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Research Article

Challenges in Online English Learning among English-Majored Students at Thu Dau Mot University

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ABSTRACT

Online learning has become an important educational approach in higher education, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite its flexibility and convenience, online learning also creates various challenges for students, especially in English language learning contexts where interaction and communication are essential. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the challenges faced by English-majored students in online English learning at Thu Dau Mot University. The study employed a quantitative research design using questionnaires as the primary instrument for data collection. A total of 100 English-majored students participated in the study. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages. The findings revealed that students experienced several significant challenges in online English learning. Regarding technological factors, students commonly faced problems related to weak Internet connection, poor sound and picture quality, limited technological skills, and unstable online learning platforms. In addition, learner-related challenges were also identified. Students reported difficulties in interacting with learning content, instructors, and classmates. Limited feedback from teachers, reduced communication opportunities, psychological distance in online discussions, and lack of engagement were found to negatively affect students' learning experiences. Furthermore, environmental constraints, including noise and distractions from social networking sites and entertainment platforms, also reduced students' concentration and learning effectiveness. Overall, the findings suggest that online English learning challenges are influenced by technological, instructional, social, emotional, and environmental factors. The study provides practical implications for students, teachers, and educational administrators in improving the quality of online English teaching and learning at Thu Dau Mot University.

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1. Introduction

Online learning has become one of the most common educational approaches in modern education, particularly in higher education contexts. Alongside traditional face-to-face learning, online learning provides students with flexible access to educational resources regardless of time and location. The rapid development of digital technologies has further accelerated the integration of online learning into English language education worldwide. In Vietnam, online learning became especially prominent during the COVID-19 pandemic when schools and universities were required to suspend face-to-face teaching and shift to virtual learning environments. As a result, online learning emerged as an important alternative for maintaining educational continuity and ensuring that students could continue their studies during periods of social distancing and lockdown. Although the COVID-19 pandemic had passed, online learning continues to play an important role in higher education because many universities have maintained online or blended learning models due to their flexibility and convenience. Previous studies have also emphasized the growing importance of digital and online learning environments in higher education worldwide (Dziuban et al., 2018; Galvis & Carvajal, 2022; Broadbent et al., 2023).

Despite its advantages, online learning also presents various challenges for students, especially in language learning contexts where interaction, communication, and immediate feedback are essential. Students may encounter difficulties related to internet connectivity, technological skills, learning motivation, communication, concentration, self-regulation, and limited interaction with teachers and classmates. These difficulties may negatively affect students' learning experiences and academic performance. Previous studies have identified numerous barriers associated with online learning. For example, Pitambar Paudel found that students experienced difficulties related to time management, learner autonomy, internet accessibility, social isolation, and delayed instructor feedback during online learning. Similarly, Fidalgo et al. (2020) reported that students were concerned about time management, motivation, and English language skills in distance education contexts. Moreover, Bağrıacık Yılmaz and Karataş (2022) revealed that student dropout in online education was influenced by factors such as

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academic integration, social integration, self-regulation, and financial conditions. Other studies have also shown that students' digital literacy, self-efficacy, emotional engagement, and technological readiness significantly influence their online learning experiences and outcomes (Kim et al., 2019; Scheel et al., 2022; Getenet et al., 2024).

In addition, previous research has highlighted that online learning may create psychological and interactional difficulties for students. Stolba et al. (2024) emphasized the importance of emotional intelligence, body language, and positive emotions in maintaining engagement in fully online learning environments. Similarly, Seo et al. (2021) found that although artificial intelligence and online learning systems can improve communication and personalized support, students and instructors still expressed concerns regarding interaction quality, social boundaries, and emotional connection in online learning. Furthermore, Koh and Daniel (2022) reported that although online learning strategies helped maintain educational continuity during the COVID-19 pandemic, many students still faced infrastructure problems, poor engagement, and difficulties adapting to online participation strategies. These findings suggest that online learning challenges are not limited to technological issues alone but also involve cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social dimensions.

