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The Use of Vietnamese in English Phonology Classes: Voices from Tertiary Teachers and Students

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Abstract

Using the mother tongue (L1) to improve four English language skills, namely listening, reading, writing, and speaking for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, and to enhance their understanding and learning process has been investigated throughout the years. However, very few studies focus on the context of Vietnamese as the L1 in a course related to English language components such as an English phonology course. Therefore, this research focuses on the use of Vietnamese by lecturers and students in this course. Specifically, the study explores teachers' and students' perceptions of using Vietnamese and how they used it in these courses. A five-point Likert scale questionnaire was distributed to 238 students majoring in English language studies at one of the universities in Vietnam to determine their perception and practice. Meanwhile, semi-structured interviews were also conducted with five lecturers of an English phonology course. The data from the questionnaire was analyzed descriptively and thematic analysis was used to analyze the responses from the interviews. The findings revealed that all the lecturers and students used Vietnamese primarily for academic purposes, strongly supporting its use in an English Phonology class. The results also showed that L1 played an important role in learning and teaching. In addition, students showed considerably positive attitudes towards the use of Vietnamese in this classroom context. The study provides some suggestions to enhance the use of L1 in classes related to English language components, and recommendations for future research.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The role of L1 in an EFL class has been discussed for years, and there are debates among researchers, teachers, and even learners on how much it is used (Hawa et al., 2021; Le, 2022; Mahmud, 2018). Proponents find that L1 plays a vital part in students' learning and teachers' teaching (Iswati & Hadimulyono, 2018; Manara, 2007; Sah, 2017). Others reject its considerable contribution to the acquisition of English (L2), adding that L1 may hinder the L2 learning process (Alrabah et al., 2016; Aoyama, 2020; Shabir, 2017; Yaqubi & Pouromid, 2013), and research has found that this is the case (Senowarsito & Ardini, 2019). To reconcile these two opposing perspectives, the others conclude that L2 learners can also benefit from the judicious use of L1 (Almohaimeed & Almurshed, 2018; İnal & Turhanlı, 2019; Shuchi & Islam, 2016).

In the context of Vietnamese EFL classrooms, Vietnamese use is a widespread practice. Anh (2012), Nguyen and Duy (2019), and Le (2022) agree that Vietnamese should be used to explain difficult terminologies in the English language. Hung and Anh (2014), however, hold the opinion that Vietnamese should be restricted, affirming that the dominating language in the classroom should be English so that students get ultimate target-language exposure.

L1 increases students' learning opportunities (Li, 2018), and it has been used in a variety of classrooms when teaching students with different English language skills. Agustin and Mujiyanto (2015) say that L1 is used in teaching four skills of English, viz. listening, speaking, reading, and writing, with a higher frequency in a listening and speaking class. Their finding is in line with two previous studies, one is by Kafes (2011) when the researcher recorded and observed English-speaking courses with Turkish as the L1; the other is by de la Campa and Nassaji (2009) in conversation courses with German as the L1. Aoyama (2020) also finds that L1 is used in English communicative activities when students seek help from their teachers or their peers. Apart from L1 practice in teaching four English language skills, it is useful in teaching grammar (Nguyen & Duy, 2019; Saruwatashi, 2020), and vocabulary (Debreli, 2016), or in providing comments or feedback (Mohebbi & Alavi, 2014; Nguyen et al., 2016).

Although the L1 role has been examined in classes of four English language skills (Agustin & Mujiyanto, 2015; de la Campa & Nassaji, 2009; Hawa et al., 2021; Kafes, 2011), there have been few studies exploring its role in classes related to English language components such as English phonology classes. Moreover, Vietnamese as an L1 in an L2 class has also been studied (Anh, 2012; Le, 2022; Nguyen, 2020; Nguyen & Duy, 2019), but those studies focus on L1 use in teaching language skills. Therefore, the present study is aimed at investigating how teachers and students used and perceived Vietnamese in English phonology classes. The study addresses the following four research questions:

1. What are teachers' practices of using Vietnamese in English phonology classes?
2. What are teachers' perceptions towards the use of Vietnamese in English phonology classes?
3. What are students' practices of employing Vietnamese in English phonology classes?

4. What are students' attitudes to the employment of Vietnamese in English phonology classes?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Proponents for Bilingual Approach: When to Use L1

Cook (2008) refers to a bilingual method of the use of L1 to establish L2's meanings. This approach has become more popular than the English-only approach, which was the primary one in the twentieth century (İnal & Turhanlı, 2019). Cook (2008) discussed some situations where L1 can be used in an EFL class, namely grammar explanation, task instructions, and other classroom activities.

In the context of English grammar instructions, many studies have been conducted and support Cook's (2008) view (Anggoro & Nguyen, 2021; Mohebbi & Alavi, 2014; Saruwatashi, 2020). Other researchers add that L1 is used when teachers explain complex grammar rules or language patterns (Agustin & Mujiyanto, 2015; Almohaimeed & Almurshed, 2018; Mahmud, 2018; Sah, 2017). In other contexts, L1 is used when teachers give instructions or clarifications to students completing their tasks or exercises (Debreli, 2016; de la Campa & Nassaji, 2009). Subsequent studies suggest that clear L1 instructions for tasks done in English help students understand deeply what they should do, and thus they perform better (Hasrina et al., 2018; Nguyen & Duy, 2019; Shabir, 2017). Furthermore, the literature also affirms students speak their shared L1 to help complete tasks or do certain assigned activities in EFL classrooms (Aoyama, 2020; Bozorgian & Fallahpour, 2015). Aoyama (2020) adds that students also prefer to ask questions to their teachers in L1 instead of asking other students because teachers may give them the best advice. Mohebbi and Alavi (2014) argue that L1 is helpful among students when they work in groups, and more importantly, teachers also prefer to use L1 when they participate in student group discussions.

