Perceptions of Postgraduates Towards Using Citation Management Software in Academic Writing: A Case Study in a Vietnamese University

Nguyen Hai Linh[1*], Nguyen Thi Luong[1], Pham Thuy Quynh[2], Le Duc Hanh[2]

[1] FPT Polytechnic College, FPT University, Ha Noi, Vietnam
[2] Hanoi University of Industry, Ha Noi, Vietnam
[*]Corresponding author's email: linhnh80@fpt.edu.vn
[*] https://orcid.org/0009-0006-8760-0755
https://doi.org/10.54855/paic.2463

Received: 26/09/2024 Revision: 24/10/2024 Accepted: 25/10/2024 Online: 01/11/2024

ABSTRACT

Citation management software (CMS), especially Mendeley, has been suggested for researchers to automatically manage bibliographic information thanks to its complementary version with significant space for data storage. However, little research has been conducted regarding the applicability of Mendeley to the academic writing of postgraduates, especially in Vietnam. This study examined postgraduates' perspectives toward utilizing Mendeley in academic writing during their language master's programs at a public university in Vietnam using a mixed method. Data was collected through pre- and post-survey questionnaires of 45 postgraduates majoring in foreign languages and in-depth interviews for a thorough investigation. The findings indicated that Mendeley enhanced the participants' research productivity and quality, but technological issues and a lack of training limit its use. Also, the study recommended that the institution organize workshops, seminars, and fundamental training courses in Mendeley for postgraduates to use it efficiently.

Keywords: citation management software, Mendeley, academic writing, perception, bibliographic information

Introduction

In recent years, research activities and the publication of research articles have remarkably increased, amplifying the demand for efficient technology-driven tools that can help researchers manage the growing volume of research literature. Willett (2013) indicated that citation plays a significant role in academic research since it gives credit to the original sources and allows readers to verify the information. Additionally, citation is crucial for establishing a credible and reliable scholarly foundation.

However, surveys of Asian students conducted by Keck (2014) and Shi (2006) revealed that students receive limited instruction in citation. This lack of knowledge and awareness about citation rules results in plagiarism among students, and particularly postgraduates, in their academic works. With the growing number of online scholarly resources, researchers are

CITATION | Nguyen, H. L., Nguyen, T. L., Pham, T. Q., & Le, D. H. (2024). Perceptions of Postgraduates Towards Using Citation Management Software in Academic Writing: A Case Study in a Vietnamese University. *Proceedings of the AsiaCALL International Conference*, 6, 35-53. ISSN: 2833-6836, ISBN: 979-8-9870112-6-3. DOI: https://doi.org/10.54855/paic.2463

advised to utilize citation management software to store, organize, and retrieve bibliographic information automatically and properly for their research papers and other academic works (Hensley, 2011).

Zhang (2012) pointed out the four most widely used citation management tools, including Endnote, Zotero, Connotea, and Mendeley, which enable scholars to tackle sophisticated and difficult-to-use reference styles such as APA, MLA, and Chicago. Among them, Mendeley has become increasingly popular among researchers worldwide due to its powerful features that help them efficiently manage and organize their sources while writing research articles. However, adopting and utilizing these tools may vary across disciplines and research cultures.

Despite Mendeley's effectiveness in managing citations, there has been little research on its use in Vietnam. Therefore, this study was conducted to fill the gap by exploring Vietnamese postgraduates' perspectives of utilizing this technology in their academic writing.

Literature review

Definition of citation in academic writing

A citation is a method of providing credit to those whose creative and intellectual works were used to assist scholars' study and academic writing, whether those are books, interviews, documents, websites, poems, or paintings (Vijai, Natarajan & Elayaraja, 2019). It is also possible to track down specific sources and prevent plagiarism. Based on the citation, readers are able to confirm the researcher's work or simply explore it further. Therefore, a proper citation should never mislead readers. The name of the author, the date, the name of the publisher, the name of the journal, or a DOI (Digital Object Identifier) are usually included in a citation.

Citation is not only a way of acknowledging other researchers' works but also of validating the author's knowledge statements. Berkenkotter and Huckin (2016) demonstrated the importance of citations by naming them the weapons scholars used to convert previous literature in the field to their advantage in the article "You are what you cite".

Popular citation styles

The researcher's citation format is determined by the lecturer, the journal, or the publisher, if a manuscript is being submitted. Each field, though, often employs one or two styles. The table below shows the specific citation styles used in different aspects:

Table 1.

Some specific citation styles used in different aspects

Fields	***Citation styles***	**Fields**	***Citation styles***
Anthropology	*Chicago*	Law & Legal studies	*Bluebook, Maroonbook or ALWD*
Art History	*Chicago or Turabian*	Linguistics	*APA, MLA or LSA*
Arts Management	*Chicago*	Literature	*MLA*
Biology	*CSE*	Mathematics	*AMS*
Business	*APA, Chicago or Harvard*	Medicine	*AMA, NLM*
Chemistry	*ACS*	Music	*Turabian or Chicago*
Communications	*MLA*	Philosophy	*MLA or Chicago*
Computing Science	*Chicago*	Physics	*AIP,*
Criminology	*APA or Chicago*	Political Science	*APSA*
Education	*APA*	Psychology	*APA*
History	*Chicago or Turabian*	Religion	*MLA or Chicago*
International Studies	*APA, APSA, or Chicago*	Sociology	*APA*
Journalism	*AP or APA*	Theater	*MLA or Chicago*

Source: *https://subjectguides.library.american.edu/c.php?g=175008&p=1154150*

In spite of some differences among these citation styles, they all have similar basic goals: identify and credit the sources and provide readers with specific information so they can access these sources on their own.

Of all citation styles, Lipson (2011) pointed out three main ones, including:

- Chicago (or Turabian), used in many disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.

- MLA (Modern Language Association), used in humanities

- APA (American Psychological Association), used in Social Sciences, Education and Engineering

Here are some typical examples of using these three styles in citing (with known authors).

Table 2.

Some typical examples of using three styles above in citing

Citation style	Material type	In-text citation	Bibliography
APA	A book	(Sapolsky, 2017)	Sapolsky, R. M. (2017). *Behave: The biology of humans at our best and worst.* Penguin Books.
MLA	A book	(Wordsworth 263)	Wordsworth, William. *Lyrical Ballads*. London: Oxford U.P., 1967. Print.
Chicago	A book	(Pollan 2006, 99–100)	Pollan, Michael. 2006. The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals. New York: Penguin.

