Improving the quality of online English teaching and learning at universities and colleges

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Abstract: *In the context of digital transformation and deep international integration, online teaching and learning have become an inevitable trend in higher education. For English language courses, online learning not only enables students to be more flexible in managing their study time and learning environment but also creates opportunities to incorporate modern technologies into language skill development. However, this form of teaching and learning still faces several limitations regarding teaching methodology, technological infrastructure, and interaction between lecturers and students. This article reviews the current situation based on previous studies and, on that basis, proposes several solutions to improve the quality of online English teaching and learning at universities and colleges.*

Keywords: *Quality; online teaching and learning; English; universities; colleges.*

1. Introduction

In the context of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 and the rapid development of information technology, online teaching and learning have become an inevitable trend in higher and vocational education. Particularly after the Covid-19 pandemic, this method has further affirmed its essential role in ensuring training progress and quality. As a key subject that helps students broaden their knowledge and enhance their international integration capability, English requires even greater attention in the online environment. In practice, online English teaching and learning, however, still encounter several challenges: limited interaction between lecturers and students, insufficiently flexible teaching methods, learners' unequal levels of self-study abilities and technological competence. Therefore, researching solutions to improve the quality of online English teaching and learning at universities and colleges is a pressing requirement, contributing to realization of the goals of educational training reform in the new period.

2. Literature review

Online teaching and learning have become an inevitable trend in modern education, particularly in foreign language instruction. In Vietnam, numerous studies in recent years have focused on improving the

quality of online English teaching and learning, considering it an important direction to meet the demands of higher education reform, promote students' self-study, and thereby enhance their foreign language competence.

Currently, online learning (E-learning) is an educational modality that utilizes information technology and the Internet to organize remote teaching and learning activities. More specifically, online learning "is a form of instruction in which teachers and learners can communicate with each other via the Internet through various means such as email, online discussions (chat), forums, and video conferencing" (Huong, 2023).

Existing studies consistently affirm that the application of information technology in online teaching is a timely and widespread trend adopted by universities, colleges, and many lecturers (Trang et al., 2021). Tools such as Google Classroom, Zoom, and other online learning platforms allow instructors to interact with students quickly and effectively (Ly & Hue, 2025). However, several studies also acknowledge that the current quality of online teaching and learning remains uneven. Factors such as lecturers' technological competence, students' self-learning ability, technical infrastructure, assessment systems, and the level of interaction continue to pose major challenges that need to be addressed (Trang et al., 2021).

Several studies have proposed solutions to improve the quality of online English teaching and learning, focusing on four main areas: (1) Developing digital pedagogical competence for lecturers; (2) Building rich and highly interactive digital learning materials; (3) Enhancing academic support and learning advisement for students; and (4) Improving management mechanisms and assessment systems for online learning outcomes (Huong, 2023; Ngoc, 2024). In addition, application of artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), and gamification in English learning is also considered a promising direction for future research (Nhuong & Linh, 2022).

Overall, existing studies have laid an important foundation for the development of online teaching in general and online English instruction at universities and colleges in particular. However, more empirical research tailored to specific groups of learners is still needed to provide a more comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of new instructional models. Improving the quality of online teaching and learning is not only an immediate requirement but also a long-term strategy aimed at building an open and flexible education system that meets the demands of international integration and sustainable development.

3. The current situation of online English teaching and learning quality at universities and colleges

In the context of digital transformation and the rapid advancement of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, "online learning has become not only a popular learning model worldwide but also increasingly widespread in Vietnam," especially at the tertiary level (Hoi & Phu, 2023). In recent years, the practice of online English teaching and learning at universities and colleges has achieved several positive outcomes, contributing to the improvement of students' foreign language competence and their adaptation to modern learning trends.

