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The Efficiency of E-teaching Activities in Teaching Speaking Skills for English Major Students

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Abstract

In the pandemic context of COVID-19, all universities in Viet Nam have paid great attention to implementing E-teaching activities. The study focuses on evaluating the efficiency of E-teaching activities on speaking skills for second-year students of English major at University of Foreign Language Studies - The University of Da Nang (UFLS-UDN). A survey was conducted in a group of 15 teachers and 100 students of UFLS-UDN to figure out what the reality is. The findings indicated that the information technology infrastructure system of the school meets the needs of online teaching. Most teachers mastered E-teaching equipment, especially supporting software, applying teaching methods suitable to the online teaching model to integrate polarize learners' learning activities. Moreover, most students are self-consciously participating in the form of E-teaching and doing exercises as well as answering questions posed by teachers in the learning process. However, some teachers are still conscious of implementing this duty or spending time to draft lessons. The research proposes suitable and feasible solutions to improve E-teaching activities at UFLS-UDN, particularly at universities, faculties of foreign languages in Viet Nam in general.

Keywords: efficiency, E-teaching, speaking skill, English major.

1. Introduction

Online literacy plays a significant contribution and essential role in student learning and teacher teaching. With the developments of software that intend to improve education quality and access educational information, the learning and teaching opportunities have increased. In fact, teaching and learning on the Internet have changed how teachers communicate with students and vice visa. According to Carol (2003), "technology is a force worthy of consideration, whether one wishes to focus on the technological potential, to examine pragmatic technology use, or to criticize both" (p.9). Van et al. (2021) and Nguyen (2021) found that technology is an essential tool in elearning in order to help students improve their English skills. In addition, Bhatti (2021) asserts that technology plays an imprtant role in English language teaching. Thanks to the developments of technology, how teachers gain access to information in lessons and how students widen their knowledge in learning has changed in recent years.

In recent years, universities in Viet Nam have paid great attention to implementing E-teaching

activities, especially in the epidemic context of COVID-19. It affected most of aspects in the society (Hoang & Le, 2021; Pham & Vo, 2021). University of Foreign Language Studies - The University of Da Nang (UFLS-UDN) is one of the educational institutions requiring students to study online during the last pandemic. Although teachers seem to master how to use technology in teaching, there is still an issue that they cannot acknowledge, understand, or 'catch' the way the world's technology changes rapidly. They feel difficult to update these techniques, especially in teaching and learning the speaking skills of a foreign language. The research evaluated the efficiency of E-teaching activities on speaking skills. It proposed suitable and feasible solutions to improve the efficiency of E-teaching activities at UFLS-UDN in particular, at universities, faculties of foreign languages in Viet Nam in general.

2. Literature review

The technologies have an impact on learning and teaching foreign languages. In teaching speaking, teachers show attentions to constant revision and recycling. Teachers try to mix many activities with helping learners' language skills. They often use tasks of dialogues, poems, songs, music, games in their lesson schedules. Students have chances to check if their speaking abilities improve, their skills of pronunciation get better, and especially their language awareness develops. In particular, using techniques in the classroom can aid in the development of a learner's speaking ability, and we have held in mind that interaction and dissection are important aspects of learning. As a result, we should have more oral focus in our instruction and allow students as much speech time as possible (Andrade, 2005:22).

In the recent context of education, most teachers pay attention to design activities in teaching speaking skills to students. They try to make more requirements on tasks aiming to achieve the criteria of the oral skills that are fluency and accuracy in the assessment.

In communication, speaking competently considers being the most basic session for a communicator who does it fluently. During speaking, language users should focus on grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, which are appropriated. Depending on the situation, they also should apply exact cultural as well as social characteristics. Therefore, teaching this skill aims to make learners ensure communicating effectively. According to Chandra (2004), the ability of technology to meet learners at any moment and in any location has the power to bring about radical improvements in the educational paradigm.

In any educational setting, e-teaching is a necessary prerequisite for e-learning, particularly for inexperienced students. Teachers' responsibilities in an online world vary significantly from those in a conventional classroom setting. The majority of today's teachers and academics lack adequate digital literacy (Alexander et al., 2017; Wineburg et al., 2016).

2.1 Research Questions

The study aims to answer the following research questions:

a) What are E-teaching activities in teaching speaking skills for major English students of the University of Foreign Language Studies - The University of Da Nang?

b) What is the efficiency of E-teaching activities in teaching speaking skills for major English students of the University of Foreign Language Studies - The University of Da Nang?

3. Methods

3.1 Pedagogical Setting & Participants

University of Foreign Language Studies - the University of Da Nang was established in accordance with the Decision No. 709 / QD-TTg dated 26 August 2002 by the Vietnamese Government, with the mission to improve students' knowledge of language and culture to contribute to national construction, development, and international integration. The University is selected by the Ministry of Education and Training and the Management Board of National Foreign Language 2020 project to be one of the five regional centers for foreign languages undertaking the task of training, fostering, and assessing foreign language. Skills, as well as developing pedagogical skills and applying information technology in teaching and learning foreign languages.

The University offers a self-study system based on textbooks, face-to-face tutorials, and a web-based instructional environment. Especially in the COVID-19 pandemic, the University performed the lessons online absolutely through MS-Teams and Zoom Meetings.

Microsoft Teams is a workspace for real-time teamwork and networking, workshops, file and software sharing, and even the odd emoji—it's the best chat app for the company. All are in one spot, out in the open, where everybody can see it. The University chose the method for E-teaching and learning for the following reasons: Text, audio, video, and file sharing are all included in this rich chat. Having a private conversation to create an idea before sharing it with the whole company; All of the users' notes, docs, and other documents are kept in one location.

Zoom Meetings is a simple-to-use platform that combines cloud video conferencing, remote meetings, community chat, and a software-defined conference room solution.

In a usual context, E-teaching and learning are optional or non-mandatory. Course sites really do not replace textbooks or face-to-face tutorials. However, in the context of COVID-19 pandemic, these activities are necessary to preserve the learning process among students. Through these systems, course sites simplify organizational procedures and enrich students' learning opportunities and experiences.

Participants

Participants were 15 lecturers and 100 students of UFLS – UDN. Lecturers had at least 5 years of teaching experience and have experienced in the ways of distance education and been trained for using these systems for E-teaching in this period. Students are in the second year of English major in the University and have enrolled in the English speaking skill courses.

3.2 Design of the Study

The aim of the study is to assess the effectiveness of E-teaching in teaching students to talk by using a set of well-structured questionnaires to provide a study context. To agree on the results of this practice, this analysis uses a descriptive test design. The researchers were able to collect data from a wide variety of respondents on the effects of speaking ability E-teaching and learning thanks to this study design. This aided in the analysis of the responses received in terms of how they impact educational content.

3.3 Data collection & analysis

Data collection through questionnaires: Questionnaires are the most common method for gathering primary data in the realistic analysis since the researcher may choose the sample size and types of questions to ask. Initially, the questionnaire architecture was coded and mixed up based on uniform constructs from individual topics. As a result, the questionnaire yielded useful information that was needed to meet the dissertation's objectives. A five-item Likert scale was used to construct the questionnaires. Each argument was rated on a five-point Likert scale, with one equaling "strongly support" and five equaling "strongly disagree." The responses were totaled to generate a ranking on each of the tests.

Participants' consent was approved at the class after they came back to school through the questionnaires, which were given to them directly. This 5-minute survey was conducted by the participants and sent to the researcher. The thesis was carried out in such a way that the participants' privacy was covered. To answer the questions raised, the analysis gathered quantitative data.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1 Activities of E-Teaching for Speaking Skills

- Lecturers prepared lesson planning for teaching speaking skills online. This is an important step for teaching speaking online. They consider the learning, their requirements, and the goal of students' learning and have some grading criteria to assess the progress of the students.

- Lecturers focus on making and dividing activities to prepare daily and weekly to achieve lessons' goals.

- Lecturers organize all the lessons and activities for students in a chronology.

- Students follow the instructions of lecturers to prepare the content.

- Students practice within the chatroom.

- Lecturers give some quizzes or exams which can be conducted to help students memorize and recite dialogues, looking at pictures and describing them, role-playing, conducting group discussions in the chatroom.

These activities help students get the chance to complete the tasks and practice what is in the

textbook. The student's success in interacting in the chatroom can be used as an assessment tool to assess the student's learning. They also help teachers make amendments, assist students in struggling areas, and plan how to perform better.

4.2 The efficiency of E-teaching for speaking skills for major students at UFLS-UDN

Table 1.

The comments of students on E-teaching for speaking skills

Questions / Statements	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
Learning speaking online is interesting	11	87	0	2	0
Learning speaking online is comfortable because of being seated at home	93	2	1	2	2
Students could study more effectively and productively	67	14	9	5	5
The website use of the school in learning speaking is stable and in good condition	75	12	7	3	3
Student has the right to get in contact in case of any problems	87	7	2	4	0
Students of the system could easily access the content of lessons	64	34	1	1	0
The knowledge which is provided within e-learning appropriate to the student's needs	45	47	6	1	1
Students could get education together in a virtual classroom	54	40	4	2	0

As can be seen from Table 1, the students of UFLS - UDN highly rated the effects of E-teaching on speaking skills. With the question *"Learning speaking online is interesting"* and a five-point Likert-type scale, for which 1 = "strongly agree" to 5 = "strongly disagree", we have been found that all the students are interested in learning online. However, the result of the survey dropped at the scale 2 "agree" (87%). With the question *"Learning speaking online is comfortable because of being seated at home"*, we have been found that the students gave the answer "strongly agree" (93%). During Covid-19, the students of UFLS – UDN were in the home and attended classes actively with big support from the school. In fact, home is always a very comfortable place, especially for introverted students.

Table 2.

The comments of the lecturers on E-teaching for speaking skills

Questions / Statements	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
The website use of the school in learning speaking is stable and in good condition	86	7	7	0	0
Students could easily access the content of lessons	86	14	0	0	0
The knowledge which is provided within e-learning appropriate to the student's needs	100	0	0	0	0
Students could get education together in a virtual classroom	100	0	0	0	0
Teachers are trained in information technologies and Internet in order to gather with the students in virtual classrooms	100	0	0	0	0

Besides, we have received the result with high rates for the last questions in the level of "strongly agree" from the lecturers surveyed. According to the educators interviewed, the majority clearly agree with the following statements: "the knowledge given by e-learning is suitable for the student's needs," "Students should receive education in a virtual classroom," and "Teachers are educated in information technology and the Internet in order to gather with students in virtual classrooms" (100 percent).

In fact, the efficiency in E-Teaching for speaking skills offers teachers and students of UFLS-UDN many advantages:

For the English major students of UFLS-UDN:

- getting interesting, comfortable feelings;

- studying more effectively and productively;

- having the right to get in contact in case of any problems;

- accessing the content of lessons easily;

- being provided the appropriate knowledge within e-learning;

- getting education together in a virtual classroom;

For the lecturers of UFLS-UDN:

- shaping the online classes to best suit their students;

- leaving them with knowledge and course satisfaction;

- being trained in information technologies and the Internet in order to gather with the students in virtual classrooms.

In general, using technical methods in E-teaching allows the learner to be trained. Students (from various locations) could learn together in a virtual classroom. The lecturers could pose questions to the students in the classroom, and the students could answer through their computer screens. It allows for the quality and appropriateness of instructional resources to be reviewed and renewed. Technology not only makes education more appealing by rich audio-visual presentations, but it also improves learning levels. E-learning allows students to gain skills without having to attend classes. As a result, they will save money on lodging and transportation.

However, with open the suggestion "Please give the ways to improve the efficiency of E-teaching activities at UFLS-UDN" in the questionnaires, we propose suitable and feasible solutions as follows:

- The school should establish virtual labs which provide the chance to follow the developments in education.

- Since many e-learning programs need shared engagement through technical resources and gathering with their students in virtual classrooms, teachers of e-learning programs must have extensive in-service preparation.

5. Conclusion

The findings indicated that the information technology infrastructure system of the school meets the needs of online teaching. Most of the teachers mastered E-teaching equipment, especially supporting software, applying teaching methods suitable to the online teaching model to integrate polarize learners' learning activities. Moreover, most of the students are self-consciously participating in the form of E-teaching and doing exercises as well as answering questions posed by teachers in the learning process. The study also supposes some suitable and feasible solutions to improve the efficiency of E-teaching activities at UFLS-UDN in particular, at universities, faculties of foreign languages in Viet Nam in general for second-year students of English major.

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Biodata

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Difficulties and some suggested solutions in studying online of the students in Van Lang University during the Covid-19 pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The essay helps readers better visualize the difficulties and propose online learning solutions for students at Van Lang University . Our team created a Google form and surveyed more than 100 people. After the results, our team conducted the complex analysis as well as proposed solutions. There are objective and subjective causes that come from students and schools. However, the essay will mainly focus on the difficulties from the student's perspective. The possible challenges teachers and students face in an online learning environment must be considered to ensure the student's success. Therefore, there are two roles in e-learning that must be considered when discussing ways to improve these challenges. The first is the role of the teacher, and the second, the role of the students (Le & Truong, 2021).

Keywords: difficulties of online learning, difficulties from the perspective of students**.**

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 has led to school closures around the world. Globally, more than 1.2 billion students are out of the classroom. As a result, education is conducted remotely and on digital platforms. Krajka (2021) claim that the Corona Virus created a chance for schools to employ the distance teaching and learning. To meet significant needs, many online learning platforms provide free access to their services, including platforms such as Google Meets, Microsoft Teams...

In Vietnam, to combat the spread of coronavirus and maintain healthy social distancing, schools across the country have temporarily closed and changed significantly, with the special development of e-learning, which quickly shifts from in-person learning to distance learning;

However, most Vietnamese students have difficulty learning online due to limitations in interaction, equipment, communication with teachers, and the stress of learning online for too long. Moreover, they find it difficult to interact with others in one lesson and are unable to answer flexible questions;

From the experience of our team, students of Van Lang University, most students have difficulty studying online at the university, and this will be tested with the support of individual examples. There have been a few studies about e-learning and its drawbacks: (Nguyen & Duong, 2021)

Vietnam is rapidly developing in terms of the internet with increasingly high speed and low cost. This leads to Vietnam is the 6th largest internet user in Asia and 12th globally with 64 million people in 2018. Socially, Vietnam is also in a "golden population period". The number of people under 30 years old in 2014 was 45,462 million, accounting for 50.2% of the population General Statistics Office year 2016 people with easy access to information and communication technology. Therefore, Vietnam is considered a country with great potential for developing E-learning. According to market research organization Ambient Insight, Vietnam is in the top 10 countries in the forecasted E-learning development rate for 2014-2016. Vietnam's E-learning market is estimated at no less than $2 billion and has a growth rate of 40%. However, most focus on exam preparation, foreign language training, and soft skills.

Although Universities in Vietnam have been interested in E-learning quite early, until recently, the overall situation has not prospered and still has some problems. Those challenges include institutional, cultural, technological, educational, and ethical aspects:

- Vietnam has had macro policies from the Party and the State on promoting the application of information technology in higher education. However, the implementation of policies in practice is not good, especially in the field of distance education.
- Inadequate legal framework. There are only regulations on general E-learning conditions (Circular 12/2016 / TT-BGDĐT) and the concept of E-learning in the Regulation on distance learning (Circular 10/2017 / TT-BGDĐT). The application of E-learning for formal training and postgraduate training does not have a clear legal basis to apply.
- Universities do not have funding for development investment in the context of non-state funding. Projects are usually carried out with foreign funding (Hanoi University of Science and Technology Project and Hanoi Open University Institute from Korean support). Due to the lack of linkages between universities, the spillover effect of these meager investments remains low. The capacity of lecturers and educational management staff has not met the requirements of E-learning development, both in terms of technology and content.

In short, the development of E-learning, especially in higher education in Vietnam, is limited compared to its potential.

There are a lot of experiences in those researches of the authors about online learning and the disadvantages of online learning during the pandemic. However, there is no information available on problems in distant learning of students at Van Lang University. Thus, this study about learning online at Van Lang University is really important. Once the causes are found out, solutions to the problem can be worked out (Pham & Vo, 2021)

The purpose of the research
The purpose of the study was to help the students in Van Lang University find appropriate solutions for personal difficulties of learning online during the pandemic and help the teacher with better

ideas in planning the lessons through students' experiences. Besides, this study also helps Van Lang University find out the best method for teaching online in the pandemic period.

The research is carried out in an attempt to find out answers to the following research questions:

- What is the reality of learning online of students in Van Lang University during the Covid-19?
- What are the difficulties in learning online of the students at the school?
- What is the suggested solution for those difficulties?

The significance of the research

The result of this study may suggest a hypothesis for further research into common disadvantages that students face when learning online, through which they can promote a number of solutions to overcome. In addition, the result of the study could be useful for teachers who are responsible for making plans to help improve the online lesson, to transmit knowledge effectively to students. By conducting a test of 100 students ranging from first-year to senior year, our group can point out some drawbacks of the online study at Van Lang University and find a way to improve the quality of online learning and interactions between teachers and students as well. Our school does not conduct distance learning programs like others, so when an epidemic breaks out, the preparation of the school and students in online learning is more or less affected. Therefore, our research topics focus on the common issues of online learning such as networking, the devices that students use to learn, the interaction between teachers and students, and effectiveness after a lesson.

THE METHOD

In this section, you can get what the actual process that we have taken to reach our purpose was. Mainly, the population, the sampling technique, some restrictions, the procedures, materials, and important methods are also mentioned in the research. Moreover, this section also contains necessary details for other researchers to help them conduct similar studies and make it easier for readers to grasp the research.

Online learning is becoming popular during the time of the epidemic outbreak. However, do the students of the Van Lang University find it difficult to overcome? We research difficulties and offer appropriate solutions for both students and schools (Le & Truong, 2021)

Sampling techniques

Most students at Van Lang University have their own laptops and are interested in learning online during a coronavirus outbreak. Therefore, we believe they can easily cooperate to complete the survey. The study is conducted on 100 students currently studying at the main campus of Van Lang University. We choose Van Lang University students because we are also studying and working at the school at the present time. So we understood the difficulty of an outbreak, and the school turned to online learning. The scope is open to all students from all majors at school as the disease affects the whole school, and above all, we need to come up with solutions not only for students

but also for the school. We sent students survey links and answer sheets to answer 13 multiple choice questions about how difficult it is to learn online and received many comments about this inconvenience and many more questions about this inconvenience. The solutions of the students were presented in the survey. For survey purposes, we have selected students from a variety of majors, including full-time and part-time education. The group then divided into three small groups and discussed providing 13 stories about the school's students. The key is Online learning practice (5 questions), difficulty (4 questions), and some solutions (4 questions). The story has four options, three referees are interested in the main, and the last sentence is "Other" is "Other" that contains student opinion and might give me a good idea for their contest. I. The next step, we created stories on Google after linking with students in all the articles through the school's social networks. We have collected and analyzed 100 statements. We have two votes (situation, problem, solution) and finally conclude in the discussion set (Le & Truong, 2021)

Restrictions

Online learning is a fairly wide range and studied by many experts. In addition, online learning depends on the purpose of each individual. Since we are students at Van Lang University, this project taken at our school would be more suitable and convenient for researchers and those surveyed. Moreover, due to time constraints, we could not learn in-depth about technology, lesson details, or teachers' difficulties.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

We analyze three items: Current situation, Difficulties, and Suggested solutions from the survey results obtained. The Current situation will include a figure analyzing student trends when studying online during the epidemic season. The Difficulties section will include two figures that analyze students' problems while studying online, and the Suggested solution section will include two figures that show how to solve the problems of online learning for both students and teachers of Van Lang University.

The two figures above analyze how Van Lang University students' interest in online learning and how online learning affects their academic performance. 60% of respondents feel that they are quite interested in online learning (Fig. 1). This is more than the number of people who do not pay too much attention and are very interested in learning online.
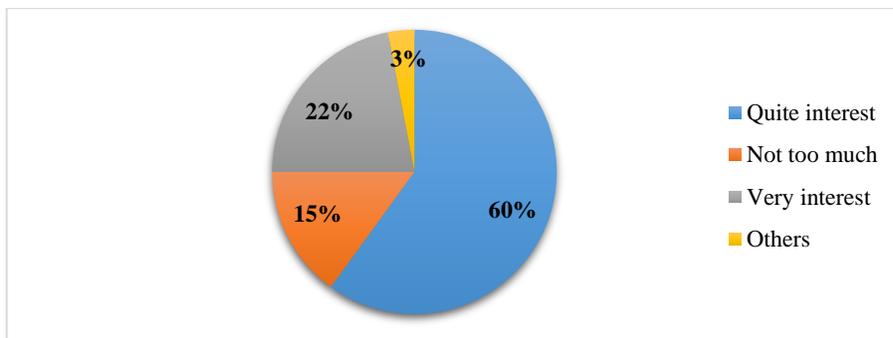
Figure 1 shows the interest of students in online learning.