However, although previous studies have identified general challenges in online learning, limited attention has been paid to the specific difficulties experienced by English-majored students in Vietnamese university contexts, particularly at Thu Dau Mot University. English language learning differs from many other disciplines because it requires frequent interaction, communication practice, pronunciation training, listening comprehension, and immediate feedback from instructors. Therefore, online learning environments may create additional challenges for English-major students compared with students in other academic fields. Understanding these challenges is important for improving the quality of online English education and supporting students' learning effectiveness.

For these reasons, the researcher conducted the study entitled "Challenges in Online English Learning among English-Majored Students at Thu Dau Mot University." This study aims to identify the common challenges that English-majored students encounter in online English learning and propose possible solutions to help students overcome these difficulties. It is expected that the findings of this study will contribute to a better understanding of online English learning challenges and provide practical implications for students, teachers, and educational administrators in improving online English teaching and learning practices at Thu Dau Mot University.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Online learning

There are various definitions of online learning in the existing literature. Carliner (1999) describes online learning as educational materials delivered through computers and digital technologies. More comprehensively, Ally (2004) conceptualizes online learning as the use of the Internet to access learning materials, interact with instructors and other learners, and receive support throughout the learning process in order to acquire knowledge and develop meaningful learning experiences. Similarly, recent studies have emphasized that online learning environments allow students to engage with digital resources, participate in virtual interactions, and learn flexibly regardless of time and location (Dziuban et al., 2018; Galvis & Carvajal, 2022). Based on these perspectives, online learning in the present study refers to a learning process in which students use technological devices such as computers, smartphones, or tablets connected to the Internet to access learning materials, communicate with instructors and classmates, participate in learning activities, and receive academic support during the learning process.

2.2. Challenges in online language learning

Various factors influence students' effectiveness in online English learning. Previous studies have shown that learners' attitudes toward online learning are affected by multiple technological and personal factors. For example, Liaw et al. (2007), Nogueira and Machado (2008), Sun et al. (2008), and Bertea (2009) reported that students' positive attitudes toward e-learning are associated with factors such as technological readiness, accessibility of Internet resources, computer literacy, perceived usefulness, self-efficacy, motivation, patience, self-discipline, and self-regulation. Similarly, Lim and Morris (2009) emphasized that learner characteristics, including age, previous experience with distance learning, preferred learning format, and study time, significantly influence online learning outcomes. Based on these previous studies, factors affecting online language learning can generally be categorized into two major groups: technological factors and learner-related factors.

2.2.1. Technology-and-facility-related factors

Technological factors, facilities, and infrastructure are considered major challenges affecting students' online learning experiences. Poor Internet connectivity, limited access to technological devices, unstable online platforms, and inadequate digital infrastructure may negatively affect students' participation, engagement, and learning performance. In particular, students living in rural areas or coming from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds often experience greater difficulties in accessing reliable Internet services and digital learning resources. According to Robert Fairlie et al. (2010), high school students with broadband Internet access at home demonstrated graduation rates that were 6–8% higher than those without broadband access. Similarly, Bauer et al. (2020) found that students from rural areas and lower socio-economic backgrounds were less likely to have stable broadband Internet access at home. Their study also revealed that inequalities in Internet accessibility were strongly associated with socio-economic factors such as family income, parental education, race, and ethnicity. Furthermore, students who relied mainly on mobile phones for Internet access often faced additional difficulties due to unstable connections, limited data packages, and restricted access to online learning resources.

Previous studies have also highlighted the influence of facilities and economic conditions on students' online learning experiences. Anderson and Perrin (2018) found that students from low-income families experienced more educational difficulties because of limited technological resources. Similarly, Hamdani and Priatna (2020) reported that students frequently faced problems related to low digital literacy, limited financial ability to purchase Internet data packages, and excessive online assignments during online learning. Pohan (2020) further emphasized that students experienced both financial and psychological difficulties in online learning environments, particularly when they lacked sufficient economic support and faced high academic pressure. In addition, Putria et al. (2020) identified the availability of smartphones, Internet quotas, and stable Internet networks as important supporting factors for effective online learning because not all students possessed adequate technological devices.