The use of L1 is necessary in some situations, for example in teaching vocabulary. With the support of L1, teachers can easily explain new vocabulary to students, which results in quick and deep understanding (Debreli, 2016; Manara, 2007; Sah, 2017; Saruwatashi, 2020). To elaborate on this view, studies find that new concepts or terminology definitions are best explained in L1 (Aoyama, 2020; Iswati & Hadimulyono, 2018; Nguyen & Duy, 2019). Another common use of L1 is in providing comments or feedback on students' work (de la Campa & Nassaji, 2009; Manara, 2007; Mohebbi & Alavi, 2014; Nguyen et al., 2016). With constructive feedback, students and teachers can understand one another, which is termed rapport among students and teachers, as proposed by Nguyen et al. (2016), Trinh (2016), Mahmud (2018), and Saruwatashi (2020). Another circumstance of using L1 is when teachers aim to build positive interaction between teachers and students (Sah, 2017). When the amount of interaction increases, the need to socialize among students and teachers arises, which can be well-achieved when L1 is used (Debreli, 2016; Le, 2022).

Finally, the other purpose of L1 use is for effective classroom management (Bozorgian & Fallahpour, 2015; Saruwatashi, 2020; Shabir, 2017). More specifically, L1 should be used to give clear instructions, manage discipline, and draw students' attention. These aspects of classroom management create a friendly classroom

environment (Bruen & Kelly, 2017; Hasrina et al., 2018; Nguyen et al., 2016), decreasing students' anxiety (Bozorgian & Fallahpour, 2015), which positively affects their communication skills (Kafes, 2011).

To summarize, regardless of the various benefits of L1 in an EFL class, the ultimate goal is to facilitate learning (Grim, 2010; Iswati & Hadimulyono, 2018; Nguyen & Duy, 2019). They strongly believe the absence of L1 may limit students' learning process, which affects learners' motivation (Hasrina et al., 2018; Nguyen & Duy, 2019). Therefore, the use of L1 is necessary (Mart, 2013), which links to enhanced L2 acquisition (Li, 2018). However, the use of L1 in an EFL class has also been criticized.

2.2 Opponents of Bilingual Approach: L1 Should Be Avoided

The absence of L1 in EFL classes is attributed to how people acquire that language. Cook (2008) points out that people acquire L1 without any support from another language. As a result, L2 learning should take place with no reference to L1. He also states that learners need to learn L2 independently with a separation from L1. Therefore, the existence of L1 in an L2 class is inadvisable.

Supporting the view that L2 should be maximally used in the classroom and that L1 may hinder the acquisition of L2, Nazary (2008) finds that tertiary students are not willing to use L1 in the classroom for more exposure to L2. The same consideration also applies to students whose L1 are Bahasa Indonesia (Agustin & Mujiyanto, 2015), Arabic (Alrabah et al., 2016), and Japanese (Aoyama, 2020). Shabir (2017) investigates a more variety of first languages, including Japanese, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Thai, and Arabic, and also finds negative impressions on L1 use in EFL classes.

Another consideration of L1 use in an EFL classroom is related to language levels (Agustin & Mujiyanto, 2015; Manara, 2007; Nguyen, 2012). Almohaimeed and Almurshed (2018) conclude that advanced learners are more likely to reject the use of L1 while beginners and intermediate learners prefer to use L1. A similar conclusion is drawn by Bozorgian and Fallahpour (2015) when they find that pre-intermediate students need more use of L1. The same case applies to learners with low-level proficiency (İnal & Turhanlı, 2019; Nguyen & Duy, 2019).

Finally, research on L1 and L2 preference has also focused on teachers' perceptions. Much research found that teachers also have negative attitudes towards L1 use in L2 instruction. For example, Yaqubi and Pouromid (2013) affirm teachers should take L1 use into earnest consideration. Mart (2013) agrees with this view, for the overuse of L1 may hinder the target language learning. Therefore, L2 should be prioritized in language learning so that learners can have more opportunities to practice the target language (Mahmud, 2018; Shuchi & Islam, 2016). This raises the question of how much L1 should be ideally used in an L2 classroom.

2.3 To What Extent is L1 Use Appropriate?

Previous studies have provided evidence that L1 has brought more pros than cons, but the practice still needs to be judicious to a proper extent. de la Campa and Nassaji (2009), Mart (2013), Mahmud (2018), and İnal and Turhanlı (2019) suggest that with a reasonable amount of L1 use in EFL classes, it can offer benefits for

students' learning outcomes instead of disadvantages. Shuchi and Islam (2016) warn that if L1 is not judiciously used, it may disrupt the L2 learning process.

