

DEVELOPING, IMPLEMENTING, AND STUDENTS' EVALUATION OF AN E-LEARNING ENGLISH COURSE FOR LOW-PROFICIENCY LEARNERS AT A VIETNAMESE UNIVERSITY

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 05/6/2025	This paper investigated the development, and implementation of an e-learning English course and the evaluation of the course from the perspectives of students across three main dimensions, namely the course design, the tests and assessment, and the technology. The related official documents were used as the data sources to depict the process of the course development and implementation while a questionnaire was employed and administered to 287 non-English major freshmen to collect data for the course evaluation. Document analysis and descriptive statistics analysis were used as the data analysis methods. The findings shed light on the development and implementation of an e-learning English course and revealed that students had a high evaluation of the course. The research could be a useful reference for administrators, teachers, and educational technology developers having a similar teaching-learning context. The limitations of the study were also identified and suggestions for future research were given.
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SỰ PHÁT TRIỂN, TRIỂN KHAI VÀ ĐÁNH GIÁ CỦA SINH VIÊN VỀ MỘT KHÓA HỌC TIẾNG ANH THEO HÌNH THỨC E-LEARNING DÀNH CHO SINH VIÊN CÓ NĂNG LỰC TIẾNG ANH HẠN CHẾ

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO	TÓM TẮT
Ngày nhận bài: 05/6/2025	Bài báo này nghiên cứu quá trình phát triển, triển khai một khóa học tiếng Anh theo mô hình đào tạo trực tuyến (e-learning) và đánh giá khóa học này từ quan điểm của sinh viên qua ba bình diện chính, bao gồm thiết kế khóa học, kiểm tra và đánh giá, và yếu tố công nghệ. Nghiên cứu sử dụng các tài liệu chính thức liên quan làm nguồn dữ liệu để mô tả quá trình phát triển và triển khai khóa học, đồng thời sử dụng một bảng câu hỏi điều tra và thực hiện điều tra đối với 287 sinh viên năm nhất không chuyên tiếng Anh để thu thập dữ liệu cho việc đánh giá khóa học. Phương pháp phân tích tài liệu và phân tích thống kê mô tả được sử dụng. Các kết quả làm sáng tỏ sự phát triển và triển khai một khóa học tiếng Anh trực tuyến và chỉ ra rằng sinh viên đánh giá cao khóa học. Nghiên cứu này có thể là một tài liệu tham khảo hữu ích cho các nhà quản lý, giáo viên và các nhà phát triển công nghệ giáo dục có bối cảnh dạy và học tương tự. Đồng thời, nghiên cứu nêu ra những hạn chế còn tồn tại của nghiên cứu và đưa ra các gợi ý cho các nghiên cứu trong tương lai.
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1. Introduction

In the era of digital transformation and global economic integration, tertiary institutions must be responsible for training human resources to meet the increasing demands of the labour market. To ensure employability and job stability in constantly changing and competitive workplaces, these institutions must develop a number of competencies for their students such as digital competencies, professional competencies, and communication competencies. One of the most important competencies is English proficiency because it helps the learners as well as the employees to access cutting-edge human knowledge and the latest information which are essential for quick responses and adaptability to global and local changes. Therefore, it has usually become conventional that enterprises and employers require job applicants to possess certain levels of English ability following their job positions. As a result, universities and colleges have taken numerous measures to develop their students' English ability such as making English courses compulsory in the curriculum, enhancing the English teaching staff's capacity, and organizing extra-curricular activities or classes. However, in the context of Vietnam, the task of ensuring English training quality has gained limited results. Many students have low proficiency failing to meet the job requirements after graduation because of several factors like institutional factors, learner-related factors, and teacher-related factors [1], [2]. Therefore, Vietnamese tertiary institutions have continuously sought and tried alternative solutions to improve the quality of English teaching. One of the methods is developing and implementing e-learning courses.

When developing a course, instructional designers, content developers, or even teachers regularly follow certain instructional design theories to create an efficient, effective teaching design. In this study, the theoretical framework for developing, implementing, and evaluating the e-learning course is based on the ADDIE model [3]. Comprising five stages - Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation (*see Figure 1*), the ADDIE model not only ensures effective course creation but also serves as a framework for researchers or educators to examine an e-learning course. The Analysis phase identifies learner needs and goals. The Design phase establishes objectives and selects online delivery methods. The Development phase creates and refines digital materials. The Implementation phase trains instructors and prepares the virtual environment. The Evaluation phase uses assessments to measure outcomes and improve the course.