Common APA errors

Dealing with citations when writing academic writing is not a simple task, no matter what style it belongs to. Researchers frequently use the American Psychological Association (APA) style when writing research papers, among all of the citation styles mentioned in the previous section. However, many authors may struggle with this style for certain reasons, including common errors in APA in-text citations and reference lists.

Reference Lists

Freysteinson, Krepper, and Mellott (2015) pointed out four common APA errors in relation to reference lists, including capitalization, italics, ampersands, and digital object identifiers (DOIs).

The most prevalent inaccuracy on reference lists is capitalization, with only the initial word of the article title, book title, subtitle, and proper names capitalized. An example of correct capitalization is shown below.

> Lipson, C. (2011). *Cite right: a quick guide to citation styles - MLA, APA, Chicago, the sciences, professions, and more.* University of Chicago Press.

Italics are employed to ensure that each entry contains a book, dissertation, or report title that is italicized, as well as the journal volume number that is italicized but not the issue number. However, if the journal is paginated independently for each issue, the issue number appears in parentheses following the volume number, according to APA-2010. Below is an instance of accurate italics.

> Zhang, Y. (2012). Comparison of select reference management tools. *Medical Reference Services Quarterly*, *31*(1), 45–60.

Ampersands, which "&" symbolizes, are used to replace the word "and" in reference lists. When two to seven writers are listed in a journal or book, an ampersand is added before the last author's name. However, an ampersand is absent when there are more than seven authors on a publication. Instead, only the first six writers' names are displayed, followed by a comma, three ellipsis points with a space between each ellipsis, and then the final author's name (APA, 2010). The correct example of ampersands is indicated below.

> Freysteinson, W. M., Krepper, R., & Mellott, S. (2015). The Language of Scholarship: How to rapidly Locate and Avoid Common APA Errors. *The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing*, *46*(10), 436–438.

A DOI, which is a unique identification and "a path to the article's location on the Internet" (Freysteinson, Krepper, & Mellott, 2015, p. 437), is often assigned to journal articles. The URL of the journal website homepage can be used for articles that do not have a DOI (APA, 2010). Here is an example of the DOI number.

> Freysteinson, W. M., Krepper, R., & Mellott, S. (2015). The Language of Scholarship: How to rapidly Locate and Avoid Common APA Errors. *The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing, 46*(10), 436-438. **doi:10.3928/00220124-20150918-14**

Citations Within The Text

When two to five writers are cited in the publication for the first time, the ampersand symbol "&" is used once the authors are cited within parentheses. Nevertheless, when the surnames of the authors come up in the text's narrative, the word "and" is added before the final author's name. Although the authors' initials are used in the reference list, only their surnames are used in the text. Here are accurate examples.

> *Authors' names in parentheses:* It is easy for readers to achieve literacy in primary school (**Pretorius & Machet**, 2004).
>
> *Authors' names in the text narrative*: **Pretorius and Machet** (2004) state that it is easy for readers to achieve literacy in primary school.

The abbreviation "et al." is used in certain author citations within the text. All writers' last names are cited in works by one to five authors at the first mention in the text. The first author's last name followed by "et al." is used for successive citations of three to five authors. The first author's name and "et al." appear at the beginning and throughout the text to credit work by six or more authors. When there are two authors on a publication, both names are always mentioned throughout the text (APA, 2010).

> *Successive citations of three to five authors*: **Freysteinson et al.** (2015) stated that a large number of citation errors can be avoided by scanning the text.
>
> *Each citation of more than five authors:* **Nguyen et al.** (2023) claims an optimal method exists.

Quotations of less than 40 words are enclosed in quotation marks, followed in parentheses by the author(s) name(s), publication year, and page number (marked by the abbreviation "p."). The sentence punctuation mark (period) comes after the author citation's closing parenthesis. A freestanding block of text contains quotations of more than 40 words. The page number on which the quotation occurs in the original book is required for all quotations. An example is indicated below.

> *Less than 40-word citation*: "a path to the article's location on the Internet" (Freysteinson, Krepper, & Mellott, 2015, p. 437)

Citation management software (CMS) and its benefits

References and citations are obligatory parts of academic writing for every researcher and scholar. Software provides greater flexibility and efficiency for references and citations, even though they can be managed manually. According to Zhang (2012), citation management software (CMS) is defined as application software used to assist researchers and authors in

managing bibliographic content, such as collecting and exploiting bibliographic citations for research papers, articles, or other publications.

In addition, there is another definition of citation management software that "enables an author to build a library of references by entering the details of each reference in a structured format" (Parabhoi, Seth, & Pathy, 2017). The software typically includes tools for categorizing reference collections using tags or "folders," and it can produce citations, bibliographies, or references in several different referencing styles.

There are a variety of reference management tools available. Some are standalone desktop applications, while others are web-based services or even browser add-ons. In spite of that, CMS is critical and widely used by researchers for its multiple benefits. Here are a few of the most significant benefits of CMS tools, according to Zhang (2012):

Accessing

CMS functions both online and offline. Some standalone programs are downloaded and installed on computers. Their libraries are saved on computers. Therefore, users can work even when there is no Internet connection. As long as there is an Internet connection, some web-based software enables users to access it from anywhere at any time.

Collecting

There are several ways to add references to the libraries in CMS. Users can directly import references using an appropriate import filter from an online database. Thanks to the proper connection file and a remote database, researchers can conduct a desktop search of the database. Some CMSs have built-in search engines that enable users to conduct searches not only in the nearby reference library but also in distant online databases and then download the results right into the library. If a PDF file or folder of PDFs is embedded with a Digital Object Identifier (DOI), researchers can use it to create a reference by importing PDFs into the library. The PDFs' metadata will be automatically extracted.

Organizing

The library's records are organized according to a variety of criteria, in addition to group sets and groups, such as subject, format, source, and others. As a result, reference groups can be simply categorized, browsed, searched, and shared. Besides, duplicate references can be easily removed. CMS is particularly useful due to its robust PDF management features. CMS technologies enable users to read, categorize, annotate, and highlight research papers in the built-in PDF viewer using the gathered PDF articles. Users can also search for keywords in the entire text of the articles, making it very easy for them to find the information they require.

