

Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Learning Outcomes from Students' Perspectives towards Research Writing Course: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: Outcome-based education, outcome-based learning activities, English Language, Vietnam

For the past twenty years, higher education in Vietnam has moved from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered approach, using Outcome-Based Education (OBE). Whereas OBE has been implemented for a long time, the amount of research investigating students' perceptions of its effectiveness is limited. This study aims to solve this gap by examining English Language graduate students' perceptions of outcome-based learning activities and the expected learning outcomes of the course Research Writing course at Van Lang University. A mixed-methods approach was used, including questionnaires and interviews, to collect qualitative and quantitative data. The findings point out that students hold a positive attitude towards the expected learning outcomes and learning activities organized by their lecturer, highlighting the benefits of an OBE course. Results from the study would be beneficial to the development of course outlines, training programs, and the implementation of OBE at Van Lang University.

Introduction

Background of the Study

In response to international integration, over the last twenty years, Vietnam has ventured into comprehensive educational reforms to transform the nature of education from all levels and develop higher education of excellent quality that can promote the development of a country in terms of economy and society (Harman et al., 2010). In this reform, focusing on learning outcomes is the pervasive feature (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2019). For most parts, education is always about outcomes; in other words, it seems that there are several significant elements in the current educational reconstruction basically summarized as Outcomes Based Education (OBE) (Andrich, 2002). Laws, decisions, and circulars enacted by the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam (MOET), such as “Law on Higher Education” (MOET, 2012),

"Circular 07" (MOET, 2015), and "Circular 17" (MOET, 2021) have heightened the expectations towards about OBE for higher education institutions.

The central principle of OBE is "Success for all learners and teachers" (Spady, 1995, p.9). Firstly, education should guarantee each learner obtains the necessary knowledge and abilities to fulfill the expected learning outcomes when completing the course. Secondly, learning outcomes should be clearly identified and maximize the potential of every learner (Thuy, 2022). In the sense of ensuring that every student can achieve the expected learning outcomes, this learner-centered approach centers around the success of every student (Thuy, 2022). The implementation of OBE has shifted the conventional teaching method of Vietnamese teachers from a teacher-centered to a student-centered one (Hang & Van, 2020).

Statement of the Problems

According to Nusche (2008), present quality assessments of educational programs tend to ignore information about learning outcomes. Alternatively, they only consider factors such as activities, inputs, and research outputs, namely materials used, classes taught, and research papers published. These kinds of performance indicators may fail to provide accurate measurements of the extent to which universities or colleges really improve the knowledge and skills of their learners.

In the context of comprehensive reform in education, with a concentration on the effectiveness of student learning, it is critical to understand students' standpoint on each course they have taken at a certain Vietnamese university (Yao & Collins, 2019). Aziz et al. (2012) stated that the most realistic way in today's education evaluation is to focalize students' viewpoints on their experience with academic programs. This could be attributed to student feedback being indispensable for designing and developing any learning program. By collecting and analyzing their feedback, educators can know how the expected learning outcomes have translated into reality. Notwithstanding the importance of feedback from students, relatively few research papers from the perspective of students have examined whether the expected learning outcomes have been achieved or where students stand on the expected learning outcomes of a specific course (Thuy, 2022).

The Purpose of the Study

It is nearly impossible to assess the effectiveness of expected learning outcomes without knowing what students think about the learning outcomes set by their lectures and the extent to which they have achieved. In the absence of this information, this paper aims to evaluate the effectiveness of learning outcomes by exploring English Language graduate students' perspectives towards the learning activities and the expected learning outcomes of the course Research Writing at Van Lang University (Ho Chi Minh City).

Literature review

Learning Outcomes

Adam (2006, p.2) stated that “learning outcomes are statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate at the end of a period of learning”. It means learning outcomes are concise descriptions of the knowledge and skills that the learner will learn, possess, and demonstrate by the end of a learning period. Learning outcomes illustrate the learning results pertaining to a combination of knowledge, abilities, capacities, and responsibilities that a learner will acquire from engaging in various learning activities at an educational institution (Coates et al., 2018).

