

Tiểu ban
NGÔN NGỮ

STUDENTS' IDEAS ABOUT THEIR PARTICIPATION IN AGREE - DISAGREE SPEAKING ACTIVITIES FROM AN E.F.L COURSEBOOK

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1. INTRODUCTION

Developing speaking skills is not always easy for students who do not major in English during their university studies. Regarding the agree-disagree speaking activities in the coursebook, some students managed to use them effectively for their own benefit. However, others found these tasks somewhat challenging and gained only limited advantages from them.

Speaking activities are an integral aspect of everyday life and should not be undervalued (Clampitt, 2016; Coombs, 2014). Confident individuals typically produce tens of thousands of spoken words each day, while certain professionals—such as auctioneers, politicians, and negotiators—may far exceed that amount. Speaking is such a demanding and vital activity that many people lose the ability to communicate effectively and engagingly, finding it challenging to develop these skills, which require not only linguistic competence but also communicative maturity. According to Larsen-Freeman (2000, p.131), those who are good at speaking skill or achieve communicative competence can use appropriate language in a given context and have the ability to utilize a wide range of structures and their functions. A learner who attains communicative competence can employ language appropriately within specific contexts of use and has command of a variety of language structures along with their functions [p.131]. The communicative competence consists of four sub-competencies, that is: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic (Coulthard, 1985, p.147).

The Common European Framework (2007, p.13) states that the sub-competencies of communicative competence are considered in terms of linguistic, pragmatic and socio-linguistic competencies. Moreover, lexical, phonological, syntactical knowledge and skills and other dimensions of the language are included in the linguistic competence. Linguistic competence encompasses lexical, phonological, and syntactic knowledge and skills, along with other dimensions of language as a system, independent of the sociolinguistic value of its variations and the pragmatic functions of its use [p. 13]. It is further stressed that this component... concerns not only the scope and quality of knowledge, but also its cognitive organization, the manner in which it is stored, and its accessibility (activation, recall, and availability) [p. 13]. In other words, learners are expected to acquire both linguistic knowledge and the strategies that enable them to become autonomous learners and users of the target language. Such strategies also support the gradual transformation of explicit knowledge of language structures into implicit knowledge, which can be accessed and applied whenever required.

This study examines agree-disagree speaking activities from the perspectives of students who regularly participate in them. Walkinshaw (2015) explains agreement can be seen as a concurring stance to a preceding action or position taken by another speaker, which indicates that an addressee shares the speaker's attitude to, or opinion of, that action or position. He adds that disagreement is considered as an oppositional stance to a preceding action or position taken by another speaker. It can be said that speaker S disagrees when s/he believes untrue, unfounded, or objectionable some proposition P uttered or presumed to be espoused by an addressee A and reacts with an utterance the propositional content or implicature of which is not P. He added that disagreements may be interpreted in various ways, ranging from supportive (such as challenging a negative self-assessment) to strongly oppositional, with the situational context playing a key role in determining

their function. Such context involves not only the referential content of the conversation but also factors like participants' social and regional backgrounds, ethnicity, and gender, all of which may influence how disagreements are expressed and understood.

This research explores students' perceptions of participating in agree-disagree speaking activities from an EFL coursebook. The aim is to determine whether these activities are beneficial and contribute to the development of their speaking skills, ultimately helping them achieve communicative competence.

The research questions for the study are as follows:

- (i) What are students' ideas of the importance of participating in speaking activities in an English class?
- (ii) What are students' perspectives of participating in agree-disagree speaking activities from an EFL coursebook?

The two research questions were thoroughly examined with sufficient detail in the *Findings* and *Discussion* sections. Subsequently, practical implications for language teaching and learning were suggested for educators, lecturers, teachers, students, and other interested readers.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study primarily employed structured interviews with 22 A2-level students majoring in fields other than English, randomly selected from three offline classes. The participants, both male and female, came from various backgrounds and demonstrated differing actual levels of English proficiency. They were between 19 and 22 years old. Additionally, all participants showed a strong eagerness to learn, as reflected in their consistent diligence and persistent effort throughout each lesson.

Although most participants were at the A2 level in terms of overall English proficiency, their speaking abilities varied significantly. Notably, they all showed an interest in expressing themselves in English—while some found it relatively easy, others faced certain challenges.

In the agree-disagree activities from an EFL coursebook, the class was divided into two large groups: one supporting and the other opposing a statement on a familiar topic. Students were given 10 minutes to reflect and jot down reasons for their stance, during which they could also search for information online to prepare for presenting their arguments before peers and the lecturer. After this preparation time, they voiced their opinions confidently, defending their viewpoints with persuasive reasoning. Several students had the opportunity to express themselves in English, with some agreeing and others disagreeing with the statement. Meanwhile, the rest of the class and the lecturer listened attentively, took notes, and remembered key points. The lecturer then synthesized the students' ideas and shared her perspective, if any. Through this process of expressing and listening to different viewpoints, both students and the lecturer engaged in mutual learning. Below is an agree-disagree activity in the EFL coursebook:

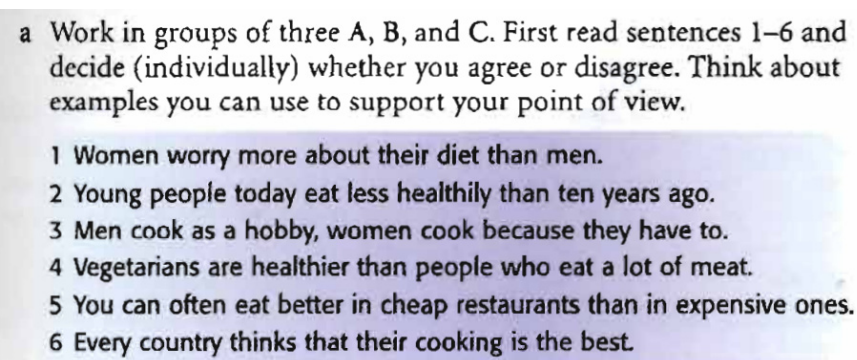
- 
- a Work in groups of three A, B, and C. First read sentences 1–6 and decide (individually) whether you agree or disagree. Think about examples you can use to support your point of view.
- 1 Women worry more about their diet than men.
 - 2 Young people today eat less healthily than ten years ago.
 - 3 Men cook as a hobby, women cook because they have to.
 - 4 Vegetarians are healthier than people who eat a lot of meat.
 - 5 You can often eat better in cheap restaurants than in expensive ones.
 - 6 Every country thinks that their cooking is the best.

Image 1. Agree-disagree activity in an EFL coursebook

A set of eight questions, adapted from previous studies, was used in the research. These questions focused on several key areas: the importance of speaking skills, how often students engage in speaking activities, the usefulness and topics of the agree-disagree speaking tasks in the

coursebook, the challenges students face when participating in these activities, and finally, their expectations regarding the continued use of such activities in classes for non-English major university students.

Hereinafter is the set of eight questions for interviews:

1. In your opinion, how important is speaking skill when learning a foreign language?
2. During English class, how often do you participate in speaking activities?
3. To what extent is the Agree-Disagree speaking activity in the textbook helpful in developing your speaking skill?
4. In your opinion, are the topics in these speaking activities really close to life? Why?
5. How does regularly participating in this Agree-Disagree speaking activities contribute to strengthening and improving your speaking skill and English knowledge?
6. What difficulties do you encounter when participating in these speaking activities in class?
7. If you have encountered difficulties, what is your solution?
8. In your opinion, should speaking activities like this be regularly assigned to students to practice in class? Why?

With over 20 participants responding to the questions, the data collected was considered reasonably reliable. Each of them was interviewed individually so that their answers would not be too similar or copied from the others. The findings offer valuable insights for stakeholders such as educators, language teachers, lecturers, and non-English major students.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Here are the findings from the in-depth interviews with 22 non-English majored students who participated in the study.

3.1. Research question (i). *What are students' ideas of the importance of participating in speaking activities in an English class?*

The first two interview questions were addressed in detail, highlighting the importance and regularity of participating in speaking activities during English classes. The author intends to present a summary of the students' responses along with some commentary.

For question 1 (*In your opinion, how important is speaking skill when learning a foreign language?*), all 22 students agreed that this skill played a crucial role. Some added the reasons, including: Speaking skill helped us be more confident when communicating; Having speaking skill means understanding and applying the grammar and vocabulary we have learned, or It could help us apply it in real cases and it was a way for us to express and confirm our English proficiency. In general, they had their own reasons when mentioning the importance of speaking skill in studying a foreign language.

Question 2 (*During English class, how often do you participate in speaking activities?*) received eight answers with rarely participating since they were afraid of speaking in English, or they did not pronounce correctly. The rest (14 students) asserted they normally got involved in these activities every week. The findings revealed the factual picture of non-English majored students. Most of the 22 participants were active in speaking activities; a few did not. Hopefully, all of them are going to gain courage to speak out in English, which is useful for their English proficiency.

It was evident that the participants recognized the critical importance of engaging actively and regularly in speaking activities in each lesson. Their consistent effort and conscious awareness contributed to relatively strong performance in the mid-course speaking test and to steady improvement in their oral proficiency, as supported by the coursebook lessons.

3.2. Research question (ii). *What are students' perspectives of participating in agree-disagree speaking activities from an EFL coursebook?*

In terms of the agree-disagree speaking activities from an EFL coursebook for non-English majors, students shared their diverse opinions related. Their perspectives are of value to the lecturers who were in charge of the course.

For question 3 (*To what extent are the Agree-Disagree speaking activities in the coursebook helpful in developing your speaking skill?*), 21 students confirmed the activities were helpful to them. They clarified their ideas with such arguments as helping them express their opinions, explain them, convince listeners in English, and practice speaking skills; learning more new words, pronouncing better and developing ideas better; or developing critical thinking. Only one participant did not think the activities were truly helpful in developing general speaking skills. Obviously, the students found it useful to be active in such activities and they did gain benefits for their tireless effort in each Agree-Disagree speaking activity.

Question 4 (*In your opinion, are the topics in these speaking activities really close to life? Why?*) mentioned the topics for agree-disagree speaking activities. Of 22 responses, only one thought the topics were not very close to everyday life. The other 21 students believed they were very close. They added some more information such as: They were not only suitable for international purposes but also appropriate for Vietnam's perspective; Most speaking topics were related to life such as talking about home, school, food... The topics were beneficial for students when speaking. Clearly, the participants found the topics familiar to their current lives, which facilitated them to speak more in English lessons.

Question 5 (*How does regularly participating in these Agree-Disagree speaking activities contribute to strengthening and improving your speaking skill and English knowledge?*) is about the ways that participation in these activities helped them to be better at speaking and broaden their knowledge of the language. All of them recognized the effectiveness of frequently getting involved in these activities towards mastering the speaking skill or the English language. They had such ideas as: helping students practice reflexes in all communication situations and express themselves more fluently, improve confidence and develop vocabulary; increasing interaction and the ability to think more quickly and sensitively, and see problems from many dimensions and more deeply. The participants made sure about their improvement while taking part in these activities every week; they did make progress in speaking skill.

Question 6 (*What difficulties do you encounter when participating in these speaking activities in class?*) discussed the troubles facing students. Two students said they did not have difficulties while participating in these activities. The rest (20 students) explained their troubles including: being shy and afraid of making pronunciation mistakes; lacking appropriate vocabulary, ideas related; being not confident to speak English; finding it hard to express in another language. The problems prevented students from expressing their ideas in these activities. They need to face up to them in order to find suitable solutions for themselves.

Question 7 (*If you have encountered difficulties, what is your solution?*) is about solutions to the above-mentioned problems. They are: Listen more English, practice speaking more often; Use support tools like ChatGPT; Improve their vocabulary and then trying to stand up and speak a little each class; Improve their own knowledge, ask the teacher to guide them with some vocabulary related to the topic. These are effective measures to solve the problems. What to remember is to strictly apply them on a regular basis for on-going progress.

Question 8 (*In your opinion, should speaking activities like this be regularly assigned to students to practice in class? Why?*) received agreement from all the participants. The reasons are different such as: It will help students a lot in communicating in English; Regularly participating in speaking activities helps you improve your speaking skills and above all, improve other skills such as communication skills, idea development skills, etc. In general, the students approved of getting students involved in these activities each lesson for their own sake.

3.3. Discussion

Overall, the agree-disagree speaking activities made a moderate contribution to students' speaking skill development over the semester. While some students found it somewhat challenging to express themselves in English through these activities, others actively participated during class and took full advantage of the opportunity to demonstrate their speaking abilities. All students were

well aware of both the benefits and difficulties they experienced when engaging in the activities. They expressed a strong desire for such tasks to be regularly included in class for non-English majors, as a way to continuously improve their speaking skills.

The activities elicited varied opinions from students during their participation. Despite the benefits and challenges encountered by non-English majors, the activities contributed positively to the improvement of their speaking skills overall, particularly in expressing agreement or disagreement on familiar topics. These practices enabled students to use English effectively, make steady progress, and ultimately achieve fairly good results in the mid-term speaking test.

It is clear that these activities brought significant benefits to the students. By participating in English lessons, they engaged naturally in speaking practice, particularly in expressing agreement and disagreement on specific topics. Through this process, the non-English majors expanded their perspectives on key issues in daily life, such as education and entertainment, while simultaneously learning how to articulate their ideas in English to achieve both communicative and linguistic competence. By the end of the course, they became noticeably more confident and fluent in speaking. These improvements were recognized not only by the students themselves but also by their peers and the lecturer. Their immediate aim of achieving good results in the mid-term speaking test was fulfilled, and, impressively, broader goals in language learning were also attained.

4. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study explored students' perspectives on the agree-disagree speaking activities from an EFL coursebook through in-depth interviews with 22 participants. The students recognized the importance of speaking skills and the value of regularly engaging in these weekly activities. Although many still faced challenges when trying to speak up in class, they understood what steps they needed to take to increase their participation and improve both their speaking ability specifically and their overall English proficiency.

For a limited time, the authors hope to extend the scope of the study for further research. The research is helpful to those who care, including educators, teachers and students.

Implications in language teaching and learning

For teachers, they are encouraged to regularly incorporate agree-disagree speaking activities into their lessons to help students develop their speaking skills and English proficiency for long-term benefit. Providing clear and practical guidance before, during, and after the activity is essential, especially in offline settings. This approach not only maximizes the effectiveness of the activity for students but also brings satisfaction to the teacher when students participate enthusiastically.

For learners, they should actively participate in the activities designed by their teachers in each lesson. If they encounter any difficulties, they should seek appropriate support from their instructors. Overcoming shyness is important, as engaging in these activities can be highly beneficial for developing speaking skills. Those who confidently express themselves in English during such tasks are more likely to perform well in speaking and excel in speaking tests during exams.

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USING MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES WHILE TEACHING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILL TO NON-ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS AT THUYLOI UNIVERSITY

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1. INTRODUCTION

Motivation is regarded one of the most important factors in second language acquisition since it is thought to determine the active level of personal involvement in studying (Gardner, 1985). Highly motivated students are more engaged in learning and they carry out the academic tasks persistently. In contrast, unmotivated students are often insufficiently involved and therefore unlikely to make progress in English learning. Motivation determines how ready and willing learners are to gain knowledge, to practice and to increase their English capacity.

Recent studies have reaffirmed this view. For instance, Dörnyei & Ushioda (2011) emphasized that motivation is dynamic and context-dependent, strongly influencing learners' willingness to communicate and persist in language learning. More recently, Al-Hoorie (2017) and Papi & Hiver (2020) demonstrated that learners' motivation is closely linked with self-concept, identity, and emotional engagement in the classroom. In his study, Gardner refers to motivation (Gardner, 1985, p. 10) as "a combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning to speak English plus favorable attitudes towards improving oral skill". Students need a reason to carry on doing their studies. And yet, through the researcher's teaching experience and observation, non-English major students at Thuyloi are found to be de-motivated and passive in speaking lessons. They haven't paid due attention to this English skill because of the dominant grammar translation teaching and learning during their previous study at school. Learners may know plenty of English vocabulary and structures but turn out to be tongued-tied speakers with low motivation. From this teaching context, it comes to a question: What strategies can be used in speaking classes to generate and nurture English speaking motivation among non-English major students at Thuyloi University?

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This is a secondary research which involves the summary, collation, synthesis and critical review of existing research, books, and articles on improving students' motivation through motivational strategies.

The aims and objectives of the study are:

- To investigate effective motivational strategies which can be used to involve students in speaking lessons.
- To give recommendations for teachers in term of teaching strategies to motivate students in speaking classes at Thuyloi university.

The present study focuses on answering the following questions:

Research Question 1: What the motivational strategies can be applied in teaching English speaking skills for non – English major students at Thuyloi University?

Research Question 2: Why and How these motivational strategies can be applied for non – English major students at Thuyloi University?

3. FINDINGS

Research Question 1: What the motivational strategies can be applied in teaching English speaking skills for non – English major students at Thuyloi University?

A number of studies have been conducted to find out the effect of implementing motivational teaching strategies on students' motivation. One of the most comprehensive and influential framework of second language (L2) motivational strategies is proposed by Dörnyei (2001a), presented in Figure 1. Since then, a great deal of research has investigated how Dörnyei's (2001) framework influences learners' motivation and achievement in language classrooms. This research synthesizes findings from a number of studies: Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008), Cheng and Dörnyei (2007), Sugita McEown and Takeuchi (2014), and Moskovsky et al. (2013) and other studies with the aim at addressing two research questions. The findings from these studies offers insights into the practical effectiveness of motivational strategies based on Dörnyei's (2001) framework.

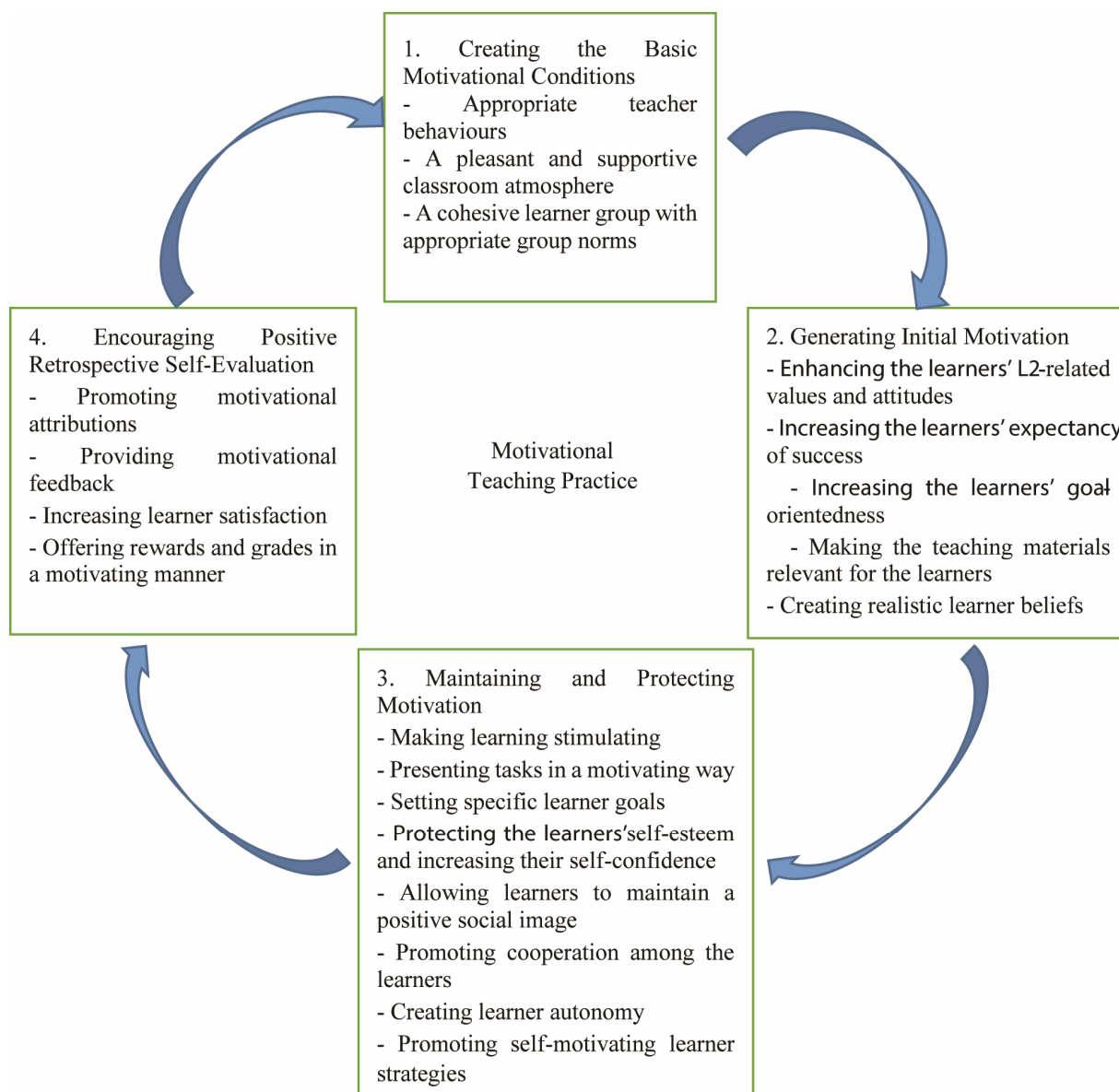


Figure 1. The Components of L2 Motivational Teaching Practice in a classroom (Dörnyei, 2001a, p.29)

In this framework, motivational teaching practice is viewed as a cyclic process, and is divided into four main phases including: creating the basic motivational conditions, generating initial motivation, maintaining and protecting motivation, and encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation.

3.1. Creating the basic motivational conditions

In one of the most comprehensive empirical studies, Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) carried out a large-scale classroom observation of 27 EFL teachers in South Korea. They aimed to assess the relationship between teachers' motivational practices and learners' observed motivation. The findings showed that once teachers built positive classroom atmospheres through enthusiasm,

clarity of instruction, and personalized interaction (nonverbal behaviors such as smiling and eye contact), students performed significantly higher levels of engagement and motivation. Similarly, Bernaus and Gardner (2008) confirmed that teachers' instructional styles and attitudes strongly influenced learners' motivation, while Papi and Abdollahzadeh (2012) emphasized the importance of supportive group norms in fostering cohesion. These results collectively highlight that motivational strategies are not only about what is taught, but also how it is delivered and perceived by learners.

3.2. Generating initial motivation

Once the basic conditions are established, the next phase involves arousing learners' interest and curiosity, connecting language learning to learners' values, and promoting the perceived value of language proficiency.

Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) discovered the second phase through a large-scale survey of 387 Taiwanese EFL teachers, analyzing the frequency and effectiveness of motivational strategy application. The study revealed that teachers who used strategies to promote learners L2 such as highlighting future benefits of learning English e.g., future careers or connecting learning with students' aspirations e.g. study abroad, succeeded in engaging students from the beginning. Furthermore, the authors pointed that initial motivation was strongly influenced by how well teachers explained the importance of given tasks and connected them to real-life contexts.

Complementing Cheng and Dörnyei (2007), Taguchi, Magid, and Papi (2009) found that the L2 Motivational Self System showed that initial motivation is particularly strengthened when teachers explicitly link classroom activities with learners' future selves and career prospects.

