

THÁI ĐỘ CỦA SINH VIÊN CHUYÊN NGÀNH TIẾNG ANH ĐỐI VỚI VIỆC SỬ DỤNG NGÔN NGỮ MẸ ĐỂ TRONG LỚP HỌC TIẾNG ANH: NGHIÊN CỨU TẠI MỘT TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC Ở VIỆT NAM

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Nghiên cứu này tìm hiểu thái độ của sinh viên trong giờ học kỹ năng thực hành tiếng và giờ học các môn chuyên ngành đối với việc sử dụng ngôn ngữ mẹ đẻ (L1) trong lớp học ngoại ngữ (L2) cũng như làm rõ quan điểm của sinh viên của mỗi chuyên ngành về việc sử dụng L1 trong các lớp học L2. Về mặt phương pháp, nhóm nghiên cứu đã sử dụng bảng hỏi nhằm khảo sát 334 sinh viên tại một trường đại học ở Việt Nam. Kết quả cho thấy mặc dù có một số khác biệt đáng kể nhưng sinh viên của cả lớp học kỹ năng thực hành tiếng và lớp học chuyên ngành đều có thái độ tích cực đối với việc sử dụng L1 trong các lớp học L2 vì những lý do khác nhau. Dựa vào kết quả thu được, nghiên cứu được kỳ vọng sẽ là một kênh tham khảo hữu ích góp phần vào việc sử dụng L1 hiệu quả trong giảng dạy và học tập tiếng Anh ở Việt Nam.

Từ khóa: thái độ, sử dụng L1, lớp học kỹ năng ngôn ngữ, lớp học chuyên ngành.

This research aims to examine the general attitudes of students in language skills and specialization classes towards L1 use in L2 classrooms, and to investigate the perspectives of students from each group on L1 use in L2 classrooms. Methodologically, questionnaires were employed where 334 students at a Vietnamese university were selected for an attitudinal survey. The results revealed that despite some significant differences, students of both class types, i.e. language skills and specialization, showed positive attitudes towards the use of L1 in L2 classrooms for different reasons. In view of the findings, the implications discussed are expected to be useful additional channels for effective strategies for L1 use in English teaching and learning in Vietnam.

Keywords: attitude, L1 use, language skills courses, specialization courses.

ENGLISH MAJORS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS L1 USE IN ENGLISH CLASSES: A CASE STUDY AT A VIETNAMESE UNIVERSITY

Introduction

English language learning, particularly for English majors, has

become significantly more accessible in recent years due to abundant resources and innovative teaching approaches. While the effectiveness of diverse teaching methods

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in equipping English majors with English proficiency (L2) is undeniable, the role of the mother tongue (L1, Vietnamese in this context) in L2 classroom for both instructors and students remains a topic of debate. In addition, the question of whether to use students' L1 in L2 classes particularly takes on heightened significance within settings with a shared cultural, meaning that most people in a country share the same beliefs and culture and generally speak the same language.

In Vietnam, specifically, because of the trend of continuous improvement in foreign language teaching and the emergence of a number of new teaching methods, the use of the mother tongue in English classes is increasingly not supported (Nguyen, 2021). Nevertheless, this view is not universally shared among Vietnamese students, indicating that the role of the mother tongue in English language teaching remains a contentious issue in the country.

Furthermore, the debate extends beyond the simple binary of using or not using the mother tongue. A comparative analysis of attitudes among different learner groups, particularly English majors, is crucial but under-researched in the Vietnamese context. Nguyen's paper in 2021 can be considered one of the rare papers on this topic, in which he found that

the use of Vietnamese in English classes is still accepted by the majority of students and lecturers from specialization courses, although the frequency, purpose, and method of using L1 still depend on many other factors.

However, the applicability of Nguyen's (2021) research on L1 use in L2 classrooms to other universities or for specific student groups, such as those in language skills courses, remains unclear. This research paper addresses this gap by not only examining L1 use in English language classes at a Vietnamese university but also gathering opinions from both specialization¹ and language skills students, aiming to provide a decent comparison and broader perspective on the role of L1 in L2 classrooms. From there, it can be concluded whether L1 should be used in classes for English majors or not, and if so, how it should be used to maximize the benefits it can bring.

The aims of this study are to investigate and thus compare the attitudes of English majors towards the use of their first language (L1) in L2 classroom settings. The study explores these attitudes across various student groups. Specifically, the aims of this research are (1) to examine the general attitudes of students studying language skills courses and specialization courses towards L1 use in L2 classrooms

¹ There are three specializations at the Faculty of English Linguistics and Literature (EF): English Linguistics & Language Teaching, American-

British Culture & Literature, and English Translation & Interpreting.

and (2) to examine specifically the perspectives of students from each specialization on the use of L1 in L2 classrooms.