Learning outcomes are typical examples of showing, expressing, and reflecting on the curriculum in terms of modules, lessons, and qualifications (Keengwe, 2022). The use of learning outcomes is closely related to the shift from teaching to learning, which is known as the learner-centered paradigm of education.

There is a wide range of definitions for the term ‘learning outcomes,’ but they all have four features in common (Adam, 2004). First, learning outcomes represent a universal attempt to be more precise by intensifying achievements. Second, Bloom's action verbs are employed to write learning outcomes. Third, learning outcomes emphasize the relationship between teaching, learning, and assessment. Finally, several learning outcomes may express a specific competence.

Outcome-based Education

Spady (1995) intensively studied the OBE approach. In her book, she states that OBE centers around the education system, ensuring that learners achieve substantial success in their later careers and future lives. OBE is a part of education transformation, changing from a teacher-centered approach to a learner-centered one. With the nature of OBE, what students have learned and whether they are successful is of great importance. In the same vein, Donnelly (2007) defines OBE as an educational process in which students’ specific learning outcome is recognized. One of the distinguishing characteristics of OBE is that learning outcomes deeply influence the entire teaching activities and the assessment of students’ learning (Tucker, 2004).

Despite different definitions of OBE, all of them bear some resemblance (Harden, 1999). First, teachers are required to form a clear expectation of the knowledge and capacities that students should achieve when they complete a course, and then make an attempt to plan the proper content and learning activities to guarantee that expected goals can be achieved (Driscoll, 2007). Second, coursebooks or teacher experiences are no longer motivators in the teaching and learning process. The student's outcome is the driving force, opposite to conventional input-oriented education (Kaliannan & Chandran, 2012). To sum up, OBE is viewed as an innovative education model for education transformation.

Previous Research

The research was done by Aziz et al. (2012a) on the topic of the effectiveness of learning outcomes from undergraduates’ standpoints. Questionnaires were distributed to 185 college students to collect data. All of the participants majored in engineering at the Universiti

Teknologi Malaysia. The percentage of students who acknowledged the importance and benefits of learning outcomes was more than 60%. The rest were on the opposite side of the fence; they neither got the meaning of learning outcomes nor thought that learning outcomes were crucial.

Lixun (2013) evaluated the effectiveness of outcome-based learning from the viewpoints of college students and lectures. Sixteen lecturers and about six hundred students from the English Department at the Hong Kong Institute of Education participated in the study. Questionnaire surveys and interviews were used to collect data. The findings revealed that both students and educators had a positive attitude toward this student-centered strategy. Students agreed that this instructional approach allowed them to have clearer purposes for studying, doing exercises, and revising. Moreover, they had a deeper understanding of what the lectures expected them to achieve and what they were required to do to fulfill these expectations.

In his research, Gong Jianmin (2016) examined the competence of university graduates. He concluded that introducing a new instructional approach, OBE, is an unavoidable alternative to enhancing the quality of students who will take part in the labor market. However, when applying this new educational model, there were some difficulties related to teachers' ability, curriculum design, quality assessment, etc.

Tan et al. (2018) systematically reviewed numerous studies published from 2006 to 2016 on eight online sources to determine OBE's effectiveness in nursing classes. Researchers found that the OBE strategies enhanced competency in the process of acquiring knowledge, which meant that students got higher final scores and cognitive skills. While demonstrating clinical skills, nursing students had a higher level of clinical skills, clinical nursing competencies, and behavioral skills. Besides, most students were satisfied with outcome-based learning activities.

Pirzada and Gull (2019) examined the perceptions of one hundred lectures of various universities in Pakistan towards outcome-based education and its effect on teaching performance. A questionnaire was used as the major instrument for collecting and analyzing data. Outcome-based education enhances lectures' teaching quality and benefits students in some aspects. It also supports college students in building and improving their portfolios. These are concrete proof of learning gained to develop academic performance and a professional career in the future.