3.3. Maintaining and protecting motivation

The third stage of Dörnyei's (2001) framework focuses on how to maintain learners' motivation throughout the learning process, especially when students struggle with difficulties or boredom. This involves promoting self-confidence, setting goals, providing scaffolding, and making encouragement.

Sugita McEown and Takeuchi (2014) conducted classroom observations and interviews in Japanese high schools to explore the effect of specific motivational strategies on learner motivation and engagement. It is concluded from the study that teachers who actively worked to sustain students' motivation by giving timely feedback, offering compliments, and helping students to cope with anxiety would fostered resilience and persistence from learners. Besides, the study found that setting clear goals and providing achievable challenges were particularly effective to help students stay motivated over time. Moreover, Papi and Hiver (2020) illustrated that sustaining motivation requires dynamic regulation, where teachers adapt strategies to maintain students' engagement affective strategies such as reducing classroom tension and demonstrating care for students performance, had a profound influence on students' willingness to participate in learning activities.

3.4. Encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation

The final phase of Dörnyei's (2001) framework focuses on promoting a sense of achievement and helping students evaluate their progress positively, which in turn enhances future motivation. Strategies include providing constructive feedback, attributing success to effort, and encouraging reflection.

Moskovsky et al. (2013) conducted a controlled study in Saudi Arabia. It involved first-year university students learning English as a foreign language at the intermediate level, who were divided into an experimental group and a control group. Students in the former group were taught by teachers who systematically applied motivational strategies based on Dörnyei's (2001) framework. Compared with a control group, students in the experimental group showed significantly higher motivation and improvement in speaking performance. One of the most effective strategies was encouraging students to reflect on their achievement and to view it as a result of their effort rather than luck or inborn ability. This helped students develop growth mindsets

and reinforced their belief in their ability to improve their speaking skill. The researchers asserted that the application of motivational strategies promoting positive self-evaluation have a great influence on both motivation and learning success.

Likewise, Ushioda (2011) further suggested that self-reflection activities and personalized feedback encourage learners to take ownership of their progress, thereby reinforcing their belief in continuous improvement.

Research Question 2: Why and How these motivational strategies can be applied for non – English major students in English speaking classes at Thuyloi University?

The question arises as to whether the Dörnyei's (2001) framework is suitable for non –English majors at Thuyloi University, who have their own challenges and characteristics in English speaking? And if it proves to be suitable, how can it be implemented?

3.5. Speaking challenges and the characteristics of Non-English Major Students at Thuyloi University through the researcher's teaching experience and observation

3.5.1. Shyness and fear of making mistakes

A dominant feature of Thuyloi students' speaking behavior is reluctance to participate due to shyness and the fear of being judged by peers. Students worry about producing incorrect grammar or pronunciation, causing the avoidance of speaking chances. This phenomenon has been widely reported in studies on language anxiety (Horwitz, 2010), which highlight the debilitating effects of fear of negative evaluation. In the Vietnamese collectivist context, the concept of “losing face” further intensifies this fear, making students less likely to volunteer to engage in speaking lessons.

3.5.2. Low perceived relevance and practical usefulness of English

For Thuyloi University students in technical majors such as engineering, water resources, or environmental studies, English speaking is often considered secondary to their core academic subjects. As a result, they may view oral communication activities as less relevant or immediately applicable. This perception aligns with findings by Dörnyei & Ushioda (2011), who pointed out that motivation is undermined when learners fail to see the connection between classroom learning and future professional goals.

3.5.3. Boredom and lack of confidence

Classroom observations reveal that students often display low energy and passive participation during speaking lessons. This stems partly from previous exposure to teacher-centered methods emphasizing grammar translation, which rarely engaged them in communicative tasks. Consequently, they lack confidence in their ability to speak spontaneously. At Thuyloi University, these problems are compounded by large class sizes (around 40 students per class) where students receive little individualized feedback to boost their self-assurance.

3.5.4. Lack of awareness of progress and underestimation of ability

Another challenge is that students often fail to recognize their gradual improvement. Because speaking proficiency develops over time and is less quantifiable than test scores in grammar or reading, learners underestimate their ability. This lack of self-awareness reduces motivation to keep practicing. At Thuyloi, without structured opportunities for reflection or feedback, students are not aware of their progress, which discourages them from engaging further in speaking activities.

3.6. Why Dörnyei's (2001) Motivational Framework is Suitable for Thuyloi University Students? How is it applied?

The reviewed studies collectively provide strong empirical support for Dörnyei's (2001) Motivational Teaching Practice framework. Each stage has been shown to contribute significantly to improving learner engagement, persistence, and progress in speaking skill. In addition, the mentioned studies share important similarities with the context of Thuyloi University. First, they all focus on foreign and second language learners who often face low motivation and confidence.

Second, the participants in these studies, like Thuyloi students, are mainly non-English majors, learning English as a compulsory subject rather than their field of specialization. Therefore, Dörnyei's (2001) framework—focusing on creating a supportive classroom climate, generating and sustaining motivation, and fostering positive self-reflection—provides a practical and effective approach to the characteristics and challenges of students at Thuyloi University. The framework's comprehensive nature ensures that both the psychological and pedagogical dimensions of language learning are taken into account, making it effective for the Thuyloi University Students.

3.6.1. Addressing shyness and fear of mistakes

One of the most prominent issues among Thuyloi students is shyness, stemming from the fear of making mistakes and being judged by peers. In Dörnyei's framework, this can be addressed in the first stage—creating basic motivational conditions—highlights the importance of establishing a supportive classroom atmosphere. Teachers are encouraged to build rapport, promote group cohesion, and create a supportive environment where making mistakes is seen as a natural part of learning. In practice, this can be achieved by normalizing errors through teacher modeling, emphasizing communication over accuracy, and incorporating cooperative learning activities. For example, small-group discussions or pair work can provide safer spaces for students to practice without the pressure in front of the whole class. This directly counters the “fear of losing face” in the Vietnamese collectivist context. By fostering a sense of safety, Dörnyei's approach reduces anxiety and encourages students to take risks in speaking English.

3.6.2. Enhancing perceived relevance of speaking activities

Another obstacle at Thuyloi University is students' low perceived relevance & practical usefulness of English to their technical majors. Dörnyei's (2001) framework emphasizes the generation of initial motivation, which involves helping learners develop realistic and personally meaningful goals. For non-English majors, this could mean designing speaking tasks that simulate professional contexts and prospects, such as presenting authentic materials, participating in mock job interviews, or discussing environmental issues in English for environmental studies majors. By aligning classroom activities with future professional scenarios, teachers can make the practical benefits of English communication visible. In this way, the framework directly tackles students' indifference and makes speaking practice more purposeful.

3.6.3. Dealing with boredom and building Confidence

Thuyloi students often appear disengaged due to prior experiences with grammar-translation methods. Dörnyei's (2001) framework addresses this in the third stage—maintaining and protecting motivation. The teacher's role here is to make tasks stimulating, provide appropriate challenges, and supply encouragement to sustain effort. Applying this stage involves designing communicative activities that are both meaningful and enjoyable, such as debates, problem-solving tasks, role-plays connected to real-world scenarios or gamification. Additionally, breaking down complex speaking tasks into smaller, achievable steps helps students experience success, gradually building their confidence. Teachers can also provide immediate, constructive feedback that highlights progress rather than only pointing out errors. For large classes, group-based projects or peer feedback can ensure that more students receive personalized input, thereby increasing their sense of competence and reducing passivity.

3.6.4. Raising awareness of progress and promoting positive self-evaluation

Students at Thuyloi frequently underestimate their ability in speaking because improvement is gradual and less quantifiable than grammar or reading. Dörnyei's final stage, encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation, directly addresses this challenge. Teachers highlight progress, provide opportunities for reflection, and celebrate effort as well as achievement. Practical strategies may include keeping speaking journals, recording oral presentations for later review, or incorporating peer assessment where students recognize each other's strengths. By making progress visible, learners are more likely to recognize their development and sustain motivation.

4. CONCLUSION

The present study has reviewed theoretical frameworks and empirical research on motivational strategies in second language learning and applied them to the specific context of non-English major students at Thuyloi University. The findings confirm the value of Dörnyei's (2001) Motivational Teaching Practice framework, which includes four stages: building conditions, starting motivation, sustaining it, and encouraging self-reflection. Applied systematically, these strategies can help turn passive learners into active speakers, improving both participation and oral skills. The analysis of students' challenges and characteristics at Thuyloi University—including shyness and fear of mistakes, low perceived relevance of English, boredom and lack of confidence, and underestimation of their own progress—demonstrates that motivational strategies can provide concrete solutions. By creating supportive classroom environments, linking learning tasks to professional goals, diversifying speaking activities, and fostering self-reflection, teachers can help Thuyloi students overcome psychological barriers, develop confidence, and recognize the practical value of English, thereby transforming their approach to speaking practice.

4.1. Limitations

First, this is a secondary research project relying on the synthesis of existing studies rather than empirical classroom experimentation at Thuyloi University. Consequently, the effectiveness of the proposed strategies has not been tested with learners in real conditions. Second, the focus has been primarily on speaking motivation, whereas other skills such as listening, reading, and writing—though interconnected—were beyond the scope of this study.

4.2. Suggestions for Further Study

Future research should therefore aim to conduct empirical classroom-based investigations at Thuyloi University to validate the applicability of the proposed strategies. Empirical studies tracking changes in learners' speaking motivation and performance over time would provide deeper insights into the sustainability of motivational effects. Finally, a mixed-skill approach that considers how motivation in speaking interacts with motivation in other language skills would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of learner development.

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SOCIAL INTERDEPENDENCE IN COLLABORATIVE LEARNING AMONG ENGLISH-MAJOR STUDENTS AT THUYLOI UNIVERSITY

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1. INTRODUCTION

Currently, social sciences and humanities programs commonly require students to undertake courses in research methodology, as acquiring knowledge and understanding of research methods are considered essential (e.g., Wishkoshi et al., 2022). Studying research methodology equips students with the foundational skills necessary to conduct academic research and fosters greater confidence among students when they apply for postgraduate programs later (Petrella & Jung, 2008).

Despite its importance, research methodology is often perceived as one of the most intimidating and anxiety-inducing subjects for students (Slocum-Schaffer & Bohrer, 2019). Therefore, the implementation of an innovative and pedagogically appropriate learning approach may help alleviate students' fear and anxiety associated with this course. One promising approach is collaborative learning (CL), which involves students actively contributing to the achievement of shared academic goals and working collectively to reach those objectives (Janssen, 2014). It can be seen that the benefits and challenges of CL, as well as cognitive outcomes and various strategies and activities designed to promote its effectiveness have been extensively explored (e.g., Almajed, 2015; Weinberger & Shonfeld, 2020). However, one aspect of CL that has received relatively limited attention is its social dimension, particularly social interdependence (SI). Therefore, this study was conducted to investigate social interdependence in collaborative learning among English-major students at Thuyloi University (TLU). To achieve that aim, the study addressed the following research question: To what extent are the second-year English-major students at TLU socially interdependent in collaborative learning in the research methodology course?

2. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

2.1. Theoretical background

2.1.1. Collaborative learning (CL)

CL has been found to promote both cognitive and social development, facilitate the sharing of learning experiences, and foster a positive learning environment (Weinberger & Shonfeld, 2020). In higher education settings, CL becomes even more critical, as it prepares students for future careers that increasingly demand teamwork and cooperative skills (Slotte et al., 2004). However, when integrating CL into instructional practice, educators must consider several influencing factors, such as personality traits, prior experiences, time constraints, and the nature of the subject matter (Almajed, 2015).

In the Vietnamese context, some studies have explored CL. For instance, Bui et al. (2021) examined CL in online learning environments and found that it offered substantial benefits, particularly in terms of bridging geographical gaps and reducing financial costs, but some students encountered challenges related to interaction and concentration. However, no prior research has investigated the application of CL in teaching and learning research methodology, especially within the context of TLU. Therefore, this study was conducted to bridge this gap.

2.1.2. Social Interdependence (SI)

Social interdependence (SI) refers to a condition in which an individual's outcomes are influenced not only by their own actions but also by the actions of others (Johnson & Johnson, 2009).

Interdependence has been structured through mechanisms such as task division, shared group identity, spatial arrangements, and simulated scenarios involving imaginative contexts (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). According to those scholars, these approaches to organizing interdependence can be broadly categorized into outcome, means, and boundary. Outcome interdependence encompasses shared goals and rewards, which may be either realistic or hypothetical (e.g., scenarios like being stranded on the moon). Means interdependence emphasizes interconnections based on shared resources, assigned roles, and distributed tasks. Boundary interdependence, on the other hand, arises from separations among individuals resulting in the formation of discrete groups. Apparently, the categorization proposed by Johnson and Johnson (2009), which divides social interdependence (SI) into boundary, outcome, and means, is well-suited for research on SI in collaborative learning. This framework effectively covers the key dimensions of SI, so it can serve as a solid foundation for developing and selecting instruments for studies on SI, particularly within the context of CL.

2.2. Contextual background

The Research Methodology course is delivered in English and designed for second-year students majoring in English Language and Linguistics at Thuyloi University. The course comprises 45 instructional hours, equivalent to 3 academic credits, and aims to provide students with foundational knowledge of research methodology. Throughout the course, students need to deliver group presentations about each step in research and are introduced to the structured process of conducting academic research, including step-by-step procedures, commonly used research methods and instruments, data collection and analysis techniques, and research proposal preparation.

By the end of the course, students are required to submit a research proposal based on a topic they have developed during the semester. This proposal must be presented in front of the class, allowing students to demonstrate their understanding and application of research principles. However, if the course were taught using traditional methods where instructors deliver lectures and students passively receive information, it could fail to achieve its intended objectives of fostering both theoretical knowledge and practical research skills. Passive listening alone is insufficient for developing the ability to apply research concepts or cultivate essential academic competencies.

To address this limitation, the course should be redesigned in alignment with contemporary educational approaches. As a result, the CL principles have been integrated into the instructional design of the course for several key reasons including collaborative engagement (Forslund Frykedal & Hammar Chiriac, 2018), personal responsibility (Zhong, 2021), and motivation (Hmelo-Silver, & Chinn, 2015).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participants

A total of 91 second-year English-major students from Thuyloi University participated in this study and completed the survey questionnaire. Among them, 68 were female (74.72%) and 23 were male (25.28%). These students were eligible to participate in this research as they had completed the Research Methodology course, which incorporated collaborative learning during Term 1 of the second semester in the 2024-2025 academic year.

3.2. Research instrument

This study employed a quantitative approach using a survey design, with a questionnaire as the primary data collection method (Creswell & Guetterman, 2024). The research instrument was adopted from a validated questionnaire developed by Shimizu et al. (2020) measuring SI. It consisted of 15 items in which each participant rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = unimportant; 2 = of little importance; 3 = neutral; 4 = relevant; 5 = very relevant). Items 1 to 9 corresponded to the component “Boundary”, items 10 to 12 represented “Outcome”, and items 13 to 15 were associated with “Means”.

3.3. Data collection and analysis

The questionnaire was administered via Google Forms, distributed to the English-major students as described above. The distribution was facilitated by course instructors and class groups through Zalo, a popular social networking platform in Vietnam.

It took the participants approximately 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. They were informed that their participation was voluntary and would not affect their academic performance or personal circumstances in any way.

Upon completion, the collected data were exported to Excel and subsequently imported into JASP statistical software for analysis. Descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, and percentage distributions, were generated to address the research question.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Boundary interdependence

The descriptive statistics of boundary interdependence can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for “Boundary”

Items	M	SD	U&LI (%)	N (%)	R & VR (%)
1. I hope my learning group is superior to others.	4.19	0.87	5.5	9.9	84.6
2. When there are different opinions, I would like to coordinate them.	4.31	0.73	2.2	8.8	89.0
3. For me, it is important to maintain harmony within the group.	4.17	0.90	4.4	13.19	82.41
4. I incorporate the advice of others when preparing a study plan.	4.09	0.92	6.59	14.29	79.12
5. Group members should carefully summarize each other's arguments.	4.09	0.85	2.2	18.68	79.12
6. Discussions with other members who have different opinions will improve me.	4.11	0.85	4.39	17.58	78.03
7. I try to share my own thoughts and materials if they are useful to other students.	4.10	0.67	1.1	14.29	84.61
8. I have respect for the others with whom I interact.	4.19	0.76	2.2	14.29	83.51
9. It is a good idea to share the tasks for more efficient group work.	4.09	0.73	2.2	15.39	82.41

Note: M = Mean; SD = Standard deviation; U&LI = Unimportant & of little importance; N = Neutral; R & VR = Relevant & very relevant

According to the statistics in Table 1, students place high values on collaborative and respectful group dynamics. Coordinating differing opinions, maintaining harmony, and respecting others were consistently rated as highly relevant. Additionally, behaviors such as sharing resources, engaging in discussions, and dividing tasks were widely supported. These findings suggest that students recognize the importance of effective teamwork and mutual support in enhancing their learning experience.

With respect to handling differing opinions, the majority (89%) affirmed the relevance of coordinating them ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.73$) with the highest mean score among 9 items. Only a small fraction (2.2%) considered this unimportant, and 8.8% showed no clear preference.

When it came to preparing study plans, most students (79.12%) reported that they valued incorporating advice from others ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 0.92$). Only a few (6.59%) found this unimportant, while 14.29% remained undecided. Likewise, the practice of carefully summarizing each other's arguments was seen as relevant or very relevant by 79.12% of participants ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 0.85$). A small group (2.2%) did not consider this important, and 18.68% expressed neutrality. Finally, the strategy of dividing tasks to enhance group efficiency was supported by 82.41% of students ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 0.73$). Notably, 2.2% of the participants found this unimportant, while 15.39% remained neutral in their responses.

4.2. Outcome interdependence

The descriptive statistics of outcome interdependence can be seen in Table 2 as follows.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for “Outcome”

Items	M	SD	U&LI (%)	N (%)	R & VR (%)
10. I can learn important things from other students.	4.20	0.89	5.5	11.0	83.5
11. It is a good idea for students to help one another in their studies.	4.15	0.84	3.3	15.39	81.31
12. We learn numerous important things from one another.	4.18	0.77	2.2	15.39	82.41

According to Table 2, the majority of participants reported that they learned many important things from their peers, reflecting a strong sense of outcome interdependence in CL. Item 10 had the highest mean score of 4.20 and a standard deviation of 0.89 in the scale. A large proportion of students (83.5%) rated this item as relevant or very relevant (R & VR), which means that they could learn important things from their peers while only 5.5% considered it unimportant or of little importance (U&LI), and 11.0% remained neutral. Item 11 received a mean of 4.15 and SD = 0.84. Specifically, 81.31% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that students could help each other in studying, whereas 3.3% rated it as unimportant or of little importance, and 15.39% were neutral.

4.3. Means interdependence

The descriptive statistics of mean interdependence can be found in Table 3 as follows. According to Table 3, students shared different views regarding the ways they contribute to and benefit from collaborative learning. Only a few students indicated that their peers relied on their presence and support. Item 14, “My peers rely on my presence as well as my help and support,” had a mean score of 2.04 and SD = 0.83. 63.74% of students rated this item as unimportant or of little importance, and 36.26% selected neutral. Notably, no responses were recorded in the relevant or very relevant categories. In contrast, many students reported that they drew conclusions from information shared in group discussions. Item 15, “I draw conclusions from information in group discussions,” received a mean score of M = 3.87 and SD = 0.89. 64.83% of students rated this item as relevant or very relevant, 29.67% selected neutral, and 5.5% considered it unimportant or of little importance.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for “Means”

Items	M	SD	U&LI (%)	N (%)	R & VR (%)
13. My peers rely on my information and advice.	2.31	0.89	40.66	59.34	0
14. My peers rely on my presence as well as my help and support.	2.04	0.83	63.74	36.26	0
15. I draw conclusions from information in group discussions.	3.87	0.89	5.5	29.67	64.83

5. DISCUSSION & CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study aimed to explore social interdependence in collaborative learning among second-year English-major students at Thuyloi University. Data were collected from a survey questionnaire adopted from Shimizu et al. (2020) with the participation of 91 students and the support of the JASP software for data analysis. The findings provide an overview of SI in CL among undergraduate students in a research methodology course. The statistics reveal that English-major students showed a high level of SI in CL, particularly in terms of outcome and boundary interdependence, which is consistent with the findings in Shimizu et al. (2020). In the Boundary dimension, students demonstrated a strong orientation toward group cohesion and interpersonal harmony (e.g., Ho, 2017).

Most participants valued coordinating differing opinions, maintaining respectful interactions, and sharing responsibilities. Interestingly, a large proportion also perceived their group as superior to others, which may reflect a sense of group identity and pride that coexists with collaborative values. In the Outcome dimension, students widely acknowledged the benefits of peer learning (e.g., Riese, Samara, & Lillejord, 2012). They agreed that helping one another and learning from peers are important aspects of their academic experience. This suggests that collaborative learning is not only accepted but also appreciated as a meaningful and effective approach to knowledge construction, especially in the research methodology course where the students had to collaborate with their peers in all activities and assignments, as collaboration in research is very important (Connors-Tadros, 2019). Importantly, the Means dimension revealed a contrasting pattern. Students did not perceive themselves as central sources of support or information within their groups. While they actively participated in discussions and drew conclusions from group interactions, they did not feel that their peers relied on them for help, presence, or advice. This means that they were humble about their role and contribution, and accumulating knowledge at the same time. Another possible reason is that they lack confidence, which could affect students' sense of responsibility and ownership in group tasks.

These findings have several implications for class activities. First, because students reported that they learned many important things from their peers (e.g., items 10–12), lecturers should foster balanced interdependence, where students not only collaborate but also recognize each other's strengths. Defining roles within group tasks may help students feel more responsible and valued. Second, since the students highlighted the importance of support and feedback, incorporating peer leadership training or mentoring activities could enhance students' sense of agency and contribution within collaborative environments.

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USING “GRAMMARLY” TO DEVELOP EFL ADULT STUDENTS’ WRITING SKILLS: BENEFITS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VIETNAM

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1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is essential for the linguistic development of a language learner. However, this is one of the most challenging skills in English learning (Fareed et al., 2016). This is even more difficult for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, including Vietnamese EFL adult students, as they need to overcome the language barriers, unfamiliarity with academic writing conventions, cultural variation in rhetoric and discourse (i.e. reasoning, argument structure, assumptions, coherence, cohesion) to produce convincing and well-organized written texts. According to Burstein et al. (2004), this skill is best improved through frequent practice accompanied by accurate instant feedback. However, this demands a huge workload for teachers who are responsible for correcting an enormous number of students’ written work on both low-level (diction, grammar, mechanics) and high-level (syntactic complexity, content and organization) aspects, leading to the challenge of providing accurate holistic feedback for Vietnamese EFL adult students. In recent years, due to the development of computer-assisted learning, the question of how Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) tools can be used to supplement teacher feedback has received growing attention. With these tools, EFL adult students can independently check their errors to raise their error awareness and promote their independent learning, and teachers can reduce the workload, thus focus on higher-level aspects to further develop students’ writing skills. Among the available free AWE applications, Grammarly has been proved to be one of the most reliable tools with the highest overall accuracy in corrections (Sahu et al., 2020). The original aim of Grammarly is to give instant correction and suggestions on six error categories, including grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, style and lexical variation (O’Neill & Russell, 2019). This article presents the justifications for the use of Grammarly in developing Vietnamese EFL adult students’ writing skills. The benefits and limitations of using Grammarly to develop EFL adult students’ writing skills will be critically discussed, followed by concrete instruction on making the best use of Grammarly to achieve the expected outcome in Vietnamese contexts.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is grounded on the theories in writing instruction and language education, including the process writing approach by Flower and Hayes (1981), the error correction feedback theory by Ferris (2003), and the sociocultural theory by Vygotsky (1978). According to Flower and Hayes (1981), writing is not only a finished product but also a developmental process in which students improve their writing gradually through such steps as brainstorming, planning, drafting, and revising. During this process, feedback plays a very important role. Ferris (2003) suggests that specific, immediate, positive feedback allows students to correct and raise their awareness of errors in the present and future writing. Moreover, the sociocultural theory by Vygotsky (1978) suggests that social interaction is critical in the learning process, in which learners can be supported by more experienced people, such as their teachers. Also, the concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in this theory suggests that students should be given a task that is slightly more challenging than their current ability with the appropriate assistance. In this case, feedback from teachers and from such AWE tools as Grammarly is considered a means of ZPD because this can facilitate students in the course of improving writing skills.

