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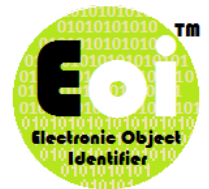*DOI*
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Online education at Saigon University during the COVID-19 pandemic: A survey on non-English major college students' attitudes towards learning English

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Abstract

The outbreak of Covid-19 has forced educational institutions to initiate online teaching to maintain the process of student learning at all levels. This paper focuses on online education at Saigon University, during which the local government has been mandating social distancing in most of the regions. This paper aims to investigate the students' attitudes towards using online learning tools, which are comprised of learning management systems (Moodle and digital support for core materials) via virtual classrooms (Google meet). A survey questionnaire was designed to evaluate attitudes towards using the above online teaching and learning package from 222 non-English major undergraduates who took part in General English courses at Saigon University in July 2021. The results indicate that a majority of students show favorable attitudes towards online education; in the meantime, health and social issues also concern their learning process. Some recommendations are also offered for improving the efficiency of the online education process at Saigon University. Since the study focused on non-English major college students, it is hoped to have particular relevance to other institutions of higher education.

1. Introduction

The outbreak of coronavirus disease (Covid-19) and its rapid spread into a worldwide pandemic has greatly affected people in any job field. There existed a substantial infrastructure for online education in many countries before the pandemic (Mishra et al., 2020). However, no university was ready for a complete shift to online education. Students missed the help they received from their peers in classrooms and laboratories and access to the library (Patricia, 2020). Nevertheless, students felt that online education helped them to continue their studies during the pandemic (Mishra et al., 2020). Universities were now using innovative strategies to ensure continuity of education for their students (Zhu & Liu, 2020).

The government has strongly supported the use of information technology (IT) in schools and universities through initiatives ranging from primary schools to higher education that has encouraged the acquisition of laptop computers for students and teachers under favorable conditions and secured broadband connections in all public establishments. Lecturers are now delivering course content through various platforms. They were using online educational platforms, videoconferencing software, and social media to teach their courses (Patricia, 2020). Online educational platforms, like Google Classroom and Blackboard, allow lecturers to share notes and multimedia resources related to their courses with students. The online educational platforms also allow students to turn in their assignments and teachers to keep track of the progress of the students. Videoconferencing tools, like Google Meet, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams, help in organizing online lectures and discussion sessions. Some universities are also disseminating course material through their websites and their own learning management system (Mishra et al., 2020). Moodle can be considered an open-source platform that 'educators can use to create effective online learning sites' (Moodle, n.d.).

In order to deal with the outbreak, Ho Chi Minh City authorities have imposed social distancing measures since the end of May 2021 due to a dramatic rise in the number of infection cases. At Saigon University (SGU), the summer semester from mid-June to August 2021 was taught online, using online educational platforms including Moodle, E-zone for textbooks, and video conferencing tools, namely Google Meets.

However, students were able to encounter some challenges or difficulties when learning online English classes in SGU. According to Octaberlina and Muslimin's findings (2020), students faced three difficulties during online learning: unfamiliarity with e-learning, slow internet connection, and physical condition, such as eye strain. Similarly, students believed that online education was difficult and had a negative impact on their health and social lives (Chakraborty et al., 2020). Accordingly, when the implementation of online learning was too urgent, and there was not sufficient training, non-English major students of SGU might have more concerns and unfavorable attitudes toward online educational platforms when taking part in English classes.

Research Questions

Considering the present situation and previous research, our study intends to uncover the EFL students' attitudes and the challenges towards the implementation of English online education. To fulfill the purpose of the study, the survey sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are non-English major learners' attitudes toward online education in SGU in terms of content delivery, interaction, and testing and assessment?

2. What are their difficulties or challenges when taking part in online education in SGU?

2. Literature review

The Covid-19 pandemic has forced various educational institutes and schools to suddenly modify their workflow strategies and adopt new technologies. In most cases, these organizations did not get enough time to reflect upon how the new strategies and the corresponded technology should be introduced and integrated into their existing setup (Carroll & Conboy, 2020). Bao (2020) described how universities were moving from classroom-based education to online education because of the raging pandemic.

In particular, blended learning is regarded as an innovative way of teaching and learning English in which teaching and learning activities have been completely supported by information technology (David, 2014). Siirak (2008) argues that blended learning with computer-based learning in the Moodle E-learning environment, based on social constructivist learning theory, is an effective tool for teaching and learning in the occupational health and safety discipline. In fact, using Moodle in teaching develops learners' communicative skills in language and requires social interaction between the teacher and students and among the students themselves (Al-Ani, 2013). A large number of studies on using Moodle in teaching and learning English were implemented in the past few years (Brandle, 2005; Irina & Laura, 2007; Stewart, 2007; Al-Ani, 2013; Tang, 2013); however, there has been little research on using Moodle in teaching translation modules thus far.

For those reasons, researchers have tried to understand the viewpoint of students on online education during the COVID-19 pandemic using empirical studies in India (Mishra et al., 2020) and the USA (Patricia, 2020). Students in this research had good opinions regarding online English learning using the LMS Moodle, despite it being their first time using Moodle.

Overall, one survey conducted by Carvalho et al. (2011) revealed that students appeared to value the contribution of an LMS to their learning, seeing it as a supplement rather than a replacement for traditional classroom activities.

Another study (Cinkara & Bagceci, 2013) investigated learners who took part in the online course using Moodle at a state university in south-eastern Turkey indicated a relatively positive attitude toward the course in accordance with the learners' scores from the uniquely-designed Online Language Learning Attitude Test (OLLAT). This study pointed out how the differences of male and female learners and their self-perception of computer literacy skills impacted their learning attitudes.

Sinaga and Pustika (2021) explored the attitude of SMK Yadika Bandar Lampung students in Turkey towards learning an English subject via Moodle, considering the characteristics of their thoughts, feelings, and behavior. It was a nice result that students showed a positive attitude to implement Moodle as a learning platform during the period of the Learning from Home program.

Here are certain studies conducted in Vietnam concerning learners' attitudes towards online learning of English. At UEH in Vietnam (Duong, 2020), some students even expressed their

enthusiasm for this method of teaching and learning because of the benefits it provides, among which concerned non-education related factors (e.g., transport cost-saving, time-saving). Duong also noted that one of the initial impressions English professors had of teaching online was that the students were more engaged in-class participation. The researcher in ULSA2 (Nguyen, 2022) found that non-English major students generally had a positive attitude about learning through video conferencing, with significant differences in attitude across gender, technical proficiency, and competencies. Nguyen concluded with high confidence that undergraduate students are eager to study a variety of courses online. Although online learning is welcomed, the encounter of difficulties is inevitable. Those were indicated in the studies of Nguyen et al. (2021) and Ngo (2021).

3. Methods

3.1 Pedagogical Setting & Participants

Saigon University (SGU) first pioneered Learning Management Systems - SGU Moodle in 2019. Since then, it has steadily been promoted among 19 faculties, providing training for basic technical practices. Alongside, teachers are required to attend real-time meetings with students via Google Meets, which also allows teachers to save recorded meetings directly to Google Drive and share with students to help them stay up to date on lessons. Furthermore, the core textbook (i.e., Helbling material) provides students with digital support from the online educational platform. This study has examined the adoption of these three platforms, hereby called online education platforms, in SGU during the summer semester.

This study selected samples by a convenient sampling method. The participants were 222 non-English major EFL students of Saigon University, Vietnam, recruited from all faculties (excluding English majors). The vast majority of students (50.5%) were between the ages of 18 and 19, which was typical of first-year undergraduate students who were required to enroll in this course. Yet, this course also attracts a high percentage of sophomores (39.7%), equivalent to the group of 20 - 21 (42.7%). In terms of gender, the percentage of female students is superior to the proportion of male students (63.9% and 39.1%, respectively).

Despite the fact that all areas of study were covered (Figure 2), over half of the participants majored in Business Management and Commerce (37.3%) and Information Technology (18.9%), whereas about 20 percent enrolled in pedagogical studies and education. Details of the participants' backgrounds are presented in Figure 1.
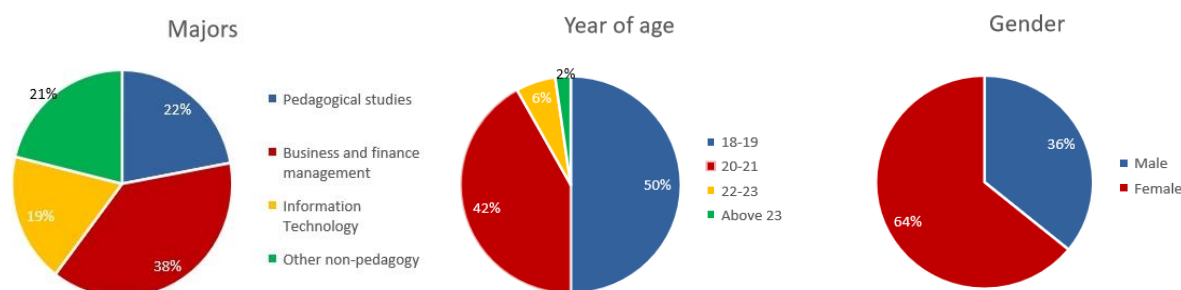
Figure 1: Participants' demographic information

3.2 Design of the Study

Based on qualitative research and referring to previous studies, we synthesized, analyzed, and quantified attribute factors in designing a quantitative questionnaire for participants. This questionnaire presented respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they were to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing (Brown, 2001). It employed attitudinal questions, which are used to find out what people think. This instrument was appropriate to the research purpose (i.e., attitudes) while it was cost-effective and versatile. In addition, questionnaires enabled researchers to collect data from a large number of correspondents, and instrument homogeneity is frequently associated with higher reliability (Mackey & Gass, 2005). The questionnaire was based on the model which was used to examine the influence of various aspects of online education on social issues related to online education suggested by Chakraborty et al. (2020) when they conducted a survey in an Indian university. However, for this study - focused on learning and teaching-related factors, we ignored the impact of health issues and social issues.

We surveyed the students who had completed the General English course - Module I in the summer semester of 2021. The survey was categorized into 3 groups of questions concerning (1) students' demographic information, (2) students' evaluation of the effectiveness of the online education platforms, and (3) their challenges/difficulties of online education.

3.3 Data collection and analysis

The questionnaire was distributed online using the Google Forms tool, and the respondents were collected two weeks after. The Google Forms tool was used to administer the survey electronically. Email invitations to respond were sent out during the following two weeks when the course had finished. We received 222 respondents, which is equivalent to a response rate of about 50%. Cattell (1978), Gorsuch (1983), and Tanaka (1987) suggested that in behavioral analysis, the sample size should be chosen from 4 to 10 times as many as the number of variables in the questionnaire to ensure representativeness. Accordingly, the size of our sample is satisfactory.

In the first section, biographical data was collected and the level and major of studies. Especially, the last items of this part identified the participants' level of English proficiency,

continuing with their needs for learning English, preferences for different contents of English, and expectations of taking the course. Necessities and expectations of learning English contribute to the evaluation of students' attitudes toward the learning process and methods. Belcher (2009) notes that needs analysis can exploit diverse, infrequently conflicting views of a large number of stakeholders.

In the second part, we asked the students to evaluate the effectiveness of online education based on their experience during the course. There were 18 positive statements related to content delivery, interaction and testing, and assessment employed by each tool of the package. A student had to respond to each survey item on a 5-point Likert scale, and their responses are coded as: strongly agree = 5, agree = 4, neutral = 3, disagree = 2, strongly disagree = 1.

The third section required the students to score their satisfaction with the whole course, ranging from favorable to disappointed. They were asked to give feedback on how online learning benefits their proficiency of English in pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar use, and 4 major skills. They were also asked to identify the problems or challenges they faced during the online sessions concerning teacher and student-related factors. Therefore, in the final part, the students were encouraged to make recommendations for a better online learning experience.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1. Demographic analysis

The demographic variables of students presented in this section include age groups, gender characteristics, areas of study, self-assessment of English proficiency levels, their preferences in learning English, and their expectations for the course. Understanding how they have facilitated their online learning, regarding where they were studying and which technological devices were used, is important.

Learning English background

Their level of English proficiency also fluctuated from Beginners to Advanced, as shown in Figure 2.
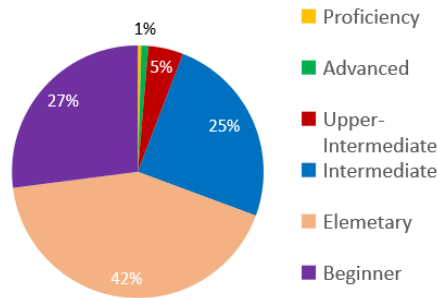
Figure 2: Participants' self-assessment level of English proficiency

Gladly, more than 90% found learning English necessary and showed positive attitudes towards expectations for the course, which aim to serve their communicative competence (Figure 3). Most of the respondents (85.5%) expected to improve knowledge (of vocabulary and grammar) and macro skills of using English which is helpful for their future career, although 78.7% aimed to pass course tests and exams according to the curriculum's assessment. Goal setting has both motivating and informational effects on learning and self-evaluation. Students who set goals are more likely to pay attention in class, put forth the effort, and persevere. These motivational effects result in increased on-task behavior and learning speed. Specifically, the number of students (more than 60%) who aimed at listening and speaking skills were slightly higher than those (around 50%) whose aim was reading and writing. Accordingly, Figure 4 presented the students' preferences for certain main English learning components. The results indicated that a majority of respondents expressed preferences with all components.
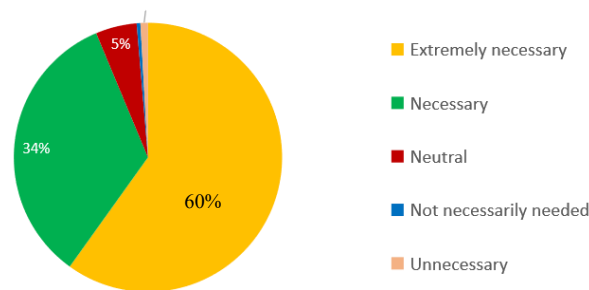
Figure 3: Participants' needs of learning English
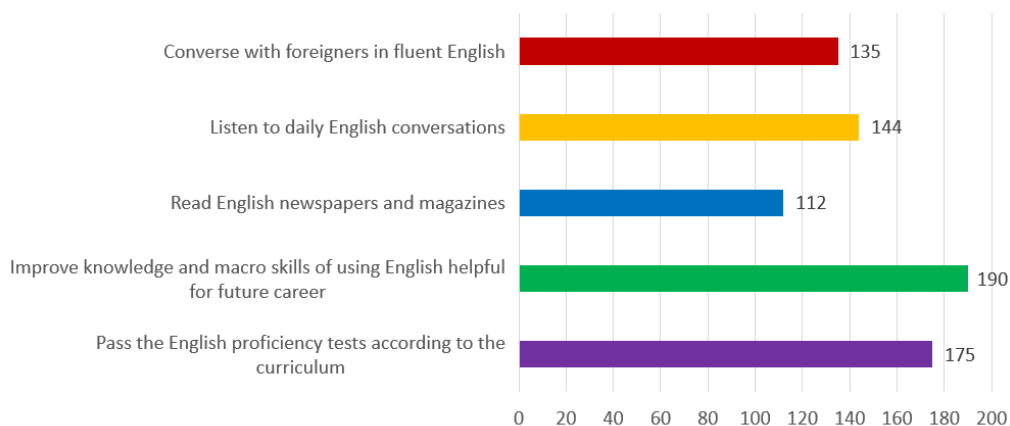
Figure 4. Participants' expectations of taking the EGP course

Studying facilities
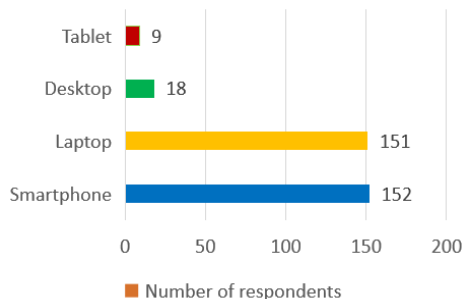
Figure 5. Technological equipment used for studying online

80% of them had been participating in online learning while they were at their permanent residence, of which 46.6% were living in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), and 33.4% were in their hometown outside HCMC. However, due to the pandemic, few of the students (2.8%) had to study while they were staying in the quarantined areas. Wherever they were, each of the participants equipped themselves with at least one piece of technological device to access the course, and their favorite ones are laptops and smartphones or both at one time.
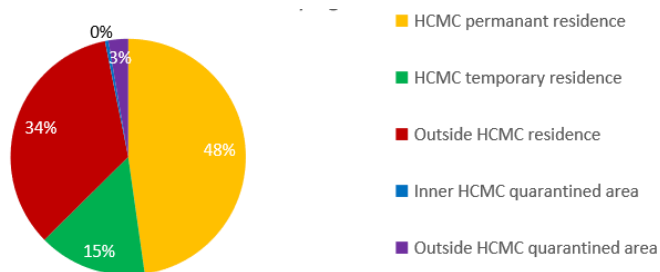
Figure 6. Location of studying online

4.2. Descriptive results of the effectiveness of online education

In general, as can be seen in Figure 7, 23.1% of students found the online course highly recommended, and more than half found the course fairly good, while 21.3% agreed that the course was satisfactory. Nevertheless, only a few of them (less than 5%) showed disappointment with the course. The effectiveness of online education regarding content delivery, interaction, and testing and assessment will be discussed in detail.
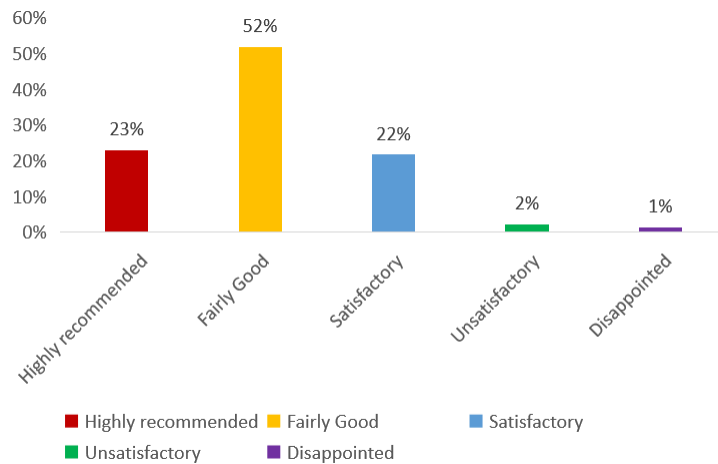
Figure 7. Participants' general evaluation of the online course

4.2.1. In relation to content delivery

The teacher's use of Moodle to share available core course materials timely was well-received by nearly 90% of the students. A high proportion of 85% agreed that the course was a user-friendly design in which the summary of the course enriched the classes. 81% expressed how they thought lectures could be made more informative. During the online sessions via Google Meets, slideshows were also deemed effective in distributing knowledge to the students. Also, the students (86%) also appreciated the meeting-recording functions of Google Meets, which helped them keep up when they had missed a session.

