

AN EVALUATION OF THE OXFORD ENGLISH HUB: INSIGHTS FROM ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS AND STUDENTS IN VIETNAM

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Received:	26/5/2025	The Oxford English Hub for Q: Skills for Success is a digital platform developed by Oxford University Press to enhance the effectiveness of the Q: Skills for Success coursebook series. At the School of Foreign Languages – Thai Nguyen University, the platform has recently been adopted as a tool for homework practice. However, no studies have yet examined how it benefits teachers and students, or what limitations it may present within the institution. Therefore, this mixed-methods research is conducted to evaluate the online practice platform of Q: Skills for Success series at the School of Foreign Languages, Thai Nguyen University in terms of its benefits and limitations. Through a survey with 559 students and an interview with 9 teachers from the English Department in the second semester of the school year 2024-2025, the research finds out specific strengths and limitations of the online practice platform. The findings, derived from both quantitative analysis using descriptive statistics and qualitative thematic analysis of interview transcripts, show that the majority of the participants agree that Oxford English Hub offers more strengths than limitations such as being friendly and easy to navigate, appropriateness, consistency in terms of the content and various task types for language skill practice. Therefore, most participants demonstrate high satisfaction ratings with the platform. Further recommendations by the interviewees may provide suggestions for publishers to improve their online practice system as well as for teachers to adapt it fitly in their educational context.
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KEYWORDS		
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Effectiveness		

ĐÁNH GIÁ NỀN TẢNG OXFORD ENGLISH HUB: NHỮNG GÓC NHÌN TỪ GIẢNG VIÊN VÀ SINH VIÊN TIẾNG ANH TẠI VIỆT NAM

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO		TÓM TẮT
Ngày nhận bài:	26/5/2025	Nền tảng Oxford English Hub đi kèm bộ sách Q: Skills for Success là một nền tảng số được phát triển bởi Nhà xuất bản Đại học Oxford nhằm nâng cao hiệu quả của bộ sách cùng tên. Tại Trường Ngoại ngữ - Đại học Thái Nguyên, nền tảng này gần đây đã được áp dụng như một công cụ thực hành bài tập về nhà. Tuy nhiên, hiện chưa có nghiên cứu nào xem xét mức độ hữu ích của nền tảng này đối với giảng viên và sinh viên cũng như những hạn chế có thể bộc lộ trong quá trình sử dụng tại nhà trường. Do đó, nghiên cứu theo phương pháp hỗn hợp đã được thực hiện nhằm đánh giá nền tảng thực hành trực tuyến của bộ sách Q: Skills for Success tại Trường Ngoại ngữ – Đại học Thái Nguyên xét trên cả phương diện lợi ích và hạn chế. Thông qua khảo sát 559 sinh viên và phỏng vấn 9 giảng viên của Khoa Tiếng Anh trong học kỳ II năm học 2024–2025, nghiên cứu đã xác định được những điểm mạnh và hạn chế cụ thể của nền tảng thực hành trực tuyến. Kết quả phân tích định lượng bằng thống kê mô tả và phân tích định tính theo chủ đề từ bản ghi phỏng vấn cho thấy phần lớn người tham gia đồng ý rằng Oxford English Hub có nhiều điểm mạnh hơn so với hạn chế, như giao diện thân thiện, dễ sử dụng, nội dung phù hợp, nhất quán và đa dạng về loại hình bài tập luyện kỹ năng ngôn ngữ. Do đó, đa số người tham gia thể hiện mức độ hài lòng cao đối với nền tảng này. Các khuyến nghị sâu hơn từ các cuộc phỏng vấn cũng có thể cung cấp gợi ý cho nhà xuất bản trong việc cải tiến hệ thống thực hành trực tuyến cũng như giúp giáo viên điều chỉnh việc sử dụng nền tảng sao cho phù hợp với bối cảnh giáo dục cụ thể.
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1. Introduction

In the recent time, courses in second and foreign languages that integrate traditional classroom instruction with computer-assisted language learning tools have been an important subject in the fields of language acquisition and pedagogy. This instructional approach is commonly referred to as Blended Learning. The definition of blended learning has changed over time. Since 2006, however, it has generally been understood as the combination of two or more distinct training methods. These can be in-person instruction supported by online learning, virtual lessons supplemented by access to mentors or instructors, simulations integrated with structured coursework, or e-learning activities combined with managerial coaching and informal workplace sessions like brownbag meetings [1].

