administration. These students were informed of the aims and objectives of the questionnaire. All aspects and terms were carefully explained so that volunteers could easily understand them. After the pilot study, there were no serious misunderstandings and volunteers were clear about their choice. The final version of the questionnaire was then produced and officially used in this study.

3.3. Data Collection

Obtaining the approval from the Director of School of International Education and the Head of English Division to undertake this study, we had teachers of 24 IEC classes distribute the questionnaires to students at the end of the course.

We introduced the research objectives, aspects and guided teachers how to administer the surveys. All questions concerning research from teachers and students were timely answered. The paper-and-pencil questionnaires were administered in the last lesson of the course when most students could get and complete the questionnaire in class.

The questionnaire was distributed when IEC course finished at the end of 2020. A total of 453 questionnaires were completed and they were all valid representing 100% response rate.

3.4. Data Analysis

After collecting the data, we scored, entered data into SPSS version 24, cleaned and accounted for missing data. Then we got descriptive statistics to find out what aspects of the course students evaluated and came to conclusions.

4. Results

4.1. Reliability of the Survey Questionnaire

Internal reliability of the 28-item survey was investigated using Cronbach's alpha α and the result indicated that the alpha value of the survey was equal to 0.928. This means the survey was a reliable tool to

investigate the effectiveness of the IEC at Thuyloi University and it could provide immediate feedback to the stakeholders at the university.

4.2. Content of the Course

Table 1 below presents the summary of the result in this first scale.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of the Content of the Course

Item	M	Sd	SD & D (%)	N (%)	A & SA (%)
1. The objectives of the course were clearly presented at the beginning of the course, which helped me to identify my learning objectives.	4.16	0.65	1.5	8.7	89.8
2. The topics in the course suited my interests.	4.0	0.70	1.6	17.6	80.8
3. The knowledge regarding pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and four language skills was neither too difficult nor too easy for me.	4.01	0.76	1.5	19.4	79.1

Apparently, due to high percentages of *agree* and *disagree*, the majority of students surveyed believed that they were well informed of the course objectives (M = 4.16; Sd = 0.65) and that the course content was appropriate to their interests (M = 4.0; Sd = 0.70). Also, nearly 80% of the

respondents agreed with the idea that the course content did not exceed their level of English (M = 4.01; Sd = 0.76).

4.3. Duration of the Course

The descriptive statistics of the second scale is summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of the Duration of the Course

Item	M	Sd	SD & D (%)	N (%)	A & SA (%)
4. 90 lessons is sufficient for me to achieve my learning objectives.	3.76	0.86	7.4	25.5	67.1
5. I spent at least 30 minutes studying before each class.	3.76	0.85	5.6	29.3	65.1
6. I think I need more time to self-study to consolidate the course's knowledge.	4.26	0.71	1.5	9.3	89.2

The results showed that although two thirds of the students surveyed thought that the duration of the course was appropriate for them (M = 3.76; Sd = 0.86), a quarter of them remained neutral in this idea.This means those students were not sure about

whether 90 lessons was sufficient to achieve their goals or not.

In addition, more than half of the students shared that they had at least half an hour for self-studying before class (M = 3.76; Sd = 0.85), whereas the others were

unsure about or did not agree with that idea. As a result, most respondents (89.2%) stated that they needed more self-studying time for knowledge consolidation (M = 4.26; Sd = 0.71).

4.4. Teaching and learning facilities

Table 3 illustrates the results regarding the extent to which the participant agreed or disagreed with the statements of facilities.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of the Teaching and Learning Facilities

Item	M	Sd	SD & D (%)	N (%)	A & SA (%)
7. There are enough seats in class, which means it is not too crowded.	4.50	0.68	1.1	5.3	93.6
8. The classroom is full of light.	4.52	0.64	0.6	4.4	95.0
9. The classroom is fully equipped with facilities such as speakers, air-conditioners, boards, chalks, and tables.	4.43	0.69	1.3	6.0	92.7
10. The classroom is well-designed, which facilitates the arrangement of tables for class activities.	4.21	0.78	2.3	13.7	83.0

It is easily seen from the descriptive statistics that the proportions of *agree* and *disagree* were really high among three items. Accordingly, the majority of respondents expressed positive views towards the items concerning teaching and learning facilities. The students shared the idea that the classroom which was not too crowded (M = 4.50; Sd = 0.68) was provided with adequate facilities for learning and teaching (M = 4.52; Sd = 0.64). Besides, the good design of their classroom supported learning activities (M = 4.21; Sd = 0.78).

4.5. Teaching and Learning Materials

The students' opinions on educational materials in the course are demonstrated in Table 4.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of the Teaching and Learning Materials

Item	M	Sd	SD & D (%)	N (%)	A & SA (%)
11. I can buy the course book easily and conveniently.	4.15	0.66	0.8	11.1	88.1
12. The course book is physically well-designed.	4.16	0.71	1.5	13.1	85.4
13. The teacher provided me with instructions to use textbooks, workbooks, and supplementary materials.	4.48	0.59	0.2	4.4	96.4
14. The teacher provided me with audio files for workbooks and supplementary materials.	4.54	0.57	0.2	2.7	97.1
15. The supplementary materials are designed with exercises to practice pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and language skills.	4.33	0.64	0.6	7.1	92.3
16. The supplementary materials are useful for my better understanding of lessons and knowledge consolidation.	4.18	0.63	0.2	11.8	88.0

It is noted from the statistics that most students held positive attitudes about materials they used during the course. Specifically, they consented that they were given audio files for learning materials to practice listening and pronunciation (M = 4.54; Sd = 0.57).

Also, they were instructed to efficiently use learning materials by their teacher (M = 4.48; Sd = 0.59). The substantial numbers of students surveyed

agreed on the high quality of course books and supplementary materials in terms of content (M = 4.33; Sd = 0.64), usefulness (M = 4.18; Sd = 0.63), and appearance (M = 4.16; Sd = 0.71). Additionally, the students shared that the materials were easily accessible (M = 4.15; Sd = 0.66).

4.6. Teaching Methods

How the participants evaluated teaching methods is summarized in Table 5 below.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of the Teaching Methods

Item	M	Sd	SD & D (%)	N (%)	A & SA (%)
17. Teaching methods in class are suitable for me.	4.12	0.64	0.7	13.1	86.2
18. The teacher has various activities in class (e.g., handouts, games, clips, applications, and physical activities).	4.34	0.70	1.5	8.2	90.3
19. I have chances to work in pairs or groups to complete tasks.	4.24	0.66	1.3	8.0	90.7
20. The lessons are delivered with an appropriate speed.	4.14	0.64	1.1	11.5	87.4
21. The class activities are guided carefully.	4.24	0.60	0.0	8.9	91.1

Although the percentages of students who chose *neutral*, *disagree*, and *strongly disagree* were minor, in general, the respondents felt satisfied with teaching methods. To be more specific, they postulated that their teacher offered careful guidance in class activities (M = 4.24, Sd = 0.60) and nobody disagreed with this opinion. Moreover, they agreed that there were a lot of engaging class activities (M = 4.34; Sd = 0.70) and that they could join pair work and team work (M = 4.24; Sd = 0.66). They also found the suitability of the teaching methods for their language learning (M = 4.12; Sd = 0.64).

4.7. Teachers

Table 6 below presents the participants' perceptions of their teachers in the course.

The statistics demonstrated that the means of the items in this scale were higher than those in the other scales and that the percentages of respondents who agreed and strongly agreed with the statements were really high. Notably, in items 25, 26, 27, and 28, the proportions of participants who stayed neutral were insignificant and there were no students who selected *disagree* and *strongly disagree*.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics of the Teachers

Item	M	Sd	SD & D (%)	N (%)	A & SA (%)
22. The teacher insists on punctuality.	4.47	0.68	0.8	6.4	92.8
23. The teacher is enthusiastic about class teaching.	4.61	0.55	0.2	2.0	97.8
24. The way the teacher delivers the lessons is easy to understand and clear.	4.55	0.58	0.2	2.9	96.9
25. The teacher answers all the questions the students raise.	4.55	0.55	0.0	2.9	97.1
26. The teacher spends time helping students to complete tasks in the supplementary materials.	4.49	0.59	0.0	4.7	95.3
27. The teacher creates pleasant atmospheres in class, thereby stimulating the students' learning spirits.	4.55	0.59	0.0	5.1	94.9
28. The teacher initiated a social network for the class (e.g., Facebook and Zalo).	4.62	0.54	0.0	2.9	97.1

The points mentioned above pointed out that the respondents shared highly positive views about their teacher in the course. In accordance with their opinions, the teacher initiated a social group for the class (M = 4.62; Sd = 0.54), expressed enthusiasm about teaching (M = 4.61; Sd = 0.55), and delivered effective lessons (M = 4.55; Sd = 0.58). S/he also responded to all inquiries from students (M = 4.55; Sd = 0.55), brought relaxing atmospheres to class to motivate students (M = 4.55; Sd = 0.59), offered students help to complete supplementary materials (M = 4.49; Sd = 0.59), and was punctual (M = 4.47; Sd = 0.68).

4.8. Students' Preferences in the Course

In question 29, students were asked to choose what they liked in the course on the basis of the aspects mentioned above. They could select more than one options based on their preferences. The options included topics, textbooks, supplementary materials, teaching methods, teaching and learning facilities, and teachers.

The descriptive statistics revealed that teachers were perceived to be the most preferable factor by the students surveyed (74.8%; n = 338), followed by teaching methods (63.5%; n = 287). The third most popular factor among the respondents was teaching and learning facilities (46.7%; n = 211), while the least favorite one manifested itself in supplementary materials (25.7%; n = 116).

4.9. Students' Self-Perceived Improvements

Question 30 required students to self-evaluate which language skills or language components were improved after the course. They could select multiple options.

According to the results, three quarters of the students believed that the course helped them to improve their vocabulary the most (75.2%; n = 340). The second most selected area was grammar (66.8%; n = 302), whereas teamwork skill was thought to improve by the smallest number of respondents (56%; n = 253).

4.10. Students' Expectations Regarding What Needs Improvements in the Course

In question 31, students were expected to indicate what, in their opinion, should be focused on to better the course.

The statistics showed that listening skill should be prioritized to enhance the quality of the course (70.6%; n = 319), followed by speaking skill (66.2%; n = 299) and pronunciation (44.9%; n = 203).

5. Discussions and Implications

Methodologically, as the study instrument was carefully developed based on a strict procedure, this contributed to ensuring its reliability and validity (Dörnyei, 2003). Therefore, this questionnaire is able to provide course designers with immediate feedback. However, it is critical to have further studies to develop and validate this questionnaire in different sociocultural contexts.

The findings represent mostly positive feedback from students in all examined aspects of the course. It seems this course has fulfilled the students' expectations and hopefully helped learners to increase their English proficiency.

IEC, as a whole, could receive favorable feedback from learners because the course was carefully designed following planning and implementation processes of language curriculum development including context consideration, learning outcome decision, course organization, effective teaching providing and program evaluation (Nation, 2000; Richards, 2001). Educators are strongly encouraged to have a certain framework and procedure to adopt when developing a language course.

While students expressed their affection for the whole course, there are some aspects that received less fondness from students. Course duration is less favored in IEC for several apparent reasons. As students taking IEC course were mostly at beginning (A1) level, 90 class hours was not a mighty and sufficient number for them to reach A2. It is scientifically stated that it takes at least 250 hours for a learner to achieve one level of proficiency in ideal

conditions (see more in Cambridge Assessment English, 2021). The intensive instructional hours were another explanation for students' modest feedback on time allocation. Students may find it tiring when they had to attend three IEC classes (three hours for one class) per week in ten consecutive weeks. It became more exhausting when students had to finish a vast amount of supplementary practice on grammar, vocabulary and four language skills after school, especially when they were not language students and were not used to this learning style before.

Students' self-study time is another course developer's concern. Weak and hardworking students might find it necessary to spend more time learning at home, and 30 minutes might be insufficient. However, those whose learning objectives and self-studying habits were lacking might be unsure about this duration.

Similar to time aspect, some students did not demonstrate their favour in the course content. Students might be uncertain about the content because objectives clarified at the beginning of the course and topics introduced in each lesson were not their keen interests. Understandably, IEC aimed at increasing English proficiency of a large number of students in general, so it was not a personally but massively designed course. It could not satisfy all learners consequently.