The article written by Li and Jiang (2020) illustrated the benefits of OBE to high school students. They used three research instruments for this research: questionnaires, interviews, pre-tests, and post-tests. The findings show that OBE helped students boost their writing skills. To be more specific, students could expand their lexical resources and structures, improve their word choice, and apply newly learned language knowledge to their essays. Moreover, this new learning paradigm encouraged students' learning motivation and minimized their bad feelings, such as uselessness, nervousness, and passiveness.

In the same vein, Zhao (2020) studies the advantages of the new English teaching model based on OBE at Bohai University, China. The researcher found that this modern educational model allows students to develop multiple skills, which are one of the most crucial features of an employee in a very competitive working environment. Additionally, OBE can meet the

requirements of the new English curriculum, developing the ability to create and apply among students.

One year later, Yasmin and Yasmeeen (2021) examined OBE's effectiveness in learning English for non-English major college students. A group of 29 second-year students specializing in Chemical Engineering participated in the experiment. Pre- and post-tests on two productive skills (writing and speaking) and the results of the midterm and final exams were used to collect data. The findings showed that after applying the OBE method, the scores and performance of students significantly increased. OBE did promote the process of obtaining learning objectives. However, there were some concerns. Some students did not have a strong learning motivation and failed to adapt to this new instructional method. They remained passive because the traditional teaching methods had forced them to do so for a long time.

Thuy (2022) conducted a study on four hundred students to examine their perspectives on outcome-based learning activities. All of them came from the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City. A questionnaire with nineteen items was employed to gather information. In general, students were positive about outcome-oriented teaching activities. They enjoyed activities that allowed them to improve their communication abilities and critical thinking. They also highly evaluated the expected learning outcomes as sufficiently informed, making them more independent in their learning process.

In the same year, Cruz (2022) wrote an article on students' attitudes toward OBE in a state university. The total participants were 100, including 45 college students, 55 graduate students, and 20 postgraduate students. They were asked to rank 31 statements on a four-point Likert scale. Results demonstrate that most respondents held a positive attitude toward OBE. Specifically, students felt ready to shift to a new education approach. They firmly believed that OBE would develop the quality of students' performance and enable them to equip the necessary skills for their future careers.

Whereas previous research has examined the importance and methods of evaluating learning outcomes in universities, it is equally essential to explore the particular difficulties students face in achieving these outcomes, especially in research writing. For example, a study carried out on postgraduate students in the University of Mekong Delta revealed that paraphrasing, plagiarism, referencing, citation, coherence, and cohesion are the most common writing problems (Ho, 2024).

However, these challenges are part of a larger obstacle that Vietnamese EFL learners face in learning English. Time constraints, financial burden, and limited English proficiency in four skills - listening, speaking, reading, and writing - prevent them from being the learning outcomes effectively (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024).

Research Gaps

Myriad research papers are conducted to investigate students' perceptions of OBE or outcome-based learning activities. However, most articles are put in the context of European countries, China, Japan, and the Philippines. Although some articles were written to propose a theoretical framework for assessing and evaluating learning outcomes at national and institutional levels, little has been known about how Vietnamese students, especially college students, think about

OBE in general and outcome-based learning activities conducted in classrooms.

Research Questions

To address the above problems, this paper has two research questions:

Research question 1: Which course learning outcomes have been achieved by students?

Research question 2: Which outcome-based learning activities have helped them achieve these course learning outcomes?

Methods

Research Context and Sample

The study was conducted at the Faculty of Foreign Languages of Van Lang University, Ho Chi Minh City. In 1995, VLU, one of the first private universities in Vietnam, was founded. The university has 66 college majors and 14 graduate majors. Concerning master's programs, the English language is a new one. VLU has just recruited for English Language graduate students since 2021.