More recent studies have emphasized that technological readiness and digital competence are also important factors influencing online learning effectiveness. Scheel et al. (2022) reported that students' digital competence, self-organization, and

independent learning abilities significantly influenced their acceptance of digital learning. Similarly, Getenet et al. (2024) found that digital literacy and technological self-efficacy positively contributed to students' engagement in online learning environments. In addition, Koh and Daniel (2022) noted that infrastructure problems and ineffective online participation strategies negatively affected students' engagement and learning quality during the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings suggest that technological factors not only involve Internet accessibility and technological devices but also include students' ability to effectively utilize digital technologies for learning purposes. Therefore, insufficient facilities, unstable technological infrastructure, and limited digital readiness may significantly hinder students' effectiveness in online English learning environments.

2.2.2. Learner-related factors

a. Learner Support

Many previous studies have emphasized the importance of learner support in online learning environments. Learner support includes academic, technical, emotional, and instructional assistance provided by teachers, tutors, counselors, and institutions throughout the learning process. Huett et al. (2004) and LaPadula (2003) highlighted that support services such as online tutors, academic counselors, and student support communities significantly influence the quality of online education. Similarly, Packham et al. (2004) reported that excessive coursework, assignment overload, and technical problems were important factors contributing to students' dropout decisions in online courses. In addition, Brown (1996) found that the lack of support from instructors and difficulties in communicating with tutors played a major role in students' decisions to discontinue online learning.

Previous research has also shown that students' learning strategies and interactional support strongly affect their online learning outcomes. Sankaran and Bui (2001) found that online learners who lacked effective learning strategies performed more poorly than those who applied deep or surface learning strategies. Their study also indicated that less motivated learners tended to achieve lower academic performance compared with highly motivated students. Likewise, King et al. (2000) emphasized that study groups, active communication, and interaction with instructors positively contributed to students' academic success in online learning environments. More recent studies have continued to support the importance of interaction and engagement in online learning. For example, McNeil et al. (2025) found that students were more engaged when participating in authentic and interactive learning activities that encouraged collaboration and communication. Similarly, Heilporn et al. (2021) emphasized that well-structured communication, supportive teacher-student relationships, and interactive digital tools played important roles in fostering student engagement in blended and online learning environments. These findings suggest that insufficient support from instructors and peers may create significant barriers for students in online English learning, particularly in developing communication skills and maintaining active participation.

b. Motivation Factors

Motivation is another important factor influencing students' online learning experiences. Since online learning environments require students to study more independently, learners' motivation and self-discipline greatly affect their academic performance and participation. According to Yoshiko Ushida (2005), teacher-related motivational factors and classroom culture significantly influence students' attitudes and motivation in online language learning environments. Similarly, Frederick Herzberg (1968) proposed that motivational factors such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement, and personal growth contribute positively to individuals' satisfaction and performance. In online learning contexts, motivated students are generally more willing to participate actively, complete learning tasks, and engage in independent learning activities.

Recent studies have also highlighted the relationship between motivation, engagement, and online learning effectiveness. Wei et al. (2024) found that learners' attitudes, self-efficacy, and intrinsic motivation positively influenced learning engagement and perceived learning outcomes in MOOCs. Likewise, Wang et al. (2022) reported that cognitive, behavioral, and emotional engagement significantly affected online learning outcomes. These findings indicate that students with low motivation may experience greater difficulties in maintaining concentration, participation, and persistence in online English learning.

c. Emotion Management

Emotional and psychological factors may also create challenges in online learning environments. Bashir et al. (2018) investigated the influence of Internet use on emotional instability, time management, and academic performance among university students. Their findings showed that excessive Internet use could increase students' stress, anxiety, and emotional instability, which negatively affected academic performance and time management. The study also revealed gender differences in emotional instability and academic outcomes associated with Internet use. In online learning contexts, students may experience pressure, loneliness, anxiety, and reduced emotional connection because of limited face-to-face interaction and prolonged screen exposure.

