



## Factors Influencing Online Instruction: Insights from University EFL Lecturers in The Mekong Delta

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines EFL lecturers' perceptions of factors influencing online teaching quality at a university in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected from 13 lecturers through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings indicate that internet connectivity ( $M=4.85$ ), student engagement ( $M=4.54$ ), and external distractions ( $M=4.38$ ) were the most significant challenges. Conversely, class schedules ( $M=1.85$ ) had minimal impact. The study underscores the need for enhanced technological infrastructure, interactive teaching methods, and professional training for lecturers.

### TÓM TẮT

Nghiên cứu này khảo sát nhận thức của giảng viên tiếng Anh về các yếu tố ảnh hưởng đến chất lượng giảng dạy trực tuyến tại một trường đại học ở khu vực Đồng bằng sông Cửu Long. Nghiên cứu sử dụng phương pháp nghiên cứu định lượng, và dữ liệu được thu thập từ 13 giảng viên thông qua bảng câu hỏi có cấu trúc và được phân tích bằng thống kê mô tả. Kết quả cho thấy kết nối internet ( $M=4.85$ ), sự tham gia của sinh viên ( $M=4.54$ ) và các yếu tố gây xao nhãng ( $M=4.38$ ) là những thách thức lớn nhất, trong khi thời khóa biểu ( $M=1.85$ ) có tác động không đáng kể. Nghiên cứu nhấn mạnh sự cần thiết của việc nâng cấp cơ sở hạ tầng công nghệ, áp dụng phương pháp giảng dạy tương tác và đào tạo chuyên môn cho giảng viên.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Rationale

Online learning has emerged as one of the most advanced and widely adopted instructional models in higher education worldwide. Despite its numerous advantages, the effectiveness of online teaching and learning is influenced by a variety of factors. Consequently, extensive research has been conducted to identify these factors to mitigate challenges and enhance the overall quality of online education. The difficulties encountered by both instructors and students throughout different phases of an online learning experience, initial adaptation, active engagement, and post-course reflection, can exert both positive and negative influences on teaching methodologies and learning experiences. Therefore, identifying and analyzing these determinants is crucial for improving the efficacy of online instruction and fostering student success.

In the context of tertiary education, academic quality is primarily determined by the effectiveness of instructors' pedagogical approaches and students' learning engagement. Universities not only focus on curriculum development but also continuously explore innovative and effective instructional strategies to optimize both teaching delivery and student learning outcomes. In parallel, the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0), driven by advancements in information technology, has reshaped traditional educational paradigms by integrating digital tools into teaching and learning processes. The widespread adoption of internet-based technologies has facilitated the transformation of conventional instructional

practices into dynamic, technology-enhanced learning environments. To ensure meaningful and engaging learning experiences in today's competitive academic landscape, it is essential to align online teaching methodologies with students' evolving needs (Madani, 2019) [15].

Despite the growing body of research on online education, existing studies suggest that both objective and subjective factors can significantly impact the online learning experiences of educators and students (Muganda & Kabate, 2012) [19]. While previous research has explored factors influencing students in distance learning contexts, there remains a lack of investigation into their specific effects on the learning outcomes of English-major students.

Addressing this gap, the present study aims to examine the objective and subjective factors influencing the online learning outcomes of English-major students at a university in southern Vietnam. This institution transitioned from traditional face-to-face instruction to online teaching in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. By investigating EFL teachers' perceptions of these influencing factors, this research seeks to provide insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with online learning in the context of English language education, ultimately contributing to the development of more effective online pedagogical strategies.

### 1.2 Literature review

#### 1.2.1 Online Teaching and Learning

Online learning, commonly referred to as e-learning, has garnered considerable attention in recent years and is conceptualized in various ways. According to Maheshwari and Thomas (2017) [16], online teaching involves the

utilization of web-based platforms as instructional tools that can be accessed both within and beyond the traditional classroom setting. Meanwhile, online teaching and learning are often defined as an entirely internet-based educational approach, wherein both instructors and learners operate outside the conventional classroom environment, relying on digital technologies to facilitate the learning process (Oblinger et al., 2005) [21]. The integration of such technological tools into online education offers a wide range of benefits, enabling students to attain their academic objectives more efficiently (Junco et al., 2013) [12].

