INVESTIGATING ENGLISH-MAJORED STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE DESIGN OF ONLINE COURSES

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Abstract: The study aims to examine EFL students' perceptions on the effectiveness of online course design. This paper employs a mixed-method research design using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. More specifically, a questionnaire for 83 English-majors and a follow-up interview for 10 students were undertaken at HCMC University of Technology and Education. The data were then analyzed using the SPSS 20.0 software to calculate mean scores of the surveyed items. The findings disclosed that some online course features such as course structure, assessment and technology tools were found to be efficient and most students had positive attitudes towards teachers' online course design. Moreover, some shortcomings of the course plan were identified. The study also points out some practical suggestions from the students' viewpoints which can be used to guide online course design for instructors to improve the online teaching quality in the future.

Key words: Perceptions, online course design, online education

1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has forced all educational institutions to be closed and shift into online instruction for the continuity of learning. The sudden transformation into a new virtual environment has caused numerous obstacles for teachers in preparing and developing fully-featured online instruction. Most educators have mainly transferred the educational contents into web-based education, rather than based on the ordinary course design. This raises a consideration of online course design as the prerequisite for implementing online teaching for the purpose of promoting teaching effectiveness in a virtual setting. A well-planned course design can stimulate learner engagement (Farrell & Brunton, 2020; Dahalan *et al.*, 2013) and facilitate students to navigate as well as associate the course concepts together to have an overview of the whole course (Reushle *et al.*, 1999). Therefore, this study is designed to examine how students perceive the effectiveness of the online course design. Based on the investigation of students' perception, the recommendations can be made for the improvement of the future course design.

Even though a multitude of publications have examined various dimensions of online education in the Covid-19 crisis period, including course design (e.g., the design and development process of online courses (Baldwin *et al.*, 2018), its critical elements and issues (Bruster, 2015; Wang, 2000; Diorny, 2012), teachers' lived experiences and practices (Lenert & Janes, 2017; Peruski & Mishra, 2004; Colak, 2018), student satisfaction (Placencia & Muljana, 2019), and online learners' perspectives towards course design in statistics class (Yang, 2017)), few data have been collected to specify learner opinions on online course design in the current literature in general and particularly in the context of Vietnam. Accordingly, to fill this gap, the present study aims to examine what EFL students perceive about the online course design concerning its

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appropriateness and shortcomings of the design features so that instructors can adjust the design of their online courses to boost the efficacy of online education.

The online course design is closely associated with learner engagement in online learning and the implementation of online teaching. It is very crucial for educators to fully comprehend the positive and negative dimensions of the design features, especially from students' viewpoints, from which certain solutions can be obtained to enhance teaching efficiency. Thus, this study is expected to provide online instructors with suggestions and guidelines to reach high-quality design of internet-based teaching. Additionally, litle empirical research has been done in the perspectives towards online course design at tertiary level so far, so the results of this study are supposed to provide more evidence to the current literature related to e-learning.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Definition

Course design is considered as the process and method of creating quality learning environments and experience for students, focusing on intellectual development with the assistance of technology (McGee & Reis, 2012). An online course design should stimulate students' active learning and collaboration among learners, support students to make connections between the course concepts and the other ideas, express teacher social presence on a daily basis, with appropriate technology tools to support diverse learning activities (Chickering & Gameson, 1987). In other words, an effective online course design should stimulate the interaction with regular social presence. It should be a fertile environment for students to develop their critical thinking skills and personalized learning at their own pace. The teaching and learning activities should be process-driven wherein the final product is as important as their learning procedure.

2.2. Critical elements of online course design

Based on Lister's literature review (2014) and other related research about the core components of online course design, the present paper synthesizes the three major elements of designing a virtual classroom, namely course structure, interaction and assessment/testing. With the purpose of investigating learners' perceptions on online course design, this course design framework of three major dimensions is chosen for this study.