Collaborating

CMS allows users to create profiles to share research interests. The references will be made private and distributed to the general public. Only the user will be able to view references if they are made private. Also, the capacity of CMS to allow users to collaborate is quite appealing. Researchers can share references by joining existing groups or starting their own and inviting collaborators. As a result, public groups enable users to share references from all over the world. CMS combines and pools its users' paper collections, resulting in a constantly developing research database available to the general public. Hence, CMS tools provide an excellent environment for users to connect with other scholars who share similar interests.

Citing and Formatting

CMS has the ability to assist users in citing as they write. Since CMS tools work with numerous

different versions of word processors, such as Word and OpenOffice/NeoOffice, users can insert citations or footnotes from a collection into their text and format citations and bibliographies. Furthermore, certain CMS technologies make it simple for scholars to cite references by dragging and dropping them directly from the collection into a document. Users can also produce standalone bibliographies and reports with ease.

Postgraduates' use of CMS and CMS tools

The use of CMS by postgraduate students has been investigated as part of larger information or academic communication practices studies. The majority of them report modest CMS use. The majority of the biology PhD students asked by Vezzosi about their information behavior at the University of Parma did not utilize CMS, although "almost all" believed their reference management should be improved (Citation 2009, p. 71).

Academic researchers and Ph.D. students might benefit from using reference management software while doing research, since the references are appropriately written to aid writers in discovering and using them quickly and easily. For larger projects such as dissertations, theses, and research articles, employing any citation management tool is preferable to none for the majority of academics. According to Zhang (2012), the following are some of the most popular citation tools used by scholars:

EndNote is a full-text and citation organizer that facilitates building bibliographies and formatting documents in a variety of output formats. EndNote Online, originally named EndNote, is the web-based version of our well-known desktop reference management and bibliographic software.

Zotero is an open-source and free citation management software to store sources and create citations and bibliographies. It allows users to collect and save references in the library. Moreover, Zotero synchronizes and backs up stored research libraries to its website, www.zotero.org. To access and preserve data online, a user account may be quickly created. This account allows users to organize and share public or private research groups in order to cooperate with other Zotero users.

Beside the two tools mentioned, the authors would like to highlight Mendeley, which provides researchers with outstanding abilities to manage references.

Description of Mendeley

Mendeley is a set of free tools that facilitate resource discovery, collaboration, information management, and citation. Mendeley was created in 2007 in London, and its name is a combination of the surnames of biologist Gregor Mendel and chemist Dmitri Mendeleyev (Hicks, 2011). In its most basic form, it is a citation manager comparable to EndNote, Refworks, or Zotero, allowing users to collect and store citations from a variety of sources using multiple techniques, extract bibliographic data, and format correct in-text citations and end-of-text references. There are two available and well-designed interfaces for users: Mendeley Desktop and Mendeley Web. Their functions are utilized to maximize their outstanding benefits as a powerful social networking tool for well-organized reference storage, closer collaboration among public groups, and user-friendly citing or formatting.

Mendeley has designed two platforms for reference managers, a desktop software and a web-based storage space, which can be used separately or synchronized. The libraries can be accessed online via the website, via a mobile app as long as an Internet connection is available, or offline via a desktop utility. Mendeley is compatible with Windows, Mac, and Linux operating systems and can produce bibliographies in Microsoft Word, OpenOffice, and LaTeX.

On the desktop, Mendeley supports drag-and-drop or manual entry of PDFs or other documents into a user's database, and it integrates with word-processing applications like Word to help integrate citations into a paper and produce reference lists in a number of formats. Mendeley on the web provides for the effortless collection of web pages, journal articles, and other materials using a web importer when the user finds them through Google or Google Scholar. Overall, Mendeley is a valuable resource for both researchers and students.

Table 3.

Quick glance at Mendeley

Means	**Mendeley**
Platforms	Mac, Windows, Linux
Browsers	IE, Firefox, Chrome, Safari
Browser plug-ins	IE, Firefox, Chrome, Safari
Mobile apps	Android, iOS
Word processing integration	Microsoft Word (Windows and Mac), LibreOffice (Linux, Mac, and Windows)
Importing references	BibTeX, EndNote, XML, RIS, Zotero library, txt, Ovid (Medlars reprint), PubMed/MEDLINE (nbib), Mendeley web catalog

Source: *https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6013132/*

Research Question

The study tries to address this specific research question:

What are the perceptions of postgraduate students towards the use of Mendeley for managing citations in academic writing?

Methods

Research setting and participants

This study aims to investigate Mendeley's utilization among linguistics postgraduates at Hanoi University of Industry. The research was carried out when all the selected postgraduates were in the second semester of their master's program. The students were chosen randomly to approach a large number of students from various ability levels so that their comprehension of the examined issue was enriched and expanded.

The research was conducted at the School of Languages and Tourism (SLT), Hanoi University of Industry (HaUI). The target population included 20 English linguistics postgraduates and 25 Mandarin postgraduates. Before enrolling in master program at HaUI, participants were students from diverse universities in Hanoi, for instance Hanoi University, University of Languages and International Studies,

Data collection and analysis

The quantitative data for this inquiry came from two online survey questionnaires that were designed using Google Forms and sent to participants to examine their attitudes before and after Mendeley's intervention. The first survey included six closed-ended questions concerning personal information and their first opinions regarding Mendeley. Then, data are collected from

the responses of all participants via a Likert-scale survey with five options ranging from fully disagree, disagree, neutral, and agree to fully agree.

After that, in-depth interviews were conducted to go deeper into the issues of perceived Mendeley usability and utility. According to Eppich et al. (2019), in-depth interviews offered interviewers and interviewees space and time to adequately investigate topics. Due to the participants' availability and willingness to participate, a modest sample size was chosen (Creswell, 2002). To identify the main themes, the replies were transcribed and qualitatively examined. Both qualitative and quantitative data were subjected to data interpretation to draw a conclusion.

Research procedure

Two surveys (pre- and post-intervention surveys) were employed in this study. In the first step, the researchers designed a 7-question pre-test in which data was collected via Google Form, comprising closed-ended and open-ended questions. The questionnaires aimed to assess participants' perceptions of Mendeley's usefulness as a reference management tool, its ease of use, and their current difficulties when using or not using citation tools to manage references.