The emergence of online education represents a paradigm shift in 21st-century pedagogy, leveraging technological advancements to optimize knowledge dissemination and skill development. This model allows learners to engage with educational content from any location and at any time, thereby enhancing their learning outcomes through supportive digital tools such as computers and the internet. To participate in online education, students require minimal resources—typically, a computer with internet access and a registered student account. Numerous online platforms offer a diverse selection of courses tailored to various learning needs. Additionally, an increasing number of educational institutions have integrated e-learning into their teaching strategies, with universities and colleges adopting online courses to provide students with greater flexibility in balancing academic and professional commitments.

- Flexible scheduling: Students can independently organize their study timetables,

allowing for greater adaptability compared to rigid, fixed class schedules.

- Cost and resource efficiency: Online courses reduce financial burdens by eliminating transportation costs, minimizing infrastructure requirements, and addressing issues such as faculty shortages or low student enrollment in traditional settings.

- Autonomous learning and assessment: Students have greater control over their learning pace, with access to various assessment tools such as interactive quizzes and gamified educational resources, facilitating a more engaging learning experience.

- Archival access to course materials: Unlike traditional learning environments that rely on printed materials, online courses often provide recorded lectures and extensive digital resources, enabling students to review content more effectively.

- Enhanced interaction and collaboration: Online platforms foster communication among students and instructors through discussion forums, social media groups, and collaborative learning tools, enabling peer-to-peer knowledge exchange.

- Ubiquitous learning opportunities: With internet access, students can engage with educational content anytime and anywhere, making knowledge acquisition more accessible and convenient.

### *1.2.2 Factors Affecting the Quality of Online Teaching and Learning*

The quality of online education is shaped by a multitude of factors, with research indicating that both learning environments and pedagogical methodologies significantly impact student

outcomes (Ames & Archer, 1988) [1]. Traditional teaching approaches have long been considered effective in achieving educational objectives (Ames & Archer, 1988; Clayton et al., 2010) [1],[8]. However, with the rapid advancement of technology, digital learning platforms have become widely adopted, particularly in response to the global shift toward remote education due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, the efficacy of online teaching methods, particularly for students majoring in languages, remains a subject of academic inquiry (Azlan et al., 2020) [3].

This study is grounded in Chapnick's (2000) [5] theoretical framework on online education and the various factors influencing student learning outcomes. Mensink and King (2020) [18] describe learning outcomes as the result of continuous interaction and effort between instructors and students, reflecting students' overall engagement throughout the course. Additionally, the role of institutional educational systems plays a crucial part in shaping learning experiences (Rono, 2013) [25]. Narad and Abdullah (2016) [20] further emphasize the interplay between institutional support and the characteristics of both educators and learners in online environments.

Several key determinants influence the effectiveness of online education, including:

- Curriculum design and course content: the structure and organization of online courses are pivotal to learning success (Makokha & Mutisya, 2016) [17].
- Technical support from institutions: schools must provide adequate technological

infrastructure and assistance to facilitate smooth online learning experiences.

- Characteristics of instructors and learners: the pedagogical approaches adopted by educators, along with students' learning attitudes and engagement levels, play an essential role in academic performance (Teo & Noyes, 2011) [28].

Traditionally, educational curricula have been designed based on face-to-face instruction, with teachers assuming a central role in knowledge transmission. However, in online education, students take on a more autonomous role, requiring active engagement and self-directed learning to achieve academic success (Debattista, 2018) [9]. To ensure effective online instruction, it is imperative that teachers not only design content suited to digital learning but also provide ongoing motivation and guidance to students (Ashwin & McVitty, 2015) [2]. The ability of instructors to tailor course content to online formats, including considerations such as lesson duration and technological integration, directly impacts student learning outcomes. Effective online curricula should align with students' individual learning capacities and proficiency levels (Ricart et al., 2020) [23]. Furthermore, online learning environments can offer advantages over traditional methods in terms of flexibility, accessibility, and opportunities for self-paced study. Instructors can incorporate diverse teaching materials and digital resources to enhance student engagement, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes.