Figure 1. The ADDIE model's five stages of instructional design

Empirical studies have reported major advantages of e-learning English courses such as improving the learners' linguistic competencies, students' learning motivation and engagement, self-directed learning, and the accessibility to teaching contents [4], [5]. It is also essential to evaluate these e-learning courses after their implementation because the teaching-learning setting and the implementation process might significantly affect their success. As prescribed in the course development process, the evaluation is the last step to evaluate the effectiveness of the course [3]. Unfortunately, such evaluation in Vietnam has been limited. Regarding the aspects for evaluation, the research highlighted some important aspects including content quality, pedagogical alignment, technological infrastructure, learner engagement and interaction, assessment and feedback mechanisms, and learner support services [6]-[8]. It would be ideal and beneficial to include all the domains in the evaluation. Yet, due to some constraints such as time, human, and financial resources, researchers have frequently prioritized some areas of their interest or the most important to their research context. Hence, the evaluation results can provide beneficial information to make any necessary adjustments to the courses.

Mercy University (a pseudonym taken for the research setting as an ethical consideration measure) developed and implemented a supplementary e-learning English course for freshmen

with low English proficiency in the academic year 2024-2025 to support these students in achieving more positive learning outcomes for formal English courses and meeting the long-term English requirements. However, up to now, there has been no research conducted to evaluate the course. The evaluation can be done from teachers' or students' perspectives. Driven by the learner-centered approach and the fact that the course evaluation from students' perspectives has not been fully explored in Vietnam, this study was carried out to partly fill this gap. Especially, this study addresses the following research questions:

- 1) *How has the supplementary e-learning English course been developed and implemented?*
- 2) *What are the students' evaluations of the supplementary e-learning English course in terms of the course design, tests and assessment, and technology?*

2. Methodology

2.1. Research setting and participants

The study was conducted at Mercy University, which is a public university located in the north of Vietnam specializing in training, doing research, and transferring digital technologies. It provides students with free, stable WI-FI access on its campus. The participants consisted of 287 freshmen, of whom male students accounted for 66.2% and 33.8% were female. A majority of them are from the midland mountainous region of Vietnam and at the age of 18 or 19. Each of them possessed at least one digital mobile device (a laptop or a mobile phone) and had stable access to the Internet.

2.2. Research instruments

To collect data for research question 1, official documents and reports related to the process of development and implementation were used for analysis. For research question 2, a questionnaire adapted from Nguyen et al. [5] to ensure its theoretical basis and comparability to the research setting and purpose was used to collect responses from students. The questionnaire consisted of three parts: Part A – The course design comprised 10 items to get students' evaluative feedback on the course design; Part B – Testing and assessment, was composed of 6 items to gauge students' evaluative viewpoints about the testing and assessment, and Part C – Technology, included 7 items to gain students' evaluation on the technological aspect (5 items) and their future intentions (02 items). These 23 items were designed on a 5-point Likert scale format with values 1 = "Strongly disagree", 2 = "Disagree", 3 = "Neither agree nor disagree", 4 = "Agree", and 5 = "Strongly agree". To ensure validity and reliability, the adapted questionnaire was subjected to a number of validation processes such as consulting experts and teachers, conducting a pilot survey, and performing several statistical tests like exploratory factor analysis. The calculation of the alpha coefficient revealed that the official adapted questionnaire had a very good alpha coefficient of over 0.9, which indicated that the survey items were reliable.

2.3. Data collection and analysis

For research question 1, the official documents and reports were obtained from the Department of Foreign Languages at Mercy University. A letter asking for permission to gain access to these documents and to use them for research purposes was sent to the Head of Department. Being granted permission, all the related documents were collected and analyzed to report the overall process of the course development and implementation.

For research question 2, the questionnaire designed on Google Forms was administered to two classes with 420 students via Zalo groups by the end of the course, together with an invitation letter to explain the research purpose and invite them to take part in the study. After two weeks and several minor reminders, the 287 students responded. The collected data were imported into SPSS version 25. Before analysis, several techniques such as checking for completeness, identifying outliers through statistical methods, and verifying data consistency were used to screen data. Responses were removed if they contained missing values or exhibited extreme

outliers [9]. For example, the respondent coded ID8 selecting value 1 (Strongly disagree) for all the items was detected as an extreme outlier by using the outlier-exploring technique. As a result, this response was removed from the final data for analysis. After the screening process, 234 responses were retained for performing descriptive analysis for the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) values. The verbal interpretation of mean values was guided by Pimentel [10].