The researchers invited 10 participants to take part in the online survey. All of them are students in the second master's program in English Language at the Faculty of Foreign Languages of VLU in the academic year 2022–2024. To be more specific, there were 8 female and 2 male participants. They completed the course 'Research Writing'. This course lasted six weeks. Students were required to attend the class every Saturday and Sunday from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. During the lessons, students participated in different outcome-based learning activities, namely discussion, presentation, collaborative writing, etc. 10 participants were asked to complete the online surveys and join in the online interviews.

Design of the Study

This is a mixed methods study. Online surveys and semi-structured studies were utilized to find out which course learning outcomes have been achieved by students and which outcome-based learning activities have helped them to do so.

Quantitative Research

When it comes to the quantitative method, the researchers made use of Google Forms to create 5-point Likert scale online questionnaires, containing 5 response options: Strongly Disagree (SD); Disagree (D); Neutral (N); Agree (A); Strongly Agree (SA). The study aimed to conduct surveys with 10 graduate students majoring in English Language at the Faculty of Foreign Languages of VLU. It took about three minutes for the students to complete the survey.

Qualitative Research

After filling out the survey, each student was invited to an online interview via Zalo to discuss their perceptions of the course learning outcomes. The researchers chose online interviews instead of face-to-face interviews due to their convenience and flexibility.

Data collection & analysis

Questionnaire

The questionnaire is based on the learning outcomes of the Research Writing course. It has two separate parts. The initial part deals with basic information that is directly connected to the issue being researched, consisting of 22 structured questions. This part was divided into three sub-items revolving around students' evaluation of three aspects of the expected learning outcomes: Knowledge (questions 1-5), Abilities (questions 6-14), and Capabilities and Responsibilities (questions 15-21). These twenty-one questions were developed using the five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Regarding question 22, students were asked to tick which outcome-based learning activities helped them achieve the course learning outcomes. The second part emphasized classification and identification information. Such information as majors, current jobs, the amount of time they have spent learning English, ages, and names were collected in this part. The students were asked to complete it in three or up to five minutes. Microsoft Excel was used to analyze the data collected.

Patten and Group (2020) stated that questionnaire surveys as a quantitative method have the advantage of saving effort and time due to their ability to automatically collect data. With technological advancements, surveys can now be conducted online, allowing researchers to gather data simultaneously.

Interview

10 students were interviewed via Zalo, a common app for sending messages and making video calls in Vietnam. The interview was recorded and lasted about twenty minutes. During the interviews, the researchers carefully noted down what the participants said. Then, their answers were shown with detailed explanations. These are the interview questions:

- 1) Do you think that these expected learning outcomes are reasonable for the length of the course? Why?
- 2) Do you think that these expected learning outcomes are reasonable to your level? Why?
- 3) Which outcome-based learning activities that you find most helpful and meaningful? Why?

Results

Research question 1: Which course learning outcomes have been achieved by students?

Quantitative Analysis (Research Question 1)

Table 1

Knowledge gained from the course

Items	Questionnaire	1	2	3	4	5
		SD	D	N	A	SA
	I. KNOWLEDGE After taking this course, you gain a broad knowledge of...					
1	Writing argumentative essays, opinion essays, discussion essays, etc.			3	5	2
2	Advanced academic writing styles		1	2	6	1
3	Writing in-text citations and references			3	5	2
4	Avoiding plagiarism		1	2	3	4
5	Writing a research paper		2	2	4	2

It is apparent from this table that students gained a decent amount of knowledge. 10 students in items 1 and 3 agreed that they had a general knowledge of types of essays and citing and referencing. This could be attributed to the fact that they had learned this knowledge during college time, and the lecturer of this course reinforced the knowledge in the first and second sessions of the subject. Item 2-4-5 shows that most students acquired a common knowledge about styles in advanced academic writing, preventing plagiarism, and writing a research paper. However, a few students did not think so.