This leads to the situation when being asked: How does online learning affect the quality of your learning? The majority of responses are Normal (65%). This means that the quality of online learning, as well as schooling, is not much different. It is worth noting that 20% of the respondents think that online learning adversely affects their learning performance (Fig. 2). This can be explained by the fact that most students have never studied online with their friends and teachers before. So even if they have sufficient preparation or lectures, they are still not ready psychologically and feel uncomfortable communicating with teachers and classmates. On the other hand, the quality of networking and learning equipment of students who do not meet the lecture requirements (learning with phones and tablets instead of laptops) is another reason affecting students' academic results.
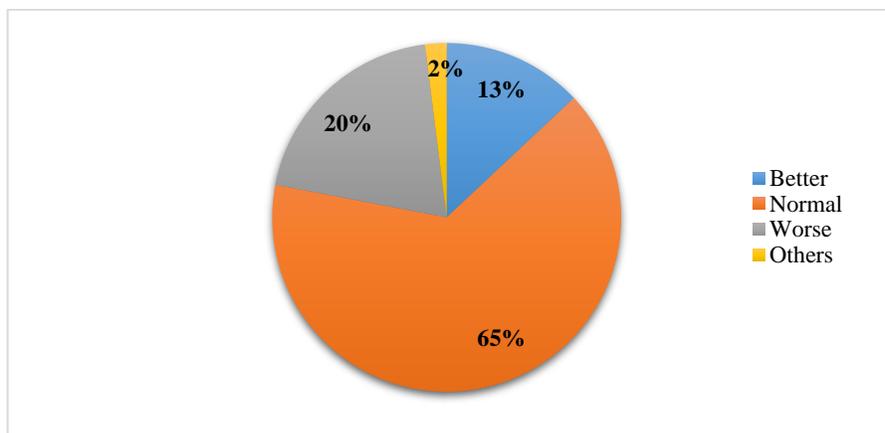
Figure 2 shows how online learning affects the learning quality of students.

As can be seen in Figure 3, up to 70 students find it inconvenient to study online using smartphones. Meanwhile, only four people find it difficult to learn online using tablets. This is easy to see because tablets have many advantages over smartphones. For example, it has a larger screen, more stable configuration. This makes learning with this device even more convenient than with smartphones. Still, 20 students surveyed said it was still difficult to use a laptop, even though it was optimal for online learning. Laptops cannot switch to 4G networks like tablets or smartphones, the students said. In addition, the remaining comments do not think that there is inconvenience

when using the above devices. Some students use all three devices for effective online learning, with results displayed graphically
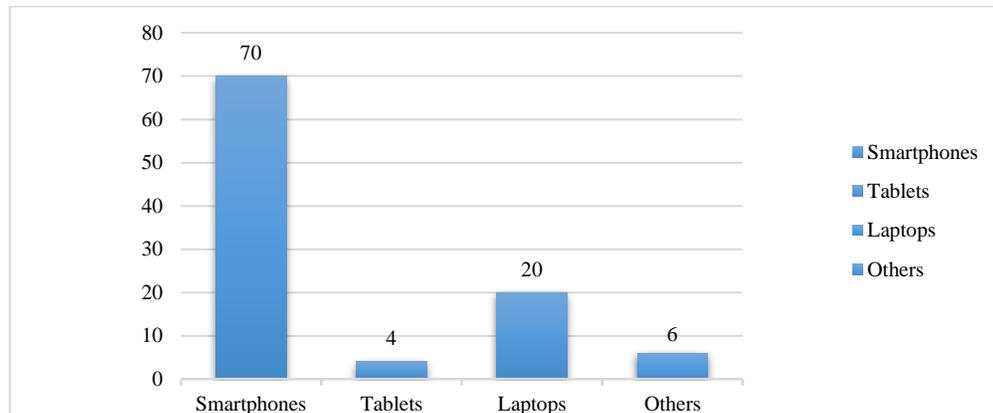
Figure 3 shows the limitations of online learning devices for students.

Through survey data, up to 45% are students. They get tired of having to focus on the device for a long time. In addition, some people reported feeling headaches, dizziness, and eye strain when studying for a long time. This concentration prevents some students from acquiring new knowledge effectively (20%). Or it may be that the internet connection is not stable while studying with the students. This opinion accounts for 30% of the students surveyed. These results were correspondent to Bui et al. (2021) who found that the students often faced with technical problems as they took online classes, such as poor Internet connection, poor computer skills, and outside-noise during their studies. This explains the problem of asynchronous network infrastructure, leading to an unstable network, making it difficult for students in remote areas to access lectures as well as connect with lecturers. The research results are shown through the statistical diagram
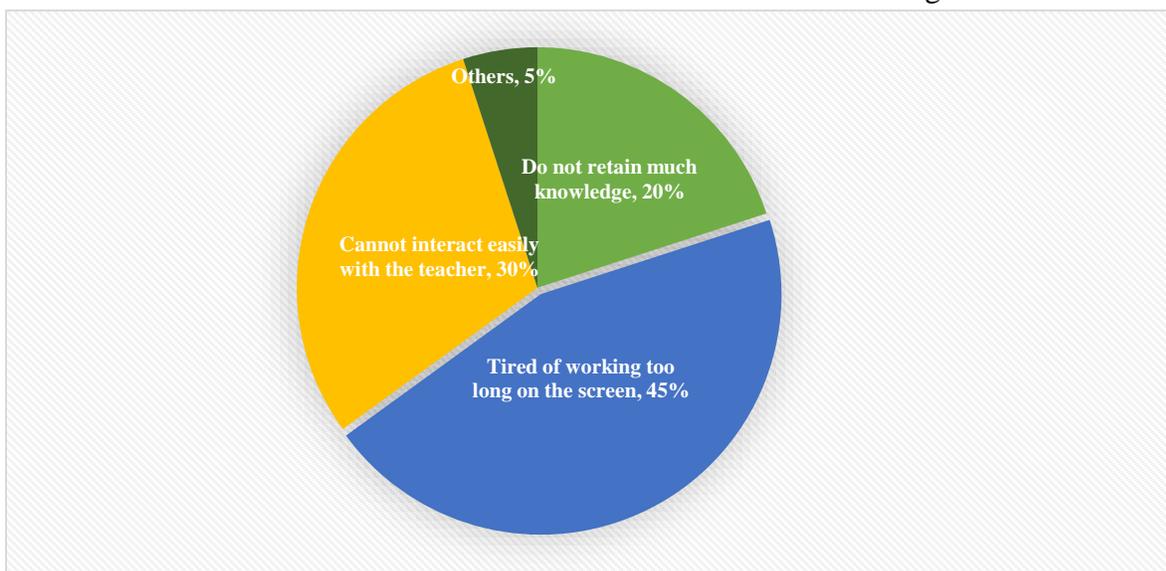
Figure 4 shows how students feel after an online lesson.

As illustrated in Figure 5, it is easy to see that nearly 60 students are proposing to shorten their course average online time. As analyzed above, 45% of students feel tired when online classes take too long (more than 2 hours per subject). However, 45 students were asked to keep their study time when asked.
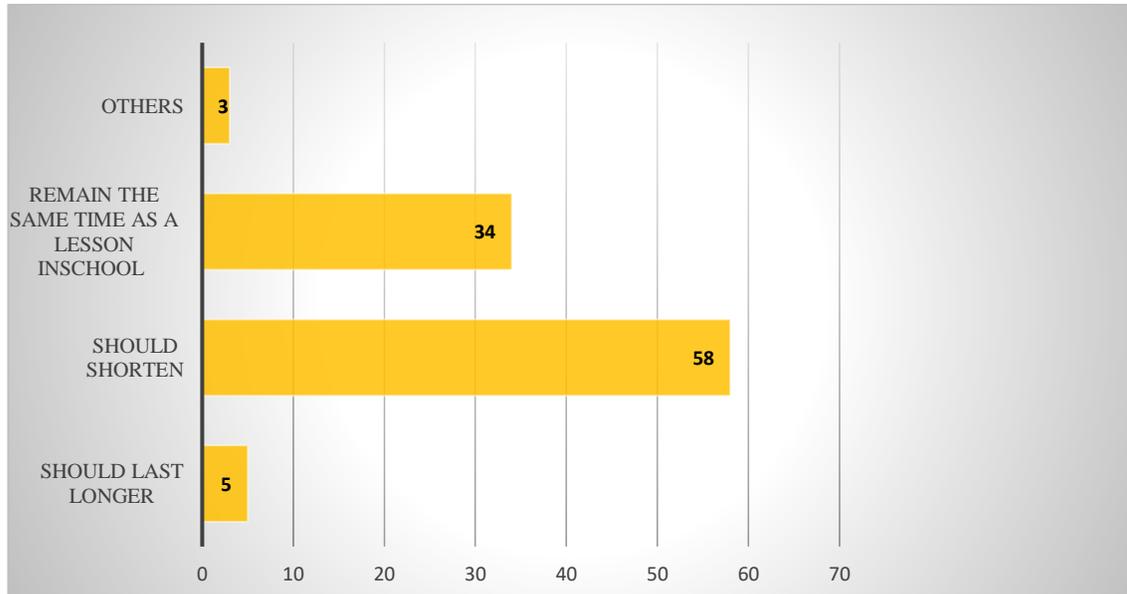
Figure 5 shows students' suggestions for the average time of the online study.

This is consistent with the survey where 65% of respondents said the quality of learning online has not decreased (figure 2). In addition, due to the unstable network connection, interrupted interaction between students and faculty as well as comparison (Figure 4) leads some students to suggest extending the time to study online to keep up. teachers account for 30%.

Chart (Figure 6) Research shows that it is very important to categorize subjects to apply online learning method through our survey. Up to 35% of respondents think that some subjects should be included in online learning form. However, because some subjects are inclined in theory and practice, there are 37% of respondents saying that learning should be alternated between online and classroom learning. In addition, there are still many opinions that should only study online when there is a social gap (27%). This explains why 15% of students answered that they do not pay too much attention to Online learning as (Figure 1) listed above.
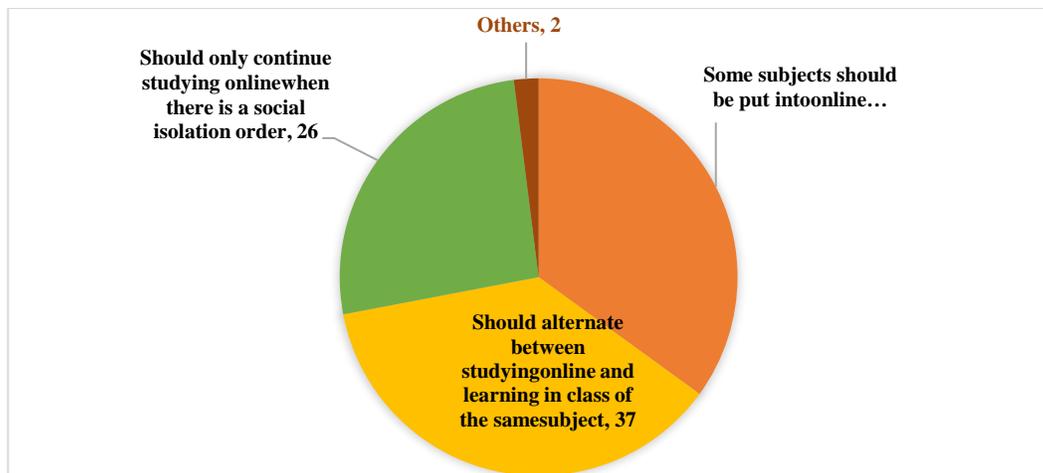
Figure 6 shows students' suggestions for online learning after the quarantine.

The main purpose of this project is to find out solutions for the difficulties of students in Van Lang University in learning online during the pandemic. So after surveying more than 100 students, we found some difficulties and analyzed them in the Results section. So this will be a summary of the ideas of the topic, which is mainly about the difficulties of online learning for students at the school, and the solutions that many students accept, as well as the reasons why to the difficulties and limitations of the topic. Finally, there will be theoretical and practical applications of our group's topic.

As mentioned above, the topic of our group was discussed among the members and divided into three sections, but the original purpose of the topic was to study the difficulties and find solutions. For example, students were unable to keep up with lectures due to unstable internet connection, or tired from sitting on computers for too long, to untangle students in online learning at the school and help lecturers and the school organize subjects more conveniently and effectively.

CONCLUSION

After discussion, our team synthesized four questions corresponding to 5 difficulties of online learning for Van Lang University students in the context that the school had to switch to online learning due to the epidemic. Questions related to the internet connection where students learn online, the devices that students use to learn, the difficulties in online group learning between lecturers and students as well as the interaction between members in the classroom, and finally, the psychology of the students after going through a regular online lesson.

In addition to the four difficulties that were discussed and selected by our team, suggestions for solutions to overcome those difficulties were also included in the survey and achieved positive results from the students. Suggested solutions related to the average online learning time, the selection of appropriate equipment to meet online learning needs, recommendations for upgrading the Internet connection where students study. And finally, the most important, it is suggested whether or not to continue the online learning form after the social isolation order.

As mentioned in Restriction, our research topic is still limited due to limited time and simple research tools (Google form). In addition, the team did not go into in-depth analysis of the technologies applied in online learning, as well as narrow the scope of the survey only to Van Lang University, and students studying at the school, aiming at propose reasonable and timely solutions to overcome difficulties during the isolation period.

Recommendations further research

Our research paper was conducted within a month and brought about certain results. However, there are many other related issues that the group has not had time to expand. Hopefully, this research paper will serve as a foundation for further research groups to study more about online learning at universities nationwide.

In addition, our team hopes that this research topic will be useful for Van Lang University in effectively implementing online learning for some future subjects.

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The Challenges of E-learning Through Microsoft Teams for EFL Students at Van Lang University in COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

E-learning, which is gradually becoming popular all over the world, is broadly used in higher education. Tamm (2019) found that e-learning means the learners use products of technology to acquire knowledge. Rouse (2020) defined Microsoft Teams as software in the Office 360 software suite. Its notable functions include file sharing, messaging, video calling, and video conferences. In previous research papers, there have been topics related to online learning in COVID-19. Still, there may be no topic related to a specific software like Microsoft Teams, so the study will focus only on analyzing the difficulties of EFL students at Van Lang University. At the same time, they take an online course via Microsoft Teams in COVID-19. Both quantitative and qualitative methods do the research for 144 EFL students in Van Lang university to find the answer to the problems. One of the most interesting things about the research is the study being done after the outbreak of corona disease; therefore, all the survey participants had to study online. To sum up, this paper is suggested that identifying these challenges may help English teachers and instructors in well-designing teaching methods. That is the reason why they will have a right look at the roles of e-learning, so the result of the research is something worth looking forward to.

Key words: *E-learning, Microsoft Teams, chanllenges, undergraduates, EFL students, Covid-19.*

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, with the growth of technological expansion, E-learning, which incorporates technology into teaching, has profoundly affected the education system. Distance education or E-learning can offer some solutions to overcome the complications of traditional methods, which increases the effectiveness and efficiency of education. About 69.1 percent of chief academic leaders believed that online learning is critical to the long-term strategy (Blair, 2012). Learning through the Internet or E-learning is predicted to play a significant role in the near future of Vietnamese education. "Young Vietnamese nowadays are fully acquainted with the internet and smart devices, and parents are more open to new ideas compared to a decade ago, when the Education Services and Investment JSC (hocmai.vn) was established" (Do, 2018, para.2). Babson Survey Research Group (2020) study shows that not less than 30% of American high school students join at least an e-learning class. (pra.3). That statistic proves the influence of e-learning in our modern life. Dumbauld (2020) said that e-learning has a lower cost. You will save more money rather than paying for school facilities (pra. 4).

Although E-learning can help students' learning process more efficiently, there are various challenges to overcome while using it. In terms of teaching English, teachers need to acquire technical knowledge and deeply understand the difficulties that students have to face when using E-learning to learn English. Nearly half of the participants who have an E-learning course at Tehran University of Medical Sciences had problems accessing the technology (Shahmoradi, Changizi, Mehraeen, Jannat, Behrooz, and Hosseini, 2018). In Viet Nam, the problem is that students and teachers have difficulty in using E-learning resulting in limited learning opportunities for students (Do, 2018). Due to Corona Virus, most of universities and schools in Vietnam ran the e-learning program to keep the education moving (Pham & Vo, 2021). According to Tran (2021), Microsoft Teams is a new tool for university lecturers who had been forced to use it during the critical period of Covid-19. At Van Lang University (VLU), E-learning has been applied in teaching English to EFL students during the Covid-19 pandemic via Microsoft Teams. However, most EFL students in Van Lang university struggled with their learning due to a lack of basic computer skills and network problems.

Lack of human interaction is another example of the disadvantage of e-learning. Armstrong (2013) claimed that e-learning could not offer face-to-face interaction for the students like when they are at school. For example, they learn how to make new friends, be patient, compete to be better, and avoid disappointment (pra.4). Trent found that whenever students have questions needed to be answered, the instructors cannot be available all time; moreover, emails could be missed for some reason, so it is hard for them to have an in-depth understanding of their lessons (pra. 3).

According to a survey of Santa Clara University in 2019, Broderick found that more than 50% of the e-learning learners said that they overvalued the advantages of e-learning (pra. 2). On the contrary, McWilliams (2019) pointed that the rate of students who do irrelevant activities while joining online courses is higher (pra.4).

Bastrikin (2020) reported in Online Education Statistics that in 2017, 25% of the total 5.5 million undergraduates join at least one course online, and more than 58% choose to study thoroughly online (pra.1). Kumar (2020) claimed that it had been dramatically increased in recent years because of e-learning's low cost, accessibility, and convenience (pra.1). Online learning is the future method of education, especially in Covid 19 pandemic.

Learning is an integral part of human life, and the development of the Internet has dramatically changed the way people study. News (2015) found that the appearance of information technology and the Internet has helped people easier to approve knowledge, a study in better conditions, etc. (para. 2).

News (2015) also claimed that nowadays, e-learning affects not only the students but also the employees. More and more companies use e-learning for training their staff. That means e-learning has become essential for both education and business (pra. 9).

For these reasons, we can see the significance of e-learning in our modern life. Thus, the primary purpose of this paper is to explore the challenges in studying English via Microsoft Teams that EFL students at Van Lang University have to cope with while learning via Microsoft Teams software. From that point, English instructors can find solutions to advance their teaching methods and improve the learning and teaching process.

Significant of the study

There is no doubt that E-learning has gradually adapted to the syllabus of teaching. It becomes ubiquitous in the education system, especially in teaching English. Despite the vast benefits brought out by e-learning, it is a struggle for the student at the same time. The education leaders need to have a deep understanding of the defects of online learning. Due to this reason, our research will point out some common challenges that EFL students, practically, EFL students in Van Lang University have to deal with when taking online courses via Microsoft Teams software. Each student has different problems when studying online, and teachers will identify the learning difficulties. As a result, the principal, teachers, or instructors can find out the solutions and improve the quality of English teaching through Microsoft Teams.

Study scope

We decided to choose this topic to find out the difficulties of using the Internet in learning. This paper collects the problems students usually cope with and build a survey in ten weeks, including 144 EFL students in Van Lang University who use E-learning. "The challenges of E-learning for EFL students at Van Lang university" is aimed to help students better their distance learning process while a pandemic is taking place. Besides, there is some useful information for teachers to examine their teaching styles.

LITERATURE REVIEW

E-learning

E-Learning (Electronic Learning) has become a breakthrough in education and widely used during the covid 19 pandemics in recent years. It is a term with many different perspectives and understandings. E-Learning is to use of Web and Internet technologies in learning (Horton, 2006). Another definition of E-Learning is that it delivers a learning, training, or education program by electronic means (Li, Lau, and Dharmendran, 2009). Additionally, E-learning is defined as a technological conveyed means to support learning (Clark & Mayer, 2016). In conclusion, The Economic Times stated that E-learning could be termed as an electronic network-enabled transfer of knowledge and skills, and the delivery of education reaches a large number of recipients at the same or different times. Earlier, it was not accepted wholeheartedly as it was assumed that this system lacked the human element required in learning.

Challenges of E-learning

E-learning is bringing students a lot of benefits; nevertheless, this kind of technique has several disadvantages. The students who take online courses may face challenges that they would have never experienced during traditional teaching and learning environment (Tsai, 2009). Zounek & Sudický (2013) said that students might lack sufficient knowledge and skills to use these technologies efficiently to enhance their study experiences. For instance, once a computer framework or network system is down, students immediately get frustrated since they may not be able to follow the lessons. Moreover, many learners have struggled to motivate themselves to keep going in a distance learning class. "Face-to-face communication with professors, peer-to-peer activities, and strict schedules all work in unison to keep the students from falling off track during

their studies," as mentioned by Tamm (2019). In short, these things above are some of the many challenges that e-learning has to deal with.