3. Findings and discussion

3.1. Findings

3.1.1. The development and implementation of the supplementary English course

The analysis of official documents indicated that the process of developing and implementing the course essentially conformed to the ADDIE model's five stages of instructional design.

Analysis phase

Before the official start of the development and implementation of the course, the university administrators and the Department of Foreign Languages had several meetings to analyze the state of teaching-learning (e.g., analyzing the learners and developing an instructional analysis), identify the practical needs as well as specify the orientations regarding the target learners, contents of the course, design of the course, and the methods of delivery and supports. Besides, some representatives of the administrators and leaders of the Department of Foreign Languages also paid official work visits to several universities in Hanoi to learn about the English education models and experiences from these universities. As a result, the specifications for the supplementary course were finalized, and the important steps and all the details needed to achieve the objectives were specified and approved. The brief specifications were as follows:

The objectives: To provide students with fundamental grammar knowledge such as parts of speech, personal pronouns, object pronouns, articles, and basic sentence structures; and vocabulary related to topics such as personal information, family, and countries. By the end of the course, students can perform simple communication situations, develop reading comprehension and writing skills, and directly support the learning of the formal English courses.

The contents: The contents cover 32 topics which were identified based on need analysis and in alignment with the contents of the English 1 course. Specifically, these contents were mapped with the contents of the English 1 course and supplemented background knowledge so that learners could directly facilitate their learning process of this formal course.

Design phase

After the analysis phase, the developers designed the assessment, selected the delivery form of the course, and created an instructional strategy. Specifically, the assessment consisted of topic-based mini-tests (progress tests) and a final test (a summative test). The mini-test consists of 20 multiple-choice items, and the final test comprises 40 multiple-choice items. To complete the course, students were required to complete at least 80 percent of learning activities including watching video lessons, completing the mini-tests with a score of at least 6.5, and completing the summative test with a score of at least 6.5. Finally, to motivate students to complete the course and to secure the course objectives, the result of the summative test was taken into calculation of the final score of the English 1 course.

Besides, the university's learning management system (LMS) was chosen as the delivery form; that is, the course would be operated in an e-learning mode where learners were subjected to their self-paced learning progress and the instructors did not provide face-to-face instructions except for sending reminders about the completion of weekly tasks and supporting students if they needed. The LMS has a function for the course instructor to monitor students' engagement and progress.

Finally, the instructional strategy was established. Specifically, 32 lessons of which lesson 1 provides general information about the course, and other lessons cover 31 instructional topics were

uploaded on the LMS. Each lesson includes the aims, instruction contents, downloadable learning materials, and a mini-test. Learning materials comprise lesson slides, lesson notes in PDF format, lesson videos, vocabulary, and linguistic terminology. Students watched the videos, read the lesson slides and lesson notes, and then did the mini-tests. Each video is about 10 minutes long. In lesson 1, besides the above learning materials, there are 04 videos designed to guide students to self-study: using dictionaries, using Quizlet to learn vocabulary, exploiting online English learning materials, and interacting with the LMS, the list of textbooks and references. In the reference, there is a Quizlet link designed by teachers for students to study meta-linguistic terminologies.

Development phase

In this phase, the course developers were supposed to create samples of our materials in order to show their work to their administrators and make sure that they were on the right track. However, since the university has had the official guidance for developing the digital learning materials and the teachers - the material developers - have been used to developing digital materials, they moved directly to developing the materials of the course.

Seven English teachers developed all the materials in three months and the materials underwent several modifications. Specifically, the teachers internally peer-checked their first version to make any necessary adjustments (e.g., the format and the correctness of linguistic knowledge). Next, the adjusted version was uploaded to the LMS and subjected to the university's evaluation and acceptance committee. The committee consisted of five members, including the chair who was a member of the Board of Administrators, and other four English lecturers. All the evaluative comments were made on the LMS. Based on these comments, the developers made some further modifications to be finally accepted to put into use. Next, a pilot learning was conducted. To do this, two demo student accounts were created and added to the online class to experience the learning as the role of a student. The result showed the system ran smoothly and the LMS was user-friendly and easy to interact with. However, although the LMS has a forum module for teachers and students to discuss, it was not activated due to some regulations in the cybersecurity law (e.g., there must be a forum administrator to control and approve the posts).