According to the previous study carried out in various educational settings, including universities and language institutes in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, China, South Korea, and Malaysia, there are a number of benefits brought by the online practice [2]. Firstly, it provides learners with an “efficient use of material resources” [3]. Moreover, it can boost students’ interest and motivation. With the online practice, learners can be motivated in different ways in learning English, for example through videos, games, animated graphics, and problem-solving tasks, which can make their language practicing process more engaging [4]. Secondly, courses that integrate both traditional teaching method and computer-assisted language learning have been found to enhance learner’s autonomy and enhance a sense of empowerment among students. Student empowerment refers to the learners’ feeling that the computer allows them to become actively engaged in the construction and use of their knowledge, rather than acting as passive absorbers and duplicators of information [5] - [7]. Learners’ learning control, in the reality, promotes their critical thinking, motivation and much of their study achievement [8], [9]. Additionally, they know how to negotiate meanings to suit their personal learning styles [10]. Shy or reserved learners can be greatly benefited through the individualized learning environment, and hard-working learners can also proceed at their own pace to achieve better results.

In addition to providing learners with more control, online practice platforms also offer them instant feedback and multiple attempts. Felix [11] reported that having multiple attempts promoted language learning, and, another study [12] found that some students liked instant feedback so much that they spent long hours in front of the technological device in pursuit of the perfect score. Instant feedback, opportunities for improvement and the extensive and overt practice that online environments provide convert procedural into declarative knowledge faster, and promote language learning.

Finally, observing and checking students’ learning progress are significant functions to help learners achieve their language acquisition effectively. Today, with the rapid development of technology in general, computers can easily collect, analyze, and present data on language students’ performances during their learning process. When teachers need to assess students’ learning progress, it is convenient for them to exploit the essential information from a well-designed computer language learning programs and then “offer feedback tailored to students’ learning needs” [13].

However, it should be noted that online practice also causes several significant drawbacks for schools, teachers, learners and parents. First, “online working can stop students from participating face-to-face small groups” and “online learning may damage their interpersonal relationships and communication skills” [14]. Second, in comparison with traditionally designed material, having an online programme completely developed is very expensive. Moreover, “ongoing faculty time commitments to an online discussion group can need much more time” [15], [16].

It is clear that technological devices are becoming popular in online learning progress; and when computers have been made a basic requirement for learners, low-budget schools and low-income students cannot usually afford a computer and online practice accounts. It will cause unfair treatment for different schools and students in different regions. On the other hand, expensive hardware and software also becomes the big hindrance for schools and parents [17].

Alur [18] and Merrill [19] came to the same conclusion that many – perhaps most – web based learning courses had an inferior instructional design. The software of computer assisted

language learning programs still contains imperfect points. Current computer technology mainly supports reading and listening skills. Although some writing and speaking programs have been developed recently, their functions are still limited in various aspects. Warschauer [20] also showed that a program should ideally be able to understand a user's "spoken" input and evaluate it not just for accuracy but also for "appropriateness".

Finally, computers cannot cope with unexpected situations. Language learners' learning situations are various and constantly changing. Due to the limitations of artificial intelligence, computer technology in general and online practice platforms in particular hardly deal with learners' unexpected learning problems flexibly and give instant responses to learners' questions as in in-person classes. The reasons for this problem can be traced back to a prominent difference in the way humans and computers analyze and process information. The findings in [21] also expressed that computer technology with the current degree of intelligence is not expected to handle every situation. In short, today's computer technology and its attached language learning programs are not yet "intelligent" enough to be truly interactive. People still need to put great attempt in developing and improving computer technology in order to support language learners more effectively.

While the advantages and limitations of blended learning has been found out, there remains a lack of practical research into how teachers and learners respond to specific online practice platforms. In particular, at the School of Foreign Languages – Thai Nguyen University (TNU - School of Foreign Languages), since the recent introduction of the Oxford English Hub as a homework practice tool for listening and speaking skills, no studies have been conducted to examine how it benefits teachers and students or to identify any limitations it may present in reality. Therefore, this research aims to provide a practical evaluation of the Oxford English Hub to help educators determine whether it is an effective platform for learners' use. In line with the research aim, two research questions have been formulated: (1) What are the perceived benefits and limitations of the Oxford English Hub for students and instructors? (2) What recommendations can be made to minimize the limitations of the platform?