Microsoft Teams

Hubbard & Bailey (2018) stated that Microsoft Teams could be considered as "one supper application that integrates many different apps into one program." According to Tsai (2018), Microsoft Teams offer usefulness that email cannot, including visit rooms and video conferencing. Microsoft Teams is a chat and collaboration platform designed to provide an easier way for small groups of people to communicate and collaborate (Heath, 2019). Another definition of Microsoft Teams is a system that offers chat, meetings, notes, and attachments ("Microsoft Teams," 2020). By this time, Microsoft Teams has proved it's useful to the user among the world.

Previous Research Studies

Numerous research studies have been conducted in terms of the Microsoft Team effect in education. In 2020, research titled "Exploring EFL Students' Perception of Online Learning via Microsoft Teams: University Level in Indonesia" was carried out by Rojabi and Ahmad, R. with twenty-eight sixth-semester students at Open University (Universitas Terbuka-UPBJJ Jember). Data were collected by using questionnaires through Google forms to gain information about the EFL students' perception of online learning via Microsoft Teams. The questionnaires data obtained were analyzed descriptively. They found out that students considered E-learning via Microsoft Teams as a new and motivating method due to this interaction and learning environment. As a result, it can be easier to access the learning materials.

A current study conducted by Rababah (2020) with six EFL students was chosen using a focus group interview. By using the qualitative method, they expressed their attitudes towards online learning through Microsoft Teams. There are some benefits and drawbacks are mentioned. Convenience, time efficiency, and shared learning materials are three good points. And two negative points were noted as well, technical problems and some specific exercises.

Alabay (2018) conducted another descriptive survey applied in quantitative method with 21 French prep-class students. The data was gathered through students' exam papers for purposeful sampling. At the end of the study, the results showed that the online learning process at a public university and online exams using Microsoft Teams software have been more effective and successful than traditional ones.

In India, two researchers Gohiya and Gohiya (2020) conducted a survey for those who participated in online courses through Microsoft Teams' online platform by filling in the google form. The feedback form consists of mixed questions from the Likert scale, yes/no responses to descriptive questions—State medical university designed, validated, collected, and analyzed the data online using Microsoft Excel. Appropriate statistics were applied. They received 2,791 feedbacks from four years, and the results were optimistic. Almost all of the students (98%) experienced the learning process on time and felt teachers' friendly and helpful attitude during class. 88% of students were satisfied when discussing lessons online. Besides, nearly 80% of students understood the lesson clearly. The teacher's class preparation was excellent in 99% of responses.

From 2016 to 2017, research titled "The challenges of E-learning system: Higher educational institutions perspective" was carried out by Shahmoradi, Changizi, Mehraeen, Bashiri, Jannat, and

Hosseini. This study concentrated on investigating the challenges of the E-learning system at Tehran University of Medical Sciences. This paper was a descriptive and cross-sectional one that consisted of 300 students who have an E-learning course at Tehran University of Medical Sciences selected randomly by asking them some questions. SPSS software was used to analyze the data. According to the study, about half of the participants (40%) had difficulty using the technology, and merely 26.4% of them were familiar with the E-learning system.

Luaran, Samsuri, Nadzri, and Rom (2014) conducted a research paper to evaluate learners' opinions about the effectiveness of e-learning, know the advantages and disadvantages of e-learning, and measure the degree to which learners are exposed to e-learning. Specifically, they used the survey research method and surveyed 44 middle school students. The research shows that learners have positive attitudes towards e-learning. Besides, they also complain about the negative things about e-learning. The research also proves that even though e-learning develops, the role of an instructor is always the most important.

Ellis, Ginns, and Piggott (2009) conducted a study to point out the main aspects of e-learning that will affect students' learning process. They used the survey method in the research. 200 3rd year economics students were participating in answering the questionnaires. They divided the respondents into two groups and had a result that: students with a low evaluation of the directly impacting aspects of e-learning had lower learning outcomes than students who appreciated those aspects, so they concluded that students had different perspectives and approaches to online learning, and their perspectives and approaches decided their learning outcomes.

In March 2020, a study – "The Challenges and Prospects of Using E-learning Among EFL Students in Bisha University," was conducted by Mohammed Mohammed Nasser Hassan Ja'ashan. This study concentrated on exploring the challenges that students face in learning English as a foreign language when using the E-learning system at the University of Bisha. Besides, it investigates whether using E-learning is beneficial to EFL students in their learning English to the degree anticipated. There were 36 teaching staff and 261 EFL students at the University of Bisha - English department included in this paper. The researcher developed questionnaires that encompass three domains for both teaching staff and students separately to collect required data for analysis. The findings reveal that the major challenges of E-learning at the University of Bisha were such as academic, administrative, and technical challenges regarding E-learning, etc. It also shows that students aware of the conveniences of using E-learning.

Another research with the title "Challenges faced by distance learners to learn the English language at the school of distance education, University Sains Malaysia," was conducted by Sai, Lin & Belaja (2013). The participants were asked to do the questionnaires, which include three sections about the challenges of learning English via distance learning during their first Intensive course lecture. Totally 512 students were involved and gave questionnaires. The purpose of this study was to examine the distant students' perspectives about the difficulties that they have to confront in learning English. The result has shown that the most challenging is lack of face-to-face interaction, which leads to limited second language acquisition.

 In 2016, after three years from their previous research titled "Challenges faced by distance learners to learn the English language at the school of distance education, University Sains Malaysia," Sai, Lin & Belaja continued to release a study named "Which aspects of the English language do distance learners find difficult?" in the attempt to explore what aspects of English language that online students found difficult to study through distance learning. This study reported research

findings on distance learners at the School of Distance Education (SDE), University Sains Malaysia (USM). 512 students out of 1028 students who took on the JUE300 English II course participated in this survey. In general, the results show that the participants reported confronting most challenges in the aspects of speaking (45%), vocabulary (45.35%), and grammar (41.1%) while learning English via distance learning at SDE and USM. Besides, the research also stated that their responsibility and hours spent studying English could impact their perceptions and performance. In the case of the SDE distance learners, just five audio-recorded lectures were putting in the E-learning gateway, which students can make their own decision to access or not access.

Research Gap

In general, these researchers above all point out the advantages of E-learning via Microsoft Teams outweigh the disadvantages. However, when this method is first applied at VLU University, the students have some difficulties when taking lessons online. Some limitations need to be improved to have a better distance learning experience from internet connection to peer interaction or teacher-student interaction and other barriers mentioned in our research. Our study is to find out the challenges of E-learning for EFL students in VLU university, which clarifies some common difficulties when applied E-learning via Microsoft Teams in higher education in VN. From our study, Van Lang University and EFL teachers' leaders can identify the challenges of E-learning and the difficulties of EFL students. Then, it is easy to bring out solutions to help EFL students overcome these challenges.

Research question

The following questions will be attempted to answer to meet the aim of this research:

1. What are the technical problems of E-learning via Microsoft Teams that EFL students at Van Lang University have to deal with?
2. What are the difficulties of EFL students at Van Lang University when joining an E-learning course via Microsoft Teams?

Methodology

Data for this study were taken from a survey of 144 third-year EFL Students at Van Lang University. The research is conducted in the first semester of the 2020 academic year, meaning that right after the semester which these students have to take an online course because of the corona epidemic. Previously, Van Lang University applied online learning, but it was not popular, and very few students joined the online courses. But because of the sudden epidemic, the students were forced to take online courses to keep up with learning progress, and Microsoft Teams was used. A passive participation in such courses left students with a lot of experience, and better than anyone else, they cleared the challenges of e-learning through Microsoft teams. That is the reason why they are the most suitable for the survey.

The questionnaires of the survey belong to the following issues:

challenges related to MS Teams software, challenges related to the necessary and sufficient conditions for online learning, and other related issues. The questionnaires are given in the form of yes / no questions, multiple-choice questions, and assessment questions. Besides, some

interview questions were randomly selected from among those invited to do the survey. The interview questions related to learners' opinions about the problems they themselves face when they study online through MS Teams and the negative aspects of e-learning.

The research paper mainly used the quantitative method, 144 respondents would answer simple close-ended questions by choosing one of the available answers. The research was designed to help statistically evaluate the difficulties the Van Lang university's EFL undergraduates face while learning online through MS Teams during the Covid-19 epidemic. Five interviewees answer open-ended questions with the qualitative method to get their specific thoughts on the given issues.

Results and Discussion

The results of the study would be presented in this section. Both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed to respond to the research questions.

Quantitative analysis

Table 1: The yes/no questions related to the challenges the EFL students faced when they study online.

Questionnaires	Yes	No	Other opinions
Have you participated in an online course via Microsoft Teams?	97.9%	2.1%	
Do you have the equipment (laptop, personal computer, smartphone, etc.) to study online?	95.8%	4.2%	
Have you ever get trouble with your Internet connection when you study online?	89.6%	10.4%	
Do you have any troubles due to lacking computer skills when joining an E-learning course?	85.4%	14.6%	
Have you had to deal with laptop errors, system errors, Microsoft Teams errors when you study online?	91.7%	8.3%	
Do you think the internet connection in rural areas is not good enough for students to study online?	45.8%	6.2%	47.9% (not too good, but it is able to study online)
Is it difficult to contact the teacher and classmate when joining an E-learning course (during the lesson, via email, via social network, etc.)?	68.8%	31.3%	
Do you think that E-learning is easy for you to work in a group?	42.6%	57.4%	
Do you have strong self-motivation when taking part in an E-learning course?	37.5%	62.5%	
Are you disturbed by Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, etc., during online class?	43.8%	0%	56.3% (just sometimes)
Is Microsoft Team difficult to use?	18.8%	20.8%	60.4% (It's not difficult to use, but there are some problems which appear infrequently)
Is it difficult for you to review the lecture through Microsoft Teams?	39.6%	60.4%	

As can be seen, Table 1 shows the results of a survey of 144 third-year EFL students at Van Lang University. As shown in Table 1, in the group of questions related to devices as well as other agents related to MS Teams software and learning devices, most of the students (97.9%) said that they had studied using the online form (e-learning), and most of them (95.8%) say they have the necessary equipment for e-learning, so learning tools are not a big problem for EFL students at Van Lang University. 89.6% of the survey respondents admitted that they all had problems with an Internet connection while studying online. In addition to the Internet connection, many people (91.7%) also encounter problems related to laptop errors, system errors, Microsoft Teams errors, etc. When studying through e-learning, many students (45.8%) find that the internet connection in rural areas is not good enough to study online, but others (47.9%) think that the connection is not very good, but it is still possible for e-learning. With the question of whether MS Teams is difficult to use, the majority of the answers (60.4%) are: it is not difficult to use, but sometimes there will be some problems. Most of those surveyed (60.4%) found it easy to review the lessons on MS Teams. *Through the survey above, we can see that the challenges when learning online are mostly related to the Internet connection and the errors of the laptop or the MS Teams software.*

The remaining group of questions is of great relevance to the learners themselves. Most people (85.4%) agreed that a lack of computer skills is also trouble when learning online. 68.8% of them said that it was difficult to contact lecturers and classmates when studying online. Many people (57.4%) also agreed that learning through e-learning on MS Teams would be difficult to work in groups. 62.5% of the respondents said that they also have no self-motivation on learning when taking e-learning courses. Even 100% of respondents said that they were distracted by other social networking applications such as Facebook, Youtube, Instagram when studying online. *It can be seen that the challenges of learning online during the covid-19 pandemic are not only coming from external factors but also from the learners themselves.*

Qualitative analysis - Interview questions

Below are the opinions of 48 interviewees:

   1. *What are the common problems with e-learning through MS Teams?*
Most of the answers given by many people are related to external factors such as unstable Internet connection affecting the quality of lectures, computer or software failure, power failure, etc.

   2. *Tell us the reasons why you don't like e-learning?*
Most of the answers to the question are also related to machine problems or Internet connection. Many people also believed that it will be easy to lose the distractions when learning online, be easily influenced by the things around, and have no motivation to learn.

   3. *What kind of cheating do you think can be done through e-learning and online testing?*
The most answered ideas are: learners can ask someone else to do the tests for them or google the answer.

   4. *What problems do you often encounter when contacting the instructor while studying online?*

The answer most commonly answered is that the instructors respond to emails, text messages very slowly or even not.

Through the collected answers, it can be determined that most of the survey participants said that the biggest problems of e-learning are related to factors such as internet connection, learning equipment, etc. Besides, the issues related to fraud when learning online are also widely commented on. How to communicate effectively with teachers and classmates while studying online is also a problem.

Since its inception, E-learning has been a hot topic for researchers, so many research papers are on this issue. Each research paper will concretize issues related to e-learning. Compared with the research assessed above, the research focuses on problems related to learners' challenges when learning through e-learning on MS Teams software. The advantages of e-learning and MS Teams software are very clear and undeniable, and there have been many topics about their advantages, but there are still few studies on the limitations of e-learning is through MS Teams, so this is probably the special feature of this research paper.

Conclusion

Through the research paper, we can clearly see the students' challenges when they study online through MS Teams. Through these statistics, it can be confirmed that the problems of e-learning through MS Teams are major challenges that partly prevent the development of e-learning. For e-learning to develop well, especially through one of the most popular software, MS Teams, it is necessary to recognize its shortcomings. The study has shown that the challenges that learners face stem from two groups of problems: external essentials and problems that come from the learners' own consciousness. To support the development of e-learning beyond finding ways to overcome factors such as internet connection, machine error, software error, it is crucial to improve the learning attitude of learners. The findings of this study supported Van et al. (2021) who claimed that utilizing technology in the English language learning classroom would provide a strong potential to enhance English skills for the students. Bui et al. (2021) confirmed that using MS TEAM for e-learning is such an evolution in education; however, learning in a group online should be an issue for reconsideration. Nguyen (2021) and Pham (2021) also asserted that employing technology in the English classrooms would promote better learning outcomes among the students. Perhaps it is said that e-learning is the future of education is not wrong. However, to make it come true, it takes a lot of time and investment to solve all the problems that still exist with future research papers. Perhaps finding solutions so that e-learning can reach more places and more subjects is also an expected topic.

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The Effects of Vietnamese High School Teacher's Utility of Google Forms on Eleventh Graders' Grammatical Knowledge

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Abstract

In Vietnam, grammar has been taught with conventional teaching methods such as the Grammar Translation Method and Audio Lingual Method, which still focus on paper-based grammar exercises in high schools. These traditional methods demotivate students' learning interest and motivation and fail to increase their independent learning and the effectiveness of grammar instruction. The purpose of this study is to explore the effects of Vietnamese high school teachers' utilization of Google Forms on eleventh graders' grammatical knowledge and their perceptions of Google Forms in learning English grammar. The study results emphasized the intervention of eleventh-grade students' knowledge of grammar and their perceptions of this treatment. The study's findings indicated that the integration of Google Forms successfully aided students in enhancing their achievement of grammatical knowledge. Furthermore, students have a positive attitude towards this application into grammar teaching.

Keywords: grammar instruction, grammatical knowledge, Google Forms.

1. Introduction

Thanks to ICT development, the implementation of Google apps and the application of blended learning in grammar instruction, in particular, have proliferated for a few decades. Such ICT-based alternatives in language instruction have been affirmed advantageous for both language teachers and students with statistical analysis and reliable evidence in a multitude of noticeable studies. These alternatives can not only improve the effectiveness of teachers' teaching in grammar instruction but also enhance learners' interest, autonomy, and concentration on grammar learning (e.g., Garrison & Vaughan, 2008; Do & Nguyen, 2014; Isti'anah, 2017; Khalil, 2018; and Pham, 2018a).

On the other hand, according to Bilonozhko and Syzenko (2020), learners belong to Generation Z or Gen Z. It refers to those born after 2000. It is also called the digital generation or digital natives. Their lifestyles are established in the basement of the

environment where the Internet, mobile phones, social media, Youtube, and instant messenger are dominated. Because they were born and have grown up in such an environment, they have a knack for adopting digital gadgets like computers, laptops, ipads, tablets, mobile phones, and ICT applications smoothly. They are also experts for adapting to ICT innovations. Harmanto (2013) identifies that it is the growth of ICT that creates Generation Z's styles of learning. They enjoy learning by interacting with ICT devices. They can utilize the Internet to discover new things and study what they are not familiar with, and the Internet and digital tools are integral parts of their learning process. They pioneer to take in new knowledge and skills with new ICT tools and innovative ICT apps. Some studies, such as Pham (2021) and Pham D. T. T., Technology is a helpful tool to help students improve their English, and the students have possitive attitudes towards technology. To be a good teacher for Generation Z, teachers should incorporate more technologies into their lesson plans. They must make use of ICT to modernize their instructional methods. They can use more technology-based activities, including visual content, and offer ways for students to provide and receive their feedback in learning and teaching. Furthermore, in a case study, Van et al.. (2021) highlighted that more than three-quarters of students used educational apps and smartphones to learn the language, and over 81% of students agreed that technology could enhance the effectiveness of their language learning.

However, in her study, Pham (2015) points out that Grammar-Translation Method still plays a dominant role in teaching English grammar throughout Vietnam because many English teachers are in favor of adopting it in their teaching practice. Likewise, Khuong (2015) claims that many English teachers are still faithful to Audio Lingual Method (ALM) in instructing grammar because they get used to this method and are unwilling to adopt a new one. These conventional approaches to teaching grammar do demotivate students' interests in learning English grammar and minimize teachers' efficiency (Pham, 2015). Also, on utilizing these traditional teaching methods, teachers miss an excellent opportunity to assist students in their autonomous learning, and students find the language lessons boring (Khalil, 2018). Furthermore, teachers can not exploit the benefits of blended learning, the combination of activities inside the classroom and outside the classroom, in instructing grammar. In other words, teachers only focus on the process of learning and teaching inside the classroom and ignore it outside the classroom (Khuong, 2015). Tackling these notable problems will bring practical benefits to both teachers and students in teaching and learning English grammar.

Google Forms combined with blended learning in grammar instruction is one notable recommendation to deal with these issues. Google Forms is defined by Haddad and Kalaani (2014) as an interactive web-based platform with a user-friendly application programming interface for producing online surveys, questionnaires, and quizzes. Blended learning refers to an educational curriculum that combines online sources with conventional learning in a classroom (Graham, 2000).

To unravel the effects of Vietnamese high school teachers' utilization of Google Forms on 11th graders' grammatical knowledge, a quasi-experimental study is first undertaken. Then the questionnaire and the interview are utilized to clarify the Vietnamese 11th graders' perceptions of Google Forms in learning English grammar.

2. Literature review

2.1 Grammar instruction

Grammar teaching is an important part of language teaching in high school. According to Fromkin, Rodman, and Hyams (2017), grammar instruction is helpful for learners who learn English because it can guide them to acquire and use how language is produced. He also suggests that form-focused language will be necessary if learners promote levels of accuracy in the target language. Pham and Nguyen (2014) claimed that the teachers at high school often employed the Grammar Translation Method in teaching grammar. DeKeyser (1996) believes that grammar teaching is essential to enhance language learning since it provides learners with several basic ways to create language. He also points out that the consciousness of target structures and forms is essential to second language learning.

Another significant point demonstrated by Zhang (2009) is that grammar instruction is fundamental in second language teaching because grammar is the basic background of the English language. Without grammar, learners find it impossible to learn a language. In addition, the most important goal for learning a language is to help learners communicate effectively and appropriately in social contexts. Thus, grammar teaching can assure this goal because it empowers students to know how to combine vocabulary to make a meaningful sentence used for their communicative purposes. Besides, he discusses that grammar learning does not occur naturally, but it needs teaching by teachers who can improve learners' grammar learning effectiveness and accuracy. Learners themselves can indeed learn other skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Still, they are not capable of learning grammar autonomously, and they need to be supported by teachers in learning grammar.

From what has been discussed so far, it is obvious to summarize that grammar teaching is an integral part of language teaching because it is considered a core part of a language and has a decisive effect on second language learning success.

2.2 ICT-based alternatives of teaching English grammar

With the integration of ICT into language teaching, the last decade has seen rapid innovation in teaching English grammar. Google-app-based alternatives and blended learning are two of the most leading trends for teaching English grammar at present.

Google-app-based alternatives

Al-Harbi and Alshumaimeri (2016) highlight that language teacher should integrate technology into teaching grammar in the era of technology because this can prompt students to direct their learning and offer them opportunities to practice the target language and develop their autonomous learning language learning outside the classroom. This view is supported by Saeedi (2016) and Keshta and Harb (2013), who points out that interactive technological platforms serving as a motivator should be utilized in grammar teaching. Thanks to this, students are able to have access to endless online input sources and be more active in their language learning. In the same vein, Khalil (2018) notes that Google apps offer teachers considerable ways to conduct English grammar lessons in the digital age. Such

Google-app-mediated alternatives in grammar instruction can promote learners' autonomy and enhance their willingness.

