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

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ABSTRACT

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

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

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Significant of the study

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

Study scope

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

LITERATURE REVIEW

E-learning

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

Challenges of E-learning

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

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

Microsoft Teams

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

Previous Research Studies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Research Gap

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

Research question

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

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

Methodology

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

The questionnaires of the survey belong to the following issues:

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

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

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

Results and Discussion

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

Quantitative analysis

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

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

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

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

Qualitative analysis - Interview questions

Below are the opinions of 48 interviewees:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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