It is then significant to justify what it means by 'judicious' use. First, it must take learners' levels into consideration. The literature shows that teachers should determine the proper time and amount of L1 use based on the student's language levels (Agustin & Mujiyanto, 2015; Almohaimeed & Almurshed, 2018; Le, 2022; Nguyen, 2012). Anh (2012) believes that different classrooms need different amounts of L1 use. Second, the use of L1 needs to consider the situations suggested by Cook (2008) or other unavoidable circumstances. Finally, teachers must be advised that L1 be used as moderately and as limited as possible (Bozorgian & Fallahpour, 2015; Bruen & Kelly, 2017; Shuchi & Islam, 2016). This advice has also been widely advocated among Vietnamese teachers teaching EFL classes.

2.4 The Context of Vietnamese as L1 in EFL Classes

Vietnamese as L1 has been used by teachers and students in EFL classes. There are also mixed viewpoints concerning the case (Ngan, 2018). According to Nguyen (2020), the proper use of Vietnamese facilitates the L2 learning process, defining its significance in an English class. Nguyen and Duy (2019) propose many benefits of Vietnamese use in this context, which involves saving time, increasing learners' motivation, especially among low-proficiency students, and dealing with students' problems in studying. Anh (2012) and Nguyen and Duy (2019) favor Vietnamese for English grammar and vocabulary instructions. Nguyen et al. (2016) and Le (2022) show social benefits of Vietnamese such as chatting to create a relaxed classroom atmosphere, which is in line with Mohebbi and Alavi (2014), Trinh (2016), Mahmud (2018), and Saruwatashi (2020).

Despite the potential benefits of Vietnamese as L1 in EFL classrooms, there are some restrictions on and disfavor of its use. Hung and Anh (2014) argue that English should be the dominant language and that Vietnamese should only be used by teachers when students cannot understand them. Grant and Nguyen (2017) state that Vietnamese should not be used habitually in an English classroom. Nguyen (2012) agrees with judicious Vietnamese use by considering students' levels but still insists that its use needs to be minimal. Grim (2010), Mohebbi and Alavi (2014), and Nguyen and Duy (2019) state that L1 saves time in an L2 classroom, and L1 is suitable for limited-time budget classes (Nguyen, 2012). Therefore, Vietnamese is highly popular in English classrooms with careful consideration of extent, frequency, and purpose.

To summarize, the literature has provided conflicting views on the use of L1, including in the Vietnamese context, in EFL instruction. Some studies recommend using L1 in teaching English language components such as grammar and vocabulary. The literature also emphasizes that L1 must be used in certain circumstances such as in teaching vocabulary or technical terms. However, other studies claim that L1 needs to be minimized or avoided at all because it hinders target language exposure, which links to language acquisition. Students and teachers also perceived L1 use negatively. In addition, other studies suggest using L1, but its use needs to be judicious and kept minimal. In fact, these previous studies focus mainly on English language skills, such as speaking, or practical language components, such as grammar. The use of L1 in a more theoretical language knowledge course such as linguistics has not been properly researched. Therefore, the present study analyzed the teachers' and students' use of

Vietnamese and their perceptions of using this language in an English Phonology class, which is a part of linguistics courses for students majoring in English language studies.

3. METHODS

This study employed a mixed methods design to collect and analyze the data to answer the research questions. This design deeply explores variables and can elaborate on an existing phenomenon (Fraenkel et al., 2012). In this research, the data from the interview and the survey help to have an insight into the nature of using Vietnamese in the English phonology classroom. The results from the qualitative and quantitative data are used to determine the convergence on the interpretation of the examined problem in this research.

3.1 Setting and Participants

This research was conducted in a Faculty of Foreign Languages at a university in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. English Phonology course was selected for this study because it is one of the sub-courses included under English linguistics courses. This course is one of the crucial branches of linguistics and includes both individual sounds and patterns of sounds (Hawkins, 2018). In this course, students learned topics related to phonemes, syllables, stress, and intonation.

The participants are students and lecturers from the selected faculty. They were chosen for the fact that they meet the study requirements regarding sampling size and the nature of the study. There are nearly 3.000 students enrolling in English Language Studies at the faculty. The number of students who have completed the English phonology course as a compulsory course was approximately 1.700 students, and 238 of them (170 males and 68 females) agreed to participate in the quantitative data collection for this study. Meanwhile, the qualitative data was collected from all five lecturers of the English phonology course (three females and two males). For anonymity, they were assigned pseudonyms, i.e., P1, P2, P3, P4 and P5, representing participant lecturers. They have a Master's degree in English language teaching, with more than three years of experience in teaching English phonology.

3.2 Instruments

The current study used a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview to collect the data. Based on the literature review of L1 use and the different purposes of L1 use in EFL classes, the authors designed a questionnaire to investigate students' practices and attitudes. Semi-structured interviews were used to discover teachers' practices and perceptions. The two research instruments were finalized after addressing the comments from two other experienced researchers in the field.