On the contrary to the three above factors, teachers, teaching methods and learning facilities are three other aspects that catch students' fancy. There are logical explanations for these findings. Firstly, in preparation for conducting IEC, all teachers of English Division who have high level competence of English and good teaching methods were supplied with a rich source of course books and supplementary materials with audio and video files. The best preparation of course instructors on active,

interactive and effective learning activities could bring students meaningful and exciting lessons. Moreover, the small size of class with no more than 25 students was beneficial for teachers to undertake and control class activities. Students were provided with more opportunities to acquire language knowledge, practice language skills and receive timely feedback from teachers. Hence, students became satisfied with the class size. This point was consistent with Kogan (2014) which concluded that the courses with fewer students got more positive feedback. Besides, students expressed their obvious satisfaction when they could learn in classroom supplied with sufficient light, and air-conditioners which contributed to the success of language learning (Fajriah, Gani& Samad, 2019). These well-equipped classrooms with modern facilities and flexible seats also gave teachers plenty of opportunities to carry out teaching activities. Undoubtedly, students highly valued all these priorities. The findings imply that a high-quality course which surely obtains positive feedback from its students is created from competent and enthusiastic teachers with effective teaching methods, small-sized classes, and adequate facilities from the institutional managing board.

The success of a language course can be demonstrated in terms of learners' improvement in language knowledge and skills. Students admitted that they enhanced grammar and vocabulary the most at the end of IEC. Weak students in the course might need more guidance on forms and vocabulary. It is possible that teachers tended to provide rich grammatical and lexical input and spend time reinforcing these components for students before teaching four language skills (see more in Trinh & Mai, 2019). Moreover, learners received excessive exposure of these language elements when finishing various exercises in supplementary materials which have high proportions of grammatical and lexical practices.

Supplementary materials are the least favorite factor in students' preferences in IEC although the course developers had made a tremendous effort to design them and expected the students to use them as an effective self-study module. This situation is psychologically understandable when students had to learn under high time intensity with vast language knowledge acquired in class. Then they were assigned extra practice in supplementary materials at home for the next lesson. Gradually, they might lose interest in these course resources. Another reason why students seemed not to be interested in spending their self-study time on supplementary books was its pen-and-paper format. Integrating this resource into a blended learning platform or uploading it to some interactive applications might be considered as effective and long-term solutions to promote students' self-learning (see more in Bowyer & Chambers, 2017; Hrastinski, 2019). The material design in a language class can be examined more in Richards (2001) and Tomlinson (2012).

In terms of learners' expectations which were mentioned in question 29 of the survey, pronunciation, speaking, and listening skills needed enhancing. The first possible explanation results from the short duration of the course. 90 class hours was insufficient for teachers to provide their students with both language components and skills. It is also crucial for educators to find out whether the course focuses on what of language learning or how of language learning or both. Secondly, due to current challenges affecting tertiary English learning and teaching in Vietnam (Trinh & Mai, 2019), IEC developers and teachers had to handle the conflicts between time constraints and vast linguistic knowledge. The course developers can refer to the course planning process in Jacobs (2010) and North, Angelova, Jarosz, and Rossner

(2018). Thirdly, arguably, both teachers and students encountered washback effects, as about 60% of test items in IEC's final reading and writing tests were lexical and grammatical. That might lead to the fact that teachers and learners had to put more emphasis on components in the exams (see more in Spratt, 2005). As a result, the educators must take a more realistic option in which grammar and vocabulary were prioritized to include in the course, so they could not guarantee the chance for students to cover all the aspects of language learning.

It is recommended for course developers to consider the time allocation for skill improvements to gain students' better satisfaction for the whole course. Besides, there should be careful attention to granting learners more autonomy to stimulate their interest in course duration and course content as the dimension of control over learning content (see more in Benson, 2011). Evidently, students' evaluations obtained from the questionnaire provide teachers with a useful source of reference to revise course and educators can refer this valuable information to their further language programs (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018).

6. Conclusions

The study aims to gain understanding about how students, after attending the IEC, evaluated the course on the basis of some concerns including content, duration, materials, facilities, teachers, and teaching methods. The study also seeks to investigate what the students liked about the course, what they improved the most, and which parts could be strengthened in the next course. There were 453 students who participated in the study and completed the questionnaire. That questionnaire survey was self-developed on the basis of a rigorous process and the reliability value of Cronbach's alpha was really high. The

results pointed out positivity in the students' views regarding all the aspects of the course mentioned above. What interested the students most were the teachers, their teaching methods, and the teaching and learning facilities in the classroom and the participants' improvements were the biggest in vocabulary and grammar and the smallest in teamwork skill. The respondents looked forward to the addition and reinforcement of listening, speaking, and pronunciation in the further courses. Accordingly, some implications were provided on the basis of need analysis and more solid curriculum design. It was suggested that the ICE was appropriate for the participants to better their language proficiency and reach the university requirements of foreign language competences.

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NGHIÊN CỨU ĐỊNH LƯỢNG VỀ ĐÁNH GIÁ CỦA SINH VIÊN KHÔNG CHUYÊN NGỮ ĐỐI VỚI KHÓA HỌC TIẾNG ANH TĂNG CƯỜNG

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Tóm tắt: Nghiên cứu được thực hiện để tìm hiểu về những đánh giá của sinh viên không chuyên ngữ với khóa học tiếng Anh tăng cường được giảng dạy ở năm thứ nhất tại Đại học Thủy lợi, Việt Nam. Đây là khóa học được thiết kế với mục đích nâng cao kiến thức và kĩ năng ngôn ngữ cho sinh viên. 453 sinh viên đã tham gia trả lời phiếu câu hỏi khảo sát vào cuối khóa học để cung cấp thông tin cho nghiên cứu. Sau khi dữ liệu được xử lý bởi SPSS phiên bản 24, các kết quả thu được rất đáng ghi nhận. Nghiên cứu đã cho thấy đa số sinh viên có nhận xét rất tích cực về nội dung, thời lượng, giáo viên, tài liệu và cơ sở vật chất của khóa học. Trong đó, sinh viên thể hiện sự hài lòng nhất với giáo viên cùng phương pháp giảng dạy của thầy cô và những trang thiết bị được cung cấp cho các lớp học tiếng Anh tăng cường. Các em đều nhận thấy từ vựng và ngữ pháp của mình tiến bộ đáng kể mặc dù các kĩ năng làm việc nhóm chưa thực sự được cải thiện như mong muốn. Sinh viên cũng hi vọng trong các khóa học tiếp theo sẽ được luyện tập nhiều hơn kĩ năng nghe, nói và phát âm. Nghiên cứu cũng đưa ra một số đề xuất và giải pháp để các nhà quản lý, người thiết kế chương trình, giáo viên và các bên liên quan có thể áp dụng cho các khóa học tiếp theo.

Từ khóa: đánh giá, tiếng Anh tăng cường, sinh viên không chuyên ngữ

FLIPGRID APP FOR TEACHING SPEAKING SKILLS: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND PERFORMANCE IMPACT

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Abstract: Technology plays an important role in the educational environment to not only assist in-class procedure but also shift traditional education practice. As a powerful tool to empower students' voice in learning, the Flipgrid application has become more prominent in the educational environment, particularly in mobile learning. This study was carried out to investigate the impacts of Flipgrid on students' speaking skills and collect deeper perceptions on the use of Flipgrid after the training process. The study employed a quasi-experimental design with eighty Vietnamese students from two classes at College of Economic Relations, Ho Chi Minh city. The training procedures for both groups were similar except for the use of Flipgrid application among the experimental group. Data came from pre-tests, post-tests, online questionnaire and interviews. The findings of the study revealed that there were positive influences of the Flipgrid application on speaking performances for non-majored English students at the research site.

Keywords: Flipgrid, speaking skills, quasi-experimental design, mobile learning

1. Introduction

As a global language, English has been realized to serve communication skills and information exchange. The English language has been proven by its presence in developing countries and its necessity in multinational working companies. In regard to language education, the claim refers to the current popularity of English in worldwide university systems in which it is highlighted as a predominant means of learning and a medium of instruction (Shamrao, 2012). Speaking is viewed as one of the most significant language skills. Nevertheless, speaking is challenging for most Asian EFL learners, which has been discussed in prior studies of Asian scholars (Hwang et al., 2014; Koyak & Üstünel, 2019; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). Similarly, EFL students in the Vietnamese context have been also found reluctant to communicate in English for many years deriving from proven rationales such as a lack of motivation, a lack of self-confidence and problems with language anxiety (Hoa & Thao, 2020; Quyen et al., 2018; Tuan & Mai, 2015). More seriously, there was equivalently a lack of English-speaking practice opportunities in the classroom and out of the classroom as well. A lot of unfavorable feedback from students' English-speaking performance has been collected for many years. Vietnamese students are generally good at grammar

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structures; however, in real-life communication, it is hard for them to kick-start a conversation in English.

Through problems faced in English speaking learning, there is no doubt that the rapid development of technology could support the process of skill formation and could shift traditional education to new patterns of instruction as integrated-technology education. In discussions of technology integration into education, computer-assisted and mobile-assisted language learning systems have underpinned the effectiveness of technology-based resources in teachers' instructions and learners' learning process. Therefore, applying the Flipgrid application into teaching English speaking is proposed in order to empower students' voices and bring the back row of students to the front of the class.

Relating to the above research context, this paper proposes to seek for a path whether using the Flipgrid app is an effective way to help improve students' speaking ability. As a result, the aim of this paper is to investigate the extent Flipgrid affects students' speaking performance. The key research questions are:

1. To what extent does Flipgrid affect students' speaking performance?

2. How do the students perceive the use of Flipgrid in practicing speaking?

2. Literature Review

Speaking is addressed as one of the dominant skills to be acquired in L2 acquisition (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017; Sabina, 2018) as it is the means of communicating meaningful and comprehensive ideas to listeners (Ho et al., 2020). This is particularly true in educational contexts where students are supposed to utilize a range of speaking skills to participate in both inside and outside classroom conversations with their peers and teachers. According to

Brown (1994), when a learner uses spoken words to express something, he/she is going through an interactive process from receiving knowledge, processing to conveying meanings and absorbing it. Sharing the same perspective, Nunan (1995) elaborates that this oral form of communication is a combination of saying words, then making meaningful sentences in requesting, questioning, answering, and conveying meanings. He later broadens the term by adding linguistic competence, sociolinguistic, and conversational skills to the definition of speaking skills (Nunan, 1999). Harmer (2007) additionally characterizes that speaking not only consists of pronunciation aspects such as intonation, stress, and connected speech to produce language output but also includes the awareness of communicative contexts, conversational repair strategies, and functional exchanges. Another claim is that speaking is an appropriate selection of vocabulary to make speaking patterns with correct grammar use, which illustrates communicative purposes (Contreras Ospitia et al., 2016).

In the light of reports from the sophistication of speaking skills, it is conceivable that learners in the EFL contexts have trouble acquiring oral skills because of a shortage of speaking practice beyond the classroom context (Nunan, 2003). According to Rao (2019), that EFL students face difficulties in speaking grammatical sentences is a popular challenge for EFL learners worldwide.

In Hong Kong, one study conducted to clarify the understanding of L2 speaking problems consolidates that students' speaking problems could be derived from three academic terms including sociocultural, institutional and interpersonal contexts (Gan, 2012). In addition, lacking inside and outside classroom interaction opportunities together with insufficient investments in language curriculum could also add up to students' speaking problems.

In one recent study, Leong and Ahmadi (2017) also conclude that Malaysian students even challenge themselves with speaking skills in terms of expressing themselves in L2 spoken language. In another context, EFL Indonesian students have trouble with language barriers, psychological factors including anxiety and motivation, lack of communicative opportunities and practice (Abrar et al., 2018). It can be seen that second language oral production has always been a great challenge for EFL students in different countries, and Vietnamese EFL learners are no exception. In a recent study conducted in English classrooms in Hanoi, Hoa and Thao (2020) point out that Vietnamese English learners are often inactive in class due to a lack of proper investments in fostering and reinforcing speaking skills. Speaking problems are also discovered in another high school context in which the students are reported that they have no motivation and confidence to produce spoken language because of their limited speaking topic knowledge and listening strategies as well as inappropriate feedback from teachers (Tuan & Mai, 2015). Likewise, with some certain challenges in Vietnamese higher education, Vietnamese university students are usually associated with fear of mistakes, a shortage of lexical items and a lack of confidence (Ho et al., 2020).

Troubles with communicating in L2 are also reported in a study done in Can Tho University, Mekong Delta region (Quyen et al., 2018). Both teachers and students encounter a range of internal and external factors that hinder their teaching and learning, especially a shortage of after-school activities and speaking environments.