First, a number of universities - such as the National Economics University (NEU), the Vietnam National University - University of Engineering and Technology (VNU-UET), the Hanoi University of Science and Technology (HUST), the Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City (VNUHCM) - have implemented various software and digital platforms to support training. Higher education institutions have begun integrating online learning management systems (LMS) capable of managing teaching activities, learning progress, and online assessment, in combination with online teaching applications such as Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, Zoom, and Zalo (Nhuong & Linh, 2022). These systems help manage, store, and track students' learning progress

while providing a flexible and convenient learning environment. Additionally, many universities have invested in upgrading Internet infrastructure, online classrooms, and digital learning resources to support teaching and learning (Ngoc, 2024). As a result, English teaching and learning is no longer confined to traditional classrooms but is expanded through digital platforms, enabling learners to access materials and lessons anytime and anywhere.

Second, English lecturers have made significant progress in applying information technology to their teaching practices. Many lecturers use interactive tools such as Kahoot, Quizizz, Padlet, and ChatGPT to increase engagement and motivate learners (Trang et al., 2021). Online teaching methods have also been innovated toward a learner-centered approach, emphasizing the development of communication skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills through group activities, online discussions, and real-time feedback. This encourages students to become more autonomous, conduct more self-study, and participate more actively in the learning process.

Alongside the achievements, the quality of online English teaching and learning at universities and colleges still faces several limitations, specifically:

First, the facilities and information technology equipment serving online instruction - such as computer systems, projectors, and Internet connectivity - at some institutions are not yet fully synchronized or modern. The application of information technology in teaching has not been systematically studied, leading to the installation and use of certain technological devices in ways that are unscientific and fail to maximize the benefits of technology in the teaching-learning process (Thang & Tu, 2023).

Second, some lecturers have not been formally trained in digital pedagogy and thus remain hesitant in using support tools such as interactive software, online assessment applications, or multimedia teaching techniques. Others still rely on traditional teacher-centered approaches, focusing mainly on theoretical explanations without fully leveraging technology to enhance interaction and develop students' English communication skills. As a result, online lessons become monotonous, less engaging, and fail to sustain students' motivation.

Third, several students still lack proactiveness in online learning, remain dependent on lecturers, demonstrate limited self-discipline, and are easily distracted by the online environment (Trang et al., 2021). Their digital literacy also varies, affecting their ability to access and process learning materials. In addition, limited opportunities for real-time English communication in virtual settings slow down the development of listening and speaking skills, which are the cores of the subject.

Fourth, financial constraints pose challenges for adequately investing in modern, up-to-date facilities that meet actual needs. Existing equipment is often unsystematic, fragmented, and outdated. There is also a shortage of highly qualified IT specialists and key personnel to design and operate educational technological platforms. Additionally, reluctance to adopt innovations among some people (i.e. lecturers, learners…) hampers the effective use of digital tools, resulting in various shortcomings in applying technology to improve teaching and learning quality.

4. Solutions to improve the quality of online English teaching and learning at universities and colleges

Based on the analysis of the current situation of online English teaching and learning in universities and colleges, the author proposes several solutions to improve the quality of this activity, aiming toward an open, flexible education system that meets the requirements of international integration and sustainable development.

First, enhancing information technology competencies and digital pedagogical skills for lecturers.

In the context of rapid digital transformation in education, strengthening IT competencies and digital pedagogical skills among lecturers is a key solution to improving the quality of online English teaching and learning in universities and colleges. Lecturers are not only knowledge transmitters but also decisive actors in effective implementation of digital learning models. Therefore, equipping, training, and regularly updating their technological and digital pedagogical capacities should be regarded as a continuous, well-planned, and well-invested task.

It is essential to promote the training of IT skills for English lecturers in a practical manner that aligns with the requirements of online teaching. Training courses should focus on enabling lecturers to master online learning platforms such as Google Meet, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, LMS, Moodle, as well as digital content creation tools such as Canva, Quizizz, Kahoot, Padlet, and Edmodo. This will allow lecturers to confidently design, organize, manage, and assess students' learning processes effectively in digital environments. At the same time, institutions should facilitate lecturers' participation in advanced training courses on emerging technologies such as AI, Machine Learning, and Learning Analytics to enhance their capacity for applying modern technologies in English teaching.