Table 2

Abilities gained from the course

Items	Questionnaire	1	2	3	4	5
		SD	D	N	A	SA
	II. ABILITIES After learning this course, you are able to...					
6	Write a logical and coherent argumentative paper or a research paper in academic writing styles		2	2	5	1
7	Write in-text citations and references			5	2	3
8	Write a summary		2	3	3	2
9	Write an analysis		2	1	5	2
10	Avoid plagiarism		1	2	4	3
11	Analyze a research paper		2	2	3	3
12	Evaluate a research paper	1	1	2	4	2
13	Write a research critique	1	1	6	1	1
14	Evaluate peer essays		1	1	5	3

What is interesting in this data is that, as can be seen in items 9-10-14, students' top three strongest abilities are evaluating peer essays, writing an analysis, and writing a summary. Next came item 6-11-12. Six students agreed that they had the ability to write logical and coherent essays in an academic way and analyze and evaluate a research paper. The rest remained neutral or did not agree. Items 7 and 8 divided opinions. Half of the students agreed that they could write in-text citations and references and write a summary, while others did not regard themselves as having these abilities. Last but not least, six students chose the 'neutral' option for item 13. Only 2 students thought that they could criticize a research paper.

Table 3

Capacities and responsibilities gained from the course

Items	Questionnaire	1	2	3	4	5
		SD	D	N	A	SA
	III. CAPACITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES After learning this course, you are capable of...					
15	Working individually to conduct your writing projects/research papers	1	2	1	3	3
16	Working in groups		1	2	2	5
17	Creating new research ideas	1	1	4	2	2
18	Speaking up for your own perspective after comprehending the knowledge related to a particular research topic	1	1	3	3	2
19	Reading academic papers at a fairly fast speed and a decent quantity to ensure sufficient knowledge	2		5	1	2
20	Developing a sense of responsibility to improve your writing quality by yourself	2	1	1	5	1
21	Collaborating with your peers to help each other improve writing quality.	2		1	5	2

The table shows that students' highest capacity was group work (item 16), which might directly result from collaborative writing (item 21). Item 15-20 demonstrated that six students could work individually to carry out their own research papers and thought they were responsible for enhancing their writing quality by themselves. In item 18, 5 participants believed that they were capable of speaking up for their own viewpoints after acquiring the knowledge of a certain research topic. Item 17 revealed that four students were confident in their capacity to generate new research ideas. In item 19, only three students confirmed that they were capable of reading academic papers at a fairly fast speech and a reasonable quantity to gain enough knowledge.

Qualitative Analysis (Research Question 1)

Interview question 1: Do you think that these expected learning outcomes are reasonable for the length of the course? Why?

When asked about this question, most students answered that it would be better to extend the course length to make the expected learning outcomes more reasonable. The following excerpts from their responses showed their opinions.

The expected learning outcomes related to knowledge can be achieved in six weeks. However, the ability to write logical and coherent essays needs more time to develop. Of all the 4 skills, writing is the most difficult one. I think I do not have enough vocabulary and structure to convey my ideas in an academic way. I just write what I think in an informal style. (Student 7-2-5-6)

The lecturer taught me all of the knowledge I need to write a research paper. However, knowledge is just what lies in my mind. When it comes to abilities and capacities, I do not think I can apply this knowledge successfully. I am not sure how to make my essay logical and coherent. Although I can follow the steps to criticize a research paper, I am always being subjective. It is not easy to find research gaps and then suggest solutions. (Student 3-4-10)

Six weeks is enough for me to remember and understand the knowledge that I have been taught. I also have the ability to work in a group and correct my friends' essays. However, I cannot say that I can write a summary or an analysis. Because the course duration is quite short, I do not have enough time and chances to practice summarizing and analyzing. (Student 1-8-9)

Interview question 2: Do you think these expected learning outcomes are reasonable for your English level? Why?