Another critical factor influencing the effectiveness of online education is the availability of institutional and technological

support. The successful implementation of digital learning platforms depends on universities and broader societal infrastructure providing user-friendly, reliable, and easily accessible technological tools (Chivu et al., 2018) [7]. Institutions must establish structured support systems to optimize online learning environments and enhance student satisfaction. Roddy et al. (2017) [24] suggest that pre-course training for both instructors and students on the effective use of digital tools can significantly impact learning outcomes and instructional quality.

In addition to these objective factors, subjective factors related to both educators and learners play a crucial role in shaping online education. From an instructional perspective, effective communication, interaction, and student engagement are key determinants of successful online learning experiences (Cheng et al., 2019) [6]. In contrast to traditional face-to-face settings, where direct interaction fosters engagement, online learning environments necessitate the use of digital communication tools to facilitate meaningful interactions. By leveraging technological resources, instructors can create more dynamic and participatory learning experiences, leading to improved academic performance (Sarabadani et al., 2017) [26].

Furthermore, students' individual characteristics, including their attitudes, motivation, and sense of responsibility, significantly influence their academic achievements in online education (Makokha & Mutisya, 2016) [17]. While institutions, instructors, and families can provide external support, the ultimate determinant of student success is their level of intrinsic motivation and

engagement with course content. Kemp and Grieve (2014) [13] identified two primary behavioral patterns among students in traditional and online learning environments: in face-to-face settings, students are more likely to engage in direct communication and collaborative learning, whereas online learners exhibit reduced interaction with instructors and peers. The level of student engagement and participation in class discussions directly impacts the effectiveness of instruction and learning outcomes. Additionally, students with strong cognitive abilities and high levels of interaction in online courses contribute to the effectiveness of instruction, enhancing knowledge transmission and academic performance.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODS**

### **2.1 Research design**

This research was conducted using a quantitative approach, which has been widely recognized in the literature as an appropriate method for studies involving large sample sizes, a substantial number of participants, and an extensive set of questionnaire items. In alignment with this methodology, a structured questionnaire was utilized to gather quantitative data, aiming to address research questions regarding lecturers' perceptions of online teaching and learning.

### **2.2 Participants**

To achieve the research objectives, the selected participants included 13 lecturers engaged in teaching English language as a major at a University in the Mekong Delta. Data collection was conducted on a voluntary basis, ensuring that participants willingly contributed to the study. The participants' background information was presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Descriptions of participants**

Participants	Personal information	Number	Ratio (%)
Gender	Male	5	38.5
	Female	8	61.5
Age	23-29	1	7.7
	30-39	11	84.6
	40 – 49	1	7.7
	over 50	0	0.0
Teaching Experience	Less than 5 years	3	23.1
	5 years or more	10	76.9
Academic Qualification	Bachelor's Degree	0	0.0
	Master's Degree	13	100
	Doctoral Degree	0	0.0
Participation in Online Teaching Programs/Courses	Yes	3	23.1
	No	10	76.9

Specifically, among 13 participants, five lecturers were male (accounting for 38.5%), while eight were female (61.5%), with ages ranging from 23 to 49 years. In addition, the majority of the lecturers had more than five years of teaching experience (10 individuals, accounting for 76.9%). A smaller proportion had less than five years of experience (3 individuals, accounting for 23.1%). Regarding academic qualifications, all participating lecturers held a master’s degree (100%). Finally, in terms of participation in online teaching training programs or courses, only three out of 13 lecturers (23.1%) had attended such training, whereas the remaining 10 lecturers (76.9%) had not taken part in any online teaching-related courses or programs.

**2.3 Data collection**

The study employed a questionnaire as the primary tool to collect quantitative data. It consists of 20 questions, all of which is concise

and focused on the necessary data to be explored. This tool is an effective and quick way to obtain a huge amount of information especially to a large number of respondents in a short time. Moreover, if the questionnaire is well conducted the data can be easily collected and analyzed. The questionnaire was designed using a 5-point Likert scale with options ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". Furthermore, the items in the questionnaire were designed based on the results of previous studies presented in the literature review.