1. Literature review

1.1. L1 and L2

1.1.1. Definition of L1 and L2

L1 and L2 are ubiquitous terms in language learning and teaching, particularly in English. L1 generally refers to the learner's first language, encompassing terms like native language, primary language, and mother tongue, which are often treated as synonymous (Saville-Troike, 2012). L1 is typically acquired early in life, usually before age three, and is integral to the individual's upbringing.

Similar to L1, the differences among terms related to L2 also need to be clarified. L2 includes terms such as EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and ESL (English as a Second Language). EFL, as Harmer (2009) noted, is used for communication with English speakers globally, often taught in learners' home countries or through short-term courses abroad. EFL is typically used in cross-cultural communication or as part of academic curricula, with limited immediate practical application (Saville-Troike, 2012). Conversely, ESL applies in communities where English is an official language, such as the UK or the US, where learners use English daily for survival and integration

(Harmer, 2009).

In a nutshell, ESL pertains to English use in countries where it is a dominant or official language, while EFL refers to its use in non-English-speaking environments. In this paper, L2 will specifically refer to EFL, aligning with the educational and social context of Vietnam.

1.1.2. Roles of L1

Given the ongoing debate about the role of L1 in L2 classrooms, this section highlights both supportive and opposing perspectives from scholars. Numerous studies emphasize the benefits of using L1 in L2 instruction. First, L1 facilitates learning, aids comprehension, and supports both educators and learners; furthermore, L1 can break language barriers, allowing students to express themselves more confidently, especially when they have limited L2 proficiency (Benson, 2004). Holding the same viewpoint, Harbord (1992) adds that L1 saves time, making it easier for instructors to explain complex concepts, thereby enhancing student understanding.

In Vietnam, where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) and not widely used outside the classroom, L1 is particularly valuable. In EFL contexts where students share a common first language, bilingual instruction is often the norm. This approach helps learners compare linguistic and cultural differences, ultimately fostering acceptance of the new language (Nguyen, 2021). Auerbach

(1993) also underscored L1's usefulness in paraphrasing, checking comprehension, and reducing learner anxiety.

However, there are drawbacks to L1 use. For instance, Cook (2001) argued that L1 use may signal a teacher's incompetence and should be avoided. Similarly, Harbord (1992) cautioned that reliance on translation can hinder L2 development by limiting exposure to and practice in the target language. Excessive L1 use may lead to oversimplification and cultural misunderstandings, as not all expressions in English can be directly translated into students' L1 (Harbord, 1992).

1.1.3. Factors influencing the use of L1 in L2 classrooms

Institutional factors include time constraints, curriculum structure, policies, institution type, and university entrance requirements, all which shape language choice (Shin, Dixon, and Choi, 2020). For instance, methods such as Direct and Audio-Lingual Methods discourage L1 to prevent interference with L2 acquisition (Allwright, 2014). Additionally, time limitations often lead to L1 use for simpler tasks rather than for complex discussions (Shin, Dixon, and Choi, 2020).

Psychological factors are also crucial, with scholars arguing that language transfer is as much a psychological challenge as it is a linguistic one (Yi, 2012). L1 use can lower psychological barriers, reduce anxiety, and accelerate progress in

L2 learning (Auerbach, 1993). However, more anxious learners might rely on L1 more frequently, avoiding challenging L2 structures (Schachter, 1988).

Other factors also influence L1 use, including social and linguistic considerations. Auerbach (1993) highlighted that L1 use benefits students with limited L2 proficiency, while language disparities can affect L1 use positively or negatively. In the context of Vietnamese and English, the significant linguistic distance justifies L1 use. Furthermore, social-psychological factors or personality orientation may also dictate L1 use in L2 settings (Yi, 2012).

In summary, the use of L1 in L2 classrooms is influenced by a complex interplay of factors related to teachers, learners, academic environments, and psychological aspects. While L1 can bridge cultural differences, support learner-centered pedagogy, reduce anxiety, and enhance the learning environment, its use ultimately depends on subjective factors, including teachers' and students' preferences and viewpoints.

1.2. Attitude, the ABC model and its components

1.2.1. Attitude

The word *attitude* itself is quite abstract and can be understood from many different angles. Eagly and Chaiken (1993) defined

attitude as “a psychological tendency expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor” (p. 1). More specifically, attitude can be defined as the way in which a person views and evaluates something or someone and as the tendency to react positively or negatively to a certain idea, subject, or situation (Vargas-Sánchez et al., 2016).