Implementation phase

The implementation is divided into three main stages: Organizing the placement test, operating the course, and organizing the summative test. The placement and final tests were administered online to all freshmen in week 2 of the semester. Students used their mobile devices or personal computers to do the test in their classroom. The tests lasted 30 minutes and were designed by a group of experienced teachers who have taken part in formal training courses in language testing and assessment. The format and item types were typical for an English test, and the contents were aligned with the course learning outcomes.

After the placement test, 662 students with test scores smaller than 5.5 were equally placed in three mandatory e-learning classes. Before these students started, they were instructed to locate the course on the LMS. They are also advised to read carefully the course specifications and learn the first lesson before moving to the next one. Although the course was offered in e-learning mode, three teachers were appointed to monitor the class progress and to provide any support for students. The teachers have been used to running an e-learning course and using the LMS. To establish a communication channel and provide any support (technical, professional, or organizational support) for students, these teachers formed three community Zalo groups. They also had direct communication with a support technician. Any technical support was immediately handled by the support technician as it was reported from the teachers.

The course lasted three months in parallel with the time frame of the English 1 course. In the final week, students took a summative test. During the course, 16 students transferred to study other foreign languages like Chinese and Japanese, transferred to other universities, or withdrew from tertiary training, so there were 646 students taking this test.

3.1.2. Students' evaluation of the e-learning English course

Students' evaluation of the course design

Table 1 shows students' evaluative feedback on the course design. As can be seen from Table 1, students had highly positive evaluations of the design of the course. Specifically, all the items had mean values of over 4.2 and the highest standard deviation was 0.66, which indicated that there was a high level of agreement among the participants with the criteria of the course design. The highest rate was for the provision of essential course information ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.56$) while the lowest rates were for the structure of each unit and the perceived usefulness of the course for the upcoming formal English courses ($M = 4.29$ and $M = 4.23$, respectively). The three criteria (e.g., the course structure, its user's friendliness, and the suitability of teaching materials) had similar mean values ranging from 4.30 to 4.37. In summary, the results showed that the course was well-designed and relevant to the students.

Table 1. Students' evaluation of the course design

No.	Items	N = 234		Interpretation
		M	SD	
1	The course is appropriately structured	4.36	0.55	Highly positive
2	The course is friendly with users (students)	4.37	0.58	Highly positive
3	The structure of each unit is appropriately designed	4.29	0.56	Highly positive
4	The course provided students with essential information	4.42	0.56	Highly positive
5	The course helps me develop my learning autonomy	4.33	0.60	Highly positive
6	The course helps improve my English proficiency	4.33	0.59	Highly positive
7	The course helps me study English 1 course better	4.34	0.60	Highly positive
8	I think the course will help me study the coming English courses better	4.23	0.66	Highly positive
9	Teaching materials are suitable with students' ability	4.30	0.58	Highly positive
10	Teaching materials are suitable with students' learning demand	4.31	0.60	Highly positive

Students' evaluation of the tests and assessment policy

Table 2 depicts students' evaluative viewpoints about the tests and assessments. Overall, the statistics revealed that students also had highly positive evaluations on the tests and assessments. Specifically, except for the difficulty taking the tests ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.68$), all the other items had approximately the same mean values of 4.20 and the highest standard deviation was 0.60. These results indicated that there was a high level of consent among the respondents with a positive evaluation of the test and assessment's aspects (the method of test administration, the contents, its benefit to students' progress, and the assessment policy). To sum up, the results indicated that the tests and the assessment policy were suitable and benefited students' learning English.

Table 2. Students' evaluation of the tests and assessment policy

No.	Items	N = 234		Interpretation
		M	SD	
1	I think placement and summative tests are appropriately organized	4.25	0.60	Highly positive
2	I do not face difficulty in taking the tests.	4.12	0.68	Positive
3	I think the test contents are well-aligned with the course contents	4.24	0.58	Highly positive
4	I think the tests have helped me notice my progress	4.29	0.57	Highly positive
5	I think using the result of the summative test as one assessment point for the English 1 course motivates me to complete the course.	4.22	0.59	Highly positive
6	I think using the result of the summative test as one assessment point for the English 1 course is suitable.	4.25	0.60	Highly positive

Students' evaluation of the technology aspect and student's future intention

Table 3 shows students' evaluation of the technology aspect and their future intentions. The statistics revealed that students had a highly positive evaluation of the technology aspect (items 1 to 5) indicated by the mean values of over 4.2 and standard deviations of about 0.60. Specifically, they responded that they could easily access the LMS, the course content and interacted with

teachers. Similarly, the stability and compatibility of the LMS were highly rated ($M = 4.23$ and $M = 4.24$). The last two items (item 6, and item 7) were deliberately added to explore students' demand for interaction with their peers and intention for taking part in a similar course in the future. As shown in Table 3, students had a strong desire to do a similar course but also strongly demanded more interactions with their classmates ($M = 4.25$). Overall, the technology application facilitated students' learning through its accessibility, stability, and compatibility along with the strong demand and desire for the future course.