2. Research Methodology

The study employed the mixed method approach because it provides a more holistic insight into the current issues than relying solely on either quantitative or qualitative approaches. The study was conducted with a survey for 559 students and a semi-structured interview for 9 teachers at TNU - School of Foreign Languages in the second semester of the school year 2024-2025. These research instruments were applied for the following reasons. First, there was a large number of students involved in the study; thus, a survey was a more reasonable choice in terms of time, effort and finance. On the other hand, the number of teachers in the study was relatively small; therefore, interviewing would be effective to provide an in-depth insight of what they considered as strengths and limitations of the online practice platform. Second, it was necessary to conduct an interview with teachers to gain a more comprehensive evaluation because the questionnaire results can only reflect how the students specifically assess the online practice platform.

2.1. Participants

Participants of the study consisted 559 students and 9 teachers from the English Department at TNU - School of Foreign Languages. The participants for the survey were selected through random sampling to complete questionnaires. Random sampling was chosen primarily to ensure a sample was representative of the entire population, minimize bias, and to give each individual in the population an equal chance of being selected. However, those who participate in semi-structured interviews were chosen through purposive sampling. This approach aimed to select individuals who possessed particular characteristics or experiences that were essential to the focus of the study. This helped to provide reliable results and generalize the findings of the research.

The total number of students participating in the study were 559, ranging from the first to the fourth year (K44 to K47) majoring in English language and English education at the School of

Foreign Languages. They were from 19 to 24 years old. All of them had at least one semester using Oxford English Hub for their listening and speaking self-practice. After being provided with student account, they could access the platform on their laptop or their smartphone to do the assigned tasks on the platform every week.

Seven out of nine teachers had more than 10-year teaching experience and two of them had five-year experience of teaching English. All of them held a Master degree in English language and English teaching methodology. Eight of the teachers were female and one was male. These teachers had at least one semester working with Oxford English Hub and frequently used this platform to assign tasks for students to do at home every week.

2.2. Data collection procedure

Data were collected in a concurrent mixed methods design in which the quantitative and qualitative data were collected during the same stage. First, a structured questionnaire was developed, informed by a review of relevant literature, to gather students' evaluations of the Oxford English Hub. The questionnaire was designed using Google Forms and consisted of both closed- and open-ended items. It was constructed based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1)- Strongly Disagree (SD); (2)- Disagree (D); (3)- Neutral (N); (4)- Agree (A) and (5)- Strongly Agree (SA). The questionnaire included three parts. The first part was used to collect students' general information. In the second one, students were asked to rate their agreement level for ten question items toward the use of Oxford English Hub. In the third part, they were asked three open-ended questions about their additional opinions and suggestions. All of the questions were written in English. The questionnaire designed on Google Forms was then delivered directly to students through their Zalo groups. At the same time, teachers were asked questions on their evaluation of the benefits and limitations of Oxford English Hub. The interview protocol consisted of three main questions. Question 1 addressed the perceived benefits of the platform. Question 2 investigated the limitations of the platform. Question 3 focused on recommendations proposed by teachers to make the best use of the platform. Their answers were recorded, noted and then coded in accordance with the question item themes. As the study focused on their evaluation of the online practice system, responses not related to its content were removed.

2.3. Data analysis procedure

After being collected, the quantitative data from the closed-ended items were refined and exported from Google Forms into Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics, such as percentages and frequency distributions, were calculated to identify overall trends in students' responses. The results were then presented in visual formats, including tables and charts, to enhance interpretability.

For the qualitative data, responses to the open-ended questions were reviewed and thematically coded. Recurring themes and patterns were identified to provide deeper insights into students' perceptions of the Oxford English Hub, particularly regarding its benefits, limitations, and suggested improvements. The integration of both data sets allowed for a more comprehensive interpretation of students' experiences with the platform.

3. Findings and discussion

3.1. Students' evaluation on the use of Oxford English Hub

Table 1 demonstrates the participants' agreement levels for ten question items related to their detailed assessment of Oxford English Hub.

As can be seen from Table 1, the majority of students responded that Oxford English Hub had many advantages such as being friendly and easy to navigate, appropriateness and consistency in terms of the content, various task types for listening and speaking practice. It is clearly shown that 70% of the participants agreed that the platform made it possible for them to check the students' answers immediately and get the detailed and accurate reports on their exercise completion. This

result revealed the same findings in [11], [12] that the students liked receiving instant feedback in their language learning process. They also showed their preference for the variety of tasks of the platform, which could enhance their interest and learning motivation [22], [23].