Course structure

Course structure refers to the shape of an online course on the virtual platform, including course guidelines and expectations (learning objectives, learning outcomes, class regulations, teaching/learning methods, grading and testing, samples of completed assignments or deadline reminder), learning material presentation (references, coursebooks, and other related materials). The course outline should be clear and consistent for students to grasp what they are learning throughout the course and follow the course rhythm straightforwardly. A better use of time to navigate around the course information helps students focus on and prepare for learning better.

Interaction

There are four types of interaction in web-based classrooms, specifically the interaction between students with their peers, teachers, learning content and technology (Nguyen, 2017).

Student-student interaction has the greatest impact on students' learning achievement (Nguyen, 2017). It should be frequent, active and collaborative which inspires students to interact with each other socially and academically through team/pair activities, discussion forums, comment posts or question-answer space, etc. An efficient design of peer interaction creates a sense of belongings, satisfying their personal and course needs.

Teacher-student interaction can be practiced in synchronous and asynchronous classrooms. Teachers can interact with learners by partaking in discussion forums, replying to comment posts, supplying well-timed facilitation or celebrating e-conferencing (Gultom & Suhartini, 2020). Especially, timely and prompt feedback to student products is crucial to motivate students to join the online interaction; teacher feedback should also be constructive and detailed for students to understand and improve their learning performance (Xu *et al.*, 2021; Richardson *et al.*, 2016). Teacher presence is vital to establish a safely virtual environment and hence engage learners in the learning process.

Student-content interaction refers to the contact with a wide variety of learning activities and materials, e.g., PowerPoint presentation, video recordings, tutorial videos or quizzes and exercises. Different teaching activities stimulate learners' interests and needs as well as meet their different learning styles since students have various choices (Ausburn, 2004). Various and rigorous course content can stimulate learners' active learning and critical thinking skills. For instance, assignments with constant reflection on readings, mutual comments or discussion help students relate the course materials to their personal lives and give them opportunities to express their own opinions, which boosts their critical thinking skills (Teräs & Herrington, 2014). The learning tasks need to be authentic and purposeful, especially connected to real life situations (Gedik *et al.*, 2013). In this way, students can see the relevance of the course content with the real world as they can link their learning with hands-on experience, from which their curiosity is boosted and then they feel more motivated.

Student-technology interaction is mainly through the LMS system and learning platforms. The LMS platform supports students to access the learning materials, quizzes, assignments, forums, interaction, or review the recordings for later revision. Online teachers should select user-friendly digital tools since students are not always competent at technology (Lee, 2014). The difficult access to the technology tools makes them confused and uncomfortable, intervening their engagement and negatively impacting their learning motivation.

Assessment and testing design

Boitshwarelo *et. al*. (2017) present principles for the design of online tests with six components, including purpose, context, learning outcomes, tasks, feedback processes, and interaction. For an effective online test design, the test purpose is clearly clarified to students, both recalls foundational knowledge and develops cognitive knowledge as well. The diverse assessment tasks with transparent marking schemes and instructions are contextually relevant and aligned with the course learning outcomes (Yonker, 2011) and should be used frequently at different stages throughout the course to enhance student engagement and performance (Smith, 2007). Additionally, these tasks should be authentic (Montgomery, 2002), contributing to students' real-life experience, developing problem-solving skills, and stimulating peer/self-

assessment to promote their self-regulation (Gardner-Medwin, 2006). The immediate feedback with reference to relevant resources can also reinforce student learning (Kibble, 2007).

This section summarizes the key factors of online course design with clear and consistent course structure for students to navigate around and follow the course information easily, with frequent and efficient online interaction in both academic and social aspects, combined with purposeful and relevant e-assessment design, especially boosting student cognitive knowledge and the peer collaboration with timely feedback.

2.3. Previous studies related to students' perception towards online course features

Research on online course design from students' perspectives in EFL context is still limited in number, but there are still some notable attempts.

Lee (2014) investigated students' satisfaction levels with online course structure on 81 mathematics graduates by using a 24-item questionnaire. The findings indicated that over 80% of the participants agreed that clear guidelines for course assignments were vital for learners to clarify the final products and better perform their tasks. The course organization included a deadline checklist presented at the beginning of the course and the accessible online materials. Regarding teacher presence, the participants expected instructor's open communication with quick response to students through email, constructive and pertinent feedback on their works. Concerning technical dimension, nearly 80% agreed that the technology tools should be simple and easy to access as not all students are competent at using technology. They also wished instructors to provide adequate training on technical aspects to reduce frustration.