On one hand, some students said that their English level is adequate for the expected learning outcomes.

I got an IELTS 7.5 overall. My reading and writing skills are at the C2 level, and my writing skill is at the B2 levels. So, I do not find it difficult to achieve these learning outcomes. (Student 4)

Although I have not taken any English proficiency test, my English level is estimated at the B2 level. As long as I try my best and follow my lecturer's instructions, I think I can complete 80% of the expected learning outcomes. (Student 2-5)

I have to read materials written in English eight hours a day. In other words, I live with English. So, I think these learning outcomes are attainable with my English competency. (Student 6)

Conversely, some students confessed that they do not have the English level required for the learning outcomes.

My English level is at B1 level. It is just enough for me to write a simple essay. I do not have a wide range of academic vocabulary and grammatical structures to write. (Student

7).

My English proficiency is equal to that of IELTS 5.0 overall. I do not have any obstacles to gaining knowledge from this course because the lecturer uses simple words. But I struggle to write even a short paragraph. How can I write a critique or an analysis when my vocabulary is not enough? (Student 1-8)

My reading speed is extremely low. When I read academic papers, even though I can find the meaning of any new words and try to understand every single word, I cannot understand the whole sentence because it is written in a complex way. This is the reason why I cannot read research papers to get information or write a summary. (Student 9)

I can't understand everything written in the coursebook and slides. This is because my English is not good enough. I find it hard for me even to read the coursebook. (Student 3-10)

Research question 2: Which outcome-based learning activities have helped them achieve these course learning outcomes?

Quantitative Analysis (Research Question 2)

Table 4.

Outcome-based learning activities help students achieve course-learning outcomes

Items	Questionnaire	Number of students
22	Which outcome-based learning activities help you achieve these expected learning outcomes?	
	Discussion	6
	Interview your friends to get more ideas for your writing	4
	Do weekly assignments via Google Docs: group writing	10
	Give feedback for your friends' writing	8
	Ask your lecturer any questions related to the lesson	8
	Group presentation	4
	Search for and read other research papers by yourself	6
	Listen to lectures	6
	Others	0

According to Table 4, doing weekly assignments, giving feedback, and asking the lecturer are the top three activities that helped students achieve the above-expected learning outcomes. What lies at the root of this result is the rating rubrics for the course. Assignment and

participation account for 20% and 10%, respectively. In terms of assignments, students were required to write an essay related to the content of the lesson on a weekly basis. After receiving their peer feedback, they had a chance to better their essay and then submit the revised essay. Moreover, group assignments reduce the homework burden. Students may feel more confident and relaxed to complete weekly assignments. These are the reasons why writing weekly assignments is ranked first among learning activities. With reference to participation, students were encouraged to give feedback and ask any questions related to the course. The lecturer then gave his students bonuses based on the number of comments and questions at the end of each learning period. This could motivate students to participate in the lesson. The figure for discussion. Listening to lectures and searching for and reading other research papers by yourself was equal, which was six. Four students chose group presentations and interviewed friends.

Qualitative Analysis (Research Question 2)

Interview question 3: Which outcome-based learning activities that you find most helpful and meaningful? Why?

I think doing weekly assignments is the most helpful outcome-based learning activity. As this course is 'Research Writing,' writing activity must be the top helpful activity. Only by writing more and more can you improve your writing quality. (Student 1-5)

I think peer feedback is the most meaningful outcome-based learning activity. When you can correct your friends' errors in word choice or grammatical structures, you can improve these two language areas a lot. To put it another way, you learn from your friends' mistakes. Besides, I also learned many good ideas and phrases from my friends' essays. (Student 2-10)

In my opinion, asking questions is the activity that I enjoyed most. There is so much information on the Internet. I cannot find the precise answer to my questions by myself. Even some information that Google does not have. The best solution for this problem is to ask your lecturer - who is an expert in research writing. (Student 3)