Blended Learning

According to Isti'anah (2017), thanks to the never-ending innovation of technology and the Internet, blended learning has prevalently been used as an effective approach to teaching English grammar. Online classes can be combined with offline ones in English grammar instruction. This integration can improve the effectiveness of teachers' grammar teaching and better students' learning outcomes and interests in learning grammar. Concurrent with this research trend, Ngo (2018) points out that blended learning, the combination of conventional and technology-mediated methodologies in the language classroom, has become prevalent in grammar instruction. He found that employing blended learning enhanced students' English grammar knowledge and encouraged their autonomy. More importantly, learners had a positive view toward the utilization of blended learning in instructing grammar.

Overall, these suggestions provide important insights that teaching English grammar with the aids of technology-based learning platforms can be a leading model which may be advantageous for both language teachers and students.

2.3 The ways technology applied in grammar teaching and learning

Technology does support grammar teaching and learning in a wide range of ways. According to An and Williams (2019), one of the noticeable ways is that videos and films can be used in the presentation stage or input. Some short videos and movies can raise students' awareness of grammatical structures, and teachers can use them to help students understand how structures are utilized in real-life situations communication. In line with this, Chau (2021) points out that ICT plays a key role in supporting students to get access to real input and diverse sources of contemporary materials of learning. Another way is the use of apps and online games (Busyteacher, n.d.). Thanks to online apps and games, students can practice grammatical points and memorize the rules better. More significantly, with funny games, students have great opportunities to experience edutainment, the combination of education and entertainment. This can help students enhance the effectiveness of grammar learning and increase their excitement and interest in grammar acquisition. In line with this, Busyteacher (n.d.) points out that one more way for technology to be integrated into grammar teaching is Web Quests. Such technological tools are adopted as a virtual classroom in which students are required to complete a grammar exercise, and teachers can visit and give feedback on students' task completion. Finally, the technology-based class should be exploited to use the time outside the classroom for students to practice and memorize grammatical points because regular practice outside the class does increase students' efficiency and activeness in the process of English grammar learning (Nguyen, 2021).

2.4 Google Forms and its uses in language instruction

According to Pham (2018a), Google Forms is one of the products developed by Google. Along with Docs, Sheets, and Slides in G Suite, Google Forms is designed for the education area. The initiative aim of Google forms is to create various kinds of forms to

gather information and data for surveys or to enroll in a particular event.

Google Forms can be used to create language quizzes or exercises. Pham (2018a) highlights that Google Forms can provide teachers and students with different types of questions utilized as quizzes in language teaching such as (i) Multiple choice, (ii) Checklists, (iii) Text – for short answers, (iv) Paragraph text – for longer answers, (v) Choose from a list, (vi) Scale – a customizable Likert scale question, and (vii) Grid – select an answer from a rubric-style grid.

What is more, thanks to Google Forms, tests can be designed for language assessment. In the educational context, Google Forms is considered a useful technological tool in the classroom. In his online article, Catapano (n.d.) suggests several ways for utilizing Google Forms in learning and teaching. Google-Forms-based exercises can be used as formative assessments. Google Forms offers teachers a convenient tool for assessing students' understanding quickly and accurately. Teachers are able to create and adopt Google-Forms-based tests in their language teaching in time-saving and convenient ways because Google Forms can set up a time allowance for the tests and score students' answers automatically.

Last but not least, teachers can adopt Google Forms for setting up homework/assignments for language teaching. According to Pham (2018a), Google Forms can be utilized for teachers to set up homework or assignments which students have to complete inside and outside the classroom. Besides, the teachers can give a deadline for the assignments or homework and give comments and evaluate students' work thanks to Google forms. From what has been discussed so far, a vast number of functions of Google Forms presented in this section are provided for the teacher in language instruction, and Google Forms can be notable recommendations for a teacher to adopt in instructing English grammar.

2.5 Research Questions

Due to the aims, the research makes efforts to seek answers to two primary questions as follows:

a) What are the effects of Vietnamese high school teachers' utilization of Google Forms on eleventh graders' grammatical knowledge?

b) What are Vietnamese eleventh graders' perceptions of using Google Forms in learning English grammar?

3. Methods

3.1 Pedagogical Setting and Participants

The current study was conducted at a rural upper secondary school in An Giang province. This school was established in 1998, and currently, 73 teachers are teaching at it, and 1241 students are attending it. Along with other school subjects, English is compulsory for all students from grade 10 to grade 12. The English classes consist of3 forty-five-minute periods every week. The primary goal for English high school education is to create and develop students' communicative competence. In other words, students are expected to use English as an effective tool of communication and achieve the proficiency level of B1 in the

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) when they finish grade 12.

Eighty-nine eleventh graders from class 11A4 and 11A5 in the academic year of 2020 - 2021 were non-randomly chosen out of three hundred and thirty-four students from a pool of eleventh-grade students of a high school in An Giang province. The rationale for selecting participants for the study is due to the researcher's convenience. This choice can help the researcher save time and energy because the participants are authentic class groups, so they are easily accessible and available. Participants are all between 17 and 18 years old, and all of them are native speakers of Vietnamese and learn English as a foreign language. They were divided into two equal groups. Class 11A4 consisting of 25 female students and 19 male students, serves as the experimental group, and class 11A5, including 25 female students and 20 male students, plays the role of the control group.

3.2 Design of the Study

The quasi-experimental research with pretest-posttest control-group design will be adopted to investigate the impacts of Vietnamese high school teachers' utilization of Google Forms on 11th graders' grammatical knowledge in the first phase of the research.

The design of the study is described in Table 3.1:

Table 3.1: The design of the study

Group	Pre-test	Intervention	Post-test
Experimental group	X	X	X
Control group	X	O	X

In this study, the pre-test and post-test were employed for both the experimental and control groups. However, only the experimental group received the intervention of employing Google Forms in grammar instruction, while conventional approaches were still adopted for teaching grammar to the control group.

3.3 Data collection and analysis

Four typical instruments, such as the pre-test, the post-test, the questionnaire, and the interview, were adopted to collect adequate data for the research. The pre-test was a paper-based test that requires students to answer grammar questions. In the pre-test, there were twenty-five items. The content of the pre-test centered on seven grammatical points such as the sequence of tenses, reduced forms of relative clauses, question tags, if clauses, reported speech with to infinitives and gerunds, wish clauses, and perfect participles in the curriculum of Tieng Anh 11 – Volume 2 textbook. The post-test was similar to the pre-test in terms of time allowance, the number of questions, the grammatical points, question forms, and question levels to make the data gathered for the study more valid and reliable. The questionnaire included fifteen Likert questions with five points (strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree, strongly disagree). These questions explored the participants' perceptions of enjoyment, engagement, convenience, perceived learning, concentration, motivation,

satisfaction, effectiveness, and autonomy toward utilizing Google Forms in learning English grammar. Since all participants are EFL students, the questionnaire was employed in Vietnamese to ensure that all respondents understood and answered the questions accurately. It was designed in the basement of Google Forms. The semi-structured interview comprised six open-ended questions on six themes such as (i) the level of interest and motivation students achieved through learning English grammar with the integration of Google Forms,(ii)the level of effectiveness on students' learning English grammar with Google Forms exercises, (iii) the extent of convenience that Google Forms offered students in learning English grammar, (iv) the extent that Google-Forms-based lessons supported students' independent learning, (v) the difficulties students confronted when they learned English grammar with Google Forms, and (vi) students' recommendations for improving the effectiveness of integrating Google Forms into grammar instruction.

The procedures for gathering adequate data for the study are described in the following table.

Table 3.2: Procedures for data collection

Step	Research instrument	Group of participants	Type of data collected
1	Pre-test	Experimental group and control group	Quantitative data
2	Post-test	Experimental group and control group	Quantitative data
3	Questionnaire	Experimental group only	Quantitative data
4	Interview	Experimental group only	Qualitative data

It can be seen from the data in table 3.2, procedures for data collection of the study included four steps. First and foremost, the quantitative data of the pre-test conducted with both the experimental and control groups were collected prior to the intervention. Second, the data of the post-test for both groups were gathered after the treatment. Two first steps were undertaken to help the researcher collect efficient data for the first research question. Third, the in-depth information of the questionnaire from only the experimental group was quantitatively brought together. Finally, qualitative information in the interview from participants of the experimental group was elicited. Two latter steps were carried out in an attempt to seek the answer to the second research question.

The descriptive data collected from the pre-test, the post-test, and the questionnaire for the current study were processed and analyzed through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) of version 22.0 for Windows. Then the textual data gathered from the interview was scrutinized.

 Data analysis procedures followed the phases in the table below.

Table 3.3: Procedures for data analysis

Phase	Research instrument	Type of data analysis	Values of analysis
1	The pre-test	Descriptive data	Frequency, mean, standard deviation, and Independent Samples T-test of both groups' means
2	The post-test		
3	The questionnaire	Descriptive data	Mean, standard deviation
4	The interview	Textual data	Textual analysis

From the table above, it can be shown that four major phases were included in the procedures for data analysis. In the first phase, the pre-test data had been descriptively analyzed with several values, namely, frequencies, means, standard deviations before independent Samples T-test of both participant groups' means were calculated. These analyses were undertaken to ensure that the level of the experimental group was similar to that of the control group prior to the treatment. In the second phase, the post-test data were descriptively processed with the same values as the pre-test to check whether the treatment had statistically significant effects. In the third phase, the data from the questionnaire were quantitatively analyzed with two sub-stages. To analyze the descriptive data, the frequencies of each scale in each item were first calculated. Then, each of the five scales in the items of the first part of the questionnaire was coded a value (namely, strongly agree = 1, agree = 2, uncertain = 3, disagree = 4, and strongly disagree = 5). Following this, the data had been converted into means for analysis. In the fourth phase, textual data from the interview was translated into English and transcribed into words. Next, the data was organized and classified into question-based themes to analyze the data more quickly and accurately. Finally, to process qualitative data from the interview, in each question, answers were put into tables so that the researcher could discover similar answers, collect diverse answers and be aware of the overall trends of the data. In short, the primary purpose of data analysis from the interview was to better understand the participants' answers to the questions in the questionnaire.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1 Research question 1: What are the effects of Vietnamese high school teachers' utilization of Google Forms on eleventh graders' grammatical knowledge?

To answer the first research question, the findings from the pre-test and the post-test are described.

Findings from the pre-test

In the table below, the results of the pre-test fro both group are presented.

Table 4.1: Summary of pre-test results

Group	N	M	S.D.	t	p
Experimental	44	6.21	.9664	*.146*	*.885*
Control	45	6.24	1.0354		

As seen from Table 4.1, the statistical values of the two groups are very much the same. The first feature being recognized was a fair equivalence between the means of both groups (**6.21** for the experimental group and **6.24** for the control group). Moreover, the two standard deviation values (**.966** for the experimental and **1.03** for the control groups) were nearly equal. Thus, it could be asserted that both groups shared an approximate similarity: their grammatical knowledge was at the same level.

Also shown in this table, the value *sig (2-tailed)* of **0.885** were much bigger than the alpha **0.05**, which meant there was no significant disparity between the two means, and two sets of scores were of equivalent means. Hence, it can be concluded that the students in both groups had equal grammatical knowledge before the experiment.

Findings from the post-test

Like the pre-test, the post-test's scores of the two groups were also analyzed in the following table.

Table 4.2: Summary of post-test results

Group	N	M	S.D.	t	p
Experimental	44	7.045	.8636	*.416*	*.0005*
Control	45	6.520	.8447		

Table 4.2 informed that after the intervention, the mean score of the experimental group (M= 7.045) was higher than that of the control group (M=6.520). In other words, there was a disparity of .5255 of the mean scores of both groups. This result indicated that the students in the experimental group had considerably improved their grammatical knowledge during the time of experimental teaching.

Also seen from this table, the sig. value (2-tailed) = **0.005** which was smaller than alpha **0.05**. This result indicated that there was a significant difference in terms of studying achievement between the experimental and control group after ten weeks of experimental teaching.

So far, the data from the pre-test and post-test have been analyzed and interpreted. The analysis suggested that the grammatical knowledge of both groups was initially almost similar at an average level. Yet, this similarity was no longer remained after the teaching intervention but substituted by a statistically significant difference. This difference was in favor of the experimental group experiencing Google Forms in learning English grammar. Indeed, this

group really made great achievements when the students obtained substantial progress in their scores by integrating Google Forms into teaching grammar.

4.2 Research question 2: What are Vietnamese eleventh graders' perceptions of using Google Forms in learning English grammar?

In order to answer the second research question, data from the questionnaire and interview were analyzed and discussed.

Findings from the questionnaire

The results from the questionnaire provided the researcher with students' perceptions concerning the implementation of the teaching alternative, Google Forms, into teaching English grammar to eleventh students in a high school. The findings from the questionnaire are laid out on two major themes as follows:

Table 4.3: Students' perceptions of Google Forms integration into grammar instruction

	M	S.D.
Interest and motivation		
I am interested in doing English grammar exercises with Google Forms.	2.18	0.54
I enjoy learning more English grammar with Google Forms.	2.18	0.66
I feel more motivated to learn English grammar through Google-Forms-based exercises.	2.29	0.70
Engagement and Concentration		
Google-Forms-based exercises can make me more engaged in learning English grammar.	2.40	0.84
Google-Forms-based exercises can help me enhance my concentration in learning English grammar.	2.34	0.79
Convenience		
I feel comfortable completing English grammar exercises with Google Forms.	2.38	0.84
I am convenient to do English grammar exercises with Google Forms.	2.31	0.80
Usefulness		
I can get more useful strategies for learning English grammar from Google-Forms-based exercises.	2.22	0.68
Google Forms is a useful tool for learning English grammar.	2.09	0.64

As shown in the above table, the means of items ranging from 2.09 to 2.40 (smaller than 3.00) have revealed that students felt more interested, motivated, engaged, concentrated, and useful in learning grammar due to the application of the Google-Forms-based grammar exercises.

Table 4.4: The effectiveness of Google Forms integration and its support for students' autonomy

	M	S.D.
Effectiveness		
Google-Forms-based exercises can help me understand English grammar better.	2.27	0.66
Google-Forms-based exercises can help me review English grammar knowledge more effectively.	2.22	0.64
Autonomy		
Google-Forms-based exercises can support my autonomy in learning English grammar.	2.27	0.73
Satisfaction		
I would like to learn Google-Forms-based lessons for my learning English in the future.	2.25	0.78
I am satisfied with the application of Google Forms in learning English grammar.	2.20	0.67
Google Forms should be integrated into grammar instruction.	2.06	0.62

From the above table, the means of items ranging from 2.06 to 2.27 (smaller than 3.00) indicated that effectiveness in learning grammar was enhanced, and students' autonomous learning was supported when Google Forms was merged into teaching grammar. Collectively, this integration of Google Forms into grammar instruction has left a good impression and a positive effect on the students under treatment.

Findings from the interview

Of the questionnaire population of 44 participants, only ten of these (6 females and four males) took part in the semi-structured interview. They can be ciphered as F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6, M7, M8, M9, and M10. As discussed earlier, six open-ended questions in the interview were administered to clarify participants' answers in the questionnaire.

About students' interests and motivation, a wide range of responses were elicited. One student stated that "*I think doing Google-Forms-based exercises are similar to playing online games where I can combine learning with entertainment, which makes me feel more interested and motivated in my grammar learning*" (F1).

One more interviewee added that "*well, I enjoy interacting with electronic devices (i.e., smartphone and laptop), so when I do Google-Forms-based exercises, I feel really interested in learning English grammar.*" (M10)

In regard to the new approach's effectiveness, the majority commented that *"Doing Google-Forms-based exercises can help them remember the grammar points because I can do them as many times as they would like."* Other responses to this question included: "*I can do and share Google-Forms-based exercises with my classmates, which assists me better understand the grammar structures.*" (M9) and "*I think Google-Forms-based exercises can help me enhance my strategies for autonomous learning, which can assist me to enhance the effectiveness of learning grammar.*" (F5)

Regarding convenience, a common view against the interviewees was that "*completing Google-Forms-based exercises is convenient because they can do grammar exercises anytime and anywhere they like, and they find really easy to have access to learning materials.*" Talking about this issue, an interviewee said: "*I can do Google-Forms-based exercises with my smartphone, which is convenient for me in my learning English. Moreover, I do not need to bring a lot of learning materials when I do Google-Forms-based exercises.*" (F6)

In the aspect of autonomous learning, several interviewees argued that *"Google Forms supports our autonomous learning in learning English grammar because we can do Google-Forms-based exercises as many times as possible, which assists them to revise the grammatical lessons and remember the grammatical knowledge better."* While others stated: "*We can set up a proper plan for our independent learning outside the classroom with the aids of Google-Forms-based exercises because the contents of these exercises are in line with those of the lesson we learned inside the classroom and we can review the grammar knowledge better through Google-forms-based exercises.*" Another interviewee said: "*I do Google-Forms-based exercises, and then I can check the answers with their clear and detailed explanations by myself, which can encourage my self-studying. What is more, I can do Google-Forms-based exercises outside the classroom, or anywhere I like.*" (F6)

About the problems, half of the interviewees responded that they had no problems when they did Google-forms-based grammar exercises. However, other participants have confronted several issues as follows:

F2 said*: My internet connection is not stable, so I have to go to the coffee house for a more stable Internet connection.*

M7 stated*: One day, when I was going to complete my Google-forms-based exercise, but there was a power cut, I had to do the whole exercise again the next day because I could save what I have completed.*

F4 considered: "*Some exercises were designed too long with too many items, my eyes were tiring when I read them, so I feel tired after completing these exercises.*"

In response to recommendations, participants provided a variety of responses. One interviewee said: "*More and more Google-Forms-based exercises should be created and sent to students so that they can have more opportunities to practice them.*" (M8). Mentioning this aspect, one interviewee argued that "*Google Forms should be integrated into not only grammar instruction but also other fields like vocabulary, phonetics, listening, reading, and*

so on." One more student commented: "*to be more effective and useful for students to learn grammar, the teacher ought to design the answer keys with more detail explanations.*" Finally, another interview participant recommended that "*the number of questions in each exercise should be limited from twenty to thirty because if the content of the exercises is too lengthy, it can make me tired of reading and answering the questions. Moreover, doing an exercise with reasonable length can assist me in avoiding some technical problems such as a power cut or a weak internet connection."*

All responses to the questions in the interview indicated that the participants had a positive attitude towards the merge of Google Forms into grammar instruction.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion

As mentioned in the introduction, the current study was designed to determine the effect of Google Forms' utilization on eleventh-grade students' grammar knowledge and discover these students' perceptions of this application. The findings from the study have shown as follows.

Regarding the first research question, Vietnamese high school teachers' utilization of Google Forms on eleventh graders' grammatical knowledge is that Google Forms merged into grammar instruction to eleventh-grade students has greatly helped improve students' grammatical knowledge. The students from the experimental group have developed from having average scoring points to achieving a lot of fair and good scores. Their progress is much more meaningful when compared to the modest improvement of their partners who received the conventional method of grammar instruction. Besides, the difference in the score improvement of the two groups has been proved to be statistically significant, which indicated the effectiveness of the trial alternative of Google Forms when it was implemented to teaching English grammar to 11th graders. Last but not least, students perceived that Google Forms exercises were likely to scaffold the effectiveness of their grammar learning.

In response to the second research question, what Vietnamese eleventh graders' perceptions of using Google Forms in learning English grammar are, students' perceptions of the teacher's utilization of Google Forms in English grammar instruction showed a positive attitude toward the new approach. Specifically, learners thought that they felt more interested, motivated, engaged, convenient, and concentrated on learning grammar with the merge of Google Forms. More significantly, their autonomous learning could be stimulated thanks to this fusion effectively.

In short, the Google Forms alternative does avail students in terms of grammatical knowledge and their attitudes towards this approach.

5.2 Limitations

Although this study may be of value in an EFL high school in Vietnam, several significant limitations need to be considered. Firstly, in comparison with a true experiment, this study, a quasi-experiment, may undergo some limitations related to the generalization to the whole population (the 11th graders) though the subjects (44 students) have some similar

matching characteristics (i.e., age, level, and background) to those of the population. Secondly, this approach was applied to the 11th graders only. Therefore, it does not ensure that it has positive effects on other high school graders. Thirdly, the current experiment confirmed the effectiveness of the new approach on grammar instruction only. Its effects on other language aspects or skills of language teaching have not been discovered yet. Finally, the experimental duration was limited in time and was probably not long enough to determine whether the improvement can be consistent and sustainable over a longer period or not.