In addition, more than half of the participants had experienced E-Zone learning provided by the core textbook. Over 80% agreed or strongly agreed that the cloud book and e-book had a friendly-user design and that they were interested in a variety of exercises.

The students received the teachers' use of reference resources and technologies to convey knowledge well. The students believe that there is currently sufficient study material available online. Online tools for problem-solving, programming, and design, according to the students, can enhance classes.

Table 1

Effectiveness   of   online   education   in   relation   to   content   delivery

TOOLS	CONTENT DELIVERY	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. SGU MOODLE (222 responses)	The teacher **timely** share available core **course materials** to students.	**61%**	**26%**	10%	2%	1%
	Reference resources such as videos are provided **adequately**.	**49%**	**33%**	16%	1%	0%
	Course summary is designed with **friendly-user layout**.	**54%**	**31%**	13%	1%	1%
2. GOOGLE MEETS (222 responses)	**Slideshows** make a session more informative.	**50%**	**31%**	14%	4%	1%
	The use of **meeting recordings** helps the students keep up when they miss a session.	**61%**	**25%**	12%	1%	1%
3. E-ZONE (116 responses)	Cloud book and e-book has **friendly-user design.**	**34%**	**47%**	15%	3%	2%
	A **variety of exercises** interests the students.	**35%**	**48%**	11%	3%	2%

4.2.2. In relation to interaction

Google Meets was served as a substitute for traditional classrooms, and interestingly, the students expressed favorable opinions to such an interactive platform in which the students were allowed to contribute to the sessions. A large number of students (90%) found the online sessions more interactive thanks to posting comments in the chatbox and raising hands to converse with the teacher directly.

Table 2

Effectiveness of online education in relation to interaction

TOOLS	INTERACTION	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. SGU MOODLE (222 responses)	Use of **attendance check** makes an online session more effective.	**53%**	**32%**	12%	2%	1%
	Teacher-students interaction takes place better through **online forums**.	**48%**	**34%**	16%	1%	1%
	Course announcements are delivered in a good time manner.	**52%**	**31%**	14%	2%	1%
2. GOOGLE MEETS (222 responses)	Students are allowed to **post comments** or answers in the **chat box** during a session, then it becomes interactive.	**58%**	**32%**	9%	0%	1%
	Students are allowed to **raise their hands** to ask and answer during a session, then it becomes interactive.	**58%**	**32%**	9%	0%	1%

The activities of Moodle were also effectively exploited to improve the interaction between the teacher and students and among students. Students were asked to take their own attendance via Moodle at any time of an online session, and this practice was favored by 85% of the students. In addition, 82% showed strong agreement with the idea that interaction took place better through online forums. Beyond the class, 83% received the course announcements in a good time manner.

4.2.3. In relation to testing and assessment

According to more than 80% of the students, regular online quizzes and exercises on Moodle or E-zone could add certain value to their learning process. We discovered that 80 percent of students believed weekly Moodle-designed assignments effectively evaluated their competence, and timely-assigned Cyber homework also assisted their learning process. Almost 80% agreed that testing and assessment were conducted objectively and effectively. 78% of E-zone users found the Cloud book and e-book enhancing self-study and learner autonomy.

Table 3

Effectiveness of online education in relation to testing and assessment

TOOLS	TESTING AND ASSESSMENT	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. SGU MOODLE (222 responses)	**Online quizzes and exercises** effectively help in learning process.	51%	32%	14%	1%	1%
	Weekly assignments effectively evaluate the competence of students.	46%	35%	17%	1%	0%
	Testing and assessment is conducted **objectively and effectively.**	42%	37%	18%	2%	1%
3. E-ZONE (116 responses)	**Cyber homework** effectively helps in learning process.	37%	48%	13%	0%	2%
	Cyber homework is assigned **timely** to assist learning process.	34%	50%	14%	1%	2%
	Cloud book and e-book enhance **self-study and learner autonomy.**	33%	45%	21%	0%	2%

4.3. Descriptive results of challenges of online education

The teacher's methodology is not interesting. — 56
The lesson content is not clear enough. — 21
The lesson is not well designed. — 11
The teacher cannot apply online teaching tools well. — 21
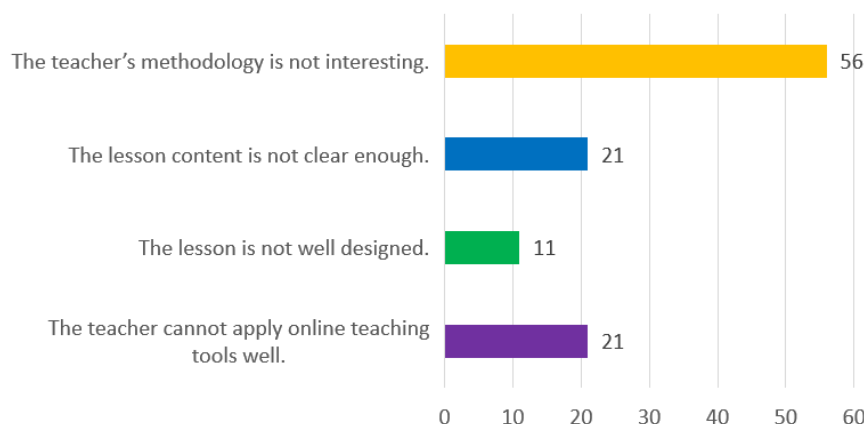
Figure 11. Challenges of online education with respect to teacher-related factors

The survey aimed to find out challenges derived from teacher-related and student-related factors. As for teacher-related factors, there were 99 out of 222 responses, equivalent to 45% of the population. Although more than half of the students found no problems concerning their teacher, the rest's suggestions are worth considering. The findings disclosed that these EFL students' (56 responses) were mainly concerned with the teacher's online teaching methodology, which was not interesting enough. Some of them (21 responses) complained that the lesson content was not clear enough or the teacher was not able to apply online teaching tools well, while a few of them (11 responses) claimed that the teacher did not well design the

lesson.

We received 205 out of 222 responses regarding the student-related factors, which means about 92% of participants experienced certain challenges in attending online courses. In general, their main difficulties were technological problems such as the unstable internet connection during online sessions via Google Meets (171 responses) or using phones/computers with low configuration (109 responses). One hundred thirty-one students also confided that they experienced some external distractions, namely social networks, household members, or neighborhoods. Eighty-eight of them confessed that they were not autonomous enough. A few of them (66 responses) had difficulties while using Moodle. Some students also stated that social communication and interactions between the teacher and students and among students were lacking in online sessions.
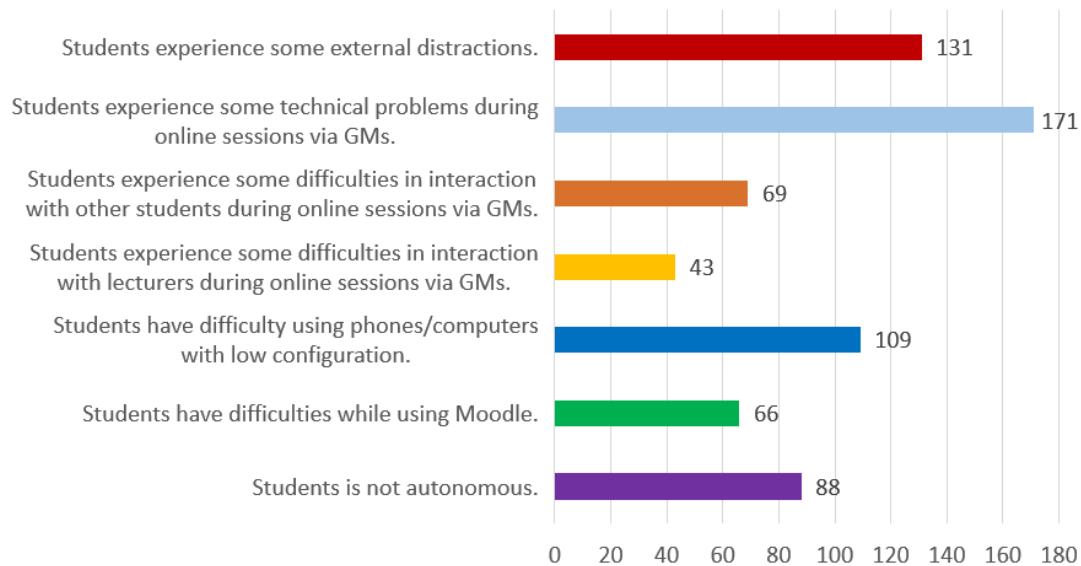
Figure 12. Challenges of online education with respect to students-related factors

Discussion

Students appreciated that the course materials and content were always available, and they could review a recorded session at all times. This was a nice result while the students showed positive exposure to the course material. Additionally, they seemed to participate and engage more in the online classroom thanks to certain functions such as self-checked attendance, posting any comments in the chatbox, or sharing ideas via forums. Assigning quizzes or tasks online via Moodle or Cyber homework assisted their learning autonomy and learning process. Beyond-classroom activities were welcomed by the students who were able to access these online activities, which helped revise and consolidate their learning progress and was rewarded by the teachers.

Nevertheless, the students acknowledged certain problems concerning the teacher's methodology of teaching online, including lesson design and the ability to use technological tools. Switching to online education was also a challenge to teachers, for which reasonable adjustments and adaption of teaching in online sessions should have been well-prepared. The participants were also aware of learners' attitudes towards learning which had a major influence on their learning during the online sessions, whereas technological impairment was also the main problem. The unstable network connection was also the biggest problem found in other recent studies conducted by Adnan and Anwar (2020), Nartiningrum and Nugroho (2020).

5. Conclusion

Due to the COVID-19 epidemic, schools and institutions are currently looking for ways to constantly improve the teaching and learning process in order to adapt to the circumstance. Thousands of further educational institutions, including those in Vietnam, believed that students or professors might conveniently access online learning without the need for face-to-face interactions (Sari, 2020). The study focused on clarifying 2 main issues in the context of social distancing due to the Covid-19 pandemic: (1) students' attitudes towards the use of three platforms for online education of English; and (2) challenges or difficulties they faced while learning online.

The findings of this study indicated that the students held moderately favorable attitudes towards online education during the period. Most of the students found learning English necessary and set a goal(s) of taking the English course, which also motivated their learning attitudes.

The students chose to use assistive technology devices for mobility to join online classes. However, they were still struggling with some interruption of technological impairment. It is required a wide coverage of network infrastructure across the country. They also looked forward to adapting the teacher's online teaching methodology more appropriately.

Limitation

The above results show that the study has contributed to strengthening the understanding of the attitude of students for the use of cross-platform online applications in online education. Despite favorable attitudes, the students' achievement regarding final grades was not discussed in this study. Likewise, the discussion of how their difficulties impacted their study results was also limited.

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Biodata

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Appendix

Questionnaire of Effectiveness and Challenges of Online Education (English Version)

This questionnaire consists of THREE sections.

For Questions 10 - 27, please select the appropriate response (Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, or Strongly disagree) to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Q1. Gender *(Select one)*

    Female

    Male

    Other

Q2. Year of age *(Select one)*

    18-19

    20-21

    22-23

    Other

Q3. Major *(Select one)*

    Natural Science Pedagogical Studies

    Social Science Pedagogical Studies

    Pre-School /Primary School Education

    Fine Art / Art

    Business and Finance

    Information Technology

    Law

    Others

Q4. Technological equipment used for studying online *(Select one or more)*

    Laptop

    Smartphone

    Tablet

    Desktop

Q5. Location of studying online *(Select one)*

       HCMC permanent residence

       HCMC temporary residence

       Outside HCMC residence

       Inner HCMC quarantined area

       Outside HCMC quarantined area

Q6. Self-assessment level of English Proficiency *(Select one)*

       Proficiency

       Advanced

       Upper-Intermediate

       Intermediate

       Elementary

       Beginner

Q8. Needs of learning English *(Select one)*

       Extremely necessary

       Necessary

       Neutral

       Not necessary needed

       Unnecessary

Q9. Participants' expectations or objectives of taking the EGP courses *(Select one or more)*

       Pass the English proficiency tests according to the curriculum

       Improve knowledge and macro skills of using English helpful for future career

       Read English newspapers and magazines

       Listen to daily English conversations

       Converse with foreigners in fluent English

       Write personal basic information

SECTION 2: EVALUATION OF EFFECTIVENESS OF ONLINE EDUCATION

Learning Management Systems - Moodle

Q10. Lecturers timely share available core course materials to students.

Q11. Reference resources such as videos are provided adequately.

Q12. Course summary is designed with friendly-user layout.

Q13. Use of attendance check makes an online session more effective.

Q14. Lecturer-student interaction takes place better through online forums.

Q15. Course announcements are delivered in a good time manner.

Q16. Online quizzes and exercises effectively help in the learning process.

Q17. Weekly assignments effectively evaluate the competence of students.

Q18. Testing and assessment is conducted objectively and effectively.

Online meeting platform- Google Meets

Q19. Slideshows make a lecture more informative.

Q20. The use of meeting recordings helps students keep up when they miss a session.

Q21. Students are allowed to post comments or answers in the chatbox during a session, then it becomes interactive.

Q22. Students are allowed to raise their hands to ask and answer during a session, then it becomes interactive.

Digital material support - E-zone

Q23. Cloud book and e-book has friendly-user design.

Q24. A variety of exercises interests students.

Q25. Cyber homework effectively helps in the learning process.

Q26. Cyber homework is assigned timely to assist the learning process.

Q27. Cloud book and e-book enhance self-study and learner autonomy.

General Evaluation

Q28. Feedback about online sessions during the COVID-19 pandemic*(Select one)*

　　　Highly recommended

　　　Fairly Good

　　　Satisfactory

　　　Unsatisfactory

Disappointed

SECTION 3: CHALLENGES OF ONLINE EDUCATION

Q29. Teacher-related factors *(Select one or more)*

The teacher cannot apply online teaching tools well.

The lesson is not well designed.

The lesson content is not clear enough.

The teacher's methodology is not interesting.

Q30. Teacher-related factors *(Select one or more)*

Students is not autonomous.

Students have difficulties while using Moodle.

Students have difficulty using phones/computers with low configuration.

Students experience some difficulties in interaction with lecturers during online sessions via GMs.

Students experience some difficulties in interaction with other students during online sessions via GMs.

Students experience some technical problems during online sessions via GMs.

Students experience some external distractions.

Q31. Your recommendations for a better online learning experience.