Farrell and Brunton (2020) carried out a qualitative study to explore the factors influencing student engagement experiences in online classes among 24 online learners at Dublin City University. The research found that peer interaction was perceived as an essential source of encouragement and human connection. Also, an engaging online teacher who provides module support in synchronous online sessions and in asynchronous discussion forums has a significant impact on learners' success and engagement.

Fontanillas *et al.* (2016) carried out quantitative research to explore student perceptions on the e-assessment and their roles during this process on 913 students. Students were assessed by using project-based learning including the continuous process assessment and the final outcomes. The findings showed that most students had high satisfaction with the course's evaluation model. The constant assessment made them work harder, especially the assessment criteria were fully explained to students which helped them understand the assessment tasks and teacher expectations, and the involvement in peer and self-assessment gave students a critical perspective of their own and other groups' products. Particularly, students highly valued teacher's thorough feedback and relevant interaction to groupwork which promoted group dynamics.

Rostaminezha (2019) investigated 40 students' perceptions about instant feedback on e-tests from the University of Birjand in Iran by using a pilot study. The findings indicated that instant feedback provided a self-assessment opportunity for students but also had a negative impact on their performance since they were always concerned about their results during the test.

The paper suggests that teachers should notice the personalization of electronic tests based on learner preference of feedback type to decline their exam anxiety.

The studies cited above have focused on learners' perceptions on different aspects of online course design in various learning settings. From the above research results, it is currently raising the concern to the author whether or not these reported findings could be reasonably and comprehensively applied to the case of EFL students at UTE. This concern has motivated the present study.

3. Methods

3.1. Research design

This study employed mixed-method research design. The combination of both quantitative and qualitative is to confirm the interpretation of the research findings as well as ensure the generalization of the data in a diverse perspective (Creswell, 2014).

3.2. Research questions

The current article attempts to search for the answers to the following research question:

What are EFL students' perceptions on the online course design?

This question leads to the three sub-questions:

1. How do EFL students perceive the design of online course structure?
2. How do EFL students perceive the design of online interaction?
3. How do EFL students perceive the design of online assessment and testing?

To expand the quantitative data, interview questions will be used as follows:

What features of online course design are effective?
What design features of online courses do EFL students find essential to be improved?
What suggestions do EFL students have to improve the online course design

3.3. Setting of the research and participants

The research was conducted at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education where different online courses have been implemented so far. Since last years' Covid-19 outbreak, all students of multiple disciplines mainly took synchronous and asynchronous classes and did the final exams online. 83 EFL students who already had experiences of online learning for at least two semesters were chosen to provide their thoughts and perceptions on online course design. Participants were sophomores, juniors and seniors attending 13-15 online courses on average (62% females, 38% males).

3.4. Data collection

The quantitative data were collected via an online questionnaire applying Google survey. After the survey, 10 participants agreed to individually partake in the semi-structured interview through "Google meet". The author informed the participants on issues such as informed consent, anonymity, the storage of confidentiality and compensation. They were aware that the interview was recorded. The interview was totally administered in Vietnamese to ensure convenience and absolute comprehension. After being clearly informed and explained the theme and purpose of the study, the participants were asked to respond to a number of questions related to the topic. Each interview lasted approximately 15 minutes and proceeded until the participants had no further information to share.

3.5. Data instrument

The instrument used is a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire consisting of 21 question items based on a 3-dimensional online course design framework as presented above. The first 6 items were used to explore learners' opinions on online course structure, the next 10 items on online interaction, and the last 5 items on online assessment/testing.

The semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were used to require students to share their thoughts on the online course design concerning its shortcomings, its effectiveness and some suggestions for improvement. Deep interview was used as the main data collection tool since it can provide the researchers an opportunity to provide deeper understanding of learners that cannot be obtained through the results from questionnaire (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.6. Data analysis

For quantitative data, the SPSS program 20.0 was employed for data analysis. The items of the participants' perceptions using a 5-point Likert scale (with score 1 = Strongly Disagree to score 5 = Strongly Agree) were quantitatively measured in the unit of mean (M) and standard deviation (SD).