In short, low motivation, disengagement to speaking activities and lack of opportunities to practice speaking are common problems of L2 learners. These problems can be derived from several reasons; nevertheless, it has been commonly proven from a variety of studies in Viet Nam that insufficient speaking practice investments could demotivate students in learning and acquiring speaking skills.

Concerning recommendations in previous studies, promoting students' motivation and creating more collaborative learning activities could develop speaking skills and reduce difficulties that students are facing (Boonkit, 2010). Furthermore, the employment of diverse technological tools as well as multimedia resources was found to have positive impacts on teachers' teaching practice and assist students' oral language production (Gómez, 2019; Quyen et al., 2018; Sabina, 2018).

Among the popular educational applications, Flipgrid is considered as one of the most beneficial ones in terms of facilitating learning discussions and boosting learning involvement. With features such as real-time video chatting and video discussions, Flipgrid is proved to effectively promote collaborative learning and learning engagement (Agan et al., 2019; Innes, 2020; Johnson & Skarphol, 2018; McLain, 2018; Miller et al., 2020; Stoszkowski et al., 2020). Students have an opportunity to present videos on a discussion grid, watch peers' videos and receive feedback from teachers, which creates connections among peers and teachers. Furthermore, it is believed that Flipgrid opens up more learning environments to students so that they can practice their speaking skills ubiquitously on various topics and elongate their speaking time (McLain, 2018). In the line of speaking ability, Forsythe and Raine (2019) reveal that Flipgrid could boost student's confidence in speaking performances. Recently, Lowenthal and Moore (2020) argue that when recording videos, students will learn to structure their ideas in a way that they can contentedly present them. Even for those who are not very confident, they are still able to post a video with an icon or

a funny emoji as their avatars; therefore, Flipgrid helps cultivate not only creativity but also flexibility.

In discussion of prior research about Flipgrid in the Vietnamese context, two more factors affecting students' speaking ability are class size and the use of grammar-focused paper tests; therefore, the authors carry out an empirical study in a university to seek for the suitability of applying Flipgrid in enhancing English communication skills in such contexts (Doan & Huynh, 2019). The results indicate that the Flipgrid program has a good impact on students' interests, English speaking improvement, and confidence. This result is supported by data from a separate study conducted with 60 tenth-grade students at a high school in the Mekong Delta, which found that students have positive attitudes and preferences toward using Flipgrid to support their speaking lessons (Tuyet & Khang, 2020). Specifically, the adoption of the Flipgrid app is reported to reduce tenth-grade students' anxiety in speaking practice. More importantly, the findings highlight that when acquiring speaking skills, the Flipgrid app could strengthen collaborative learning skills, autonomous learning ability and reflective learning.

In summary, it is strongly believed that speaking is indispensable for L2 learning goals; however, EFL learners have to put more effort and practice to acquire it. In order to fluently speak English, it is recommended to increase students' motivation, stimulate confidence, engage in speaking activities and offer more opportunities to practice speaking in language classrooms and beyond classroom contexts. Flipgrid is reviewed as an effective tool to improve students' oral competence attached to reducing language anxiety, increasing willingness to communicate in English, and enhancing learners' involvement in speaking activities. Clearly, the benefits featured from the Flipgrid

application could affect students' speaking performance in English language education.

3. Methodology

3.1. Setting and Participants

The research was conducted at College of Economic Relations [COFER] located in Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam. The study was carried out with eighty participants from different majors including Tourism, Travel Management, Administration Management, Exporting and Importing who were second-year students of non-English majors and were assigned into two intact classes by General Faculty. This convenience sampling strategy was used due to the schedule constraints from COFER Department of Training. However, the research reliability was made up with triangulated data from interviews and questionnaires.

3.2. Procedure and Training Process

The research employed pretest-posttest quasi-experimental design and was implemented in three stages with two intact classes of non-English majors during a two-month procedure. The training procedures for Experimental Group (EC) and Control Group (CG) happened within 15 weeks equally distributed in a period of two months.

In the pre-stage, before the intervention, the students from CG and EG were given a speaking pre-test to measure speaking performance and proficiency level. In the while-stage, primarily based on the college training curriculum, speaking topics relating to the subject of English for Business Communication in the syllabus were equally delivered to students in both groups during a 15-week course (60 periods, 4 periods for each class meeting). For the control group, students were taught with traditional instructions without using the treatment. For the experimental group, the

Flipgrid application as the treatment was employed to focus on making speaking videos. In the post-stage, the online questionnaire was sent to the students who were in the experimental group, and then the interviews were also delivered online to them. At the end of the course, the students took a post-test to measure speaking performance after using the treatment.

Table 1

VSTEP Speaking Assessment Criteria

Five VSTEP speaking assessment criteria		Scoring scale
Grammar (0.2)	Range and Accuracy	0-10
Vocabulary (0.2)	Range and Flexibility	0-10
Pronunciation (0.2)	Individual Sounds, Stress and Intonation	0-10
Fluency (0.2)	Hesitation and Topic Development	0-10
Structures (0.2)	Coherence and Cohesion	0-10

3.4. Instruments

3.4.1. VSTEP Speaking Tests

In the study, VSTEP's speaking criteria had been used to measure students' speaking performance before and after administering the treatment. As a purpose to answer the first research question that how the Flipgrid application affects students' speaking performance, VSTEP speaking tests were used to measure students' performance before and after the intervention. In particular, students' recordings were used to (1) measure students' language proficiency before the intervention, (2) measure students' speaking ability before the intervention, and (3) measure students' speaking competence after the intervention. The VSTEP speaking tests were conducted with two raters (teacher A and teacher B). Test scores were then checked for reliability with Pearson Correlation. With correlation score for both pre-tests and post-tests larger than 0.7, teacher A's score was used for T-test analysis.

3.3. Scoring Rubrics

The current study employed an official scoring rubric regarding VSTEPs from Ho Chi Minh City University of Education that has been approved by the MOET in order to train teachers and lecturers on scoring the tests. A summary of scoring criteria was presented as below:

3.4.2. Online Questionnaire

The study also applied an online questionnaire as the second research instrument to collect more specific data on participants' attitudes towards the treatment. According to Creswell (2002), a questionnaire is defined as a form of a survey design used for the respondents to answer questions in the effort of gaining deeper insights for research. As reported in past literature, there are three major categories of questionnaires most often used in educational research including paper- and pencil-based questionnaires, mailed questionnaires and web-based questionnaires. With the popularity of websites and the help of the Internet in designing questionnaires (Creswell, 2002), it is believed that web-based questionnaires assist researchers to collect data more quickly and conveniently. For that reason, an online questionnaire will be used to obtain data from respondents instead of traditional ones.

In this study, the online questionnaire was used to explore the second

research question, which was related to students' perceptions on the use of Flipgrid in speaking class. The questionnaire items in this study were adapted from a related study concerning perceptions on Flipgrid (Johnson & Skarphol, 2018) and students' feelings about the usage of video blogs on speaking (Lestari, 2019) since they had comparable research goals which focus on the effects of technology-based tools on speaking skills. The questionnaire was adjusted and redesigned to align with current research gaps about factors that could possibly have impacts on speaking skills such as students' motivation, confidence, engagement, interaction, and opportunities to practice when using Flipgrid. There were two main parts in the questionnaire.

Part 1 includes 5 questions which aim at gaining demographic information such as gender, age, major, and English learning time. In part 2, there were 24 statements divided into four specific constructs: (1) general perceptions on

Flipgrid, (2) its influence on speaking performance and confidence, (3) the impacts of Flipgrid on engagement, collaboration and opportunities to practice, and (4) perceptions of enjoyment of discussion and interaction on Flipgrid, and motivation behind the use of Flipgrid. Part 2 was constructed using a five-point Likert scale with five levels ranging from 1 to 5 (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree) to obtain participants' self-evaluation of the Flipgrid app. In addition, the online questionnaire was conducted in both Vietnamese and English languages; however, it was only handled by participants in the experimental group at the end of the course via an online link to Cognito Forms, a free online form builder for data collection. Participants were given an online questionnaire in Vietnamese in order to avoid misunderstandings when providing replies. More importantly, to ensure the anonymity of responses, respondents were not required to submit names in the answer sheets.

Table 2

Structure of Online Questionnaire

	Structure of Online Questionnaire	No of items
Part 1	*Demographic information*	5
Part 2	*Perceptions on the use of Flipgrid*	
1	General perceptions on Flipgrid	6
2	The influence of Flipgrid on speaking performance and confidence	5
3	The influence of Flipgrid on engagement, collaboration and learning opportunities	6
4	Perceptions of enjoyment of discussion, interaction on Flipgrid and learning motivation	7
	Total	**29**

3.4.3. Interviews

In order to gain deeper insights and solid evidence, the study used a third research instrument, interviews, which triangulated the study's findings. When the

researcher is unable to gain direct replies from participants, the interview seeks to provide further detailed information. (Creswell, 2002). Individual interviews provide private opinions and genuine

perspectives for research, which reinforces the accuracy of research findings (Lange, 1996). In the current study, interviews were carried out with six participants from the experimental group at the end of a learning course in order to obtain students' deeper viewpoints and perceptions on the values of Flipgrid during their 15-week experience. To prevent bias issues when asking questions, the interview consisted of five primarily structured and open-ended questions that were developed to align with research questions.

4. Data Collection and Analysis

All data from the interview, questionnaire, and Pre- and Post-tests were obtained at the end of the course, as scheduled. The independent sample t-test was used with students' pre- and post-tests to see if there were any significant variations in their speaking performances before and after the treatment. Subsequently, the questionnaire was constructed with a five-point Likert scale and was analyzed using SPSS vs. 26 to find out additional answers on impressions of Flipgrid use. Then, in order to collect extra information, six random EG participants were recalled at random to take part in interviews conducted in Vietnamese. The interview lasted from 5 to 10 minutes for each student. The interview was then audio-recorded for analytical purposes. To prepare for a good interview, various aspects such as the natural environment and the interviewee-interviewer interaction were taken into consideration. The researchers next translated the raw data and grouped it into themes to support the answers to the second research question.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. To What Extent Does Flipgrid Affect Students' Speaking Skills?

The pre-tests were administered to both the control and experimental groups prior to the training process to assess whether the students' levels of speaking skill were equal. More importantly, the results of the pre-tests were analyzed using the Independent Sample T-test to investigate how the intervention affected the results of the post-tests. The results of the pre-tests between the control and experimental group were illustrated in table 3.

Table 3

Results of the Pre-Tests

	N	Mean	SD
Pre-tests			
Control group	40	3,200	1,18
Experimental group	40	3,250	1,11

In discussion of the Mean scores, the table presented that the Mean score of CG was 3,2 (M = 3,2; SD = 1,18) and that of EG was 3,25 (M = 3,25; SD = 1,11). As seen from the table, the Mean scores between CG and EG was nearly 0, which meant there was no difference in terms of students' speaking proficiency level before administrating the intervention.

In order to clarify answers for the first research question, Independent Sample T-test was employed in the pre-stage, the scores were compared to seek whether there was no difference in pre-tests results between the control and experimental group.

Table 4

Independent Samples T-Test of Pre-Tests

	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Std. Error Df
Pre-tests Results	,305	,582	-,195	78	,846	,256

From the results of the equality of the Mean value, the Sig. (2-tailed) value presented .846 (> .05). It was strongly believed that there was no significant difference between the pre-tests scores of CG and those of EG. In other words, the results regarding speaking performances and language proficiency of participants from both research groups were equal to each other before adopting the intervention.

With regard to the findings of post-tests from CG and EG in the post-stage, data from Independent Samples T-test was explained in Table 5. Concerning the equality of Means, it presented that the Sig. value (2-tailed) was ,00 (< .05), which justified that there was a statistically significant difference between the post-test means of CG and those of EG after two-month research time. Therefore, there was a remarkable change regarding speaking performances between CG and EG in comparison with the pre-tests and post-tests.

Table 5

Independent Samples T-Test of Post-Tests

	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Std. Error Df
Post-tests Results	24,6	,000	-5,59	59,8	,000	,203

To sum up, there was no significant difference in speaking performances between the control and experimental group before the experiment. After the experiment with Flipgrid, the experimental group outperformed the control group in speaking performance. This result matched with the findings from past research that were gone through in the part of literature review consisting of Johnson and Skarphol (2018), Forsythe and Raine (2019), Doan and Huynh (2019), Lowenthal and Moore (2020), Stoszkowsk, Hodgkinson and Collins (2020), Tuyet and Khang (2020). The findings from those past studies similarly paid attention to the effectiveness of Flipgrid on speaking skills. Some of them reported

that Flipgrid is helpful for practicing speaking skills and enhancing students' confidence. Some stayed focused on the influences of Flipgrid on reducing anxiety, increasing collaboration and autonomy.