Answer: …

Written Corrective Feedback Strategies Applied by Van Lang University's EFL Lecturers in Teaching Online

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Abstract

During the covid-19 pandemic, many changes occurred that disrupted our lives. Authors must adapt to survive, and learning through online platforms is a change that forces us to adapt to avoid disrupting the learning process. The primary goal of this research project is to investigate the WCF techniques used by 30 teachers while teaching writing English online. The research instrument sets comprised 16 questions, including open and closed ones. The study uses quantitative and qualitative methods. This research paper is a timely complement to the topic of WCF strategies. It will serve as a resource for many teachers who are unsure about using the WCF approach when teaching writing online.

Keywords: Written corrective feedback, WCF strategies, writing, online platform, EFL lecturers

1. Introduction

Throughout the history of teaching and learning to write in L2, especially writing in English, written correction feedback (WCF) has always played an unalterable role. It is proven as an effective pedagogy even in our constantly changing world. A study by Bitchener & Knoch (2009) showed that the more occasions the direct corrective feedback was provided, the more accurate the students' writing was and the less time it took for students to reach a higher writing level. In order to make a counterargument against the idea that WCF was ineffective and negatively affected learning writing skills, Bitchener (2008) did research to prove the effectiveness of WCF. The research's findings showed that the feedback of the written corrections greatly influenced the accuracy improvement of the two functions of the English article system, and this accuracy level did not change even after two months without additional feedback or guidance.

However, it remains the case that if something changes, something else must also be changed. The growth of e-learning and the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic have forced lecturers to change their written corrective feedback strategies. Over the past decade, several authors have researched WCF through online platforms. For instance, they conducted a study

on conservation language teachers' online written correction feedback option and response time in computer-assisted L2 grammar teaching. In 2019, KılıcKaya found that learners recognized that direct feedback was the most effective method for improving their writing through online platforms. In an effort to discover whether synchronous corrective feedback or asynchronous written corrective was more effective when applying online, Shintani & Aubrey (2016) conducted a study of 68 intermediate-level English students. The results showed that synchronous correction feedback provided a greater advantage in learning grammar than asynchronous correction feedback.

In Vietnam, e-learning is not a new definition, but it is only more popular as the Covid-19 pandemic spreads throughout the country because authors are forced to use e-learning as an alternative method in order not to interrupt our learning process. Therefore, there seems to be a lack of research papers on WCF strategies adopted by Vietnamese lecturers when using online apps to teach writing.

2. Literature review

2.1. Previous related studies

Nakamura Sachiko (2018) defined Written Corrective Feedback as an instruction that teachers give their second language students to help them improve their writing skills. WCF strategies can be designed in different ways. Teachers can focus on types of WCF such as giving direct feedback, commenting, or reformatting, or they may provide WCF primarily for the purpose of correcting student grammar, organization, or content. Or more simply, teachers can design WCF strategies in a negative or positive tone. Online Written Corrective Feedback strategies mean WCF strategies devised by teachers as they teach academic writing in a second language through online applications.

Throughout the history of second language teaching, especially in English language pedagogy, WCF has been proven as having positive effects on teaching writing in English (Hosseiny, 2014; Wang & Jiang, 2015). Although there are a large number of organizational patterns in the literature reviews, this review mainly focuses on the methodologies that have been applied in the collected research papers. After analysis, the collected research articles were divided into two groups according to the way they were approached. The first group consisted of researchers whose data were collected in one trial. And the other group included research with data obtained through surveys, interviews, and/or existing data. The difference in their approach made a difference in research results.

The following articles used an experiment to collect their data to explore how WCF strategies affected the effectiveness of teaching English writing. The first one is Bitchener's research (2008). He investigated the effect of WCF after some studies had proved conflicting results of WCF on learners (Truscott, 1996; Ferris, 2004, 2006). He conducted the findings of 2-month research on the effectiveness of written corrective feedback to 75 low intermediate

international ESL students in Auckland, New Zealand, who had East Asian origin by means of a pre-test/post-test design. After being assigned randomly to 4 groups of WCF options (direct corrective feedback, written and oral meta-linguistic explanation; direct corrective feedback and written metalinguistic explanation; direct corrective feedback only; the control group received no corrective feedback), the participants wrote three tests (pre-test, immediate post-test, and delayed post-test) to compare the efficacy between those groups when testing students to differentiate two functional uses of the English article system a/the. The research found that the students who received written corrective feedback in the immediate post-test were more accurate than those in the control group since the study focused on one small specific aspect of the English language (article a/the).

In 2009, Bitchener and Knoch conducted a study in ten months to prove the effective role of written corrective feedback (WCF) in using two articles: a/the. 52 ESL students at a low-intermediate level from a New Zealand university were randomly assigned to one of four groups (direct corrective feedback, written, and oral meta-linguistic explanation; direct corrective feedback and written meta-linguistic explanation; direct corrective feedback only; the control group) and were asked to write five pieces (pre-test, immediate post-test, and three delayed post-tests). The research looked at the impact of these specific feedback choices (variable combinations) to see whether each group has different accuracy. The data was collected by means of a pre-test–post-test design (a pre-test at the beginning of the 10-month period and the remaining four post-tests after two weeks, two months, six months, and ten months). On all post-tests, each of the treatment groups outperformed the control group, and there was no difference in efficacy among the three treatment groups.

Yu et al. (2020) studied topics related to WCF translation strategies. Research data were collected during the semester, and the study participants have experienced teacher and 151 undergraduates. The results showed that the teacher mainly used WCF indirectly and unfocused WCF and the strategy used had a positive impact on student campus and improved the accuracy of the translated text.

In 2020, two research papers that also found the effectiveness of WCF by using experiments were collected. The first article was the article of Lira-Gonzales, Maria-Lourdes, and Hossein. They conducted a survey to verify the usefulness of written corrective feedback in different origins and educational levels. There were six ESL teachers and 128 students with different backgrounds and educational levels. An experiment collected the data, teachers gave feedback on students' writing assignments and then asked them to redo the assignments and correct mistakes based on the teacher's WCF. The results revealed important differences between the three levels in terms of student mistakes, teacher comments, and student reviews. Their findings suggested that teachers should pay more attention to the students' education level in order to choose the appropriate feedback types.

The second one is Wei and Wu (2020)'s research. They used Ellis's typology and Borg's theory to investigate the strategies used by second language teachers in correcting and giving feedback on student writing tests. There were 254 lecturers from Vietnam, China and

Thailand who participated in the survey. Quantitative and qualitative analyses of survey data were carried out, and the results of the study showed that teachers would adopt various strategies such as high requirements, low requirements, and no feedback based on different reasons. Their findings show that the personal and contextual factors have a significant impact on teachers' corrective written feedback.

As mentioned above, the methodology of the other research group is mainly made up of surveys, interviews, and/or existing data. Amrhein and Nassaji (2010) compared the similar and different perceptions between lecturers and students about different types and amounts of written corrective feedback (WCF). A total of 64 respondents, including 33 adult ESL students and 31 ESL teachers in five different classes from two language schools, took part in the study. Data were collected by using both quantitative and qualitative methods to find out participants' views and their reasons given about the different types and amounts of WCF. Quantitative data were gathered using a closed-ended questionnaire as a Likert scale. Qualitative data were also gathered through open-ended questions to elicit further information about why instructors and students preferred a specific kind or quantity of feedback. As a result, the learners thought WCF most useful when they received as many as possible mistakes corrections. In contrast, the instructors categorized the mistakes and focused on important ones to save time. The students liked the feedback with mistakes, and corrections with a comment, while the teachers wanted them to self-correction. Both the learners and instructors agreed that WCF played an important role in grammatical mistakes, punctuation mistakes, spelling mistakes, and vocabulary mistakes, though there was some disagreement about the effect of WCF on content and idea. Furthermore, the study included a small group of people, so additional research on a larger scale in various educational settings is needed.

Ferris et al. (2013) investigated the effect of written corrective feedback (WCF) in a U.S. university. Ten non-native students wrote four texts in the ESL writing class over a 16-week semester. After writing, they received WCF to revise each text. Three interviews were conducted after the first three writing texts respectively and revisions. The authors used a qualitative method with a multiple-case study design. Student surveys, four texts with mistake marks and revision sessions per student, the four essay prompts used to produce the texts, three retrospective interviews per participant, and a teacher interview were among the gathered data. In this research, the individual factors such as external limitations (busy schedules) and internal qualities (attitude, confidence) affected the benefits of feedback and teaching. Moreover, the students valued the personalized and interactive teaching and learning offered by the feedback and interview cycles.

Based primarily on the topic related to the effectiveness of WCF in improving grammatical writing skills in second language learning. Kang and Han (2015) used a meta-analysis analytical for their research. They selected 18 published and four unpublished articles that matched their high requirements for quality to find their research results. Their results suggested that WCF had a significant effect on improving second language learning, but the

effect was influenced by a number of specific factors such as learner skills, context, and the type of article.

Chen, Nassaji and Liu (2016) conducted a study to discover EFL students' different perceptions and attitudes from different study backgrounds towards written corrective feedback (WCF). The data was collected from 64 EFL students at three levels (intermediate, advanced-intermediate, and advanced) in a university in Mainland China. A written questionnaire was used to gather quantitative and qualitative data on participants' views of WCF and the reasons behind such perceptions. Closed-ended questionnaire questions with multiple choices or Likert scale formats were used to gather quantitative data. Open-ended questions were used to gather the qualitative data. The quantitative data were gathered in order to analyze the participants' preferences for grammar education and WCF activities in general. The qualitative data were gathered to learn more about the reasons behind their choices. The findings showed that most students viewed WCF as a positive method to improve their writing, especially grammar.

Instead of conducting surveys or experiments, Mao and Lee (2020) selected studies published in renowned academic journals on the topic of WCF in a second language. They then analyzed and synthesized the collected data to obtain results where the collection of data from the point of view of the scope of the response was an extraordinary means for future research. In addition, their study also provided a detailed assessment of the response coverage in the WCF study, adding valuable data to the previous review and synthesis that primarily focused on quantitative research.

2.2. Writing Teaching Approaches

In the research fields of writing, there has been a great deal of research on writing teaching methods and their effectiveness. In recent years, due to the expansion of the covid-19 epidemic, learning through technology-based has been a major subject in scientific research circles. Tran and Nguyen (2021) explored the problems with students' writing ability due to limitations in cognition, emotion, and social interaction. Then, they used technology-based communication as a new writing teaching method and discovered that the new method improved students' writing performances and the students' attitudes toward writing. Their research also said that much of the feedback on students' writings focuses mainly on cognitive elements of writing.

Due to the increase in using technology and demands for using mobile devices for online learning, Le (2021) conducted a study on English-majored students' attitudes toward using mobile-assisted in learning writing. The research findings showed that the students had positive attitudes towards using mobile devices in learning writing. They believed that m-learning would help look for information and improve accuracy and fluency. As a result, m-learning is a writing teaching method that is ideal for teachers to apply to their writing teaching approaches. Because of the development of technology and the negative effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, teaching and learning writing using technology devices are trends.

Because this research focuses on the WCF strategies used by EFL lecturers at VLU, research on EFL learners learning writing strategies would be extremely beneficial to the research's literature evaluation. Tran (2021) investigated the self-regulated learning (SRL) techniques VLU EFL students use when learning writing. Mai conducted research on a cross-sectional explanatory design using questionnaires and interviews to gather data with the purpose of determining what SRL techniques students at Van Lang University commonly apply, as well as the challenges they confront when employing various SRL strategies. The study's findings revealed that using SRL methods assisted learners in improving their writing skills. She also stated that both instructors and students must participate. She also stressed the importance of both instructors and students working together to improve students' writing performances. She also stated that instructors should train or give more opportunities for their students to improve their time management and approach.

In summary, all of the above articles are perfectly organized, and their results have contributed greatly to the improvement of writing corrective feedback strategies. Although they have different types of approaches and are taken at different times, their results do not appear to be significantly different. Most of the above research results show that written corrective feedback has a significant impact on improving second language learning, but this impact is affected by many specific factors, such as the academic level of teachers, skills of students, context, and type of language. They also note that the more feedback students receive, the more their writing skills will improve. These studies also show that it is important for teachers to choose appropriate written corrective feedback strategies for students of different levels and educational settings.

2.3. Research Questions

1. What are the most common strategies applied when providing WCF on the online platform?

2. What is the most influential factor in choosing a WCF strategy on an online platform?

3. Methods

3.1 Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The survey was conducted at the Faculty of Foreign Languages of Van Lang University, established in the early days of the university's establishment. The Faculty of Foreign Languages of Van Lang University currently offers two bachelor's programs: English Language and Chinese Language. There are five majors in the Bachelor of English Language Program: English for Teaching, English for Business, English for Tourism, English for Translation and Interpretation, and English - Chinese for Business.

Due to the high demands on the quality of teaching, all of the Faculty of Foreign Languages participants have a master's degree and/or higher and have extensive experience in teaching English. Particularly, the authors sent our survey to 40 EFL lecturers and received 30 answers

in two weeks. In fact, nearly all of the participants have been teaching English for more than five years, accounting for 90%, with 13 teachers (43.3%) reporting that they have been EFL teachers for more than ten years. All the respondents already gave the WCF on students when teaching online. The male and female respondents accounted for 40% and 60%, respectively. There are 25 VLU lecturers (83.3%) who give more than three writing assignments throughout the semester since nearly three-quarters (70%) give assignments every week. More than half of the lecturers give assignments for both group work and individual work made up 56.7%, followed by individual work (33.3%), and only 10% in total give writing assignments for group work only.

3.2 Design of the Study

The research instrument sets comprised 16 questions, including both closed and open-ended ones. The first two questions are designed as multiple-choice questions to collect personal information about respondents, including their gender and teaching time. From questions 3 to 7, the authors also use the multiple-choice form. Authors ask if they have ever taught writing in English through online platforms if they provide feedback on their students' writing tasks, if they give the assignments to students by group work or individual work, their frequency of giving writing assignments, and the number of assignments. In the next six questions, the authors also use multiple-choice questions. Authors ask our participants if they have ever taught writing in English through an online platform if they provide feedback on students' writing assignments if they assign assignments to students through group or individual assignments, and authors ask them about the frequency and number of writing assignments they give students at any given time. The last three questions in our survey are designed as multiple-choice questions of the checklist type. For collecting information on issues like common student mistakes, feedback strategies, and factors affected by WCF strategies, checklist types can help respondents make decisions among the many options listed. In the final part of the questionnaire, the authors use five open-ended questions to know the respondents' true attitude on the mentioned issues.

3.3 Data collection & analysis

To illustrate the collected data, the authors utilize pie charts, bar charts as figures, and statistical tables. The data is then analyzed using the average calculation and analysis of variance to answer two questions regarding the WCF technique the participating lecturers used when teaching online and the factors that impact their method choice.