Similarly, Pickens (2005) defined attitude as a mindset of behaving in a particular tendency based on an individual’s experiences and temperament. According to Pickens (2005), when referring to a person’s attitude, people often try to explain that person’s behavior. It can also be stated that attitude is a complex combination of many different factors, including personality, beliefs, values, behavior, and motivation. For example, when someone says, “She has a positive attitude at work,” people often think of her emotions and behavior in that work environment. In addition, Jain (2014) said that since attitude is a psychological phenomenon, it cannot be observed; therefore, it can be assumed that attitude is a subjective, personal attribute that is very difficult to measure.

Attitude, in brief, refers to complex psychological tendencies that reflect an individual’s feelings, behavior, and

perceptions toward a specific object or situation. It can be positive or negative, conscious or unconscious, evaluative or informational, and can have a significant impact on an individual’s decisions or course of action. In addition, attitude is changeable and difficult to measure.

1.2.2. *The ABC Model and its components*

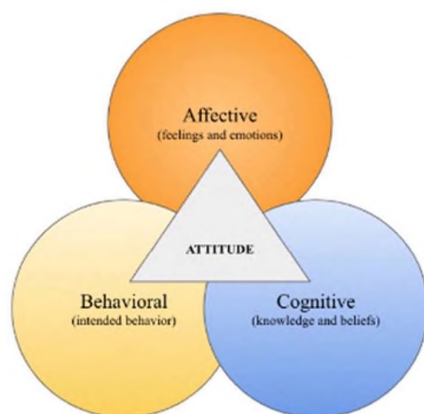
The attitude model opted, which is also one of the most common models found in research articles, is the ABC model (aka the tri-component model), put forward in 1969 by Thomas M. Ostrom. The ABC model was selected for the theoretical framework of the study because it is clearly presented and highly generalizable. In addition, the attitude components in the model are also more measurable than the components in other models. Although the two models, ABC and CAC², are similar, as the ABC model was detailed and researched in many projects, its reliability is also higher. In particular, the fact that the elements in the ABC model are described more clearly and in detail will facilitate researchers in designing questions in the questionnaire with easier-to-measure indicators.

Figure 1. The ABC Model or The Three-

² The CAC model introduced by Schiffman and Kanuk (2004) proposes that attitudes are built around three components, including (1) the

cognitive component (beliefs), (2) the affective component (emotions), and (3) the cognitive component (behaviors).

Component Model of Attitude (adapted from Breckler, 1984)



The ABC model shows that attitudes include three components: affect, behavior, and cognition. According to Jain (2014, p. 5), “Affect denotes the individual’s feelings about an attitude object. Behavior denotes the individual’s intention towards an object of attitude. Cognitive denotes the beliefs an individual has about an attitude object.”

The affective component of attitude pertains to an individual’s emotional response—positive or negative—towards an attitude object. Haddock and Maio (2010) highlighted that emotions significantly influence attitudes through the emotional reactions evoked by exposure to the object. This emotional component is crucial, as evidenced by research (Jain, 2014); for instance, some students fear speaking English in public.

The behavioral component involves observable actions based on one’s attitude towards the object. For example, students

may avoid speaking English due to fear, reflecting their behavior towards a past emotional experience, such as being criticized for their pronunciation (Haddock & Maio, 2010).

The cognitive component encompasses the beliefs and thoughts associated with an attitude object. This element influences emotions and behaviors, as seen when students perceive public speaking in English as challenging, leading to reluctance (Haddock & Maio, 2010). Additionally, attitudes may be shaped by the evaluation of an object’s attributes, as in the case of an English learner choosing a dictionary, where careful consideration of various factors influences the purchasing decision.

1.3. Former studies on L1 use in L2 classrooms

Littlewood and Yu’s (2009) paper addressed three key issues: the reasons for teachers’ widespread use of L1, strategies for balancing L1 and L2, and advice for teachers who wish to use L2 while not entirely discarding L1. Despite the lack of direct data collection, the study effectively supports its arguments with evidence from previous research. A notable insight is the cultural perspective that Western teachers often avoid L1 to maintain the status of native-speaking instructors, thus upholding neo-colonial dominance. The study suggests that L1 should not be completely abandoned but used appropriately, though it would have been

more valuable with original data collection.