In the next step, the researchers held a workshop for one hour to train all participants to use Mendeley, following these items:

- How to download and install Mendeley, and Mendeley Web Importer on laptop
- How to select references and import to Mendeley manually or from the web page via Mendeley Web Importer
- How to classify references to different categories
- How to use Mendeley Cite to insert auto-formatted citation and create bibliology on Word
- How to change and select proper citation style for articles

In the final step, the researchers carried out the post-test for the graduates after three weeks of applying Mendeley to writing essays and assignments. After designing qualitative questions with five options (fully disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and fully agree) following the Likert scale (a research scale used to measure attitudes and opinions) (Liando et al., 2022), statistics are collected from the responses of 45 postgraduate students. The questionnaires included two parts, with the first addressing not only the participants' perceptions of Mendeley's usefulness and efficiency but also their satisfaction with and willingness to use Mendeley. In the second part, the study also gathered information on factors that may influence or hinder the use of Mendeley, such as computer literacy and familiarity with alternative reference management tools. The collected data will be analyzed descriptively and presented in tables, graphs, and charts.

Regarding interviews, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 random students voluntarily to further investigate their own experience of Mendeley's utility. The researchers encouraged them to share the factors that trigger difficulties when applying Mendeley to academic writing as well as their recommendations for spreading the use of Mendeley at school. The end of the interview saw the insights into how Mendeley contributes to the academic writing endeavors of linguistics postgraduates at Hanoi University of Industry.

Findings and discussion

Students' habits of handling citations

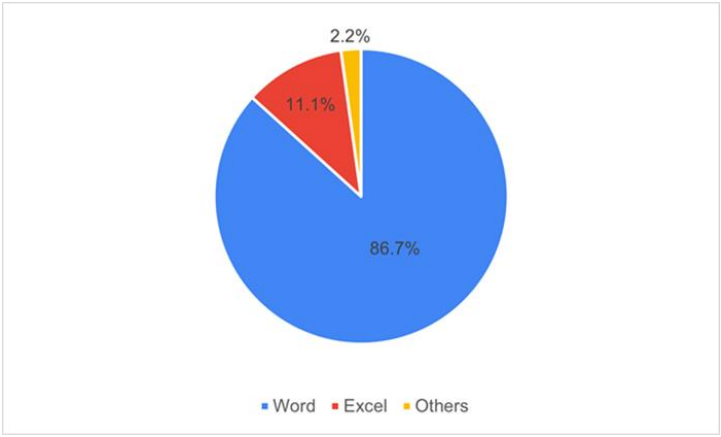

Figure 1: Students' current citations and references management tools

The figure above illustrates that before the Mendeley training session, most postgraduate students chose to manage citations and references via Microsoft Office. It is evident that a significantly higher proportion of people (86.7%) utilize Microsoft Word than Excel (11.1%) when it comes to organizing citations. This indicates that the majority of users probably favor Word as their tool of choice for adding citations and building bibliographies. This finding is consistent with that of Agustini (2021), who indicated that students often use Microsoft Word to manage their citation. Word has a variety of built-in citation and reference management capabilities, which may be one factor contributing to this tendency (Mukhedkar, 2021).

For the method of writing references, most simply, the "Add Files" icon in the "References" menu of the "Microsoft Word" program can be used. Conversely, Excel could be a helpful tool for specific citation management tasks, such as managing voluminous citation-related data or monitoring sources over time (Agustini, 2021). The fact that fewer people (11.1%) use Excel than Word for managing citations, however, raises the possibility that users may not consider Excel to be the best option for this task. Only 2.2% of postgraduate students opt for other methods of managing citations and references. However, it is important to remember that even though Word may be a well-liked program for managing citations, it might not always be the ideal option. Previous studies have shown that Microsoft Word is inadequate for handling a sizable database of citations or for collaborating on research projects. Moreover, they have to add references manually, which can be time-consuming (Mukhedkar, 2021).

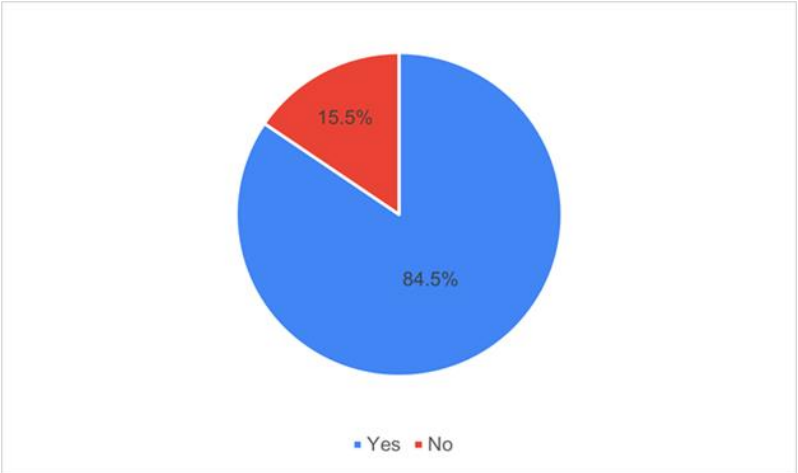

Figure 2: Students responses on difficulties managing citations and references using current methods

The figure above shows that a significant majority of postgraduates encounter challenges in using their current methods, as mentioned in Figure 1, to manage citations and references in academic writing. The reported difficulty rate of 84.5% indicated that these methods are not user-friendly, readily comprehensible, or efficient for the majority of postgraduates. Consequently, inaccurate or missing citations could affect their publications' quality. In contrast, only 15.5% of postgraduates reported no issues with manually managing their references and citations. The numbers demonstrate the need for alternative, more efficient approaches to reference management that enable postgraduates to optimize their efforts to organize, cite, and reference their work. Automated reference management tools and academic citation software can offer viable alternatives to manual processes, thereby enhancing precision, productivity, and efficiency. These findings further support the idea that postgraduate students face challenges with managing citations using manual methods or basic software like Microsoft Word (Mhokole & Kimaryo, 2022).