For qualitative analysis, the content analysis is applied as it "*offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analyzing qualitative data*" (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Every participant was coded, e.g., student No. 1, No. 2, No. 3 was coded S1, S2, S3, etc. The information from the interview was transcribed. The transcription was then coded and grouped into main themes and patterns. Then, these themes were interpreted to show any relationships.

3.7. Validity and reliability

The writer checked validity by asking for help from her colleagues while reliability was tested by using Cronbach's Alpha.

Table 1. Reliability of the main themes in the questionnaire

Online course structure	Online interaction	Online assessment
N of Cronback's items Alpha	N of Cronback's items Alpha	N of Cronback's items Alpha
6.886	10.919	5.828
Average Cronbach Alpha: .953		

The alpha values of each main theme and the whole items are between 0.8 and nearly 1, the value required for satisfactory reliability. The writer, therefore, concluded that the questionnaire was reliable for data collection.

4. Findings

4.1. Perceptions towards the design of course structure

Table 2. Survey items regarding perceptions towards online course structure

Items	Contents surveyed	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
1.1	I find the guidelines for course information and course expectations are informative and clearly stated.	1 1.2%	2 2.4%	14 16.9%	46 55.4%	20 24.1%	3.99	.789
1.2	I find the presentation of assessment information clear.	1 1.2%	4 4.8%	12 14.5%	35 42.2%	31 37.3%	4.10	.905
1.3	The learning materials are well-organized.	1 1.2%	4 4.8%	15 18.1%	42 50.1%	21 25.3%	3.94	.860
1.4	I can understand what I am going to learn throughout the course.	1 1.2%	7 8.4%	23 27.7%	37 44.6%	15 18.1%	3.70	.907
1.5	I can follow the course rhythms easily.	1 1.2%	8 9.6%	24 28.9%	34 41%	16 19.3%	3.67	.938
1.6	I can prepare for the course better.	3 3.6%	9 10.8%	20 24.1%	35 42.2%	16 19.3%	3.63	1.033

Table 2 shows the result of students' perceptions on online course structure. Overall, the participants agreed on the appropriateness of the online course outline. The highest mean score is on the presentation of online assignment and testing information (item 1.2: M = 4.10, SD = .905), followed by course information and expectations (item 1.1: M = 3.99, SD = .789) and then the learning material presentation (item 1.3: M = 3.94, SD = .860). It was also reported that the clear design of online course helped learners have an overview of the course (item 1.4: M = 3.70, SD = .907), follow the course straightforwardly (item 1.5: M = 3.67, SD = .938), and prepare for the course better (item 1.6: M = 3.63, SD = 1.033).

The data from the interview also indicated that all interviewees found the guideline information was consistently presented. They especially valued the updated lectures and well-organized learning materials, from which they could find the essential information easily.

4.2. Perceptions towards the design of online interaction

Table 3. Survey items regarding perception towards online interaction design

Items	Contents surveyed	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
2.1	I like the flexibility of online interaction with my peers and teachers through various forms and channels.	8 9.6%	6 7.2%	22 26.5%	28 33.7%	19 22.9%	3.53	1.203
2.2	I can interact with my peers and instructors frequently, actively and collaboratively.	5 6%	9 10.8%	27 32.5%	28 33.7%	14 16.9%	3.45	1.085
2.3	I can receive constructive feedback and prompt responses from teachers for my personal and academic questions.	2 2.4%	5 6%	16 19.3%	44 53%	16 19.3%	3.81	.903
2.4	I believe that interaction with my peers and teachers online can improve my learning achievement.	2 2.4%	10 12%	19 22.9%	36 43.4%	16 19.3%	3.65	1.005
2.5	The pre-recorded lectures are well-planned.	2 2.4%	3 3.6%	20 24.1%	43 51.8%	15 18.1%	3.80	.866
2.6	I find the learning tasks are authentic and meaningful.	1 1.2%	3 3.6%	17 20.5%	43 51.8%	19 22.9%	3.92	.829
2.7	Online learning tasks develop my critical thinking and reflective abilities.	2 2.4%	6 7.2%	19 22.9%	40 48.2%	16 19.3%	3.75	.935
2.8	The various digital tools have made online learning more effective.	2 2.4%	4 4.8%	15 18.1%	33 39.8%	29 34.9%	4.00	.975
2.9	I can easily adapt to technology tools for my study.	2 2.4%	8 9.6%	18 21.7%	31 37.3%	24 28.9%	3.80	.866
2.10	I like real-time learning sessions through live stream.	4 4.8%	10 12%	20 24.1%	34 41%	15 18.1%	3.55	1.074