Yildiz and Yesilyurt's (2017) study, one of the latest international studies, examined whether Turkish should be used in English teaching and to what extent. Data from 374 prospective English teachers reveal strong support for L1 use, particularly in enhancing student-teacher interaction, especially in contexts where English is rarely used outside the classroom. However, the study's reliance on a single data collection method (questionnaire) and lack of instructors' perspectives are limitations.

Three domestic studies were also reviewed. Nguyen and Pho (2017) explored the effectiveness of code-switching in teaching reading comprehension and students' attitudes toward this method. The study found that students prefer a bilingual approach for better understanding, particularly with vocabulary and abstract concepts. However, the study's short duration, small sample size, and focus solely on reading comprehension limit its generalizability.

Nguyen (2018) investigated code-switching in pre-intermediate EFL classes, using data triangulation methods for comprehensive results. The study found variability in code-switching use among teachers and students support for using L1 for specific purposes, such as content explanation and enhancing interaction. However, the study's small sample size and focus on non-English majors limit its

broader applicability.

Nguyen (2021) examined L1 use in English major classrooms, finding that students generally accept L1 use but suggest adjusting its extent depending on the course. While the study aligns closely with the group's research direction, its small sample size and exclusion of lecturers' perspectives limit its generalizability.

It can be concluded from the studies above that previous studies have revealed that overseas research on L1 use is often limited in scope, focusing on specific participant groups rather than covering a broad range. Most studies examine L1 use in secondary or high school settings, with fewer exploring its role in universities. Even in higher education contexts, research often centers on a single specialization. Rarely do studies investigate L1 use across various specializations such as English Linguistics, English Language Teaching, Translation, and Literature. In Vietnam, research on this topic is scarce also. As a result, to address these limitations, the current study aims to expand its scope by examining the attitudes of first-, second-, and third-year students towards L1 use in L2 classrooms based on the two following research questions:

Research question 1: *Is there a statistically significant difference between the attitudes of students studying in language skills courses and specialization*

courses towards L1 use in classes for English majors?

H₀: There is no statistically significant difference between the attitudes of first-year, second-year, and third-year students towards L1 use in classes for English majors.

H₁: There is a statistically significant difference between the attitudes of first-year, second-year, and third-year students towards L1 use in classes for English majors.

Research question 2: Is there a statistically significant difference in attitudes towards L1 use in English-major classes among students from three specializations?

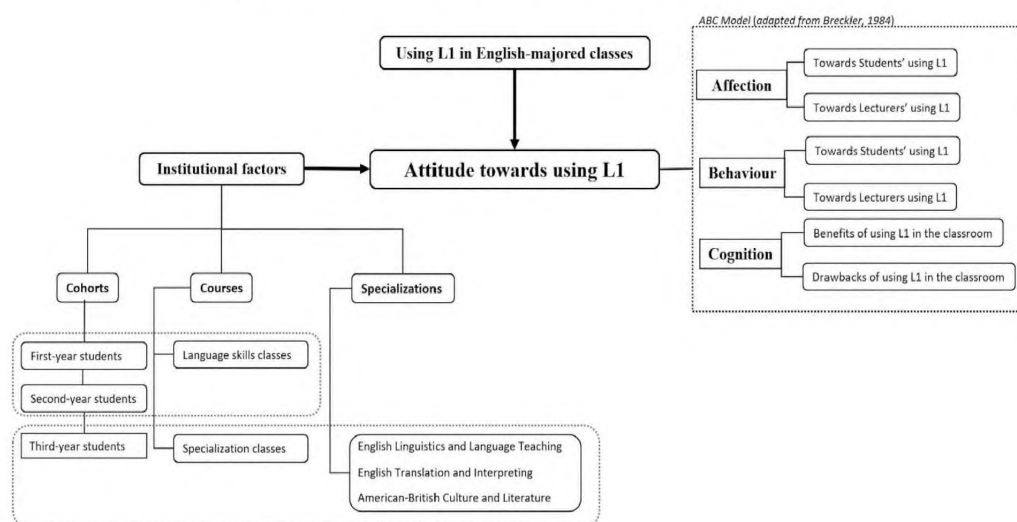
H₀: There is no statistically significant difference between the attitudes of third-year students of three specializations towards L1 use towards L1 use in specialization classes.

H₁: Alternative hypothesis: There is a statistically significant difference between the attitudes of third-year students of the three specializations towards L1 use in specialization classes.

1.4. Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework underscores the interconnected relationships between factors, including subjective and objective ones, and individuals' attitudes towards using L1 in English classrooms for English majors.