In Vietnam, several studies have examined the challenges encountered by Vietnamese adult students in developing writing skills. Phan's (2025) research on Vietnamese undergraduate students reveals that grammatical errors are the most popular in their writing, followed by vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation mistakes. These findings are consistent with those of Ngo (2023), who identified vocabulary, grammar, and structural difficulties among Vietnamese students. According to Nghi and Truong (2023), grammar is perceived to be one of the greatest difficulties in English writing.

Nevertheless, research on such technological pedagogical solutions as automated writing evaluation tools remains limited in Vietnam. In this article, the benefits and limitations of using Grammarly to develop EFL adult students' writing skills will be critically discussed, followed by recommendations on making the best use of Grammarly to achieve the expected outcome in Vietnamese contexts.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data were collected from such reliable secondary sources as journal articles, books and proceedings of the international conferences. The Grammarly-related publications were found on academic databases, and those focusing on the benefits and limitations of using Grammarly in writing instruction for EFL adult learners were selected to align with the research objectives. These selected publications were then synthesized and analyzed so that the researcher could have a comprehensive overview of the effects of using Grammarly in developing writing skills. Themes on the benefits and limitations of Grammarly were synthesized and analyzed in detail from the relevant publications, from which proper recommendations to make the best use of Grammarly to develop Vietnamese EFL students' writing skills are proposed in this article.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Benefits of using Grammarly in developing EFL adult students' writing skills

There are three ways in which the use of Grammarly can promote the development of the grammatical, mechanical and lexical aspects of writing. Firstly, the tool serves to enhance writing accuracy. It has been proved by Parra and Calero (2019) that students reduce their writing errors after using this tool. In this research on 28 undergraduate students of the Faculty of Social Science in a public university in Ecuador, the experimental group using Grammarly increased their mean score of the official Versant standardized placement test from Pearson from 47.07 in the pre-test to 57.29 in the post-test ($p = 0.0044$). This is because the real-time feedback enables students to independently revise the grammatical and mechanical aspects and reformulate the errors, thus boosting their low-level writing error awareness (Parra & Calero, 2019). These errors are explained in detail, contributing to the grammar, spelling, punctuation and writing style knowledge development (Wang, 2015). The effectiveness of Grammarly is further strengthened when considering the fact that Grammarly has been proved to achieve the highest overall accuracy in corrections of spelling and syntax errors among the available free AWE tools by Sahu et al. (2020).

Secondly, besides increasing awareness of the grammar, spelling and punctuation errors, the use of such AWE tools as Grammarly also helps to promote awareness and mastery of the writing lexical variation. This is facilitated by the predictive text function in Grammarly, which suggests words and phrases based on the previous text. The lexical variation improvement thanks to the predictive text feature has been successfully proved by Dizon and Gayed (2021). It was found out that college EFL Japanese students produced essays with more words at the 1K or 2K frequency levels under the non-Grammarly condition, while they used a greater variety of vocabulary at the 3K, 4K, 5K, and off-list levels under the Grammarly condition. This means that students with the Grammarly assistance produced writing with more of the less common words and less of the common ones, while the opposite pattern could be seen for essays written without Grammarly assistance. This writing diction development aligns with the previous study carried out by Ghufon (2019). Therefore, Grammarly can be used to support the incorporation of less common vocabulary in the essay production process, and in turn the enhancement of lexical variation in writing.

Thirdly, a key benefit of AWE tools like Grammarly lies in their ability to improve writing skills by motivating learners, as many EFL adult students report positive perceptions of the tool. According to Freiberg (2005), positive feeling is one of the contributing factors to learning success. Students' perceptions of such AWE tools as Grammarly are worth considering as it provides deeper insights into how much they appreciate the given feedback (Thi & Nikolov, 2021). Therefore, it is vital to examine students' attitudes towards Grammarly to know whether the tool can bring about the expected benefits. The study carried out by Parra and Calero (2019) on 28 undergraduate students in Ecuador and the one conducted by Thi and Nikolov (2021) on 30 first-year students in Myanmar have shown that Grammarly is very well received, particularly by adult learners. The findings of both studies indicate the adult learners' positive attitudes towards the effectiveness of Grammarly in improving certain writing skill aspects. They show that the immediate feedback along with the detailed explanation of the errors that motivate students to fix the incorrect usage by themselves and produce better essays without teachers' support, facilitating autonomous learning and active classroom participation, thus developing their writing skills.

4.2. Limitations of using Grammarly to develop EFL adult students' writing skills

However, the use of such AWE tools as Grammarly comes with certain limitations. The first limitation is that Grammarly does not support the enhancement of syntactic complexity in writing. Although it is suggested by Wang (2015) that the automated feedback draws students' attention mainly on sentence-level errors, it is worth noticing that the use of Grammarly does not promote the production of more subordination in their writing. This has been proved by Dizon and Gayed (2021) when they observed students using a slightly higher frequency of subordination in the non-Grammarly condition than in the Grammarly condition. With the insignificant difference in syntactic sophistication under the two writing conditions, the use of Grammarly can be concluded to neither improve nor hinder students' writing ability with more syntactic complexity.

The second limitation is that Grammarly does not support the enhancement of such higher-level essay components as content and organization. The limited organization assessment ability of such automated system is understandable as it requires higher-level writing concerns that would call for the need for human feedback. This argument matches the findings of the studies implemented by Ghufon (2019) and Parra and Calero (2019) as the researchers found out negligible improvement in terms of content and organization of writing after using Grammarly. Therefore, the technology should only serve as an assistant to improve students' writing skills, and teacher's feedback still plays a vital role in assessing the higher-level aspects that the AWE tools can hardly cover.

The third limitation is that Grammarly lacks meaningful interaction with students. The study implemented by Parra and Calero (2019) showed that more than half of 28 Ecuadorian undergraduate learners reported the lack of useful interaction as the worst part of using AWE tools. This could be attributed to the computerized one-size-fits-all feedback pre-programmed for specific error categories. Worse still, Grammarly sometimes provides misleading feedback, according to Nova (2018). Consequently, students possibly have doubts and uncertainties about some comments that must be clarified by the teacher. If a feeling of doubt and uncertainty is sustained, students' frustration and discouragement in writing are likely the result.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the above analysis of the benefits and limitations of using such AWE tools as Grammarly in developing EFL adult students' writing skill, pedagogical implications are drawn so that the expected outcome can be achieved in Vietnamese contexts. As Grammarly performs well in providing fast and detailed explanations of the spelling, grammar and mechanical errors (Parra & Calero, 2019), this can be used as a regular classroom assistant tool. This tool can be used in the revising step in the writing process proposed by Flower and Hayes (1981), as writers can critically

evaluate and refine their drafts with the assistance of Grammarly. This is potentially useful in Vietnamese contexts, given the fact that Vietnamese adult students make the most mistakes in grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation (Ngo, 2023; Phan, 2025). Furthermore, specific and immediate feedback by Grammarly allows students to raise their awareness of errors in the present and future writing (Ferris, 2003). When Grammarly is used as a regular classroom assistant tool, teachers' burden of giving essay feedback can be significantly reduced, affording them more time to focus on other writing aspects, and this potentially upgrades the quality of both the teaching and learning process. Students should also be encouraged to use the tool independently to facilitate autonomous learning. As Grammarly are proved to enhance lexical richness in writing by Dizon and Gayed (2021) and Ghufon (2019), students can use the predictive text feature to boost their productive vocabulary levels.

However, given the shortcomings of Grammarly, human guidance and support are still needed to compensate for its limitations. Firstly, teachers should be aware and inform students of the disadvantages of such AWE tools. Secondly, as Grammarly mainly focuses on lower-level errors (Thi & Nikolov, 2021), teachers can concentrate on correcting higher-level problems such as syntactic complexity, content and organization for the sake of students' comprehensive development. This integration aligns with the previous study result. It is stated by Ghufon (2019) that Grammarly performs better in correcting the errors in diction, grammar and mechanics of writing and worse in enhancing the content and organization of EFL students' writing, while the opposite pattern could be seen in teacher corrective feedback. Therefore, the combination of such modern technological approaches as Grammarly and such traditional approaches as teacher feedback is highly recommended for students' comprehensive writing development. This integration enables students to better perform tasks within their ZPD, according to Vygotsky (1978). Besides, the content and organization aspects of writing can also be improved by teacher providing students with model written texts, according to Parra and Calero (2019). This is an appropriate approach as model essays can help students to have clearer ideas about how to produce a better content and organized written text. Last but not least, teachers can play a role in clarifying doubts that students may have during the process of using Grammarly, be it the uncertainties about the tool operation or the confusion about the computerized given feedback.

6. CONCLUSION

The research aims at reviewing and critically discussing the benefits and limitations of using Grammarly to develop EFL adult students' writing skills. To achieve this objective, relevant Grammarly-related publications were found, synthesized and analyzed, enabling the researcher to gain a thorough overview of the effects of using Grammarly in developing writing skills. The process of reviewing such secondary sources provides strong evidence to support recommendations for the effective use of Grammarly in developing Vietnamese EFL adult students' writing skills.

In conclusion, the use of such AWE tools as Grammarly can help to develop EFL adult students' lexical, grammatical and mechanical aspects of writing. Also, the immediate feedback along with the detailed error explanation promotes confidence, autonomous learning and active classroom participation. However, given the automation features, Grammarly cannot boost the writing quality comprehensively as it does not support the improvement of syntactic sophistication, content and organization and lacks meaningful interaction. Therefore, the integration of Grammarly and teacher feedback is highly recommended for students' comprehensive writing development. Future study is suggested to examine the effectiveness of Grammarly in developing the writing skill of Vietnamese EFL students at different proficiency levels. Besides, the comparison between Grammarly and other automated writing evaluation tools in making a long-term writing improvement in Vietnamese EFL adult students should also be investigated.

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TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES OF STUDENTS' QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSIONS IN CULTURE-RELATED COURSES FOR ENGLISH-MAJOR STUDENTS AT THUYLOI UNIVERSITY

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1. INTRODUCTION

Classroom interaction plays an important role in the construction, acquisition, and transmission of knowledge from teachers to students and vice versa (Hu & Li, 2017). In Vygotsky (1962)'s sociocultural theory, learning and development are deeply rooted in social interaction, and the intellectual interaction with teachers and peers can strengthen the function of complex cognitive process. Classroom interaction consists of teacher-student interaction and student-student interaction. According to Marton and Tsui (2004), questions and answers are the essential elements in classroom interactions.

In English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) classrooms, questions and answers play a similarly important role. Students in EMI classrooms has the dual goals of learning both subject content and language (Hu & Duan, 2018). Questions from teachers and peers assist students' content learning by referring back to their background knowledge, scaffolding their learning activities, strengthening their understanding of new knowledge and triggering their critical thinking in the knowledge construction (Larson & Lovelace, 2013). Students can communicate their understanding, ask for teachers' feedback, and co-construct knowledge of the subject matter. These questioning and answering processes also help accelerate the achievement of language learning objectives by providing the language input and feedbacks for language output, so questions and answers (QnA) sessions can demonstrate students' engagement classroom activities, their understanding of the subject matter, and their ability to use English (Hu & Li, 2017). Therefore, QnA sessions are beneficial for students in both language and subject content (Dalton-Puffer, 2007).

At Thuyloi University, the teaching curriculum for English-major students offers students two main courses about the culture of English-speaking countries. They are considered EMI courses in which teachers deliver subject content related to basic understanding in communication with other cultures and general knowledge of British-American countries and peoples in English. EMI is considered an effective way to achieve two goals – subject content learning and English language learning (Hu, 2008).

The main teaching methods of the course include presentations, QnA sessions, and lectures. Due to the nature of the course which is mainly knowledge provision, teachers provide students with knowledge through lectures. In order to increase students' engagement in the course and better retain the knowledge, members of each class are divided into groups of 3-4, and each group is responsible to present the topic of the lesson assigned to them at the beginning of the course. Group members need to collaborate with their partners and prepare the presentation carefully at home. In a 3-period lesson, the first period is for group presentation, the second period is for students' QnA session and the third period is for the teacher' lecture to summarise and explain the main content of the lesson. In the first period of the lesson, group members act as the lecturer when delivering the lecture to their peers. In the second period, a students' QnA session is organised under the supervision of the teacher. In this session, group members answer all questions from their peers related to the content of the lesson in their presentation. The teacher supervises this session and provides or amends the answers if necessary. In the last period, the teacher summarises the main points of the lesson and explain necessary information.

The teaching method which consists of group presentation, students' QnA session and teacher's lecture has been applied to these two courses for two consecutive years. Now it is time to look into the effectiveness of these activities' implementation. Within its limited scope, this small study intends to investigate the students' QnA sessions from the teachers' perspectives.

The research focuses on how teachers assess students' QnA session and how these activities benefits or challenge teachers and students.

The research aims to answer the following questions:

1. How do teachers perceive the performance of students' QnA session?
2. What are the benefits of this activity for both students and teachers?
3. What are the challenges of these activities for both students and teachers?

2. METHODOLOGY

This small research applied a qualitative approach in understanding teachers' perspectives of QnA sessions in culture-related courses for English-majored students. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four English teachers because there are only these four responsible for teaching the two courses. The teachers were invited to join in via messages.

The interview questions originated from the researcher's desire to understand how teachers assess these QnA sessions, and what teachers think are the benefits and challenges for themselves and their students.

The interviews took place via Zoom online because of the geographical distance between the researcher and the interviewees. Each interview lasted from 25 mins to 40 minutes. The interviewees were asked main questions in the interview protocol, but were also let to share more of their experience with the researcher. The interviews were conducted in Vietnamese in order that the interviewees were able to fully express their perspectives on these QnA sessions. The interviews were recorded with the participants' permission. The researcher later transcribed the recordings and translated them into English.

The author used thematic analysis to process the data in this research. After double-checking the transcript translation by reading sentence by sentence in English and looking back at its Vietnamese version to ensure the accuracy of the translation and to get familiar with the data, the researcher started the coding process. The four teachers were coded from T1 to T4. The researcher conducted the first deductive round of coding by looking at a priory codes related to "QnA perspectives", "challenges of QnA sessions" or "benefits of QnA sessions". These codes stood out as they directly related to the interview questions. In the second inductive round of coding, the author read the whole transcripts more carefully and elicited some new codes and in Vivo codes. She then put all these codes into appropriate pre-determined themes. Some emergent themes also appeared to help answer the three research questions.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Findings

3.1.1. Teachers' perspectives on the performance of students' QnA sessions

The questions

The thematic analysis revealed that in general, teachers had quite similar opinions in assessing students QnA session. First of all, teachers were concerned about how students asked questions. They all shared that the most important criterion was whether students asked the group members the "right" questions (N=4). The "right" questions here meant that the questions directly addressed the topics; for example, students may ask about what they did not know about the topic, what some difficult terms meant, or what they want their peers to make clearer.

Most teachers (n=3) noticed that their students sometimes asked very general questions about the economic or political situations in countries in the world, which required the group members to have a lot of social knowledge and the ability to analyze and synthesize. T3 remarked, "*sometimes my*

students asked the group member: *How do you understand the Civil War in the US, and what do you think about it? This question is too big and can't be answered in a few sentences*" (T3). These teachers had a guess that their students used AI to generate these kinds of questions as they were too general or not closely related to the topic. On the contrary, T4 confirmed that her students usually asked simple direct questions about details of events, or definitions of terms. She shared, *"it maybe because my students were not quite well-prepared and still had difficulties in understanding the knowledge in the textbooks. So, they just based on the presentation and asked what they were not clear about"* (T4). T2 observed that her students asked the groups member questions to relate the knowledge in the lesson with the reality, to compare between situations in Vietnam and foreign countries.

The teachers (n=3) emphasized that sometimes the students' questions were lengthy, not concise, and hard to understand. They understood this ambiguity was due to the students' limited English proficiency when dealing with difficult and theoretical subjects. In these cases, the teachers assisted students by rephrasing or paraphrasing the questions to make them more comprehensible and transparent to both the group members and the audience. T3 particularly highly valued interesting questions which both the teacher and their peers wanted to discuss.

The answers

As for the answers, teachers' perspectives about students' efforts were consistent. The four teachers highly valued the efforts of the group members in trying to provide the answers for their peers. T1 observed, *"I think the group members really tried their best to answer the questions. Every time they received a question from the audience, they discussed the answers quickly in their group and provided the best possible answers"* (T1). However, teachers had quite diverse opinions about the quality of the answers. T2 and T4 asserted that although the group members pulled their efforts to reply, for a lot of times the answers did not directly address the questions. On the contrary, T3 praised his students by saying that he highly valued most of his students' answers as they got to the points immediately. The teachers (N=4) added that the group members also had a quick search in the Internet for the answers if they did not have enough information or they were not able to answer them.

The four teachers also showed their pedagogical solidity and soundness of English language teaching when they always tried to encourage their students to answer the questions in English as much as possible. If it was difficult to express the answer in English, the students were allowed to switch to Vietnamese. The teachers (N=4) reported that the group members all started answering in English, tried to make themselves understood in English first, then switched to Vietnamese to explain their answers more clearly to the audience. T4 shared, *"I felt glad to see my students managed to speak in English. At least they tried to find ways to speak the language"* (T4). Three teachers officially required their students to answer the questions in English, encouraging them to do so by having incentive measures if the group members were able to reply in English. The fourth teacher did not mention whether he had this requirement applied to his class or not. He only revealed,

Although my students tried to use English first, most of them ended up answering in Vietnamese later. I noticed that when the group members were asked and answered in Vietnamese, they had a better understanding of the questions, and provided better answers. (T4)

In either situation, the teachers (N=4) admitted that the ratio of the Vietnamese language use was always bigger in the QnA sessions, and students had better answers in Vietnamese. The teachers explained that unlike other language skill courses, these two courses consisted of difficult theories and complex topics with a lot of terms, which were sometimes even challenging for teachers. Because of this, when asked if they valued the content or the language complexity in the answers, all four teachers confirmed that they paid more attention to the content. T1 said,

As these were two EMI courses, not language skill courses, ... Although I knew the language factor is not separated, I appraised the directness and conciseness of the answers more than the language the students used. The important thing was my students grasped the knowledge of the course. The language he or she used was just complementary. (T1)

3.1.2. Benefits of QnA sessions for students and teachers

For students

Teachers all agreed that QnA sessions offer students a lot of cognitive benefits, enabling them to understand the lessons better. Teachers explained that in order to ask and answer questions, both the group members and the audience needed to prepare the lessons carefully at home. And then during the QnA sessions, through their peers' questions and answers, they could also understand more deeply about things they might not know in the lessons. T1 said,

Certainly after the QnA sessions, students would have deeper understanding of some areas of the lesson. For example, for some questions related to difficult terms, not everyone had precise grasp of these terms. Then when these terms were brought into QnA sessions, students would have chance to understand the nature of these terms.

Most teachers (n=3) believed that these QnA sessions promoted learner-centered approach, fostered the active role of the students in the learning process, and made the classroom atmosphere more lively. Students were more engaged to the lessons when they asked the group members about what they wanted to know and listened to their peers' answers. T4 stated that the lessons in these two courses were long and difficult, and if students just sat listening to the lectures for the whole three periods, they would become bored and distracted. In QnA sessions, students were encouraged to engage in the lesson. In addition, T2 remarked, "*Students not only listened to teachers or their peers, they also had chance to raise their voices.....They were allowed to present their personal viewpoints about some topics and defend their views*" (T2). Some teachers (n=2) believed that QnA sessions helped students to develop their language competence, their confidence and other essential skills, for example, critical thinking skill, negotiating skill or debating skill, which would help them a lot in their graduation defense and other future jobs.

For teachers

The teachers shared various opinions on both cognitive and pedagogical benefits of QnA sessions for themselves. Two teachers believed that QnA sessions helped widen both their knowledge of the subject and pedagogical experience. Sometimes the questions the students asked were beyond the teachers' comprehension. The questions, in most cases, were unpredictable. T1 discussed,

We don't know everything about this world. So when I listen to the students' questions and answers, I may learn new knowledge. But if there was a question that no one could possibly answer, then I was the one who had to deal with it. In this case, we had to use our teaching experience in dealing with pedagogical situations". (T1)

This means through QnA sessions, teachers were able to learn new things, and at the same time they had to train themselves to handle pedagogical situations. These two teachers also admitted that, while QnA sessions physically helped reducing the lecturing time in class, they actually increased the reading and preparing time considerably for teachers at home, so that teachers were better prepared for class questions. This can be considered either benefits or challenges for teachers, depending on their personal perspectives.

Two other teachers related that QnA session helped them evaluate their students easier. By listening to students' asking and answering questions in English, they knew which one had good command of English or subject matter, through which they were able to assess them more precisely. T4 observed, "*when we listened to a student asking or answering their peers with confidence in English, we knew for sure that student was well-prepared and proficient*" (T4). Without QnA sessions, teachers would not have assessed their students with ease.

3.1.3. Challenges of QnA sessions for students and teachers.

For students:

Teachers all agreed that their students met common difficulties with both content and language during QnA sessions. The first obvious difficulty was their limited English competence, which hindered them from confidently asking and giving satisfying answers in English. The second difficulty was the content of the courses. The two courses consisted of a lot of new knowledge of

foreign cultures with lots of models, theories and abstract definitions. T4 observed, *“even when my students read the chapter at home, they could not possibly comprehend some details or terms... Sometimes, those things were also hard for me”* (T4). The teachers (N=4) really had similar thoughts about these obstacles and all showed their sympathy and understanding toward their students.

For teachers

The teachers sometimes felt tense due to unexpected situations they may meet in these QnA sessions. As previously mentioned in section 3.1.2., the two courses had complex theories, models and terminologies about foreign cultures and countries other than Vietnam. There was no limit or boundaries for such knowledge, so teachers had to spend a lot of time reading and preparing for the lessons, and at times, they may not understand clearly the content. Moreover, unexpected questions were likely to happen in every QnA session. Teachers (N=4) reported that sometimes they had to deal with difficult questions that they hardly knew the answer. T2 remarked, *“usually questions about reality were more difficult than theory questions, because the theory was in the coursebooks, but the reality was elsewhere in the world, and no one could ever know everything”* (T2). Although they all managed to handle that pedagogical situation in their own way, the situation caused some tension for teachers, and their last resort was to leave the questions there for homework for both teachers and students.