Students' perceptions towards CMS tools before the integration

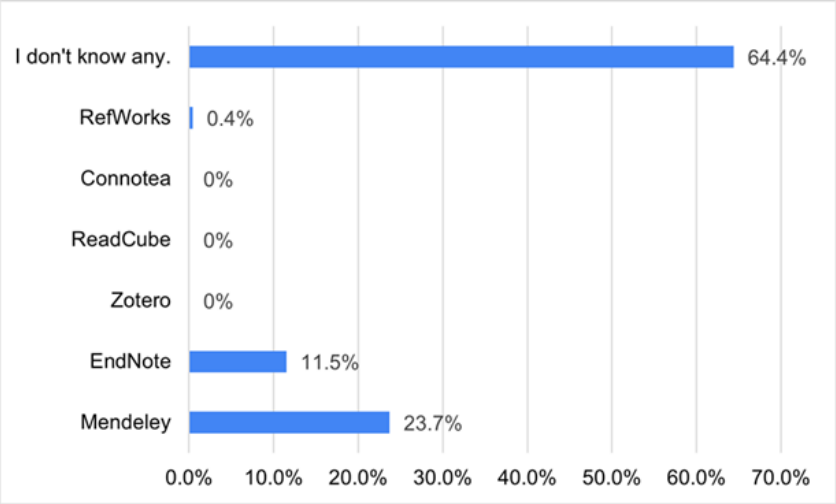

Figure 3: Students' awareness of some CMS tools

From the results of the data presentation above (figure 3), it can be seen that the majority of students have no idea about applying CMS to their academic writing, accounting for nearly 65%. Even though citations play a prominent role in research, students are not equipped with sufficient knowledge about how to manage them effectively. The statistics reflect a lack of awareness or training on the importance and use of such software. Of the citation software programs listed, Mendeley seems to be the most well-known among the students surveyed, with 23.7% being familiar with it, followed by Endnote, which accounts for 11.5%. Interestingly, Zotero, ReadCube, Connotea, and RefWorks each had a familiarity score of 0-0.4%. Further research conducted by Butros and Taylor (2010) also indicated that while software like Mendeley and EndNote are recognized tools, they are underutilized by students due to a lack of knowledge and training.

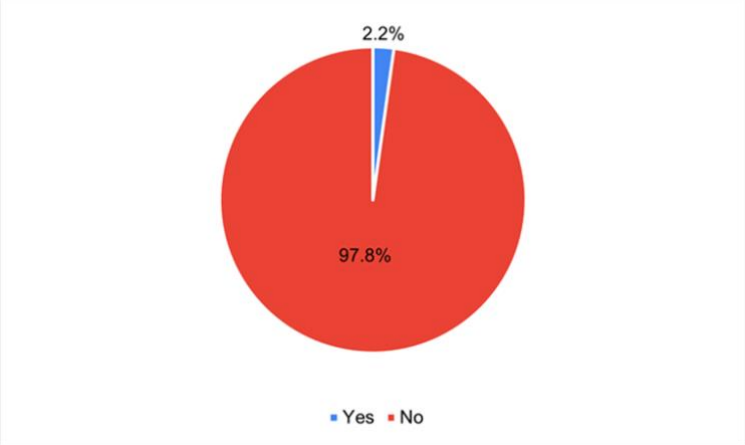

Figure 4: Students' experience of CMS utilization

Figure 4 shows the utilization of CMS among postgraduates. Since the authors' previous analysis, little knowledge about CMS has been gathered. Approximately 100% of the students surveyed have never used citation management software. This is surprising as Mendeley, as well as the rest listed above, is a popular free and open-source reference management software and highly regarded citation tool used by academics and researchers.

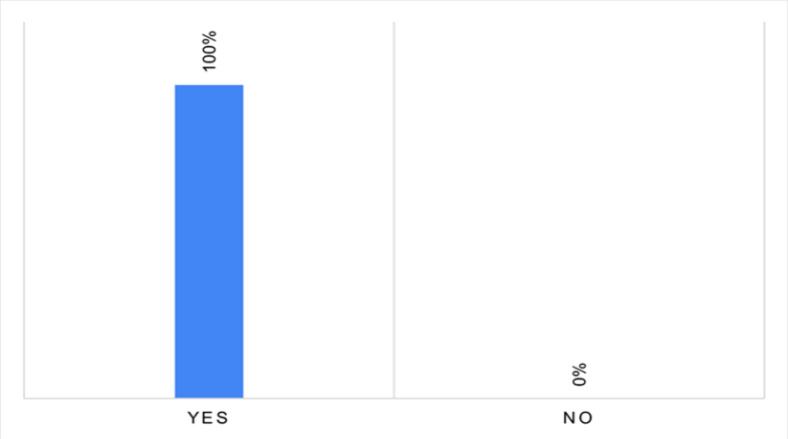

Figure 5: Student's willingness to attend a training session about using Mendeley

According to the figure provided, it appears that all postgraduate students who participated in the poll were interested in enrolling in a training session on using Mendeley to manage citations and references automatically. The result indicates that multiple postgraduate students are excited about adopting technology to facilitate their academic work (Phan, 2023; Vu, 2022) and need to have competencies regarding reference management to benefit from CMS training (Iskandar & Patak, 2019).

Overall, it is evident that postgraduate students appreciate citation management software in their academic work and are prepared to put in the time and effort necessary to become proficient users of such programs. This leads to a strong urge to provide students with proper materials, resources, and training courses to equip them with the skills essential to utilizing these innovative tools effectively in their academic endeavors.

Students' perceptions towards Mendeley after the integration

In response to the study question, "What are the perceptions of postgraduate students towards the use of Mendeley for managing citations in academic writing?" The researchers invited 10

volunteers to join the interviews. The interviewees included three female English majors (participants 1, 2, 3), three male English majors (participants 4, 5, 6), and four female Mandarin majors (participants 7, 8, 9, 10). After that, based on the analyzed data, an online survey was conducted to investigate the comprehensive attitude of all participants towards the use of Mendeley in depth.

When questioned about their affection for using Mendeley to handle citations, most participants indicated that they prefer using it for their academic writing. It was specified as (1) user-friendly, (2) free of charge, (3) easy to collect and track data (4) good online/offline storage, (5) easy to create and custom reference styles (6) immediate updates, (7) convenient to import references to Mendeley library, (8) convenient to integrate with Microsoft Word, (9) easy access to full-text articles, (10) save time, (11) easy to cite/ provide references, (12) automatically generate bibliography, (13) easy to download and install.

User-friendly and free of charge

The analysis of in-depth interviews with 10 participants revealed that Mendeley is a popular citation management tool among researchers due to its user-friendly interface, cost-effectiveness, and reliability. Participants universally appreciated Mendeley's easy-to-use interface and free pricing structure. Participant 1 shared, "*I absolutely love using Mendeley to manage my citations because it's incredibly easy to use, even for a beginner like me."* Participant 6 said: *"I really appreciate that Mendeley is completely free of charge, which saves me money compared to other citation management tools.".*

Easy to collect, track and store data online and offline

Participants noted that Mendeley's data collection and tracking capabilities and reliable online and offline storage options helped them stay organized and efficient while conducting research. As mentioned by participants 8, 9, and 10, they really enjoy using Mendeley to manage my citations because it is easy to keep everything organized and accessible. Whenever they come across a newspaper or article, they can easily add it to their library and categorize it for later use. Besides, participants reported capturing important information from research papers by highlighting it directly on the pdf files.