5.3 Suggestions for further studies

From the limitations mentioned above, there are several suggestions for further studies. First and foremost, it is expected that future studies will expand the subjects of study to ensure the generalization of the results for students of the same grade. Second, the process genre approach has proved its effectiveness on the 11th graders; therefore, it is suggested that further studies be implemented on the 10th and 12th graders to depict a more comprehensive picture of applying the process genre approach to teaching English writing to high school students. Next, the current study is affirmed to be successful on grammar instruction. Therefore, future research should concentrate on investigating Google Forms integration's effects on other language fields (i.e., vocabulary & pronunciation) and other language skills (i.e., listening & reading). Finally, to testify the approach's effectiveness over time, future studies should also be conducted in a bigger length of time, for example, an academic year instead of one semester.

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Boosting English Majors' Ability in Pronouncing Stressed Vowels via Blue Canoe, a Mobile-based Application: A Focus on Vietnamese EFL Learners

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Abstract

There is no doubt that teaching and learning English pronunciation is one of the major concerns facing EFL/ESL educators and experts. Specifically, stressed vowel practice instruction has been considered a massive challenge among Vietnamese teachers because these two languages possess certain distinctive features in phonetics. This new digital age indicates that mobile-based applications have actively promoted EFL/ESL learners' sound production. Thus, this paper pinpointed how digital apps affected learning vowels among English learners and discussed their attitudes towards the apps with the help of 32 first-year students majoring in English at Van Lang University, Ho Chi Minh City. A pre-test and post-test were used to see if there was a significant distinction in the participants' ability to acquire vowel sounds. In addition, a five-point Likert scale questionnaire was employed to test how content they were when they used the app. The results show that with mean scores of 6.88 and 11.177 in the pre-test and post-test, respectively, students in the experimental group improved than their counterparts in the other group (M=6.0 in the pre-test and 8.47 in the post-test). Hence, an explanation for the better performance in the intervened group is that the participants practiced pronouncing vowels with the application Blue Canoe during the course. In addition, these participants also had a favorable attitude towards the mobile-based application in their phonetics class, with a mean score of 3.96 on the questionnaire.

Keywords: mobile game-based apps/ activities, English pronunciation/ vowel sounds, oral fluency.

1. Introduction

As English has been widely used as a means of international communication, the question of how to produce its sounds intelligibly has generated deep concerns among ESL/EFL learners and educators (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2007; Vang, 2003). Dhillon (2016) and Jones (2018) stated that pronunciation is the principal element of successful oral communication. If they do not acquire good and clear pronunciation, even if they might use proper grammar and vocabulary, their speech still becomes unintelligible (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 2010). Do (2021) and Van et al. (2021) also states that pronunciation is seen as one of the most crucial features in the area of learning english.

However, several studies have shown that pronunciation teaching in EFL classrooms is often traditional, unplanned, and is mainly about on-spot error correction. For example, Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu's (2010) research findings indicate that most EFL teachers prefer using reading aloud, dictionaries, and dialogues in their phonetics class. Also, Foote et al. (2016) also demonstrate that when teaching pronunciation, most EFL teachers tend to apply some techniques that are mainly related to giving corrective feedback on their students' errors instead of incorporating teaching episodes into their lesson plans. Similarly, as Wahid and Sulong (2013) noted, EFL teachers at a university in Malaysia focus too much on correcting their students' pronunciation errors rather than giving explicit pronunciation instructions. Consequently, the students are quickly bored with and discouraged from learning and practicing English pronunciation.

One of the most apparent reasons why learning English pronunciation is a huge challenge for most students is related to vowel sounds. A study conducted by Pham and McLeod (2016) demonstrates that learners of English encounter several vowel-related difficulties when they study English pronunciation because its vowel system seems to be more complex than that in their mother tongue. Additionally, regardless of their ability to distinguish vowels and consonants in minimal pairs, students still find it challenging to pronounce vowel sounds in multi-syllabic words (Al-Rubaat & Alshammari, 2019; Heggie & Wade-Woolley, 2017).

Alongside the speedy development of technology, using computerized applications in teaching pronunciation is a must since they are such a powerful tool to better English learners' pronunciation and boost their interest in learning the language (McCauley, Nguyen, & McDonald, 2016). Similarly, according to Godwin-Jones (2014), digital games or mobile-based games have great potential in teaching and learning foreign languages thanks to cellphones - a major technological advancement. Candilas (2021), Tran and Nguyen (2021) confirms that with technology support, online synchronous learning, a digital teaching platform, is seen as the best use for English learning and can be an indispensable tool in education in the time of the pandemic.

In Vietnam, despite their capability of enhancing English learners' pronunciation, using mobile games in class has not gained much attention from EFL/ESL teachers. Particularly, teachers are still more likely to use traditional activities such as transcription practice and minimal pair drills, which are not easy for many L2 adult learners to improve their pronunciation (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2010). Besides, little research on integrating technology in English pronunciation instruction has been conducted (McCauley et al., 2016). According to Nguyen (2021), technology is the most effective tool to help the students acquire vocabulary and other aspects of learning a foreign language.

Hence, the current study is carried out with two primary objectives: (1) to investigate if Blue Canoe can assist EFL students at the faculty of foreign languages in Van Lang University in improving their vowel production of English multi-syllabic words and (2) to ascertain their attitudes towards such application.

For the purposes set out above, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the effects of using Blue Canoe on learning stressed vowels among first-year English majors?

2. Do students have positive attitudes towards using mobile apps on learning vowels?

The research has significantly contributed to EFL/ESL teaching and learning in Vietnam's context. Indeed, it has pointed out how digital games affect English majors' vowel sound production and their positive feedback on applying computerized applications in pronunciation class. Thus, the findings have supported using handy technological devices to foster learning outcomes in English language teaching. These two inputs from the study have also enabled teachers of English to have a clear point of choosing appropriate games and activities that can enhance their students' vowel pronunciation and minimize their negative feelings in the age of technological advancement.

2. Literature review

What are vowel sounds?

According to Celce-Murcia et al. (2010), there are 14 vowel sounds in American English, including simple phonemes with a glide movement (/iy/, /ey/, /ow/, /uw/) and without it (/ɪ/, /ɛ/, /æ/, /ɑ/, /ɔ/, /ʊ/ and /ʌ/) and three diphthongs (complex vowels) (/ay/, /aw/ and /ɔy/) (p. 114-125). Their classification depends on the height of the body of the tongue (high, mid, and low); how forward or backward the tongue is in the oral cavity (front, central, or back); the degree of muscular tension (tense or lax); and the position of the lips (rounded or unrounded) (Lane, 2010, pp. 163-164). Roach (2009) says that the main distinction between vowel sounds and consonant sounds is that vowels do not obstruct the airflow when it passes from the larynx to the lips (p.10). He also reports that phonetically, such sounds are always found at the center of a syllable.

Intelligibility and Vowel Quality in Stressed Syllables

Zielinski (2006) defines intelligibility as how well a speech is understood by listeners or how much a listener can recognize words, phrases. It should also focus on English pronunciation teaching and learning (Lane, 2010, p. 2). That means as English has become a globally spoken language, EFL teachers need to attempt to help their learners to achieve mutual intelligibility instead of forcing them to achieve native-like pronunciation (Jenkins, 2002).

If pronunciation teaching aims to obtain intelligibility, identifying which speech feature is the leading contributor to the overall intelligibility is a must. According to Lesner, Sandridge, and Kricos (1987), incorrect vowel production has a negative effect on speakers' intelligibility. In other words, in oral communication, a speech is likely to be misinterpreted if the speakers do not produce accurate vowel sounds. Several studies then support this viewpoint. Research by Rogers and Dalby (2005) shows a positive correlation between vowel production accuracy of Mandarin speakers of English and their overall intelligibility. Similarly, Bent, Bradlow, and Smith (2007) investigated the relationship between the intelligibility of Chinese speakers of

English and accurate segment production in different word positions. Native English speakers are then asked to listen to the participants and write these sentences down. The findings demonstrate that vowel sounds contributed more information to overall auditory speech intelligibility than their counterpart.

Another aspect of intelligible pronunciation is stress placement. Valcke and Pavón (2015) noted that this element is crucial to interpreting messages in statements. They believe that native English speakers generally attach great importance to the quality of the vowel in a stressed syllable than other features that constitute stress when they listen to non-native English speakers. This could be explained that correct stressed syllables help them identify a word much more easily. In other words, misplaced stress leads to intelligibility loss and vowel quality change (Richards, 2016)

Pronunciation teaching approaches

One of the most popular approaches used in teaching L2 pronunciation and is still prior is the audio-lingual approach. The primary purpose of this approach is to help adult students to memorize grammatical sentence patterns by drilling (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). With the approach, teachers emphasize dialogues, minimal pair drills, and morphemes (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 1991). In fact, the more learners repeat the whole or part of a dialogue in L1, the more the learners can emphasize the importance of proper pronunciation, intonation, stress, etc.

However, according to Odisho (2007), teaching L2 pronunciation through memorization in the form of 'repeat-after-me activities appears more effective for children than for adults. In his book, Odisho (2014) believes that since the human brain tends to control all senses to gather more information to make decisions, it does not rely on one sensory source. EFL teachers generally fail to teach adult learners English pronunciation since pronunciation is also conveyed via the visual sensory modality and kinesthetic sensory modality. They apply the traditional pronunciation approach relying heavily on the auditory sensory modality (model, hear and pronounce) solely. Consequently, a new pronunciation teaching approach, the Multisensory, Multicognitive Approach (MMA), is proposed. Odisho (2007) notes that teaching L2 pronunciation with a multisensory approach means EFL learners are required not only to hear and make sounds but also to see and feel them in the context of natural speech. Similarly, in L2 classes, the metacognitive approach gives students more encouragement to do more than one simple task. For instance, they have to listen to the sounds carefully and store them in short-term memory. After that, the L2 learners need to compare those sounds with ones already part of their psycholinguistic inventory using all cognitive processes.

Game-based learning

According to Qian and Clark (2016), game-based learning refers to an environment in which game activities help students acquire better knowledge and skill acquisition. These games could be divided into two different kinds, including entertaining games and educational games. Although they are both employed in the learning environment, their purposes are slightly

different. The first is mainly designed for fun, while the latter is used for educational purposes (Connolly et al., 2012).

However, choosing appropriate games in language learning is a consideration for many English teachers. Shanahan, Hermans, and Haytko (2006) stated that effective-in-class games must have five fundamental characteristics. First, the games must be related to the learning outcomes. Their rules also are easy to understand by players, but they must less important than the learning. Such games then provide more motivation for the students to perform better. Finally, these students can give feedback on the games to their teachers. Corno and Snow (1986) also believe that educators can achieve educational purposes successfully if they can satisfy the needs of students with different learning styles (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic styles). In that case, games are the optimum choice because they can offer teachers and educators countless opportunities to implement that task.

Benefits of games in language learning

Educational games are regarded as one of the most effective tools for teachers and students because they can support traditional teaching methods (Lujan & DiCarlo, 2006). For teachers, games can help them teach their students complex content (Cardona et al., 2007) and allow them to have discussions with their peers about the target concepts (Odenweller, Hsu, & DiCarlo, 1998). For students, games add more enjoyment to their learning environment (Wang, 2010). Zhu (2012) adds that for learners of foreign languages, games, especially language games, will become their preference if those games are used effectively in classrooms. Therefore, the students can enjoy learning the target language with high motivation (Reese & Wells, 2007) while their anxiety is lowered.

Benefits of mobile devices in pronunciation learning

The widespread use of mobile phones to develop language skills in education is not a new concept. In fact, integrating these devices has had several considerable merits for language learners (Murphy, 2011). One of these advantages is to improve students' foreign language pronunciation. Wilson (2008) discovers that by utilizing interactive English pronunciation apps, EFL students are likely to enhance their pronunciation skills because they offer numerous practical exercises and native speakers' instant feedback to users (Agusalim, Assidiqi, & Muhammad, 2014). Similar findings found in research by Xiao and Luo (2017) indicate that students who learned phonetics with the Liulishu app outperformed those who did not.

The second merit of using mobile devices for learning is that they are more accessible and user-friendly than desktop computers (Stockwell, 2007). That means students do not need to stay in any set location but still get access to learning materials without attending a face-to-face class.

Another plus point of this practice is that teachers can facilitate their students' studies with fun mobile games in an interactive and fascinating environment by using portable devices such as smartphones or tablets. Thus, not only do the students become autonomous (Ertmer, 2005), but their learning motivation also increases (Ebrahimzadeh & Alavi, 2016).

Benefits of mobile games in pronunciation

According to Gee (2007) and Prensky (2006), playing mobile games has become extremely popular recently and offered promising benefits when used in language classrooms. Apart from the benefits mentioned above of games in L2 learning, mobile games will assist students in improving their language acquisition (Chiu, Kao, & Reynolds, 2012). Suppose EFL learners are engaged in mobile game-based activities. In that case, they are likely to gradually level up their language proficiency, such as writing development (Allen, Crossley, Snow, & McNamara, 2012) and better oral proficiency (Lan, 2014). Moreover, a study conducted by Young and Wang (2014) demonstrates a remarkable improvement in students' pronunciation performance after they use mobile games in their EFL class. This conclusion is strengthened by the research findings of Berry (2021). In his study, a video game called Spaceteam ESL was used as the main treatment for Korean speakers of English with the ages of 18 and 22 in 3 experimental groups (EG). After a 15-week semester, he found out those students improved more significantly than those who utilized paper-based pronunciation exercises.

Related studies

The use of games in language teaching and learning, especially in teaching pronunciation, has received considerable attention in recent years. Nguyen (2015) gets the most out of Bingo, Noughts, and Crosses and other games to enhance second-year non-English major students' pronunciation at Ha Noi University. Her study findings show that students at different English levels can make huge progress in their pronunciation after receiving the treatment. The results also reveal that her students have a positive attitude towards the game usage in their pronunciation class.

Another study conducted by Nguyen (2016) has the same results in her English class at Khanh Hoa University. In her study, minimal pairs are chosen as a key solution to her freshmen's pronunciation problem. After six-week treatment, not only do the students make enormous improvements, but they also take a favorable attitude to learning pronunciation. A similar result is found in Suhaili's and Kurniawan's research (2019) when they employ BINGO games in their classroom setting to improve their students' pronunciation.

After reviewing the studies, the researchers conclude that while pronunciation games can help students improve their segmental features such as vowel and consonant production and boost their motivation to learn the subject, such games focus too much on monosyllabic words. Hence, the researchers wonder if any game might help them enhance their vowel sound production in multi-syllabic words.

3. Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The study was carried out with the help of 32 English- majored freshmen at Van Lang University. They were randomly chosen and belonged to two different Phonetics classes scheduled by the Faculty of Foreign Languages. Therefore, one class was the control group,

and the other was the experimental group in this study.

Design of the Study

The current paper was conducted using a mixed-method. Particularly, a pre-test, a post-test, and a questionnaire were employed to investigate the effects of the apps on students' vowel pronunciation and their attitudes towards the apps.

Tests

To ensure the same level of difficulty, the pre-test and post-test resemble and consist of 14 multi-syllabic words, as listed in Table 1. Each of the words was manipulated to determine the participants' ability to pronounce one specific vowel. These words in the tests were selected from books for teaching English to L2 adult learners such as 'American Accent Training' by Cook (2017), 'Clear Speech: Pronunciation and Listening Comprehension in North American English' by Gilbert (2012), and 'Master Mastering the American Accent' by Mojsin (2009), and were stated to be the most commonly mispronounced words in Norman's paper (2000).

Additionally, these words were taught to the students during the course. The tests were administered for both groups in the class during school time. Each participant was asked to read aloud the words in 1 to 2 minutes. All of the students' performance in the test was recorded and marked manually by two experienced teachers who are experts in teaching and researching English phonetics features.

Table 1. List of words in the pre-test and post-test

vowels	words	vowels	words
/i/	police	/ɑ/	photographer
/ɪ/	interesting	/u/	canoeing
/eɪ/	maintain	/ʊ/	understood
/ɛ/	vegetable	/oʊ/	pronouns
/æ/	Titanic	/aʊ/	allow
/ər/	purchase	/ɔɪ/	annoying
/ʌ/	comfortable	/aɪ/	childhood

Questionnaire

The questionnaire applied only for the experimental group was designed based on Parreno and Eamoraphan (2017) and Berry (2021). The reason for choosing these two sources lies in that their questions were made to figure out subjects' perceptions of digital games in EFL learning. To fit the purpose of the current study, the authors selected and modified these questions into

statements in the questionnaire consisting of two separated parts. In the first part, subjects' personal information (e.g., course, class) was included. The information in this part was confidential and only served to ensure that students were in the experimental group. The second part presented six statements about students' attitudes towards the mobile apps, and a five-point Likert scale (1- strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3- no idea, 4- agree, 5- strongly agree) was used. Additionally, the reliability of the questionnaire was .825, which was an acceptable rate.

Treatment

A mobile application for pronunciation practice, namely Blue Canoe, served as the treatment for the current experiment. There are several reasons why this application was chosen for the research. First, it uses the proven 20-year-old brain-based methodology called Color Vowel System, which is based on Finger's model (1985) and has been used in several renowned international education organizations such as the Peace Corps, the U.S. Department of State, Harvard, and Yale University. Another reason is that the multisensory and metacognitive approach (Odisho, 2007, 2014) is applied to Blue Canoe, which means learning vowels with the app is suitable for all different learning styles, including visual, auditory, and auditory kinesthetic styles.

The free version of the mobile application was made to help activate our brain to learn sounds through images, music, and movement. More specifically, when L2 learners use the app, they are first trained to identify and memorize 14 English vowels by looking at the color vowel chart and listening to vowels which rhyme with different colors. For example, long I sound, and the phrase 'white tie' is in rhyme, while short I sound rhymes with the phrase 'silver pin.' After that, several quizzes with audios included in the app are used to teach the learners how important it is for the stressed syllable and stressed vowel quality to be in intelligible pronunciation. Finally, the learners can experience a fascinating and fun game called Color it Out to show how intelligible their pronunciation is with native English speakers' feedback included in the game.

Data collection & analysis

The tests and the questionnaire were delivered to the participants during school time. The procedure of the experiment lasted for five weeks (from week 3 to week 8, based on the school syllabus) and was summarised as follows:

Week 1:	Introducing the features of English pronunciation
Week 2:	Giving pre-test
Week 3, 4, 5, 7, 8:	Applying the treatment (Week 6: Mid-term test)
Week 9:	Giving post-test
Week 10:	Delivering the questionnaire via Google forms

From week 3 to week 8 (except week 6 when students had to attend a midterm test), the intervened class learned and practiced vowel sounds with Blue Canoe during two-hour lessons chorally, individually, and in pairs. At the end of each lesson, the students are asked to play the game Color It Out in the application with their friends in about 15 minutes, either in pairs or in small groups, so as to consolidate their knowledge about the vowel sounds. However, students in the control groups were instructed through the audio-lingual method. That is to say, the participants only listened and repeated after the models provided by the teacher right from the beginning of the lesson, and then they practiced with minimal pair drills and dialogues.

Data collected were analyzed using SPSS 26.0. Before administering the treatment for the experimental group, independent samples t-tests were used to figure out whether there were any differences in the pre-test and post-test results in both groups. Then, after five weeks of applying the treatment for the experimental group, a paired sample t-test comparing the results of the tests was calculated for each of the groups. Data from the questionnaire was also computed right after the test analysis.

4. Results/Findings and discussion

The results from the pre-test and post-test in both groups indicated the significance of the treatment applied to the intervened class. A more detailed look at the figures for the test result analysis revealed that the students in the experimental group gained more improvement than the control group.

Following the authors' earlier discussion, with the intention of examining to identify whether there were any marked discrepancies in participated students' pronunciation, independent samples t-tests and reliability were operated. The statistics clearly signified the consistency of the pre-test in both classes. Particularly, Cronbach's Alpha of the pre-test was 0.702 for the control group and 0.78 for the intervened group, as shown in Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4 below.

Table 2. Reliability of pre-test in the control group

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.702	14

Table 3. Reliability of pre-test in intervened group

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.78	14

Students' accurate stressed vowels before the intervention

Table 4. Results of independent t-test between the pre-tests in the two groups

Variable	M	SD	t	df	p
Vowel production					
Control group	6.0	2.55	-.986	32	.331
Experimental group	6.88	2.67			

Note.   * The t and df were not adjusted because variances were equal.

* Independent Samples t-test

As can be seen from Table 4, the mean score of the students in the control group was slightly lower than that in the experimental group, at 6.0 and 6.88, respectively. However, the result of the independent samples t-test with the p-value, p = .331 > .05, illustrated no significant difference in the ability to produce accurate stressed vowel sounds of the students in the two groups. This means that before the treatment was applied, the two groups' vowel production was similar. Therefore, the experiment fulfilled the criteria and was approved.

Research question 1: What are the effects of using mobile games on learning stressed vowels among first-year English majors at Van Lang University (VLU)?