Table 3. Students' evaluation of the technology and intention

No.	Items	$N = 234$		Interpretation
		M	SD	
1	I have easy access to the university's learning management system (LMS)	4.22	0.67	Highly positive
2	I have easy access to the course contents in the LMS	4.25	0.62	Highly positive
3	The LMS operates with stability without interruption	4.23	0.59	Highly positive
4	The LMS is compatible with my electronic devices (e.g., computers and mobile phones)	4.24	0.64	Highly positive
5	I can have an easy interaction with teachers	4.22	0.67	Highly positive
6	I think I need more interactions with my classmates	4.25	0.62	Highly positive
7	I desire to do a similar course in the future	4.25	0.65	Highly positive

3.2. Discussion

This paper reported the development and implementation of an e-learning supplementary English course and evaluation of the course from non-English-majored students' perspectives across three main dimensions, namely the course design, the tests and assessment policy, and the technology and intention. While the development and implementation of the course followed the general steps, the detailed operation of each step was not radically identical to any process reported in the previous studies [5], [8]. For instance, while developing the course, Mercy University consulted with other teaching-learning models from some other universities and specified the course contents aligned with a formal English course to directly augment the students' knowledge deficiencies which the formal English courses could not often address due to the time constraint and large-class size.

Besides, the findings of this study demonstrated that students had a very positive evaluation of the course, which was inconsistent with findings in Nguyen et al. [5] and Dahal et al. [8], which reported that students generally satisfied with the categories related to the organization of online teaching activities, namely the design of courses, technology-related elements during the learning process. However, compared to those findings in Nguyen et al. [5], the currently investigated course received a bit higher rating. This could be explained by differences in the components of the courses (e.g., course design and technology-related factors).

Finally, the findings also unveiled that students had a willingness to do a similar course, which could be accounted for by their perceived benefits of the course and perceived ease of use of the LMS. This result supported the findings in those studies on e-learning course acceptance [4], [6], [7]. Additionally, the need for more interaction with peers in an e-learning environment suggested the natural demand for communicative activities which are typical to any language learning.

4. Conclusions and implications

This study has provided a report about an e-learning course to meet the critical needs of improving English proficiency for students with low levels of English at a tertiary institution in Vietnam, which contributes to the literature on using e-learning platforms (LMS) to deliver courses. Given the perspective that there were few studies conducted specifically in Vietnam on this topic, the current research results shed light on the contemporary application of technology to teaching-learning as an innovative teaching method.

Furthermore, the detailed description of the research context, course development, implementation, and evaluation might give useful pedagogical implications for other institutions with similar teaching-learning situations. First, the current research suggests that all the resources such as the technology and human resources should be well prepared before the start. Specifically, the LMS should be self-developed or customizable to the instruction needs and there should be experienced teachers serving as the material developers. The other stakeholders should include a member of the Board of Directors, a support technician, and a committee to evaluate the materials. Secondly, the course developers should conform to the ADDIE model's five stages of instructional design to ensure successful development and implementation. Besides, the topic-based instruction model suggested that expected learning outcomes should be specified carefully to facilitate the course design and learning process.

Moreover, students have accepted and been able to adapt to the new course delivery mode. Therefore, stakeholders should promote the deployment of these courses in the future as an alternative to traditional face-to-face instruction. Finally, the student's desire for more interaction with peers implies that the LMS could be improved by activating a discussion module or function like a chat room or a forum for learners to communicate with online peers and course instructors to exchange learning contents and information.

This study retained some limitations in terms of the methodology and scope. Methodologically, using quantitative research to gauge students' evaluative feedback would not provide an in-depth insight into the effectiveness of the e-learning English course. Therefore, it is suggested that a mixed-method approach combining quantitative and qualitative techniques should be employed for future studies. Besides, this study focused on the three components of the course, namely the course design, the testing and assessment policy, and technology, which also failed to provide a comprehensive view of the effectiveness of the course concerning other factors such as instructor-related factors, learner-related factors, and institution-related factors. Therefore, it is suggested that studies with extended scopes should be carried out to fulfill this limitation.

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