Easy to cite/provide references and save time

With respect to participants' fondness for using Mendeley to manage citations, some of them confirmed that it helps them to cite references automatically and save time. As Participant 7 explained, *"The software downloaded quickly and didn't require any complicated setup or technical expertise on my part.* Furthermore, Mendeley's seamless integration with Microsoft Word, automated citation system, and easy access to full-text articles helped improve researchers' productivity and eliminate many tedious tasks associated with academic writing.

When it comes to difficulties, the data show that individuals confront a number of significant obstacles when using Mendeley. The majority of participants mentioned language difficulties, indicating that the software may be difficult for users who are not proficient in English or academic terminology. For instance, *"I found the language used in Mendeley, which is English, quite challenging because I major in Chinese,"* claimed participant 7 in the interview.

Participants were also concerned about the lack of technical proficiency and subpar institution-provided instruction, which were delaying their research project. Participant 9 stated: *"Poor technical proficiency and insufficient training are really challenges to my effectively using the software."*

As recorded from the responses of the majority of participants, the lack of training on citation

styles and the absence of some citation styles were sources of their frustration. For example, participant 1 noted, *"I found certain citation styles missing [...]. In addition, I struggled to understand specific citation formats that were unfamiliar to me."*

Lastly, several participants reported having trouble with sophisticated features such as adding references manually as well as installing and adding plugins. Take the responses of participants 3 and 10 as an example.

"As a non-technical person, I don't know how to install and manage plugins effectively, and I sometimes run into problems while manually inserting references." (Participant 10)

"Although Mendeley includes many valuable capabilities, they can be difficult to use without adequate installation and organization". (Participant 3)

These issues demonstrate the need for more streamlined software solutions with adequate training and support channels. Institutions can help by providing improved documentation, training courses, and workshops to make Mendeley more accessible and effective for all postgraduates.

According to the data provided by the participants in the interviews, attending training courses and workshops to encourage the use of Mendeley for research and academic writing is essential. As highlighted in their comments, such programs assist in improving the quality of academic writing (Participant 1), reducing stress during academic writing tasks (Participant 2), saving time (Participant 5), increasing productivity (Participant 6), and providing students with the skills and techniques required for effective literature review, source management, and citation formatting (Participants 4, 7, 8, and 9). Several participants emphasized the importance of technological improvements in academia and the use of software tools such as Mendeley (Participants 3, 5, 8). Furthermore, they stated that organizing training courses and workshops on this program can serve as a stepping stone for enhancing research and writing abilities (Participant 10). These findings support previous investigations highlighting the relevance of digital literacy in academic achievement (Bhuasiri et al., 2012) and the use of reference management software such as Mendeley.

After analyzing the data from interviews, an online survey was sent to all participants, which apparently provides a deeper and more comprehensive investigation into students' attitudes towards the use of Mendeley. Data also revealed some challenges that participants faced when using Mendeley.

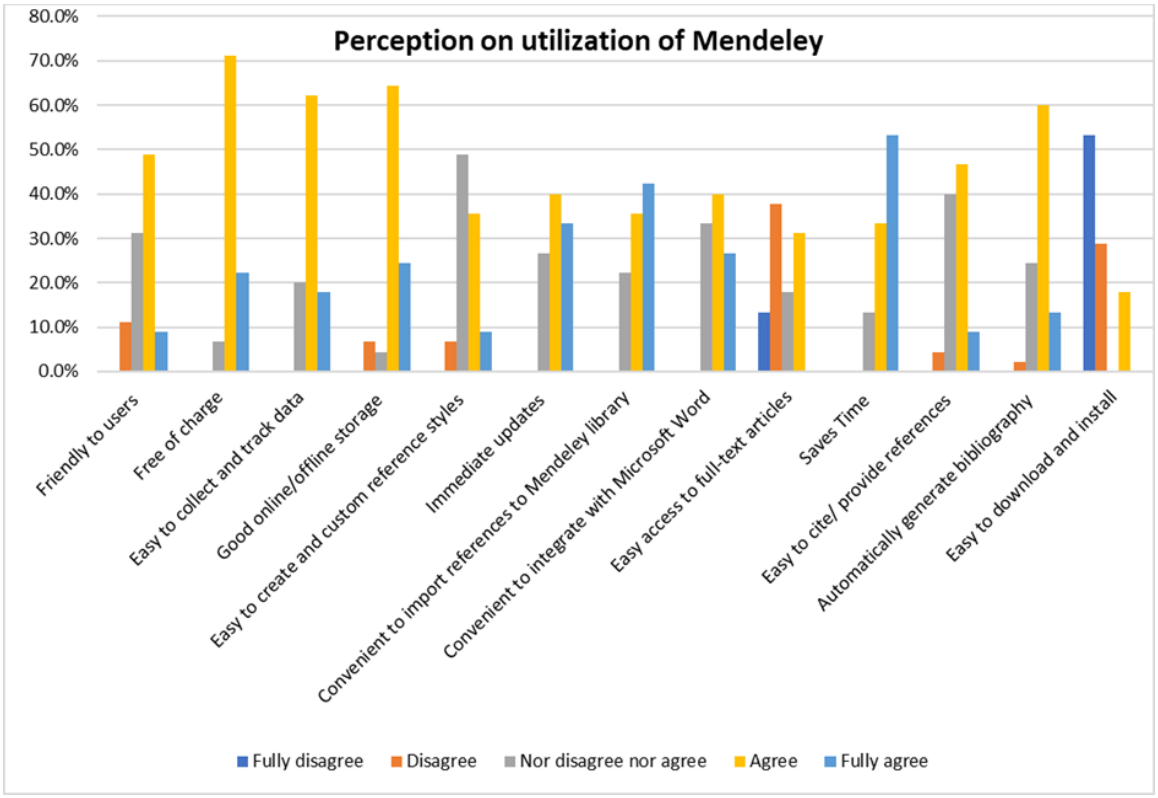

Figure 6: Students' perceptions on utilization of Mendeley

The graph provides insights into postgraduates' perceptions of Mendeley's utilization based on various aspects. Many postgraduates thought Mendeley had a friendly interface for users, with 62.2% of respondents agreeing. The tool's cost is another favorable aspect, as the majority of participants (93.3%) agreed and fully agreed that it is free of charge. This indicates a positive perception, as the absence of financial barriers is attractive to postgraduates, particularly those with limited resources.