5.2. How do Students Perceive the Use of Flipgrid in Speaking Practice?

The second research question was clarified through the online questionnaire and the interview that was delivered to the students in the experimental group at the end of the training process. The questionnaire aimed to find out insights of students on the implementation of Flipgrid. The findings were summarized in the below table.

Table 6

The Results of the Questionnaires

Items No	Question items	Mean
1	Flipgrid is an effective tool for speaking activities	4,2
2	I find Flipgrid easy and convenient to use	4,4
3	I enjoy using funny emoji icons when making videos on Flipgrid	3,95

4	Flipgrid helps increase my academic achievement (e.g. grades)	3,9
5	Flipgrid helps me improve my communication skills.	3,87
6	I feel that my speaking ability is better when using Flipgrid	3,8
7	I feel more comfortable to make videos with Flipgrid	4,07
8	I am more confident to speak English than I used to	3,7
9	I am more involved in speaking activities when using Flipgrid	3,8
10	I watch more speaking videos from peers on Flipgrid platform	3,5
11	I work well to make speaking video with peers	3,6
12	Flipgrid provides more communicative opportunities	4,05
13	I use Flipgrid to practice speaking more after school	3,6
14	I can use Flipgrid anytime and anywhere	4,2

As can be seen from Table 6, the students had positive attitudes towards the use of Flipgrid in speaking practice, which was addressed by the mean scores ranging from 3,3 to 4,25. Outstandingly, the large portion of students' responses reported that Flipgrid was easy and convenient to use (M = 4,4). Moreover, there were other findings that addressed positive perceptions of students on the effectiveness of Flipgrid on speaking practice including enhancing interaction (M = 4,25), providing more convenience in speaking learning (M = 4,2), increasing confidence (M = 4,07), creating more speaking opportunities (M = 4,05), promoting motivation in learning speaking (M = 4,05).

With regard to speaking proficiency, most students showed positive agreement in helping gain achievement in speaking with 25% for "strongly agree" and 47.5% for "agree". In line with this, it was considered that Flipgrid could enhance communication skills, which accounted for 67.5% of the responses comprising 25% for "strongly agree" and 42.5% for "agree". The numeric data entailed 65% of students who were satisfied with Flipgrid in terms of speaking improvement. Concerning the notion of confidence in speaking practice, 77.5% of answers (37.5% for "strongly agree" and

40% for "agree") were proven by the students who believed that they felt comfortable making speaking videos with Flipgrid. However, a few students showed their disagreement with it, which constituted a small fraction of 7.5% for "disagree" in the response graph. More importantly, the last item in the graph presented 60% of responses relating to confidence in speaking. Thanks to Flipgrid, the students became more confident than they used to. Nevertheless, for some reasons, a quite large portion of respondents remained their neutral value that took up 35%. Basically, the results from these above items reveal that the students mostly showed favorable comments on Flipgrid in terms of speaking improvement and increase in confidence.

As presented in Table 6, students showed positive feelings towards the help of Flipgrid in terms of engaging themselves into learning, creating more collaboration and more learning opportunities in class, which was seen through all the respectively high means of each item. Specifically, from the graph, there were 62.5% of the respondents who favorably answered to function regarding increasing involvement in learning made up 25% for "strongly agree" and 37.5% for "agree". The rise in learning engagement was proven through

frequency of watching friends' speaking videos. 20 of 40 students spent time watching more oral videos than before, which comprised 45%. Nevertheless, 37,5% of students' answers had neutral attitudes towards this statement. Another important part relating to collaboration in speaking depicted a positive trend with 55% concerning teamwork with the help of Flipgrid. Moreover, positive insights towards Flipgrid that could help create more learning opportunities were collected from three next items. This led to 80% of the agreement for "Flipgrid provides more communicative opportunities" (35% for "strongly agree" and 45% for "agreement"), 65% of saying yes for "I use Flipgrid to practice speaking more after school" (17.5% for "strongly agree" and 47.5% for "agree") and 85% of agreement for "I can use Flipgrid anytime and anywhere" (42.5% for "strongly agree" and 42.5% for "agree"). As details just mentioned from a very large majority of favorable responses, the Flipgrid application was highly recommended to use to practice speaking English beyond classroom-based environments, which was supposed to provide better learning environments for students. It was shown that a high proportion of students expressed satisfaction of using the Flipgrid making up 85% of being able to use it anywhere and anytime and 65% of frequently using it after school.

With the purpose of triangulating research findings, the interview was used to collect deeper thoughts of students on the use of Flipgrid after the training process. It can be reported that the students strongly believed that Flipgrid could positively impact on speaking skills in terms of improvements of pronunciation in speaking skills and the attachment of funny stickers used when videoing. Although some students faced difficulties in dealing with technical problems at the beginning, they gradually got used to using the application

and felt more confident in creating their speaking videos. This interesting result is aligned with findings from the questionnaires which state that Flipgrid was useful to enhance students' confidence in speaking.

6. Conclusion

In a nutshell, Flipgrid could be certified to be an efficient learning application in terms of improving speaking skills adequately explained from the results of the outweighed difference between speaking performances of EG and those of CG. This justification was further pointed out by data collected from the questionnaire and the interview. Firstly, regarding assistance with speaking skills, Flipgrid could help improve pronunciation after making videos. Secondly, Flipgrid helped increase the notion of interaction, especially peer interaction and teacher-students interaction through spending time observing themselves and peers speaking and sharing videos and receiving feedback from teachers. Furthermore, Flipgrid could enhance students' confidence in producing speaking videos, which was one of the most indispensable factors for lifelong learning and English-speaking learning in particular. The results of this study show that the Flipgrid application has a good impact on students' speaking skills. This is consistent with a large body of data on mobile and computer-assisted language acquisition. Besides, this study also revealed some problems students faced when using Flipgrid, which could have opened doors for further research in the future.

7. Limitations

Firstly, this is a quasi-experimental study with the use of available convenient sampling (Creswell, 2002), which might not express the deepest results for all populations. It could also be one of the

recommendations for further research study because, according to Creswell (2002), it is thought that quasi-experimental studies pose far greater risks to internal validity than actual experimental research. Secondly, two months for data collection might be insufficient to capture the most complete and effective picture of the research problem. Last but not least, one of the unexpected limitations of this study is that as the course was mostly delivered online, post-tests, questionnaires, and interviews were all as well administered online using Zoom platform. This caused a lot of difficulties for the researcher to handle this situation. However, with the support of students and the school, the study yielded positive results. Fortunately, the students did cooperate well to overcome struggles with technical problems with virtual learning, resulting in a satisfactory conclusion to the study.

8. Recommendations for Further Research

With a help of triangulation in research methods and instruments, the study provided significant results to contribute to English language education in Viet Nam regarding practical and theoretical aspects. However, it may be more efficient if the study is carried out as a true experiment with data collecting through random sampling. This could open up a new path for other researchers interested in this area.

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TÁC ĐỘNG CỦA ỨNG DỤNG FLIPGRID
TRONG VIỆC DẠY KĨ NĂNG NÓI
ĐỐI VỚI CẢM NHẬN VÀ KẾT QUẢ HỌC TẬP CỦA SINH VIÊN

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Tóm tắt: Trong bối cảnh giáo dục hiện đại, vai trò của công nghệ không chỉ là hỗ trợ quản lí các hoạt động học tập mà còn góp phần vào quá trình thay đổi phương thức giáo dục truyền thống. Là một trong những công cụ mạnh mẽ giúp nâng cao tiếng nói của người học, ứng dụng Flipgrid đã được sử dụng rộng rãi trong giáo dục, đặc biệt là trong lĩnh vực học tập trên thiết bị di động. Nghiên cứu này được thực hiện nhằm tìm hiểu và phân tích tác động của ứng dụng học tập trên thiết bị di động Flipgrid đối với kỹ năng nói của học sinh và tìm hiểu sâu hơn về nhận thức của người học về tác dụng của Flipgrid sau quá trình đào tạo. Nghiên cứu được thiết kế theo hướng bán thực nghiệm với sự tham gia của hai lớp 80 sinh viên Việt Nam tại Trường Cao đẳng Kinh tế đối ngoại. Nội dung giảng dạy của hai nhóm là như nhau, tuy nhiên một nhóm sẽ trải nghiệm học với Flipgrid. Dữ liệu được thu thập từ các bài kiểm tra trước và sau quá trình thực nghiệm, bảng câu hỏi trực tuyến và phỏng vấn. Kết quả của nghiên cứu cho thấy ứng dụng Flipgrid đã có những ảnh hưởng tích cực đến kỹ năng nói của các sinh viên không chuyên ngành tiếng Anh thuộc bối cảnh nghiên cứu.

Từ khoá: Flipgrid, kỹ năng nói, bán thực nghiệm, học tập trên thiết bị di động

ONLINE LEARNING READINESS LEVEL
OF FIRST AND SECOND YEAR STUDENTS
AT FACULTY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER
EDUCATION, VNU UNIVERSITY OF LANGUAGES
AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

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Abstract: Recent advances in Information and Technology Communication (ICT) have prompted significant changes in the domain of education, particularly in the rise of online learning. In early 2018, VNU University of Languages and International Studies (VNU-ULIS) started implementing several web-based courses on a Learning Management System (LMS), in an attempt to encourage the development of online learning at the university. The aim of this study was to investigate the level of readiness for online learning of potential learners of LMS so that both course instructors and course participants would be able to identify difficulties that they might encounter in the novel virtual teaching and learning environment. The data collection process was divided into two phases: closed-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews afterwards. The main instrument was Online Learning Readiness Scale developed by Hung Chou, Chen and Own (2010).The final results indicated that university students from both academic years get relatively high levels of online readiness, yet the second year student participants had a slightly higher level of readiness than the first year participants. Therefore, the implementation of LMS was probably more suitable for sophomore ones.

Keywords: online learning, online courses, online learning readiness level

1. Introduction

Currently, there is a growing inclination towards distance education while traditional teaching methods are not able to meet the burgeoning demands for education (Schachar & Neumann, 2003). Despite the widespread popularity of online education programs, they have received mixed reviews from both faculty members and students. Further elucidation of advantages and disadvantages of online learning will be presented in the later part of the research.

Several previous studies have emphasized the importance of measuring students' readiness in online learning prior to student taking an online course (McVay, 2001), as well as the significant impacts of individuals' readiness on their academic achievements within online learning environment (Bernard, Brauer, Abrami & Surke, 2004). As LMS is newly adapted at VNU-ULIS, it is crucial to gauge students' online learning readiness level (OLRL) to

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better understand how to achieve fruitful online learning and teaching experiences (Yu & Richardson, 2015).

The execution of an e-learning readiness instrument is highly desirable for not only web-based course designers but also course participants to identify feasible difficulties that they might encounter in the virtual teaching and learning environment. By undertaking this task, online course instructors are likely to help the distance learners develop their competencies or improve their readiness skills to avoid problematic situations involving non-content related learning challenges that could hinder their success in online learning (Zawacki-Richter, 2004).

This study focuses on identifying students' readiness for online learning at the Faculty of English Language Teacher Education (FELTE), VNU-ULIS through these two following research questions:

- *What is online learning readiness level of the first year students at FELTE, VNU-ULIS?*
- *What is online learning readiness level of the second year students at FELTE, VNU-ULIS?*

2. Literature Review

2.1. Distance Education

Definition

Recently, online learning has gradually become a popular form of teaching and learning for various academic fields at different grades around the world. Yet, there appears to be no clear consensus on one definite term for this mode of teaching and learning. The variations include distance education, online classes, online learning and e-learning. As a matter of fact, these terms might have been utilized interchangeably (Doe, Castillo & Musyoka, 2017).

Holomberg (1986) claimed that distance education was a term used to describe organized learning that was not directly monitored by teachers at a specified time and place; it required special techniques of course design, instructional techniques, communication tools and finally special administrative management. Likewise, Perraton (1988) emphasized the flexibility of online learning as this educational process constituted teaching and learning activities conducted by independent individuals, without obligatory physical meetings between teachers and students. Keegan (1988) proposed a more comprehensive definition of online learning by extending the concept suggested by Holomberg (1986) and even specifying the differences of e-learning in comparison with other types of education, namely the separation of teachers and learners, which distinguished distance education from face-to-face education; the integration of an educational organization, which distinguished it from self-study and private tutoring; the application of digital media to distribute teaching contents and finally, the presence of two-way computer-mediated communication with other teachers and students.