Some other teachers (n=2) met difficulties in allocating enough time for QnA sessions because they usually lasted longer than expected. Teachers (n=4) also wished to have more time for preparing the lessons before going to class. This problem links back to the previous obstacle about the difficult nature of the courses, which was challenging for both teachers and students.

3.2. Discussion

The findings has revealed how teachers perceived their students' QnA sessions in EMI classrooms, and what they considered the benefits and challenges of these QnA sessions for their students and for themselves.

Regarding the teachers' perception of the QnA sessions, teachers highly appreciated the directness, the conciseness, and the close relatedness of the questions to the topic. When students asked a direct, concise and closely-related question, it showed that the students were well-prepared before going to class. It also showed that they paid a lot of attention to the group presentation so that they knew exactly what they wanted to ask. On the contrary, sometimes teachers had to paraphrase the questions to make them become more comprehensible for the group members and for other audience. When facilitating these situations, teachers played the role of both an instructor and a facilitator for the session. Teachers also recognized students' efforts in answering their peers' questions. Students were encouraged to use English to interact in the session, but were also allowed to switch into Vietnamese if necessary. Teachers showed their pedagogical solidity when they place more weight on content complexity than language complexity in the students' answers as they realized that their students often switched to Vietnamese to express more complicated knowledge. These perspectives were considerably consistent with previous research (Dalton-Puffer, 2007; Hu & Li, 2017) which found that the medium of instruction had statistically significant effect in cognitive complexity of students' questions and answers.

As for the benefits of QnA sessions, one of the most outstanding benefits was that students had a better understanding of the lessons thanks to their preparedness at home, and the knowledge obtained during class interaction. Teachers also benefited from the QnA process in enriching both their subject knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. These benefits were also mentioned in Hu & Duan (2018)'s research. Questions and answers during class interaction helped triggering students' cognitive process by eliciting their prior knowledge or alternative knowledge, challenging them to review and work out conflicting ideas, encouraging them to create new ideas from existing knowledge, and applying new knowledge in various situations (Hu & Duan, 2018). These findings, once again, support Vygotsky (1962) socialcultural theory that social interaction is the core of learning and development.

The challenges of these QnA sessions for both teachers and students firstly ascribed to the difficult nature of the two courses. Reading and learning alien content knowledge of foreign culture and countries became burdensome for language learners. This finding was much similar to Larson and Lovelace (2013) and Marton et al. (2024)'s confirmation that difficult EMI content negatively affected students' understanding of the subject. In order to conduct these QnA sessions more successfully, teachers and students should spend ample time to read and learn carefully about the lesson beforehand. To encourage students to read and research about the topic at home, teachers should have short mini quizzes to test students at the beginning of the class. Students also need to listen to the presentation attentively so that they know the exact section or areas they want learn more about. Secondly, the teachers were often in short of time for these session. As QnA sessions usually last longer than expected, teachers should apply technology into QnA session to save time, for example, using Padlets for students to write their questions. By so doing, teachers can save time rephrasing or paraphrasing the questions, and the group members can be better prepared for their answers.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this small qualitative study seeks to understand teachers' perspectives on students' performance, the benefits, the challenges of QnA sessions in culture-related course at Thuyloi University. Teachers generally had positive views on QnA sessions they conducted in their class in the two courses. Teachers believed that QnA session strengthened student-centered learning approach by increasing students' engagement in the class. Students were encouraged to share their knowledge, raise their voices, and learn from their peers. By asking and answering questions, students improve their content knowledge, their English competence, and also their practical skills. QnA session also helped teachers to enrich knowledge, train their pedagogy, understand their students' strength and weakness easily and evaluate them more precisely. Other similar EMI subjects in the curriculum can consider applying QnA sessions in their classroom.

The study has some limitations. Due to its limited scope, the study only explored teachers' perspectives on QnA sessions and ignored the perceptions of the students. The study only applied qualitative approach, and the number of interviewees was also limited as there were only 5 teachers teaching these subject at Thuyloi University including the researcher. Further research should employ both quantitative and qualitative approach with more participants, and look into both teachers and students' perspectives.

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BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF PEER FEEDBACK AS PERCEIVED BY ENGLISH-MAJOR STUDENTS

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1. INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH BACKGROUNDS

Feedback plays an increasingly important role in improving students' learning outcomes within the context of higher education (Maringe, 2010). As workload becomes heavier and class sizes are larger in higher education, peer feedback has served as an effective instructional way that supports student learning and achievement on a broader scale (Er et al., 2021). The integration of peer feedback into teaching and learning practices not only boosts student engagement but also facilitates a deeper and broader understanding of the subject matter (Bayat et al., 2022).

Peer feedback is defined as “a communication process through which learners enter into dialogues related to performance and standards” (Liu & Carless, 2006, p. 280). Specifically, they may have an opportunity to discuss and evaluate their peers' work. As a result, according to Liu and Carless (2006), there are some reasons for engagement of peer feedback including enhancement of learning through active involvement, scalable feedback provision, and collaborative articulation. Evidently, existing research indicates that peer feedback exerts a positive impact on writing skills (e.g., Huisman et al., 2018; Noroozi et al., 2023), decision-making skills (e.g., Bayat et al., 2022), and critical reasoning (e.g., Noroozi & Hatami, 2019). Besides, peer feedback is proven to improve important skills such as communication skills (e.g., Ritzhaupt & Kumar, 2015), and job-relevant skills (e.g., Lowell & Ashby, 2018). Although peer feedback brings about pedagogical benefits, it is equally important to explore students' perceptions of peer feedback, as they are the ones who both give and receive it. Throughout this process, students have their own experiences and form perceptions of the benefits and challenges associated with peer feedback. Therefore, this study was conducted to investigate language-major students' perceptions of peer feedback in relation to their experiences, the advantages it brings, and the difficulties they encounter during its implementation. To achieve that aim, the study answered the following research questions: What are the perceptions of English-major students toward peer feedback regarding their experiences, its benefits and challenges?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Participants

A total of eight third-year English-major students from Thuyloi University participated in the study, including six females and two males. These students had prior experience with peer feedback in various courses such as speaking skills, writing skills, translation, critical thinking, and research methodology.

2.2. Research method

This study was qualitative research aimed at gaining insights into students' perceptions and experiences with peer feedback. The research employed semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method, with questions focusing on how frequently students have engaged in peer feedback, what those experiences were like, and what benefits or challenges they encountered when getting involved in peer feedback.

2.3. Data collection and analysis

Invitations were sent via emails and text messages, and thirteen students responded; however, only eight met the criteria regarding both peer feedback experience and expressed willingness to participate. Interview schedules and locations were arranged based on participants' preferences. All interviews were conducted individually and face-to-face, each of which lasted between 15 to 20 minutes and was conducted entirely in Vietnamese to ensure a smoother and more natural flow of conversation. The interviews were recorded with the participants' consent.

Upon completion of the interview phase, all data were transcribed and then translated into English prior to analysis. Each interview was given a coded name from S1 to S8 (standing for Student 1 to Student 8). The data analysis followed the six-step framework for thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which includes: (1) familiarization with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the final report. This systematic approach helped to identify recurring patterns and insights in the participants' sharings.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Experiences with peer feedback

One salient theme that emerged from the interviews was students' initial exposure to peer feedback at the university level. Participants reported that they had not had peer feedback practices during their secondary education. As a result, engaging in peer feedback at university was perceived as a novel and stimulating experience. This sense of novelty appeared to foster curiosity and motivation among students. For instance, S1 reflected:

"Peer feedback was a completely new experience for me when I entered university. I had never done it during my time in middle or high school. At university, I was guided by lecturers to engage in peer feedback in several courses. My first experiences with peer feedback were truly exciting and I felt like I was being trained to become a teacher."

Secondly, some interviewees discussed demotivation due to repetition in peer feedback practice. While initial engagement with peer feedback was marked by enthusiasm and curiosity, several participants reported a gradual decline in motivation when the activity was repeated across multiple courses in the same academic term and semester. This repetition, particularly in writing skills and translation, led to feelings of fatigue and disengagement. As S5 remarked:

"At first, we were excited about peer feedback because it was new and interesting. But over time, we started to feel bored, especially when many courses in the same semester required it. It was particularly time-consuming in writing classes."

This observation reflects demotivation because of task redundancy, where the repeated implementation of a pedagogical activity without sufficient variation may negatively influence its perceived value and impact. The findings suggest that while peer feedback can be a powerful learning tool, its effectiveness may be compromised if not strategically integrated into the curriculum (Zhang et al., 2023).

Another notable theme was peer feedback as a means of diversifying learning experiences. Most students ($n = 7$) appreciated peer feedback as a way to make their educational experiences vary. Participants expressed that peer feedback was a refreshing alternative to traditional classroom practices, which often centered around lectures, note-taking, and individual or group assignments. The inclusion of peer feedback was perceived as a dynamic and interactive component to enrich the learning process. S8 emphasized:

"Peer feedback made my learning experience at university more diverse. It wasn't just about listening to lectures, taking notes, doing homework, or preparing for exams. We found peer feedback to be generally enjoyable and beneficial to our learning."

This point highlights the role of peer feedback not only as a pedagogical tool but also as a motivational factor that contributes to a more engaging and student-centered learning environment (e.g., Kerman et al., 2024). The variety it introduces into the curriculum appears to enhance students' overall satisfaction and perceived value of their academic experience.

3.2. Benefits of peer feedback

A particularly noteworthy benefit of peer feedback identified in this study is its role in promoting self-reflection and comparative learning. Participants consistently described how the process of reviewing their peers' work prompted them to re-evaluate their own work. This reflective engagement allowed students to identify areas for improvement that they might not have noticed. S4 articulated this clearly:

“What I find interesting about peer feedback is that when I read or listen to my classmates' work to give comments, I also compare it with my own and think about how mine stands in relation to theirs. It helps me improve my work later if needed. I also learn from the strengths in their work.”

This finding aligns with the concept of metacognitive development, where learners become more aware of their own thinking and learning processes. By engaging in peer review, students can learn from diverse approaches and perspectives, which enables them to enhance their own academic performance. The opportunity to learn from peers, both through identifying errors and recognizing effective strategies, contributes to a richer, more collaborative learning environment. Moreover, this reflective dimension of peer feedback supports the development of feedback literacy, as defined by Carless and Boud (2018), which highlights students' ability to understand, apply, and generate meaningful feedback. When students internalize the feedback process, they become more autonomous and strategic learners.

Another significant benefit highlighted by most participants was the sense of responsibility and empowerment that peer feedback cultivated. Interviewees reported that being entrusted with the task of evaluating their peers' work made them feel more accountable and valued in the learning process. This sense of being given a voice and a role in the academic community contributed to the development of both self-confidence and learner autonomy. S7 reflected: *“I felt that I needed to take responsibility and show that responsibility through each piece of feedback I gave. This gradually helped me become more confident and more responsible in my work.”*

This finding aligns with the principles of student-centered learning, where learners are not merely passive recipients of knowledge but active participants in the construction and evaluation of learning. By engaging in peer feedback, students are seen as co-constructors of knowledge, which can enhance their sense of agency and autonomy in their academic development (Nicol, 2014). Moreover, giving feedback requires students to articulate their thoughts clearly, justify their evaluations, and consider the impact of their comments, which are essential for both academic and professional communication. When students perceive that their feedback has values and consequences, they tend to engage more thoughtfully and take the process more seriously, thereby reinforcing a cycle of reflective and responsible learning (Winstone et al., 2017).

An unexpected yet meaningful benefit of peer feedback reported by several participants was peer feedback as a social connector and community builder, or its role in facilitating new social connections. Students shared that being assigned peer feedback tasks with classmates they had not previously interacted with created opportunities for communication, collaboration, and ultimately friendship. This was particularly evident in credit-based courses where students from different classes or cohorts were grouped together for the first time. S6 shared:

“I made friends with some classmates I had never known before through peer feedback in the Writing Skills course. We were assigned to exchange feedback, and now, even though we're not in the same class, we still hang out and have formed a group.”

This finding suggests that peer feedback can serve not only as a pedagogical strategy but also as a social mechanism that fosters a sense of belonging and community among students. In higher education settings, especially where students may feel isolated or disconnected, peer interaction can play a vital role in enhancing the social dimension of learning. It aligns with socio-constructivist perspectives that emphasize the importance of collaborative learning environments in promoting both academic and interpersonal development (Gillies, 2019).

3.3. Challenges in doing peer feedback activities

A major challenge shared by participants was the lack of confidence in providing peer feedback, which stemmed largely from insufficient skills and content knowledge. Students expressed uncertainty about how to identify strengths or weaknesses in their peers' work, and often struggled to articulate constructive comments. This lack of evaluative clarity led to hesitation and discomfort during the feedback process. For instance, S3 explained:

"The hardest part of giving peer feedback is that we don't feel qualified to comment. Sometimes I think my peer's work is good, similar to mine, and I don't know what they need to improve. Or I know it's good, but I can't tell exactly what makes it good."

The point above reflects a common issue in peer assessment contexts, particularly among language learners, where limited linguistic and analytical proficiency can hinder the ability to provide meaningful feedback. It underscores the importance of feedback literacy (Carless & Boud, 2018), which involves equipping students with the skills to interpret, generate, and apply feedback effectively. Without adequate training and scaffolding, peer feedback may lose its pedagogical value and become a source of anxiety rather than empowerment.

Another challenge frequently mentioned by participants was the reluctance to provide critical feedback, particularly when evaluating close friends or familiar classmates. Students expressed concern that pointing out weaknesses or areas for improvement might negatively affect interpersonal relationships or cause embarrassment. This social sensitivity often led to avoidance of direct critique, even when students recognized issues in their peers' work. S7 said:

"If it's someone I don't know well, I feel less hesitant. But if I have to give feedback to a friend, sometimes a close friend, and their work isn't very good, I worry they won't like it or feel embarrassed in front of others and me. So I tend to avoid giving direct comments, even though I still want to point out the problems."

This finding highlights the interpersonal dimension of peer feedback, which can complicate its implementation in collaborative learning environments. While peer feedback is intended to foster constructive dialogue, the emotional and relational dynamics among students may inhibit honest and effective communication (Winstone et al., 2017). As noted in previous studies (e.g., Hyland, 2000), the fear of damaging social ties can lead to overly positive or superficial feedback, reducing its pedagogical value.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This qualitative research aimed to investigate experiences with peer feedback, its benefits and challenges in the perceptions of English-major students at Thuyloi University. Participants included eight third-year students who participated in the semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that the students enjoyed the experiences with peer feedback in the initial stages, but became demotivated due to the repetition within and across the courses in the same term or semester. The students reported enhanced self-reflection and comparative learning, improved confidence and learner autonomy, and social connections as benefits of peer feedback, whereas lack of knowledge and skills and avoidance to give feedback were the main challenges.

There are three important implications in this study. First of all, the findings showed that the students lacked confidence due to limited knowledge and skills to provide feedback, so it is vital to provide students with feedback literacy training with rubrics, modelling, and guided practice (Carless & Boud, 2018). Secondly, as some interviewees reported a reluctance to give feedback to

friends or peers (e.g., Hyland, 2000), it is advisable for the lecturers to create a supportive and respectful learning environment and make constructive feedback a part of the learning process. Thirdly, demotivation was experienced by several interviewees as peer feedback activities were repetitive and overused. As a result, the lecturers should pay attention to design, timing and variation of peer feedback to avoid boredom and demotivation (Zhang et al., 2023).

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PROJECT-BASED LEARNING IN BRITISH – AMERICAN COUNTRY STUDY: VOICES OF ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS

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1. INTRODUCTION

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is an innovative approach that employs various critical strategies to support learners' success in modern society (Bell, 2010). Rooted in constructivism (Silver, 2004), PBL was first introduced by John Dewey at the end of the 1890s. Currently, PBL is explored and conducted in a variety of language and content subjects and learning situations because it can promote social learning, allowing learners to practise and develop the 21st century skills of communication, negotiation and collaboration (Bell, 2010).

In language education, project-based language learning is beneficial for improving learners' language skills and metacognitive skills since it "promotes purposeful language and content learning" and it also empowers students "by engaging them in information gathering, processing and reporting" (Stoller, 2012, p.38).

Vietnamese universities strongly recommend using PBL in English language training curriculum with various disciplines of cultural communication, country studies and English for specific purposes. This integration aims to make learning more engaging and develop the learners' ability to apply knowledge in real-world settings and enhance their foundational skills (Chi, 2023; Chu et al., 2011; Tien, 2021). There are numerous studies on PBL in language teaching; however, the integration of PBL into country studies remains under-researched. Therefore, this article aims to reveal English major students' perspectives on adopting PBL in British-American country study at Thuyloi university by addressing three research questions:

1. What are students' opinions on PBL in British - American country study?
2. What are the challenges and benefits of PBL in British-American country study?
3. Which do students prefer, PBL or traditional learning approaches?

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Project-based learning

Different researchers define PBL in different ways. In some studies, it is referred to projects, project approach, or project-based instruction. PBL is a constructivist-based and innovative teaching method designed to involve students in exploring real-life problems (Stoller, 2012). In addition, Miller & Krajcik (2019) identify PBL as an active student-centred learning approach characterised by students' goal setting, cooperation, communication, autonomy, constructive studies, and reflection within real-world contexts.

According to Stoller (2012), PBL is an instructional method that encompasses both a process and a product, lasts over a period of time, requires students to use integrated skills to foster the integration of language and content. "Project-based learning" is emphasized by Stoller as a long-term task that includes various activities that students complete individually or in groups. The goal is to enhance their language skills, content knowledge, and workplace-related abilities. The project approach also consists of a variety of activities or tasks, presented as problem-solving cases that facilitate learners' higher-order thinking skills to complete the projects (Nunn, 2020).

2.2. Fundamental principles and stages of PBL

Firstly, PBL emphasizes authenticity by allowing students to apply their language skills in real-life contexts. It then promotes inquiry-based learning, enhancing critical thinking and vocabulary.

Collaboration plays a vital role because when students work together to plan, implement, and assess projects, their communication and negotiation skills can be improved. PBL is also student-centered, fostering autonomy and intrinsic motivation (Nunn, 2020). Moreover, according to Stoller and Myers (2019), conducting PBL involves three main phases: preparation, where students select topics and plan tasks; information gathering and reporting, where they acquire necessary knowledge by reading, processing and presenting activities; and reflection, which occurs after project completion to evaluate their work. Hence, projects that require teamwork, outside classroom research, and autonomy are more interesting to learners than traditional lectures (Puangpunsi, 2021).

2.3. Project-based assessment

“A lot may be lost” (Stoller, 2012, p.44) if the project is considered done at the point when students hand in their products, turn in their portfolio or make presentation. Therefore, assessment is critically final step conducted in reflection phase of PBL. Project-based assessment (PBA) can be valuable in terms of increasing students’ motivation and self-esteem. It also offers teacher insights into students’ efforts, which will aid them in implementing more successful projects in the future (Stoller, 2012) .

In terms of developing skills,PBA is an evaluation method where students engage in authentic tasks that integrate skills such as data collection, discussion, and presentation to solve real-world problems (Chu et al., 2011). In PBA, students can create various products, including oral presentations and written work (Wrigley, 1998). It combines summative, authentic, and performance assessments (Sawamura, 2010) and utilizes rubrics, self-assessment, and peer-assessment for evaluating outcomes.

2.4. Benefits and challenges of the integration of PBL in disciplines of intercultural and country studies

BPL offers advantages for students. Because PBL opens the door to engage in intercultural inquiry, students can gain an understanding of a country and cultural sensitivity and empathy, which are essential qualities of global citizenship (Bell, 2010). When applying language in solving real-life problems, students can share their viewpoints of customs, immigrations, racial discrimination or cultural diversities. They also can improve their language abilities and cultural awereness by looking at different angles and propose feasible solutions (Stoller,2012).

Findings from many studies reveal common challenges while adopting this teaching and learning approach in both country studies and other study fields (Petersen & Nassaji, 2016 ; Puangpunsi, 2021). Significantly, teachers and students must put in significant effort to prepare for the lessons due to limited resources relating to cultural and political topics. Wrigley (1998) identifies key challenges as classroom management, students' inexperience with group work, and time constraints. Additionally, language students face barriers such as a lack of content knowledge and vocabulary related to socio-economics and politics. In PBL, students are also expected to switch from passive to active learners, taking collaborative responsibility for completing tasks (Tien, 2021).

3. CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

Because of critical roles in language education, British-American country studies is compulsory in most English major training curricula in Vietnam. It helps students understand more about British and American societies, economics, politics and culture with analysis from various perspectives. This subject prepares students to be global citizens with intercultural knowledge and analysis of socio-economic and political viewpoints (Nguyen&Hoang, 2010).

At Thuyloi University, British-American country studies is taught in the sixth semester for over 45 class hours, targeting students with at least a B2 proficiency level. It includes 12 lessons on the history, economics, politics, traditions, and values of Britain and the USA. The way of evaluation and assessment of this course is different to other subjects because it is taken under the format of PBL. Instead of taking traditional exams, students complete three main tasks in groups. The first one is preparing a portfolio to upload to the teacher's drive before lectures. This task belongs to the preparing and information gathering steps in PBL. Then, delivering a presentation on an assigned topic, and producing a video clip related to the course content are identified as reporting step in PBL. At the final step of PBL, grades for each student are awarded based on both teacher evaluation and peer assessment.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Participants

This qualitative study employed purposive sampling to invite specific participants. Target participants were students who attended and finished all lessons and projects of British-American country studies at Thuyloi University in the school year 2024-2025, when the course was first conducted under the PBL approach. When the course completed, I sent an invitation to interview in some K64 Zalo groups, and after one week, seven students agreed to be interviewees. The participants' names then were coded as SV1 to SV7 for confidentiality, anonymity and better data analysis.

4.2. Instrument

The questions for semi-structured interview were adapted based on the framework of Stoller and Myller (2019) to mainly address the opinion of students, the challenges students may encounter and the benefits they can obtain when experiencing all stages of learning British-American country studies through PBL. After generating the questions, I sent them to get a consultation from a linguistic expert in the English Department to check the relevance and clarity. The questions were then translated into Vietnamese using back-translation so that all the interviewees would fully understand the questions.

4.3. Data collection and analysis

I contacted students to arrange interviews. I interviewed two students separately in person at the office after school, and the others online via Zoom. All meetings were recorded with students' consent. The recordings were then transcribed and translated into English, and the English version of the interview data was officially used in this research. The qualitative data were analysed and arranged into certain themes to answer the research questions.

5. RESULTS

5.1. Student's opinion on PBL in British-American country studies

All participants (N=7) had positive viewpoints on PBL in their British-American country studies classes. When being informed by the teachers about the way to study, tasks to complete and ways of evaluation and assessment, while some students initially felt a little worried (n=2) and curious (n=2), most of them (n=6) expressed their excitement and eagerness to experience new learning approach, and none of them held negative attitudes toward PBL.