It can be seen that there was a higher evaluation for the effectiveness of the online student-technology interaction design. They appreciated the various digital tools (item 2.8: M = 4.00, SD = .975). Concerning student-content interaction, learners highly valued the authentic learning tasks (item 2.6: M = 3.92, SD = .829) and resultantly enabled them to develop the critical thinking and reflective skills (item 2.7: M = 3.75, SD = 935). Meanwhile, the design of student-teacher interaction and among peers received lower mean scores (item 2.2: M = 3.45, SD = 1.085) and thus may not have much contribution to their online learning achievement (item 2.4: M = 3.65, SD = 1.005). However, the opinions of the respondents were diverse with much opposition in terms of teacher-student and student-student interaction.

From the data collected, most interviewees showed positive attitudes towards the design of online interaction. They favored the flexibility and quick responses of contact with their peers and teachers online. S9 said that, "*Through discussion forums, I can easily communicate with everyone in class, unlike in a traditional classroom, I can only interact with those next to me. I can work in groups with my partners through online channels and save time travelling, then I can*

use this time for further study". Concerning the interaction design with content, the majority of respondents liked the various types of materials uploaded on LMS, particularly the recorded lectures for later review. S10 confessed that, "*I really appreciated the tutorial videos and lectures on LMS as I can read the lessons before class to understand the live lectures better. The lessons are well-prepared and informative with lively pictures and slides, making me more interested in learning*". In terms of interaction with technology, most participants valued the Class In platform, with the functions of "breakout rooms" and "white board" from which they could communicate with peers and teachers simultaneously with interactive activities, which replicated face-to-face class and reduced the isolation of the virtual learning environment. S8 added, "*The useful and user-friendly online page LMS, combined with live learning can help me have a deeper understanding of the lessons*".

However, some students were concerned about the effectiveness and frequency of the online student-teacher interaction. They preferred to have more channels to communicate with online teachers. S5 said that, "*I find teacher presence in the online environment limited. I desire to contact more with my lecturers beside academic issues, through social networking sites or online page*". S3 would like teachers to upload more learning materials for self-study and more pre-recorded lectures with better sound quality. They also wished online instructors to design more interactive games to enhance their learning motivation.

4.3. Perceptions towards the design of online assignment and testing

Table 4. Survey items regarding perceptions towards online assignment and testing design

Items	Contents surveyed	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
3.1	The assessment instructions are clearly clarified.	1 1.2%	7 8.4%	16 19.3%	41 49.4%	18 21.7%	3.82	.913
3.2.	I find the assessment tasks relevant with learning outcomes and useful for my course.	1 1.2%	3 3.6%	11 13.3%	53 63.9%	15 18.1%	3.94	.755
3.3	Online assessment strategies are various.	2 2.4%	7 8.4%	18 21.7%	36 43.4%	20 24.1%	3.80	.997
3.4	I like online tests with instant feedback.	3 3.6%	6 7.2%	17 20.5%	30 36.1%	27 32.5%	3.87	1.068
3.5	The frequent test throughout the course and the number of online assignments is appropriate.	1 1.2%	6 7.2%	18 21.7%	38 45.8%	20 24.1%	3.84	.917

All items received the agreement from the learners with the means over the standard value of 3.4, which showed positive results for online assignment and testing design. The most agreed statement was the relevance and usefulness of online assessment tasks (item 3.2: M = 3.94, SD = .755), followed by instant feedback (item 3.4: M = 3.87, SD = 1.068) and the frequency plus the number of online testing (item 3.5: M = 3.84, SD = .917). The least mean score is a little bit lower with assessment strategies (item 3.3: M = 3.80, SD = .977).