The questionnaire, which is the instrument for the quantitative data, consists of two parts. Part 1 is related to students' practices with four questions to determine how much Vietnamese has been and should have been used, what purposes were, and in what aspects of the course Vietnamese should be used. Each question in this part provides a list of options from which participants can choose. These questions were created based on different studies conducted by Cook (2008), Debreli (2016), Nguyen

et al. (2016), Trinh (2016), Mahmud (2018), Aoyama (2020), Saruwatashi (2020), and Le (2022). Meanwhile, Part 2 is to investigate their attitudes towards the use of Vietnamese with 11 statements in three categories: participation in the classroom (Aoyama, 2020; Bozorgian & Fallahpour, 2015), learning motivation (Hasrina et al., 2018; Nguyen & Duy, 2019) and learning outcomes (Hasrina et al., 2018; Nguyen & Duy, 2019; Shabir, 2017). Part 2 employs the five-point Likert scale from 1 to 5.

For the qualitative data collection, a semi-structured interview was chosen because this type of interview is more flexible, allowing the researchers to interview the participants most thoroughly by probing techniques, i.e., asking for clarifications carefully and indirectly (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). There are two parts to the interview: teachers' practices and teachers' perceptions. To explore their practices, the questions focus on how much Vietnamese is used in their English phonology class, its purposes, and the rationale for their use. For their perceptions, the authors asked the participants to explain the benefits of using Vietnamese in teaching and learning English phonology, the roles of Vietnamese in such classes, and their views on how much and when it should be used. The interview questions were created based on different researchers (Anggoro & Nguyen, 2021; Cook, 2008; Mohebbi & Alavi, 2014; Saruwatashi, 2020).

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

3.3.1 The questionnaire

The questionnaire was delivered online to students through the faculty's Facebook groups, which are managed by faculty staff. The researchers provided instructions with the questionnaire to state that only students who had completed the English phonology course may complete the questionnaire and that the participant responses would only be used for the specified research purposes. Participation in completing the questionnaire was voluntary. All the data collected from 238 students then was entered into SPSS 25.0 and a detailed analysis was made. The Cronbach's alpha and the descriptive statistics were analyzed, using frequency percentages and mean scores. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was determined using Cronbach's Alpha. According to Taber (2018), the sufficient value which is commonly considered reliable is 0.70. The reliability of the questionnaire returned by 238 students is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Cronbach's alpha for each category of the questionnaire.

No.	Categories	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Participation in the classroom	.876
2.	Learning motivation	.888
3.	Learning outcome	.920

3.3.2 The semi-structured interview

The interview was conducted individually using the Zoom platform after the participants agreed to be interviewed. Before the interview, the researchers informed the purpose of the study clearly and asked for consent from the interviewees. With their permission, the researchers recorded the interview. After the interviews, the authors listened to each of the recordings and transcribed them. After that, the authors

started to use a thematic analysis strategy to identify keywords, phrases, and ideas and put them into appropriate codes and themes. This method was used for the fact that it is flexible and accessible, and it ensures the coding and theming based on the content of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The authors then found the similarities and differences in the ideas of the interviewees. The perceptions and practices were then defined and thoroughly analyzed. The data analysis procedure of the interview data is detailed in Table 2, using the 6-phase model from Braun and Clarke (2012).

Table 2. Steps in data analysis.

No.	Phases	This research's phase description
1.	Familiarizing yourself with the data	The researchers listened to each recording carefully and started transcribing. They read the transcripts a few times and took notes where necessary.
2.	Generating initial codes	The researchers looked for codes from the scripts. Two researchers did the work separately, and then compared and discussed the codes.
3.	Searching for themes	Based on the codes, the researchers constructed themes. This step involved double-checking the codes and finding the new themes so that they did not leave any codes out of the proper themes.
4.	Reviewing potential themes	The two researchers rechecked the themes and tried to compare the information so that there was no mistake in codes for themes and vice versa.
5.	Defining and naming themes	In this step, the name of each theme and its meaning were finalized, which were used in the result section.
6.	Producing the report	The researchers drafted the report, relating the themes to each research question, as stated in the result section.

4. RESULTS

This study was guided by four research questions outlined in the introduction section. Therefore, this section is organized based on the research questions, where the result for each research question is presented separately.

4.1 Teachers' Practices

The results show that Vietnamese as L1 was used regularly in English phonology classes. All five lecturers interviewed in this study admitted that they used Vietnamese in English phonology classes. Four of them used a considerable amount of Vietnamese language in their classroom, and one lecturer used a moderate amount of the language.

The purposes of using Vietnamese reflect academic and social nature. All five lecturers agreed that Vietnamese was used to explain difficult English phonology terminologies related to speech articulators, intonations, syllables, or phonemes. P1, P4, and P5 translated from English to Vietnamese when their students did not understand them. P1, P2, P3, and P5 shared the idea that they always needed to use Vietnamese when correcting quizzes, analyzing lesson questions, and explaining test questions to ensure that their students understood them. P2, P3, and P4 used Vietnamese to summarize or review lessons with students. In giving instructions, P2 and P4 usually used Vietnamese, such as instructions on how to pronounce English sounds, whereas P1, P3, and P5 explained how to do tasks, quizzes, and tests, and

informed students about the course syllabus in Vietnamese. Only P1 used Vietnamese for social purposes, as shown in the following extract.

- (1) “Vietnamese was used to tell stories about the lesson, so students can listen and relax”. (P1)

In addition, both P1 and P5 used Vietnamese so that students would have an opportunity to compare the two languages. It is reflected in the following interview extract.