SV1 answered quickly that she felt so excited about writing a portfolio and making video clips, which were two products to submit in the course. Differently, SV3 emphasised that he was somewhat curious because he had no idea of how to complete his portfolio every week. Opinions of other participants were reflected in the following excerpts:

Initially, I was nervous when the teacher announced we had to work in groups of three or four and create a weekly portfolio, which was new to me. However, I became interested when we learned we would produce a video about an aspect of Britain and the US instead of taking a final test. (SV5)

Although I knew the course would be challenging with tasks like portfolio preparation and presentations, I felt excited about the opportunity to learn. The support from my friends reduced my anxiety. (SV7)

5.2. Challenges in PBL in British-American country studies

Participants faced several challenges while learning and working on the course. The significant obstacle was reading and analysing a huge amount of information in the course book, websites and documents sent by the teachers. Their lack of academic skills, such as scanning, skimming, and summarising also contributed to the challenge in relation to reading materials. Some participants shared that:

We had to read in the course book and on websites a lot to elicit and analyse information for the portfolio and presentation. Each chapter might consist of 20 or 30 pages. That made me really overwhelmed. We assigned a reading task to each group member, but it took each of us at least two days to complete our weekly portfolio. (SV4)

One of the challenges I encountered was too much reading material. I was confused and did not know what should be adopted in the portfolio or video clips. (SV2)

Interviewees also highlighted the lack of background knowledge, which could cause difficulty in completing a portfolio, presentation and video on certain topics. Some content related to economics and politics, with numerous terms and concepts was definitely strange to students due to differences between Vietnam and the other two countries. Below are some students' comments:

Economics and politics of Britain and America were the most difficult topics for us. We were not clear about the terms even when we checked their meaning in books and websites. The reason might be that we did not understand the operation of their economic and political systems. (SV6)

I was really confused when I found some conflicts about the history and politics of England and the US. I did not know which was right and which was wrong, and I did not know how to give an answer if asked by friends in our presentation. (SV5)

Time constraint was another barrier during the implementation of PBL. Every activity and product needed time to complete. All participants (N=7) mentioned that they had to work under time pressure. They had to prepare a portfolio, outline the content of the video clip, choose the images and sound for the clip, and edit the raw footage on time because "when one member missed the deadline, the group could not complete their products according to the tentative schedule" (SV3).

Last but not least, peer assessment posed a challenge to some project groups. Although the mark students got at the end of the course was based on the evaluation of both group mates and teacher, in most groups, students got the same score. Some participants (n=2) thought it was unfair because individuals' contribution to projects varied differently. Below are their reflections:

I think I deserved to get a better mark in my group because I committed more. Some members did not finish their duty, and I sometimes had to back up. One of the group members almost did not reply to the message in our Zalo group. (SV1)

One of my group members did not collaborate during the project, but the group leader still gave her a same mark as others. I did not agree, but I kept silent because other members had no comments. (SV3)

5.3. Benefits of PBL in British-American country studies

First and foremost, participants all agreed that PBL could promote learners' content and language knowledge (N=7). Interviewees emphasised that through the process of planning, conducting and completing the products of the course, they got insights into history, society, education, politics, and economics of Britain, the US and other English-speaking countries. Many terms related to topics discussed in the course were clearly explained, which expanded participants' vocabulary. Therefore, students felt more confident in intercommunication after the course. Here are their comments:

Thanks to the course, I understood more about American and British culture. The course offered me an insight into the differences in history, culture and political systems between the two countries. Besides, the course enriched my vocabulary, especially less common words related to economics and politics. (SV5)

I was most impressed by British tea customs, which were so amazing with low and high tea, and a lot of cakes or sandwiches. British and American educational systems were strange to me as well. (SV1)

Skill improvement emerged as a considerable benefit mentioned by most participants (n=6). Thanks to the new approach of the course, students could enhance both academic and communicative skills. Initially, participants found it challenging to read materials, but gradually, they could speed up their reading and practised some skills, including collecting, summarising and analysing information for their portfolio and video clips. Moreover, SV4 highlighted that she could learn to "collaborate with other group members to complete all tasks on time". SV3 shared that he could "learn how to elicit the information, discuss topics, support friends", and then he also "received support from the groupmates".

All participants (N=7) held positive perceptions toward PBL in British-American country study as they were able to integrate content, language knowledge and technology skills into real-life situations. Interviewees (n=3) mentioned that making video clips instead of taking exams was a "wonderful experience" (SV1) because it allowed them to develop skills in scriptwriting, image selection, soundtrack integration, dubbing a movie and subtitle running. Participants shared that they really enjoyed the sense of achievement when they could create their own movie clips. This benefit was demonstrated in the following excerpts:

We discussed a lot to make the video related to British history. I was responsible for sourcing images and music, and L dubbed the movie while T edited the subtitles. It took us three weeks to have the first draft. However, it did not meet our expectation, so we decided to change some scenes. Finally, we got the final one which received positive feedback from the teacher and friends. It was really amazing. (SV4)

We decided to act in our clip. It was not easy to perform in front of the camera; we encountered setbacks many times, but we could do it well ultimately. Along the way, we learned how to edit the scenes, reduce the background noise and run the subtitles smoothly. We were proud of our product, which reflected our efforts. We were so happy to get a mark A for the course. (SV6)

5.4. PBL as a preferred learning approach

Participants (N=7) all selected PBL as their preferred learning approach. They emphasised that despite various challenges, students could develop their confidence, creativity and autonomy, explore their own strength, improve their knowledge and enhance their life skills. One more reason for choosing PBL is its innovative way of assessment. Students expressed their happiness at not having to take the final test. Some comments are mentioned below:

I prefer PBL even though I had to work hard all the time. In order to complete the video clip, we had to watch a lot of movies on the internet to get the ideas and write meaningful scripts. I also had to spend many hours a day learn to use the Capcut. Luckily, it was not too difficult. (SV2)

I was happy when I did not have to take the test. It took us much time to complete the products of the portfolio and movie clip, but I considered these tasks challenges, not burdens. (SV3)

Participants (N=7) also explained why this subject was challenging but possible because they could get "clear orientation and instruction from the teacher" at the beginning of the course. SV5 said that students felt more confident when a "well-organised syllabus" with "detailed guidance" for each topic was introduced at the very first lesson. Some students (n=2) might not be satisfied with their peer-assessment, but most participants (n=5) felt good when their efforts were "highly valued" and "fairly evaluated" by the teachers.

6. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The qualitative results sketched a comprehensive picture of English major students' perspectives toward PBL in British-American country studies. The positive attitudes revealed in the dataset align with findings in the studies by Petersen & Nassaji (2016) and Puangpunsi (2021). However, some students still displayed their worries when attending the course. To overcome this anxiety, students should seek a suitable group or community to engage with. By actively collaborating, they can share the responsibilities and reduce their stress.

In the context of learning country studies through projects, unlike students in research by Devkota et al. (2017), TLU students did not cope with the challenges in relation to the lack of a well-designed syllabus or improper teaching methods. However, language students at TLU encountered barriers such as time constraints and a lack of some academic skills, which were also discussed by Aldabbus (2018). Teachers can assist students in managing their time limitations by encouraging them to create a tentative schedule that prioritizes specific tasks. Moreover, teachers should take the role of instructors to provide students with reliable reading materials, applications and platforms to facilitate their information gathering, analysing and synthesising. Even though students show a preference for PBL over other traditional approaches, challenges arise in project-based assessment. Therefore, teachers should act as a referee providing clear guidance for all tasks and a detailed rubric to evaluate students' projects and performance (Wolf & Stevens, 2007).

In general, PBL offered English major students at TLU numerous benefits during and after their coursework in British-American country studies, including increasing creativity, promoting confidence and enhancing communication and language competency. That is consistent with the results in study by Bell (2010). This is a suggestion for teachers and the language department to consider adopting this approach in other language-related disciplines.

7. CONCLUSION

This study examines English major students' perspectives regarding the adoption of PBL in British-American country study. It highlights both benefits and challenges that students

experienced. It is hoped that the pedagogical solutions discussed in this study will contribute to the literature on PBL in language education.

However, this article has certain limitations. It adopted a qualitative method with the participation of English majors at Thuyloi University, which provides the insights into language students' perspectives but also makes it difficult to generalise the results to other contexts. Additionally, this research has not investigated language teachers' perceptions while adopting a project-based approach in teaching content-based subjects. The benefits, challenges and strategies adopted by teachers while integrating PBL in teaching language and content-based disciplines should be studied in further research.

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE SPEAKING ANXIETY AMONG VIETNAMESE EFL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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1. INTRODUCTION

Anxiety has been identified as a common emotional reaction in foreign language classrooms. Researchers have found that one-third of foreign language learners experience at least a moderate level of foreign language anxiety (Horwitz, 2001). Krashen (1982) argued that anxiety creates an affective filter that would block foreign language acquisition. Luo (2014) asserted that researchers have also found that foreign language anxiety has a wide range of potential negative effects on foreign language learning. Therefore, foreign language researchers have been interested in finding out the causes of foreign language anxiety. Among the four skills, speaking has been recognized as the most anxiety-provoking. As stated in the study conducted by Nguyen (2025), speaking in a foreign language is often cited by students as their most anxiety-producing experience. In the context of this study, English-speaking anxiety is the most evident when students are required to engage in speaking activities during the process of language learning. This anxiety hinders their performance in oral communication, negatively affecting their overall engagement with their peers and others. If left unaddressed, such anxiety could undermine students' progress in all aspects of academic performance.

In spite of numerous studies on general foreign language anxiety, research exclusively focused on foreign language speaking anxiety has been scarce, especially in the context of Vietnam, where Vietnam's government launched the National Foreign Languages Project (NFLP) to enhance English teaching and learning, aiming to equip students with effective communication skills in both academic and real-world contexts. Some studies in Vietnam have examined this anxiety among Vietnamese students who are not majoring in English (Dinh & Tran, 2020; Ho & Truong, 2022), but there is a notable absence of research focusing on English-speaking anxiety among Vietnamese university students who are majoring in English.

To address this gap, the present secondary research is to contribute to the existing literature by emphasising different factors that might lead to English Language Speaking Anxiety (ELSA) for EFL (English as a foreign language) learners, providing an overall understanding of this ongoing phenomenon in Vietnamese universities among non-English-majored students. This objective is achieved by answering the following question:

1. What are the key factors contributing to English Language Speaking Anxiety (ELSA) among non-English-majored EFL university students in Vietnam?

It is expected that information gained from this study will give meaning and understanding to EFL lecturers so that they can provide a positive learning environment that will contribute to reducing ELSA and will encourage students to become more competent when performing speaking.

2. METHODOLOGY

In this part, the researcher would like to review some topic-related research and summarise the main findings. This study is considered as secondary research. The researcher decided to adopt this method because enormous amounts of information can be collected in a limited time. Secondary research also allows the researcher to access a wide range of the primary research data, which will open an overall picture of the current topic before the researcher makes any recommendations.

3. FINDINGS

There are a number of factors that past studies have identified in relation to ELSA. Hanifa (2018) noted that factors generating ELSA for EFL learners in learning speaking skills. This paper provides an overview of the phenomenon of speaking anxiety within the context of foreign language learning. It identifies and analyzes potential factors that contribute to this anxiety. These factors includes cognitive factors covering topics, genre, interlocutors, and processing demands; affective factors dealing with feelings towards the topic and/or the participants, and also self-consciousness; and performance factors concerning mode, degree of collaboration, discourse control, planning and rehearsal time, time pressure and environmental conditions. However, in 2020, Hardacre and Guvendir made a different list of possible factors, including learners, situational context, linguistic abilities, physiological reactions, somatic markers, self-related appraisals, interpersonal relationships, or pragmatics. In a recent study conducted in 2023, Papi and Khajavy grouped different sources of anxiety into three categories: linguistic, learner-internal and learner-external by reviewing the literature. Comparing with these factors, Nguyen (2025) conducted the study on the causes of English-speaking anxiety among Vietnamese pre-service English teachers and reports on some of the strategies used to manage this anxiety. The findings highlight linguistic challenges, such as limited vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, and reliance on translation, as key contributors. Sociocultural factors, including fear of negative evaluation and classroom dynamics, further compounded the issue, while personal factors like low self-confidence and unrealistic expectations of linguistic perfection heightened speaking anxiety.

3.1. Linguistic factors

Regarding linguistic sources of anxiety, linguistic proficiency has been clarified as a common contributor to students' anxiety when speaking English. Papi & Khajavy (2023) argued that learners' anxiety came from their self-perceived language proficiency, multilingualism and frequent use of the foreign language. However, this view has been criticized by Nguyen (2025), who agreed with Hammad and Ghali (2015) that their proficiency problems included poor pronunciation, insufficient grammar knowledge, and limited vocabulary. She clearly explained that their linguistic challenges led them to become self-conscious and worried about their language abilities, and this typically caused them to avoid speaking in class. These linguistic weaknesses exposed students to a higher level of stress when they tried to translate words, phrases or ideas from their mother tongue to the target language. Their attempt to balance linguistic precision with psychological stress slowed their communication and heightened anxiety at the same time.

3.2. Sociocultural factors

Papi and Khajavy (2023) noted that classroom environment, teachers' manner of error correction, teachers' characteristics and instruction, younger age, and limited use of target language in the class were reported as sources of foreign language anxiety. Nguyen (2025) shared the same view with them that teacher-student interaction in the classroom was considered as anxiety-inducing, particularly error correction from teachers. She further added that "error correction is an important part of language learning, the way it is delivered can either reduce or amplify students' ELSA" (p. 6). In addition to teacher-student interaction, peer interactions in foreign language classrooms also played a critical role in shaping students' experiences of ELSA.

3.3. Personal factors

Personal factors have been recognised as a major influence on ELSA. Papi & Khajavy (2023) noted that some of these factors are sociobiographical and psychological. Findings about sociobiographical factors including gender, age, geographical area of residence, second language, and major of study wered mixed and inconsistent ; meanwhile psychological factors can be a primary source of anxiety. Self-esteem and competitiveness might be related to ELSA. Learners with low self-esteem often worried about being judged by others or pleasing others, and learners with competitiveness often compare themselves to other students, thereby triggering their anxiety. Papi & Khajavy (2023) also added that lower-order personality factor such as introverts,

neuroticism and perfectionism can cause ELSA among learners. In other words, learners with high-order personality factor are more emotionally stable, so they are better at controlling their emotions. Papi & Khajavy (2023) also emphasized the important role of learner's motivation in shaping their experience of anxiety. Specifically, Papi & Khajavy (2023) found the following:

Individuals motivated by an ought-to L2 self (representing the learner's L2-related duties and obligations) tend to experience more L2 anxiety in comparison with individuals motivated by an ideal L2 self (representing one's L2-related hopes and aspirations), because the former group is more prevention-focused and sensitive to the presence or absence of negative outcomes, which naturally provoke anxiety', Papi & Khajavy (p. 8).

Nguyen (2025) shared the same belief with them that learners with low motivation are likely to experience a higher level of anxiety. She added that their low motivation might stem from their past negative experiences or family issues. Nguyen (2025) emphasized another personality trait: self-confidence as a personal factor leading to learners' experience of anxiety. Performance in oral testing regimes is a common cause of anxiety amongst English language learners as stated in her 2025 study. It intersects with the fear of being judged among learners with low self-esteem.

4. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

4.1. Conclusion

A critical literature review of studies on ELSA reveals that experiences of Vietnamese EFL university students with English-speaking anxiety might be a common phenomenon across varying proficiency levels Nguyen (2025). The causes of this anxiety were categorised into three main themes: linguistic factors (such as limited vocabulary, pronunciation problems, and lack of grammatical knowledge), personal factors (including self-esteem and competitiveness, lower-order personality, learner's motivation, self-confidence), and sociocultural factors (such as classroom environment, teacher-student interaction and peer interaction).

The result underscores the importance of teachers creating a supportive and comfortable educational environment that promotes their students' acquisition of linguistic knowledge and reduces the level of anxiety among their students at the same time (Nguyen, 2025; Hardacre and Guvendir, 2020). In addition, while developing their linguistic proficiency, EFL learners themselves must take responsibility for their own process of mastering English speaking by identifying particular personal factors leading to their anxiety, thereby seeking coping strategies to control their emotion. This is crucial for mitigating these factors on their learning journey.

4.2. Implications

4.2.1. Theoretical implication

Many research have places much focus on teaching practices and they have been suggested that they should strive to create a classroom environment where their students feel supported and accepted (Hardacre and Guvendir, 2020). Though these teaching principles are important in student's learning process, preparing them to recognize triggers of language anxiety, how to avoid them, or how to help anxious students is more challenging. Some practical means of addressing anxiety triggers that typically stem from linguistic, sociocultural and personal sources should be suggested. This might provide insights into how teachers can develop appropriate interventions to decrease language anxiety among learners.

4.2.2. Practical implication

It is very unlikely that a teacher would be able to control the entire range of variables that may trigger their students' foreign language anxiety. Perhaps a more attainable goal would be to focus on increasing learners' enjoyment during their time together in the classroom. Zarrinabadi and Lou (2022) conclude that growth mindsets positively predict enjoyment and beliefs about self while fixed mindsets negatively predict emotions and self-concept and self-efficacy. They argue that developing growth mindsets could potentially make learners' feel better about their self and emotions. This idea is consistent with Mindset Theory (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). More clearly, Papi & Khajavy (2023) note that learners with a

growth mindset can be a source of positive emotions such as enjoyment while learners with a fixed mindset can be a source of ELSA. The reason for these findings is that learners with a fixed mindset are more concerned about how they are judged by other people, which in turn increases their anxiety. On the other hand, learners with a growth mindset see these challenges as opportunities for learning and are less concerned about others' judgments, thereby protecting them from experiencing anxiety (Lou et al., 2021). The Findings suggest that more consideration should be taken into students' growth mindset. Teachers should integrate a growth mindset into their teaching practices

5. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite extensive global research on factors contributing to ELSA, there is limited understanding of how linguistic, sociocultural, and personal factors uniquely shape the experiences of Vietnamese EFL university students. Due to limited time and scope of the study, the research can only provide a summary of the main findings in this field. Further research in Vietnamese context, particularly in Vietnamese universities should be conducted to explore the prominent factors leading to ELSA. This is crucial to gaining deeper insights into the challenges faced by learners and designing tailored intervention strategies that fit in each specific situation.

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USING BAAMBOOZLE AS A FUN GAME TO ENGAGE STUDENTS IN ENGLISH CLASSES AT THUYLOI UNIVERSITY: STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES

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1. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary educational settings, English language teaching has become increasingly technologically-powered, which reflects the expectations developed for the new teaching functioning of students and the integration of digital platforms within the classroom. Traditional approaches, such as grammar-translation and note-taking, appear inadequate to meet the educational demands of General Z learners. Thus, adopting integrated instructional strategies has become necessary in the era of artificial intelligence, where digitization enters education, and technical equipment plays a supportive role in language teaching and learning facilities.

To address the needs of this technology-integrated teaching approach, gamification has emerged as an effective strategy for enhancing student engagement in English language classes. According to Zuleha et al. (2025), game-based learning reduces the monotony commonly associated with conventional classroom environments. In recent years, many digital platforms and software applications have been developed by technology firms to support both teachers and learners in the English language instructions. Among these, Baamboozle stands out as a widely used tool suitable for students at various proficiency levels. The platform is popular because its straightforward rules, the utilization for various subjects and proficiency levels, options for both personal and team participation, diverse question format, and unpredictable results. As noted by Walidaina et al. (2024), students demonstrated high levels of engagement and interaction during Baamboozle-integrated lessons.

As an English teacher at Thuyloi University (TLU), I have included Baamboozle in the lessons for both English majors and non-majors. This tool has proved to be particularly effective for warm-up, introduction, new material delivery and review sessions. The student's response has been constantly positive, and Baamboozle especially helps the teacher create more dynamic and enjoyable atmosphere in the classroom. To further assess the effectiveness of Baamboozle from the students' perspectives, I conducted a research study involving a survey distributed to English majors and non-majors at TLU. The quantitative research method was conveyed with the utilization of a survey questionnaire that helps to collect the perspectives of students when they learn in the lessons including Baamboozle games. The findings aim to substantiate my classroom observations and encourage the continued integration of interactive technological tools in language instruction. Additionally, this study serves as a reflective practice to enhance my pedagogical approach and stimulate the exploration of novel educational technologies.

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- 1. How do students view the effectiveness of incorporating Baamboozle in their English classes at Thuyloi University?*
- 2. What features of Baamboozle do students consider beneficial?*
- 3. What difficulties do students frequently face while participating in Baamboozle games?*

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Definition and Features of Baamboozle

Baamboozle is defined by Jasmin et al. (2025) as an interactive digital platform designed to facilitate learning through educational games. Similarly, Muhajirin et al. (2022) characterize Baamboozle as a free online learning platform adaptable for classroom usage. According to Walidaina et al. (2024), Baamboozle effectively integrates comprehension assessment with knowledge acquisition. These definitions collectively underpin Baamboozle's dual function of gamification and educational support. Moreover, the platform's adaptability enables its application across a broad range of subjects and language proficiency levels.

2.2. Effectiveness of Baamboozle in English Classes: A review of previous studies

Empirical evidence certifies the benefits of incorporating Baamboozle in English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms. Muhajirin et al. (2022) observed notable improvements in student engagement, manifesting through increased attention, active note-taking, repeated explanation, vocabulary rehearsal, material comprehension, questioning, discussion participation, response accuracy, opinion articulation, and vocabulary enhancement. These indicators collectively reflect increased participation of students in EFL classes.

Saud et al. (2020) confirmed the students' positive attitudes towards game-based learning, highlighting the role of Baamboozle in overcoming educational challenges. The platform encourages interactive communication between students and trainers, strengthening its educational utility. Nguyen (2025) emphasized the significance of Baamboozle within English-Medium Instruction (EMI) contexts, noting a transformation from traditional lecture-based teaching to interactive, student-centered learning involving discussions, teamwork, and enthusiastic participation in game-based activities. These findings corroborate earlier studies referring to the motivational appeal of Baamboozle.

Lestari (2024) appreciated Baamboozle for promoting a pleasant and inspired learning environment, which facilitates communication and leads to attaching students' preferences and aligning to creative class experiences.

Several studies have emphasized the effectiveness of Baamboozle as a technical tool to increase the vocabulary mastery in English language classes. Researches including Hariyanto (2024), Walidaina et al. (2024), Hanum, & Wahyuni (2025); and Fitriani et al. (2025); collectively report conclusions about the efficacy of the game. These researches suggests that Baamboozle not only facilitates significant improvements in the vocabulary acquisition of students, but also contributes positively to overall learning results. A major factor underlining these advances is the attractive and stress-free learning environment that promotes the platform during instructional activities.

In summary, Bamboozle is recognized as a valuable technological innovation within English language education. Its purpose spreads diverse teaching functions and adjusts learners at various proficiency levels. The major advantage celebrated by both teachers and students is the creation of a comfortable and interactive classroom atmosphere, which can be particularly beneficial and is often associated with challenges and alleged monotony in EFL classrooms. By integrating game-based teaching equipment such as Baamboozle, teachers are better in motivating the learners, which can stimulate their enthusiasm and commitment to language acquisition.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1.Participants

The study was held at TLU with a sample of 55 first year students enrolled in the English Division of School of International Education (SIE) and other faculties. Participants were selected based on their experience of playing Baamboozle games in English classes. These students included a group of English majors and two groups of non-English majors who learned with the researcher in the last semester. They were students of all English levels, which made the research

data collection more reliable and comprehensive. They registered in general English skills courses, including grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation components and four integrated skills (reading, listening, reading and writing). The course materials were topic-based textbooks, supplemented by other resources, available online such as the Baamboozle platform (<https://www.baamboozle.com>).