Table 5. Results of pre-test and post-test paired samples t-test in the control group (CG)

Variable	M	SD	Correlation	Mean difference	t	df	p
Vowel production of CG							
Pre-test	6.0	2.065	.510	-2.47	-4.388	16	.000
Post-test	8.47	2.549					

Note. Paired Samples t-test

Table 6. Results of pre-test and post-test paired samples t-test in the experimental group (EG)

Variable	M	SD	Correlation	Mean difference	t	df	p
Vowel production of EG							
Pre-test	6.88	2.214	.713	-4.29	-9.337	16	.000
Post-test	11.177	2.667					

Note. Paired Samples t-test

Tables 5 and 6 show the results of a paired samples t-test between the pre-test and the post-test in the control and experimental groups, respectively. Regarding to the former, the mean score of the pre-test was 6.0 (M = 6.0, SD = 2.065) while that of the post-test was slightly higher, at 8.47 (M = 8.47, SD = 2.549). The mean difference between the tests was -2.47 and the results of the paired-samples t-test (t = -4.388) was .000 (p = .000 < .05). These statistics illustrate that the distinction in the tests of the control group was statistically significant. Hence, it can be concluded that the participants gained improvement during the course without the treatment.

For the control group, the mean difference between the mean score of the pre-test (M = 6.88) and that of the post-test (M = 11.177) was -4.29. In addition, the paired samples t-test had a p-value of .000 (p = .000 < .05). Thus, there was a statistically significant difference in the test scores.

The findings are consistent with those in Wilson's study (2008), in which students made great progress in their English consonant and vowel pronunciation after they used mobile applications. The outstanding achievement in the student's score in the present study can be explained by the fact that the mobile application used includes practical activities and games and immediate feedback to users, as well as by the fact that it boosted student's learning ability with the combination of different senses such as hearing, feeling, and sight. With the application of the multisensory and multicognitive approach mentioned earlier, the pronunciation learning process of the experimental group took place in different stages, from listening to the vowels, storing them, comparing them with the ones in their psycholinguistic inventory to articulating the desired sounds.

Table 7. Results of independent t-test between the post-tests in the two groups

Variable	M	SD	Correlation	t	df	p
Vowel production						
Post-test (EG)	11.177	2.214	2.706	3.684	32	.001
Post-test (CG)	8.47	2.065				

Note. Independent Samples t-test

Another independent samples t-test was made between the data collected from the post-test in both groups to make the point clearer. In Table 7, statistics from t-test analysis (t = 3.684, p = .001 < .05) reveal a statistically significant divergence in the post-test scores between these two groups. Also, the mean difference of the group using Blue Canoe appeared higher than that of the other group. These figures indicate that using mobile pronunciation applications had a positive effect on participants' vowel pronunciation.

The result of this study supports Xiao and Luo (2017), who found that when students made use of mobile apps, they outperformed those who studied in a traditional phonetics class where students are taught with the audio-lingual approach in order to memorize patterns by drilling. However, such an approach seems to be more effective with children than adult learners (Odisho, 2007, 2014). Therefore, students in the experimental group experience the new approach in which they can control many senses to get information and produce the target sounds. This explains why there is a remarkable difference in the mean score of the post-test in the two groups, which means the treatment group with the use of the mobile application performs better than the control group learning with the traditional approach. Accordingly, students would improve their stressed vowel production more considerably if they learned pronunciation with a mobile application like Blue Canoe.

Research question 2: Do students have positive attitudes towards using mobile games on learning vowels?

A survey was delivered to intervened samples right after the post-test to examine students' viewpoints on mobile apps in learning phonetics. Data from the questionnaire were collected and analyzed via SPSS program 26.0. The reliability stood at 0.825, which was highly accepted (Table 8). Statistics from this survey (Table 9) indicate that most students had positive attitudes towards Blue Canoe, with a mean score of 3.956. Remarkably, most of the students strongly agreed that they would continue to use it in class (M=4.467), followed by the idea that they could hear the vowel sounds more clearly (M=4.267). Although they were generally on the side of that digital application use in class, not many students are for the points that the app could assist them in pronouncing words or getting feedback easily with the lowest mean scores of 3.6 and 3.667, respectively. Regarding the two statements investigating whether they felt confident or were interested in manipulating the digital apps, the participants tended to reach *agree*ment

on level (M= 3.8 and 3.93, correspondingly).

Overall, this finding is similar to the one by Nguyen (2015) and by Ghounane (2019), where it was found that students had a positive attitude to the use of mobile games or mobile applications. With the use of Blue Canoe, students felt more confident and would continue to use it in the future, which shows that the application has provided them with both satisfaction and interest. Obviously, the application is easy to install on a mobile phone, which they can carry anywhere and do some practice at any time. The fact that the students wanted to keep using them with a mean score of 4.47, which is remarkably high, shows the possibility of continuous use for pronunciation improvement. One of the reasons for the interest in the application is that they could get helpful feedback from the application when they produced the sounds. Instant feedback is one of the essential features of a mobile application game (Agusalim et al., 2014); therefore, in this study context, the feedback students got immediately made them feel happy and keep track of their study progress. Moreover, students found the sound of the app clear to hear, with the second-highest mean score of 4.27, which indicates that the sound system's quality in the app gets students involved in the activities they do with it and creates a sense of satisfaction. Ultimately, they felt they pronounced the words more easily.

Table 8. Reliability of the questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.825	6

Table 9. Descriptive statistics on students' attitudes towards the mobile apps

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
feel confident	16	3	2	5	3.80
want to continue using the apps	16	2	3	5	4.47
can hear the sound more clearly	16	2	3	5	4.27
can pronoun words more easily	16	4	1	5	3.60
be interested in the game	16	3	2	5	3.93
can get useful feedback	16	4	1	5	3.67
Valid N (listwise)	16				

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the current research was conducted to investigate the effects of using mobile apps in enhancing English vowel pronunciation among EFL majors at Van Lang University and their attitudes towards using the apps in Phonetics class. The results showed that there was a considerable difference in the post-test results between the control group (M=8.47) and the experimental group (M=11.177). In addition, the independent samples t-tests (p= .331 and .001) and paired samples t-tests (p=0) in the pre-test and the post-test indicated that the subjects were treated fairly during the experiment. Particularly, students in the intervened class could pronounce better at difficult sounds with more accurate stresses (e.g., Titanic, purchase) than those in the other class. Therefore, it was concluded that using a mobile app like Blue Canoe has enabled students to perform better in pronouncing English vowels. This is because it facilitates the combination of different senses in learning from students.

For this reason, English teachers should apply the multisensory and multicognitive approach in their teaching pronunciation to reach a better possibility of success. More specifically, the implementation of a mobile application like Blue Canoe can be recommended in the classroom, especially in the pronunciation class. Instead of using traditional games or activities that only adopt an audio-lingual approach, teachers should take the above-mentioned approach into account to get the best from students' learning practice. For students, the use of this application is highly suggested for its easy accessibility and effectiveness. It is suitable for varied kinds of learners, for it activates different senses in a learner. Besides, based on the result of the questionnaire (M=3.956), it was stated that the participants had positive attitudes towards using the mobile app in practicing vowel sounds. This finding confirms the potential for utilizing the app in a long-term period, which can even result in better performance in students' vowel articulation.

Although the paper has shown some significance in the field, limitations could not be avoided. Firstly, the time for the treatment only lasted for five weeks, and there were only 16 participants, so the results could not be generalized. Secondly, the test was focused on American vowels; thus, the results were not applicable for other English language varieties' sounds. Finally, only a questionnaire was administered in the research, which was not enough to investigate all of the students' attitudes in depth.

In connection with suggestions for further research, the following issues should be taken into consideration. First, there should be a larger number of participants so that the results can be more generalized. Furthermore, it is highly recommended that other features of English pronunciation should be included in future investigations. Regarding tools for measuring learners' attitudes towards the treatment, questionnaires, interviews, and observations should be used for gaining more students' detailed opinions about manipulating mobile applications in ESL/EFL classrooms.

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Does online instruction in discourse conventions of literary analysis affect L2 students' critical stance in academic writing? A longitudinal study

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore L2 students' longitudinal development of critical stance patterns in academic writing as a result of their exposure to online instruction in the discourse conventions of literary criticism. The data consisted of a 75661-word longitudinal corpus of 63 essay assignments, collected over 7 weeks' instruction via pre-, during- and post-instruction google classroom submissions. Applying Martin & White's (2005) appraisal taxonomy, the data was analyzed for frequency and wording differences using manual coding of attitude, graduation, and engagement markers through UAM Corpus Tool. The results show a significant longitudinal decrease in the use of linguistic resources which express personal feelings and make the construed evaluative meanings forceful and compelling. This shows that the teaching and the learning methods employed in the online instruction may have impacted L2 students' ability to develop a formal style of academic writing; the results also indicate a less significant longitudinal increase in the use of linguistic resources that construe a register-appropriate critical stance, such as the use of attitude sub-types of judgment and appreciation. This shows that the teaching and learning methods employed in the online instruction may not have impacted L2 students' ability to develop a register-appropriate critical stance. These findings have far-reaching implications for the use of online mode to make explicit the discourse conventions of literary criticism to L2 students. They show the extent to which the integration of certain teaching and learning methods in online instruction has an impact on L2 students' academic writing.

Keywords: Critical stance, discourse conventions of literary criticism, evaluation, longitudinal corpus, online instruction

1.Introduction

Academic writing plays a crucial role in university students' life in academia. Not only is it hard to imagine students' experience in academia without essay assignments, research reports, research papers, etc., but writing is also a key to students' success in a particular discipline. Indeed, the success of students in a particular discipline is partly dependent upon their success in writing different tasks that are given to them (Hyland, 2013). Many studies have shown that writing a successful text requires students to follow the discourse conventions of the discipline in which they write (Lancaster, 2012, 2014, 2016; Wilder, 2002, 2005, 2012; Wilder & Wolfe, 2009, etc.). While it is reasonable for students to adopt disciplinary discourse conventions in writing, it also has been shown that these discourse conventions are challenging for many students, particularly students writing in English as a foreign language (Miller, Mitchell & Pessoa, 2017). This is because of three main factors. First, as Hyland (2013) points out, students'

prior writing experience does not prepare the student for the literacy demands of disciplinary discourse communities. Second, the disciplinary discourse conventions are not often tacitly taught to students even though teachers invoke them when assessing students' written texts (Wilder, 2002). Third, students' writing in English as a foreign language may have difficulties in grammar, structures of arguments due to the fact that different language seems to have different ways of organizing ideas and arguments (Hyland, 2013).

To help students gain access to disciplinary discourse conventions, many researchers working within composition and rhetoric, systemic functional linguistics, critical discourse analysis, etc. have analyzed the nature of these conventions (e.g., Bruce, 2008, 2010, 2016; Crosthwaite & Jiang, 2017; Lee & Deakin, 2016; Wilder & Wolfe, 2009; Wu, 2007, etc.). These researchers demonstrate that these disciplinary discourse conventions are exceedingly associated with construing critical stance in academic text. Construing a critical stance involves adopting a stance toward ideas or the subject matter at hand, toward the status of knowledge, and towards other positions, views, or voices (Hyland, 2005; Lancaster, 2016; White, 2003; etc.). Therefore, many researchers analyze the rhetorical or linguistic features associated with enacting a critical stance in disciplinary writing. For example, Wilder's (2002, 2005, 2012) studies analyze the rhetorical features of literary analyses by university students. The study by Bruce (2016) examines linguistic features associated with enacting critical stances in essays written by students majoring in sociology and English studies.

These analyses of linguistic and rhetorical features associated with critical stance are motivated by pedagogical needs to help students become aware of how these features are realized in academic texts. As a result, these analyses have led to the creation of EAP and WID (Writing In Discipline) courses to demystify to students how critical stance patterns are enacted in disciplinary writing. Pedagogically, it has been shown that the deconstruction of successful academic texts in terms of critical stance features alongside explicit teaching of this feature improves students' success in writing in a particular discipline (Wilder & Wolfe, 2009).

 However, while a considerable number of studies deconstruct critical stance patterns in successful academic texts for pedagogical needs (e.g., Bruce, 2016; Humphrey & Economou, 2015; Miller, Mitchell & Pessoa, 2017, etc.), less is known regarding how L2 students develop critical stance in academic writing as a result of online instruction in the discourse conventions of a particular discipline. Addressing this gap would contribute to shedding light on the effectiveness of online instruction in discourse convention of a particular discipline in producing a desired academic genre. Therefore, this study investigates whether online instruction in the discourse conventions of literary analysis over time affects L2 students' development of critical stance in academic writing. It uses students' corpus collected longitudinally to examine whether online instruction in the discourse conventions of literary analysis influence students' development of critical stance in academic writing.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Critical stance in Disciplinary Writing

There has been a significant body of studies on the concept of critical stance in disciplinary writing (e.g., Aull & Lancaster, 2014; Bruce, 2014, 2016; Jiang & Hyland, 2015; Lancaster, 2012, 2016; etc.). In these studies, there is an agreement that construing critical stance in academic writing involves different things in different disciplinary contexts. In other words, it involves engaging with the epistemological beliefs or values of a particular discipline. In the discipline of education, it involves, as Humphrey & Economou (2015, p.46) point out, "the challenging of a theoretical notion or aspect of research in an external source, and the

positioning of the reader to accept an authorial alternative/counter position". As Rothery & Stenglin (2000) suggest, literary analysis involves challenging conventional interpretations of literary work under analysis, evaluating the techniques/strategies employed by writers (novelists, poets, etc.), and positioning readers to accept an authorial interpretation of the portrayal of characters. In this regard, many studies conduct a linguistic and rhetorical analysis of critical stance in a published research paper and successful essay assignments by undergraduate and postgraduate students writing in a particular discipline.

For example, in the study by Rothery & Stenglin (2000), an appraisal analysis of a successful response to a literary text is conducted. The analysis reveals that successful responses to literary texts employ linguistic resources of judgement to evaluate characters in terms of behavior and attitude, linguistic resources of appreciation to evaluate the aesthetic qualities of the literary work under analysis, and linguistic resources of engagement to interpret the characterization in the work under analysis from the perspective of a particular literary theory. Another similar study to the study by Rothery & Stenglin (2000) is the study by Bruce (2016). In this study, Bruce conducts a genre and linguistic analysis of successful essays by university students in literature. The analysis shows that successful essays in literature employ critical statements of ground conclusion, concession contra-expectations and reason result, and the linguistic markers of hedging and attitude.

In the study by Wilder (2012), a rhetorical analysis of successful literary analyses by undergraduate students is conducted. The findings reveal that successful literary analyses employ special topoi. Topoi is a term used by Fahnestock & Secor (1988, 1991) and Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) to mean commonly held warrants or unstated premises that seek to connect with an audience's hierarchy of values (in Wilder, 2005). Topoi, as Fahnestock & Secor (1991) argue, invoke the shared assumption of literary scholars, and make literary arguments convincing to their intended audience. Specifically, the results indicate that successful literary analyses predominantly employ appearance/reality topoi to invoke the apparent meaning of the literary text under analysis before arguing for the real meaning. Another similar study to the study by Wilder (2012) is the study by Lancaster (2016). In this study, Lancaster conducts a linguistic deconstruction of critical stance in unsuccessful literary analyses by one upper-level university students and literary analyses from Michigan Corpus of Upper-level Student Corpus (MICUSP). The findings indicate that literary analyses from MICUSP employ more linguistic resources that realize the appearance/reality topoi than unsuccessful literary analysis by one upper-level university student.

In summary, the reviewed studies show how critical stance is linguistically and rhetorically construed in successful literary analysis. It is obvious that these studies adopt different perspective to examine critical stance in successful literary analysis. The study by Wilder (2012) follows a rhetorical approach to the analysis of critical stance in literary analyses, while the study by Rothery & Stenglin (2000) adopt a systemic functional linguistics perspective, particularly appraisal theory by Martin & White (2005) to analyze how critical stance is construed in literary analyses. The objectives of these analyses are to inform pedagogy in English studies. In other words, teachers in the discipline of English studies can draw on these analyses to make explicit the linguistic and rhetorical resources associated with critical stance to students. However, although these analyses are conducted for pedagogical need, they do not inform us on how students majoring in English studies develop the linguistic and rhetorical resources associated with critical stance. In other words, these analyses do not show how students learn to construe critical stance in their literary analyses. Therefore, it is still uncertain the extent to which instruction in the linguistic features associated with critical stance help students develop register-appropriate critical stance in academic writing. Qualitative and

quantitative analyses of the longitudinal impact of online instruction in the discourse conventions of literary criticism on the production of critical stance patterns are important in determining the usefulness of making explicit the linguistic and rhetorical resources associated with the discourse conventions of literary criticism to students over a period of time.

2.2. Online Instruction in Disciplinary Discourse conventions

Disciplinary discourse conventions concern the ways in which knowledge is built and arguments are developed in a particular discipline. Wilder (2012) points out that these discourse conventions are reflected in the linguistic and rhetorical features of successful academic texts produced by professional academic writers or undergraduate and postgraduate students writing in a particular discipline. Therefore, a number of studies are conducted to explore the ways in which instructions in disciplinary discourse conventions impact students' quality of writing, improve students' critical awareness in academic writing and affect students' ability to construe register-appropriate critical stance (e.g., Crosthwaite & Jiang, 2017, Wilder & Wolfe, 2009; Wingate, 2012, etc.).

For example, the study by Wingate (2012) explores the impact of an online writing course in the discipline of management on students' critical awareness. This online course was guide by the constructionist theory of learning and genre approach to academic writing. In other words, the online writing course in this study exposed students to the discourse conventions of the discipline of management through research papers and successful essays. In this study, Wingate used a questionnaire as a research method to explore the impact of the course on students' critical awareness. The results reveal that the components of the course that exposed students to the ways texts are organized were highly useful, while the components of the course that raised students' critical awareness were not useful. This seems to suggest that the online writing course in the study by Wingate (2012) impacted students' ability to organize an academic text, but it did not raise students' critical awareness. The reason for these results, as Wingate (2012) suggest, is that the online course was detached from regular subject teaching.

The study by Wingate, Andon & Cogo (2011) investigates the usefulness and the impact of a blended (online and offline) instruction in the discourse and epistemological features of the discipline of applied linguistics on undergraduate students' writing quality. This online and offline course was guided by academic literacies and genre approach to academic writing, and it was embedded in the teaching of applied linguistics. In other words, participants in this study were exposed to the ways in which knowledge is built and arguments are developed in the discipline of applied linguistics. The results from holistic assessment of students' submissions and from questionnaire show that students made progress in the quality of writing from the first submissions to the final submissions, and students felt that the writing course helped them improve their academic writing. The results in this study agrees with the findings in the study by Wilder & Wolfe (2009). In this study, Wilder & Wolfe employed a quasi-experimental research design to examine whether an offline explicit instruction in the discourse conventions of literary criticism helps students produce rhetorically effective discourse or hampers students' enjoyment, expression, and engagement in literature. The results indicate that students in the experimental group produced essays of higher quality and engaged more effectively with the special topoi of literary criticism than students in the control group. This suggests that the offline instructions in the discourse conventions of literary criticism improved students' quality of writing.

In summary, the reviewed studies show the extent to which an online or offline instruction in the discourse conventions of a particular discipline impact students' writing quality. It is clear in these studies that many factors affect the effectiveness of the instructions in disciplinary

discourse. One of these factors is the detachment of the instructions from subject teaching. However, although these studies contribute to understanding the importance of embedding academic writing in the teaching of disciplinary knowledge, they do not inform us on which linguistic features or rhetorical features contribute to the progress in the quality of writing by students. They indicate a holistic progress in the quality of writing as a result of online or offline instruction in disciplinary discourse conventions, but they do not indicate which discourse and epistemological features contribute to this progress. Therefore, this study examines whether there is a progress or a regress in the use of discourse and epistemological features that construe a register-appropriate critical stance as a result of an online academic writing course. To meet this objective, this study draws on appraisal theory from systemic functional linguistics.

2.3. Theoretical Framework: Appraisal Theory

The theoretical framework applied in this study to investigate whether there is a progress or a regress in the use of discourse and epistemological features that construe a register-appropriate critical stance is appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2005). This theory extends SFL account of interpersonal meaning and consists of three linguistic systems: attitude, graduation and engagement.

2.3.1. Attitude system

Attitude system include all the linguistic resources (semantic region) that are used to construe emotions and feelings, to evaluate human character or behavior according to ethical norms, and to assess the value of entity (Martin and White, 2005). According to Martin and White (2005), the system of attitude differentiates three attitude types: *affect, judgement, appreciation*.

Affect deals with personal emotions/feelings. It groups emotions/feelings into four major sets having to do with dis/inclination, un/happiness, in/security and dis/satisfaction. Dis/inclination covers emotions concerned with intention/desire and fear. Un/happiness covers emotions concerned with "affair of the heart"- sadness, hate, happiness and love. In/security covers our feelings of peace and anxiety in relation to our environment, including of course the people sharing them with us. Dis/satisfaction deals with our feelings of achievement and frustration in relation to the activities in which we are engaged, including our roles as both participants and spectators. All these four sets of emotions have positive and negative polarity.