The History of Distance Education

Since online learning is closely related to technology, technological innovations have changed the face of distance education and revolutionized the concepts of teaching and learning. According to Taylor (2001), distance education practices and theories have evolved through five generations. The first generation of distance education was *Correspondence Mode,* which was based on print technology. Correspondence courses utilized written/ printed texts and postal services to deliver information manually in the form of books, newspapers, etc. Interaction between educational partners was limited since it occurs merely through letters or written/ printed documents and with the help of the postal system, which was

undoubtedly time-consuming and not very interactive (Moore, 1994).

Following Correspondence Model was *Multi-media Model*, which was based on print, audio and video technologies. Unlike the first generation, the second generation was broadcast. This generation was characterized by the application of diverse technological transitional devices such as satellite, cable television, radio, live presentations and records. Nonetheless, this generation still possessed a limitation on establishing an interactive communication between students and instructors (Bowles, 2004).

In the third generation of distance education – *Telelearning Model,* telecommunication technologies were applied to provide learners with synchronous communication. To be more exact, ICT was adopted as a tool to distribute information and facilitate communication between learners and teachers as well as between learners and learners. However, it was observed that the universities offering distance education do not make enough use of technology in terms of educational application (McLellan, 1999).

The fourth generation of distance education was the *Flexible Learning Model,* which was based on online delivery via the Internet. During this era, the widespread voice/video conference system not only enabled distant interaction between students – teachers and students – students but also promoted collaborative group work across borders (Perraton, 1988). Although many universities were just beginning to implement the fourth generation of distance education initiatives, the fifth generation was already emerging based on the further development of modern technology.

The fifth generation of distance education, *Intelligent Flexible Learning Model*, was bound to be an indispensable derivation of the fourth generation, which

aimed to capitalize on the features of the Internet and the Web. This generation facilitated teaching and learning activities with an automated response system together with campus portal access to institutional processes and resources.

Factors of Successful Online Learning

Several studies have pointed out various advantages of distance education, including flexibility (Chizmar & Walbert, 1999), convenience (Poole, 2000) and informative communication (Vonderwell, 2003). First, Petrides (2002) stated that according to the participants, collaborative groups could be arranged more easily in a virtual learning and teaching environment than in traditional face-to-face settings. Next, there existed an overwhelming consensus in different online learning literature on the convenience of web-based courses. Poole's (2000) study of student participation in web-based courses (i.e., going online) when they felt convenient, normally at home and at the weekend. The study of Murphy and Collins (1997) found similar results. Participants indicated they would perform learning activities when it was available and most productive to them. Furthermore, participants in Petrides' (2002) interviews indicated that they had their tendency to consider more carefully about the subject areas when expressing personal viewpoints in written communications since online postings would not only be public but also be permanently displayed. In Vonderwell's study (2003), the author interviewed 22 students concerning their perceptions of individuals' online communication experiences. Most participants agreed that thoughtful and responsible comments were likely to be fostered by asynchronous communication.

However, this particular type of teaching and learning was perceived to possess certain drawbacks. To begin with,

Hara and Kling's (1999; Petrides, 2002; Vonderwell, 2003) qualitative case study of a Web-based distance education course at a U.S. university reported online learning students' frustration due to a lack of immediacy in getting responses back from the instructor. Delayed response appeared to be an inevitable feature of asynchronous communication since both course instructors and course participants varied online schedules. Another problematic issue relating to distance education was the level of expertise. Specifically, students indicated a considerable amount of skepticism about their peers' knowledge. This phenomenon would influence the quality of online discussions negatively as students could be dubious about their friends' feedback, resulting in low effectiveness of peer review activities. Last but not least, feelings of isolation could affect the success of distance education as well. Wood (2002) and Vonderwell (2003) reported that online learners appeared to experience the lack of connection with course instructors as well as other learners. It is not only because they are new to the online learning environment but also because they are not familiar with online learning communities, which are virtual classes filled with virtual friends (Cho, Shen & Laffey, 2010). Consequently, their social presence (the degree to which participants in computer-mediated communication felt actively connected one to another – Swan & Shih, 2005) was relatively low.

2.2. Dimensions of OLRL

To optimize the advantages of distance education, Bowles (2004), Wang and Beasley (2002) emphasized the importance of identifying learner's e-readiness. Similarly, Dada (2006) found that readiness was an integral factor that was often highlighted and measured in research on online learning, e-learning or distance learning. To better understand how to achieve effective online learning, it is necessary to know what dimensions of online learning readiness college students should possess. As a matter of fact, there are simultaneously various research projects focusing on developing the most comprehensive and effective student readiness instrument, which is expected to be generalizable across contexts.

Dimensions of OLRL in Previous Research

A foundational study on readiness for online learning in academic settings was proposed by Warner, Christine and Choy (1998). They examined the readiness of 542 students from Australian vocational education and training sector for participation in web-based learning environments. The authors defined OLRL in terms of three aspects: (1) students' preferences for flexible delivery as opposed to face-to-face classroom instruction; (2) students' confidence in using electronic communication technologies for learning, particularly, competence and confidence in the use of Internet and computer-mediated communication; and (3) student's ability to engage in autonomous learning.

Based on the research of Warner et al. (1998), Mattice and Dixon developed a survey on online learning readiness in 1999, consisting of three dimensions: students' readiness (learners' self-direction, orientation to time, preferences for feedbacks and their previous experience with distance education), students' access to ICT and lastly students' interest in future virtual learning courses. Thereafter, McVay (2001) established a 13-item instrument for measuring readiness for online learning. The instrument focused on students' behavior and attitudes towards online learning, specifically, online learners' background knowledge about distance education, access to technology and personal motivation to pursue online learning. The McVay's

instrument had been considered as an important and useful online readiness assessment tool and has exerted a great influence on subsequent readiness studies (Bernard, 2004). Later, Smith, Murphy and Mahoney (2003) conducted a study with college-age students to examine the reliability and validity of the McVay's instrument. Their study on the instrument resulted in a two-factor structure: self-management of learning and comfort with e-learning.

A review of this study, however, revealed that these scales and measures of assessing learners' readiness do not succinctly cover other dimensions that are critical to online learning, including technical skills and learner control (Stansfield, McLellan & Connolly, 2004). Likewise, other researchers emphasized that technical skills involving computers and the Internet were related to learners' performance in web-based learning environments (Peng, Tsai & Wu, 2006). Similarly, learners' perceptions towards the Internet could shape the learners' attitudes and online behaviors (Tsai & Lin, 2004). In terms of learner control, since online learning environments were not highly teacher-centered, students were supposed to take a more active role in their learning. Specifically, students had to take responsibility for managing their own learning, involving making decisions about learning pace, depth, and coverage of the content, type of media accessed, and time spent on studying, etc.

Another typical feature of web-based courses was computer-mediated communication tools, categorized into two types: asynchronous tools (threaded discussions and email) as well as synchronous ones (live chat, instant messages, etc.). Online courses generally lacked regular face-to-face meetings; therefore, it was important for students to be able to communicate comfortably and

confidently with teachers and classmates through computer-mediated correspondence or discussions (Salaberry, 2000). In addition, distance learners appeared to have a lower sense of belonging than students in face-to-face formats (Ma & Yuen, 2010). Tinto (1998) emphasized the positive effect of student-faculty interactions and student-student interactions on students' senses of belonging. Thus, the dimension of online communication should also be added to the readiness instrument.

Dimensions of OLRL in This Study

The concept of five distinctive dimensions in the OLRL instrument (Hung et al., 2010), which was utilized in the data collection procedure of this research, would be clarified as follows.

Computer/ Internet Self-Efficacy

The idea of self-efficacy stems from the social cognitive theory, which offers a conceptual framework for elucidating how self-efficacy beliefs regulate human functioning through cognitive, motivational, affective, and decisional processes (Bandura, 1977). Bandura (1986) defined self-efficacy as:

> People's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances. It is concerned not only with the skills one has but also with judgments of what one can do with whatever skills one possesses (p. 391).

The term self-efficacy was generally extended to other domains, including the use of computers. Compeau and Higgins (1995) defined computer self-efficacy as "a judgment of one's capability to use a computer" (p. 192). The researchers also affirmed that computer self-efficacy did not merely represent basic technical skills, such

as running the computer, but it would refer to an individual's perception of his or her ability to use computers to accomplish a task such as using software to calculate, demonstrate and analyze data. Computer self-efficacy (CSE) was identified to have a significant effect on computer-use outcomes, emotional reactions to computers, and actual computer use (Compeau & Higgins, 1995).

The construct of the terminology Internet self-efficacy (ISE) was analogous. Eastin and LaRose (2000) pointed out that ISE did not reflect solely the act of performing some Internet-related tasks, such as uploading or downloading files; instead, ISE involved one's belief in his or her own competency to apply more sophisticated technological skills in the Internet, namely troubleshooting problems occurring online. A study conducted by Tsai and Lin (2004) showed that the level of ISE was directly proportional to the result of student's academic performance in web-based courses. Students with high Internet self-efficacy seemed to learn better than students with low Internet self-efficacy.

To sum up, the joint of those two aforementioned self-efficacy aspects, is also known as learner's computer/ Internet self-efficacy, alludes to individual's ability of "successfully performing different sets of skills required to establish, continue and utilize efficiently the Internet on the basis of sufficient computer skills" (Peng et al., 2006, p. 84). Computer/ Internet self-efficacy has been identified as an important factor that affects learner's motivation, interests and performance in Internet-based learning environments, since learner's perceptions of the Internet may shape his or her attitudes and online behaviors.

Self-Directed Learning

Knowles (1975) defined self-directed learning as a "basic human competence – the ability to learn on one's own" (p. 17). In the context of online learning, this terminology would refer to a linear procedure in which individuals actively decide their learning needs, formulate learning goals, identify feasible human as well as material resources for learning, select and apply suitable learning strategies, and finally evaluate learning outcomes.

There are currently two distinctive perspectives exploring the domain of self-directed learning. The first one is personal attribute, which refers to learners' motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) for and the competency of taking responsibility for their learning on the basis of their prior knowledge and prior experience (Garrison, 1997). In the context of online learning, personal attributes involve three components: resource use, strategy use and motivation. First, resource use refers to students' ability to successfully utilize available human resources (instructors and peers) and information resources (given instructional materials and the Internet). In distance education, Internet offers permanent access to instructors' and peers' comments throughout the whole course (Petrides, 2002); but it also has delayed feedbacks and the lack of in-depth discussions from the participants, leading to the need of learners' adequate self-directed skills equipment for better e-learning experience. Second, the novel LMS may require unique communication strategy, especially from those inexperienced learners, as the lack of facial expressions and body language in written communication could lead to misinterpretation (Petrides, 2002). Finally, research indicates that motivation to learn in a virtual environment appears to be tough due to distraction and procrastination (Elvers, Polzella & Graetz, 2003). The absence of strict requirements for physical presence makes it easier for students to procrastinate in online classes than in conventional face-to-face classrooms

(Elvers et al., 2003). In this sense, increasing students' motivation is vital to mitigate detrimental effects of distraction or procrastination on learners. Consequently, from the perspective of personal attributes, self-direction seems to be an essential competency that students should have for the success of online learning.

The second perspective is process, which is known as individuals' autonomy in learning process, involving planning, monitoring and evaluating (Moore, 1972). For planning, the flexibility of distance education (Chizmar & Walbert, 1999) means that online learners are free to create individualized learning pace as long as it suits their learning styles and convenience. In terms of autonomous monitoring, the lack of physical presence challenges students to decide whether they understand the subject correctly (Shapley, 2000) to look for assistance from course instructors, peers or Internet resources. With regards to evaluating, in Petrides' study (2002), the research group showed a high level of uncertainty when it came to evaluating participants' own knowledge as well as peers' knowledge. Indeed, online learning is closely associated with self-directed learning from both perspectives.

Self-directed learning is a key factor in distance education (Lin & Hsieh, 2001), as a web-based learning environment appears to be less challenging for students being able to establish customized learning strategies and learning pace than for those who are dependent on fixed schedules in traditional learning environments. In summary, it is integral for distance educators to actively help potential learners determine whether they are prepared to take an online course or program through identifying their self-directed learning level at the pre-course stage.

Learner Control (in an Online Context)

According to Shyuand Brow (1992), learner control is the degree to which a learner can manage his or her own learning experience and process. With online learning, learners are allowed to choose the amount of content, the sequence, and the pace of learning with maximum freedom (Hannafin, 1984; Reeves, 1993). This is also the main difference between traditional learning environments and web-based environments.