3.2. Instruments

The survey questionnaire adapted from Akbarani and Pamungkas (2024) and Yani et al. (2024) was chosen to collect data from three out of four classes at Thuyloi University. The questionnaire consisted of 16 items, including 15 questions about the attitude of students, its benefits for students' attention, engagement, motivation and their priority on various versions of Baamboozle in English classes. The final question interrogated the difficulties of using Baamboozle in English classes. Almost all questions were designed in forms of Likert scale statements with 5 options: *1-Strongly agree, 2- Agree, 3- Neutral, 4- Disagree, 5- Strongly disagree*. The questions were translated into Vietnamese to ensure that all students can easily respond.

3.3. Data Collection and Data Analysis

In a fast way to collect data for the survey questionnaire, all questions were converted into Google Form and the link was sent to students in three classes. Students had three days to complete the survey and the researcher downloaded the Excel sheet that was attached to the Google Form link to accumulate data for the survey. After the data was collected, the answers were coded and put into JASP software to obtain descriptive analysis that helped the researcher give insight into the research problem.

4. FINDINGS

The analysis was performed to calculate descriptive figures using JASP software, including the instrument, standard deviation, and the percentage of response to five-point Likert scale questions. The results are summarized in the tables below.

Table 1. The students' perspectives on Bamboozle's effectiveness in English classes

No	Question (Q)	Mean (M)	SD	Strongly agree and Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Question 1	I think Baamboozle is interesting and attractive.	4.382	0.593	94.5 %	5.5 %	0%	0%
Question 4	I think Baamboozle helps students cooperate more in English classes.	4.382	0.652	90.9 %	9.1 %	0%	0%
Question 5	I believe that Baamboozle makes students more competitive in English classes.	4.327	0.610	92.7 %	7.3 %	0%	0%
Question 6	I think Baamboozle creates a more dynamic and creative learning environment.	4.418	0.567	96.4 %	3.6 %	0%	0%
Question 7	I prefer the team version of the game to the individual version.	4.182	0.841	83.6 %	10.9 %	5.5 %	0%
Question 11	I believe that Baamboozle helps me understand the lessons better (e.g., when I learn vocabulary, grammar, etc.).	4.273	0.732	87.3 %	10.9 %	1.8 %	0%

The data indicates a strong overall agreement with positive characteristics and educational benefits associated with using Baamboozle in English language instructions. In particular, items Q1, Q4, Q5, and Q6 specifically demonstrate a strong consensus of "Agree" and "Strongly agree" confirming with more than 90% of the respondents, confirming with more than 90% of the respondents. These students agreed that Baamboozle is attractive, promotes cooperation and competition, increases classroom's dynamics and creativity. For example, 94.5% of students (Q1: M = 4.382, SD = 0.593) considered Baamboozle interesting and attractive. That means Baamboozle

disrupts a dull, individualist learning pattern, promoting a more interactive and vibrant environment. The preference for the team version of the game also got the high appreciation (Q7: 83.6%, $M = 4.182$, $SD = 0.841$) while the similar percentage of the students agreed with the benefit of increase in learning effectiveness in Bamboozle lessons (Q11: 87.3%, $M = 4.273$, $SD = 0.732$).

Table 2. Students' motivation to learn English when Bamboozle is used in English classes

No	Question (Q)	Mean (M)	SD	Strongly agree and Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Question 3	I am motivated to learn English when learning and doing practice exercises on Baamboozle website.	4.255	0.673	87.3 %	12.7 %	0%	0%
Question 8	I think that Baamboozle games are suitable for all students levels.	4.255	0.700	89.1 %	9.1 %	1.8 %	0%
Question 9	I believe that Baamboozle games are suitable for all English subjects.	4.273	0.732	83.6 %	16.4 %	0%	0%
Question 10	I think that Baamboozle increases students' concentration in English classes.	4.309	0.690	87.3 %	12.7 %	0%	0%
Question 12	I am eager to know the final judgement of the game to know who is the winner or loser.	4.327	0.579	94.5 %	5.5 %	0%	0%
Question 14	Baamboozle is very easy and familiar to players.	4.291	0.685	87.3 %	12.7 %	0%	0%

Most students expressed the motivated inspiration (Q3: 87.3%, $M = 4.255$, $SD = 0.673$) and eagerness (Q12: 94.5%, $M = 4.327$, $SD = 0.579$) to participate in English learning activities. A sufficient ratio underlines the level of concentration during the lessons using the game (Q10: 87.3%, $M = 4.309$, $SD = 0.690$), the student's attention and the effectiveness of the game in maintaining participation. Regarding the applicability of the game, most of the students rated as Baamboozle as suitable for different levels of proficiency (Q8: 89.1%, $M = 4.255$, $SD = 0.700$) and all English language subjects (Q9: 83.6%, $M = 4.273$, $SD = 0.732$). The majority considered the game format accessible and easy to use (Q14: 87.3%, $M = 4.291$, $SD = 0.685$), supporting its viability for integration in diverse classroom contexts.

Table 3. The students' expectations for using Bamboozle in English classes

No	Question (Q)	Mean (M)	SD	Strongly agree and Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Question 2	I look forward to learning and doing practice exercises on Baamboozle website.	4.273	0.651	89.1 %	10.9 %	0%	0%
Question 13	I believe that Baamboozle reflected the players' English proficiency levels accurately.	3.909	0.845	70.9 %	23.6 %	5.5 %	0%
Question 15	I expect that teachers will use Baamboozle frequently in English lessons.	4.236	0.816	83.7 %	12.7 %	3.6 %	0%
Question 16	Do you meet any difficulties when playing Baamboozle games? If yes, write your answer here.						

A strong consensus emerged about the expectation of continuous use of Baamboozle in future English lessons (Q15: 83.7%, $M = 4.236$, $SD = 0.816$), indicating students' expectation the continuous employment of the gamified learning tool. Students also showed the eagerness for learning and practising Bamboozle exercises, reaffirming their interest in the game (Q2: 89.1 %, $M = 4.273$, $SD = 0.651$) the Q16, the open- ended question, asked for the challenges that students faced when they played the game and no participants mentioned any kind of difficulties. They just noted "No", or left a blank for this question, implying the ease and familiarity of the game.

However, the item related to the game use as an assessment tool to test students's English levels received small percentage of disagreements (Q13:Disagree-5.5%), although these dissatisfied ideas were minimal than overall positive reactions (Strongly agree and Agree- 70.9%).

5. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1. Discussions

Results justify the educational role of Baamboozle as a gamified learning platform that enhances learner engagement, cooperation, inspiration and concentration in English language classes. The online gameplay appears especially to encourage social interaction and dynamic learning experiences, addressing the general challenges related to the student participation. In addition, adaptability for a wide range of Baamboozle 's proficiency levels and courses content suggests its practical utility in various educational settings. These findings align with prior researches (including Muhajirin et al. (2022), Saud et al. (2022), Lestari, F. (2024), Rahayu et al. (2024), Wardani & Kiptiyah (2024), Zuleha et al. (2025) and Nguyen (2025)) that online games can promote positive participation and increase the classroom atmosphere in a fun way. The ease of the game helps teachers manage it in a fun way creating a fun and interactive way to engage students in English classes. The element of unexpectedness, especially through the “*magic box*” that offers a chance during the team gameplay, contributes significantly to the student engagement.

No challenges of using the game were found in this research, though some other studies mentioned the obstacles when using Baamboozle in classes. Nguyen (2025)'s findings showed that the students had limited physical movement and lack of post-activity reflection. Muhajirin et al. (2022) also emphasized the role of high-tech teachers in classes to manage the game well.

5.2. Conclusion

The study investigated the students' view on using Baamboozle as a fun game in EFL classes at Thuyloi University. To some extent, the three research questions were answered via the data collected from the survey questionnaire. Baamboozle was proved to be effective to increase students' engagement, motivation and language learning acquisition in classes. However, the study has not approached a deeper insight into the students' opinions on specific aspects of the game or explored the other teachers' observation about the game's efficiency. Therefore, future studies can detect longitudinal effects of such gamified intervention and examine teachers' perspectives about the differential effects of Baamboozle in different lessons.

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SUPERVISING AN UNDERGRADUATE THESIS: CHALLENGES PERCEIVED BY SUPERVISORS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS AT THUYLOI UNIVERSITY

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Department of English Language and Linguistics at Thuyloi University was established in 2021, and its first cohort of English major students (K63) is expected to graduate in 2025. To be eligible for graduation, students are required to complete an undergraduate thesis during the final semester of their bachelor's program. For this reason, 2025 marks the first time the department has undertaken undergraduate thesis supervision. Given this milestone, it is essential to examine how the supervision process was carried out: specifically, the challenges that supervisors faced.

Writing a thesis is a significant component of a bachelor's degree and can be one of the most challenging tasks for undergraduate students, as it requires students to demonstrate their research, critical thinking and academic writing skills and problem-solving abilities. In the completion of an undergraduate thesis, supervision plays a significant role. Good supervision often yields positive outcomes (Razali et al., 2020; Robert & Seaman, 2018). Good supervision is often characterised by open communication and a strong supervisor-student relationship (Islami et al., 2024) and “clear advice, supporting and instilling confidence, interesting topic and ownership and evolving relationships” (Robert & Seaman, 2018, pp. 33-34). Supervision best practices can include providing students with structure and research knowledge, explaining concepts (Robert & Seaman, 2018), establishing and maintaining a research-focused relationship by, for example, having a research plan and clear expectations right at the beginning of the process, keeping in touch regularly and giving and acting on feedback (Razali et al., 2020).

The supervision process often comes with many challenges. One of the most prominent difficulties that supervisors face is managing students who lack basic research and academic writing skills (Peng, 2018; Mali, 2023; Christidis et al., 2024). For example, a study conducted by Peng (2018) involving 13 supervisors at a top Chinese university revealed that many students demonstrated limited ability in synthesising literature, and struggled to adopt a critical perspective while writing a literature review and were unable to build a conceptual framework. Similarly, Mali's (2023) study which investigated the supervision in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context in an Indonesian private university, found that students often struggled with important thesis-writing tasks such as narrowing research topics, constructing literature reviews, and using academic language effectively. These difficulties prolonged the supervision timeline and led to frustration on both sides.

Student disengagement is another big concern in supervision. The disengagement is often attributed to poor time management, low motivation and unclear academic goals. A study by Islami (2024) which involves six supervisors in a state university in Indonesia discovered a wide range of issues relating to supervision such as difficulties in identifying relevant topics and methods, poor communication, and limited understanding of research and thesis formatting conventions. A study by Christidis et al. (2025) involving eight supervisors in Sweden also found that supervisors frequently encountered students who lacked self-regulation, failed to meet agreed deadlines, or lost interest mid-way through the research process. These challenges often result in superficial engagement with the thesis and require supervisors to put additional effort in motivating and monitoring progress.

A study by Roberts and Seaman (2018) in the Australian higher education context found that misalignment in expectations significantly influenced supervision. Some students expected high levels of direction, while others expected autonomy, leading to confusion and dissatisfaction. Supervisors, particularly those with heavy teaching and administrative loads, may find it difficult to keep a balance between providing sufficient support and encouraging independence.

Another challenge in supervision stems from the dynamics of the relationship between supervisors and students. The level of supervisory experience also contributes to challenges faced, with novice supervisors often struggling more during the supervision process. Vereijken et al. (2018), in a study of 12 novice supervisors, identified four key challenges: navigating regulatory and institutional expectations, establishing productive student-supervisor relationships, defining their professional identity, and resolving uncertainty about supervisory boundaries and best practices. These challenges often manifest as inconsistent supervision, over-reliance on manuals or peers, and anxiety about evaluation outcomes.

This paper reports the findings of a research study that seeks to answer the following research question:

What are the challenges that academic staff face in the supervision of English major students' undergraduate theses?

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research utilised qualitative approach to explore supervisors' experiences with undergraduate supervision at the Department of English Language and Linguistics, Thuyloi University.

The participants of this research included seven lecturers from the Department of English Language and Linguistics who had supervised undergraduate theses in the 2024-2025 academic year. Among them, two were experienced supervisors who have been supervising at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and five were novice supervisors with little or no supervision experience before this supervision.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. All interview recordings were transcribed using Notta.ai- an online transcription platform. Transcripts were then double-checked by the researcher and analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1. Student-related challenges

Of the seven supervisors interviewed, five of them noted that the students lacked foundational research skills and understanding of research stages, despite having previously completed a research methods course. Many of them struggled to recall key concepts such as how to structure a thesis, formulate research questions, and analyse data. For example, Participant 4 stated:

The biggest challenge is that the students' foundation in research methodology was still weak. Even though they had taken a course on research methodology, they still didn't know the structure or how to develop each section. Therefore, during the supervision process, I had to explain everything again and had to provide templates. Some students didn't even know how to search for sources, which shows that their research skills were quite poor, even though they had already taken a course.

Four participants identified poor time management as a big challenge in supervision process. Students were observed to frequently miss deadlines, often due to having part-time jobs or inability to prioritise tasks. These time management issues not only delayed the progress but also put pressure on supervisors who had to read and give feedback for all of students' work at the end of the process and added emotional strain for supervisors who had to repeatedly follow up with students.

Three participants agreed that one of their concerns in supervision process relates to students' poor academic language skills. They highlighted that students struggled with academic English writing, paraphrasing, synthesizing information and applying other academic conventions. Participant 2 said, "*their [students] academic foundation was too weak. Writing a full thesis in English was extremely difficult for them. They tried but still couldn't do it effectively*".

Three participants perceived varying academic and critical thinking abilities of students as making the supervision process more difficult, forcing them to provide differentiated support which takes more time and effort. This finding is reflected in the following excerpt from Participant 5.

My group had varying academic abilities. For strong students, I only need to explain something once and they can understand what mean quickly. Therefore, after the meeting, they could continue working on their project and submit their tasks on time. However, students with weaker academic abilities still had to message me after the meeting for more explanation and clarification. I just have to accept that I'll have to adjust my guidance and spend more time with them. For example, I had to be much more detailed when providing feedback.

The use of AI tools in research among students was also reported as a challenge. All seven interviewed supervisors mentioned students' increasing use of AI tools such as ChatGPT during research and writing process. While they agreed that AI could offer some support, they were concerned about students' overreliance on these tools and ethical issues.

3.2. Supervisor-related challenges

Four participants identified heavy workload as their biggest constraint. This is because supervision happened during busy teaching semesters, making it hard for them to provide timely and quality feedback and leading to burnout and exhaustion. Participant 2 admitted that when workload piled up, she had to work late at night and sometimes even replied to students' emails at midnight.

Three supervisors expressed their concern over being assigned students whose research topics fell outside their areas of expertise, requiring them to spend time reading to update background knowledge about these topics. This finding is reflected in the following excerpt from Participant 7:

Probably the biggest challenge, at least for me, is dealing with topics that are unfamiliar.... With such topics, we also need to figure out which research method is appropriate. One of the difficulties is that when a student proposes a topic, I have to do a lot of reading before concluding whether it's suitable or feasible. I had to read extensively to see whether I'm actually capable of supervising that topic or not.

Some other reported challenges relate to supervisors' limited supervisory experience, lack of quantitative research skills, limited research experience and time management. For example, Participant 5 stated that she was a novice supervisor, and she felt that her limited supervisory experience prevented her from guiding students effectively. Additionally, Participant 6 said that she did not feel confident in supervising students who use quantitative methods and had to consult other colleagues. Participant 1 admitted:

I myself have limited research experience. I have only written some short academic papers at our university. A thesis is much longer, and since I haven't had the experience of being a research student, my own skills in writing a full thesis are still limited. I also faced difficulties during the supervision process.

3.3. Institution-related challenges

Five out of seven participants reported that one of the barriers in their first time supervision is the lack of detailed and timely guidelines about the process from the university from the beginning. Therefore, supervisors struggled to figure out thesis length, format, structure, assessment and supervision expectations.

There should be clear guidance from the beginning outlining the steps and timeline. Regarding the tracking sheet, I only received it around early May. At first, I was just waiting for the department to provide it. I did not receive it until maybe halfway through the process. At that point, I realized I also hadn't been following the expected weekly meeting schedule. So, having clear instructions from the beginning would make it easier for us to plan everything more reasonably. (Participant 1)

Two supervisors also raised their concern about a lack of training or orientation for supervisors, especially novice supervisors, making them feel unprepared.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

4.1. Student-related challenges

This study found that one of the most commonly reported challenges in the supervision process was students' lack of basic research knowledge and skills and academic writing skills. These findings are consistent with previous studies about challenges in supervision (Peng, 2018; Mali, 2023; Christidis et al., 2024). Despite having previously completed research method course, students were perceived as struggling with essential research elements such as building a research question, structuring a thesis and analysing data. Students were also seen as having difficulties with academic English writing, paraphrasing, synthesizing information and applying other academic conventions. These findings support Peng's (2018) claim that students often lack the ability to synthesise literature or apply a critical perspective in their academic work. Similarly, the difficulty with academic English writing supports Mali's (2023) findings in the EFL context, where students faced challenges with paraphrasing, synthesising sources, and following academic conventions.

Another common concern identified by supervisors was students' poor time management. This leads to missing deadlines due to part-time work or inability to prioritise tasks. This issue required constant reminders and often results in piled up work and emotional distress for supervisors. These findings resonate with those of Christidis et al. (2025) and Islami (2024), who highlighted student disengagement, low motivation, and lack of self-regulation as key issues that negatively affect supervision quality and progress.

The increasing use of AI tools such as ChatGPT emerged as a new but significant concern among all interviewed supervisors. While some recognised the potential of AI to support students in their thesis completion, the overreliance on AI tools raised ethical concerns and made it difficult for supervisors to assess students' real understanding. This issue is relatively new and underexplored in existing literature, but it signals a growing area of tension in supervision that needs further investigation and clearer institutional guidelines.

4.2. Supervisor-related challenges

One of the major supervisor-related issues was their heavy workload. This limited their ability to provide timely feedback and contributed to exhaustion and burnout. This finding is consistent with Roberts and Seaman's (2018) observation that supervisors often struggle to balance competing responsibilities such as teaching, administration, and supervision.

Another significant challenge was supervisors being assigned students whose thesis topics lay outside their areas of expertise. This finding extends earlier research (e.g., Razali et al., 2020; Robert & Seaman, 2018) that emphasised the importance of clear advice and subject knowledge in effective supervision. This finding seems not commonly reported in recent research in supervision, suggesting that the misalignment of expertise and supervision assignments may be a distinctive and emerging challenge in only newly founded departments such as the department where the research was conducted.

Supervisors also identified their own limited supervisory experience, gaps in research expertise, and lack of confidence with quantitative methods as barriers. These concerns resonate strongly with Vereijken et al. (2018), who found that novice supervisors face difficulties in establishing professional identity, setting boundaries, and applying best practices.

4.3. Institution-related challenges

At the institutional level, a lack of clear and timely guidelines was consistently reported as a barrier. Supervisors received little information regarding thesis structure, supervision expectations, or assessment criteria, particularly at the start of the supervision process. This absence of structured support reflects what Van Biljon and de Villiers (2013) describe as institutional multiplicity and fragmentation, which can result in inconsistent practices and uncertainty among supervisors.

4.4. Conclusions and recommendations

This paper provides insights into the challenges of undergraduate thesis supervision from the perspectives of academic staff during their first year of supervisory experience. The findings

reinforce existing literature on student-related issues such as poor research skills, weak academic language skills and time management, while also identifying emerging concerns such as the use of AI tools. Additionally, supervisor-related challenges such as heavy workload, supervising topics out of research expertise, limited research experience, and limited supervisor experience were prevalent, especially in the absence of structured institutional support.

To enhance the quality of undergraduate thesis supervision, this study made the following recommendations:

- (1) strengthening students' research preparation: Given students' weak research foundations, academic writing challenges, poor time management, and misuse of and overreliance on AI tools, it is essential to provide scaffolded research experiences earlier in the curriculum. This could include integrating smaller research projects into earlier years, offering workshops on academic English writing and paraphrasing, and embedding explicit training in time management and project planning. Clearer guidance on the ethical and responsible use of AI tools should also be incorporated into research methods courses to help students develop critical awareness and reduce overreliance.
- (2) providing training and peer support for novice supervisors; The supervisors – related challenges point to the need for structured professional development. Targeted workshops on quantitative methods and best practices for guiding undergraduate research would enhance supervisory competence. Establishing peer-support groups or mentoring systems between experienced and novice supervisors could also provide a community of practice where knowledge and strategies are shared.
- (3) issuing clear, detailed, and timely supervision guidelines: The institution-related challenges highlight the importance of clear and timely guidance. Universities should provide supervisors with comprehensive supervision handbooks that outline thesis requirements, assessment criteria, and expected milestones. Regular briefings or orientation sessions at the start of the supervision cycle would also ensure consistency across supervisors. Furthermore, workload allocation should be revisited to allow supervisors adequate time to provide meaningful feedback without excessive strain.

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THE IMPACT OF PROJECT-BASED LEARNING ON INTRINSIC MOTIVATION: A STUDY OF ENGLISH MAJORS AT THUYLOI UNIVERSITY'S SOUTHERN CAMPUS

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1. INTRODUCTION

Project-based learning (PBL) is a student-centered pedagogical approach that involves continuous inquiry-based learning activities within real-world contexts, aiming for students to produce a complete project and solve interrelated problems within a set timeframe (Larmer et al., 2015). It particularly emphasizes student interest and purposeful action (Jingfu & Zhixian, 2002).

With regard to its impact, PBL is widely believed to enhance student motivation (Harackiewicz et al., 2016; Larmer et al., 2015; Wijnia & Servant-Miklos, 2019), leading to positive outcomes such as increased engagement and improved academic achievement, affective attitudes, and thinking skills (L. Zhang, & Ma, 2023). In addition, PBL generally has a positive effect on students' motivation compared to traditional teaching models (Wijnia et al., 2024).

In relation to this, intrinsic motivation is a concept that describes when an action is taken to get a distinct result. It specifically refers to engaging in an activity for its inherent enjoyment or satisfaction, rather than for external rewards (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In the same vein, PBL is often reported to significantly increase intrinsic motivation (Cournia, 2025; Y. Zhang, 2021). This is largely attributed to how PBL supports students' innate psychological needs, as proposed by Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which posits that intrinsic motivation is fostered when three fundamental psychological needs are met: autonomy (choice), competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Consequently, PBL has garnered attention in foreign language training courses, particularly English learning and teaching in diverse settings (Hao & Razak, 2024). These include English as a Foreign Language (EFL) for non-English major undergraduates (Carver, 1983), English for Specific Purposes (ESP) such as Business English Translation (Deng, 2018, 2020). PBL is also recognized for the advantages it offers over traditional teaching and learning approaches, and this teaching method has been applied in universities in Vietnam, particularly within the realm of EFL/ESP. Specifically, at Thuyloi University, where this study was conducted, PBL has been implemented in many courses for English majors right from their first year.