Figure 2. The conceptual framework of the research



In this framework, the dependent variable is the attitude towards L1 use, while the independent one is the actual use of L1 within different educational settings. Three primary independent variables are

identified: individual factors, specialized classes, and institutional factors (including cohorts, courses, and specializations). Individual factors encompass personal characteristics and attributes that may

influence one's attitude toward L1 usage, while specialized classes refer to specific educational programs or courses tailored to meet the needs of student populations. Institutional factors encompass broader organizational aspects such as cohorts, courses, and specializations within the educational institution that may shape attitudes toward L1 use. By delineating these relationships, the conceptual framework provides a structured approach for examining the complex dynamics underlying attitudes towards the use of L1 in English language classrooms.

2. Methods

2.1. *Pedagogical Setting and Participants*

There are significant differences in the courses offered to each cohort from their first to fourth year. In the first year, students take courses in language skills and other foundational subjects to strengthen their language competence. In the second year, similar but more advanced courses are provided, along with supporting courses such as Introduction to Culture and Society or Introduction to Literature in preparation for the students' division into different specializations in the following year. Finally, in the last two years, both theoretical and practical courses are tailored to the students' chosen specializations, enhancing their professional competencies for various future careers.

The study participants comprised first-, second-, and third-year English majors at a

Vietnamese university. Approximately 250 students are admitted annually, yielding an estimated 750 students across these three cohorts. Using the Yamane formula, a sample size of 260 was calculated. Given that specialization data could only be collected from third-year students, 120 third-year participants were expected, with the remainder coming from first- and second-year students in roughly equal proportions. To ensure representativeness, students from the three specializations were included proportionately. Ultimately, the study sampled 107 first-year, 112 second-year, and 125 third-year students after removing outliers.

Initially, fourth-year students were considered; however, due to their internships and limited accessibility, they were excluded. Most fourth-year students had likely completed their programs and were awaiting graduation, making comprehensive data collection challenging despite potential incentives. Third-year students, with substantial specialization knowledge, were deemed suitable for providing insightful responses, even though their understanding may not be as advanced as that of seniors. In conclusion, while fourth-year students were not included, the study effectively captures the attitudes of a representative sample of freshmen, sophomores, and juniors from both language skills and specialization courses.

2.2. *Design of the Study*

The research utilized several designs:

Cross-sectional design was employed in the current study to find out the attitude of students towards the use of L1 by taking a cross-section of the students and lecturers according to our research requirements. As the characteristic of the design is the respondents contacted only one time, it is totally appropriate for the study's intention.

As for the timeframe, the retrospective was the best fit for the study. Students' opinions relating to L1 usage in the classroom were investigated. Their opinions and attitudes were also helpful for the researchers to study more about the attitude diversity towards L1. Another research design applied in the research is non-experimental study. Since the instinct of the study is to investigate the students' attitude for a tendency, there is no need for experiment.

2.3. Data collection and analysis

The study collected quantitative data through questionnaires. In order to adapt and develop questionnaires for the current study, eight steps were conducted: (1) literature review, (2) selection of relevant questions, (3) question wording, (4) introduction of contextualized questions, (5) pilot testing, (6) expert review, (7) pre-testing, and (8) validation. The questionnaires were then distributed both online and offline via Google Forms and QR codes. To be more specific, five different questionnaires were designed: one for first-year students, one for second-

year students, and three for third-year students depending on their chosen specializations. It is noted that different questionnaires were distributed to the students as they take different courses from their first to third years, and all the questionnaires were in English.

Data analysis involved two main stages: cleaning and analysis. During the cleaning phase, missing values, outliers, and incomplete or unqualified responses were removed. Both descriptive and inferential statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were computed using SPSS version 27 to explore differences in attitudes and associations between variables. The entire process underwent peer review to ensure reliability and validity.

The questionnaires comprised four sections: personal information, the current use of Vietnamese in language skills classes, attitudes towards Vietnamese use by lecturers and students, and preferences for Vietnamese usage in class. Section A, focused on personal information, included questions about the students' academic year, years of English learning, hometown, and whether they attended specialized English classes in high school. The demographic options were classified into four categories: Area 1 (communes with significant difficulties), Rural Area 2 (other rural areas), Area 2 (provincial towns and suburban districts), and Area 3 (inner-city districts). Section B addressed the current context and students' feelings

about using Vietnamese in class. Section C, aligned with the conceptual framework, explored students’ attitudes across affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. Section D gathered students’ opinions on the desired frequency and appropriate use of Vietnamese by lecturers and students in class.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Research questions 1: *Is there a statistically significant difference between the attitudes of students studying in language skills courses and specialization courses towards L1 use in classes for English majors?*

3.1.1. Results of research question 1

To address the first research question, the data from the questionnaire was analyzed using the Kruskal-Wallis H test. Initially, an ANOVA test was considered; however, the data did not meet the normality assumptions required for ANOVA. The Kruskal-Wallis test, a non-parametric method, was chosen instead because it does not assume a normal distribution, making it more robust for non-normally distributed data. In addition, it uses ranks rather than raw data, reducing sensitivity to outliers. Unlike ANOVA, which relies on means or medians, the Kruskal-Wallis test assesses differences based on mean ranks, further justifying its use for this analysis.