The findings from interviews show that the participants felt satisfied with the design of online assessment. In particular, they liked the instant feedback and grades after the test, which reinforced their knowledge. They also appreciated the techniques of reflective writing with peer and self-assessment, which made them more responsible for their own learning and developed their critical thinking. Nevertheless, some felt stressed as they were unfamiliar and inexperienced with online testing. S4 expressed her concern that, "*I felt overwhelmed because the number of online exercises were much more than that in a traditional classroom. Also, I think the duration of online tests should be longer in case of electricity or internet failure*". Moreover, S5 wished his teachers to present clearer assignment information with rubrics and samples of the completed assignment and final tests so that he could complete the tasks better.

5. Discussion and implications

The data of this study was analyzed based on the theoretical framework of three main themes, namely the design of online course structure, online interaction and online assessment/testing. The findings confirm that the majority of EFL learners have positive perceptions on the online course design. Firstly, most students agree that the presentation of online courses is well-planned with clear guidelines for course information, course expectations, e-assessment and sufficient learning materials, assisting them to follow the online course conveniently. The same positive opinions above can be found in Lee's study (2014). However, some would like to have deadline dates and groups' project progress to be updated on the LMS page. Regarding the second aspect, the most striking feature is participants' positive viewpoints on various and user-friendly technology tools. It is understandable since online instructors use Class in platform plus others (Google Forms, Wordwall, Quizzlet, Khahoot, isLcollective, Padlet) making the learning process more interactive and cooperative among peers and groups. This finding echoes the one suggested by Lee (2014) that students were highly satisfied with the digital tools with easy access and simple to use. Nevertheless, some complain that live learning is too long; consequently, they wish to have more learning materials for self-study even though they value the recorded live learning and lectures for later review. Hence, the design of learning activities and contents for self-study space, combined with the forums for peer discussion, e.g., in the kind of flipped classroom, to reduce time of livestream is worthy for further research. Meanwhile, the interaction design between teacher-students and among peers receive the least agreement from the respondents, except teacher prompt and timely feedback. The learners desire to have more communicative opportunities through more channels and forms with online supervisors related to personal aspects, experience sharing and emotional support. The finding of the present study is contrary to the one claimed by Farrel and Brunton (2010) and Nguyen (2017) that students most value student-student interaction and teacher presence in an online environment whereas the online interaction between student and learning content is less important. Finally, the design of e-assessment is highly appreciated by the respondents, especially the instant feedback, which is in line with the previous research implemented by Rostaminecha (2019) regarding student satisfaction with the instant feedback of e-testing in promoting their motivation in learning and their self-assessment ability. Additionally, the various e-assessment strategy design is considered to enhance learners' critical thinking and cooperative learning, concentrating on final product and the learning progress. Positive learners' perceptions towards online assessment

design are matched with the investigation by Fontanillas *et al.* (2016) wherein students, along with teachers join the assessment process through peer and self-assessment in the project-based learning. However, some students have negative opinions on online test formats as they were inexperienced and unfamiliar with e-testing as well as unable to solve technical problems during the tests. They also find the progressive assignments challenging to carry out with vague rubrics and unclear explanation from teachers. In comparing with the findings of the previous studies of online course design in the EFL setting in Vietnam, this study has obtained its own value. Pham (2020) used mixed methods approach to examine factors influencing students' online interaction in an online English course at a Vietnamese university while Bui *et al.* (2021) reported their survey data to discuss the benefits and drawback of collaborative online learning activity at Van Lang University. Also, Diep, Nguyen and Vo (2021) suggested the steps of designing an online course, that is, determining the learning goals, designing the learning contents, designing the learning activities, and designing evaluation strategies. It can be said that those studies mentioned single aspects of online course design whereas the present study examined the dimensions of online course design more generally and included students' viewpoints in the design of online courses they attended at UTE. This cannot be found in the previous studies.