Table 1. *Students' evaluation on the use of Oxford English Hub*

	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
1. The platform is user-friendly and easy to use.	3.5	4.1	33.8	41.1	17.5
2. Exercise content is appropriate and aligned with the curriculum.	3.8	3.5	32.2	41.7	18.8
3. The listening and speaking practice exercises are varied and rich in content.	3.8	5.7	35.4	37.7	17.4
4. The platform provides fast and accurate answers.	2.9	2.9	27.4	43.8	23.1
5. The platform generates detailed and accurate reports on exercise completion rates.	3.6	5.4	31.6	39.2	20.2
6. The platform promotes my motivation in self-study.	3.6	5.2	35.1	37.0	19.1
7. Online working damages my interpersonal relationships and communication skills.	18.3	32.8	29.5	13.8	5.6
8. The student account costs more than I can afford.	4.5	17.6	23.3	45.2	9.4
9. The platform sometimes crashes during my exercise completion.	22.3	31.6	18.9	18.4	8.8
10. My speaking assignments are not graded automatically by the system.	4.2	3.2	16.7	58.5	17.4

However, besides these benefits, the platform also had some limitations which can be noted as following. First, the access code was expensive for students because they had to buy the student account every term for each listening and speaking course. That is the reason why nearly 55% of students agreed with question item 8 about the account cost. About 30% students said that they had technical issues during their use of the platform. When being asked the open-ended question, they responded that the frequently encountered problems with the platform could be no voice recognition for their recordings, impossibility to get access to the platform because of the limited internet access and losing track of the deadline due to no notifications sent to their email. It is easy to understand that technical problems have always been a disadvantage of computer-assisted language learning programs because the control system may be on upgrading process to meet constant changes of the users' needs and technological development. Noticeably, as what more than 70% of students reported, the automatic grading function for speaking had not been integrated yet, so they did not know how well they spoke as well as how to make an improvement in their speaking skill. Besides, about 20% of students complained that the system did not provide any mode or space for interactions among students. This issue, however, may not severely affect students' interpersonal skills and relationships because the courses with Q: Skills for Success were provided in blended learning method and students can interact with each other on their face-to-face class time.

In general, it can be concluded that the majority of students agreed that Oxford English Hub had more strengths than limitations. Therefore, nearly 70% of the participants when being asked another open-ended question gave high satisfaction ratings with the platform. In answering the last question about their recommendations for the platform improvement, they suggested the publisher should cut down the account cost for students. Moreover, they also expected to get automatic feedback instantly from the grading system for their speaking assignments in order to know how to correct their pronunciation, their word choice, their grammar use, or the idea development. Additionally, it would be more convenient if the platform gave them more notifications via their own email to help them follow the track. Finally, to make tasks more engaging, students would prefer to receive more explanations and congratulations from the system.

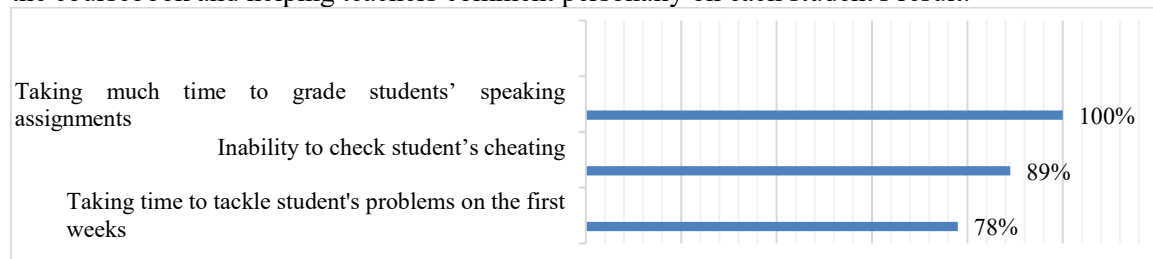
3.2. Teachers' evaluation on the use of Oxford English Hub

After the interview, the teachers' answers were noted and then coded in themes. Because the study focused on their evaluation of the platform, their responses were mainly categorized in themes of benefits and limitations.