Authors utilize both open-ended and closed-ended questions in the mailed questionnaire to gather information, so the collected data would be evaluated in multiple ways. The data gathered are much trustworthy because all of the respondents are experienced and competent instructors. Specifically, the ratio of male to female respondents is 2/3, and 90% of them have been teaching English for more than five years. fig 3.2 illustrates that 46.7 percent (blue) have five to ten years of experience teaching English, while 44.3 (green) percent have more than ten years of experience as EFL lecturers.
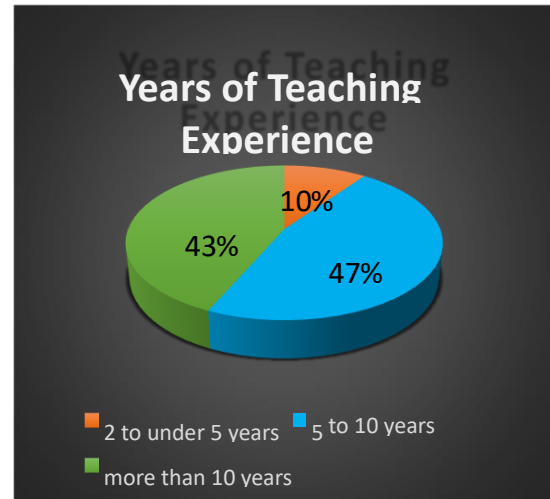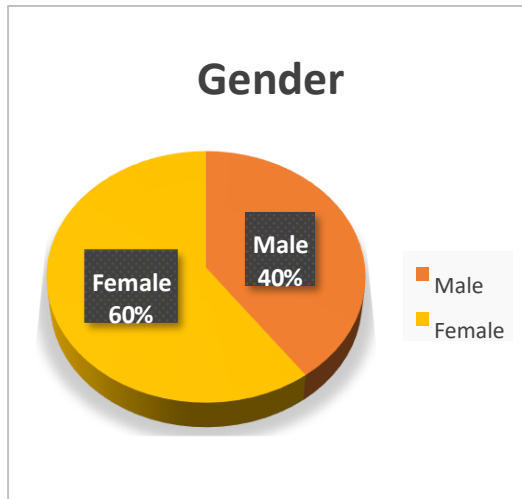
Fig. 3.1. Gender of participants   **Fig. 3.2.** Teaching experience of participants

Our research focuses on the WCF techniques used by instructors at Van Lang University's Faculty of Foreign Languages. The authors design a question that requires respondents to choose from various response alternatives. There are eight available WCF strategies, and respondents are able to add any methods. According to fig. 3.3, the most used WCF method is "correct common errors," chosen by 73% of surveyors. The other two methods, "peer correction and direct feedback", account for 73.3%. "Students respond to feedback required," according to half of the study respondents, is one of the strategies they employ while teaching English writing online. The remaining strategies are "Indirect Feedback", "Electronic Feedback", "Metalinguistic Feedback Correction", and "Correct all the mistakes", which are picked by 33.6%, 26.6%, 20%, and 20% of the total poll respondents, respectively.
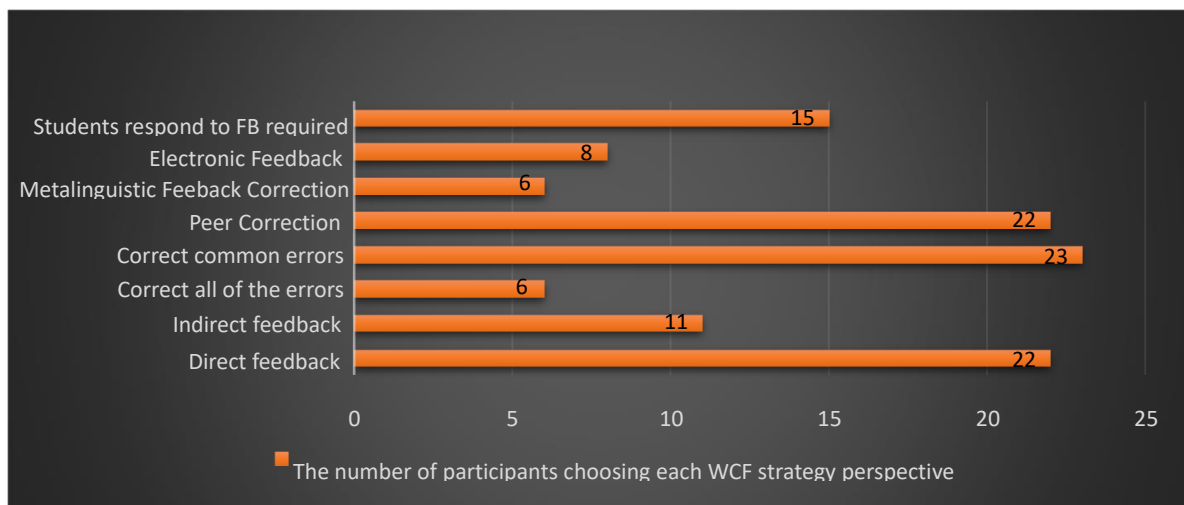
Fig. 3.3. Some common online WCF strategies applied in VLU university

The authors inquire about the elements that influence the techniques VLU's Foreign Languages faculty lecturers use to provide feedback on their students' English writing online and receive responses shown in fig. 3.4. More than 50% of the lecturers choose "target of the course", "time allowed", "students' levels", "students' weaknesses", "learning experiences", and "personal teaching experience" as the influenced factors. Specifically, "students' levels" and "personal teaching experience" earn 70% of the lecturers' votes, whereas "students' weaknesses" and "learning experiences" receive 66.6% of the votes.
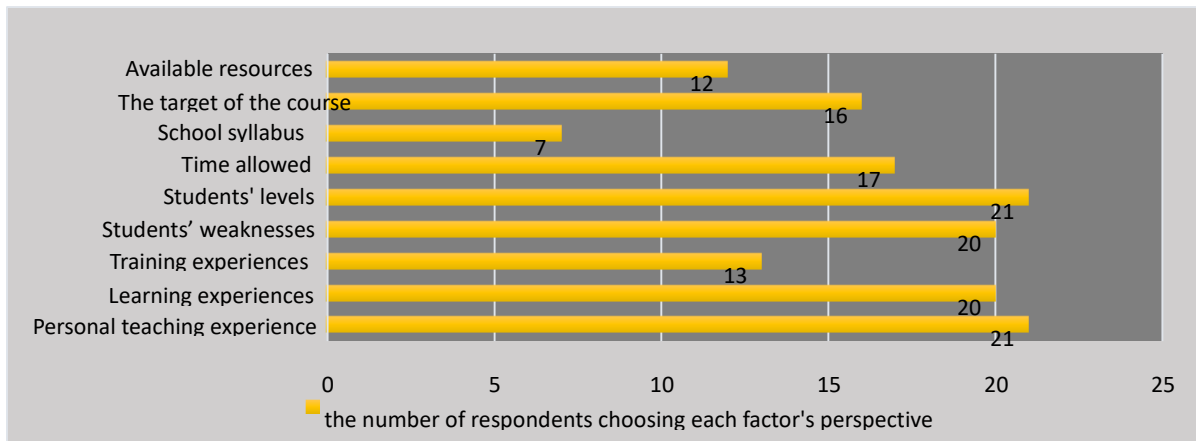
Fig. 3.4. Some common factors influence WCF strategies

One factor that is frequently recognized as having a significant impact on the selection of WCF methods based on the common mistakes that students make. According to the statistics in Fig. 3.4, 2/3 of the questioned lecturers admit that they pick the suitable WCF technique based on students' weaknesses. According to the data collected, students' most common mistake when learning English writing through online platforms is "Grammatical correctness," with 93.3 percent of the teachers picking this option.
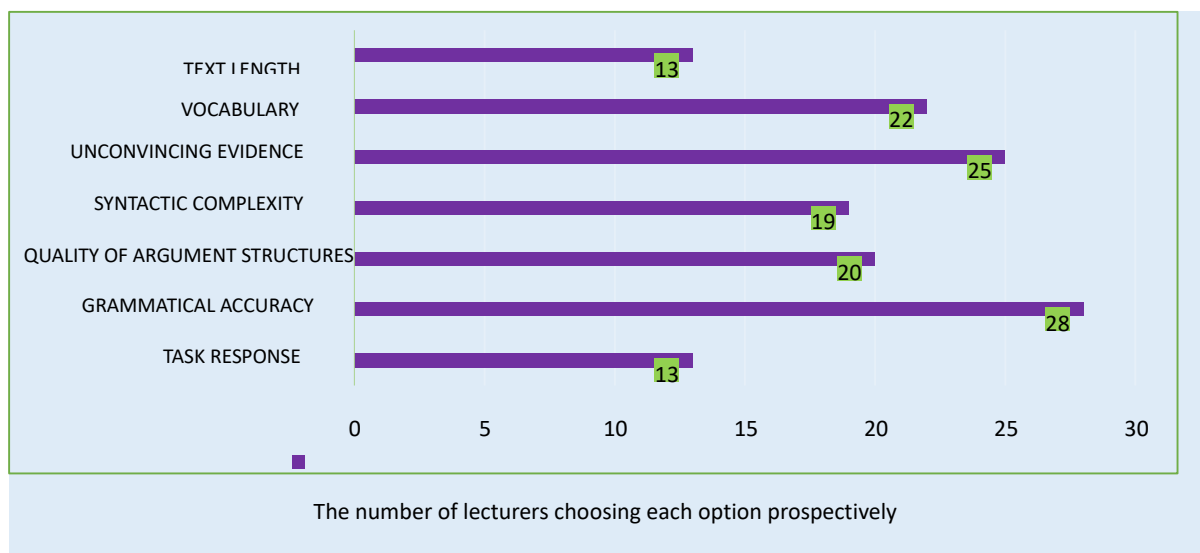
Fig. 3.5. Common mistakes of VLU students

In addition, Fig. 3.5 also shows that other options, including "unconvincing evidence", "vocabulary", "quality of argument structures", and "syntactic complexity," are likewise regarded as common student mistakes by the majority of the lecturers.
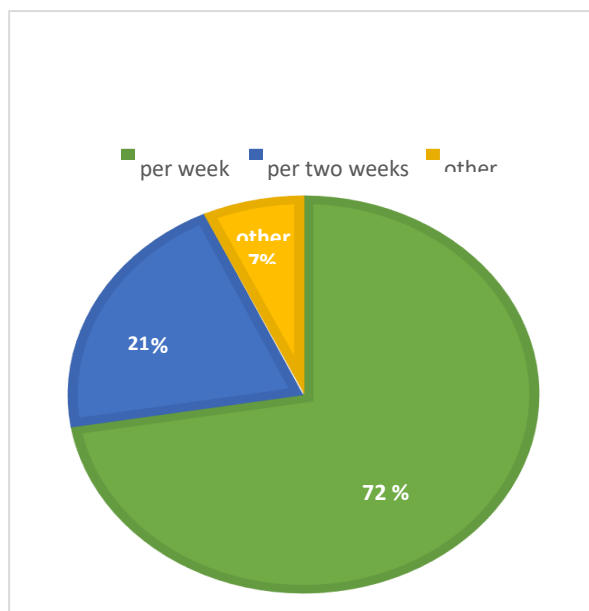
Fig. 3.6 The frequency of giving online writing assignments

The number of assignments that teachers give to students will have an effect on how teachers give feedback, so the authors examine the frequency of online writing tasks. Each writing course at Van Lang University's Faculty of Foreign Languages generally lasts around ten weeks. The number of writing assignments in each writing module may vary depending on various circumstances, but according to the data collected, the majority of teachers (72%; in green) provide pupils with writing tasks every week, and 21% (blue) give writing assignments to their students per two weeks.
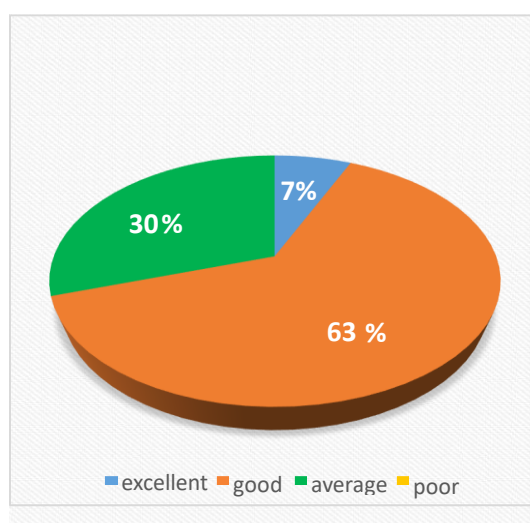
Fig. 3.7 The effectiveness of online WCF

Learning writing online as opposed to face-to-face learning causes changes that both students and teachers must adapt to learn effectively. The authors decide to study the efficacy of studying writing using an online platform since the inability to physically engage and continue working with the computer may produce certain pressures. And the result is, according to fig. 3.7, 63% (orange) of teachers still believe the online writing program is successful, and 7% (blue) believe it is extremely effective. However, 30% of instructors believe that the effectiveness of teaching writing online is at an average level (green).

Table 3.1. Some considerations of VLU lecturers for effective online WCF

Considerations	Count	%
Learning platform	3	10
Teachers' responsibility	13	43.33
Students' responsibility	8	26.67
Teacher-student collaboration	3	10
Others	3	10

Table 3.1 shows that some considerations are given by VLU lecturers when providing WCF to students on the online platform. Three teachers (10% of the respondents) commented that the system and the learning platform need upgrading. Also, it is critical to use various online tools to assess the students' work. Teachers' responsibility is the most important factor in the effectiveness of the online WCF, with 13 participants (43.33% of the total) agreement. Teachers have to deal with the burden of a high workload throughout the course to track students' progress. Firstly, teachers must provide a clear scoring rubric and explain the course objective to students before the course. Then they have to instruct students to add submissions and read the feedback on the platform. To adapt to teaching writing online, teachers are required to have a lot of experience, patience, dedication, skills, and knowledge. When providing WCF online, teachers follow some rules to correct students' writing assignments and help them to clarify their problems. Firstly, they randomly pick some writing assignments, correct common mistakes, and let the students conduct self-correct mistakes by themselves or by peer correction. The feedback needs to be simultaneous and concise and focuses on the content and structures. Besides, lecturers should be responsive and prompt to students' work and give regular assignments for better assessment. Also, some teachers use some oral feedback by recording to make sure students fully understand their comments. Eight VLU teachers (26.67% of the respondents) claim that students are mostly responsible for effective online WCF. First of all, the students need to take the feedback into more serious consideration. The suggestion is that after receiving feedback, students correct responses and reassess their writings. After this process, they will improve their writing and broaden their knowledge. The readiness of both teachers and students to adapt to the online WCF is necessary. Three teachers (10% of the respondents) state that boundary setting, empathy, and cooperation between lecturers and learners are crucial for effective online WCF. Finally, three teachers (10% of the respondents) mentioned some other factors apart from teachers and students, such as class size and technical problems.

Table 3.2 The advantages of online WCF

Advantages	Count	%
Convenience	13	43.33
Quick feedback	9	30
Effectiveness	6	20
Others	2	6.67

Regarding the advantages of the online WCF, table 3.2 reveals that 13 respondents (43.33% of the participants) agree that providing corrective feedback through online platforms is flexible and convenient. Lecturers can correct students' work whenever they have time and wherever they are and organize students' work effectively. All online feedback can store as a reference for students, which is permanently available for them to revise. The students can review the lesson better and improve their level of academic performance. Also, 9 VLU teachers (30% of the total) admit that students can receive feedback faster when giving WCF online. Also, students' mistakes can be noted and recognized clearly, which are easier to read compared to handwriting. Thanks to the quick feedback, learners will revise their writing work better. Besides, 6 participants (20% of the teachers) notice that students feel less nervous when receiving and responding to teachers' online WCF. They are more aware of their mistakes and easier to improve. These factors help improve students writing to meet the course objective. The last two respondents (6.67% of the answers) mention other benefits of online WCF, such as progress tracking and various online tools. These instruments help the teacher target students' mistakes and provide constructive feedback on their writing performance. It also saves time in giving feedback during the process of writing and in grading the final products.

Table 3.3 The disadvantages of online WCF

Disadvantages	Count	%
Plagiarism	3	10
Time consuming	8	26.67
Face-to-face interaction	5	16.67
Misunderstanding	4	13.33
Class organization	3	10
Unproductive	4	13.33
Others	3	10

As can be seen in table 3.3, there are a variety of drawbacks that VLU lectures deal with when providing WCF online. The most common problem is time-consuming, with eight respondents (26.67% of the participants) experiencing the fact that WCF on multi-modal texts from students can bring more challenges to teachers because of the heavy workload and time constraints. Teachers need a large amount of time and patience to give feedback on all students' assignments. Five teachers (16.67% of the respondents) claim that the practice of WCF online lacks human interaction. No face-to-face communication can cause some

confusion and call for clarification. They have to give "impersonal" feedback, which creates a sense of isolation. Also, four respondents (13.33% of the total) admit that WCF online is unproductive. There are some limitations in giving WCF to some grammatical areas, and ineffective for low-tech or weak students. Besides, three lecturers (10% of the respondents) state that plagiarism is a challenging issue to address. Another three teachers (10% of the respondents) claim that class organization depends on students' engagement and cooperation, which means teachers have difficulty controlling the class and monitoring students. Also, four lecturers (13.33% of the total) admit that there are some misunderstandings between teachers and learners when giving WCF online, which leads their students to ignore their feedback. Finally, 3 participants (10% of the respondents) mentioned some external factors when providing online WCF, such as WiFi connection or eye disease.

Table 3.4 VLU students' responses to WCF online

Students' responses	Count	%
Positive	13	43.33
Average	7	23.33
Negative	7	23.33
Method	3	10

The open-ended question about student responses when studying online receives a lot of positive feedback, as revealed in the table 3.4. 13 VLU teachers (43.33% of the respondents) report that their students are active and satisfied when replying to their WCF online. They often ask for more questions about the mistakes to correct and rewrite the essays. However, seven lecturers (23,33% of the participants) answered that just some of their learners read their WCF carefully and asked them to clarify the feedback to provide better answers. Others easily accept their feedback or ignore it. They just submit their work and commit the mistakes again after getting WCF. Regarding group work, some students cooperate well, and some do not work. Moreover, 7 participants (23.33% of the respondents) comment that they find their students uninterested and insufficient when learning online. They have no comments, rarely ask for further explanation, and work on WCF with reluctance. Finally, three lecturers (10% of the total) give information about some common ways that learners respond to their WCF by typing in on chatbox, voicing their opinions, or using the icons.