Recent studies have similarly emphasized the importance of emotional engagement and emotional intelligence in online learning. Stolba et al. (2024) found that positive emotions and emotional intelligence were closely associated with greater participation and engagement in fully online learning communities. Furthermore, Turner et al. (2023) reported that online learning environments could create feelings of stress, isolation, and psychological pressure despite offering flexibility and convenience. These findings suggest that ineffective emotion management may negatively influence students' learning motivation, participation, and overall online learning experiences.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

Based on the research objectives, this study employed a quantitative research design. According to Creswell (2014), quantitative research is a type of research that explains phenomena through the collection and analysis of numerical data using statistical and mathematical techniques. The quantitative approach was considered appropriate for the present study because it enabled the researcher to collect, measure, and analyze students' responses regarding the challenges they encountered in online English learning systematically and objectively. In this study, data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to English-majored students at Thu Dau Mot University. The questionnaire was designed to gather participants' perceptions and experiences related to difficulties in online English learning. After the data collection process, the responses were coded and analyzed using statistical methods to identify common challenges faced by students. The use of quantitative research methods also helped increase the efficiency of data

analysis, minimize errors during data processing, and provide more objective and reliable findings for the study.

3.2. Participants

The participants of this study were English-majored students at Thu Dau Mot University. These students were considered appropriate participants for this research because they had experienced both traditional face-to-face learning and online learning. Therefore, they were expected to provide reliable and practical insights into the challenges encountered in online English learning contexts. To collect data for the study, the researcher randomly selected 100 English-majored students from the total population. Random sampling was employed in order to increase the diversity and representativeness of the collected data and to reduce potential bias that might occur if only familiar participants were selected. Although a larger sample size would have provided broader representation, the researcher was limited by time constraints and difficulties in directly contacting students during the data collection process. Nevertheless, the sample size of 100 participants was considered sufficient to provide meaningful data for the purposes of this study.

3.3. Research instruments

This study employed a questionnaire as the primary instrument for data collection. Questionnaires are widely used in quantitative research because they enable researchers to collect information from a large number of participants efficiently and economically. According to Creswell (2014), questionnaires are considered a useful research tool because they are less expensive than face-to-face interviews and can be administered more quickly, particularly when the sample is large and geographically dispersed. Therefore, the use of questionnaires in the present study helped the researcher save time and cost while facilitating the data collection process. The questionnaire used in this study consisted of two main parts. The first part aimed to collect participants' demographic and background information, including gender, years of learning English, time spent on online learning, devices used for online learning, learning locations, and participants' perceptions of the importance of online learning. This information was necessary to provide a general overview of the participants involved in the study. The second part focused on investigating students' challenges in online English learning. Based on previous studies, the questionnaire examined two major categories of difficulties, namely technological factors and learner-related factors. Regarding technological factors, participants were allowed to select more than one difficulty from a list of technological problems provided by the researcher because students might experience multiple technological challenges simultaneously during online learning. This design helped provide more comprehensive and accurate data regarding the technological difficulties commonly encountered by students. For learner-related factors, the questionnaire focused on four major aspects: interaction with learning content, interaction with instructors, interaction with classmates, and other personal difficulties related to online learning. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement using a five-point Likert scale, including strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. For each item, participants were allowed to select only one response that most accurately reflected their experiences and perceptions. The use of the Likert scale helped measure the degree to which students experienced different challenges in online English learning environments.

3.4. Data collection procedures

After the questionnaire had been finalized, it was created and distributed using Google Forms. The questionnaire was organized into separate sections and arranged on different pages in order to reduce missing responses and improve participants' completion of the survey. The survey link was then distributed to third-year English-majored students at Thu Dau Mot University through various online communication platforms, including Facebook, Zalo, and email. The researcher also received support from lecturers, classmates, and students from the Faculty of Foreign Languages in sharing the questionnaire with appropriate participants. In addition, the survey link was posted in online study groups that the researcher had previously joined. The data collection process was conducted within a one-month preriod. Participants voluntarily completed the questionnaire until the target number of 100 responses was reached. After the data collection period ended, the questionnaire was closed, and the collected responses were checked, coded, and prepared for statistical analysis. The researcher then proceeded to analyze the data in order to identify the common challenges experienced by English-majored students in online English learning.