Perceived Choice (Autonomy)

A core aspect of PBL is providing students with a voice and choice, fostering a sense of "ownership" over their learning, which directly promotes feelings of autonomy (Cournia, 2025). PBL supports students' need for autonomy, thereby enhancing their motivation (Black & Deci, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2020). When students perceive that they have the freedom to decide the "what" and "how" of their projects, their intrinsic motivation is likely to increase (Ames, 1992; Shachar & Sharan, 1994; Sharan & Sharan, 1992).

While PBL could alleviate students' perception of pressure, this was partially due to their autonomy in doing the project (Y. Zhang, 2021). This suggests that even though pressure can arise, the autonomy inherent in PBL can help mitigate its negative effects.

Perceived Competence

PBL is designed to promote students' sense of mastery and effectiveness when dealing with their environment (Cournia, 2025). Research indicates that PBL can improve student competence. It

promotes students' competence beliefs because optimally challenging tasks can activate prior knowledge (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Katz & Assor, 2006; Pintrich, 2003). Y. Zhang (2021) found that students felt their ability while doing the work was enhanced in a PBL environment. Moreover, high self-efficacy, defined as the confidence in one's ability to plan and execute tasks successfully, is crucial in PBL, and students who reported feeling more confident in their abilities after working through complex tasks and receiving feedback from peers and teachers showed increased motivation (Cournia, 2025).

Relatedness

Relatedness is reported to increase students' engagement and enthusiasm in learning, making lessons more conducive and meaningful (Hao & Razak, 2024); Klein et al., 2009). Students demonstrate a richer affective attitude, including greater interest in learning and positive attitudes toward learning, which can positively guide their motivation (L. Zhang & Ma, 2023).

On the contrary, PBL can introduce academic pressure, particularly related to presentations, research time, and achieving group consensus (Ocak & Uluyol, 2010). Students feel pressure to perform well in group settings (Wijnia et al., 2024); for example, the need to present projects in the classroom and the responsibility towards group members could cause academic pressure. However, the findings on this aspect can be mixed: Toyoshima et al. (2023) found that learners might still retain some hesitation, conflict, and stress. Students might also feel overwhelmed by project demands, leading to anxiety, frustration, and self-doubt, which can hinder their motivation (Cournia, 2025).

This study aims to explore how PBL influences university students' intrinsic motivation in their learning process for several reasons. First, PBL has received significant attention in education and is widely recognized for its potential benefits; however, this approach has been carried out more often at the primary and secondary school levels than in universities, where its application is relatively low globally (L. Zhang & Ma, 2023). This suggests a need to actively explore PBL's application at the higher education level. Existing studies related to PBL in EFL settings, including Vietnam, have shown that PBL has both advantages and disadvantages in uplifting student motivation. Tran (2024) asserts that PBL helps give meaningful contexts to practice English, and interact with other students, but it brings challenges for learners lacking self-study skills or in situations where teachers give insufficient support or poor classroom management. Hao and Razak (2024) identified practical challenges of PBL application such as "less experience" with PBL, issues with "groupwork," "time management," "technology skills," and "assessment". However, these studies do not delve deeply into how these challenges specifically impact intrinsic motivation components.

Drawing upon the contextual and theoretical foundations mentioned above, this study is designed to answer 2 research questions:

- 1. How does PBL impact students' intrinsic motivation in their learning process?*
- 2. Are there any differences in intrinsic motivation between first-year and third-year students in Thuyloi University's Southern Campus when perceiving PBL?*

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This quantitative study utilized the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI), originally developed by Ryan (1982). The questionnaire included 22 items rated on a seven-point Likert scale, divided into four subscales: interest/enjoyment, perceived competence, perceived choice, and pressure/tension. The questionnaire has 6 reverse-coded items (item 2, 9, 11, 14, 19, 21).

The participants were recruited from English Linguistics majors at the Thuyloi University's Southern Campus, who had experienced PBL in several courses. Participants gave informed consent, confidentiality was ensured, participation was entirely voluntary, and recruitment was conducted through online questionnaire at the end of May, 2025 (also the end of the academic year 2024-2025). After a week, 58 valid responses were collected: 35 from the first-year students, 18 from the third-year, and only 5 from the second-year. Prior to data analysis, the very small number of responses from the second-year group (n=5), they were excluded from the analysis stage, and the reverse items were

also recoded. The internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, and descriptive statistics were used to summarize the results. Besides, independent samples t-tests were applied to all the items to find out whether there were any differences between freshmen and junior students.

3. RESULT

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Reliability of IMI Subscales

Subscale	Number of items	M	SD	Cronbach's α
Interest/Enjoyment	7	5.11	1.66	.85
Perceived Competence	5	4.26	1.80	.71
Perceived Choice	5	4.45	1.92	.58
Pressure/Tension	5	4.50	1.81	.67

Descriptive statistics and reliability values for the four IMI subscales are presented in Table 1. Interest/Enjoyment showed the highest mean ($M = 5.11$, $SD = 1.66$) with strong internal consistency ($\alpha = .85$). Perceived Competence was moderate in both mean ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 1.80$) and reliability ($\alpha = .71$). Perceived Choice had a mid-range mean ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 1.92$) but a relatively low alpha ($\alpha = .58$). Pressure/Tension showed a slightly higher mean ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 1.81$) with modest reliability ($\alpha = .67$). Above all, the Perceived Choice subscale had the lowest reliability ($\alpha = .58$), showing greater variability in participants' responses about autonomy. Although this falls below the usual standard of .70, it was retained in subsequent analyses due to its strong theoretical grounding in the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), the small number of items, and the relatively small sample size of the study.

Overall, the results suggest that participants reported relatively high enjoyment, moderate competence, and moderate autonomy, alongside moderate levels of pressure/tension.

Table 2. Interest/Enjoyment

Item	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Min	Max
Item 1. While I was working on the task, I was thinking about how much I enjoyed it.	5.08	5.00	7	1.64	1	7
Item 5. I found the task very interesting.	5.40	6.00	7	1.56	2	7
Item 8. Doing the task was fun.	5.19	5.00	7	1.72	2	7
Item 10. I enjoyed doing the task very much.	4.57	5.00	5	1.81	1	7
Item 14. I thought the task was very boring. (R)	5.66	6.00	7	1.66	1	7
Item 17. I thought the task was very interesting.	5.26	5.00	7	1.68	1	7
Item 20. I would describe the task as very enjoyable.	4.58	4.00	4	1.56	1	7

The items under Interest/Enjoyment generally received high ratings, with means ranging from 4.57 (item 10) to 5.66 (item 14). Several items (e.g., Items 1, 5, 8, 14, and 17) had modes of 7, indicating that many participants selected the maximum value on the Likert scale. This pattern suggests that participants tended to perceive the activity as enjoyable and engaging. The standard deviations were moderate (1.56–1.81), reflecting some variability but overall consistency in responses. The results highlight strong enjoyment and positive affective involvement across the sample.

Table 3. Perceived Competence

Item	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Min	Max
Item 4. I think I am pretty good at this task.	3.92	4.00	4	1.75	1	7
Item 7. I think I did pretty well at this activity, compared to other students.	4.00	4.00	3	1.84	1	7
Item 12. I am satisfied with my performance at this task.	4.64	5.00	5	1.82	1	7
Item 16. I felt pretty skilled at this task.	4.17	4.00	4	1.89	1	7
Item 22. After working at this task for a while, I felt pretty competent.	4.58	4.00	4	1.56	1	7

The Perceived Competence subscale revealed moderate scores, with item means between 3.92 and 4.64. These results indicate that while participants reported feeling somewhat competent, there was variation in their self-perceived ability, with some individuals experiencing lower levels of competence. A statistical difference between two groups of participants was found in item 22 when using an independent sample t-test. *Item 22. After working at this task for a while, I felt pretty competent (reverse)*: The third-year students rated this statement significantly higher than the freshmen, $t(51) = -2.19$, $p < .05$, suggesting the third-year group experienced greater competence.

Table 4. Perceived Choice

Item	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Min	Max
Item 3. I felt that it was my choice to do the task.	4.49	4.00	3	1.74	1	7
Item 11. I didn't really have a choice about doing the task. (R)	4.94	6.00	7	1.99	1	7
Item 15. I felt like I was doing what I wanted to do while I was working on the task.	4.38	4.00	4	1.70	1	7
Item 19. I felt like I had to do the task. (R)	3.62	4.00	4	1.83	1	7
Item 21. I did the task because I had no choice. (R)	4.81	6.00	7	2.33	1	7

Scores on the Perceived Choice items were mixed, with means ranging from 3.62 (item 19) to 4.94 (item 11). The reverse item 19 reflected the lowest mean (3.62), suggesting some participants had the feeling of being forced to do the tasks. SDs were relatively large (1.70–2.33), particularly for item 21, which indicates considerable variability in perceived choice. This variability suggests that participants had diverse experiences regarding the degree of choice they felt.

Table 5. Pressure/Tension

Item	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Min	Max
Item 2. I did not feel at all nervous about doing the task. (R)	4.79	5.00	7	1.91	1	7
Item 6. I felt tense while doing the task.	4.74	5.00	5	1.67	1	7
Item 9. I felt relaxed while doing the task. (R)	4.26	4.00	7	2.16	1	7
Item 13. I was anxious while doing the task.	4.36	4.00	4	1.65	1	7
Item 18. I felt pressured while doing the task.	4.36	4.00	4	1.65	1	7

The Perceived Pressure/Tension subscale produced moderate means, ranging from 4.26 (item 9) to 4.79 (item 2). Several items had medians of 4, consistent with a mid-level perception of tension. However, item 9 exhibited the highest variability ($SD = 2.16$) and a mode of 7, indicating that some participants experienced high levels of tension while others reported very little. Overall, the pattern suggests that although participants experienced a moderate amount of tension on average, there were substantial individual differences.

The independent-samples t-test results show a statistically significant difference between 2 groups of freshmen and junior students on item 9 and item 18. *Item 9. I felt relaxed while doing the task (reverse)*, $t(51) = -2.12$, $p < .05$. Participants in the first-year students reported significantly lower agreement with the statement compared to the third-year ones, which indicates that the freshmen generally felt more tense during the task. Also, *Item 18. I felt pressured while doing the task*, $t(51) = -2.49$, $p < .05$. The first-year students disagreed more strongly than the third-year ones with the statement, showing that the third-year students experienced greater pressure.

4. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The findings of this study contribute meaningful insights to research on the effects of PBL on intrinsic motivation not only among English majors but also among college students of other fields in Vietnam, as well as worldwide contexts. Grounded in Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), the results generally affirm that PBL is facilitative to fostering intrinsic motivation despite existing variations across student cohorts and motivational components.

In terms of interest and enjoyment, students reported relatively high levels of interest and enjoyment throughout their PBL experiences. Mean scores suggest that students not only engaged with the learning materials but also found the tasks personally satisfying and stimulating. This aligns with earlier findings that project-based approaches encourage meaningful engagement when students see clear relevance in the content (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

In addition, perceived competence was found to be at a moderate level, with the notable finding that third-year students scored significantly higher than first-year students. This suggests that sustained exposure to PBL practices over time may foster greater confidence and a stronger sense of mastery among learners. As students gain more academic and procedural familiarity, they feel more capable, echoing research that links self-efficacy with repeated successful learning experiences (Cournia, 2025; Pintrich, 2003).

Also, the autonomy dimension was positively perceived overall, indicating that most students felt ownership over their learning processes. However, as shown by lower mean score in item 19, suggests that autonomy is not absolute due to the presence of curriculum-related factors. Nevertheless, when students felt they had genuine input into how to approach their tasks, their motivation was likely to increase (Black & Deci, 2000).

Findings related to pressure/tension highlight a more complex picture. While first-year students reported experiencing greater nervousness than third-year students when completing the tasks, the latter appeared to experience higher levels of pressure. This might be attributed to the fact that PBL was new to freshmen, who had limited prior exposure to such approaches in their high school curricula. Furthermore, the distinctive assessment methods employed in PBL, which differ significantly from traditional high school evaluations, may have contributed to this finding. Consequently, it is strongly recommended that teachers provide clear explanations of assessment criteria and offer additional guidance throughout the projects in order to alleviate freshmen's anxiety. Conversely, the greater pressure experienced by third-year students is understandable given their heavier workload, which typically involves multiple presentations, demanding group assignments, and challenges associated with collaboration. It implies that teachers should take students' overall workload into account and establish reasonable deadlines for major assignments in order to enhance the learning experience by alleviating stress. These findings highlight the dual-edged nature of PBL: while it encourages active engagement, it also increases demands on students' time, cognitive effort, and group coordination.

While this study offers practical insights, it has some limitations. First, the participants were only English majors from Thuyloi University's Southern Campus, and the sample size was small (53 students). This means the results may not apply to students in other majors, universities, or regions. Second, the study used only quantitative data, without any interviews or open-ended questions; as a result, it was difficult to understand why students felt motivated or stressed in certain situations. Future studies should include a wider range of participants, follow students over a longer time, and use both surveys and interviews to get a deeper understanding of how PBL affects motivation.

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THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED LANGUAGE LEARNING ON THE OUTCOMES OF HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of technology and artificial intelligence, Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL) emerges as an inevitable development of education. This terminology is used to refer to the utilisation of information and communication technology in pedagogy system. TEL-related research often involve in other terms such as e-learning, mobile learning and CALL (Computer-asisted language learning). According to Mote (2024), this approach has fundamentally reshaped educational paradigms through the incorporation of digital tools into conventional pedagogical practices, with the primary goal of augmenting student outcomes.

As a language instructor, the author aims to examine the impacts of TEL on language learning. Several research have been conducted to fulfill this goal. It has been suggested that the introduction of TEL into language learning (TELL) has improved language proficiency of learners (Peguero, 2024). Other researchers also indicate that TELL has positive influence on student's language main skills and sub-skills (Ghanizadeh, et.al, 2015). This paper aims to investigate the impacts of TELL on various aspects of student performance, encompassing learner's autonomy, academic achievement, interpersonal skills and motivation; potential challenges as well as recommending a number of tools to apply TELL in language classroom, especially in higher education contexts.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study reviews a collection of recent articles related to the effects of utilising technology on student's performance in language learning. The research includes a wide range of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method studies examining how technology influences learners' progress. These studies were published between 2017 and 2025 and met the following criteria: 1. Assessing the impact of TELL on students' performance was the main purpose of the study. 2. The context of the study was second language learning and 3. Positive effects of combining technology into language were indicated.

The search strategy is based on major academic databases such as Google Scholar, Researchgate, ScienceDirect and Web of Science. The search terms include "technology-enhanced learning", "e-learning", "digital education" and "student outcomes."

In collecting the data, (s)he uses descriptive and analytical approaches to explore the definitions of TELL; investigate the impact of TELL on students' language proficiency as well as suggesting some digital tools to incorporate technology into Vietnamese educational settings.

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Definitions and theoretical frameworks of TELL

The term TELL is used to refer to a teaching method that involves the application of various technological resources, such as computers, mobile devices and software applications, with the aim of improving language learning process and facilitate interactive and engaging learning environments. (Faramaji & Dayag, 2023; Doman, 2019)

The key theoretical frameworks of TELL include constructivism, sociocultural and cognitive load theory. In the context of TELL, constructivism highlights the vital role of active participation and the practical learning experience. According to sociocultural theory, social interaction,

cooperative learning, culture, and collaboration with other individuals within the social circle is considered as one of the most important aspects of learning a language. As for cognitive load theory, it provides principles for the design of teaching resources and teaching activities by minimizing unnecessary cognitive load (Perez, 2024).

3.2. Previous studies on the impacts of TELL on student outcomes

In higher education teaching context, numerous research and studies have shown the influence of TELL on learners' proficiency. Mote (2024) proposed that the integration of TELL contributed to improving student's academic achievement by comparing the test scores of two groups of students: one using TELL and the other only taught by conventional methods. She also suggested that technology broadened the horizons of educational engagement, which greatly tied to the extent that a student will be successful academically. Besides, TELL has allowed for personalization of learning experiences, which is suited to the abilities of individual learner. The use of educational technology can modify the pace and content of learning according to the learner's needs, performance, and progress. This not only caters to the diverse learning requirements of the learners in a classroom, but also allows learners to be in control of their learning path, which has positive impacts on their achievement (Ghanizadeh, et.al, 2015). A study conducted by Ahmad, et al. (2017) on the effects of TELL on vocabulary acquisition indicates that students who learn new words through computer and mobile phone apps can memorise better than those who learn in traditional way.

The application of technology into language teaching has also been proved to increase the level of student's motivation by a plethora of studies. As suggested by Trimmel and Bachmann (as cited in Dunn & Kennedy, 2019), the more students utilise technology, the higher motivation levels they get. Tseng and Tsai (as cited in Dunn & Kennedy, 2019) also indicated that students were likely to be intrinsically motivated when they were assigned online tasks, hence, their belief to successfully complete the tasks was also greater. According to Mote (2024), the integration of technologies such as educational software, virtual environments, and gamified learning not only helps students learn but also enhances their positive attitudes towards the subjects and fuels their interest. Sharing the similar opinion, Peguero (2024) also claimed that TELL helps to boost learner's motivation, fostering active participation and commitment towards second language learning as it creates interactive and engaging learning atmosphere through competition and teamwork. Moreover, TELL provides instant feedback and demonstrates student's progress, thereby enhancing their self-efficacy, which can motivate their persistence in learning (Hughes, 2014., as cited in Serrano, et al., 2019). According to Zainuddin (2023), technology-based tasks that resemble real-life contexts can enhance learner's engagement, enabling them to immers in the target language and culture while broadening global awareness and intercultural appreciation.

According to Wong (as cited in Eltaiba, et al., 2024), TELL facilitates learner's autonomy by allowing them to engage in self-directed learning and get access to a wide range of instructional resources. This approach helps students take control of their learning through self-regulation and by spending time meaningfully engaging with the learning materials. Another pivotal concern is the role TEL plays in fostering collaboration and communication among learners, which fostering students' interpersonal skills. Collaboration is supported by technology through discussion forums, online group work, and peer assessment. Such collaborations help improve students' teamwork, communication, and analytical skills in problem solving (Mote, 2024).

3.3. Challenges of applying TELL into educational settings

Despite its potential benefits, there is still much to be done in overcoming challenges of applying TELL such as lack of infrastructure and the reluctance to transition from conventional teaching approaches to TELL (Eltaiba, et al., 2025; Le, 2024). As suggested by Eltaiba, et al., (2025), many educational institutions do not have the requisite infrastructure for extensive technology integration. In addition, poor internet connection and mobile phone accessibility have been noted as obstructions to effective knowledge dissemination in the region. In Vietnamese context, Le (2024) pointed out that despite the advancement of technology and class program, students still prefer physical interaction with teacher in traditional classrooms rather than learning with computer.

According to Liang, et al. (2024), another challenge of over-reliance on technology for both teaching and learning activities is termed as ‘technostress’ among learners when they have to struggle with technological advancement. This form of stress may emerge from teacher’s increased expectations of time and effort, and rising demands for learner’s autonomy. Sharing the similar idea, Le (2024) indicated that the role of teachers in TELL classrooms reduced to only “information provider” and “supporter”, while students expected them to be the inspirer.

3.4. Recommendations

Since the improvement of student’s language proficiency has been proved with the aid of technology, it is beneficial to incorporate the use of technology into teaching practice. Perez (2024) suggested several tools such as computer-assisted language learning (CALL) platforms, mobile applications, and online collaboration tools in teaching.

3.4.1. Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) platforms

The purpose of CALL platforms is to integrate interactive exercises, learning resources and also provide tailored teaching to individual’s demand, thereby making learning self-paced and flexible. Some popular examples of such platforms are Quizlet, Duolingo and Babbel.

3.4.2. Mobile applications

Mobile applications further enhance accessibility, enabling learners to engage with language resources such as flashcard, quiz, and speech recognition programs on tablets and phones. Memrise, Rosseta Stone and HelloTalk are mobile applications that utilize gamified elements to encourage learner participation and provide progress reports.

3.4.3. Online collaboration tools

With the aid of online collaboration tools such as video conferencing platforms, discussion forums and social networking sites, participants can engage in communicative activities on a global scale regardless of their linguistic backgrounds. In addition, social media platforms continue to offer new ways to foster intercultural communication and help build communities. All of this technology motivates learners to participate in real-life and purposeful language learning, which emphasizes the role of multiple digital tools in education.

Although it is recommended to incorporate the use of technological resources into language classroom, the role of teacher should not be neglected. Teachers should regard technology as an aided tool, not a stunt teacher to do all the jobs.

4. CONCLUSION

According to the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the application of Technology-Enhanced Language Learning is a beneficial approach to improve students’ performance in many aspects. Through the analysis of data collected across multiple higher education contexts, the study demonstrates that TELL facilitates active learning, encourages collaborative interactions and boost students’ motivation and engagement. The results also indicate that when effectively implemented, TELL has the potential to substantially improve academic results by meeting individual learning needs and providing adaptable learning environments.

Nonetheless, there still remains some challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, technostress and hesitation to transform to modern approach. Resolving these issues need cooperation from educators, policymakers and technology developers to guarantee equal opportunities among regions and reduce the risks of technology use in educational context. Several tools are recommended to incorporate TELL into language classrooms such as computer-assisted language learning platforms, mobile applications, and online collaboration tools. The integration of TELL into higher education settings will be a transformative movement in pedagogical approaches, contingent upon adequate resource allocation and strategic technological support.

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ENGLISH-MAJOR STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS' ORAL CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK IN EFL SPEAKING CLASSES AT THUYLOI UNIVERSITY

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1. INTRODUCTION

One of the significant roles of an EFL teacher is to give feedback on their students' language performance. During speaking classes in particular, language teachers are used to providing various types of oral corrective feedback (OCF) on incorrect utterances delivered by their students to improve their speaking accuracy and prevent the possible fossilization of the errors (Benati, 2020). However, there might be a mismatch between teachers' and students' perceptions of the efficacy of the different types of OCF, which may have a negative impact on students' learning outcomes. Hornby (2010) defines perception as "an idea, a belief or an image you have as a result of how you see or understand something" (p. 1126). In the context of language learning, students' perceptions are shaped by their experiences combined with the overlapping of notions they acquire in the learning process (Khader, 2012). Ellis (2008) points out that teachers should investigate how their students perceive the teaching and learning practices and address any mismatch between these perceptions and their own to enhance instructional effectiveness. Thus, in speaking classes, it is essential for EFL teachers to understand how students perceive the ways their errors are corrected in order to refine and improve their feedback strategies.

Thuyloi University is relatively new in the field of English language and linguistics. To date, little research has been conducted on the use of OCF in its speaking classes. This study, therefore, aims to provide EFL teachers at Thuyloi University, as well as those working in similar educational contexts, with useful insights to enhance the effectiveness of their OCF practices, thereby supporting students in improving their language competency and performance.

The main research question of this study is: *What are the English-major students' perceptions of their teachers' OCF in EFL speaking classes at Thuyloi University?*

Specifically, it seeks to answer the following sub-questions:

1. Which types of OCF do students prefer the most and the least?
2. Which types of OCF do students perceive as the most and the least effective?
3. What benefits and challenges do students associate with different types of OCF?