4. Findings and Discussion

Due to the covid 19 expansion, e-learning is the only solution that will allow us to continue studying without interruption. This study aims to investigate the WCF techniques used by VLU lecturers to assist students in improving their writing.

Research question 1: *What are the most often used WCF strategies for an online writing class?*

According to the statistics given in fig. 3.3, the most common WCF technique used by VLU lecturers is "correct common mistakes."The lecturers detect the common mistakes that the

majority of the students frequently make and give solutions to correct these mistakes. This technique is chosen by 23/30 participants, accounting for 76.6 percent of the total. In a different context, in response to the question about variables influencing feedback, 56.6 percent of participants stated that they picked the suitable WCF technique based on the time allowed. Perhaps this is why the "correct common mistakes" is the most popular technique at Van Lang University's Faculty of Foreign Languages. 22/30 participants, or 73.3 percent, choose "Peer correction then teacher correction" and "Direct Feedback" as their WCF strategies to provide feedback online to their students in writing class. Direct feedback means teachers point out students' faults in writing and offer strategies to assist them better. The advantage of this technique is that students become more aware of the faults they frequently make. In the "peer correction then teacher correction" technique, the instructors allow students to point out and correct each other's faults. Then teachers examine the tasks again, give comments, and recommend ways to improve. This technique encourages students to be more active while studying. Besides, addressing their peers' writing mistakes is a good way to improve their writing skills proactively. Half of the surveyed lecturers chose the technique "students reply to requested feedback." After getting comments from the teacher, pupils must edit their work. Teachers determine if students have comprehended the directions and provide students more opportunities to practice writing. The remaining options, "indirect feedback," "electronic feedback," "metalinguistic feedback correction," and "correct all mistakes," are not as popular among surveyed participants, with just 20% to 36.6 percent of total votes.

The authors use the *X* formula below to get each respondent's average number of WCF methods. As a result, the authors find that each survey participant employs a mix of more than three WCF strategies on average, which means students receive writing feedback in various ways, making their learning process more pleasant and successful.

Research question 2: What is the most influential factor in choosing WCF strategy on an online platform?

The authors ask respondents what variables influence their decision to approach WCF, and authors receive answers like fig. 3.4. According to the data collected, "personal teaching experience" is one of the most common factors, with 70% of voters for it. For that reason, the authors tabulate table 4.1 to check if there are any variations in the use of WCF techniques among groups of teachers with varying years of teaching experience. Table 4.1 shows that there is a difference in the WCF technique utilized by groups 1 and 2 compared to group 3. If authors merge groups 1 and 2, authors will get a group of lecturers with fewer than ten years of teaching experience. The most commonly used WCF method in this mixed group is "Correct common mistakes". In the group of lecturers with more than ten years of teaching experience, the most common method is direct feedback.

Table 4.1. The WCF strategies are applied by the three groups, separated by teachers' years of experience

WCF Strategies								
		Direct Feedback	Indirect feedback	Correct all the mistakes	Correct common mistakes	Peer correction then teacher correction	Metalinguistic Feedback Correction	Electronic Feedback	Students respond to FB required
Years of Teaching Experience	2<x<5 (1)	1			3	2		2	
	Row Percent	33.3%			100%	66.6%		66.6%	
	5<=x<=10 (2)	9	5	3	11	11	5	6	2
	Row Percent	64.3%	35.7%	21.4%	78.6%	78.6%	35.7%	42.9%	14.3%
	>10 (3)	11	5	2	8	8	2	6	3
	Row Percent	84.6%	38.5%	14.4%	61.5%	61.5%	14.4%	46.2%	23.1%

* x: the years of teaching experience

Table 4.1 indicates that while teaching writing online, the majority of instructors from 2 to less than five years of experience and the majority of teachers from 5 to 10 years of experience utilize the "correct common mistakes" strategy. However, among teachers with five to ten years of experience, the "peer correction then teacher correction" technique is also often applied. The majority of lecturers with more than ten years of experience favor "direct feedback," although the two techniques "correct common mistakes" and "peer correction then teacher correction" also obtain a significant proportion of votes. Next, the authors utilize one-way ANOVA, a statistical approach, to examine whether there are variations in the number of WCF methods employed by instructors in groups with varying years of teaching experience.

Table 4.2. The summary of the calculation of subgroup statistics for variables within categories.

Group	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
>10 (Group 3)	13	45	3.461538	3.769231
5<=x<=10 (Group 2)	14	52	3.714286	2.527473
2<x<5 (Group 1)	3	9	3	1

There are three different groups: lecturers from 2 to less than 5 years of experience (Group1), lecturers from 5 to 10 years of experience (Group 2), and lecturers with more than 10 years (Group 3) of teaching experience. Particularly, the total number of types of feedback used by group 1 is 9. On average, each participant use three different types of feedback. In group 2, the total number of types of feedback used is 52. On average, each person uses 3.7 different types of feedback. For group 3, the total number of types of feedback used is 45. On average, each person uses 3.5 different types of feedback.

Table 4.3. ANOVA

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	1.378754579	2	0.689377	0.232409	0.794191	3.354131
Within Groups	80.08791209	27	2.966219			
Total	81.46666667	29				

As can be seen in Table 4.3, F value is less than F crit in this case (0.232409 < 3.354131), thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. It indicates that the numbers of WCF methods used by the lecturers in different groups are quite similar. The ultimate result is that the number of WCF techniques used by the lecturers is not different based on teachers' years of teaching experience.

Next, the authors tabulate table 4.4 to examine if there is any difference in WCF techniques used by instructors when students work independently (group 1), in groups (group 2), and both (group 3). The results show that the teachers in group 1 use various methods, but there is little overlap in the methods employed. Only two methods were not used, and half of the participants in this group chose the most used methods. Group 2 also has various WCF methods, but there is an overlap in methods applied. According to table 4.4, 6/8 methods are used by two-thirds of the lecturers in this group. People in group 3 utilize a range of WCF methods as well because the data reveal that just one method is not used. The three approaches utilized by the teachers in this group are "peer correction then teacher correction", "correct common mistakes", and "direct feedback". In conclusion, there is little variation in the number and kind of WCF methods used by trainers from these groups.

Table 4.4. The WCF strategies are applied by the three groups, separated by types of assignments

		Indirect feedback	Correct all the mistakes	Correct common mistakes	Peer correction then teacher correction	Metalinguistic Feedback Correction	Electronic Feedback	Students respond to FB required
		**WCF Strategies**
Types of assignments	Individual (1)	0	3	5	4	2	3	0
	Row Percent	0.00%	30.00%	50.00%	40.00%	20.00%	30.00%	0.00%
	Group (2)	2	2	2	2	0	1	2
	Row Percent	66.67%	66.67%	66.67%	66.67%	0.00%	33.33%	66.67%
	Both (3)	6	0	15	16	5	10	3
	Row Percent	34.49%	0.00%	88.24%	94.12%	29.41%	58.82%	17.65%

This research aims to find out the most common WCF methods used by teachers when teaching writing online and the factors that affect their choices. The results will serve as a reference for those who wish to apply the WCF method to teach writing online. In addition, based on the above results, readers will better understand the WCF methods used and the factors that influence the choice of these methods. The findings of the study accord with earlier relevant studies on the recognition of the effectiveness of WCF, indicating that EFL teachers utilize a combination of three different WCF tactics on average to assist their students in developing their writing skills, and the strategies are successful. The findings are in line with previous research papers' findings that the factors that affected how teachers used particular WCF strategies are personal factors and factors related to students' writing levels.

The research findings also increase the diversity of WCF strategy research, especially the WCF strategy in online teaching, during the spread of the Covid19 epidemic.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, based on fig. 3.3 and the preceding data, the most common online WCF strategy applied by Van Lang University's Faculty of Foreign Languages lecturers while teaching writing online is "Correct Common Mistakes." According to the lecturers in fig. 3.4 and the study above, some elements that have the largest effect on the choice of WCF method are "personal teaching experience" and "students' level". Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that when most lecturers in the Faculty of Foreign Languages of Van Lang University conduct online teaching, they mainly rely on their personal teaching experience to

the method of "correct common mistakes" to give feedback to EFL students. This technique can utilize the limited time in each writing class to provide feedback to all students, so all students' writing can be corrected. In addition, the teacher's survey also uses a combination of other methods to support students more effectively. Due to the global outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, this research paper becomes a timely complement to the topic of WCF strategies. It serves as a resource for many teachers who are willing to teach writing online. In comparison to previous research, the findings of this paper have further supported the topic of WCF, which provides readers with more practical facts about the situation of the spreading epidemic and makes e-learning necessary.

In comparison to previous relevant studies, this research supports the notion that WCF has a good impact on writing instruction and learning.

All in all, there are some limitations in our study that should be addressed. There are 30 VLU lecturers who conduct our survey, which is quite a small research scale. Our scale is in the Faculty of Foreign Language, where teachers use English mostly to give WCF to students. Besides, the authors focus on the WCF strategies applied in writing assignments – a small aspect requires WCF. Due to the covid-19 pandemic, VLU teachers have just been switching to the online platform for a short amount of time, so the long-term effects of different WCF strategies need to be taken into consideration.

The results of the study will contribute to the existing literature on WCF strategies and provide additional information on how WCF should be applied through online platforms. Based on the analysis of data provided by experienced teachers, the research's findings are reference resources for young teachers who are inexperienced in applying WCF strategies when teaching via online platforms. Besides, because of the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, e-learning is the most popular used learning method in Vietnam. The information from the research will be the latest and the most appropriate for reference to apply in places where e-learning is used for the first time as a form of formal teaching. Furthermore, based on the results, the other researchers will know the most popular strategies are used, and then they can research the effectiveness of these WCF strategies when applying to teaching L2 to Vietnamese students. Future research which studies the effectiveness of different WCF strategies on the online platform should employ a longitudinal design to examine the improvement of their students' writings. From their performance, authors can find out the most effective WCF strategy when learning online. Besides, students should be provided with different types of WCF strategies to decide which one is the most suitable for them. Different levels of students may adapt to different WCF strategies, so future research can develop more about the factors that influence the WCF methods used by teachers.

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Promoting Students' Autonomy in Online Classes: A Study on First-Year Non-English Major Students at Thuongmai University

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Abstract

Vietnam's higher education has experienced considerable changes due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. When schools are closed, online classes become the inevitable mode of teaching, and Information Technology shows its indispensable role. In response to significant challenges, not only do teachers have to upgrade themselves with new teaching forms and techniques, but students also need to adapt to a new remote learning environment. Classes occur outside the classroom and only via a computer screen, which means many difficulties faced by the teachers in giving good lectures and promoting students' active learning. Different tactics have been used to deal with these problems, bringing both positive and negative results. This study is aimed to investigate strategies that English teachers at Thuongmai University have been employing to improve students' autonomy in their online courses and the results they have achieved. To collect data for the study, five English teachers and fifty first-year non-English major students at Thuongmai University are invited as participants, while questionnaires and interviews are used as the main data collection tools. The research findings reveal that a wide range of IT tools have been employed in English online classes, and they show a great help in promoting students' autonomy. Among the listed IT tools, Padlet and Quizizz are the most preferred.

Keywords: online classes, Thuongmai University, students' autonomy, strategies

1. Introduction

The year 2020 witnessed unpredictable changes and unforeseen challenges in every aspect of life due to the emergence of a virus called SARS-COV-2. What is called the "Covid-19 pandemic" has been exerting negative effects on almost all countries worldwide. Undoubtedly, the three sectors that most severely suffered from the pandemic are health, economy, and education.

In response to the pandemic, numerous changes have been made in education, including the replacement of online classes for offline ones. All aspects of teaching are conducted through the screen, which causes significant difficulties for both teachers and students. Getting exposed to a new learning environment, that is, virtual learning requires students' more active participation and strong determination.

There is no doubt that fostering students' motivation and self-study plays a vital role in achieving learning objectives regarding English language teaching. Promoting students' engagement in a face-to-face class is never easy, and this level of difficulty increases when it comes to online classes. Globally, many recommendations have been proposed, and they have proved to be of various influences. Among the ways suggested, IT tools are considered a great help.

As one of the first universities in Hanoi to shift from the offline mode into an online one, Thuongmai University has made significant attempts to prepare teaching and learning resources that can serve the new situation. The school renovated its facilities by installing a new WIFI connection system, purchasing learning management systems, and upgrading the classroom equipment. Numerous training courses and webinars on the application of IT in teaching and research were offered to both teachers and students. The very first days of online teaching and learning saw undeniable struggles and difficulties for different reasons; however, things got better over the next few months thanks to the non-stop efforts made by participants. As for the question of promoting learner autonomy inside and outside the classroom, it is time for us to look back and have some evaluation of what we have been doing and achieving. This paper serves as a minor study contributing to developing students' autonomy in online learning at Thuongmai University. Due to the limited time and effort, the study only focuses on online English classes, investigating the current situation of promoting learner autonomy and students' perceptions of the strategies their teachers have applied.

2. Literature review

In a traditional view, the focus of teaching language is imparting knowledge and developing skills instead of guiding how to learn. Nevertheless, students' learning outcomes are different because of distinctions in teaching curricula, course books, or teaching styles but due to their studying methods. In other words, students take primary responsibility for their own learning and decide how good their learning results are.

Obviously, autonomous learning has received increasing focus because it is closely linked to student development in language learning. Over the past decades, many scholars have attempted to define what learner autonomy, also called autonomous learning, is.

Learner autonomy derives from the concept of life-long learning, which has been regarded as a significant goal since the early 1960s (Gardner & Miller, 1999). In the 1970s, learner autonomy was first introduced into the field of second language teaching. According to Holec (1981), who is considered a father of autonomous learning, it is "the ability to take charge of one's learning" (p.3). Included in this definition is the management of various aspects of the learning process, which means monitoring one's learning progress, setting goals, and self-assessment. Dickinson (1995) states that an autonomous learner "takes complete responsibility for all of the decisions concerned with learning and implementation of those decisions" (p.11).

Similarly, Little (1991) is of the opinion that autonomous learners are cast in a new perspective and have a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, and decision-making. He adds that these kinds of learners take independent actions and are expected to assume greater responsibility for and take charge of their own learning.

Learner autonomy is not related to students only but is looked at in a relationship with the teacher. As for the teacher's roles, Scharle and Szabo (2000) suggest that it is very important

for teachers to find out students' level of knowledge and attitudes, their level of motivation, the learning strategies the students use, and to get students to think about their own learning style. Harmer (2007) said that teachers need to offer them choices in learning strategies if they train the learners to be autonomous. Dornyei (2001) shows how important learning materials and technology-based approaches are to the development of learner autonomy, which emphasizes independent interaction with educational technologies. In Zhong (2018), it was stated that apart from the psychological factors of the learner, environmental factors, e.g., the guidance from the teacher and learning conditions, also play a critical role in the formation of different dimensions of learner autonomy.

There have been numerous studies on learner autonomy in the context of online education. Indonesian researcher, A study was conducted by Sung, Chang, and Yang (2015), whose results supported the benefits of the use of e-media in mobile learning. It is claimed that e-media are quite effective in enhancing learner autonomy in language learning. The reasons are mobile learning allows students to personally control learning by deciding the preferable time, place, and pace. Also, it boosts students' interaction and cooperative learning between teachers and students or even peers.

Regarding language teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, Muhammad (2020) investigated how Schoology – a learning management system – successfully promoted students' active participation by logging in and commenting on others' ideas. The finding of his research also revealed that some shy students in EFL classes showed better confidence in Schoology. Dutton (2021) conducted an auto-ethnographic work on teaching French online during the COVID-19 confinement, which demonstrated that negotiating the balance between autonomy and community is the key to teaching and learning a language during that time. Other studies on voices of the emerging context of online learning platforms over learner autonomy, including teachers' and students', could be found in Onyema et al. (2020), Ariebowo (2021), and Ningsih and Yusuf (2021).

When it comes to the English language teaching and learning in Vietnam during the coronavirus outbreak, Nguyen (2021) studied home-based teaching and practice at Ton Duc Thang University with three-period online lessons. The study revealed that studying through IT-based tools, such as Zoom and Google Classroom, made it difficult for English teachers in class facilitation, control, and feedback giving in spite of geographical convenience and time flexibility. Nguyen et al. (2022) had a closer look at the use of Quizlet to enhance autonomous learning of vocabulary for first-year and second-year students at a university in Ho Chi Minh

City, which indicated that this learning application is a tool that plays an important role in motivating students' self-study. A study by Tran & Nguyen (2022) was about non-English major college students' attitudes towards learning English at Saigon University under the COVID-19 restrictions, while another was to investigate the utilization of digital resources to foster young learner's engagement in online learning classrooms (Ho & Nguyen, 2022).