3.5. Data Analysis Methods

After the data collection process was completed, the researcher conducted data analysis to examine the challenges faced by English-majored students in online English learning. First, all responses collected through Google Forms were downloaded and carefully checked to ensure that the data were complete and valid. Incomplete or irrelevant responses were removed before the analysis process began. Next, the collected data were coded, classified, and organized according to the research objectives and questionnaire sections. The demographic information of the participants was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean, frequencies and percentages. Tables and charts were created to present the data more clearly and systematically. The researcher used descriptive statistical methods to identify the most common technological and learner-related difficulties experienced by the participants.

4. Findings

4.1. Technology-and-facility-related challenges

The findings indicate that technological problems were common among English-majored students during online learning. Among the reported technical difficulties, weak or unstable Internet connection was the most serious problem, with 67% of participants reporting that poor Internet connectivity caused problems such as screen freezing, broken sound, and delays during online classes. This finding suggests that Internet accessibility remains a major barrier affecting students' participation and learning quality in online learning environments. Similarly, 58% of the students reported poor sound and picture quality during online classes, which may negatively influence students' ability to understand lesson content and interact effectively with instructors and classmates.

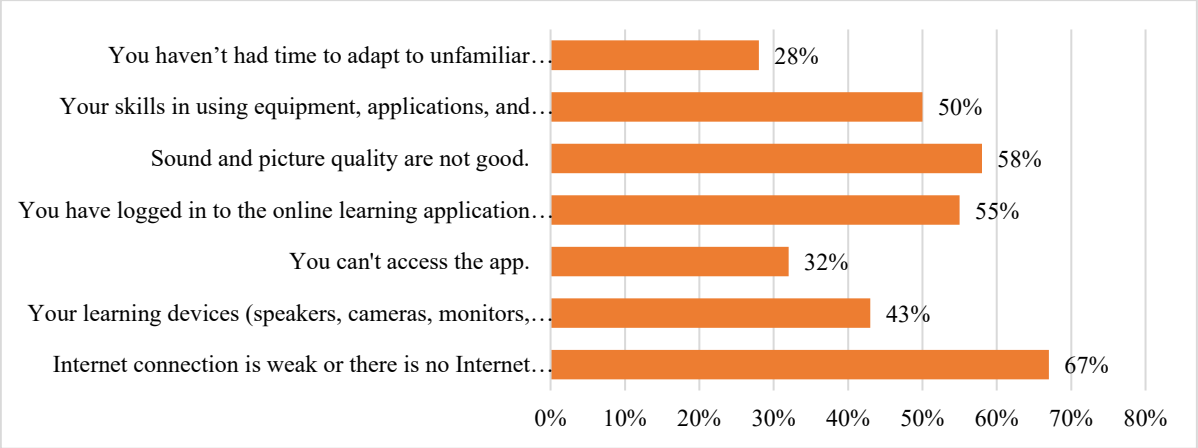


Figure 1. Technology-and-facility-related challenges

Another frequently reported problem was students being unexpectedly removed from online learning applications and being unable to rejoin classes, which was experienced by 55% of the participants. In addition, 50% of the students indicated that they had limited skills in using technological equipment, applications, and information technology. This finding implies that technological competence and digital literacy remain important issues affecting students' online learning experiences. Furthermore, 43% of the participants stated that their learning devices, such as speakers, cameras, or monitors, had poor performance or technical damage, which may further reduce the effectiveness of online learning.

Meanwhile, 32% of the students reported that they could not access online learning applications, while 28% indicated that they had insufficient time to adapt to unfamiliar technologies and applications. Although these percentages were lower than other technical difficulties, they still demonstrate that adapting to new technologies may create challenges for some students in online learning contexts.

Overall, the findings suggest that technological difficulties remain significant barriers to effective online English learning. Internet connectivity problems, poor audio and visual quality, limited technological skills, and inadequate technological devices may reduce students' engagement, participation, and learning effectiveness in online learning environments. These findings are consistent with previous studies emphasizing the importance of technological infrastructure, digital competence, and Internet accessibility in online education (Scheel et al., 2022; Getenet et al., 2024).