The Component Display Theory of Merrill (1983) has indicated that learner control is an important aspect of effective learning and that the level of learner control may maximize student performance. With self-control, individuals would have a chance of making instructional decisions that match their learning styles together with experiencing the results of those decisions afterwards.

Regarding students' varied characteristics, the way in which each individual would prefer to access and to interact with computer-based learning material varies from individual to individual. In fact, there seems to be no particular teaching method that would perfectly satisfy all learners' needs. Learners may have their own preference, viewing the instructional material in a sequence that best meets their needs (Jonassen, 1986). In a study conducted with a sample of 81 Taiwanese undergraduates, Wang and Beasley (2002) found that students' task performance is affected significantly by learner control in an online learning context. Better web-based learning performance possibly counts on better management of the learning procedure. Thus, the dimension of learner control becomes an important part of students' OLRL (Hew & Cheung, 2008).

Motivation for Learning (in an Online Context)

Over decades, researchers have investigated the impacts of motivation on distance education since motivation theories administered in traditional face-to-face classrooms and other settings might not be applicable in the modern innovated learning environment. It is suggested that Self-determination theory (SDT: a quality of human functioning that involves the experience of choice to commence an action – Ryan & Deci, 1985) is probably a suitable framework to examine the role of motivation in online learning. Determinants of motivation identified in the self-determination theory are autonomy, relatedness and competency relatively, which correspond to some characteristics of learning such as flexibility (Chizmar & Walbert, 1999), computer-mediated communication and social interaction (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997).

According to Ryan and Deci (1985), motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, is strictly related to learners' attitudes and learning behaviors in educational research and practice. First, motivation directs behavior towards particular goals. Numerous research studies have proved the direct connection between learners' motivational levels and their academic achievement (Fyans & Maehr, 1987; Walberg, 1984). Besides, due to the fact that motivation determines the specific goals towards which students strive for, it affects their instructional decisions when they enroll in any educational activities. Understanding an individual's motivation for learning is essential to improving the planning, producing, and implementing of educational resources (Federico, 2000). Finally, it determines the positive or negative attitude that a student may have throughout the learning process. Saadé, He and Kira (2007) agreed with the crucial role of motivation in

the success or failure of online learning. To sustain motivation, students must become active learners who have strong desires for learning (Knowles, 1975).

Online Communication Self-Efficacy

The absence of regular face-to-face meetings between teachers and students means that online communication is the sole information transmission channel for students to stay contactable with other course participants as well as with the course instructors. McVay (2000) emphasized the importance of providing online students with opportunities for interactions. Communication with other course participants is likely to help online students evade the loneliness and social isolation of virtual classes. In addition, asking questions or joining online discussions with the help of certain computer-mediated communication tools such as forum, Q&A sessions, comment sessions, etc., is a beneficial way for students to not only attain more comprehensive information about the subjects but also to seek constructive advices for unexpected problems occurring online.

In fact, social presence (the degree to which a person is perceived to be a real person in an online community) is suggested to be an effective predictor of students' satisfaction in online classes (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997). This finding implies that designing web-based courses should involve designing techniques that enhance social presence.

The overall goal for creating social presence in any learning environment, regardless of teaching delivery methods: face-to-face or online, seems to be equal to creating a high level of comfort, in which learners would feel comfortable communicating with the instructor and other peers. It allows individuals to participate in virtual learning activities more eagerly (Rourke, Anderson, Garrison & Archer, 1999), and to share their personal opinions

as well as emotions more easily (Gunawardena et al., 2001). Similarly, Roper (2007) suggested that successful students should make the most of online discussions, which may provide opportunities for richer discourse and thoughtful questions as a technique to stimulate both fellow students and instructors' engagement.

From aforementioned studies, Hung et al. (2010) pointed out that learner's communication self-efficacy in online learning is an essential dimension for overcoming the limitations of online communication to help students enhance their online learning achievements.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study was designed on the basis of mixed methods research, which combined both quantitative and qualitative data to attain a more elaborated understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2017). To be more specific, the study adopted a sequential explanatory design, which included survey together with interviews afterwards in order to ensure the reliability and validity of the eventual results.

Survey was chosen to be the initial stage of the data collection method thanks to its flexibility in eliciting quantitative data (Mackey & Gass, 2005), generalizability (Chambliss & Schutt, 2015) and effectiveness in terms of effort and cost for researchers (Dörnyei, 2007). Besides, additional semi-structured interviews were conducted to triangulate data in order to alleviate superficiality of the questionnaire responses. The semi-structured format was chosen as its guiding questions and prompts would help the researcher gain deeper insights into the conclusions generated by the quantitative data (Dörnyei, 2007). Moreover, the removal of pre-fixed responses appeared to provide room for

unfolding new phenomenon(s), which might not have been recognized in the survey. Consequently, a more comprehensive and profound description of the research topic was likely to be achieved after a two-phase data collection process.

3.2. Sampling

The first (QH2018) and second year (QH2017) students at FELTE, VNU-ULIS from both majors (English Linguistics and English Language Teacher Education) and from both programs (Standard Program and Fast-track Program) were selected to be the research participants because of three main reasons. First, according to the list of thirty pilot courses on LMS, there were initially courses for FELTE students at the first year as well as at the second year, so it was vital to conduct research on both freshman and sophomore students. Second, although there were two distinctive majors for students at FELTE, all pilot courses for them on LMS focused on English competency in general, with no difference between the two majors. Therefore, students from both majors should be included in the research group to guarantee the representativeness of the final results. Third, mainstream as well as fast-track students were selected since the LMS was designed for students from both programs. Omitting students from any teaching programs would impinge on the representativeness of the eventual results.

With the confidence level of 90% and the confidence interval of 5%, the following table showed the detailed sample size calculated by the Creative Service Systems (a sample size calculation online service).

Program	Sampling	
	Total population	Sample size
First year	529	180
Second year	550	183

Since the average number of students per class is 26 students/class, regarding the aforementioned sample size, the desired number of classes that participated in the first data collection process was 7 classes/ academic year.

After that, 8 female students (4 first year students and 4 second year students) from the research group were asked to participate in the semi-structured interviews. Interviewees were chosen from the list of students who participated in the previous close-ended questionnaire, based on their convenience and willingness.

3.3. Data Collection

Data Collection Instrument

The main instrument was the Online Readiness Level Scale questionnaire developed by Hung et al. (2010). The complete questionnaire includes 18 statements in total. They are categorized into five dimensions of OLRL, namely self-directed learning, motivation for learning, computer/ Internet self-efficacy, learner control and online communication self-efficacy. All of the statements are close-ended, attitudinal ones. The adopted scaling technique is 5-point Likert scale, in which the respondents were asked to make evaluative judgments about the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a list of provided statements by choosing one of the responses ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Data Collection Procedure

Prior to the administration of the questionnaire, the researcher contacted lecturers who were teaching at VNU-ULIS via email to ask for permission. When the approval was made, the researcher came to each selected class and administrated the questionnaire after having briefly introduced the background as well as the significance of the study to avoid unwanted misunderstanding among participants. The questionnaire was delivered directly to the research participants by the researcher during class time at VNU-ULIS to ensure the positive response rate. Despite face-to-face administration, the data collection process still prioritized voluntary participation.

Following the questionnaire, there were additional semi-structured interviews to explain quantitative data. The researcher contacted the interviewees via e-mail initially to ask for permission. During the interviews, the interviewees were enquired for further explanations for their choices in the questionnaire. Despite predefined questions, the responses at this data collection stage were not noted to be restricted to those particular themes. Interviewees were free to express their opinions about other issues related to the research topic as well. To ensure the consistency between the interviewees' responses in the close-ended questionnaire and the semi-structured interview, the researcher provided the participants with their former answers and gave them time to scan through their individual survey before officially commencing the interview. All interviews were recorded and transcribed to guarantee the accuracy of the responses. Interview transcripts were also sent to the interviewees to proofread deliberately before data analysis to eliminate unwanted misinterpretation or subjectivity.

3.4. Data Analysis

The main adopted data analysis method was descriptive statistical analysis. Specifically, the data collected from the close-ended questionnaire responses was transferred into SPSS software for interpretation. Firstly, the frequency distribution of the variables ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) was identified. After that, the central tendency (mean and mode) as well as dispersion (standard deviation) of eighteen items was calculated. Descriptive statistics

of eighteen separated variables were merged and divided into five broader variables. The output was the overall OLRL of students from both academic years, which was divided into five dimensions: computer/ Internet self-efficacy (CIS), self-directed learning (SDL), learner control (LC), motivation for learning (MFL) and online communication self-efficacy (OCS).

After calculating and interpreting data from the close-ended questionnaire responses, researchers focused mainly on problematic issues that emerged in the results of the survey to dig deeper in the semi-structured interviews with former respondents. However, participants were still able to express their opinions about other topics related to the context of this study if wanted.

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1. Findings From the Close-Ended Questionnaire Responses

The number of participants was 363 in total. The response rate was approximately 78% (285 respondents: 132 first year responses and 153 second year responses). The response rate was considerably affected by a significant number of absent students in each class.

Research question 1: What is online learning readiness level of the first year students at FELTE, VNU-ULIS?

Table 4.1

Results of First Year Students' OLRL

Dimension	Mean	SD
CIS	3.54	.89
SDL	3.39	.82
LC	2.98	.90
MFL	3.66	.84
OCS	3.39	.99

(CIS: Computer/ Internet self-efficacy; SDL: Self-directed learning; LC: Learner control;

MFL: Motivation for learning; OCS: Online communication self-efficacy)

At first glance, apart from LC, students' mean scores in other four dimensions (CIS, SDL, MFL and OCS) were all higher than the average mean of 3.00, ranging from 3.39 to 3.54 on a 5-point Likert scale. VNU-ULIS students participating in this study had the highest readiness level in the dimension of motivation for learning, followed by computer/Internet self-efficacy, self-directed learning and finally online communication self- efficacy.

The lowest readiness level was in the dimension of learner control. Gaps among five dimensions were not significant, leading to a tentative assertion that freshman students seemed to be confident in their readiness for online learning.

The standard deviation (around 1.00) indicated that individual scores were not really clustered close to the mean. In fact, respondents shared varied opinions about their readiness for online learning in all five subscales. The majority (around 42%) possessed a neutral attitude (the responses were in between 3 and 4) towards all items in the survey. Approximately 30 percent of freshman students seemed to be confident in their CIS, SDL, MFL and OCS. The readiness level of LC was totally low since 51 percent of responses was negative (below 2). Generally, it was tentatively asserted that a certain number of freshman students seemed to be confident in their readiness for online learning.

From the results presented in Table 4.1, it was clearly seen that the mean score of LC (2.98) was slightly lower than that of other dimensions. On this account, it was essential to take a closer look at the central tendency of separated variables within the category LC to figure out the problematic statement(s) with the low level of positive responses, which was presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Descriptive Statistics of Separated Items in OLRL (QH2018)

Descriptive statistics	CIS1	CIS2	CIS3	SDL1	SDL2	SDL3	SDL4	SDL5	LC1
Mean	3.39	3.24	3.98	3.26	3.83	2.70	3.33	3.80	3.24
Mode	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	4	3
SD	.90	.92	.86	.84	.80	.85	.81	.83	.82

Descriptive statistics	LC2	LC3	MFL1	MFL2	MFL3	MFL4	OCS1	OCS2	OCS3
Mean	2.30	3.42	3.70	3.50	3.77	3.72	3.60	3.35	3.22
Mode	2	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	3
SD	1.02	.82	.83	.88	.84	.85	.92	.99	1.0

The most common mode of eighteen variables was 4 (*agree*) with 10 times. *Neither disagree nor agree* (3) ranked second with 7 times. LC2 (*I am not distracted by other online activities when learning online)* was the sole item having 2 (*disagree*) as the number of mode and 2.30, which was below the average mean of 3.00, as the number of mean. This finding probably indicated that distraction from non-learning activities had significant impacts on online learners' readiness in a virtual learning environment. Likewise, a study conducted by Winter, Cotton, Gavin and Choy (2010) highlighted the difficulty of managing the combination of learning and non-learning activities when participating in web-based courses as perceived by online students.

Besides, LC2, SDL3 (*I manage time well),* was another item with the mean score below 3.00. Time-management skill seemed to be a problematic issue of students, regardless of teaching modes, traditional or virtual context.

The variable with the highest mean score was CIS3 (*I feel confident in using the Internet to find or gather information for online learning),* which showed that first year students appear to be self-assured in their computer/ network skills, which were requisite for online learning.

Research question 2: What is online learning readiness level of second year students at FELTE, VNU-ULIS?