In short, it can be inferred from the above-mentioned that learner autonomy is a complex concept that involves the responsibilities of teachers and students. To become autonomous learners, students need to develop their own awareness of their self-study, improve their learning techniques and increase their learning independence. Teachers are supposed to let students make their own learning choices, instruct and provide them with a learning environment where they can think, do, act, achieve and assess. Technological advancements are believed to make a considerable contribution to fostering students' motivation and learner autonomy.

Research Questions

To fulfill the purpose of the study, the survey was seeking to answer the following research questions:

1. What IT tools are used to promote students' autonomy in online classes for first-year non-English major students at Thuongmai University?

2. How do IT tools help promote students' autonomy in online classes for first-year non-English major students at Thuongmai University?

3. Methods

3.1 Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The study is to investigate how to promote students' autonomy in online classes at Thuongmai University. The main participants of the study are 50 first-year non-English major students partaking in the two English classes, namely Class 1 and Class 2. The students come from the Faculty of International Training, and they are taking part in the course English 2, the second of the English preparation series with four courses in total. They all have a 5-day-a-week learning schedule, and they encounter different teachers for different learning sessions of the week. These students are believed to provide reliable responses to the study as they are in the second semester of the first year at university and may not be masters of online learning methods but are getting familiar with the new teaching and learning styles. Moreover, five teachers of English, who are in charge of these classes, are invited for email interviews.

3.2 Design of the Study

Online survey questionnaires were sent to the students to collect data for the study, while email interviews were conducted with the teachers. This study acts as primarily quantitative research whose focus is to find out the current situation of online classes, ways to promote

learner autonomy in online classes, as well as teachers' and students' perceptions of these ways.

3.3 Data collection & analysis

At the end of the eighth week of the course of English 2, the researcher delivered the questionnaires and the interviews with students and teachers. The questionnaire consists of 4 parts with 68 items about students' personal information, their understanding of learner autonomy, the use of IT tools in their online classes, and perceptions of the use of IT tools to promote learner autonomy in their classes. The Likert scale with 5 degrees was employed to measure the frequency of using different learning activities and IT tools and investigate students' opinions on how IT methods helped develop their learner autonomy. After the survey questionnaires were collected and analyzed, ten students, including five from Class 1 and five from Class 2, were selected for email interviews to clarify some details collected from the questionnaires. At the same time, teachers were invited to get involved in email interviews.

Having had all the data needed, a careful analysis was made to find out answers to the research questions raised above. Methods used for the data analysis could be named as synthesizing, selecting, grouping, counting the percentages, presenting, explaining, comparing, and concluding.

4. Results/Findings and discussion

As presented above, participants of the study are first-year non-English major students from the Faculty of International Training of Thuongmai University who are taking part in the course English 2, where they are trained in English at the Pre-Intermediate level. The coursebook they use is Life, Pre-Intermediate, published by National Geographic Learning. The first six units of the book cover the topics of *Lifestyle*, *Competitions*, *Transport*, *Challenges*, *Environment*, and *Stages in life*.

Students involved in the survey are asked to give their opinions about learner autonomy. The results collected from the questionnaires show that the majority of students, accounting for 60%, responded that learner autonomy means learning outside the classroom. More than three-quarters of the students agreed that students become autonomous when they are allowed to choose their own learning materials and learning methods. All the students surveyed proposed that they feel more independent in their learning if they could make and then evaluate their own choices in classes. Furthermore, half of the students suggested learner autonomy means students work individually, while the others argued that it means they have to work in pairs or groups. With regard to the teacher's roles, only 20% of students strongly agreed that they need the teacher's help and guidance in their self-study, while 50% showed their uncertainty. Finally, over 80% of students responded that learner autonomy is of great importance in modern learning, especially in online classes.

In general, most student participants gain some common understanding of what learner autonomy is, but some present their own opinions. In line with the theories suggested by

researchers (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012), students agreed that learner autonomy means they can make their own decisions inside and outside the classroom, and they are centered in their learning process. As for the time to have learner autonomy, a minority of students seemed to think that it is mandatory for them to work during the class as to the teacher's requirements and evaluation, and this is not learner autonomy. They suggested that their level of learner autonomy is only shown and measured through their self-study at home. In this way, the concept of learner autonomy is misunderstood by a number of students surveyed. Moreover, the fact that nearly 5% of the students, who disagreed on the important roles of teachers in learner autonomy, indicated that they viewed learner autonomy as their complete self-study; in other words, they are fully responsible for their study progress, and the support from the teachers seems to make them less autonomous. Thus, this idea is opposite to the theories presented previously.

4.1 The use of IT tools in online English classes for first-year non-English major students at Thuongmai University

An investigation into the general situation of online classes for first-year non-English major students at Thuongmai University was conducted. For online classes, the university used the platform of Zoom Meetings as the main tool for lesson delivery. This platform brought some advantages for English teachings such as screen sharing, Chatbox, Breakout Zooms, Note-taking, and Highlighting.

Students were asked about activities during and after online classes. The majority of students surveyed, with over 90%, agreed that their teachers not only taught things in the coursebook only but gave them further exercises for practice. All students suggested that their teachers had a mix of Zoom Meetings techniques and others such as Google Docs, Padlet, Mentimeter, Quizizz, and Canva. As for the interviews, all students from Class 1 stated that their teachers only gave exercises in the workbook as homework assignments after the online classes, and those from Class 2 presented that they were given various types of exercises to do at homes, such as journal writing, magazine designing, and video making.

Responses to the questions on the use of IT tools used during or after online classes show that teachers from the two classes employed a variety of IT techniques in their teaching, which are illustrated as follows:

Table 1: The frequency of IT tools used in online English classes

Technologies	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Zoom technologies					
1. Chatbox	10%	30%	30%	30%	0%
2. Breakout Rooms	0%	30%	50%	10%	10%
Other technologies					
1. Google Docs	0%	10%	80%	10%	0%
2. Padlet	20%	30%	0%	20%	30%
3. Mentimeter	10%	10%	40%	30%	10%
4. Quizizz	10%	60%	20%	10%	0%
5. Canva	0%	0%	40%	20%	40%
6. Others	0%	0%	10%	50%	40%

As can be seen from Table 1, Zoom technologies were always used by the teachers in the two classes. 60% of the students stated that their teachers used Chatbox quite often. Over 30% claimed that Breakout Zooms was often used, while half of the students surveyed presented that their teachers sometimes used it. For non-Zoom technologies, it is clear that Quizizz was the most popular tool employed during online classes, while Padlet ranked second. Google Docs and Canva were sometimes used, which were agreed upon by 80% and 40% of the students, respectively. Students from Class 2 noted that their teachers also occasionally used some other techniques, such as *liveworksheet.com* or Google Forms, while those from Class 1 claimed that their teachers used no other tools.

To be more specific, students were surveyed on the frequency of IT tools in different learning activities during and after online classes. These activities included Brainstorming, Giving opinions, Multiple choice questions, Gap-filling, Short-answer questions, Discussion, Writing sentences, and Writing letters/ short emails.

Chatbox was most frequently used regarding Zoom technologies when teachers wanted students to give short answers to questions. It was also used quite often for students to brainstorm ideas, give opinions, or write short sentences. Breakout Rooms proved to be very helpful in activities of interviews, and discussions, especially for group work. As for other technologies, teachers showed a particular preference for each tool, in line with a particular activity, for example, Google Docs for collaborative writing, Mentimeter for brainstorming ideas, Quizzes for Multiple choice questions, and Gap-filling, Canva for Mini-projects, and Google Forms for mini-tests. Padlet was reported to be helpful for different activities. It was used for Brainstorming ideas, Giving opinions, Short-answer questions, and Writing sentences.

A comparison of responses from the two classes showed that teachers in Class 1 used fewer IT tools than those in Class 2. The frequency of using non-Zoom technologies for class activities in Class 1 was also lower than that of Class 2. Results from email interviews with teachers of the two classes showed a great match when those from Class 1 admitted that they were not able to use technology tools flexibly as their IT skills were not good enough. They were only confident with Zoom tools, which they got familiar with and were well-trained. They sometimes used some other techniques like Padlet or Quizizz as their colleagues had shared them. In contrast, teachers from Class 2 showed their considerable interest in using different IT tools in their teaching. They were all younger than 35 years old, so they seemed to be quick and efficient at performing IT tasks. In addition to learning tasks designed in the coursebook and workbook, these teachers assigned extra tasks to students as homework. A striking example of this was a mini-project of designing a travel poster or magazine using Canva. They used this mini-project as a preparation for the topic 8: *Holidays*.

4.2 Teachers' and students' perceptions towards the use of IT ways to promote learner autonomy in online classes

As for the students' opinions on how learner autonomy was developed in their online classes when asked whether the level of their autonomy in online classes, most of them agreed

that they were given more independence compared to offline classes. Nearly half of the students agreed that student talking time increased while teacher talking time decreased during online classes. Over 30 students surveyed claimed that they were encouraged to work in pairs or groups. About the opportunity to make decisions, three-quarters of the students stated that they were free to make their own choices of learning materials and methods and to raise their voices well. Half of the students agreed that teachers sometimes let them do peer checking, especially in collaborative writing or discussions. Regarding learning activities after online classes, the level of learner autonomy was reported to be high because students were totally responsible for their assignments. With around 70%, the majority of students responded that their teachers gave them some group work to be done at home, and they had to decide all things related to their homework. Individual work was assigned for completing exercises in the workbook. Over half of the students agreed that their teacher gave constant help and feedback on their assignments, while the others stated they received infrequent assistance.

The findings from email interviews with teachers reveal that they did all their best to promote their students' autonomy in online classes. Although they always tried to give support to all students, they could not make it as constant due to the fact that they had to be in charge of different classes, most of which were in big size. One more thing is that the teachers sometimes applied the peer assessment prior to giving their feedback on students' final work. It was the reason why students sometimes did not receive their comments and feedback.

As regards to the effects of using IT tools in online classes to increase learner autonomy, findings from questionnaires are shown below:

Table 2: Opinions on the use of IT tools to promote learner autonomy

Opinions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree
1. The use of IT tools gives me opportunities to develop my learning independence.	0%	10%	40%	20%	30%
2. IT tools help me develop my language skills.	10%	30%	50%	10%	10%
3. The use of IT tools helps me develop my learning skills.	0%	0%	20%	50%	20%
4. The use of IT tools helps me develop my critical thinking.	0%	30%	20%	30%	20%
5. The use of IT tools helps me develop my IT skills.	10%	0%	40%	30%	20%
6. The use of IT tools helps me develop my teamwork skills.	0%	20%	30%	10%	40%
7. The use of IT tools helps me develop my presentation skills.	20%	10%	30%	20%	20%
8. The use of IT tools helps me develop my confidence and determination.	0%	20%	20%	40%	20%

It is noticeable from the table that students give the most positive feedback on the use of IT tools to develop learner autonomy in online classes. Teamwork skills rank the most greatly benefited thanks to the use of IT tools, with about 40% of the students strongly who agreed. Similarly, 30% of the students strongly agreed that IT tools give them opportunities to develop their learner independence, while only one out of ten disagreed. Almost half of the students stated that through the use of IT tools, they could develop their learning skills and their confidence. In the interviews, nine of ten students presented that they felt more confident to raise their voices in online classes compared to offline ones. Assignments that included the use of IT tools made them work hard to complete their learning duties, such as researching, collecting, selecting, and analyzing data. Hence, their learning independence and learning skills were considerably enhanced.

Meanwhile, a third of the students agreed to develop IT skills and critical thinking to be other important help that the use of IT tools brought to them. 20% of students stated that the employment of IT tools helped them develop their language skills, while half of them admitted that they were not sure. In the interviews, they explained that they did not know how to count and measure the level of their English proficiency before and after they got exposed to IT tools in their online classes.

Four out of ten students, mostly from Class 2, claimed that they could develop their presentation skills thanks to the use of IT tools as they had to present their mini-project products - their travel magazines. Results from teachers' interviews showed an excellent match with their students'. They all agreed that increased learner autonomy was advantageous for both teachers and students.

When asked about what they expect to develop learner autonomy, 80% of student interviewees agreed that the teachers should increase their roles by giving clearer and more frequent instructions and guidelines. In addition, flexible use of learning materials and IT tools is highly recommended, with all students strongly agreeing. Students from Class 1 expect their teachers to use more technologies and assign learning tasks in a greater variety, while those from Class 2 suggested they were so happy with the support they had had from their teachers. However, some students from Class 2 admitted that they found that having too many homework assignments with the use of IT tools with strict deadlines was quite stressful at times. Furthermore, students from the two classes were willing to constantly have feedback from the teachers.

In the interviews with teachers, they shared that they should have better use of technology in their teaching by updating new IT techniques in order to promote learner autonomy in online classes. Also, they should make a careful plan for the whole course and for each lesson so that their learning tasks can be given in a more systematic way and in a greater variety of forms. Regarding the class size, they expected the school to reduce the number of students in each class so that they could manage and supervise them more effectively.

5. Conclusion

The covid-19 pandemic has caused various problems, but education has done its best to solve them. With the new mode of online teaching and learning, both teachers and students at Thuongmai University have made great attempts to improve their situation. Admittedly, promoting learner autonomy is a big challenge in online classes, and different strategies are used to deal with it. Results of the study show that IT tools are a great help.

Fifty students from the two English classes were selected to be the participants of the study, and most of them agreed that learner autonomy was of significant importance in online classes, and they were given opportunities to develop it. During the online classes, teachers had a mixed use of Zoom techniques and non-Zoom ones, such as Padlet, Quizizz, Google Docs, Mentimeter, and Canva. Tools were particularly used for activities they served best, namely brainstorming ideas, giving opinions, short answer questions, multiple-choice questions, collaborative writing, and peer checking. When each other tool was commonly used for a certain activity, Padlet was helpful in different ways. As for opinions on ways to promote learner autonomy in online classes, the majority of students had positive feedback, while some of them suggested that online classes with stricter requirements on self-study made them quite stressed and anxious. Responses from the two classes also showed differences. While students from Class 1 admitted that their teachers sometimes used some new IT tools, those from Class 2 reported that their teachers were able to use technologies flexibly and at high frequency. Learning activities in Class 2 also presented a greater variety than in Class 1; as for homework assignments, teachers from class employed mini-projects and collaborative writing, which are believed to strongly foster learner autonomy in their online classes.

The use of IT tools was reported to bring improvements in all aspects of learning in online classes. When students become more autonomous, their confidence, determination, and learning skills were also sharpened. Besides, soft skills like IT, presentation, teamwork, and critical thinking were strengthened when students' autonomy was enhanced. As for the better promotion of learner autonomy in online classes, some suggestions have been made, namely increasing teachers' roles, the use of IT tools, and frequent feedback given to students.

In spite of fruitful attempts, the limitations of the study cannot be avoided. Owing to the limited time and ability, the study focuses only on some IT tools used as a way to promote learner autonomy in online classes. The number of participants is only fifty, which may not ensure the reliability of the study findings. All these limitations leave a gap for further studies to fulfill, which can go for an investigation into ways to promote learner autonomy through the use of a greater variety of tools and with data collected from a larger number of participants.

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Biodata

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APPENDIX 1

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Promoting Learner Autonomy in Online Classes: A Study on First-year Non-English Major Students in Thuongmai University

Hello, everyone!

My name is Pham Thị Tuấn, a teacher of English from English Faculty, Thuongmai University. I'm conducting a research titled "**Promoting Learner Autonomy in Online Classes: A Study on First-year Non-English Major Students in Thuongmai University**". This questionnaire is designed to collect data for the research.

I would be very grateful if I could receive responses from you. I ensure that All the information you provide will be only used for the research and strictly kept confidential.

It should take about 15 minutes to complete this questionnaire. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at tuan.pt@tmu.edu.vn

Thank you for your time and support!

PART 1: PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Full name

2. Age

3. Faculty:

4. Class:

5. Name of English course:

6. How many English classes do you have per week?

7. How many teachers do you have for this English course?

8. Which course book do you use for this English course?

PART 2: OPINIONS ON LEARNER AUTONOMY

Please tick the answer that can show your understanding and perceptions of learner autonomy (1 = strongly disagree => 5 = strongly agree)

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
1. Learner autonomy means learning outside the classroom.					
2. Learner autonomy means that students can choose their own learning materials.					
3. Learner autonomy means that students can choose their learning methods.					
4. Learner autonomy means that students can make their own choices and decisions.					
5. Learner autonomy means that students can evaluate their own learning tasks.					
6. Learner autonomy means that students work individually.					
7. Learner autonomy means that students work in pairs and in groups.					
8. Learner autonomy means that students can learn without a teacher.					
9. Learner autonomy means that students learn with teachers' help and instructions.					
10. Learner autonomy is important, especially in online classes.					