Judgement deals with meaning construing our attitudes to people, the way they behave- their character. Judgement can be divided between those dealing with social esteem and those oriented to social sanction. Judgements of social esteem have to do with normality (how unusual someone is), capacity (how capable they are), and tenacity (how resolute they are). Judgements of social sanction have to do with veracity (how truthful someone is) and propriety (whether someone behaves according to social-cultural norms). Similarly, all these forms of judgements have positive and negative polarity.

Appreciation deals with meanings construing our evaluations of things, for example, the worth of a literary text and process in a culture. Appreciations can be divided into three sub-systems- reaction, their composition, and their valuation. Rothery & Stenglin (2000) points out that each of these sub-systems corresponds to one of the three metafunctions of language: ideational meaning, interpersonal meaning and textual meaning. Reaction corresponds to interpersonal meaning. It describes an emotional impact of an entity/thing, such as a literary work, message in the literary work, etc. on literary critics/readers. Positive reaction includes linguistic resources such as captivating, interesting, stunning, beautiful, etc. Negative reaction includes linguistic resources such as boring, questionable, debatable, predictable, etc. Composition is aligned with textual meaning. It describes the texture of a thing, such a literary work, in terms

of its complexity and balance. Positive composition includes detailed, rich, etc. Negative composition includes simplistic, irregular, ambiguous, cyclic, etc. Valuation corresponds to ideational meaning. It evaluates the worth of a particular literary work, for example, its social contribution to understanding a particular idea. It also evaluates the message conveyed in a particular literary work. Positive valuation includes linguistic features, such as innovative, significant, important, unique, etc. Negative valuation entails linguistic resources, such as insignificant, overdue, useless, shallow, etc.

2.3.2. Graduation System

Graduation system has to do with linguistic items which intensify meaning or grade values. Martin and White (2005) identifies two graduation types. First, graduation according to prototypicality (focus) involves sharpening or softening the boundaries of a categorical meaning (e.g., He is a **true** friend; It was an apology **of the sort**). Second, graduation according to force involves scaling of intensity (e.g., **very** interesting, **somewhat** interesting) and scaling of amount or extent of entities (e.g., I have **many** worries about your performance; There is a **paucity** of information on the matter). Xie (2016, p.3) argues that graduation "may function to evoke attitudinal reading out of experiential meanings". For instance, by scaling down an apology given by someone as in "It was an apology **of the sort.**", the readers are invited to have a negative attitude towards the proposition.

2.3.3. Engagement System

The system of engagement is concerned with the linguistic mechanism by which the writer/speakers incorporate various positions in their texts and take a stance towards those positions. These various positions may be single-voiced (mono-glossic) and multi-voiced (hetero-glossic). Mono-glossic assertions are those, as Martin & White (2005) point out, which do not recognize other voices. On the other hand, hetero-glossic options include linguistic mechanisms by which writers/speakers expand or contract dialogic space for alternative positions or voices (White, 2003).

2.4. Research Question

This study investigates L2 students' longitudinal development of critical stance patterns in academic writing as a result of their exposure to online instruction in the discourse conventions of literary criticism. It addresses the following research question.

RQ: Is there any variation in the distribution of critical stance patterns in L2 students' written literary analyses pre-, during- and post-online instruction in the discourse conventions of literary criticism?

3. Research Methods

3.1. Research Context

The present study is situated in the department of English at Maharaja Krishnakumarsinhji Bhavnagar University (MKBU). The department of English at this university offers postgraduate courses in literature studies. These courses generally include those related to world literature (Indian writing in English, British literature, American literature, African literature, etc.) and to literary critical theories (existentialism, feminism, new critical theory, etc.). This postgraduate program requires regular writing activities. The writing activities include written thinking activities, and lengthy essay assignments, which students can present orally in class.

However, although teachers and researchers across disciplines in India acknowledge the difficulties university students face in writing effectively, academic writing courses are not

included on the curriculum of undergraduate and postgraduate level in all disciplines-arts, humanities, social sciences, etc. (e.g., Evangeline & Ganesh, 2016; Vijayakumar, 2018; etc.). In addition, there is no provision of English for academic writing course that helps students transition from general writing to disciplinary-specific writing. Two assumptions may underpin this no provision of English academic writing course in Indian educational context. The first assumption is that students may learn disciplinary-specific way of writing tacitly. The second assumption is that students who have difficulties in academic writing may attend academic writing workshops. Indeed, many universities in India organize academic writing workshops and encourage students to attend them. However, academic writing workshops provide students with knowledge of how to organize an academic text, but they do not help students learn disciplinary-specific way of writing. Therefore, this study explores whether online instructions in the discourse conventions of literary criticism impacts students' ability to produce a register-appropriate critical stance or affect students' quality of writing. This study is relevant as it may inform teachers across disciplines in India the usefulness and the importance of teaching disciplinary-specific way of writing to university students.

3.2. Participants

The participants in the present study were selected as follows. First, after the writing course was designed, the researchers made video recordings that introduced the content of each unit of the course. Second, a google classroom website was created. Third, a video recording that introduced the course was uploaded on the google classroom website. The introduction of the course was intended to explain to students the reasons and the objectives of the course. Fourth, students were requested to watch the video recording and to read the content of the introduction, and if interested, to register for the course. Before registering, students were asked to do a diagnostic writing task which required them to analyze a literary work from a particular literary theory. Therefore, 42 postgraduate students registered for the course. Some of these students were in the first year, and others were in the final year of a two-year program of English studies in the department of English at MKBU. However, all the students who registered did not take or did not comply with all the requirements of the course. Of 42 students, 21 students satisfied all the requirements of the course. This means that only 21 students were able to watch the video recording, to read the content of the course, and to do all the assignments. As a consequence, the data were collected from 21 postgraduate students who complied with all the requirements of the online instruction. It is important to note that students in this study writes in English as a second language. Nevertheless, they are generally considered as competent users of English, having been instructed through it in their three-year undergraduate program and having learned English as a subject in their pre-university studies. In addition, although the researchers did not measure this competence with reliable English texts, Bhavnagar university admits students who have a score of 48% and above on English tests to its postgraduate programs (see on https://www.mkbhavuni.edu.in).

3.3. Online Instruction in the Discourse conventions of Literary Criticism

3.3.1. The structure of the Online Instruction

The online instruction was planned as follows. First, it comprised 5 units. The design of the contents of the 5 units was guided by genre approach to teaching academic writing and by academic literacies. In other words, the contents of the online instruction exposed students to the ways in which knowledge is built in the discipline of English studies and to the discourse and epistemological practices of literary criticism. Second, it consisted of video recordings of 5 to 20 minutes, which introduced each unit of the module. These introductory videos were intended to help participants know what is included in each unit, what was expected of them,

and online submissions details. Third, it consisted of assessment rubrics to evaluate each submission. Last, it comprised an individualized online feedback on each online submission. In summary, the intervention comprised the contents of 5 units, 5 introductory videos, assessment rubrics, and individualized feedback.

3.3.2. Implementation of the online instruction

The intervention lasted 7 weeks from 16th January 2021 to 8th March 2021- 5 weeks were for independent learning and individualized online feedback on each online submission and two weeks were for completing the final submission. This self-regulated learning was guided by the integration of the following methods.

Watching introductory videos and reading the contents of the online instruction: upon the weekly upload of the introductory video and the content of each unit on google classroom website, students were asked to watch the video and read the content of the unit. The upload followed a sequential pattern from unit one to unit five. This sequential pattern was followed for two reasons. First, each unit was designed to help students learn specific types of discourse and epistemological practices of literary criticism. Second, it was possible to evaluate whether students have understood the content of the unit through multiple-choice questions and writing task. They were given four days for reading the content of each unit and for doing the above-mentioned tasks. Therefore, the content of the unit contained explanations of the requirements for writing a literary analysis and an excerpt from a successful essay in literature. The explanations were intended to help students understand the ways in which literary critics critically engage with the portrayal of characters and the message conveyed in the literary text under analysis. They were also intended to help students understand how literary critics assess the techniques used by writers to articulate a particular theme and show an understanding of the literary theory in the interpretation of the message articulated in literary work under analysis. Then, students were asked to read the excerpt from successful essay and to comment on the ways in which these explanations were realized in the excerpt. The content of the second and the third unit contained explanations of discourse and epistemological features of literary analyses. In these two units, students were presented with extracts from published paper in literature and successful essays by university students. These extracts were used to demonstrated the linguistic and discourse markers that are usually used to meet the requirements explained in the first unit, as well as the style of citing and referencing. These markers included linguistic markers of critical stance and language used to develop arguments in literary analyses. The contents of the fourth and the fifth units contained explanations of the ways in which arguments in an essay and research paper are organized. In these two units, students were presented with an example of an essay and research paper and were asked to comment on the ways in which the introductions of an essay and research paper provide background information on with the essay or the research paper focuses. Students were also asked to comment on the ways in which arguments are developed and the ways in which critical stance is expressed in the body sections of the two genres. Last, students were asked to comment on the ways in which the conclusions of the two genres summarize the content of the body section, consolidate the position taken in the introduction or answer the research question formulated in the introduction, etc.

Online submission and individualized online feedback: online submission and individualized online feedback were organized in sequential pattern. This was done in order to ensure that the researchers can track a longitudinal development of students' ability to construe a register-appropriate critical stance in their literary analyses. In this regard, in the first unit, students were presented with a short story and were asked to write two paragraphs which demonstrated their

critical engagement with the portrayal of characters and with the message conveyed in the short story. After they submitted the two paragraphs on google classroom, the researchers took two days to evaluate each submission and to give individualized feedback. In the second unit, students were asked to revised the two paragraphs according to the content of the second unit and were given individualized feedback. In the third unit, students were asked to edit the two paragraphs submitted in the first unit according to the content of the third unit and were also given individualized feedback. In the fourth unit, students were asked to extend the two paragraphs submitted in the first unit and to write an essay which included the introduction, the body, and the conclusion and were also given individualized feedback. In the fifth unit, students were asked to add an abstract and a list of references and were also give individualized feedback. Each submission was evaluated on the basis of assessment rubric, which was uploaded on google classroom website. Students were asked to read the assessment rubric before writing each submission.

In summary, the implementation of the online instruction was guided by the integration of the above-outlined methods. Students were independent learners in that they were not told the number of hours a week they should read the content of each unit. They were free to read the content of each unit as many times as they wanted, provided that they complete all the tasks within four days in a week. The introductory videos, the contents of the online instruction and the assessment rubrics can be accessed via the following website: https://classroom.google.com/c/MjU2NjcxMDk2NDAw.

3.4. Collection of Data

The data were collected longitudinally at three points- pre-instruction, meaning a diagnostic writing task before students were exposed to the course (point 1), during-instruction, meaning immediately after the fourth unit (point 2), and post-instruction, meaning the final writing task (point 3). The assignments at point two were selected for one reason. It was after the fourth unit that students were asked to write an extended essay which comprised the introduction, the body and the conclusion. Therefore, the assignments at this point were selected in order to match the format of assignments at point 1 and at point 3. At these two points, students were asked to write an extended essay. The written assignments collected at each point were used to constitute three corpora. The first corpus included 21 essay assignments collected at point 1 and this corpus was called "Pre-Instruction Corpus 1 (PIC 1)". The second corpus included 21 essay assignments collected at point 2 and this corpus was called "During-Instruction Corpus 2 (DIC 2)". The third corpus included 21essay assignments collected at point 3 and this corpus was called "Post-Instruction Corpus 3 (PIC 3)". The collection of data at these three points made it possible to fit a developmental line which could shed light on the linear progression, U or reverse-U shaped behavior (Meunier, 2016 cited in Crosthwaite & Jiang, 2017). Table 1 presents the size of each corpus.

Table 1.

Longitudinal Corpora

Longitudinal corpora	Texts	Words	Sentences
PIC 1	21	17582	1025
DIC 2	21	14774	832
PIC 3	21	43305	2401
Total	63	75661	4258

3.5. Analysis of Data

In this study, a discourse analytic research method was employed to examine critical stance patterns in the longitudinal corpus. This analysis of critical stance patterns drew on appraisal system (Martin & White, 2005) through manual coding using UAM corpus tool (O' Donnell, 2007). The appraisal analysis of longitudinal corpus was conducted as follows. First, the researchers converted the corpus into plain text (with extension txt), compatible with UAM Corpus Tool. Second, after uploading the corpus into the application (UAM Corpus Tool), the researchers conducted three layers of appraisal analysis. The first layer involved drawing on the appraisal sub-system of attitude to examine the ways in which students critically evaluated the portrayal of characters, the message conveyed and the techniques used by writers to articulate a particular theme in the literary work under analysis. The second layer entailed drawing on the appraisal sub-system of graduation to explore the ways in which students amplified evaluative meanings in their assignments. The third layer involved drawing on the appraisal sub-system of engagement to examine the ways in which students position readers to accept their interpretations and critically engage with alternative interpretations of the portrayal of characters. These three layers of analysis contributed to understanding the differences in construing critical stance in the longitudinal corpus. By examining the ways in which students selected linguistic and discourse resources to evaluate entity, people's behavior, and to negotiate other positions, the three layers of analysis shed light on the variation in the register-appropriate critical stance in the longitudinal corpus.

3.6. Coding of the Data

The coding of the three layers of appraisal system drew on Martin & White's (2005) taxonomy. It was conducted as follows. First, the researchers coded the attitude types- affect, judgement, appreciation, and their sub-categories, the attitude mode as inscribed or evoked and the attitude polarity as negative or positive. In order to code these resources, the researchers had to read each assignment multiple times in order to interpret accurately the critical stance patterns that occurred in the assignment. The researchers had also to read back-and-forth between clause and text levels and to resort to co-textual relations to examine how one linguistic item could influence the interpretation of another linguistic item or to capture how a particular linguistic item could have different interpretation when it occurred in different co-textual relations. Example [1] presents the coding of attitude, in which "patriarchal" explicitly embodies the writer's negative evaluation of "arrangement of social order. Patriarchal is a descriptive term and therefore does not carries an evaluative meaning. The negative evaluative meaning it inscribes results from the linguistic items it occurs within the same sentence, e.g., "horrific form" and "unsafe position".

[1]: Women were subject to **horrific [Appreciation: reaction -]** forms of sexual violence during partition which suggests the **unsafe [Appreciation: reaction -]** position of women in the **patriarchal [Appreciation: valuation -]** arrangement of social order (PIC 3).

Second, the researchers coded the graduation type as force and focus, the graduation orientation as up-scaling and down-scaling, and the graduation effect as evoking and non-evoking attitude. If the graduation resources evoked attitude, then we coded the attitude type and its polarity. If the graduation resources did not evoke attitude, then we coded the graduation orientation. Examples [2] and [3] illustrate this coding.

[2]: Retelling of a story becomes *very* **interesting [Force: intensity, up-scaling]** to interpret when it is said from a different perspective (PIC 1).

[3]: The River Churning *presents* **[Focus: fulfilment, up-scaling], [Appreciation: valuation +, evoked]** how the state intervention on the bodies of women affected their lives (PIC1).

Third, the researchers coded the engagement resources. In order to code these resources, the researchers had to interpret whether propositions in the assignments were mono-glossically or hetero-glossically formulated based on the clausal level. If the propositions were hetero-glossically formulated, the researchers coded the sub-categories of hetero-glossic resources. Example [4] and [5] illustrates this coding.

[4]: Partition violence positioned women as objects of possession and vehicles to carry the burden of hostility of opposed groups of men (PIC 3) **[Mono-glossic proposition]**.

[5]: Moreover, the above lines **can** be read as an insightful presentation of Jenny's experience of comprehending reality **[Hetero-glossic proposition, expand: entertain].**

The researchers coded these resources using UAM Corpus Tool. To ensure reliability of the coding, appraisal resources were coded at one-month interval. This involved coding the data manually using UAM Corpus tool and after one month, the researchers coded again the resources manually using UAM Corpus Tool. This was done to make sure that there was an inter-rater agreement at one-month interval.

3.7. Statistical Analysis

After coding the data, the number of occurrences of appraisal resources was calculated per 100 words. Then, the mean and the standard deviation along with the significance of differences in the longitudinal corpus were calculated through SPSS (version 16.0).

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Longitudinal Variation in Critical Stance Patterns in L2 Students' Written Literary Analyses

Previous studies show that projecting a critical stance is a highly valued features of literary analyses (e.g., Macken-Horarik, 1996, 2003; Rothery & Stenglin, 2000; Wilder, 2012, etc.). Rothery & Stenglin (2000) show that project a critical stance involves the use of attitude markers to critically evaluate the portrayal of characters and the message convey in the literary work under analysis. It also entails the use of graduation and engagement markers to position readers to accept authorial interpretations and to critically engage with alternative interpretations of the message conveyed in the literary work under analysis. In this regard, the results were reported as follows: (1) findings from the analysis of the distribution of attitude markers, (2) results from the analysis of the distribution of graduation resources, and (3) findings from the analysis of the distribution of engagement markers.

4.1.1. Longitudinal Distribution of Attitude Resources in L2 Students' Literary Analysis

Table 2 presents longitudinal distributions of attitude resources in the three corpora collected at three points, namely Pre-Instruction Corpus (PIC 1), During-Instruction Corpus (DIC 2), post-instruction Corpus (PIC 3). The results reveal a longitudinal rise in the use of attitude sub-types of judgement and appreciation and a reverse-U shaped reduction in the use of attitude subtype of affect as seen at PIC 1, DIC 2 and PIC 3. Table 2 shows that the use of judgement resources by students increased at PIC 3 (M = 1.01) from PIC 1 (M = 0.74, Mean difference = -0.27, P-value = 0.142), the use of appreciation increased at PIC 3 (M = 0.82) from PIC 1 (M = 0.70, Mean difference = -0.11, P-value = 0.272), while the use of affect resources decrease at PIC 3 (M = 0.44) from PIC 1 (M = 0.53, Mean difference =0.08, P-value = 0.319). However, the increase in the use of judgement and appreciation resources from PIC 1 to PIC 3 is not

statistically significant, while the decrease in the use of affect resource from PIC 1 to PIC 3 is statistically significant.

Therefore, the less significant increase in the use of attitude sub-types of judgement and appreciation may not be suggestive of an impact of the online instruction in the discourse convention of literary criticism, and the significant reverse-U shaped decrease in the use of attitude sub-type of affect may be suggestive of the impact of the online instruction. To be more specific, the resources of judgement and appreciation are employed to evaluate the behaviors of characters according to ethical norms, the strategies and techniques used by writers (novelists, poets, etc.) to convey a particular message, and the aesthetic qualities of the literary work under analysis. Rothery & Stenglin (2000) demonstrate that successful literary analyses are characterized by the use of the resources of judgement and appreciation. In addition, the content of the online instruction, the online assessment rubrics and the individualized online feedback focused on the use of these linguistic markers. Therefore, the less significant increase in the use of these resources presumably suggest that the teaching and learning methods employed in the online instruction may not have impacted L2 students' ability to construe a register-appropriate critical stance. The resources of affect are used to articulate an emotional response to the literary work under analysis. Rothery & Stenglin (2000) show that successful literary analyses are characterizes by a near absence of the resource of affect. Furthermore, the individualized online feedback emphasized the need to use impersonal style and the need to avoid expressing emotional feelings in academic writing. Therefore, the significant reverse-U shaped decrease in the use of affect suggests that the individualized may have impacted L2 students' ability to avoid expressing emotional feelings in their literary analysis.

Table 2.

Longitudinal distributions of Attitude Resources

Attitude markers	Mean per 100 words	Standard Deviation	Pairwise comparison (Bold = statistically significant, P<0.05)
Affect	(PIC 1) M = 0.53 (DIC 2) M = 0.88 (PIC 3) M = 0.44	(PIC 1) SD = 0.45 (DIC 2) SD = 0.60 (PIC 3) SD = 0.28	**PIC 1<DIC 2 MD = -0.34 P = 0.017** PIC 1>PIC 3 MD = 0.08 P = 0.319 **DIC 2>PIC 3 MD = 0.43 P = 0.006**
Judgement	(PIC 1) M = 0.74 (DIC 2) M = 0.77 (PIC 3) M = 1.01	(PIC 1) SD = 0.60 (DIC 2) SD = 0.45 (PIC 3) SD = 0.50	PIC 1<DIC 2 MD = -0.03 P = 0.848 PIC 1<PIC 3 MD = -0.27 P = 0.142 DIC 2<PIC 3 MD = -0.25 P = 0.106
Appreciation	(PIC 1) M = 0.70 (DIC 2) M = 0.83 (PIC 3) M = 0.82	(PIC 1) SD = 0.42 (DIC 2) SD = 0.40 (PIC 3) SD = 0.36	PIC 1<DIC 2 MD = -0.12 P = 0.435 PIC 1<PIC 3 MD = -0.11 P = 0.272 DIC 2>PIC 3 MD = 0.005 P = 0.958

Within the attitude subcategories of judgement and appreciation, then subcategories that are predominantly used in successful literary analysis are judgement subtypes of capacity and propriety and the appreciation subtype of valuation, composition and reaction. Therefore, it is important to report on the distribution of these subcategories in order to see whether there may be any important variation in the longitudinal corpus.

