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## *A Note from the Editor-in-Chief*

Dear authors and colleagues,

It is with great pleasure that I present to you the second issue of the second volume of the International Journal of Language Instruction (IJLI). This issue encompasses a diverse array of research papers, critical analyses, and thought-provoking discussions that showcase the commitment and dedication of language instruction professionals from around the world.

First and foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all the contributors who have generously shared their expertise and insights in this volume. Your commitment to advancing the field of language instruction is evident in the quality and depth of your work. Each article brings a unique perspective and contributes to the broader understanding of language teaching and learning. Without your valuable contributions, this issue would not have been possible.

I would also like to extend my thanks to the dedicated editorial board members, whose knowledge and expertise have been instrumental in ensuring the rigorous review process for the articles in this volume. Their thoughtful feedback, constructive criticism, and meticulous attention to detail have helped shape the final versions of the papers. Their commitment to maintaining the scholarly integrity of the journal is greatly appreciated.

Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of the reviewers who have dedicated their time and expertise to provide insightful and constructive feedback to the authors. Their expertise and attention to detail have significantly contributed to maintaining the high standards of the journal. Their thoughtful comments and suggestions have undoubtedly enhanced the quality of the published articles.

Once again, I extend my sincerest appreciation to all the contributors, editorial board members, and reviewers for their invaluable contributions to this issue. It is through your dedication and scholarly endeavors that the International Journal of Language Instruction continues to be a platform for disseminating high-quality research in the field.

I hope you find this volume engaging, informative, and thought-provoking. May it inspire you in your own teaching and research pursuits, ultimately leading to further advancements in the field of language instruction.

Thank you for your continued support of the International Journal of Language Instruction.



Associate Professor Dr. Pham Vu Phi Ho  
Editor-in-chief  
Faculty of Foreign Languages, Van Lang University

## Lexical Collocation Errors in Essay Writing: A Study into Vietnamese EFL Students and Their Perceptions

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### ABSTRACT

**Keywords:** lexical collocation errors, EFL learners' perceptions, essay writing, collocation perceptions

Writing requires practicing language by combining words, not using them separately. Accordingly, EFL learners commit errors in lexical usage or lexical collocations. Previous studies have highlighted the significance of collocations in writing and identifying lexical collocation errors, but few researchers have looked into this field in the Vietnamese context. Therefore, this paper investigates lexical collocation errors of Vietnamese EFL learners in their writing essays and their perceptions. 104 English majors at a private university in Vietnam participated in the study. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected, and essays and semi-structured interviews were research tools. The results show that Verb + Noun and Adjective + Noun are the two most common lexical collocation errors, which are attributed to learners' lack of competence, negative transfer, synonym strategy, and approximation. The interview results suggest EFL learners do not understand collocations adequately, so there should be guidelines and instructions from teachers for better collocation practice.

### Introduction

Vocabulary has been demonstrated to play an essential role in L2 language proficiency (Thach, 2022) and in good writing (Vo, 2022). As Smith (2000, as cited in Alqahtani, 2015) pointed out, lexical knowledge is pivotal in communicative competence and the acquisition of a second language. Likewise, Decarrico (2001, as cited in Susanto, 2017) emphasized the importance of vocabulary learning, stating it is fundamental to language acquisition, regardless of the language role, i.e., first, second, or foreign. Vocabulary knowledge is so indispensable that the meaning cannot be transmitted entirely without lexical knowledge (Wilkins, 1972, as cited in Barcroft, 2004). Therefore, the comprehensible input of vocabulary is essential in learning (Thach, 2022). Among many aspects of vocabulary learning, collocation is considered the most important. Hosseini (2007) suggested a strong correlation between learners' general proficiency and collocational competence. However, collocation is the most challenging barrier for EFL

learners, and their collocation knowledge is moderate (Angkana, 2008; Huang, 2001; H. Nguyen & Webb, 2017). Such problematic issues of collocation competency have negatively influenced EFL learners' writing skills. As stated by Kim and Bae (2012), whereas there is a nonsignificant correlation between students' reading skills and collocation knowledge, a significant relationship between writing quality and collocation usage is found. In particular, learners are inclined to make mistakes mostly in lexical collocation (Shamsudin, Sadoughvanini & Zaid, 2013; Ying, 2009, as cited in Sadeghi & Panahifar, 2013). Lexical collocation errors are concerning problems in writing since they strongly correlate with the writing quality. Hsu (2007) concluded that Taiwanese college EFL learners' frequency of lexical collocations and their online writing scores are positively correlated.

In the Vietnamese context, the notion of learning and teaching collocations receives insufficient attention from teachers and learners (Bui, 2021). The curriculum designed for EFL learners concentrates predominantly on grammar orientation. As a result, EFL learners' vocabulary competency in general, and collocations in specific, is limited (Dang, 2020; Tran, 2013; Vu & Nguyen, 2019, as cited in Vu & Peters, 2021). Several studies have been conducted on collocation learning and usage, but few studies have been conducted on collocation errors and learners' perceptions of the situation. This research is intended to contribute to such a research area, suggest some corresponding pedagogical implications, and raise students' awareness of the importance of learning and using collocations in their writing. In particular, the study aims to find typical types of lexical collocation errors in Vietnamese EFL learners' writings. Besides, the researchers desire to gain insights into the sources of those mistakes and how students view the collocation concepts.