- (2) “This is the best way to get students exposed to critical analysis of both Vietnamese and English phonology”. (P5)

All lecturers were comfortable using English in teaching, and they always felt confident to give a lesson without using Vietnamese; however, they realized that students would not understand them well and that the students did not have the same level of English proficiency, so the English-only policy in such classes was inappropriate. P1 admitted that the amount of Vietnamese use increased over the course since the use of Vietnamese was more convenient and beneficial to students, especially to increase their material understanding. P2, P4, and P5 thought that teachers should adapt to the situation, such as students’ English levels and the nature of the lesson, in applying the English-only policy. P5, for example, stated:

- (3) “Individual sounds like vowels and consonants should be taught in English only, and syllable and intonation can be taught in Vietnamese”. (P5)

In conclusion, all lecturers used Vietnamese in English phonology classes. However, there was a difference in its frequency among lecturers. Their reasons for using Vietnamese, either academic or social, also varied. It was found that teachers used Vietnamese because they needed to ensure students’ material understanding and to improve their learning outcomes. It was not because they could not use English in teaching the lesson.

4.2 Teachers’ Perceptions

In this study, teachers’ perceptions include perceptions on the benefits of using Vietnamese, the preference between Vietnamese and English, the circumstances of its use, and its roles.

4.2.1 *Benefits of Vietnamese to teachers*

According to all the interviewees, Vietnamese helps them teach better in general. For example, P1 reported that they needed to use Vietnamese to teach difficult concepts, as reflected in the following extract.

- (4) “Emotions are necessary when teaching students, especially teaching some difficult concepts which cannot be well-expressed in English. It is Vietnamese that helps you do that”. (P1)

She also emphasized that a sense of humor contributes to a relaxed classroom atmosphere, and no other language creates a better sense than L1. P4 and P5 agreed

that adding Vietnamese helps facilitate better learning activities. P2 and P5 said that it was easier for teachers to express ideas in Vietnamese when teaching difficult terminology, as shown in the following extract.

- (5) “Vietnamese helps me make sure that what I convey to students is understood correctly”. (P3)

In addition, P1, P3, P4, and P5 believed that Vietnamese helped them manage the class more effectively. P1 said that she found it easier to remind students in Vietnamese about the lesson. P3 and P4 also agreed with this view, and they used Vietnamese to manage class activities. P2, however, had a different view than the other four lecturers, as stated in the following excerpt.

- (6) “Both Vietnamese and English can be used to manage the class. I have experience of using both languages in managing students’ misbehavior and giving instructions”. (P2)

4.2.2 Benefits of Vietnamese to students

All interviewed teachers believed that using Vietnamese could make students more motivated to learn and more interested in participating in class activities. P1, P3, P4, and P5 stated that using Vietnamese made students more involved in class activities. They were also more confident to ask questions in class. They added that by using Vietnamese, students could express their ideas clearly, answer questions more frequently, and discuss the lesson with their peers comfortably. However, P2 claimed that, in addition to language selection, clear instruction was also significant for students’ motivation and classroom participation, as shown in the following extract.

- (7) “Students’ involvement depends on both the language use and teachers’ clear instructions”. (P2)

According to the lecturers, Vietnamese use improved students’ overall course performance. They believed that students found it easy to retain difficult concepts when they were delivered in Vietnamese. Moreover, P1, P3, P4, and P5 claimed that students completed tasks more successfully; as a result, they performed better in the test. In addition, P5, as reflected in the following extract, believed that teaching English phonology in Vietnamese helped students in their future linguistics-related courses.

- (8) “I think using Vietnamese elicits students’ critical thinking in comparing Vietnamese and English, which gave them valuable background knowledge, benefiting them in other linguistics or interpreting courses”. (P5)

However, P2 disagreed with other teachers. He claimed that students’ learning outcomes were not only determined by what language was used, as stated in the following extract.

- (9) “More factors need to be considered to determine whether it ensures success in completing tasks or taking tests”. (P2)

To summarize, all lecturers agreed that Vietnamese did not affect the English phonology learning process to a great extent. In fact, it enhanced the learning process because students were more motivated and could understand the lesson better. Overall, Vietnamese facilitated the learning process.

4.2.3 *Preference to use Vietnamese*

P1, P3, P4, and P5 preferred using Vietnamese to English in English phonology classes. They confirmed that it was necessary to use Vietnamese in this context. For classes focusing on language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, or writing, Vietnamese should be avoided, as perceived by P3 in the following extract.

(10) “We should consider students’ levels, too, but overall Vietnamese must be used”. (P3)

P2, however, did not favor Vietnamese even though he admitted that there were some benefits of using it. He concluded that Vietnamese should be considered as a choice, not a must.

4.2.4 *Circumstances of using Vietnamese: How much and when?*

All the teachers believed that under any circumstances, Vietnamese should be used in teaching English phonology classes. However, there was a disagreement among the lecturers regarding how much it should be used. P1, P4, and P5 stated that the amount of English and Vietnamese in the English phonology class should be equal. P3 proposed that Vietnamese should not be used more than 70% of the teaching time, while P2 preferred to use it at most 20%, depending on students’ proficiency level.