From my perspective, finding and reading more research papers is the most meaningful outcome-based learning activity. I do not like working in groups. I learn best when I do everything by myself. By reading alone, I can organize ideas clearly and deeply understand the problems. (Student 4-9)

I think listening to lectures is the most helpful outcome-based learning activity. How can you acquire new knowledge without listening to your lecturer? This is the best, safest, easiest, and quickest way to learn new things. (Student 8)

It is definitely a discussion. I learn best when I actively find the information and exchange this information with others. I think I can learn something new from my classmates' viewpoints. (Student 7)

Discussion

Research question 1: Which course learning outcomes have been achieved by students?

The results from our research show that students can achieve many expected learning outcomes of the Research Writing course. All of the outcome-based learning activities organized by the lecturer assisted students in achieving these outcomes. According to the data, it is suggested that students need more time to boost their writing skills in general. In terms of writing a research critique, creating new research ideas, and reading speed, students need more instructions and time to develop. The findings from the survey were supported by the conclusion of the research by Lixun (2013), Pirezada and Gull (2019), and Li and Jiang (2020) which suggested that when students know exactly what they need to learn and improve, they can acquire knowledge and practice skills that are necessary for the course they are learning. These findings confirmed the findings of the research paper carried out by Tan et al. (2018), who affirmed that OBE approaches did improve proficiency in learning, resulting in higher overall grades and better cognitive abilities for students. In terms of professional skills, their skills increased significantly. All of the students enjoyed every learning activity extremely much.

Research question 2: Which outcome-based learning activities have helped them achieve these course learning outcomes?

Findings from item 22 and the interviews showed that each outcome-based learning activity helped students obtain these course learning outcomes. These activities involved them working in groups effectively to find the answer to a certain problem or write an essay. This result was consistent with those of the study conducted by Thuy (2022). In her research, students were in favor of all outcome-based learning activities that their lecturers set. The difference between the two research is that in Thuy's one, most students highly recommend activities that could boost their critical thinking and communication skills.

Conclusion

A study was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of learning outcomes from students' perspectives towards the research writing course. Both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods were applied, with data collected through an online survey and a semi-structured interview. The study results demonstrated that students achieved the most expected learning outcomes. Specifically, students all agreed that they could absorb the required knowledge of this course. Their strongest abilities are evaluating peer essays, writing an analysis, and avoiding plagiarism. Students favored outcome-based learning activities designed by the lecturer. However, more support and time are needed for students to create new research ideas and improve writing quality.

Limitation

This study has a number of limitations. Firstly, the sample size is limited to only ten graduate students from the Faculty of Foreign Language at VLU, which may not be enough for broader representation. Increasing the number of samples could provide more generalizable results.

Secondly, the research methods are not utterly objective, as the results depend heavily on the viewpoints of the students. There might be a potential for information bias, where students may express their own feelings rather than genuine opinions. Thirdly, prior exposure to English and this subject and personal experiences may have an impact on their responses, which influences the consistency of the study. Future research could solve these limitations by collecting larger samples and extending the time of the study to get more thorough results.

Implication for Instruction

This study suggests courses of action for EFL lecturers at VLU. The first suggestion is that lecturers should design more learning activities for students to develop the skill of reading a vast array of research papers effectively and quickly so that learners will have sufficient knowledge to write commentaries and critiques for a research paper. The second piece of advice is that lecturers should give detailed feedback for each student's work in terms of vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and coherence so that every student knows exactly what their problem is and finds a proper way to solve it. The other suggestion is that lecturers should provide long-term support to help students find new ideas for a certain research topic.

Recommendation for Further Research

It is recommended that future research should have a larger number of participants. Researchers could investigate students' learning motivation to discover their learning needs because some articles show that why a student pursues a master's degree can affect their achievement of expected learning outcomes. Questions related to their difficulties in learning this subject and English should be included, as this information plays an important role in building effective learning outcomes for the next course.

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