Table 4.3

Results of Second Year Students' OLRL

Dimension	Mean	SD
CIS	3.59	.99
SDL	3.62	.86
LC	3.22	.92
MFL	3.80	.87
OCS	3.51	1.03

(CIS: Computer/ Internet self-efficacy; SDL: Self-directed learning; LC: Learner control; MFL: Motivation for learning; OCS: Online communication self-efficacy)

It was shown that all students' average scores of different variables ranged from 3.22 to 3.80 on a 5-point Likert scale, indicating that they generally exhibited above medium levels of readiness toward online learning (above 3.00). Similar to their counterparts, the second year students at VNU-ULIS possessed a positive viewpoint towards their readiness level for web-based courses. In addition, the dimensions with the highest and lowest mean score of sophomore students were analogous to that of freshman

students, as motivation for learning ranks first and learner control was at the bottom of the list. The second, third and fourth dimension were online communication self-efficacy, computer/ Internet self-efficacy and self-directed learning respectively.

The dispersions of OLRL of the second year students were slightly higher than that of the first year students, which means that the value of individual responses scattered more considerably around the mean. The neutral responses (around 40%) repeatedly accounted for the greatest amount of responses. Approximately 32 percent of sophomore students showed positive responses to the level of CIS, SDL, MFL and

OCS. The readiness level of LC was slightly higher since only less than half of the participants (41%) expressed negative responses towards this particular dimension. Indeed, it could be concluded that the second year students seemed to be more confident in their OLRL level than the first year students, yet the percentage of participants with high level of readiness for online learning was still limited.

To attain a more profound understanding of each item, Table 4.4 demonstrates the descriptive statistics, including mean, mode and standard deviation of all 18 items in the close-ended questionnaire.

Table 4.4

Descriptive Statistics of Separated Items in OLRL (QH2017)

Descriptive statistics	CIS1	CIS2	CIS3	SDL1	SDL2	SDL3	SDL4	SDL5	LC1
Mean	3.35	3.29	4.14	3.65	3.91	2.98	3.56	3.97	3.56
Mode	4	4	5	4	4	3	4	4	4
SD	1.04	1.00	.95	.80	.86	.94	.82	.89	.80

Descriptive statistics	LC2	LC3	MFL1	MFL2	MFL3	MFL4	OCS1	OCS2	OCS3
Mean	2.57	3.53	3.79	3.64	3.95	3.84	3.62	3.48	3.43
Mode	3	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4
SD	1.09	.88	.87	.98	.78	.84	.97	1.00	1.13

There were certain similarities in the results of mean scores and mode numbers between two groups of research participants. To begin with, the predominant mode was 4 (*agree*), appearing 14 times. *Neither disagree nor agree* or 3 was the second most frequent mode number. Moreover, the two items with the low mean score were LC2 (*I am not distracted by other online activities when learning online (instant messages, Internet surfing)* and SDL3 (*I manage time well*). Their mean scores were both below 3.00, which are 2.57 and 2.98 relatively. Finally, the mean score of CIS3 (*I feel confident in using the Internet to find or*

gather information for online learning) was on top of the list, which was fairly 1.5 times greater than the lowest mean score of LC2.

Unlike descriptive statistics of freshman students, there was no trace of mode number 2 (disagree). Instead, mode number 5 (strongly agree) appeared twice in variable CIS3 (*I feel confident in using the Internet to find or gather information for online learning)* and MFL4 (*I like to share my ideas with others).* In addition, the fluctuated dispersion (from 0.80 to 1.12) of eighteen variables indicated that the scores were spread out from the mean. Consequently, there was likely to exist

individual differences among participants' responses, which could be solved by teachers' special guidance or training relative to online learning (Tsai & Tsai, 2003).

Despite the analogies in terms of central tendency, dispersion as well as ranking among eighteen variables in particular and five dimensions in general of VNU-ULIS students' OLRL, there still existed certain differences between readiness level of freshman students and that of sophomore students. The table below (Table 4.5) showed the summary of OLRL of students from QH208 and QH2017.

Table 4.5

Comparison of the First Year Students' OLRL and the Second Year Students' OLRL

Dimension	Mean (First year/ Second year)	SD (First year/ Second year)
CIS	3.54	.89
	3.59	.99
SDL	3.39	.82
	3.62	.86
LC	2.98	.90
	3.22	.92
MFL	3.66	.84
	3.80	.87
OCS	3.39	.99
	3.51	1.03

(CIS: Computer/ Internet self-efficacy; SDL: Self-directed learning; LC: Learner control; MFL: Motivation for learning; OCS: Online communication self-efficacy)

By and large, the mean scores of the second year students were roughly higher than that of the second year students in all five dimensions of OLRL. However, to decide whether or not these differences could serve the confirmatory purpose of a correlation between students' academic level and their readiness level for online learning, independent samples t-tests were conducted.

Independent samples t-tests of these five subtopics were below ($p < 0.05$). In other words, there appeared to be inadequate evidence to conclude that grade level seemed to make significant differences in students' readiness for online courses within the context of this study. The gaps of mean scores and dispersion in all five dimensions of OLRL between the first and second year students were not remarkable since they frequently overlapped the qualitative data of each other. The result of a negative correlation between students' academic level and their readiness level for online learning was different from the result of other related studies about the feasible connection of those two aforementioned categories (Hung et al., 2010; Wojciechowski & Palmer, 2005). The semi-structured interviews conducted afterwards were expected to provide explanations(s) for this phenomenon.

4.2. Findings From the Semi-Structured Interviews

All participants in the interviews had an analogous number of online courses that they had participated in before (3), specifically *Informatics 2, Introduction to Vietnamese Culture, Introduction to Vietnamese Culture and Introduction to Vietnamese Linguistics.*

Overall, qualitative data showed a more crystal-clear positive attitude of the participants (regardless of their academic year) towards distance education than quantitative data, especially towards the dimension of CIS, MFL, SDL and OCS. They seemed to be quite confident in their computer/ Internet skills as well as online communication skills thanks to personal acquaintance with those skills. Throughout approximately one academic semester at VNU-ULIS, first and second year students

were required to accomplish particular assignments integrating those two aforementioned competences. Despite individuals' prior skills in e-learning, participants consistently put emphasis on the absolute importance of clear and adequate instructional materials from the virtual learning environment to help them save time from non-content related learning challenges and to maximize the quality of teaching input together with output.

From the results of the survey, four issues concerning the OLRL that seemed to require further investigation were: a high number of neither disagree nor agree responses (1), a low level of some variables, particularly LC2 (2) and SDL3 (3) and the gaps of OLRL between the two academic years (4).

First and foremost, all interviewees seemed to have the same reasons when responding neutrally for any items in the questionnaire. They chose *neither disagree nor agree* because they were unfamiliar with online courses conducted completely in English. They stated that although they had enrolled in some online courses before, namely *Introduction to Informatics 2, Introduction to Vietnamese Culture, Introduction to Vietnamese Linguistics*, these courses were totally Vietnamese so that the language barrier on web-based courses on LMS could be a noticeable issue that they did not feel very comfortable with. Besides, the new format of LMS (with the lack of predetermined meetings) made students feel afraid of vague requirements for assignments (if any) of web-based courses. Once again, interviewees persisted on comprehensive instructional materials, especially a course orientation beforehand, in which the lecturers could briefly explain the course objectives, course rules, compulsory assignments and marking rubrics, etc. to avoid unnecessary misunderstanding *("A meeting at the beginning of the course is enough.")*

Secondly, when being asked about the distraction of non-learning online activities (LC2), only one participant said that she found no significant differences between online or offline learning. Most interviewees (7 students) claimed that they *"sometimes [turned] on another window when there [was] no new information in the online lessons"* or *"when the teaching videos [were] so boring, [...] because there [was] no interaction between the lecturers and me"* and *"because the lectures' facial expression [was] too serious."* From these responses, it could be seen that the course design, including course content and online interaction, was remarkably important to enhancing students' participation in online learning. A study conducted by Swan (2002) on 73 online courses offered at the State University of New York Learning Network also unveiled the correlation between clarity in course design and students' satisfaction. Course design had also been reiterated several times throughout the interviews of other items, such as LC1 *(I can direct my own learning progress)*, LC3 *(I repeated the online instructional materials on the basis of my needs)* and MFL2 *(I have motivation to learn)*. Besides, interaction, in three forms: between students and teachers, between students and between students with content (Moore, 1989), had been identified as a critical factor in online learning. Since interaction did not belong directly to the dimension of learner control, it would be analyzed more thoroughly in the latter part of this research, with the focus on online communication self-efficacy.

In terms of SDL3, this item received contradictory opinions from interviewees. Three out of eight participants thought that they could manage time well with online learning as long as deadlines of the modules are not extremely intensive *("It would be alright if the university gives me enough time to finish every assignment")*. The remaining participants were skeptical about their own

time-management skill since keeping a balance between studying and a hectic working schedule from part-time jobs appears to be quite tough. Besides, they also claimed that their procrastination might bring them trouble with deadlines. Despite (sometimes) low quality of the work, time pressure did help these students accomplish their assignments. In other words, the underlying problems integrated with a low mean score of SDL3 were not from the web-based courses themselves, but from the individual students. Fortunately, all participants were aware of the pernicious effects of poor time management skill and promised that they are trying to ameliorate the situation *("I am trying really hard. I don't think that it can be better soon but at least I am aware of the problem.")*

Concerning the gaps between the first year and second year students' level of readiness, the quantitative data just proved that there was an insufficient evidence to claim the statistical differences between these two research groups, yet it did not mean there were absolutely no differences. The qualitative data showed that it could probably be speculated that knowledge and skills that sophomore students have attained from some second-year English courses (i.e., *English 3A, English 3B, English 4A, English 4B* and *English 4C*) might have better prepared them for the e-learning. One student from QH2017 stated in the interview that *"I have already learnt how to find a reliable source of information [CIS3] in English 3B"*. Although students from QH2018 have a relatively high mean score in this item (CIS3 – *I feel confident in using the Internet to find or gather information for online learning*), all of them (4 students) seemed to be unable to thoroughly explain what the proper way to find and to evaluate a reliable source of information actually were. In fact, they appeared to overestimate their computer/ Internet skills (White, 2000). This inconsistency occurs in other items as

well: CIS2 *(I feel confident in my knowledge and skills of how to manage software)* – first year students were uncertain about common software(s) applied for distance education, and LC3 *(I repeated the online instructional materials on the basis of my needs)* – the notion of instructional materials were unclear to freshmen. In short, the first year students were not familiar with fundamental concepts related to online learning, resulting in their misunderstanding of some items in the questionnaire (without their awareness). Therefore, an online course orientation before an official implementation of LMS for students at VNU-ULIS was highly recommended to help not online course learners but also course designers achieve a fruitful virtual learning experience.

Besides, the semi-structured interviews also revealed two other issues that were not evident from the quantitative data. First, despite relatively high mean scores from participants from both academic years (3.22 – QH2018 and 3.43 – QH2017), the item OCS3 *(I feel confident in posting questions in online discussions)* involved varied responses from the interviewees. Some of them claimed that written discussions, to a certain extent, were not as effective as spoken interactions since *"it took a long time for you to type"* or *"you could easily be judged by the others with your words."* These answers raised concern about the low quality of online discussions without direct observations from the lecturers. On the contrary, some thought that posting questions online was not so difficult unless students tried to do it frequently to attain a habit of critical thinkers. In fact, a comfortable online community would facilitate valued discussions in particular and effective online interaction in general (Swan, 2002).

Next, participants were worried about the delayed response time from the instructors due to asynchronous communications. On LMS, students were

expected to direct their own learning process themselves despite the physical arrangement of the learning materials. Thus, interviewees were dubious about the availability of lecturer(s) when they sought for special guidance; for example, when reviewing the existing instructional materials was insufficient. Although students could seek assistance from their peers as well, they felt rather dubious about the validity of these responses. For this reason, the course instructors were recommended to go online in accordance with predetermined schedules to provide students with timely feedback of the modules on which they are currently working. The combination of both written and spoken discussions was likely to bring out the most fruitful e-learning experiences for learners. In case making prefixed online appointments was impossible, there should be some voluntary or selected course assistants (senior students) to help inexperienced course participants when needed. In this way, students tend to absorb online information more effectively.