Besides technological competencies, digital pedagogical skills also play a particularly important role. Lecturers must know not only how to use technology but also how to apply it creatively and flexibly in order to optimize students' learning process. Universities and colleges should organize training programs on designing e-lessons and developing interactive online instructional scenarios that foster interactions and students' self-study abilities. Lecturers should be guided on how to integrate technology with active teaching methods - such as project-based learning, game-based learning, and scenario-based learning - to create engaging learning environments that help students develop language skills and creative thinking.

In addition, to ensure long-term effectiveness, training institutions should establish mechanisms to encourage, assess, and recognize lecturers' digital pedagogical competencies. Applying evaluation criteria related to digital and technological competencies in emulation and commendation will motivate lecturers to continuously learn and innovate their teaching methods. Institutions should also form "digital learning communities" where lecturers can share experiences and support one another in applying technology and developing high-quality online teaching materials.

Second, investing in improving technical infrastructure and the Learning Management System (LMS).

In the context of robust digital transformation, investing in the development of technical infrastructure and an effective online Learning Management System (LMS) plays a pivotal role in enhancing the quality of online English teaching and learning in universities and colleges. A modern, stable, and user-friendly LMS not only supports lecturers in delivering lessons and monitoring students' learning progress but also creates an interactive and flexible learning environment that meets the demands of educational innovation in the digital era. According to the Politburo's Resolution No. 71-NQ/TW dated August 22, 2025 on breakthroughs in developing education and training, institutions must "ensure adequate, standardized facilities and equipment," including high-speed Internet connections and high-capacity servers that enable stable and uninterrupted access throughout teaching and learning activities. Upgrading internal networks, establishing smart classrooms, and equipping essential devices such as cameras, microphones, interactive boards, and online teaching software are indispensable to ensuring high-

quality audio, visuals, and optimal learning experiences for students. Particularly, technical contingency plans should be developed to promptly resolve issues related to network connectivity, data security, and information safety, preventing disruptions that may affect teaching effectiveness and learning progress.

In addition, the LMS must be designed and improved with features that best support the needs of English teaching and learning. Specifically, the system should integrate essential tools such as discussion forums, interactive assignments, online quizzes, automated grading functions, and diverse learning resource storage (videos, audio files, documents, images). Moreover, the LMS should enable lecturers to monitor and evaluate each student's progress through learning analytics, thereby adjusting their instructional methods accordingly. For English language courses, integrating tools for online listening-speaking practice, pronunciation assessment software, and automatic grammar and vocabulary checkers, etc. will make learning more dynamic, practical, and effective.

Operating and managing the LMS requires a team of highly competent technicians and administrators. Therefore, tertiary institutions should invest in training and upskilling this workforce to ensure their capacity to operate, maintain, and update the system regularly while ensuring stability, security, and modernity. At the same time, both lecturers and students need to be trained to use the LMS proficiently and to fully leverage its features during teaching and learning activities. To ensure long-term effectiveness, institutions must adopt sustainable financial investment strategies, mobilize social resources, and collaborate with technology enterprises and international education organizations to continuously upgrade their infrastructure and learning management software. When the LMS is fully developed, synchronized, and made user-friendly, online English teaching and learning will become more flexible, engaging, and effective, thereby contributing to improving the quality of training in higher education institutions.

Third, innovating English teaching methods toward interaction and learner-centeredness.

Innovating teaching methods must be grounded on the principle of learner-centered instruction in which lecturers act as facilitators and guides, while students take the central role in acquiring and applying knowledge. In online classes, lecturers should design highly interactive learning activities such as group discussions via Zoom, idea-sharing on Padlet, pair work or small project assignments on Google Classroom. These learning formats not only encourage students' active participation but also enhance their collaboration, critical thinking, and English communication skills in a digital learning environment.

In addition, teaching approaches should be adjusted toward diversifying interaction forms and tools. Instead of relying solely on one-way lecturing, lecturers can incorporate simulated videos, conversational scenarios, language games, or AI-based applications that provide automated feedback and personalize the learning process. Platforms such as Kahoot, Quizizz, Nearpod, or ChatGPT can be seamlessly integrated to make lessons more engaging and to offer learners frequent opportunities for review and reinforcement. Notably, online learning tools also allow students to practice pronunciation, listening comprehension, and written and spoken communication in near-authentic contexts, thereby fostering more comprehensive English communicative competence.