There are some suggested situations for Vietnamese use. P1, P4, and P5 said that Vietnamese was used to compare Vietnamese and English phonology, to grade quizzes, tasks, and tests, to check students’ understanding, and to give them instructions in doing tasks. All lecturers affirmed that Vietnamese should be used in explaining difficult phonology concepts. P2, P3, P4, and P5 stated that Vietnamese should be used to demonstrate native speakers’ pronunciation. For this purpose, P2 said:

(11) “I usually give tips about pronunciation, so that students can improve theirs”. (P2)

P3 and P5 also recommended that Vietnamese be used to analyze English phonology comprehensively. Most importantly, P2 expressed a contrasting viewpoint to that of P1, P4, and P5 in the following extract.

(12) “We should not translate Vietnamese and English when teaching English phonology”. (P2)

P1, P4, and P5 often translate English into Vietnamese in teaching English phonology classes. P1, P2, and P4 stated Vietnamese could be used to socialize in the classroom. They realized that Vietnamese could be used to create a relaxed atmosphere, through socialization. P2 clarified that Vietnamese should be spoken to tell jokes related to the lesson.

4.2.5 *English-only or Vietnamese-only?*

The lecturers were confident that English should not be the only language used in teaching as long as students’ understanding was the concern. In addition, they were aware that students wanted to use Vietnamese in English phonology classes. P4 stated:

- (13) “Imagine that you explained English phonology terminologies in English only, almost all of which were alien to students, and then your students would not understand anything”. (P4)

They also agreed that the use of Vietnamese helped students learn the topics in English phonology such as phonemes, syllables, stress, and intonation, and helped them learn more effectively. However, P2 shared a different view, where he claimed that students’ expectations were more complex than what other teachers believed, as in the following excerpt.

- (14) “It’s hard to say yes or no to either; it’s all about students’ course expectations, and it is extremely hard to determine their expectations”. (P2)

Furthermore, P2 added that teaching methods should also be considered.

- (15) “It’s about the teaching method as well. If teachers make their lesson more interesting by adding some clips or visual aids or demonstrations, their students’ understanding, and performance will improve”. (P2)

4.2.6 The role of Vietnamese: Final word

The participants used different words to describe the role of Vietnamese in English phonology classes. P1 considered it “essential” while P2 and P5 used the word “supporting”. P3 believed that Vietnamese was “necessary”, and P4 considered it “important”. Regardless of the different words used, all the lecturers agreed that Vietnamese is inevitable in English phonology classrooms, and it always plays a certain part in students’ learning process and their learning outcomes. As P4 stated in the following extract.

- (16) “I believe it is difficult to avoid using L1 in my class. It must be present for its own reasons. So, why not make use of L1 to support students’ learning?” (P4)

Overall, teachers agreed that Vietnamese should be used for some academic and social purposes. P1, P3, P4, and P5 recommended that Vietnamese be used frequently, while P2 stated that it should not be used as frequently. They all provided different benefits of using Vietnamese in both teaching and learning. In addition, in linguistics courses such as English phonology classes, the English-only policy should not apply, for the absence of Vietnamese hinders the learning process. Therefore, there should be a presence of Vietnamese in English phonology classes because it plays a significant role in teaching and learning English phonology.

4.3 Students’ Practices

The questionnaire revealed that almost all students used Vietnamese in English Phonology classes. However, 1% of the students did not use it at all. The frequency of Vietnamese use was significantly high. More than half of the students used Vietnamese frequently. Figure 1 demonstrates these results in detail.

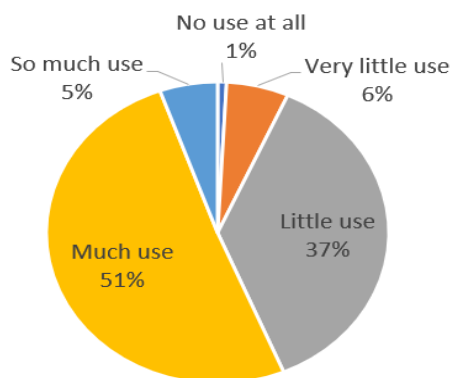


Figure 1. Vietnamese use by students.

The purposes of using Vietnamese by students varied. The most common purpose was to discuss the lesson with their peers, followed by asking questions to the teachers. Some other common purposes were to answer questions and to chat with classmates about topics unrelated to the lesson. None of the students stated that they used Vietnamese to raise new ideas or for other purposes. The details are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Purposes of using Vietnamese in the English phonology class by students.

Purposes	Number of responses	Percent
To discuss the lesson with my friends.	186	38.9
To ask questions to the teacher.	145	30.3
To answer the questions from the teacher.	88	18.4
To raise new ideas.	0	0
To chat with friends about something else, not about the lesson itself.	58	12.4
Others:	0	0

Half of the students used much Vietnamese in English phonology classes, whereas only a third of them believed this was an ideal amount. In fact, nearly two-thirds of them said that little use of Vietnamese would be perfect. Detailed percentages are shown in Figure 2.