Table 1. Kruskal-Wallis Test Mean Rank Results

Ranks			
Average	Year	N	Mean Rank
	First year	107	161.40
	Second year	112	163.79
	Junior	125	189.80
	Total	344	

Table 1 shows the mean ranks for students across different year levels, with higher scores indicating a more positive attitude towards L1 use (1 = very negative, 5 = very positive). Higher ranks suggest a more favorable attitude. To be more specific, junior students had the highest mean rank (189.80), followed by sophomores (163.79) and freshmen

(161.40), indicating that juniors, particularly those in specialization courses, tend to view L1 more positively than freshmen and sophomores. Nonetheless, to determine whether this observed difference is substantial and statistically significant, the results of the Kruskal-Wallis test were analyzed.

Table 2. Kruskal-Wallis Test Results

Total N	334
Test Statistic	5.975 ^{a, b}
Degree of Freedom	2
Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided test)	.050

From Table 2, it can be seen that the Kruskal-Wallis test statistic (H) was 5.975 with a p-value of 0.050, which is on the borderline of conventional statistical significance (typically ≤ 0.05). This suggests a near rejection of the null hypothesis, indicating a possible statistically significant difference in attitudes across year levels. With a p-value of 0.05 or lower generally accepted as significant, the decision was made to reject the null hypothesis. This implies that the observed difference in student attitudes across the years is likely not due to random chance but reflects a real trend. Combined with the mean rank data, it can be concluded that third-year students hold more positive attitudes towards L1 use than first- and second-year students.

3.1.2. Discussion on research question 1

This section explains the results of the first research question.

Similarities between first-year and second-year students' attitudes towards L1 use

As can be seen from Table 1, the mean ranks of first-year and second-year students were quite close compared to third-year students, with the mean rank of

sophomores was 163.79 and freshmen was 161.40. The minimal disparity in mean ranks between freshmen and sophomores suggests a possible homogeneity in attitudes towards L1 use during these initial academic years. In other words, this indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the attitudes of freshmen and sophomores towards the use of L1 in L2 classrooms.

There might be one reasonable reason for this trend, which is the shared type of course enrollment: language skills program. During the initial stages of language acquisition, first- and second-year students typically focused on developing core competencies and English skills. Though it might be the case that sophomores would possess a higher proficiency in English than freshmen, the use of L1 in these classes still functions as a valuable pedagogical tool in facilitating conceptual clarification and providing a foundation for comprehending new grammatical structures. This shared curriculum and consistent L1 use policy across these two years likely contributed to the observed consistency in student attitudes from both years towards L1 use.

Differences in the attitude of those in language skills courses and specialization courses towards L1 use

As first- and second-year students stand for language skills courses and third-year students represent specialization courses, it can be generally inferred that there might

be a statistically significant difference in attitudes between students of language skills courses and specialization courses towards the occasions of mother tongue. Specifically, third-year students seem to be more accepting of L1 use compared to first and second-year students, as the mean rank for third-year students was much higher than the scores for first and second-year students. To explain the difference in attitudes of students from two course types, there are two main reasons that could be taken into consideration.

Different proficiency levels between specialization and language skills students

The more positive attitudes of juniors towards L1 use, compared to freshmen and sophomores, likely stem from differences in English proficiency levels. Third-year students, having completed language skills courses, possess higher English proficiency and feel less pressure to immerse themselves in English for skill development. Unlike freshmen and sophomores, juniors are less focused on proving their language mastery and are more relaxed about using L1 in class. This aligns with a junior's comment: "In the first year, I judged peers by their English skills, but now in specialization courses, we are all advanced learners, so this no longer matters."

Juniors may also use L1 to assist peers or provide feedback, reflecting a greater acceptance of L1 use as seen in previous studies (Hawa et al., 2021). Advanced

students recognize that some classmates are still developing their skills and may use L1 to avoid confusion or misinterpretation. This tolerance is rooted in their understanding that, after completing language skills courses, differences in proficiency among peers are less significant.