Lecturers should focus on creating an open learning environment that encourages two-way communication and timely feedback. In online instruction, the connection between lecturers and students may diminish without adequate interaction. Therefore, organizing virtual discussion sessions or small study groups helps strengthen engagement and supports students in overcoming challenges in their learning. At the same time, lecturers should regularly collect

learners' feedback to adjust content and teaching methods, ensuring alignment with their needs, proficiency levels, and learning pace.

Fourth, developing an open, diverse, and learner-centered learning resource system.

The development of an open learning resource system should prioritize diversity and continuous updates. Universities and colleges need to collaborate with lecturers to build a digital learning repository that includes various formats such as videos, podcasts, e-lectures, online textbooks, language games, and applications for pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar practice. Integrating multimedia resources makes English learning more engaging and dynamic, thereby enhancing students' retention and motivation. At the same time, materials must be regularly updated to keep pace with global linguistic, cultural, and technological trends.

The learning resource system should be designed to match individual learners and their proficiency levels. Content needs to be categorized according to language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing), English proficiency levels (A1 to C1 according to the CEFR scale), and learning goals (communicative, academic, or English for specific purposes). Personalizing learning resources enables students to select materials that fit their abilities and needs, while also supporting lecturers in designing learner-centered lessons that promote students' active engagement and self-study ability in online learning environments.

Moreover, to maximize the effectiveness of learning resource system, a strong connection is needed between institutional materials and open educational resources which are available online, such as Coursera, EdX, the British Council, BBC Learning English, and various interactive English learning platforms. Institutions should encourage both lecturers and students to build, contribute and share learning resources, thereby fostering an open learning community that promotes knowledge

sharing and creativity. Along with this, a screening and quality assurance mechanism is essential to ensure that learning materials are accurate, scientifically sound, and aligned with instructional objectives.

Fifth, strengthening assessment activities and learner support.

In the current context of online English teaching and learning at universities and colleges, assessment and learner support play a crucial role. These activities not only enable lecturers to measure learning outcomes but also help students recognize their own competencies and adjust their learning strategies accordingly. Particularly, assessment in online environments must be innovated in terms of content, format, and methodology to ensure fairness, objectivity, and accurate reflection of students' abilities.

Institutions should establish a diversified assessment system that combines periodic and continuous evaluation, as well as teacher assessment and student self-assessment. In addition to traditional multiple-choice or written tests, more performance-based assessments should be adopted, such as presentations, group projects, or online speaking tasks. These approaches not only help students practice language skills in practical contexts but also promote autonomy, creativity, and collaboration. Furthermore, lecturers should utilize modern technological tools - such as Google Forms, Kahoot, Quizizz, and LMS-based assessment functions - to administer tests, collect responses, and analyze results efficiently and transparently.

In addition, feedback and learner support must be emphasized consistently. After each assessment or learning activity, lecturers should provide detailed comments highlighting students' strengths and weaknesses, along with suggestions for improvement. Regular academic advising sessions, online consultations, or discussion forums should be organized to give students opportunities to raise questions, share difficulties, and receive

timely support. These activities not only reinforce learning but also create a supportive environment that encourages confidence, engagement, and stronger connections between lecturers and learners.

5. Conclusion

Online teaching and learning of English at universities and colleges have become an inevitable trend in the context of digital transformation and international integration. In practice, this modality creates opportunities to innovate teaching methods, expand learning spaces, and strengthen students' self-directed learning. However, the quality of online education still faces limitations related to technical infrastructure, lecturers' technological competencies, levels of interaction, and learners' autonomy. To enhance quality, educational institutions need to prioritize developing lecturers' digital pedagogical skills, improving technical systems and LMS platforms, renewing instructional methods toward greater interactivity, developing rich digital learning materials, and strengthening assessment aligned with learner support. The synchronized implementation of these solutions will contribute to improving the quality of online English training while laying a foundation for building a modern, flexible educational model that meets human resource development requirements in the new period.

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