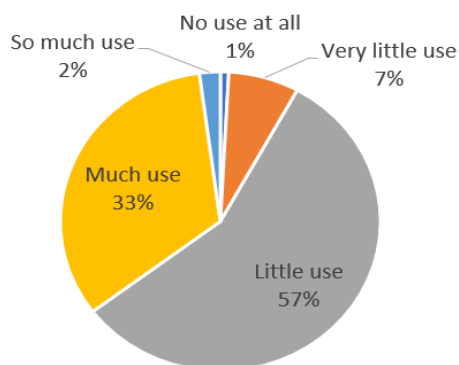


Figure 2. The amount of Vietnamese to be ideally used in English phonology classes.

Regarding when Vietnamese should be used most frequently, the majority of students responded that it was “syllables”. In addition, “intonation” also accounts for a considerable percentage, followed by “vowels” and “consonants”. Some students

also believed that “stress” needed to be taught using Vietnamese. These findings are depicted in Figure 3.

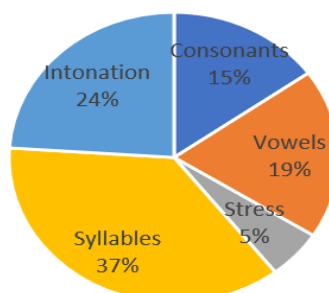


Figure 3. Aspects of phonology that should be taught in Vietnamese.

4.4 Students' Attitudes

The researchers employed three contributors to evaluate students' attitudes, i.e., students' participation, students' motivation, and students' learning outcomes. First, students' classroom participation, as in Table 4, consists of five statements, all of which have a mean score of over 4.4, to determine whether students were involved in the classroom activities. Overall, the students' responses varied, but the mean scores show Vietnamese helped students increase their willingness to get involved in the classroom. More specifically, Vietnamese improved their participation in classroom activities, helped them to ask questions more easily, made them confident in expressing ideas, and set more freedom in peer discussion.

Table 4. Students' participation in classroom activities.

Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am more willing to participate in the classroom activities.	238	1.00	5.00	4.4118	.81039
I can ask questions more easily.	238	1.00	5.00	4.4664	.76094
I can express my ideas more confidently.	238	1.00	5.00	4.4454	.81336
I can discuss the lesson with my friends more freely.	238	1.00	5.00	4.4916	.73915
Valid N (listwise)	238				

Table 5 shows students' increased motivation in learning. The mean score ranges from 4.32 to 4.47, which shows strong agreement among students. This confirms that students were more motivated by the presence of Vietnamese in phonology classes. They claimed that they were more comfortable in doing activities, more encouraged in completing assignments, and most importantly, they were more motivated to learn more topics related to English phonology.

Table 6 demonstrates students' learning outcomes with the help of Vietnamese. As the cases presented in Table 3 and Table 4, the mean score is considerably high, which demonstrates that students gained a very satisfactory learning outcome using Vietnamese in their class. Students could understand and retain the lesson better. The result also reveals that students were more successful in completing their assignments and performed better on tests.

Table 5. Students' motivation.

Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I feel more relaxed in the classroom activities.	238	2.00	5.00	4.4664	.76094
I am more encouraged to do assigned tasks.	238	1.00	5.00	4.3151	.88914
I feel more motivated learning about English phonology.	238	1.00	5.00	4.3151	.98376
Valid N (listwise)	238				

Table 6. Students' learning outcomes.

Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I remember the lesson better.	238	1.00	5.00	4.4076	.8604
I understand English phonology terminologies better.	238	1.00	5.00	4.4580	.77699
I can do assigned tasks more successfully.	238	1.00	5.00	4.4538	.77130
I can perform well in my English phonology tests.	238	1.00	5.00	4.3824	.90055
Valid N (listwise)	238				

To summarize, the results reveal that students had a highly positive attitude toward using Vietnamese in English phonology classes. Indeed, Vietnamese have boosted their learning in different aspects including participation, motivation, and learning outcomes. Although students generally used Vietnamese in their phonology lessons, a majority of them preferred to use it in a moderate amount. They used Vietnamese for different purposes, the most popular of which was to discuss with their classmates and to ask questions to teachers. They expected that Vietnamese be used most frequently in learning the topic of 'English syllables', while 'word stress' needs the least utilization.

5. DISCUSSION

This study was designed to discover teachers' and students' practices and perceptions towards the use of Vietnamese in English phonology courses. The result has shown that both teachers and students used Vietnamese in their linguistics class and generally had positive attitudes towards this use. This section provides the interpretation of the results and relates them to previous studies so that a deeper understanding of the research problem can be acquired.

5.1 The Teachers' Voices

Most lecturers used Vietnamese very frequently while only one used it in a moderate amount, which supports earlier studies concerning L1 use in EFL classrooms. The purposes of using Vietnamese by lecturers can be categorized into class management, academic purposes, and cultural or social purposes. Among those purposes, our study revealed that the primary purpose was academic. Teachers used Vietnamese to explain difficult terminologies to students. This purpose is also commonly found in other studies, such as [Anh \(2012\)](#), [Bruen and Kelly \(2017\)](#), [Iswati](#)

and Hadimulyono (2018), İnal and Turhanlı (2019), Nguyen and Duy (2019), and Aoyama (2020). This result shows that explanations for phonological terminologies were the key reason for using Vietnamese. Another popular academic purpose for Vietnamese use was to give instructions, which supports other previous studies (e.g., Alrabah et al., 2016; Debreli, 2016; de la Campa & Nassaji, 2009; Hawa et al., 2021; Le, 2022). The Vietnamese instructions in English phonology classes varied, including instructions on how to pronounce sounds and how to complete tasks or tests.