PART 3: THE SITUATION OF ONLINE CLASSES FOR FIRST-YEAR NON-ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS

Please tick the answer that can show the general situation of your online classes (1 = strongly disagree => 5 = strongly agree)

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
During the online classes					
1. The teachers only teach things in the coursebook.					
2. The teachers give further exercises.					
3. The teachers use the Zoom techniques only.					
4. The teachers use a mix of Zoom techniques and other techniques.					
After the online classes					
1. The teachers only give exercises in the work book.					
2. The teachers give further practice exercises.					
3. The teachers ask to make mini-projects.					
4. The teachers use different techniques for giving and collecting homework.					

Please tick the answer that can show the use of technologies in your online classes (1 – always, 2 – often – 3 – sometimes – 4 – rarely – 5 – never)

Technologies	1	2	3	4	5
Zoom technologies					
1. Chatbox					
2. Breakout Rooms					
Other technologies					
1. Google Docs					
2. Padlet					
3. Mentimeter					
4. Quizzes					
5. Canva					
6. Others …. ……………………….					

Write the numbers 1-5 as for the frequency of using the technologies for learning activities in your online classes (1 – always, 2 – often – 3 – sometimes – 4 – rarely – 5 – never)

	Brainstorming ideas/ Giving opinions	MTC questions	Gap-filling	Short answer questions	Interview/ Discussion	Writing sentences	Writing paragraphs/ letters	Peer-checking
During the online classes								
1. Chatbox	5	2	3	10	1			
2. Breakout Rooms								
After the online classes								
1. Google Docs								
2. Padlet								
3. Mentimeter								
4. Quizzes								
5. Canva								
6. Others ………...								

PART 4: PERCEPTIONS ON THE USE OF IT TOOLS TO PROMOTE LEARNER AUTONOMY IN ONLINE CLASSES

Please tick the answer that can show your opinion for each statement. (1 = strongly disagree => 5 = strongly agree)

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
Opinions on activities during online classes					
1. The teachers talks most of the class time.					
2. Students talk most of the class time.					
3. The teachers encourage students to work independently.					
4. The teachers encourage students to work in pairs or groups.					
5. The teachers let Ss make their own choices and decisions.					

6. The teachers let Ss freely give their opinions.					
7. The teachers encourage Ss to think critically.					
8. The teachers let Ss peer check.					
Opinions on activities after online classes					
1. The teachers give homework assignments in different kinds (listening, speaking, reading, writing, mini-projects).					
2. The teachers give Ss clear instructions on how to do the homework.					
3. The teachers let Ss choose their own learning materials/ sources.					
4. The teachers let Ss choose their own ways to present their homework/ assignments.					
5. The teachers give Ss homework mostly as an individual work.					
6. The teachers give Ss homework mostly as pair work or group work.					
7. The teachers let Ss peer check their homework assignments.					
8. The teachers give constant help and feedback when Ss do their homework assignments.					

Please tick the answer that can show your opinion for each statement. (1 = strongly disagree => 5 = strongly agree)

Opinions on the use of IT tools in online classes to promote learner autonomy.					
1. The use of IT tools gives me opportunities to develop my learning independence.					
2. IT tools help me develop my language skills.					
3. The use of IT tools helps me develop my learning skills.					
4. The use of IT tools helps me develop my critical thinking.					
5. The use of IT tools helps me develop my IT skills.					
6. The use of IT tools helps me develop my teamwork skills.					
7. The use of IT tools helps me develop my presentation skills.					
8. The use of IT tools helps me develop my confidence and determination.					

APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Promoting Learner Autonomy in Online Classes: A Study on First-year Non-English Major Students in Thuongmai University

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – FOR TEACHER INTERVIEWEES

Please answer the questions below:

1. In your opinion, what is learner autonomy?

2. How important is learner autonomy in your online classes?

3. What IT tools do you use to develop learner autonomy in your online classes? How often do you use them?

4. Is the use of IT tools in developing learner autonomy a big challenge to you? Why (not)?

5. Did you often give feedback to students in your online English classes? Why (not)?

6. What do you think about the benefits of the use of IT tools in terms of promoting learner autonomy in your online classes? Why?

Opinions
1. The use of IT tools gives me opportunities to develop my learning independence.
2. IT tools help me develop my language skills.
3. The use of IT tools helps me develop my learning skills.
4. The use of IT tools helps me develop my critical thinking.
5. The use of IT tools helps me develop my IT skills.
6. The use of IT tools helps me develop my teamwork skills.
7. The use of IT tools helps me develop my presentation skills.
8. The use of IT tools helps me develop my confidence and determination.

7. What will you do to promote the learner autonomy in your online English classes in the future?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – FOR STUDENT INTERVIEWEES

Please answer the questions below:

1. How many English online classes do you have per week?

2. Do you think learner autonomy is important in your online English classes? How is learner autonomy promoted in your online English classes

3. What IT tools are used in your online English classes? Please state how frequently they are used, for what they are used and why

4. What do you think about the benefits of the use of IT tools in terms of promoting learner autonomy in your online classes? Why?

Opinions
1. The use of IT tools gives me opportunities to develop my learning independence.
2. IT tools help me develop my language skills.
3. The use of IT tools helps me develop my learning skills.
4. The use of IT tools helps me develop my critical thinking.
5. The use of IT tools helps me develop my IT skills.
6. The use of IT tools helps me develop my teamwork skills.
7. The use of IT tools helps me develop my presentation skills.
8. The use of IT tools helps me develop my confidence and determination.

5. What do you expect from the teachers to increase learner autonomy in the future?

Cultural Groups of Words in EFL Coursebooks and Pedagogical Implications

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ABSTRACT

Vocabulary seems to be a high mountain to climb for language learners. Cultural words are among the enormous range of vocabulary on diverse topics. As far as this study is concerned, the structure and meaning of cultural groups of words in selected EFL course books are explained and analyzed; after that, pedagogical implications are recommended for learning these words. The key research methods include describing and analyzing the structure and meaning of cultural words in EFL coursebooks. Findings revealed that cultural words in selected EFL coursebooks possessed several distinctive features of structure and meaning. At the end of the study, several pedagogical implications in online English teaching and learning were proposed.

1. Introduction

English vocabulary is a focus for learners during acquiring the language. Cultural words are among the common wide range of vocabulary to memorize frequently. This special type of word needs proper concern by both language teachers and learners. It can be recognized that there have not been many studies conducted on the structure and meaning of English cultural words. Hence, within the research paper, the authors would like to describe and analyze this issue of English cultural words from selected EFL coursebooks used for students at Hanoi National University of Education. After that, appropriate pedagogical implications are proposed in English vocabulary teaching and learning.

Significance of the study

Studies revealed that vocabulary or ESP vocabulary had been a focus of linguistics research so far. Regarding cultural words in EFL course books, the topic has been of concern to several authors. However, cultural words in EFL course books in relationship with suggested online activities to learn this special type of vocabulary, to some extent, are still not researched much. Therefore, our research is going to contribute to clarifying the topic and discussing the theoretical framework relating to cultural words in EFL course books and pedagogical implications in the current context of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Literature review

2.1. Definition of cultural words

There appear to be several definitions of cultural words by authors. Wiezbicka (1997:5) stated that, in a sense, it might seem obvious that words with special, culture-specific meanings reflect and pass on not only ways of living characteristics of a given society but also ways of

thinking. She considered cultural keywords extremely vital and revealed words in a certain culture (Wiezbicka, 1997, 15-16). Li, Ran & Xia (2010) named cultural words as words with image culture and explained that the words are the results of long-lasting history and culture of tribes, closely associated with traditional legends or ancestors' worship.

To determine the criteria to define cultural words, Wierzbicka (1997:16) confirmed that the words are of common vocabulary, frequently used on a typical semantic aspect, and finally put in the central position of a particular complete phrase. These criteria are useful for authors to determine cultural words among diverse words used in speaking and writing.

In terms of forms of cultural words, Wierzbicka (1997:17) said that cultural words were not only single words but also common collocations, set phrases, grammatical constructions, proverbs, and so on. Clearly, cultural vocabulary is expressed in a variety of forms. These forms of cultural words are found in such materials as EFL course books for language learners.

2.2. Classification of cultural words

Cultural words have been classified by many researchers. Here are several ways to categorize this special type of word.

To start with, Newmark (1988:94) divided cultural words into five smaller types, as follows: (1) ecology covers flora, fauna, wind, valley, and mountains; (2) material culture or artifact covers food, cloth, housing, and city, transportation; (3) social culture covers work and leisure; (4) organization covers customs, activities, procedures, political and administrative concepts, religion, arts, and (5) gestures and habits.

Alonso & Ponte (2015) proposed the following classification for cultural words, specifically, into 12 types.

Table 1.

Classification of cultural words

Everyday living	Food, working, school, holidays, leisure activities, clothes, housing
Cultural heritage	Famous monuments and people, literature, TV shows, movies, music.
National identity	Languages, religions, nationality, history, humour, art and politics from different cultures.
Popular culture	Rites, traditions, celebrations, festivals, social conventions, dances, discos, religious observances and values, and types of music, among others.
Society	Living standards, classes, urban tribes, minorities, family structures, regional cultures, and subcultures.
Geography	Countries, continents, cities, towns, streets.
Stereotypes	Typical features attributed to certain cultures.
Language	Borrowings, informal register, idioms, collocations.
Worldwide issues	Political, economic, social and environmental issues.
Institutions and organization	Official institutions and organizations from different countries.
Varieties	Words from other varieties of English.
Social interaction	Greetings, apologies, politeness.

As far as this research is concerned, the authors determine cultural words based on the second way of classification in the study done by Alonso & Ponte (2015) since it is in detail with clarity.

2.3. Meaning of cultural words

The topic of the meaning of cultural words has been so far discussed widespread worldwide. A variety of authors possess both similar and different viewpoints. Cultural words are among a common range of words. The meaning of cultural words has been mentioned in several works when culture is a significant factor in the words.

Smirnitsky stated that the meaning of words is the natural reflection of objects, phenomena, or relationships in awareness (or a psychological composition similar in nature, formed on the reflection of separated elements in reality) in the structure of words in terms of their inner side. (Nguyen, 2018, 21)

Ullman (1967) explained the meaning of a word is the relation between the sound of the word and its content of definition. He drew a triangle of meaning, in which he focused on making a distinction between linguists, logicians, and psychologists. He asserted that it should not be considered the same between viewpoints, the position of linguists with which of logicians and psychologists.

Lyons (1995) changed the triangle of meaning into one called the "triangle of signification" with three tops, that is, signal, definition, and things signified. He assumed that the content of meaning definition consisted of numerous parts distinguished in functions and contents, and it is necessary to distinguish different types of meaning.

Regarding the meaning of selected cultural words, there witnessed many research papers. In *Semantics, culture, and cognition – universal human concepts in culture-specific configurations,* Wiezbicka (1992) researched different dimensions of psychology, emotion, and ethics by comparing meanings of couples of words in English and Russian, that is, *soul, memory, and heart; fate and destiny; courage, bravery, risk,* and so on. Additionally, Wiezbicka figured out and contrasted the meanings of a few cultural keywords in Anglo English, including *privacy*, *personal autonomy*, *fairness*, *mind, reason*, *sense*, *evidence*, *experience* (Wiezbicka, 2006, 2010), Australian English: *bloody*, *bullshit*, *whinge*, *dob in* (Wiezbicka, 1997, 2002), Russian: *duša (*soul*)*, *sud'ba* (fate), *toska* (thirst), *iskrennost'* (genuineness), *pravda* (truth), *obščenie* (communication) and *avos'* (possible) (Wiezbicka, 1997, 2002, 2010), Polish: *przykro* (annoyingly), *rodzina* (family), *wolność* (freedom) (Wiezbicka, 1997, 2001). Importantly, the principles for semantics analysis practiced by Wiezbicka were also used in analyzing cultural keywords.

Levisen (2012) continued the direction of Wiezbicka's research on several cultural keywords. In detail, in *Cultural Semantics and Social Cognition – A Case Study on the Danish Universe of Meaning*, he analyzed systematically, from the perspectives of semantics and national pragmatics, a few Danish cultural keywords, that is, *hygge* (warmth)*, tryghed* (security)*, lykkelig* (happiness)*,* verb *synes* (seem) *và mener* (think), etc. in the light of theoretical framework of Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) (Goddard and Wiezbicka, 1994, 2002).

Nguyen (2018) had an overview of the meaning of words in the relationship with culture in Vietnamese and international studies, compared cultural and lexical semantics of Vietnamese and English cultural keywords, and shaped a framework to compare cultural keywords. More specifically, her thesis compared two groups: the semantics of cultural keywords with specific references and the semantics of cultural keywords with non-specific references between Vietnamese and English; as well, she revealed the similarities and differences in the linguistics (characteristics of semantics) and culture (characteristics of social life, perceptions, thinking...) between two cultural keywords groups of Vietnamese and English community. Two groups of

cultural words were mentioned, that is, the group with real referential things (*land, water, house, man*) and another group without real referential things (*dragon, ghost, fairy*).

Le (2017:15) clarified the role functions and meaning of four cultural keywords: *fate – hometown – face – soul* in Vietnamese people's awareness and action in comparison with English and Russian. She discussed several cognitive features of Vietnamese people accompanied by similarities and differences between Vietnamese and English, Russian. The writer consulted typical linguistic materials (Vietnamese, English, and Russian) with sociology survey data to figure out conceptions used by Vietnamese for painting the world picture in words that differed from other languages during expressing the same conception.

2.4. Vocabulary in EFL course books and its cultural components

Vocabulary is considered the key to success in mastering four skills of a language. It was stated that learners with a limited vocabulary range found more difficulties in L2 reading and writing (Hu and Nation, 2000). Course books or textbooks are the main tools for language teachers to select vocabulary and activities for lessons in order to attract learners' engagement (Criado and Sanchez, 2012).

Vocabulary has a strong connection with the culture of different countries in the form and meaning as it reflects the life of the whole community (Wiezbicka, 1997; Grossberg and Morris, 2005). CEFR (2001) explained that vocabulary was partially influenced by the cultural characteristics of the community where the speaker was living. Liddicoat and Scarino (2013:28) owned a comparatively similar idea that words were more noticeably affected by culture and code of cultural context.

The authors found a few research conducted several years ago in terms of cultural words in EFL textbooks. Georgiveska (2000) analyzed two textbooks, one for secondary EFL students in Macedonia, the other is Headway (Intermediate) which was internationally learned. Findings showed that gaps in socio-cultural vocabulary were discovered, and the meaning of words related to culture was not explained specifically. Another research conducted by Mahmood, Asghar, and Hussain (2012) analyzed an ELT textbook quantitatively in Pakistan. The research aimed at figuring out the predominant culture in the textbook and references the native culture of learners. They confirmed that the target culture should be significantly concerned within the textbook, and international culture should not be the major focus.

Alonso & Ponte (2015), in *An analysis of Cultural Vocabulary in ELT textbook,* deeply investigated cultural words in two ELT textbooks of two levels which were used for teaching in Spain (that is, *Aspire – Upper Intermediate* and *English Alive 4*). The range of cultural words was taken out from the sections of vocabulary and reading comprehension, classified based on the list of cultural forms (Byram & Morgan, 1994; CEFR, 2001). Findings revealed that the number of cultural words in the two ELT textbooks was not balanced; in *English Alive 4*, cultural vocabulary on cultural heritage and geography outnumbered the words on other topics; in *Aspire – Upper-Intermediate*, words on social interaction and popular culture were many more counted. The research broadens the knowledge of cultural words in ELT coursebooks.

2.5 Research questions

Within this brief study, the writers are going to answer the following research questions:

(1) What is the structure and meaning of cultural words in the coursebook Real Life (upper-intermediate)?
(2) What are the pedagogical implications of learning English cultural words?

3. Methods

3.1. Pedagogical Setting

The authors described and analyzed the structure and meaning of cultural groups of words in the coursebook Real Life (upper-intermediate), which is currently used for 2nd-year English majors at the Faculty of English

Table 2.

Description of the coursebook *Real Life (upper-intermediate)*

Coursebook:	Cunningham S.& ByGrave J. (2011). Real life (upper-intermediate). Pearson Education Limited.
Number of units:	10
Sections in each unit:	6 sections: Grammar, Vocabulary, Reading, Listening, Speaking, Writing
Topics for 10 units:	(1) Going to extremes, (2) Living together, (3) Global network, (4) Happy and successful, (5) Pop culture, (6) Something different, (7) Body and mind, (8) Consumer society, (9) Right and Wrong, (10) Life changes

After that, the writers proposed appropriate pedagogical implications of online teaching and learning English cultural groups of words from the coursebook.

3.2. Design of the Study

The study was carried out based on such methods as collecting, describing, and analyzing cultural words from the coursebook Real Life (upper-intermediate) to figure out the structure and meaning of this special type of vocabulary.