Table 2. Teachers' evaluation on the benefits of Oxford English Hub

Benefits	Number of teachers
1. Monitoring and tracking students' progress in detail	8
2. Reducing workload by eliminating the need to assign and assess students' homework.	9
3. Having the flexibility to adjust assignments and set different due dates for individual students	7
4. Having various tasks in alignment with each unit section in the coursebook	7
5. Can comment personally on student's result	6

Regarding benefits as can be seen in Table 2, almost all of the teachers in the study agreed that it was much convenient to monitor and keep track of students' progress by the integrated functions on the platform. Teachers reported that they could easily "extract students' assignment statistics in great details" that enabled them to "follow students' progress precisely." These details involved students' scores, the time students spent for doing each task, their frequency of doing assignments on the platform etc. One teacher said that these reports could help her "have proper intervention and warning" with her students' learning process. Significantly, all of the teachers agreed that the online practice system could reduce their workload because it saved much of their time preparing homework and grading assignments for each week of the whole semester. The main things that teachers had to do were unlocking the tasks, setting deadlines and keeping track of students' progress. Other positive comments that more than half of the participants agreed on were the ability for teachers to adjust assignment options and modify due dates for individuals, having a wide variety of task types in alignment with each unit section in the coursebook and helping teachers comment personally on each student's result.

**Figure 1.** Teachers' evaluation on the limitations of Oxford English Hub

With respect to the limitations as shown in Figure 1, all of the teachers agreed that it took them a great amount of time to grade students' speaking assignments because there was no AI-generated grading function for them to use. Therefore, they all expressed their preferences to have this supporting function on the platform. This limitation aligns with broader concerns in the literature regarding the scalability of technology-assisted language learning platforms. As noted in [24], while digital tools offer enhanced practice opportunities, the lack of automated assessment particularly for productive skills such as speaking remains a major drawback in many systems. Automated scoring tools, when designed carefully, can support consistency, save time, and provide learners with quicker feedback [25]. Additionally, almost all of the teachers showed their concern about how to know whether students do the tasks themselves since "the platform provides a self-study mode from which students can copy the answers or ask the others to help them do the tasks". This challenge may mislead teachers' perception of students' ability, which would bring about inappropriate evaluation for the class. It may also alter students' grade and cause unfair assessment for students on the course. Another challenge that more than half of the teachers faced was coping with students' code problems. In reality, some students had trouble copying the wrong codes, having their code used by another student or having expired code delivered from the supplier. All those issues took much time from the teachers to solve every week, especially at the beginning of the course.

In short, although the platform had some limitations as being mentioned above, teachers still considered it as a powerful tool to help them control their students' self-study effectively.

4. Conclusion

The study offered a preliminary description of the benefits and limitations of Oxford English Hub – the online practice platform from the viewpoints of both teachers and students at TNU - School of Foreign Languages to explore the effectiveness of the platform.

Overall, the platform demonstrated a number of major advantages for both students and teachers. For students, the key benefits included flexibility, ease of access, and a wide range of task types that supported their further language skill development. For teachers, the platform helped reduce workload and provided tools for detailed monitoring as well as tracking of students' progress. However, there were also some limitations. One notable drawback was the lack of an automatic grading function. As a result, teachers had to spend a significant amount of time manually assessing students' speaking assignments.

As being discussed during the interview, a number of actions may be recommended for teachers who use the online practice platform along with the textbook series to minimize its limitations. First, a community with teachers and the publisher representative should be created to support students with their technical issues as soon as possible. Additionally, teachers should take the online practicing scores into reconsideration if there is a big gap between their online grade and test scores. They should choose automatically graded scores in terms of vocabulary, grammar, listening, critical thinking to give the most accurate evaluation on students' learning process. For speaking, teachers should grade their students' performance in person.

With respect to the platform developer, it is advised to consider incorporating automatic grading functions. Second, there should be more interactive functions such as a chat box, video calls, quizzes, congratulations etc. to increase the interaction between teachers and students, and among students. Finally, surveys for teachers and students should be carried out regularly in order to collect necessary feedback to upgrade the system more effectively.

While the study was carried out to delve into teachers' and students' evaluation of the online practice platform, certain limitations were likely inevitable. Because it was carried out with a small number of teachers in a regional university, its results can only reflect the case of Oxford English Hub in the context of TNU - School of Foreign Languages and cannot be generalized for other contexts. However, it is believed to provide evidence to support current studies on computer assisted language learning and also serves as a pilot study for further research on the digital practice platform.

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