There are some new academic purposes which were found in the study. First, Vietnamese was used to review and summarize the lesson, which is an effective strategy to improve students' understanding. Second, Vietnamese was used to grade or provide feedback for students' quizzes, tests, or lesson questions, and English-Vietnamese translation. Notably, although Vietnamese was used for management and social purposes, they were not often practiced by lecturers. It seems Vietnamese was primarily used for academic purposes in English phonology classes, the most popular of which were for terminology clarifications.

Furthermore, all teachers agreed that Vietnamese helped them in teaching, which positively affected their attitude. This result is in line with the results of previous studies (e.g., Anggoro & Nguyen, 2021; Hawa et al., 2021; Iswati & Hadimulyono, 2018; Le, 2022; Manara, 2007; Sah, 2017). Overall, the presence of Vietnamese supported their teaching in many ways both academically and in classroom management. All lecturers also claimed that Vietnamese use positively affected students' learning process, including their motivation, participation, and learning outcomes.

Although this research has found that there was a need to use Vietnamese in teaching, lecturers warned that the language should be used with care and in appropriate amounts. They need to consider the student's language proficiency and the lesson content. In other words, judicious use is recommended. This finding agrees with previous studies conducted by de la Campa and Nassaji (2009), Mart (2013), Mahmud (2018), İnal and Turhanlı (2019), and Le (2022). More importantly, the benefits of Vietnamese use are strengthened when teachers also use appropriate teaching methods and media. Some of them include using online platforms or websites (Nurhayati, 2019), boardgames (Łodzikowski & Jekiel, 2019), smartphone apps (Nguyen et al., 2021), or phonological system simplification (Celik, 2008).

5.2 The Students' Voices

Students have a highly positive attitude towards the use of Vietnamese in English phonology classes. They used Vietnamese very often in the classroom and expected that their teachers also use it frequently. According to the students, all topics of English phonology, especially syllables, need to be taught in Vietnamese. Students learned more when the language was used. This result aligns with previous studies conducted by Agustin and Mujiyanto (2015), Shuchi and Islam (2016), and Almohaimeed and Almurshed (2018). The results show Vietnamese helped them in various learning aspects, namely motivation, participation, and learning outcomes. First, student participation in the class activities increased. The improved learning participation was a result of student learning motivation. Because the students were motivated, they participated more in learning activities. In addition, when their motivation and participation increased, they could understand the lesson better, and complete their

tasks or tests better. Student learning outcome is the primary benefit of using L1 in teaching. The finding corresponds to previous studies by Grant and Nguyen (2017), Sah (2017), Shabir (2017), Hasrina et al. (2018), Nguyen and Duy (2019), Saruwatashi (2020), Anggoro and Nguyen (2021), and Le (2022).

In summary, the findings from the student questionnaire confirm how lecturers perceived the benefits of Vietnamese use on students' learning, and the benefits students got best reflected what Vietnamese teachers practiced. Both teachers and students appreciated the irrefutable role of L1 in English phonology classes. Although in practice students used more Vietnamese than they hoped, and there were some disagreements regarding the impacts of Vietnamese in English phonology classes.

6. CONCLUSION

The use of Vietnamese positively affected students and teachers in teaching and learning activities in English phonology courses. For students, Vietnamese was used very frequently in the classroom, which got them more engaged in the classroom activities and tasks, made them more motivated to learn, and improved their learning outcomes. They also expected that Vietnamese be used in teaching all topics in English phonology courses, with specific emphasis on syllables. In addition, they spoke Vietnamese mostly for academic purposes. For lecturers, Vietnamese has been used for management and social purposes, but most frequently for academic purposes to teach English phonology terminologies. The lecturers suggested some other situations for effective use of Vietnamese, i.e., pronunciation instruction and analysis of phonology components. Most importantly, Vietnamese use should be judicious for the right purpose, at an appropriate amount, and within learners' English language proficiency.

Based on the research results, the authors can make some recommendations for more effective teaching of English phonology, which applies to other language knowledge courses, using L1 as the main language instruction. First, the use of L1 will have a satisfactory advantage if teachers also employ different approaches to teaching. Every student has different learning styles, and if teachers use different techniques and strategies in their teaching, students can benefit more from the instruction. For example, teachers may use videos, animations, analogs, and different activities to improve students' learning experience. Second, regardless of the approaches the lecturers use, it is suggested that they do not only use English or L1. English-only instructions hinder students' learning, and L1 helps only to a limited extent. Third, teachers should determine the frequency of L1 use based on students' English language proficiency. Fourth, English phonology includes complex concepts, so lecturers should focus on key points in helping students understand the materials.

Regardless of its significant findings, the study has some limitations which can be considered in future research. The questionnaires in this study reflected students' practices and attitudes. However, the results from the questionnaire cannot provide in-depth information about these two aspects, so that an interview needs to be considered in future research, where more questions are asked to ascertain what students expect and think about the use of L1. The other shortcoming of our study is the small number of interviewees. We invited all the lecturers who teach English phonology; however, this sampling size was small, and thus our results would not be generalizable to a larger

population. For future research, more EFL teachers from different universities should be recruited to participate in the study.

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