Mendeley is also perceived to have good features that make it easy to collect and track references, with 62.2% agreeing and 17.8% fully agreeing. The online/offline storage functionality is well-regarded, with 64.4% agreeing and 24.4% fully agreeing. Furthermore, Mendeley is seen as effective in saving time, with 33.3% agreeing and a significant 53.3% fully agreeing. Additionally, the tool is perceived as facilitating easy citation and reference provision, with 46.7% agreeing and 8.9% fully agreeing. Generating a bibliography is also viewed positively, with three-fifths of participants agreeing and 13.3% of them fully agreeing. However, there are areas for improvement, such as the ease of download and installation, with which 53.3% fully disagreed.

Overall, the data suggests that postgraduates have a largely positive perception of Mendeley and its utilization, including its ease of use, cost-effectiveness, useful features, efficient storage, time-saving capabilities, and assistance in citation and bibliography generation.

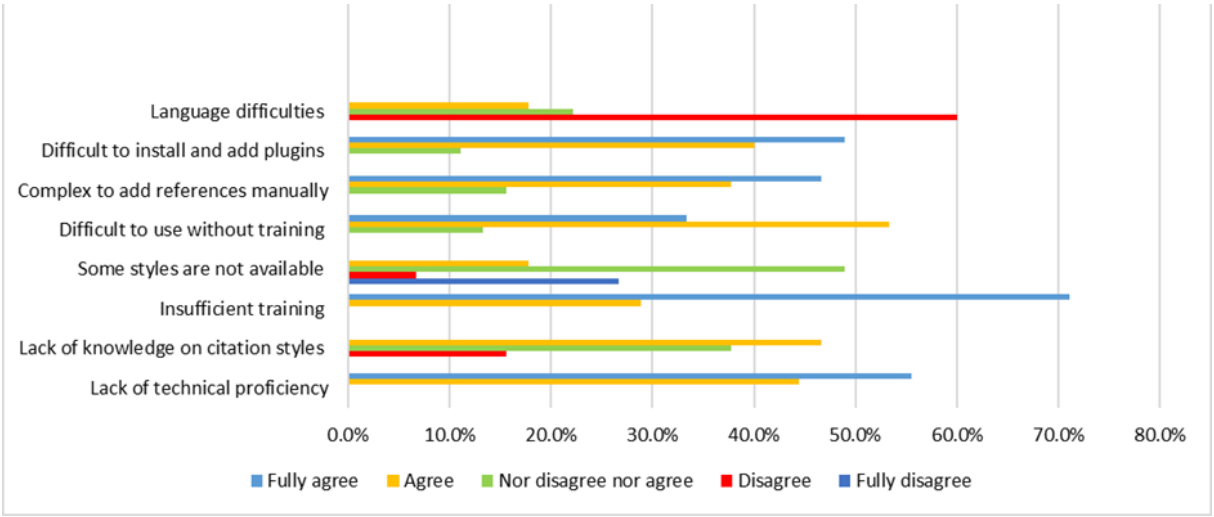

Figure 7: Challenges associated with the use of CMS

Based on the data presented, it appears that using Mendeley poses several challenges. The majority of respondents (71.1%) indicated that insufficient training is a problem, and 44.4% and 55.6% fully or partially agreed with the lack of technical proficiency. While nearly 60% disagreed that language difficulties posed a challenge, a significant proportion of respondents (48.9%) agreed and fully agreed that installation and adding plugins were difficult. Learning to use Mendeley software on their own was also problematic when more than half of the respondents (53.3%) agreed that the software was difficult to use without training. Additionally, 46.7% felt they lacked knowledge of citation styles, which may trigger more difficulties when adding references manually. Finally, almost one-fifth of the participants (17.8%) experienced problems due to missing citation styles. This feedback is based on the in-depth interview section, and the results are revealed below.

The findings from both the online survey and interviews reveal a comprehensive view of postgraduate students' attitudes towards Mendeley and the challenges they face when using the software. This finding aligns with other research that emphasizes the growing popularity of Mendeley among students and researchers (Gilmour & Cobus-Kuo, 2011). As reflected in this study, one of Mendeley's greatest strengths aligns with other research indicating that Mendeley's automation of citation generation and bibliography creation makes it a preferred tool for researchers aiming to streamline their academic writing process (Lorenzetti & Ghali, 2013).

However, the study also reveals challenges, such as language barriers and a lack of technical proficiency, which hinder some students' ability to fully leverage Mendeley, which was already mentioned in previous studies (Bhuasiri et al., 2012; Nitsos & Chamouroudi, 2022). These findings also underscore the need for academic institutions to promote the use of Mendeley by providing adequate training through workshops or courses, as suggested by both the participants in this study and by other scholars like Nitsos and Chamouroudi (2022). Incorporating structured training programs can significantly enhance students' ability to manage citations effectively and improve their overall academic writing quality.

Conclusion

This research aimed to explore postgraduates' perspectives and attitudes regarding using Mendeley in academic writing at a Vietnamese institution. According to the research's findings, postgraduate students hold favorable opinions about Mendeley, viewing it as a helpful tool for

organizing references. Most students found the software easy to learn, which is crucial for maintaining an efficient workflow. The software's functions also speed up the research process by allowing users to input references from a variety of sources and automatically create bibliographies. However, participants also experience technical difficulties when using Mendeley, suggesting that developers and instructors still have work to do in terms of support and development.

Overall, the study provides valuable insights into the potential benefits and challenges of using citation management tools like Mendeley in academic writing. The findings suggest that Mendeley can foster better writing practices and help writers manage references more quickly, which is important for postgraduate students who must juggle the demands of their schoolwork, research projects, and personal lives. The study emphasizes the need to integrate these tools into university academic writing curricula.

References

Agustini, N. L. P. R. E. (2021). *Undergraduate EFL Students' Perception towards the Use of Microsoft Word References on Students' Thesis* (Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha). https://repo.undiksha.ac.id/6700/

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Berkenkotter, C., & Huckin, T. N. (2016). *Genre knowledge in disciplinary communication: Cognition/culture/power.* Routledge.