4.2. Student-related challenges

4.2.1. Challenges in interacting with the content

Table 1 presents the challenges faced by students in interacting with online learning content. Overall, the findings indicate that English-majored students experienced substantial difficulties in accessing, understanding, and engaging with online lesson content, as all items obtained relatively high mean scores ranging from 4.23 to 4.56. These results suggest that interaction with online learning content was one of the major challenges affecting students' online English learning experiences.

Table 1. Participant's challenges in interacting with the content

Statements	Mean	SD
You don't know how to exploit documents, download the contents of the lesson, the assigned exercises.	4.56	0.61
You feel bored and do not focus on the lesson content when the content is not presented in a variety	4.29	0.74
You have difficulty conveying or accessing the lesson content (how to show the presentation, how to review the recordings of old lessons, etc.)	4.23	0.66

Among the investigated issues, the highest mean score was found for the statement "You don't know how to exploit documents, download the contents of the lesson, the assigned exercises" (M = 4.56, SD = 0.61). This finding indicates that many students experienced difficulties in accessing and utilizing online learning materials effectively. The relatively low standard deviation shows that students shared similar perceptions regarding this challenge. This result may suggest that some students still lacked sufficient technological skills and familiarity with online learning systems, which negatively influenced their ability to study independently.

In addition, students reported feeling bored and unable to concentrate when lesson content was not presented in a variety of ways (M = 4.29, SD = 0.74). This finding implies that monotonous teaching methods and limited interaction in online classes may reduce students' attention and engagement during the learning process. Furthermore, students also experienced difficulties in conveying or accessing lesson content, such as presenting slides and reviewing recorded lessons (M = 4.23, SD = 0.66). This result suggests that students encountered obstacles in interacting with digital learning materials and online learning platforms.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that challenges related to interacting with online learning content negatively affected students' concentration, engagement, and learning effectiveness in online English learning environments.

4.2.2. Challenges in interacting with instructors

Table 2 presents students' challenges in interacting with instructors during online English learning. Overall, the findings indicate that students experienced considerable difficulties related to teacher interaction, instructional support, and technological competence, with mean scores ranging from 4.03 to 4.40.

Table 2. Participant's challenges in interacting with instructors

Statements	Mean	SD
Your teachers have little or no interaction with students.	4.13	0.87
Your teachers give students few practice tasks and are unable to provide prompt constructive feedback on a case-by-case basis.	4.40	0.55
Your teacher's information technology literacy is limited in integrating digital equipment into online classroom instruction.	4.03	1.01
Your teachers have insufficient network conditions for online teaching, causing interruptions in communication and information transmission.	4.19	0.83

Among the investigated issues, the statement "Your teachers give students few practice tasks and are unable to provide prompt constructive feedback on a case-by-case basis" received the highest mean score (M = 4.40, SD = 0.55). This finding suggests that insufficient practice opportunities and delayed feedback were major concerns affecting students' learning experiences. The relatively low standard deviation also indicates that most participants shared similar perceptions regarding this issue.

In addition, students reported limited interaction between teachers and students during online classes (M = 4.13, SD = 0.87). This result implies that the online learning environment may reduce opportunities for communication and interaction between instructors and learners. Furthermore, students perceived that some teachers had limited technological literacy in integrating digital equipment into online teaching activities (M = 4.03, SD = 1.01). The higher standard deviation for this item suggests greater variation in students' perceptions of teachers' technological competence.

Another commonly reported difficulty was teachers' unstable network conditions, which interrupted communication and information transmission during online classes (M = 4.19, SD = 0.83). This finding indicates that technological and Internet-related issues not only affected students but also influenced teachers' ability to conduct online lessons effectively.

Overall, the findings suggest that limited interaction, insufficient instructional support, technological limitations, and unstable network conditions negatively affected students' online English learning experiences.