In brief, the qualitative data did indicate similar results with the quantitative data, with overall positive responses to OLRL of students from both academic years. Besides, the semi-structured interviews presented certain issues that were not identified from the close-ended questionnaire responses together with ways to tackle those difficulties, providing the researcher with deeper insights into the problematic issues.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Summary of the Findings

Combining both the quantitative and qualitative data, it could be concluded that students from both academic years had a relatively high level of online learning readiness. Results of the second year students were moderately higher than that of the first year students. Therefore, it might

suggest that the second year students (QH2017) could possess greater readiness for enrollment in online courses and were likely to achieve a better academic performance than the first year students (QH2018). The results of this study pointed out that it seemed to be challenging for freshmen to make adjustments from their traditional face-to-face teaching mode at high school classrooms to the virtual university classrooms. Needless to say, the application of LMS would be more appropriate for the sophomore students than the freshman ones. Furthermore, the quantitative data revealed that two readiness dimensions needed special attention are learner control and online communication self-efficacy.

5.2. Implications

When dealing with students owning relatively low learner control, teachers can instruct them to control both the learning content and the learning process in a way that could meet individuals' learning need. To reduce the side-effects of non-learning activities, it is advisable for students to strictly follow their pre-set learning plans to ensure successful academic performance. From the perspective of course designers, they are suggested to create a stimulating learning community through varied motivating and interactive online activities to enhance learners' interests in the web-based courses (Swan, 2002).

Regarding online communication self-efficacy, social presence, which is defined as "the degree to which participants in computer-mediated communication feel affectively connected one to another" (Swan & Shih, 2005), is probably the key principle. For instance, to formulate a highly connected online community among online learners, teachers are supposed to have students get to know their lecturers or peers through prevalent online communication tools such as social networks, online

messages, etc. The fundamental target of formulating a positive perception of social presence is to provide a flexible environment for other participants, in which they would be able to explain themselves better (Tu, 2002). Besides, students are encouraged to wisely utilize LMS forum by participating extensively in the discussions and by freely expressing their thoughts. The problem of delayed feedback could be solved through establishing established guidelines for timely and constructive response from peers as well.

In terms of other three dimensions, the application of supplementary short-term online orientation courses before registration is supposed to equip potential learners with indispensable technical training about all five dimensions of OLRL and to mitigate future encounters with possible technical difficulties. Therefore, they would become more familiar with the functions of this novel learning system. In addition, Bowles (2004) suggested that teachers may provide students with sufficient information about course objectives, course content, course structure as well as testing and assessment schemes to help students establish their individual-tailored learning plans with adequate time for the class participation. Special guidance and supportive assistance from teachers also plays such an important role in curtailing high attrition rate of online learning (Tsai & Tsai, 2003).

In conclusion, LMS should be optimized for VNU-ULIS students by the support from not only teachers but also from the education institutions before, during and even after their enrollment in any web-based courses. Findings of this research are expected to exhibit a fruitful contribution to the implementation of the LMS in the near future.

5.3. Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

This study was limited to the specific research group only, which was the first and second year students at FELTE, VNU-ULIS. Due to rigid time limit as well as inconvenience of accessing a larger population, this research could not identify the OLRL of students at VNU-ULIS with a larger confidence level (95%) and from a greater range of academic years (from first year to fourth year). For further research, it is recommended to conduct study on students' readiness with participants from varied academic years and from different faculties at VNU-ULIS or from multiple universities to overcome the statistical sampling bias.

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Appendix

(Questionnaire)

ONLINE LEARNING READINESS LEVEL

The domains of teaching and learning are experiencing great changes as higher-education institutions rapidly adopt the concepts and practices of e-learning. In early 2018, VNU-ULIS has embarked on a project of building web-based format for entire teaching and learning courses at the university, which are expected to be applied from the academic year 2018 - 2019.

But, are VNU-ULIS students ready for online learning?

The purpose of this study is to examine students' readiness for online learning so that not only online course designers but also potential online course participants would be able to identify feasible difficulties that they might encounter in the novel virtual learning environment.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. Please give your answer sincerely as only this will guarantee the success of the investigation. If there are any items you do not feel comfortable answering, please skip them. Thank you so much for your cooperation.

Name: _____

Class: _____

E-mail: _____

This questionnaire asks about your PERSONAL evaluation of different dimensions related to online learning. There are 18 statements in total.

Please tick ONE box to show how much you agree or disagree with each of these statements.

1 - Strongly disagree;

2 - Disagree;

3 - Neither disagree nor agree;

4 - Agree;

5 - Strongly agree.

No.	Items (in an online context)	1	2	3	4	5
1	I feel confident in performing the basic functions of Microsoft Office programs (MS Word, MS Excel and MS PowerPoint).					
2	I feel confident in my knowledge and skills of how to manage software for online learning.					
3	I feel confident in using the Internet (Google, Yahoo) to find or gather information for online learning.					
4	I carry out my own study plan.					
5	I seek assistance when facing learning problems.					
6	I manage time well.					
7	I set up my learning goals.					

8	I have higher expectations for my learning performance.					
9	I can direct my own learning process.					
10	I am not distracted by other online activities when learning online (instant messages, Internet suffering).					
11	I repeated the online instructional materials on the basis of my needs.					
12	I am open to new ideas.					
13	I have motivation to learning.					
14	I improve from my mistakes.					
15	I like to share my ideas with others.					
16	I feel confident in using online tools (email discussion) to effectively communicate with others.					
17	I feel confident in expressing myself (emotions and humor) through the text.					
18	I feel confident in posting questions in online discussions.					

THE END
Once again, thank you so much for your contribution.

MỨC ĐỘ SẴN SÀNG CHO VIỆC HỌC TRỰC TUYẾN CỦA SINH VIÊN NĂM THỨ NHẤT VÀ NĂM THỨ HAI, KHOA SƯ PHẠM TIẾNG ANH, TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC NGOẠI NGỮ, ĐHQGHN

Khoa Anh Việt, Nguyễn Khánh Linh

Khoa Sư phạm tiếng Anh, Trường Đại học Ngoại ngữ, ĐHQGHN,
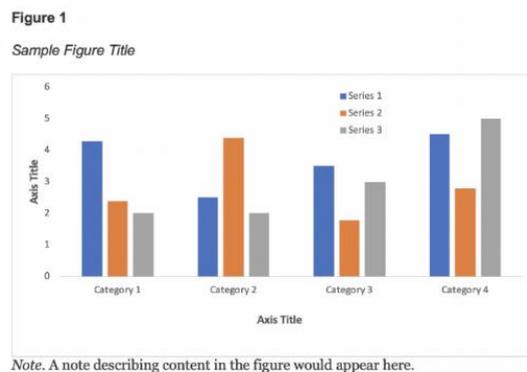*Phạm Văn Đồng, Cầu Giấy, Hà Nội, Việt Nam*

Tóm tắt: Những tiến bộ gần đây trong Công nghệ thông tin (CNTT) đã thúc đẩy những thay đổi đáng kể trong lĩnh vực giáo dục, đặc biệt là sự phát triển của việc học trực tuyến. Đầu năm 2018, Trường Đại học Ngoại ngữ (ĐHNN) đã bắt đầu triển khai việc xây dựng website môn học (Language Management System – LMS) nhằm mục đích khuyến khích phát triển việc học trực tuyến tại trường đại học. Nghiên cứu này tập trung xác định mức độ sẵn sàng cho việc học trực tuyến của những người học tiềm năng của hệ thống website môn học để những người hướng dẫn khóa học cùng với những người tham gia khóa học có thể xác định những khó khăn mà họ có thể gặp phải trong môi trường dạy và học trực tuyến. Quá trình thu thập dữ liệu được chia thành 2 giai đoạn: phiếu khảo sát và phỏng vấn trực tiếp. Kết quả cuối cùng chỉ ra rằng sinh viên ĐHNN ở cả hai năm học đều có mức độ sẵn sàng cho việc học trực tuyến tương đối cao; tuy nhiên, sinh viên năm thứ hai có mức độ sẵn sàng cao hơn so với sinh viên năm thứ nhất. Do đó, việc áp dụng hệ thống website môn học sẽ phù hợp với sinh viên năm thứ hai hơn.

Từ khóa: giáo dục từ xa, khóa học trực tuyến, mức độ sẵn sàng cho việc học trực tuyến

THỂ LỆ GỬI BÀI

1. **Tạp chí Nghiên cứu Nước ngoài** là ấn phẩm khoa học chính thức của Trường Đại học Ngoại ngữ, Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội, kế thừa và phát triển *Chuyên san Nghiên cứu Nước ngoài* của Tạp chí Khoa học, Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội. Tạp chí xuất bản định kỳ 06 số/năm (02 số tiếng Việt/năm và 04 số tiếng Anh/năm từ năm 2019 trở đi), công bố các công trình nghiên cứu có nội dung khoa học mới, chưa đăng và chưa được gửi đăng ở bất kỳ tạp chí nào, thuộc các lĩnh vực: *ngôn ngữ học, giáo dục ngoại ngữ/ngôn ngữ, quốc tế học hoặc các ngành khoa học xã hội và nhân văn có liên quan.*

2. Bài gửi đăng cần trích dẫn ÍT NHẤT 01 bài đã đăng trên Tạp chí Nghiên cứu Nước ngoài.

3. Bài báo sẽ được gửi tới phản biện kín, vì vậy tác giả cần tránh tiết lộ danh tính trong nội dung bài một cách không cần thiết.

4. Bài báo có thể viết bằng tiếng Việt hoặc tiếng Anh (*tối thiểu* 10 trang/khoảng 4.000 từ đối với bài nghiên cứu và 5 trang/khoảng 2.000 từ đối với bài thông tin-trao đổi) được soạn trên máy vi tính, khổ giấy A4, cách lề trái 2,5cm, lề phải 2,5cm, trên 3,5cm, dưới 3cm, font chữ Times New Roman, cỡ chữ 12, cách dòng Single.

5. Hình ảnh, sơ đồ, biểu đồ trong bài viết phải đảm bảo rõ nét và được đánh số thứ tự theo trình tự xuất hiện trong bài viết. Nguồn của các hình ảnh, sơ đồ trong bài viết cũng phải được chỉ rõ. Tên ảnh, sơ đồ, biểu đồ trong bài viết phải được cung cấp trên ảnh, sơ đồ, biểu đồ.

Ví dụ:

Figure 1

Sample Figure Title

Note. A note describing content in the figure would appear here.

6. Bảng biểu trong bài viết được đánh số thứ tự theo trình tự xuất hiện trong bài viết. Tên bảng trong bài phải được cung cấp trên bảng. Yêu cầu bảng không có đường kẻ sọc.

Ví dụ:

Table 3

Sample Table Showing Decked Heads and P Value Note

Variable	Visual		Infrared		F	η
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Row 1	3.6	.49	9.2	1.02	69.9***	.12
Row 2	2.4	.67	10.1	.08	42.7***	.23
Row 3	1.2	.78	3.6	.46	53.9***	.34
Row 4	0.8	.93	4.7	.71	21.1***	.45

***$p < .01$.

7. Quy cách trích dẫn: Các tài liệu, nội dung được trích dẫn trong bài báo và phần tài liệu tham khảo cần phải được **trình bày theo APA7** (vui lòng tham khảo trang web: https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines hoặc hướng dẫn của Tạp chí trên trang web https://jfs.ulis.vnu.edu.vn/index.php/fs/about/submissions)

8. Bản thảo xin gửi đến website của Tạp chí tại https://jfs.ulis.vnu.edu.vn/. Tòa soạn không trả lại bản thảo nếu bài không được đăng. Tác giả chịu hoàn toàn trách nhiệm trước pháp luật về nội dung bài viết và xuất xứ tài liệu trích dẫn.

MẪU TRÌNH BÀY BỐ CỤC CỦA MỘT BÀI VIẾT

TIÊU ĐỀ BÀI BÁO

(bằng tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt, in hoa, cỡ chữ: 16,
giãn dòng: single, căn lề: giữa)

Tên tác giả (cỡ 13)[*]

Tên cơ quan / trường đại học (cỡ 10, in nghiêng)
Địa chỉ cơ quan / trường đại học (cỡ 10, in nghiêng)

Tóm tắt: Tóm tắt bằng tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt, không quá 250 từ, cỡ chữ: 11

Từ khóa: Không quá 5 từ, cỡ chữ: 11

Phần nội dung chính của bài báo thường bao gồm các phần sau:

1. Đặt vấn đề

2. Mục tiêu

3. Cơ sở lý thuyết

   3.1. …

   3.2. ….

4. Phương pháp nghiên cứu

   4.1. …

   4.2. …

5. Kết quả nghiên cứu

6. Thảo luận

7. Kết luận và khuyến nghị

Lời cảm ơn (nếu có)

Tài liệu tham khảo

Phụ lục (nếu có)

---

[*] ĐT.: (Sđt của tác giả liên hệ)
Email: (Email của tác giả liên hệ)