In contrast, first- and second-year students, focused on building a strong foundation in language skills, may feel guilty about using L1, viewing it as a potential hindrance to their progress. This sentiment is echoed in student responses in the opened-ended questions of the questionnaires, such as, "I feel guilty if using much L1 in class" or "L1 should be seen as an impediment while developing English skills."

Specialization students acknowledge that L1 cannot be entirely abandoned and, with higher proficiency, view its use more positively, realizing that occasional L1 use does not diminish their L2 skills. This perspective contrasts with Mouhanna's (2009) finding that higher proficiency correlates with reduced L1 use. Advanced learners understand that effective language learning often involves a blend of L1 and L2, and they may use L1 strategically to support classmates, fostering collaboration in the classroom.

The focus on specialized knowledge or English language proficiency

In the third year of study, the focus shifts from language skills to specialization courses, where in-depth

knowledge in areas such as linguistics, translation, or literary theory takes precedence. From the participants' responses, it is possible to claim that L1 use in specialization courses aids in deeper understanding and timesaving, particularly for tasks like translating texts or clarifying complex theories. Junior students, as reflected in open-ended responses, acknowledge the necessity of L1 in these contexts, resulting in more positive attitudes towards its use.

In contrast, language skills courses prioritize L2 proficiency, particularly in speaking and listening activities, where excessive L1 use is seen as counterproductive. This is supported by student responses and aligns with Nguyen's (2021) findings at Can Tho University, where English majors advocated for maximizing L2 use in language skills classes, except for grammar courses, where L1 is necessary for explaining complex structures. Research by Hawa et al. (2021) and Tsagari and Giannikas (2020) also supports the appropriate use of L1 in grammar instruction.

A notable contrast exists in student expectations for L1 use across different courses. Unlike juniors in specialization courses, freshmen and sophomores favor L2 use to develop their skills. This differs from Carson and Kashiara's (2012) findings, which suggested beginners might rely more on L1 for confidence. However, the observed confidence among EF students at HCMUSSH may explain their

reduced reliance on L1. Interestingly, specialization students, despite their advanced English proficiency, exhibit a greater need for L1 to manage the cognitive demands and anxiety associated with specialized coursework. This aligns with Carson and Kashiara's (2012) research, demonstrating that advanced students may require more L1 support for confidence and material comprehension.

In conclusion, there appears to be a statistically significant difference in attitudes towards L1 use between specialization and language skills courses, with juniors exhibiting more positive attitudes than freshmen and sophomores. This is attributed to differences in proficiency levels and course focus. While language skills students share a focus on developing English competencies, limiting L1 use, especially in listening and speaking, grammar courses remain an exception. Specialization students, however, use L1 more freely, reflecting their need for it in handling complex specialized content.

3.2. Research questions 2: *Is there a statistically significant difference in attitudes towards L1 use in English-major classes among students from three specializations?*

3.2.1. Results of research question 2

To answer the second research question, the data from the questionnaire were used and analyzed with the ANOVA test. Generally, the findings indicate no statistically significant difference among

students from three specializations shown in Tables 3, 4, and 5. towards L1 use in class. The results were

Table 3. Tests of Normality for Third-Year Student Attitudes Across Specializations

Average	Specialization	Kolmogorov-Smirnov*			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
	English Translation and Interpretation	.108	34	.200*	.967	34	.387
	American-British Culture and Literature	.155	43	.183	.977	43	.520
	English Linguistics and Language Teaching	.098	48	.200*	.974	48	.355

As can be seen from the table, the Sig. value of the Shapiro-Wilk Test was greater than 0.05, so the data was normal to continue with the Homogeneity test.

Table 4. Tests of Homogeneity of Variances for Third-Year Student Attitudes Across Specializations

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Average	Based on Mean	.492	2	122	.612
	Based on Median	.413	2	122	.663
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.413	2	120.894	.663
	Based on trimmed mean	.501	2	122	.607

The data met the assumptions for a one-way ANOVA test. Both normality and homogeneity of variances were confirmed, with a significance level exceeding 0.05.

This allowed this research to proceed with the ANOVA test to analyze the data and draw conclusions for the second research question.

Table 5. ANOVA: Comparison of Third-Year Student Attitudes Across Specializations

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.129	2	.565	2.864	.061
Within Groups	24.060	122	.197		
Total	25.189	124			

The ANOVA analysis results indicated an F-statistic of 2.864 with a p-value of 0.061. Since the p-value slightly exceeds the common alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, suggesting no statistically significant difference in attitudes towards L1 use among students from the three specializations. While the F-statistics indicate some variance between specializations, it is not significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, the ANOVA results suggest that third-year students across the specializations have similar attitudes toward L1 use in L2 classrooms, indicating a general positive preference for L1 use among these students.