4.2.3. Challenges in interacting with classmates

Table 3 presents students' challenges in interacting with classmates during online English learning. Overall, the findings indicate that students experienced considerable difficulties related to communication, collaboration, and social interaction with peers, with mean scores ranging from 4.24 to 4.37.

Table 3. Participant's challenges in interacting with classmates

Statements	Mean	SD
You do not have the opportunity to study and exchange ideas with friends, which reduces your ability to absorb and remember information.	4.24	0.71
Online discussions restrict immediate behaviors and verbal interaction, leading to psychological distance between you and other communicators.	4.37	0.56
Online learning tends to isolate learners and limit communication with others, making you feel stressed, depressed, and difficult to integrate.	4.30	0.85

Among the investigated issues, the statement "Online discussions restrict immediate behaviors and verbal interaction, leading to psychological distance between you and other communicators" received the highest mean score (M = 4.37, SD = 0.56). This finding suggests that online learning environments reduced students' sense of connection and natural communication with classmates. The relatively low standard deviation also indicates that most participants shared similar perceptions regarding this issue.

In addition, students reported that online learning tended to isolate learners and limit communication with others, making them feel stressed, depressed, and difficult to integrate into the learning environment (M = 4.30, SD = 0.85). This result implies that the lack of direct interaction in online classes negatively affected students' emotional well-being and social engagement. Furthermore, students agreed that limited opportunities to study and exchange ideas with classmates reduced their ability to absorb and remember lesson content (M = 4.24, SD = 0.71).

Overall, the findings suggest that limited peer interaction and reduced communication opportunities negatively influenced students' learning effectiveness, engagement, and emotional experiences in online English learning environments.

4.2.4. Challenges due to environmental constraint

Table 4 presents students' challenges caused by environmental constraints during online English learning. Overall, the findings indicate that environmental factors negatively affected students' concentration and learning effectiveness, with mean scores ranging from 4.02 to 4.58.

Table 4. Challenges due to environmental constraint

Statements	Mean	SD
You are affected by external sound factors from family members, neighbors, noise, etc.	4.58	0.57
You are easily disturbed or distracted by social networking sites and entertainment websites.	4.02	0.94

Among the investigated issues, external sound factors from family members, neighbors, and surrounding noise received the highest mean score (M = 4.58, SD = 0.57). This finding suggests that noisy learning environments were one of the most serious problems affecting students during online classes. The relatively low standard deviation also indicates that most participants shared similar perceptions regarding this challenge.

In addition, students reported being easily distracted by social networking sites and entertainment websites while participating in online learning (M = 4.02, SD = 0.94). The higher standard deviation for this item indicates greater variation in students' experiences with online distractions.

Overall, the findings suggest that environmental constraints, particularly noise and online distractions, negatively influenced students' concentration, engagement, and learning performance in online English learning environments.

5. Discussion

The present study investigated the challenges experienced by English-majored students in online English learning at Thu Dau Mot University. The findings revealed that students encountered difficulties related to technological factors, interaction with learning content, interaction with instructors, interaction with classmates, and environmental constraints. Overall, the findings support previous studies suggesting that online learning challenges are multidimensional and involve technological, cognitive, emotional, and social aspects of learning.

First, technological and facility-related factors were found to be major barriers affecting students' online learning experiences. Many participants reported problems related to weak Internet connection, unstable sound and picture quality, limited technological skills, and inadequate learning devices. These findings are consistent with previous studies emphasizing that technological readiness and Internet accessibility significantly influence students' online learning effectiveness (Scheel et al., 2022; Getenet et al., 2024). The findings also support Bauer et al. (2020), who found that students from disadvantaged backgrounds often experienced difficulties related to broadband Internet access and technological resources. In the context of English language learning, technological limitations may create even greater difficulties because language learning requires frequent listening, speaking, and interaction activities, which heavily depend on stable Internet connections and effective communication tools.

Second, the findings showed that students experienced substantial difficulties in interacting with online learning content. In particular, students had difficulties exploiting learning materials, downloading assignments, and maintaining concentration when lesson content was not presented in a variety of ways. These findings suggest that students' digital competence and self-regulated learning abilities may still be limited. This result is consistent with Scheel et al. (2022), who reported that students' digital competence and self-organization abilities significantly influenced their acceptance of digital learning. Moreover, the finding that students felt bored when lesson content lacked variety supports previous studies emphasizing the importance of interactive and engaging instructional design in online learning environments (McNeil et al., 2025; Heilporn et al., 2021).