As educators, teachers should comprehend learners' perceptions and their needs towards online course design in order to improve course design in various dimensions. It is implied that EFL students at UTE have lacked skills and experience in doing online tests because they were not trained on those ones before. To solve this problem, consequently, it is advisable that before tests or examinations, UTE students should attend a formal training of online test formats, the use of educational software or platforms to reduce their frustration. The assignment should also be explained in more detail, with clear description, rubrics and sample. Secondly, the participants confessed that they easily feel isolated and disoriented in web-based education, so more interactive activities among peers and student-teacher interaction should also be paid more attention; students need to interact together and with online instructors both academically and socially. The sharing of learning experience and methods, coupled with the exchange on the online posts or discussion forums is essential to establish an online community. Teacher facilitation in terms of academic, technical and emotional issues is paramount to create a sense of belonging in the online learning community. Next, in the online course presentation, a checklist of due dates and students' work progress should be updated on the learning page to remind them. Eventually, the self-learning space for individuals should be more well-planned with more learning materials and quizzes to enhance learner autonomy as well as reduce long hours in front of the screen.

6. Conclusion

The present study has provided evidence about EFL students' perceptions on the design of online courses concerning course structure, online interaction and e-assessment in the context of Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education. Although the online courses have not been widely applied at the institution before, the online course design is perceived relatively appropriately by the students. Nevertheless, the online interaction design needs to be further studied; more discussion forums or other interactive online platforms should be designed to promote teacher social presence and the interactivity among students in academic and social

aspects. More learning materials and learning activities are essential to be designed in the self-learning space to enhance students' learner autonomy.

Due to the time limit, the present study could only deal with a small number of target participants and data, which resulted in fewer databases to be analyzed and interpreted. Hence, if more participants were involved in contributing to the study, the results could yield a better generalizability. Moreover, most of the respondents were female, which leads to another limitation of investigating based on gender.

Although there are many articles on online education in ESL/EFL content, few studies are available on online course design. Therefore, the issue related to course design features in virtual settings should be investigated more thoroughly, for instance, the factors or indicators of successful online course design. More investigation should also be done in online interaction design. Also, further empirical studies on larger samples with the comparison between genders can be implemented. Finally, this paper merely concentrates on EFL learners' perspectives on the online course features, there should be more in-depth research conducted in other disciplines in various settings.

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KHẢO SÁT NHẬN THỨC CỦA SINH VIÊN CHUYÊN NGỮ VỀ THIẾT KẾ KHÓA HỌC TRỰC TUYẾN

Tóm tắt: Bài báo nhằm tìm hiểu thái độ của sinh viên chuyên ngữ về hiệu quả của việc thiết kế các khóa học trực tuyến. Bài viết dùng phương pháp nghiên cứu định tính và định lượng. Cụ thể, bảng câu hỏi khảo sát dành cho 83 sinh viên và phỏng vấn dành cho 10 sinh viên được thực hiện tại Khoa Ngoại Ngữ, Trường Đại học Sư phạm Kĩ thuật Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh. Số liệu sau đó được phân tích bằng phần mềm SPSS 20 để tính mức trung bình của các mục khảo sát. Kết quả đạt được thể hiện rằng một số đặc điểm thiết kế của khóa học trực tuyến như cấu trúc khóa học, kiểm tra-đánh giá, và công cụ công nghệ đạt hiệu quả và sinh viên có thái độ tích cực đối với việc thiết kế khóa học trực tuyến của giáo viên. Ngoài ra, một số điểm hạn chế của việc thiết kế cũng được xác định. Bài nghiên cứu cũng đưa ra một số giải pháp đề xuất của sinh viên, có thể dùng làm nguồn tham khảo cho giáo viên để nâng cao chất lượng giảng dạy trực tuyến trong tương lai.

Từ khóa: Nhận thức, thiết kế khóa học trực tuyến, dạy-học trực tuyến