4.1.1.1. Longitudinal Distribution of Judgement sub-categories in the corpora

Table 3 presents a longitudinal distribution of judgement sub-categories in the three corpora collected at three points. The results show a less significant increase in the use of judgement sub-category of capacity as seen at PIC 3 (M = 044) from PIC 1 (0.28, Mean difference = -0.15, P-value = 0.152). The resources of judgement of capacity are predominantly employed to evaluate writers' strategies to convey a particular message in successful literary analysis (Rothery & Stenglin, 2000) as in [6]

[6]: Divakaruni has **skillfully demystified [Judgement: Capacity +]** the story of *Mahabharat*a by de-glamorizing the male characters and making it suit the assertion of the female self of the twenty-first century India (PIC 3).

The results also show a less significant increase in the use of judgement sub-category of propriety as seen at PIC 3 (M = 0.46) from PIC 1 (M = 0.23, Mean difference = -0.22, P-value = 0.065). The resources of judgement sub-category of propriety are employed to evaluate the behavior of characters according to ethical norms (Rothery & Stenglin, 2000) as in [7] and [8].

[7]: Velutha, the god of small things, **transgresses [Judgement: Propriety-]** the established norms of society by having an affair with a woman of high caste (PIC 3).

[8]: Government officials were **corrupt, manipulative [Judgement: Propriety-]** of villagers, and could arrest anyone they chose for any reason, more often than not for their own benefit (PIC 1].

Table 3**.**

Longitudinal Distribution of Judgement Sub-categories

Judgement sub-types	Mean per 100 words	Standard Deviation	Pairwise comparison (Bold = statistically significant, P<0.05)
Capacity	(PIC 1) M = 0.28 (DIC 2) M = 0.38 (PIC 3) M = 0.44	(PIC 1) SD = 0.44 (DIC 2) SD = 0.29 (PIC 3) SD = 0.21	PIC 1<DIC 2 MD = -0.09 P = 0.430 PIC 1 <PIC 3 MD = -0.15 P = 0.152 DIC 2<PIC 3 MD = -0.06 P = 0.412
Propriety	(PIC 1) M = 0.23 (DIC 2) M = 0.29 (PIC 3) M = 0.46	(PIC 1) SD = 0.27 (DIC 2) SD = 0.28 (PIC 3) SD = 0.38	PIC 1<DIC 2 MD = -0.060 P = 0.421 PIC 1<PIC 3 MD = -0.22 P = 0.065 DIC 3<PIC 3 MD = -0.16 P = 0.122

In addition, Macken-Horarik (2003) shows that the predominant use of the resources of propriety enable literary analysts to recontextualize the characterization in the literary work under analysis in terms of ethical struggle and therefore to construct an ethical stance.

The content of online instruction, the individualized online feedback, and the assessment rubrics emphasized the need for students to critically evaluate the portrayal of characters and the techniques used by writers to convey a particular message in the literary work under analysis. Therefore, it can be inferred that the less significant increase in the use of the resources of capacity and propriety probably suggest that the teaching and the learning methods employed in the online course may not have impacted students' ability to construe a register-appropriate

critical stance in their literary analyses. Two factors may have contributed to these results. First, the online instruction did not include follow-up discussions. These follow-up discussions would have contributed to checking whether students had understood the content of the online course, the assessment rubric, and the individualized online feedback. In addition, the online instruction was detached from regular teaching of English literature. Embedding the online instruction into regular teaching of English literature would have helped students understand the ways in which a critical evaluation of the portrayal of characters and the techniques used by writers to articulate a particular theme is construed in literary analyses. These results seem to agree with the results in the study by Wingate (2012). In this study by Wingate, the results indicated that the online writing course did not impact students' critical awareness in academic writing because the online instruction was not embedded in subject teaching.

4.1.1.2. Longitudinal Distribution of Appreciation Sub-categories in the corpora

Table 4 presents a longitudinal distribution of appreciation sub-categories in the three corpora collected at three points. The results indicate a less significant increase in the use of appreciation sub-category of reaction as seen at PIC 3 (M = 0.23) from PIC 1 (M= 0.16, Mean difference = -0.07, P-value = 0.152). The resources of reaction are predominantly used to express a critical personal response to the portrayal of characters and to the message conveyed in the literary work under analysis (Rothery & Stenglin, 2000). Example [9] illustrates this use.

[9]: It seems that this story is a **good [Appreciation: Reaction +)** example for television represents the world of illusion rather than reality (DIC 2).

Table 4.

Longitudinal Distribution of Appreciation Sub-categories

Appreciation Sub-type	Mean per 100 words	Standard Deviation	Pairwise Comparison (Bold = statistically significant, P<0.05)
Reaction	(PIC 1) M = 0.16 (DIC 2) M = 0.30 (PIC 3) M = 0.23	(PIC 1) SD = 0.14 (DIC 2) SD = 0.19 (PIC 3) SD = 0.17	**PIC 1<DIC 2 MD = -0.13 P = 0.023** PIC 1<PIC 3 MD = -0.07 P = 0.154 DIC 2>PIC 3 MD = 0.06 P = 0.284
Composition	(PIC 1) M = 0.13 (DIC 2) M = 0.01 (PIC 3) M = 0.07	(PIC 1) SD = 0.19 (DIC 2) SD = 0.06 (PIC 3) SD = 0.07	**PIC 1>DIC 2 MD = 0.11 P = 0.012** PIC 1>PIC 3 MD = 0.06 P = 0.212 **DIC 2<PIC 3 MD = 0.05 P = 0.016**
Valuation	(PIC 1) M = 0.41 (DIC 2) M = 0.51 (PIC 3) M = 0.50	(PIC 1) SD = 0.30 (DIC 2) SD = 0.37 (PIC 3) SD = 0.30	PIC 1<DIC 2 MD = -0.10 P = 0.436 PIC 1<PIC 3 MD = -0.09 P = 0.264 DIC 2>PIC 3 MD = 0.001 P = 0.984

The results also indicate a less significant increase in the use of the resources of valuation as seen at PIC (M = 50) from PIC 1 (M = 41, Mean difference = -0.09, P-value = 0.264). The resources of valuation are predominantly employed to evaluate the strategies and techniques

employed by the writers to convey a particular message or to explore a particular theme as in [10] (Rothetery & Stenglin, 2000).

[10]: In the play, the chorus is an **expedient [Appreciation: Valuation +]** device used brilliantly to provide the commentary on the way communal provocation instigates mindless mob violence (PIC 3).

In addition, the results show a significant decrease in the use of the resources of composition as seen at PIC 3 (M = 0.07) from PIC 1 (M = 0.13, mean difference = 0.06, P-value = 0.212). The resources of composition are also predominantly used to explore the strategies used by the writers to convey a particular theme and to evaluate the aesthetic qualities of the literary work under analysis as in [11]

[11]: Their sexual attraction and relation are **beautifully woven [Appreciation: Composition +]** in more than one level, it represents a union that openly defies all society constructed restrictions and leads to a sense of fulfilment and contentment [PIC 3].

The content of the online instruction, the individualized online feedback, and the online assessment rubrics focused on the linguistic features that are used to critically evaluate the strategies used by writers to articulate a particular message in their literary work and on the linguistic resources that used to critically engage with the message conveyed in the literary work under analysis. Therefore, the less significant increase in the use of the resources of reaction and valuation and the significant decrease in the use of the resources of composition probably suggest that the teaching and the learning methods employed in the online instruction may not have impacted students' ability to evaluate the strategies and techniques employed by the writers to convey a particular message or to explore a particular theme. The two factors outlined earlier (in 4.1.1.1) may have contributed to these results.

4.1.2. Longitudinal Distribution of Graduation Resources in L2 Students' Literary Analysis

Table 5 presents a longitudinal distribution of graduation resources in the three corpora collected at three points. The results show a significant decrease in the use of graduation resources of force as seen at PIC 3 (M = 0.91) from PIC 1 (M = 1.18, Mean difference = 0.266, P-value = 0.046).

Table 5.

Longitudinal Distribution of Graduation Resources in the corpora

Graduation type	Mean per 100 words	Standard Deviation	Pairwise Comparison (Bold= statistically significant, P<0.05)
Force	(PIC 1) M = 1.18 (DIC 2) M = 1.21 (PIC 3) M = 0.91	(PIC 1) SD = 0.56 (DIC 2) SD = 0.50 (PIC 3) SD = 0.27	PIC 1<DIC 2 MD = -0.032 P = 0.859 **PIC 1>PIC 3 MD = 0.266 P = 0.046** **DIC 2>PIC 3 MD = 0.270 P = 0.022**
Focus	(PIC 1) M = 0.044 (DIC 2) M = 0.006 (PIC 3) M = 0.017	(PIC 1) SD = 0.11 (DIC 2) SD = 0.03 (PIC 3) SD = 0.05	PIC 1>DIC 2 MD = 0.038 P = 0.146 PIC 1>PIC 3 MD = 0.027 P = 0.374 DIC 2<PIC 3 MD = -0.010 P = 0.449

The results also show a less significant decrease in the use of graduation resources of focus as seen at PIC 3 (M = 0.017) from PIC 1 (M = 0.044, Mean difference = 0.027, P-value = 0.374). The resources of graduation are employed to make the construed evaluative meaning compelling, forceful (Hood, 2004, 2010; Lancaster, 2012, 2014, 2016, etc.) as in [12].

[12]: Retelling of a story becomes *very* **[Graduation: Force) interesting [Appreciation: reaction+]** to interpret when it is said from a different perspective (PIC 1).

The content of the online course, the individualized online feedback, and the online assessment rubrics emphasized the need for students to tone down evaluative meanings in their literary analysis. Therefore, the significant decrease in the use of graduation resources of force presumably suggest that the teaching and learning methods employed in the online instruction impacted students' ability to construe a less compelling and forceful evaluative meaning.

4.1.3. Longitudinal Distribution of Engagement Resources in L2 Students' Literary Analysis

Table 6 presents longitudinal distributions of single-voiced (monoglossia) and multi-voiced (heteroglossia) statement in the corpora collected at three points. The results indicate a less significant decrease of single-voiced statements in the corpora as seen at PIC 3 (M = 3.35) from PIC 1 (M = 3.64, Mean difference = 0.29, P-value = 0.142). Single-voiced statements are those, as Martin & White (2005) point out, which do not recognize other voices. They are presented as facts (Lyon, 1977, p.794). In addition, single-voiced statements function to make the construed evaluative meanings assertive and are less valued in academic writing (Xie, 2016). The individualized online feedback insisted on the need for students to avoid making unwarranted interpretations. Therefore, the less significant decrease of single-voiced statement from PIC 1 to PIC 3 presumably suggest that the teaching and learning methods in the online instruction may not have impacted students' ability to avoid making literary interpretations within single-voices formulations.

Table 6:

Longitudinal distributions of voices in the corpora

Voices	Mean per 100 words	Standard Deviation	Pairwise Comparison (Bold = statistically significant, P<0.05)
Monoglossia	(PIC 1) M = 3.64 (DIC 2) M = 3.49 (PIC 3) M = 3.35	(PIC 1) SD = 1.03 (DIC 2) SD = 1.37 (PIC 3) SD = 0.71	PIC 1>DIC 2 MD = 0.15 P = 0.655 PIC 1>PIC 3 MD = 0.29 P = 0.142 DIC 2>PIC 3 MD = 0.14 P = 0.403
Heteroglossia	(PIC 1) M = 1.68 (DIC 2) M = 2.38 (PIC 3) M = 1.96	(PIC 1) SD = 0.94 (DIC 2) SD = 0.72 (PIC 3) SD = 0.63	**PIC 1<DIC 2 MD = -0.699 P = 0.004** PIC 1<PIC 3 MD = -0.286 P = 0.096 **DIC 2>PIC 3 MD = 0.412 P = 0.048**

The results also show a significant reverse-U shaped increase of multi-voiced statements across the corpus as seen at DIC 2 (M = 2.38) from PIC 1 (M = 1.68, Mean difference = -0.699, P-value = 0.004), at PIC 3 (M = 1.96) from DIC 2 (Mean difference = 0.412, P-value = 0.048) and at PIC 3 from PIC 1 (Mean difference = -0.286, P-value = 0.096). Multi-voiced statements are those which are employed to make readers accept authorial interpretations and to critically engage with alternative interpretations (Martin & White, 2005). The content of the online

course, the individualized online feedback, and the online assessment rubrics focused on the importance of the use of linguistic resources to make multi-voiced statements. Therefore, the reverse U-shaped increase of multi-voiced formulations from PIC 1, DIC 2 to PIC 3 seem to suggest that the teaching and learning methods employed in the online instruction may have impacted students' ability to recognize multiple literary interpretations. However, multi-voiced statements are divided into different categories. Therefore, it is important to report the results on the distributions of those categories in order to see whether there is a significant variation in the longitudinal corpus. Table 7 presents longitudinal distributions of multi-voiced statements in the corpora collected at three points. The results indicate a less significant increase in the use of dialogic contractions as seen at DIC 2 (M =1.20) from PIC 1 (M = 0.95, Mean difference = -0.253, P-value = 0.208), at PIC 3 (M = 1.11) from DIC 2 (Mean difference = 0.082, P-value = 0.662) and at PIC 3 from PIC 1 (Mean difference = -0.162, P-Value = 0.333). Dialogic contractions include linguistic mechanisms by which writers/speakers use to contract dialogic space for alternative viewpoints and therefore to show confidence and authoritativeness in the construed meanings or interpretations (Lancaster, 2012). Example [13] and [14] illustrate this use.

[13]: **Although** higher-class female characters like Rahel, Ammu and Mammachi are physically healthy, they are **not** the decision-makers in the family or society **[Contract, disclaim: counter]** (PIC 3).

[14]: It is **obvious** that communal unrest arises from highlighting the differences between these two religious groups **[Contract, proclaim: concur]** (PIC 3).

Table 7.

Longitudinal Distributions of multi-voiced statements in the corpora

Multi-voiced statements	Mean per 100 words	Standard Deviation	Pairwise Comparison (Bold = statistically significant, P<0.05)
Contract	(PIC 1) M = 0.95 (DIC 2) M = 1.20 (PIC 3) M = 1.11	(PIC 1) SD = 0.81 (DIC 2) SD = 0.62 (PIC 3) SD = 0.34	PIC 1<DIC 2 MD = -0.253 P = 0.208 PIC 1<PIC 3 MD = -0.162 P = 0.333 DIC 2>PIC 3 MD = 0.082 P = 0.662
Expand	(PIC 1) M = 0.72 (DIC 2) M = 1.16 (PIC 3) M = 0.79	(PIC 1) SD = 0.44 (DIC 2) SD = 0.60 (PIC 3) SD = 0.45	**PIC 1<DIC 2 MD = -0.442 P = 0.011** PIC 1<PIC 3 MD = -0.066 P = 0.544 DIC 2>PIC 3 MD = 0.375 P = 0.063

The less significant increase in the use of dialogic contractions seem to indicate that the teaching and learning methods employed in the online instruction may not have impacted students' abilities to construe evaluative meaning in a confident and authoritative manner.

The results also show a significant reverse-U shaped increase in the use of dialogic expansions as seen at DIC 2 (M = 1.16) from PIC 1 (M = 0.72, Mean difference = -0.441, P-value = 0.011), at PIC 3 (M = 0.79) from DIC 2 (Mean difference = 0.375, P-Value = 0.063) and at PIC 3 from PIC 1 (Mean difference = -0.066, P-value = 0.544). Dialogic expansions include linguistic

resources that writers/speakers use to expand dialogic space for alternative positions (Martin & White, 2005). In addition, dialogic expansions are linguistic mechanism by which speakers/writers avoid construing an empty or descriptive critical stance (Xie, 2016). In literary analysis, some dialogic expansions, such as entertainment options, are used to signal that the interpretation of the portrayal of characters or events in the literary work under analysis is one among multiple interpretations and, therefore to make allowance for those alternative interpretations (Bruce, 2016). In addition, Lancaster (2016) shows that entertainment options are found within the rhetorical strategies that Wilder (2012) calls "appearance/reality topoi". Wilder argues that this rhetorical strategy is employed to invoke the apparent meaning of the literary text under analysis before arguing for the real meaning. She also says that this rhetorical strategy is an important characteristic of the discourse practices of literary criticism because her analysis of students' successful assignments and published research papers reveals that appearance/reality topoi is the most frequently used rhetorical strategies in those texts. Example [15] illustrates this use.

[15]: Ramnik and Javed confess their actions, the hesitation of Javed and Ramnik **suggest** that each individual survives with a human identity that is beyond externally imposed communal identity **[Expand: entertain]** (PIC 3).

Therefore, the significant reverse-U shaped increase in the use of dialogic expansions probably suggest that the teaching and learning methods employed in the online instruction may have impacted students' ability to recognize alternative multiple interpretations in their literary analysis.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of variation in the distribution of critical stance patterns in the longitudinal corpus show the extent to which teaching and learning methods employed in the online instruction have impacted students' ability to construe a register-appropriate critical stance in their literary analysis. The results show a less significant increase in the use of attitude sub-categories of judgement and appreciation to evaluate the behaviors of characters and the strategies used by writers to convey a particular theme. Since the content of the online instruction, the individualized online feedback, and the assessment rubric emphasized on the importance of the use of linguistic resources of judgement and appreciation, it was expected a significant increase in the use of these resources. Therefore, it can be concluded that the teaching and learning methods employed in the online instruction may not have impacted students' ability to develop a more register-appropriate critical stance. The findings also show a significant reverse-U shaped decrease in the use of attitude sub-category of affect. Since the content of the online instruction and the individualized online feedback insisted on the use of impersonal style, it can be inferred that the teaching and learning methods may have affected students' ability to avoid expressing personal feelings in their literary analyses. Moreover, the findings show a significant decrease in the use of graduation sub-type of force, which includes linguistic mechanism by which writers/speakers make their construed evaluative meanings forceful and compelling (Xie, 2016). Since the individualized online feedback insisted on the need for students to tone down evaluative meanings in their literary analyses, the decrease in the use of graduation sub-type of force suggests that the individualized feedback have impacted students' ability to construe a more register-appropriate critical stance.

The findings also show a less significant decrease in the use of single-voiced statements and a significant reverse-U shaped increase in the use of multi-voiced formulations. Since the individualized online feedback insisted on the need for students to avoid making unwarranted interpretations, it may be concluded that the less significant decrease in the use of single-voiced

statements presumably suggest that the individualized feedback may not have affected students' abilities to develop an avoidance of making assertive interpretations. In addition, since the content of the online instruction, the individualized online feedback and online assessment rubrics focused on the linguistic resources that are employed to engage with alternative interpretations, the significant increase in the use of multi-voiced statements seems to suggest that the online instruction may have affected students' ability to make appropriate literary analyses.

In summary, the results paint the following picture of the impact of the online instruction on students' ability to construe a register-appropriate critical stance in their literary analysis. First, the individualized online feedback may have affected students' ability to avoid using features that are not valued in literary analyses, such as expressing personal feelings in the interpretation of literary work and making construed evaluative meanings forceful and compelling. Second, the content of the online instruction, the individualized online feedback, and the online assessment rubrics may not have impacted students' ability to construe critical stance in their literary analysis, for example, the use of attitude sub-categories of judgement and appreciation to construe a register-appropriate critical stance. Third, the teaching and learning methods employed in the online instruction may have impacted students' ability to engage with alternative interpretations. These results seem to suggest that the teaching and learning methods employed in the online instruction may have improved students' formal writing style, but they may not have developed students' ability to construe critical stance in their literary analyses. Two main factors may have contributed to these results. First, the online instruction did not include follow-up discussions. These follow-up discussions would have contributed to checking whether students had understood the content of the online course, the assessment rubric, and the individualized online feedback. In addition, the online instruction was detached from regular teaching of English literature. Embedding the online instruction into regular teaching of English literature would have helped students understand the ways in which a critical evaluation of the portrayal of characters and the techniques used by writers to articulate a particular theme is construed in literary analyses. Nevertheless, these results have far-reaching implications for the effectiveness of online instruction. This study shows that online instructions guided by the integration of a set of teaching and learning methods has an impact on students' writing style. It shows that self-regulated learning, individualized online feedback, and online assessment rubrics may affect students' ability to develop a formal style of academic writing. Therefore, future studies may explore the effectiveness of online instruction in the discourse conventions of a particular discipline by integrating others methods, such as the use of follow-up online discussions, the embedding of the online instruction into regular subject teaching, and peer feedback. They may also employ blended teaching and learning methods where offline classroom discussions are held and online feedback are given.

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