3.2.2. Discussion on research question 2

This section explained the results of the second research question.

The homogeneity of their L2 proficiency

The similarity in learner attitudes towards L1 use in L2 classrooms may be attributed to the homogeneity of their L2 proficiency, particularly after completing language skills courses. When learners share a similar level of proficiency, the pressure for constant English immersion

decreases, creating a more relaxed learning environment. This shared linguistic foundation reduces anxiety about L2 use and fosters a more positive attitude towards occasional L1 use. As a result, learners may use L1 more strategically. Supporting this, one third-year student mentioned in open-ended responses that, after completing language skills courses, they feel less pressured to use L2 exclusively and more comfortable integrating L1 when necessary.

Cultural identity

Surprisingly, this phenomenon might also be linked to students' cultural identity. Some specialization students adopt a more holistic approach to language learning, viewing L1 as a valuable pedagogical tool for L2 acquisition rather than strictly adhering to L2 dominance, which contrasts with the perspectives of language skills students. Open-ended responses support this reasoning. One student noted, "I now see L2, like L1, as a tool for learning specialized knowledge... the more advanced I become in English, the more I value my Vietnamese." Another student from the American-British Culture and

Literature specialization expressed pride in Vietnamese culture and language, alongside an appreciation for English-speaking societies. This is in good agreement with Beka's (2016) research, which highlights the benefits of learning in a familiar language, including in Vietnam. Beka's findings suggest that many students prefer to use their mother tongue alongside other languages, feeling proud of opportunities to develop both their linguistic and cultural identity.

The focus of specialization courses and specific situations that need L1 use

The third factor contributing to the similarity in attitudes across specializations is the shared focus on deep understanding and effective communication within specialized fields. As students advance to specialization courses, the emphasis shifts from developing L2 skills to utilizing English as a tool for mastering specialized knowledge. This shared focus fosters a view of L1 as a valuable pedagogical tool, similar to L2, for facilitating learning.

In all specializations, the priority is understanding complex concepts and communicating effectively. Students are expected to actively participate in discussions, and L1 use is often tolerated if it aids in clearly conveying ideas. For example, students noted in open-ended responses that L1 is sometimes allowed in literature and translation courses to explain difficult concepts. This approach contrasts

with findings by Tsagari and Giannikas (2020), who suggested that L1 use might hinder communicative progress in students with lower L2 proficiency. However, for specialization students with advanced English skills, occasional L1 use does not detract from their L2 proficiency.

Each specialization faces unique challenges where L1 can be particularly beneficial. For instance, in teaching courses, using L1 to explain complex theories helps students grasp intricate concepts, as noted by Nguyen (2021). Similarly, students in American-British Culture & Literature grapple with obsolete terms in literature, where L1 aids in discussions and creative activities like composing and translating poems.

In the English Translation and Interpreting specialization, L1 use is essential for translating texts between English and Vietnamese. Students in this field reported using L1 extensively, with estimates ranging from 50% to 80% in class. This is in complete agreement with Nguyen's (2021) findings, where Translation students at Can Tho University advocated for a balanced use of L1 and L2, with an equal emphasis on both languages.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Further Studies

Overall, the data displayed general positive attitudes of English majors on using Vietnamese in English classes for English majors. For the first research question, a notable difference exists

between students in specialization courses and language skills courses regarding attitudes toward L1 use in the classroom. Specifically, third-year students generally have more positive attitudes than freshmen and sophomores, likely due to differences in proficiency and coursework focus. For the second research question, no significant difference was found in attitudes towards L1 use among third-year English majors across specializations. This widespread support for L1 use is likely due to the homogeneity of their English proficiency, a shared cultural identity that promotes a holistic L2 learning approach incorporating L1, and the specialization coursework focus, which may necessitate L1 use to supplement L2 learning.

The implementation of the study is meaningful as there are not many papers researching on the same field in Vietnam. Besides, the data included the way of using L1 preferred by students, so English instructors or even other foreign language teachers can also read these points to advance their teaching. However, further investigation is also recommended to investigate any other possible elements that may affect students' attitude towards using mother tongue in the L2 classroom. Lastly, since only questionnaires were used to collect the data in the study, further research should include conducting interviews to confirm and dig deeper into their answers to have a more thorough study.

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