**2.4 Data analysis**

The data collected from questionnaire was then analyzed by Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 20.0. First, a Reliability Analysis was conducted to check the reliability of the questionnaire. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient showed that the questionnaire was completely reliable ( $\alpha=0.82$ ). Next, Descriptive Statistics were performed to calculate the mean

score, maximum, minimum, and standard deviation.

**3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 2 presents the results obtained from the questionnaire regarding the perceptions of English-major students towards the factors affecting the quality of online learning.

**Table 2. Teachers' perceptions of factors affecting the quality of online learning**

Factors affecting online learning	N	Lowest	Highest	Mean	Standard Deviation
Curriculum design	13	1	5	2.69	1.377
Schedule	13	1	4	1.85	0.987
Online lessons	13	1	5	2.69	1.251
The lessons' liveliness	13	2	4	3.38	0.870
Supportive exercises/activities	13	2	4	3.15	0.987
Teaching Methods	13	1	5	3.23	1.301
Technical support from the school	13	1	5	2.85	1.519
Online teaching equipment/ tools	13	2	5	3.85	1.144
Training course on online learning	13	2	5	4.15	0.987
Access to learning resources	13	2	5	3.62	1.193
Internet connection	13	4	5	4.85	0.376
Skills in using tools/equipment	13	2	5	3.46	1.266
Software/programs	13	1	4	2.69	1.109
Space/location	13	2	5	3.69	1.109
Ability to apply information technology	13	1	5	3.15	1.519
Distracting factors	13	3	5	4.38	0.768
Interaction between teachers and students	13	2	5	4.00	0.816
Psychological aversion to online learning	13	1	5	3.54	1.266
Students' interaction skills with teachers	13	3	5	4.23	0.832
Student's focus and level of engagement	13	4	5	4.54	0.519
Overall perceptions	13	3	4	3.50	0.523

According to Table 2, lecturers' perceptions of factors influencing the quality of online teaching in English courses align with existing literature on online education challenges. The significant concern regarding unstable internet connectivity (M=4.85) is consistent with findings that technological infrastructure is crucial for effective online instruction (Ferri et al., 2020) [10].

The issue of students' lack of concentration and passive participation (M=4.54) reflects challenges identified in online learning environments, where the absence of physical presence and potential distractions can lead to reduced engagement (Holmes, 2013; Setiawan et al., 2021) [11],[27]. Similarly, external

distractions such as leisure activities and work commitments (M=4.38) have been noted as factors that negatively impact student focus during online sessions (Ouyang et al., 2022) [22].

Limited interaction skills among students in online settings (M=4.23) highlight the need for developing digital communication competencies, as effective interaction is essential for language acquisition in English courses (Lee & Meng, 2021) [14]. The lack of participation in training courses on online teaching and learning by lecturers (M=4.15) suggests a gap in preparedness, underscoring the importance of professional development in online pedagogy (Bragg et al., 2021) [4].

Conversely, the perception that class schedules have minimal impact on online teaching quality ( $M=1.85$ ) may indicate that the flexibility inherent in online learning platforms alleviates scheduling concerns (Weldon et al., 2021) [29].

To put in a nutshell, these findings emphasize the critical role of technological reliability, student engagement, and targeted training in enhancing the quality of online teaching for English study program. Addressing these factors through institutional support and professional development can lead to more effective teaching practices and improved student outcomes in the online learning environment.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGETIONS

The findings emphasize that internet connectivity, student engagement, external distractions, and limited digital interaction skills are the most significant challenges affecting online instruction. In contrast, factors such as class scheduling and curriculum design were perceived as having minimal impact. To improve online teaching effectiveness, institutions should enhance technological infrastructure, implement interactive teaching strategies, provide digital communication training, and offer professional development programs for lecturers. Addressing these issues will contribute to a more engaging and effective online learning experience for both educators and students. Future research should explore the long-term impact of online teaching on student performance, the effectiveness of different instructional methodologies, and the role of motivation in online learning. Additionally, investigating faculty training programs and adaptation to online education

post-pandemic would provide valuable insights for the sustainable development of digital learning in higher education.

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