3.3. Data collection & analysis

The authors took vocabulary words out from the coursebook Real Life (upper-intermediate), then analyzed the structure and meaning of these special words based on certain theoretical frameworks (definitions and classification of cultural words as mentioned above in the Literature review). Cultural characteristics of diverse countries were revealed through the procedure.

4. Findings and discussion

The cultural words were collected from the coursebook Real Life (upper-intermediate). They belonged to different cultural groups, including proper nouns, collocations, and idioms/ proverbs. In terms of structure or meaning, findings on cultural words in EFL course books contribute to clarifying and correctly comprehending this special type of words in English. Language learners are advised to be careful while managing to figure out English cultural words so as not to misunderstand them from the perspective of culture.

4.1. Structure of cultural words in EFL course books

Proper nouns

The authors found a large number of cultural words with the structure of proper nouns. This group of cultural words is easily recognized for their capitalized first letters. Some examples are below:

They can be famous names (*Bill Gates*), names of continents (*America*), names of countries (*the UK*), nationalities (*Korean*), names of a state (*Hawaii*), names of cities (*Budapest*), names of a prize in cinema (*Oscar*) or sports (*the World Cup*).

Collocations

The collocations that the writers found in the coursebook are grouped into several types: Verb + Noun, Verb + Preposition + Noun, Verb + Noun (object) + Preposition + V_ing, Verb + Adverb, Adjective + Preposition + V_ing, Adjective + Noun. Thus, the structures of English collocations are diverse, requiring learners' thorough understanding and using so that meaning is not misunderstood.

Some examples can be found in the coursebook as follows: *play a gangster, score the winning goal, get on with her parents, suffer from exhaustion, expect her to help with household jobs, behave reasonably, be desperate to move to a place of my own.*

Idioms/ Proverbs

This group of cultural words is of limited number within the course books. However, it does not mean that the group rarely appears in the book. Several idioms/ proverbs were seen in Real Life (upper-intermediate). The authors are interested in this type of cultural word for its meaningful inner culture. Hereinafter are a few examples:

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

Success is often about being in the right place at the right time.

From preliminary research, the authors found such structure of cultural words in the coursebook chosen. The very first group of proper nouns accounted for the largest number of cultural words from the coursebook. The second group of collocations could be seen with different combinations using nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions. The third group of idioms/ proverbs is of a smaller number though it is typical in terms of culture included in each idiom or proverb.

4.2. Meaning of cultural words in EFL course books

As far as the cultural words from the coursebook were mentioned above, meaning features are revealed and analyzed in terms of cultural perspective.

Proper nouns

This subtype of cultural words taken out from the coursebook can be easily comprehended in meaning as they exactly mean certain known people, continents, states, nationalities, cities, places, or prizes. It can be understood in Vietnamese meanings as follows:

*Bill Gates (*Bill Gates*), America* (châu Mĩ), *the U.K* (Vương quốc Anh), *Korean* (người Hàn Quốc, tiếng Hàn), *Hawaii* (Hawaii), *Budapest* (Budapest), *Oscar* (Oscar)*, the World Cup* (Giải vô địch thế giới).

Collocations

The meaning of collocations should be carefully investigated based on the cultural context and structures of the collocations so that readers understand them clearly in Vietnamese.

For example: *play a gangster* (đóng vai xã hội đen)*, score the winning goal* (ghi bàn quyết định chiến thắng)*, get on with her parents* (hòa hợp với bố mẹ cô ấy)*, suffer from exhaustion* (bị kiệt sức)*, expect her to help with household jobs* (mong cô ấy giúp làm việc nhà),

behave reasonably (cư xử phù hợp)*, be desperate to move to a place of my own* (trở nên tuyệt vọng đến mức chuyển đến nơi ở riêng).

Above are suggested translations for selected English collocations in the coursebook. Readers are completely able to possess their own way of figuring out the collocations, provided that they understand the collocations well in the appropriate context.

Idioms/ proverbs

It is ideal to find comparatively equivalent idioms/ proverbs in Vietnamese for the English ones. In case it is quite hard to find one, readers should manage to understand the meaning of the idioms/ proverbs to avoid misunderstanding.

For example:

Beauty is in the eye of beholder. (Vẻ đẹp là ở trong mắt người xem.)

Success is often about being in the right place at the right time. (Thành công thường là ở đúng nơi vào đúng thời điểm.)

It can be seen obviously that understanding different groups of cultural words needs sufficient knowledge of culture. The group of proper nouns is the most understandable as the names themselves are typical for people, places, events, and many other aspects of life all over the world. The other groups, including collocations and idioms/ proverbs, require more effort and analysis for their more complicated structure and carefulness to avoid misunderstanding during figuring out the meaning in the context.

In comparison with results from previous studies, it was discovered cultural words in the EFL coursebook mentioned in this research paper were analyzed for larger groups, including proper nouns, collocations, and idioms/ proverbs. Previous studies were mainly related to certain groups of vocabulary, such as words on clothes, plants, and flowers. The words in these papers were discussed with the specific structure of single, compound, complex words and phrases.

Regarding meanings of cultural words, it could be said that in previous studies, specific Vietnamese word groups of diverse cultural topics such as food, animals, and colors were clarified in contrast with such words in other languages, including English, French, and Russian. Within this piece of writing, the authors did not contrast the meaning of such English cultural groups of words found in the EFL coursebook; they managed to find equivalent vocabulary and phrases in Vietnamese with the notice of cultures in two different countries.

Hereinafter are selected works on structure and meanings of certain cultural groups of words that the authors made effort to find from linguistic journals, books and Ph.D thesis. Some names can be counted: Nguyễn Chi Lê (2009), Đặng Ngọc Lệ (2013), Phạm Thị Châu Pha

& Trần Thị Phương Lý (2016), Nguyễn Thị Thu Hà (2016)*,* Trương Thị Mai (2016)*,*

Lê Thị Hồng Nga (2014), Nguyễn Văn Dũng (2014), Vũ Thị Thắng (2014), Trần Minh

Hùng (2018)*,* Vũ Thị Ngọc Minh (2014), Nguyễn Thị Hương Lan (2018)*,* Vũ Đức

Nghiệu (2010), Nguyễn Thị Bích Hợp (2015), Hà Thùy Dương (2020), Nguyễn Thị Thủy Chung (2021), Võ Thị Mỹ Hạnh (2021).

4.3. Research questions:

To answer research question 1 (*What is the structure and meaning of cultural words in the coursebook Real Life (upper-intermediate)?*), findings show that cultural words found in the

coursebook belong to such structure as proper nouns, collocations, and idioms/ proverbs. The majority of the cultural words are in the form of proper nouns (that is, famous names, places, events, etc.), which appear in nearly every session in the coursebook. In terms of meaning, learners and readers are required to possess cultural knowledge to comprehend these groups of cultural words, especially the second and third groups, that is, collocations and idioms/ proverbs. It is advised to find equivalent expressions in Vietnamese to figure out such collocations and idioms/ proverbs; moreover, context is also a factor to note in this case.

Research question 2 (*What are the pedagogical implications of learning English cultural words?*) is a part of the study which is suggested based on the theories and findings. The authors would like to mention the implications of online teaching and learning vocabulary, including cultural words, within this study.

Here are suggested Quizlet, Quizizz and Google Form, Blooket, Wordwall vocabulary tasks that can be used in English vocabulary teaching and learning:

The first activity suggested is associated with the Quizlet app. The teacher-designed tasks on the appropriate vocabulary topic, such as topics in the coursebook on the Quizlet app. Different tasks, including Flashcards, Learn, Write, Spell, Test, Match, Gravity, are created with selected words on the topic together with images. Learners memorize new words by accomplishing all the online tasks.
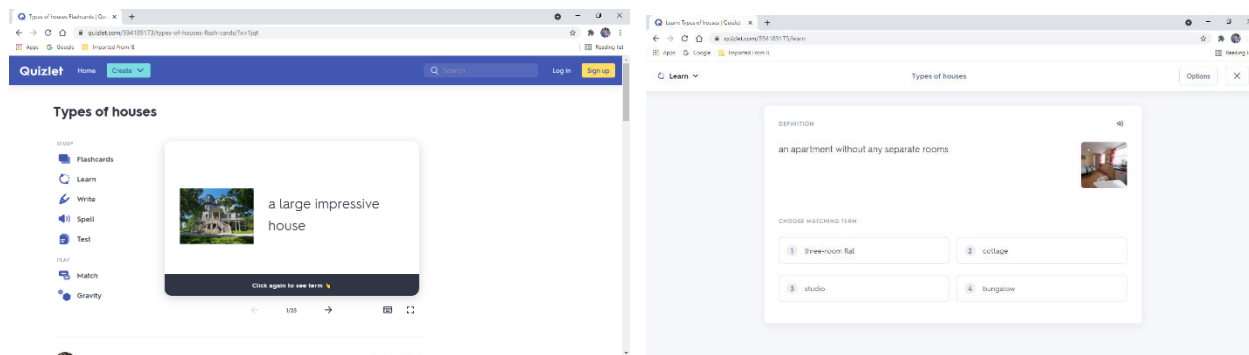

Image 1. Vocabulary task on Quizlet app

The second type of online app for designing vocabulary tasks is Quizizz. This app is beneficial for a number of subjects, including English. It has been widely used so far with online teaching and learning in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The instructor designs appropriate online vocabulary tasks on the chosen topic in the coursebook, such as multiple-choice, gap filling, and True/ False questions, and add colorful pictures or videos to make the tasks more attractive. After that, the instructor is able to choose indirect or instructor-led playing for the vocabulary games that he has created before class. For the first time playing Quizizz games, students were completely engaged in the activity with joy and excitement. The player gets a score at the end of the game and is ranked in the group of classmates, which motivates the students to get higher and higher scores.
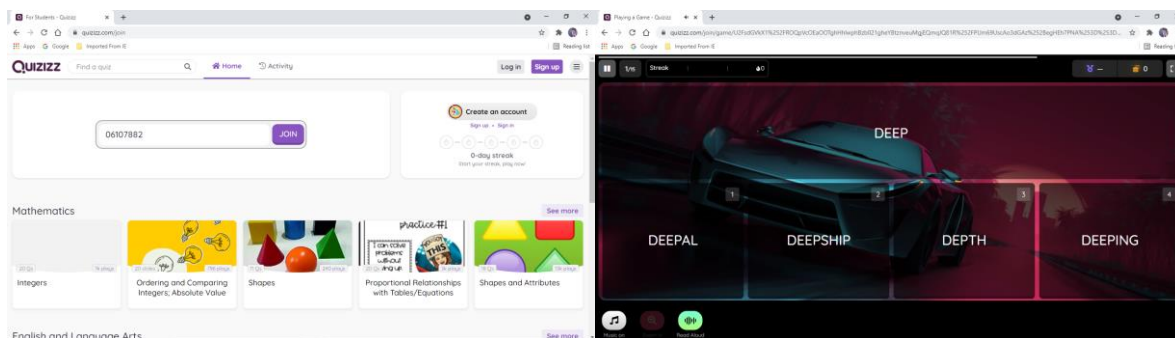
Image 2. Vocabulary task on Quizizz app

The third online app to suggest is Google Form. This app has been taken advantage of for the past few years by a variety of people, including teachers and researchers. It has been popularly used for its convenience. Diverse tasks are created on Google Form, such as multiple-choice, gap-filling, text adding, video attaching, and image adding. It enables designers to add answers to questions, scores for correct responses, and to auto-grade, the responses after students have finished the tasks. Online vocabulary tasks on Google Form used to be the first choice for language teachers some years ago.

At present, language teachers still favor this Google app in designing online tasks and tests.
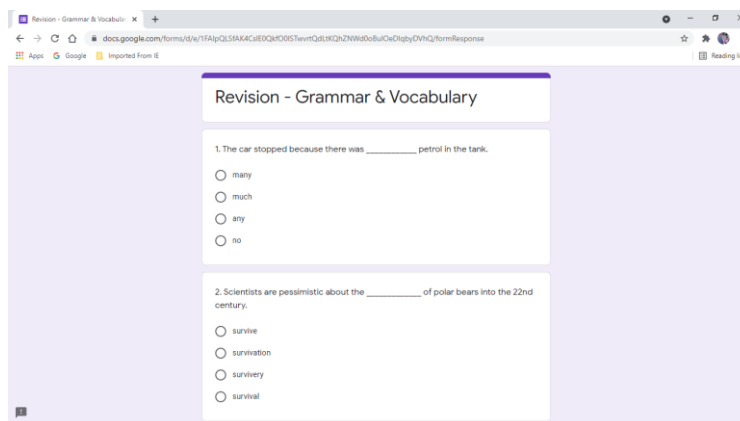

Image 3. Vocabulary tasks on the Google Form app

The fourth suggestion is the Blooket app. This app has been used much recently by teachers and students with a variety of game modes applied for the same question set, such as Gold Quest, Fishing Frenzy, Crypto Hack, and Blook Rush, which motivates the students to play and learn at the same time. Learners are extremely interested in the game without recognizing that it is, in fact, a task to learn. Language teachers are able to search for English vocabulary games on diverse topics available online and direct the game for a limited time. They can also design questions for the game which are appropriate for the lectures.
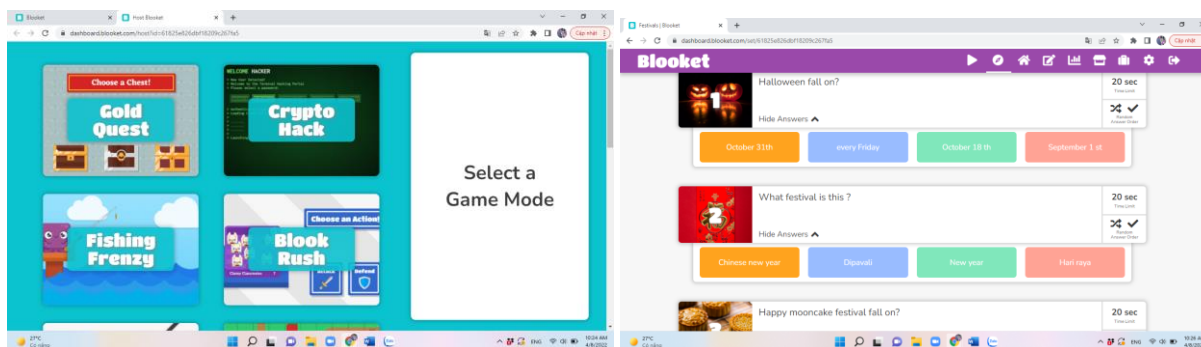
Image 4. Vocabulary tasks on Blooket.com

The fifth app to utilize for memorizing vocabulary is Wordwall. This app is designed for vocabulary games only. For the same set of questions, players have the right to choose different ways to play, as you can see in the photos. With this game, learners are able to play without the control of the teacher. The game is normally designed with colorful images; thus, it stimulates the learners a lot while playing. Players can get bonus points after finishing answering the questions, which makes the learners happy.
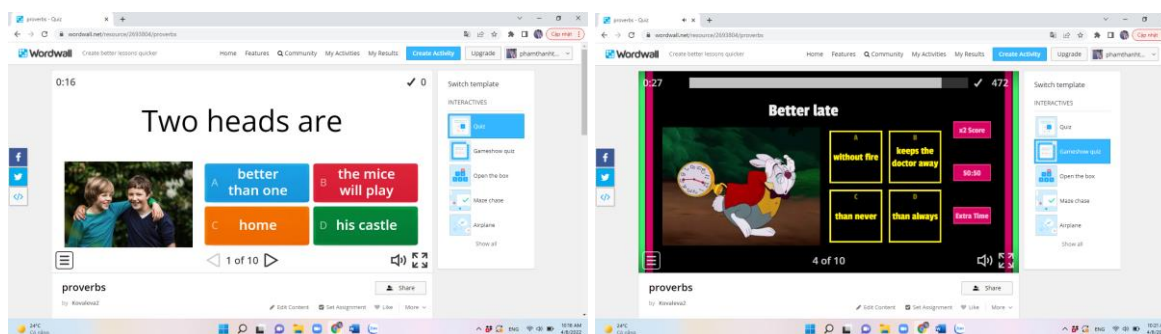

Image 5. Vocabulary tasks on the Wordwall app

5. Conclusion

From the above findings, obviously, cultural words found in the coursebook Real Life (upper-intermediate) possess typical features in terms of structure and meaning. These features should be cared about by readers so that they understand the cultural words thoroughly and rightly. Pedagogical implications in online language teaching and learning are also proposed for educators, teachers, learners, and researchers who may concern.

For the limited scope of the study, the authors selected cultural words from the coursebook *Real Life (upper-intermediate)* for analysis only. For further research, the writers are expected to extend the scope to other EFL coursebooks being used by Vietnamese students.

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