Bhuasiri, W., Xaymoungkhoun, O., Zo, H., Rho, J. J., & Ciganek, A. P. (2012). Critical success factors for e-learning in developing countries: A comparative analysis between ICT experts and faculty. *Computers & Education*, *58*(2), 843-855. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2011.10.010

Butros, A., & Taylor, S. (2010). Managing information: evaluating and selecting citation management software, a look at EndNote, RefWorks, Mendeley and Zotero. In *Netting knowledge: two hemispheres/one world: proceedings of the 36th IAMSLIC Annual Conference* (pp. 17-21). USA: IAMSLIC.

Creswell, J. W. (2002). *Educational Research. Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. London: Pearson Education.

Eppich, W.J., Gormley, G.J., Teunissen, P.W. (2019). In-Depth Interviews. In: Nestel, D., Hui, J., Kunkler, K., Scerbo, M., Calhoun, A. (eds) *Healthcare Simulation Research*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-26837-4_12

Fazilatfar, A. M., Elhambakhsh, S. E., & Allami, H. (2018). An investigation of the effects of citation instruction to avoid plagiarism in EFL academic writing assignments. *SAGE Open*, *8*(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244018769958

Freysteinson, W. M., Krepper, R., & Mellott, S. (2015). The Language of Scholarship: How to Rapidly Locate and Avoid Common APA Errors. *The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing, 46*(10), 436-438.

Gilmour, R., & Cobus-Kuo, L. (2011). Reference management software: A comparative analysis of four products. *Issues in science and technology librarianship*, *66*(66), 63-75. https://doi.org/10.29173/istl1521

Hensley, M. K. (2011). Citation management software: Features and futures. *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, *50*(3), 204-208. https://journals.ala.org/index.php/rusq/article/viewFile/3962/4448

Hicks, A. (2011). "Mendeley": a review. *Collaborative Librarianship, 3*(2), 127-128. https://doi.org/10.29087/2011.3.2.10

Iskandar, & Patak, A. A. (2019). The significance of Mendeley usage on the accuracy of citation and references. *International Journal of Humanities and Innovation (IJHI), 2*(4), 108–114. https://doi.org/10.33750/ijhi.v2i4.51

Keck, C. (2014). Copying, paraphrasing, and academic writing development: An examination of L1 and L2 summarization practices. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *25*, 4-22. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2014.05.005

Liando, N. V. F., & Tatipang, D. P. (2022). English or Indonesian Language? Parents' Perception Toward Children's Second Language Learning Context. *Jurnal Lingua Idea, 13*(1), 61–75. http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3514498

Lipson, C. (2011). *Cite right: a quick guide to citation styles--MLA, APA, Chicago, the sciences, professions, and more.* University of Chicago Press.

Lorenzetti, D. L., & Ghali, W. A. (2013). Reference management software for systematic reviews and meta-analyses: an exploration of usage and usability. *BMC medical research methodology*, *13*, 1-5. https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-13-141

Mhokole, E. L., & Kimaryo, C. (2022). Usage of Reference Management Software by Postgraduate Students at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. *University of Dar es Salaam Library Journal*, *17*(2), 188-203. https://doi.org/10.4314/udslj.v17i2.12

Mukhedkar, M. V. (2021). Reference Management Using MS-Word Software: A Practical Approach. *Technology*, *3*(4), 223-231. https://doi.org/10.26761/ijrls.7.1.2021.1375

Nitsos, I., Malliari, A., & Chamouroudi, R. (2022). Use of reference management software among postgraduate students in Greece. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, *54*(1), 95-107. https://doi.org/10.1177/0961000621996413

Parabhoi, L., Seth, A. K., & Pathy, S. K. (2017). Citation management software tools: A comparison with special reference to Zotero and Mendeley. *Journal of Advances in Library and Information Science*, *6*(3), 288-293.

Phan, T. N. L. (2023). Students' Perceptions of the AI Technology Application in English Writing Classes. *Proceedings of the AsiaCALL International Conference, 4*, 45–62. https://doi.org/10.54855/paic.2344

Shi, L. (2006). Cultural Backgrounds and Textual Appropriation. *Language Awareness*, *15*(4), 264–282. https://doi.org/10.2167/la406.0

Vezzosi, M. (2009). Doctoral students' information behaviour: an exploratory study at the

University of Parma (Italy). *New library world*, *110*(1/2), 65-80. https://doi.org/10.1108/03074800910928595

Vijai, C., Natarajan, K., & Elayaraja, M. (2019). Citation tools and reference management software for academic writing. *GIS Business*, *14*(6), 586–596. https://doi.org/10.26643/gis.v14i6.14788

Vu, T. B. N. (2022). Application of technology in teaching and learning at the University - Opportunities and challenges for lecturers and students in Vietnam today. *AsiaCALL Online Journal, 13*(5), 100–111. https://doi.org/10.54855/acoj.221357

Willett, P. (2013). Readers' perceptions of authors' citation behaviour. *Journal of Documentation*, *69*(1), 145–156. https://doi.org/10.1108/00220411311295360

Zhang, Y. (2012). Comparison of Select Reference Management Tools. *Medical Reference Services Quarterly*, *31*(1), 45–60. https://doi.org/10.1080/02763869.2012.641841

Biodata

Ms. Linh Nguyen *is an English teacher for non-English-major students at FPT Polytechnic College, FPT University, Vietnam. Her research interest is language teaching methodology, especially for teaching listening and speaking skills. She always tries her best to help non-English-majored students enhance their English competency.*

Orcid account: https://orcid.org/0009-0006-8760-0755

Ms. Luong Nguyen *is an English lecturer at FPT Polytechnic College, FPT University, Vietnam. She is interested in applying technology in teaching and classroom management.*

Orcid account: https://orcid.org/0009-0007-4111-031X

Ms. Thuy Quynh Pham *is currently a lecturer working for EMI group, Faculty of English Language at School of Languages and Tourism, Hanoi University of Industry. She has been involved in developing syllabus and teaching materials for EMI courses. Her professional interests include English for Occupational Purposes, English as the medium instruction and ICT in Language Teaching and Learning.*

Orcid account: https://orcid.org/0009-0004-3042-5250

Ms. Le Duc-Hanh *has been working as an English lecturer at the School of Languages and Tourism, Hanoi University of Industry, Vietnam since 2007. Besides teaching, she currently works as the deputy director of the center of training and partnership development at her school. She has taken responsibilities of designing, teaching EOP blended programs for technical students. Her areas of professional interest include professional development, EMI, and ICTs in education.*

Orcid account: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2139-5729