Third, interaction with instructors was also identified as an important challenge in online English learning. Students reported that teachers provided limited interaction, insufficient practice opportunities, delayed feedback, and sometimes lacked technological competence in online teaching. These findings are consistent with Paudel's study, which found that delayed instructor feedback and limited interaction negatively affected students' online learning experiences. Similarly, Seo et al. (2021) emphasized that although online technologies can support communication, interaction quality between learners and instructors remains a major concern in online learning environments. In language learning contexts, prompt feedback and frequent interaction are particularly important because students need immediate correction and communication practice to improve their language skills. Therefore, limited teacher-student interaction may reduce students' engagement and learning effectiveness.

Furthermore, the findings demonstrated that students experienced considerable difficulties in interacting with classmates. Many participants felt that online learning reduced opportunities for communication and collaboration with peers, created psychological distance, and increased feelings of isolation and stress. These findings support previous studies suggesting that online learning environments may negatively affect students' emotional engagement and social connection (Stolba et al., 2024; Turner et al., 2023). Similarly, Teng et al. (2024) emphasized the importance of interaction and collaborative learning activities in maintaining students' engagement in blended EFL learning environments. Since English language learning requires active communication and collaborative practice, reduced peer interaction may negatively influence students' speaking confidence, communication skills, and motivation to participate in learning activities.

Finally, environmental constraints were also found to negatively affect students' online English learning experiences. External noise from family members, neighbors, and surrounding environments was identified as one of the most serious problems experienced by students. In addition, many students reported being distracted by social networking sites and entertainment platforms during online classes. These findings are consistent with Bashir et al. (2018), who found that excessive Internet use and online distractions negatively affected students' concentration and academic performance. The findings also support Hamdani and Priatna (2020), who emphasized that unsuitable home learning environments may create barriers to effective online learning. In online learning contexts, students are required to study independently in environments that may not always be appropriate for academic concentration, which may reduce learning effectiveness and participation.

Overall, the findings indicate that online English learning challenges among English-majored students at Thu Dau Mot University were influenced by a combination of technological, instructional, social, emotional, and environmental factors. These findings suggest that improving online English learning effectiveness requires not only technological support but also improvements in instructional design, teacher-student interaction, peer collaboration, and learning environments.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated the challenges faced by English-majored students at Thu Dau Mot University in online English learning. The findings revealed that students experienced various difficulties related to technological factors, interaction with learning content, interaction with instructors, interaction with classmates, and environmental constraints. Among these challenges, unstable Internet connection, limited technological skills, lack of interaction and feedback from instructors, reduced communication with classmates, and environmental distractions were identified as major barriers affecting students' online learning experiences.

The findings also indicate that online English learning challenges are not limited to technological issues alone but also involve cognitive, emotional, social, and instructional dimensions. Since English language learning requires frequent interaction, communication practice, and immediate feedback, limitations in online learning environments may negatively affect students' engagement, concentration, communication ability, and overall learning effectiveness.

Based on the findings, several implications can be suggested. First, universities should improve technological infrastructure

and provide better technical support for both students and instructors during online learning. Second, instructors should diversify teaching methods, increase interaction and communication with students, and provide more timely feedback and practice opportunities. Third, students should improve their digital literacy, self-regulation, and independent learning skills in order to adapt more effectively to online learning environments. In addition, creating more collaborative and interactive learning activities may help reduce students' feelings of isolation and improve engagement in online classes.

Although this study provides useful insights into the challenges of online English learning, it still has several limitations. The study only involved English-majored students at Thu Dau Mot University with a relatively small sample size of 100 participants. Therefore, the findings may not fully represent students from other universities or academic disciplines. Future studies should employ larger samples and include participants from different educational contexts to provide more comprehensive findings regarding online English learning challenges.

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