The findings of this study are expected to contribute both practically and academically to the body of knowledge on OCF in EFL teaching and learning.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Definition of oral corrective feedback

According to Suzuki (2004), corrective feedback is a technique that teachers use to help students notice their errors and make improved output. Corrective feedback can come in an oral mode or written mode, which "have unique features and have been examined separately in the primary research" (Li & Vuono, 2019, p. 49). Only oral corrective feedback is discussed in this article, and any feedback mentioned henceforth refers to OCF.

2.2. Types of oral corrective feedback

There are different recorded views on the types of OCF. Lightbrown and Spada (2004, as cited in Laeli & Setiawan, 2019) summarize two ways of giving corrective feedback: explicitly and implicitly. Explicit feedback is used when a teacher provides a metalinguistic explanation of a student's error, while implicit feedback includes no metalinguistic explanation for the error correction. Lee (2013) further elaborates the two types by providing six types of OCF: recast, repetition, clarification request, explicit correction, elicitation, and metalinguistic feedback. This research used the classification of these six types of OCF, each of which was explained and illustrated with examples in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Types of OCF

OCF types		Teacher's practice	Example
Implicit feedback	Recast	Teacher provides the corrected words or phrases directly without explanation.	S: I go to school yesterday. T: I went to school yesterday.
	Repetition	Teacher repeats the errors but highlights them by using emphatic stress.	S: I go to school yesterday. T: I GO to school yesterday? S: I went to school yesterday.
	Clarification request	Teacher notifies the students that their utterance is not understood and asks them to reformulate it.	S: I go to school yesterday. T: What? Can you say it again?
Explicit feedback	Explicit correction	Teacher points out the error, explains the error and provides the reformulation.	S: I go to school yesterday. T: Not "go". You should use the past simple tense here. I went to school yesterday.
	Elicitation	Teacher repeats the student's utterance, pauses at the error, so that the student can self-correct it.	S: I go to school yesterday. T: I...? I...? S: I went to school yesterday.
	Metalinguistic feedback	Teacher gives the relevant linguistic information related to the error without providing the correction.	S: I go to school yesterday. T: Yesterday was the past, so you should use the past simple tense.

T = teacher, S = student

2.3. Benefits and challenges of OCF in EFL speaking classes

It is the purpose of corrective feedback to make a positive impact on students' learning outcomes (Laeli & Setiawan, 2019). Studies have shown evidence that OCF can significantly help students improve their speaking accuracy, including the usage of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, as well as motivate them to speak (Hamidi et al., 2022; Huong, 2021). Nevertheless, OCF does sometimes interfere in students' learning process, creating pressure, anxiety and unwanted disturbance which discourage them from practicing speaking (Laeli & Setiawan, 2019). Some types of OCF are considered unclear or unhelpful when no guidance is provided on how to make use of them for improvement (Ölmezer-Öztürk & Öztürk, 2006).

2.4. Students' perceptions of teachers' OCF in EFL speaking classes

There have been quite a few studies conducted to investigate students' perceptions about EFL teachers' OCF in speaking classes around the world. Ölmezer-Öztürk and Öztürk (2006) examined the EFL students' perceptions and preferences on the six types of OCF using qualitative research methods, including video-recorded classroom observations and focus group interviews. They found out that Turkish students highly appreciated elicitation and explicit correction for the hints and clear explanations, but regarded recast and clarification requests as ambiguous, and metalinguistic feedback as anxiety-provoking and confusing. Similarly, Laeli and Setiawan (2019)'s quantitative study on 30 Indonesian university students also discovered that the students preferred to receive explicit correction as it helped increase their engagement. However, different from Ölmezer-Öztürk

and Öztürk (2006)'s findings, Indonesian students chose repetition as the most effective type of feedback because it offered them an opportunity to analyze the error and make self-correction.

In the context of Vietnamese universities, very few studies have been carried out to examine students' perceptions of OCF types and their benefits and challenges. Luu (2020)'s study identified some matches and mismatches between the perceptions of teachers' and students' regarding various types of OCF. By conducting observations and questionnaires, the researcher found out that while most Vietnamese teachers highly valued clarification request and recast, most students, in sync with those in Turkey and Indonesia, highlighted the explicit correction as the most effective and considered the implicit feedback as ineffective. Ha et al. (2021) conducted a study at Ha Tinh University on both teachers' and students' preferences on the types of OCF in EFL classrooms adopting a mixed-method approach with both survey and interview. They also discovered the clear preferences of students towards explicit feedback over implicit feedback.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a questionnaire to collect data. The questionnaire, adapted from Laeli and Setiawan (2019), consisted of 4 multiple-choice questions about the OCF types the participants preferred the most and the least, and those they perceived as the most and the least effective. In the following open-ended questions, the participants were asked to write down the reasons for their choices, indicating the benefits and challenges they associated with the selected OCF types.

The questionnaire was designed in both English and Vietnamese, printed and given to 40 third-year English majors who had been attending a compulsory 45-hour speaking course, which is part of Thuyloi University's English language and linguistics curriculum. Before the students did the questionnaire, the researcher introduced the six types of OCF and explained the differences between them using examples, which were also presented in the introduction of the questionnaire. The students were free to request clarification for any questions, but the researcher made sure that no leading clues were provided for any open-ended questions. A total of 35 out of 40 students returned the completed forms.

The collected data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel. For the multiple-choice questions, descriptive statistics were generated to answer the first two research sub-questions. Content analysis was employed to code the responses to the open-ended questions and address the final research sub-question.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Students' preferences for the OCF types

The statistics presented in Tables 2 and 3 showed that the types of OCF that the participants preferred the most were explicit correction (n=15, 42.9%) and metalinguistic feedback (n=14, 42.9%), completely overshadowing the other four types of OCF (n=1~2). Meanwhile, the OCF types that the participants least favored were clarification request (n=18, 51.4%) and, to a lesser extent, recast (n=9, 25.7%). It is consistent to see that explicit correct and metalinguistic feedback were disliked by almost none of the participants. Notably, over 11% of the participants (n=4) identified elicitation, classified as explicit feedback, as their least preferred type of OCF, making it third on the list of the most disliked.

4.2. Students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the OCF techniques

The perceived effectiveness was consistent with the results of the preferences. The two types of OCF that the participants referred to as the most effective in helping them in speaking classes were explicit correction (n=16, 45.7%) and metalinguistic feedback (n=12, 34.3%). Clarification request received the most votes (n=18, 51.4%) as the least effective OCF techniques, with repetition and elicitation sharing the second ranking (n=5, 14.3%), and recast ranked the third (n=4, 11.4%). Very few participants thought metalinguistic feedback and explicit correction were ineffective (n=1 and n=2, respectively).

4.3. Benefits and challenges of the OCF types

The content analysis process resulted in the benefits and challenges the participants associated with the selected types of OCF. As the favourite OCF types, both explicit correction and metalinguistic feedback were claimed by many participants (n=21) to help them understand the errors clearly and develop the ability to correct the errors themselves, thanks to the teachers' explanation of the relevant grammar or vocabulary knowledge. Both of the OCF techniques were believed to help students remember the error better and avoid making the same mistakes again. In addition, metalinguistic feedback was appreciated for the ability to boost students' confidence and not make them feel embarrassed or nervous like certain OCF types. Meanwhile, the perceived least effective types of OCF, clarification request and repetition, were praised by a few participants (n=4) for providing them the opportunity to contemplate and correct the error themselves, thereby improving their critical thinking and self-improvement.

On the other hand, the challenges of the types of OCF were also discovered. Clarification feedback was criticized by many participants (n=13) for negatively affecting their emotions, making them feel nervous or even embarrassed, resulting in their lack of motivation and confidence. This technique was also claimed to confuse the participants rather than helping them identify the error to reformulate. As for recast, even though a few participants (n=2) thought it helps them remember the error better, many more participants (n=7) claimed that it only makes them quickly forget the error and likely to commit it again. This seems to be because when teachers only recast and offer no explanation, students do not understand clearly why they make the error and become confused. Recast was also criticized for discouraging critical thinking and self-improvement which seem to be better promoted by metalinguistic feedback.

5. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this study suggested that English-major students at Thuyloi University preferred to receive explicit feedback rather than implicit feedback. Except for elicitation, both metalinguistic feedback and explicit correction were appreciated for their clear and direct explanations, while clarification request, recast and repetition were judged as ineffective. These findings are consistent with those of Luu (2020) and Ha et al. (2021), both of whom found that EFL students preferred metalinguistic feedback and considered recast and clarification request as the least effective. However, Laeli and Setiawan (2019) offered a slightly different result, as the Indonesian university students most preferred repetition, apart from explicit correction. Meanwhile, Ölmezer-Öztürk and Öztürk (2016) found out Turkish students highly appreciated elicitation and regarded metalinguistic feedback as less effective, even though they also praised the explicit correction and disapproved recast. The differences might stem from the variation in the teaching and learning contexts. Vietnamese students might have been influenced by the exam-oriented environment that emphasizes the importance of being correct explicitly (Ha et al., 2021), compared to other educational systems that might focus more on developing students' fluency and communication effectiveness.

The benefits and challenges associated with the six types of OCF discovered in this study, to some extent, accord with earlier findings by Laeli and Setiawan (2019) and expose significant differences from those by Ölmezer-Öztürk and Öztürk (2016), especially concerning metalinguistic feedback. Whereas Vietnamese students preferred this OCF type for its encouraging features, Turkish students criticized it for only leading to terminological confusion and anxiety. Although repetition is not considered as highly effective by Vietnamese students as Indonesian students in Laeli and Setiawan's (2019) study, the benefits identified by the two studies are quite similar, including encouraging critical thinking and self-correction. Notably, the fact that every OCF type in this current study was appreciated by a few students, and at the same time criticized by some others, indicates that all the OCF types can be helpful and suitable for certain types of language learners. It is the teachers' responsibility to trial and vary all the types of OCF in their class to find out which ones are the most suitable for their students and help them the most effectively in improving their language skills (Luu, 2020).

In conclusion, this study explores English-major students' perceptions of teachers' OCF in EFL speaking classes at Thuyloi University in Vietnam. It was discovered that explicit correction and metalinguistic feedback are the favourite OCF types, while clarification request and recast are the least favoured. The students' preferences were in sync with the perceived effectiveness of the OCF types, when metalinguistic feedback and explicit correction were considered the most effective, and clarification request, repetition and elicitation least effective. The benefits and challenges associated with each type of OCF were also discussed, explaining the students' preferences and perceptions. The results of this study might not be representative of all Thuyloi University English majors or those in other contexts. Further studies need to be conducted to investigate the issue in more depth, and empirical research will help determine which OCF types are genuinely the most effective in helping students improve their speaking skills.

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HOMework IN ELT – WHAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED?

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1. INTRODUCTION

Researchers of homework (Amiryousefi, 2016; Lelesiene & Jasnauskaite, 2016; Wallinger, 2000) generally agree with Cooper (1989, p. 86) and Cooper (2013, p. 18) to define homework as “tasks assigned to students by school teachers that are intended to be carried out during non-school hours”. In addition, Alleman and Brophy (1991) see homework as a chance to make use of external materials and environments to reinforce school learning.

Homework is almost universal in education, yet the role of homework and its effectiveness as a teaching strategy remains an age-old debate (Chang et al., 2014). Cooper (1989) and Cooper et al. (2006) concur that homework is a contradictory practice, with both positive and negative effects coexisting. Additionally, Cooper (2013) realizes that homework is a reason of complaint and friction between home and school more often than any other educational activity and names this issue as the battle over homework. Some researchers tend to view homework as an extension of sitting for boring work (Alleman and Brophy, 1991). Moreover, opponents of homework argue that overload of assignments can affect students’ mental health negatively such as stress and burnout, and hinder overall learning (Deysolong, 2023; Depkota, 2024), or homework can lead to bad habits like cheating when students copy work from others (Kralovec and Buell, 2001) (as cited in Devkota, 2024). However, Dudley and Shawyer (1991) conducts an experimental study on student evaluation and finds the fact that the teaching effectiveness is greater when teachers use homework as an essential part of the lessons. Also, according to Bembenutty and White (2012), the significance, value, and positive impact of homework on learning and academic success are widely assumed, especially in middle school, high school, and college settings. Cooper (1989) and Cooper et al. (2012) (as cited in Fernandez-Alonso et al., 2017) state that the strength of homework varies significantly with students’ age – stronger when students are older. Besides its immediate academic objectives, homework can encourage important life skill such as responsibility and autonomy (Sorial, 2024). Despite some drawbacks, homework is generally considered as educational supplement to improve students’ performance and learning experience.

Based on the background knowledge about homework, this study aims to explore the issue of homework in the context of foreign language teaching, especially English language teaching. According to Khonamri and Pavlikova (2020), homework serves as a channel of communication between learners and teachers in an EFL context where there is little exposure to English out of the classroom. That is the reason why language learners are given homework to enhance their exposure to the language, strengthen and retain linguistic knowledge, and support ongoing language learning beyond the classroom (Wallinger, 2000).

Although homework is generally accepted to affect students’ achievement positively, especially in EFL context (Khonamri et al., 2022), Wallinger (2000) notes that there is little mention of it in foreign language teaching literature. Moreover, Amiryousefi (2016), Dogan and Dogan (2024) and Moorhouse (2018) all notice the fact that homework in ELT has not received much attention by researchers so far. This leaves a gap in our knowledge about English assignments.

A thorough understanding of homework in general, foreign language homework and English homework in particular allows English teachers conduct effective homework practices in their classes because this is beneficial (Cooper, 2013; Darn, 2007; Devkota, 2024; Dogan & Dogan, 2024; Khonamri et al., 2022). Therefore, this study focuses to answer the following question:

What essential aspects of homework should teachers take into consideration to have effective homework practices in ELT?

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This qualitative literature review synthesizes materials from relevant studies on the subject of homework, homework in foreign language teaching, and homework in ELT.

The writer tried to plan a systematic search using review methodology that identified the studies' selection criteria. All the databases which could be accessed for free were searched: Web of Science, ERIC, Google Scholar, Scopus and ResearchGate. The eligible journals discovered in the databases mentioned above would be chosen to ensure the quality of this study. At the beginning, the phrases "homework in ELT" was utilized in the searches according to the theme of the study; and the timeframe was limited for researches published from the year 2015 onward. However, after the initial database search employing the certain term and the set timeframe as classifiers, the number of publications found is rather small. As a result, the writer had to expand the focus by using more terms such as 'homework in foreign language teaching', "homework", and/or "assignment"; and accepted timeframe extension to investigate as long as the publications were cited in many other articles from reliable databases.

A total of 19 papers were examined and finally chosen for inclusion in this study once their eligibility was validated. Among the selected papers, 9 publications are about homework in general, 4 of them are about homework in foreign language teaching and learning, and 6 researches are about homework in ELT.

3. RESULTS

Although there have been only a few studies on the subject, English language homework was discovered to have the same theoretical background as other languages and subjects. This is demonstrated in some studies found in the searching by the following researchers: Amiryousefi (2016), Chang et al. (2014), Darn (2007), Fernandez-Alonso et al. (2017), Khonamri and Pavlikova (2020), Khonamri et al. (2022), Lelesiene and Jasnauskaite (2016), Moorhouse's (2018) and Wallinger (2000). These writers do their study focusing in some certain aspects of homework in foreign language teaching or ELT such as quantity of homework, homework time, types of homework, homework's feedback, learners' motivation, learners' and teachers' attitudes toward homework, benefits of homework, and reasons or purposes of homework, etc. To some extent, these aspects are similar to the characteristics of homework suggested by Cooper (1989), Cooper et al. (2006) and Cooper (2013) and Alleman and Brophy (1991) – the scholars who do researches on general homework.

Amiryousefi (2016) and Dogan and Dogan (2024) conclude that homework plays a crucial part in ELT which has benefits for students' performance. Assignments can focus on all English skills and should be designed and assigned taking into account all the aspects of homework so that it can be the most effective (Amiryousefi, 2016).

The findings reveal aspects surrounding the English language homework which affect the work of designing, assigning and completion of assignments.

3.1. Types of homework

Xu (2013) carries out a qualitative research and comes to a conclusion that homework is a frequently assigned and widely practiced educational task although students have difficulties completing it. Moorhouse (2018) claims that homework in English teaching is essential after she did an experimental study on English teachers' homework practices in some schools in HongKong. However, definitions of homework grow more complex when taking into account the different kinds of assignments. According to Alleman and Brophy (1991), most scholars specify four frequent types of homework, and they are presented in common order as follows:

- i) *practice homework* reinforces the learning of material that has already been presented in class.
- ii) *preparation assignments* introduce material to be presented in upcoming lessons.
- iii) *extension homework* requires students to transfer knowledge or skills previously learned to new situations.

iv) *creative homework* requires students to integrate many skills and concepts to construct new knowledge or produce a product.

Darn (2007) considers assignments as useful and practicable tasks at home but classifies homework into 6 groups of tasks. The first three groups of tasks are the same as the first three types of home work above: workbook-based task, preparation tasks and extensive task. However, the last three groups are quite different: guided discovery task, real-world tasks and project work.

In the context of technology progress, Dogan and Dogan (2024) propose 2 types of homework: traditional concept type and online concept type.

3.2. Purposes of homework

According to Epstein and Van Voorhis (2001) (as cited in Khonamri et al., 2022), homework can have both instructional and noninstructional purposes. Palardy (1988) (as cited in Alleman & Brophy, 1991) supports this claim and lists four purposes for assigning homework: i) increasing achievement - a common rationale, ii) teaching students self-discipline, independence, and responsibility, iii) fulfilling the expectations of students, parents, and the public - the most powerful reason, and iv) expanding and easing the time constraints on the curriculum.

Teachers give assignments for many different purposes and Cooper (1994) (as cited in Wallinger, 2000) and Cooper (2013) notes that most homework serves more than one of the purposes listed above.

Lelesiene and Jasnauskaite (2016) synthesize ten common reasons for assigning homework from many sources in their article. Although some of these reasons are the same as the purposes mentioned above, they are more detailed and categorised as followed:

- i) *reinforcing material* that has already been presented in class
- ii) *determining* if pupils understand the lesson and have mastered the required skills
- iii) *increasing* pupils' skill proficiency
- iv) *introducing* pupils to new material the teacher will present in the future
- v) *applying* previously learned skills to new situations or other areas of interest
- vi) *providing* opportunities for pupils to identify and learn to use resources, such as the library, internet, reference books and other community resources
- vii) *allowing* pupils to use their unique talents and abilities to produce individualized and creative work products
- viii) *helping* pupils improve their time management and organizational skills and develop perseverance, responsibility, self-confidence, and self-discipline
- ix) *improving* communication between parents and their children on the importance of schoolwork and learning
- x) *fulfilling* school or district mandates, such as requirements for a specified amount of daily or weekly homework

3.3. Principles of homework

Homework is seen as an integral part of the teaching and learning process (Lelesiene & Jasnauskaite, 2016). However, teachers should consider out-of-school learning activities in the same context of principles for planning and implementing in-school learning activities (Alleman & Brophy, 1991). All learning activities must meet the following criteria (Alleman & Brophy, 1991):

- i) *goal relevance*: the activity is designed based on key concepts essential for achieving important curriculum objectives
- ii) *appropriate level of difficulty*: the activity is challenging enough to promote learning without being so hard that it overwhelms or frustrates most students
- iii) *feasibility*: the activity is feasible for accomplishment within the prevailing constraints
- and iv) *cost effectiveness*: the anticipated learning gains from the activity make the time and effort invested worthwhile

3.4. Effects of homework

To answer the question regarding the role of homework “What might homework do?” Cooper (1989, 2013) catalogues potential positive and negative effects of homework. Alleman and Brophy (1991) share the same ideas as Cooper’s and these are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Effects of homework

<i>Positive effects</i>	<i>Negative effects</i>
Immediate achievement and learning - Better retention of factual knowledge - Increase understanding - Better critical thinking, concept formation, information processing - Curriculum enrichment Long-term academic effects - Willingness to learn during leisure time - Improved attitude toward school - Better study habits and skills Nonacademic effects - Greater self-direction and self-discipline - Better time management - More inquisitiveness - More independent problem solving Greater parental appreciation of and involvement in schooling	Satiation - Loss of interest in academic material - Physical and emotional fatigue - Denial of access to leisure-time and community activities - Parental interference - Pressure to complete assignment and perform well - Confusion of instructional techniques - Cheating - Copying from other students - Help beyond tutoring - Increased disparities between high and low achievers

3.5. Factors influencing the effect of homework

The benefits of homework are dependent on various factors. Cooper (1989, 2013) concludes that “homework probably involves the complex interaction of more influences than any other instructional device” (p. 87, p. 22). The factors affecting the utility of homework are adapted from Cooper’s (1989, 2013) and categorized in Table 2.

Table 2. Factors affecting the effects of homework

Exogenous Factors	Assignment Characteristics	Initial Classroom Factors	Home-Community Factors	Classroom Follow-up
Student characteristics (ability, motivation, study habits) Subject matter Grade level	Amount Purpose Skill area utilized Degree of individualization Degree of student choice Completion deadlines Social context	Provision of materials Facilitators Suggested approaches Links to the curriculum Other rationales	Competitors for student time Home environment (space, light, quiet, materials) Others’ involvement (parents, siblings, other students)	Feedback (written comments, grading, incentives) Testing of related content Use in class discussion

3.6. Recommendations for homework strategies

To enhance the advantages of homework while reducing its possible disadvantages, English teachers should evaluate various approaches. Out-of-school tasks may be seen as effective homework if they meet the theoretical principles of homework and have some characteristics as follows (adapted from Darn, 2007): i) homework should be relevant, interesting and varied; ii) homework should be coordinated within the curriculum as a whole; iii) homework should be manageable and achievable; iv) teachers should explain the purpose of homework at the beginning; v) various tasks can be assigned to groups based on their abilities, and individual learning preferences should be considered vi) learner motivation and involvement may be increased by encouraging students to contribute ideas

for homework and possibly design their tasks; vii) teachers need to know students' difficulties such as time budget, facilities, etc.; viii) homework should consolidate classwork not replicate it and should be nearer to real-life applications; ix) homework must be assessed in some way and given feedback. Peer and self-assessment can encourage learner independence and reduce teachers' workload. Homework should be given comments to motivate students.

4. CONCLUSION

The study of homework in English language teaching highlights its crucial role as an educational tool that extends learning beyond the classroom, enhances language exposure, and supports academic achievement. By examining the various types, purposes, principles, effects, and influencing factors of homework, this research underscores the complexity and significance of effective homework design and implementation. The findings emphasize that, when carefully planned and aligned with students' needs and curriculum goals, homework can foster both academic success and important life skills such as responsibility and autonomy. Therefore, this study may offers valuable insights for English teachers to develop thoughtful homework practices that maximize benefits while minimizing potential drawbacks, ultimately contributing to more effective and meaningful language learning experiences.

Despite the findings presented above, this study is limited by its scale. The study only reviewed and synthesized research about homework, language homework and English language homework which are free of charge and available in some databases such as Webs of Science, ERIC, Google Scholar, Scopus or ResearchGate, etc. Thus, the results are preliminary and need further research to deepen understanding in this area.

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