## Literature review

### *Definitions of collocations*

Many scholars have defined the term "collocations" in different ways.

The definition is introduced by adopting the frequency-based approach. Firth (1957) was mentioned to be the first linguist to introduce "collocation," which is the co-occurrence of particular word combinations (as cited in Boonraksa & Naisena, 2022; Evert, 2008; Hong, Quyen, Nhu & Yen, 2022). Later, other scholars gave a similar sense of definition to Firth that emphasized the frequency of a group of words co-occurring (Carter, 1998, as cited in Bartan, 2019; Lewis, 1993, as cited in Trang, Anh & Khanh, 2021; Nation, 2001, as cited in Setiarini, 2018). In addition, the co-occurrence of word combinations is derived from the natural usage of native speakers (Celce-Murcia & Schmitt, 2010, as cited in Duong & T. Nguyen, 2021; O'Dell & McCarthy, 2017, as cited in Trang et al., 2021).

Regarding the phraseology approach, collocation is identified by analyzing its syntax and semantics characteristics (Granger, 2005, as cited in Chang, 2018). In particular, the criterion for identifying collocation is the arbitrary constraint on substitution (Nesselhauf, 2003). For example, in the phrase "reach a decision," the noun "decision" can be substituted by other words that represent a similar meaning of "a particular aim," such as "conclusion," "verdict", or "compromise", but not the word "aim"; this kind of restriction results from the unsystematic



convention, rather than semantic properties (ibid). Therefore, this study adopts the definition of “collocation” as the combination of the two approaches. Collocation is the co-occurrence of word combinations having a restricted selection of its constituted elements that native speakers use frequently and naturally.

### *Collocations and other word combinations*

Previous researchers have raised the concern of distinguishing collocations and other types of word combinations since there exists a misunderstanding about those kinds of word combinations. Even teachers inaccurately understand the term “collocations,” which is an unchangeable or even closed group of words (Le Linh, 2017). Therefore, it is important to highlight the differences between them.

**Table 1.** Collocations and other word combinations

Word combination categorization	Explanation	Example
Free word combinations	The literal meaning of separate parts is used to understand a free combination’s meanings. (Howarth, 1993, as cited in Farrokh, 2012).  Of all combinations, free combinations are the least cohesive. Their constituents have the most leeway in terms of combining with other lexical entities (Benson et al., 1986, as cited in Farrokh, 2012).	In the case of “put”, the semantic constraint on the object is relatively open-ended, and thus the range of words that can occur is relatively unrestricted (McKeown & Radev, 2000). Some combinations from “put” are: “ <i>put</i> ” <i>these flowers on the table</i> , “ <i>put</i> ” <i>it over there</i> , ... Other examples are “ <i>to take</i> ” <i>the bus</i> , “ <i>to take</i> ” <i>the tour</i> ; etc.; “ <i>to buy</i> ” <i>some food</i> , “ <i>to buy</i> ” <i>a car</i> ; etc.
Restricted collocations	This category is more restricted in the choice of compositional components and generally has one element used in a specific context (Howarth, 1993, as cited in Farrokh, 2012).	“Explode a myth” is a true collocation, “explode” illustrates a much more restricted collocational range such as belief, idea, and theory (ibid)
Idioms	Idioms refer to word groups in an unchanged order with the meaning impossible to guess by only knowing the meaning of every single word (O’Dell, 2008, as cited in Bui, 2021)	In the English language, for example, the expression “kick the bucket” is an idiom. A listener who knows only the meaning of “kick” and “bucket” would be unable to deduce the actual meaning of the expression (Batani, 2010, p. 594-595)

### *Collocation categorization*

There have been various ways of categorizing collocations based on the restriction level of the elements. In other words, the classifications depend on how wide the node goes with its collocates. Several types of collocations adopt this kind of approach. The first type is **strong collocation**. Those phrases that combine rigidly with each other, “auburn hair” and “deliriously happy”, for example, and one part of it hardly collocates with other words (Hill, 2000; Lewis, 1997, 2000; McCarthy & O’Dell, 2008, 2017, as cited in Hong et al., 2022). This kind of

classification is related to the “restricted collocation” of Sughair (2007, as cited in Petkoska & Neshkovska, 2019) which the node (the headword) only goes together with particular words, and users cannot easily predict the accurate “node” upon the meaning of the collocates. The other one is **weak collocation**. There will be a higher capability of one part of the collocation to collocate with other words, and users can make a precise prediction easier compared to strong collocation (e.g., good boy, white shirt, white wine) (Sughair, 2007, as cited in Petkoska & Neshkovska, 2019). Similarly, “open collocation” from the perspective of Sughair (ibid) and Mahmoud (2005) has the same characteristic, which is that the number of words to collocate with the other is significant (e.g., a good book, a good chance, a good idea, ...)

Besides, Sinclair (1991, as cited in Hong et al., 2022) proposed another classification of collocations that are upward and downward collocations. As mentioned above, a collocation consists of a node and its collocates. Accordingly, **upward collocations mean that** it is the node that collocates more often with other words than the node itself (e.g., “back” collocates with “at”, “down”, “from”, “into”, “on”, all of which are more frequent words than “back”), whereas **downward collocations are defined that** the frequency of a word that combines with its collocates is less than the word itself (e.g., “arrive”, “bring” are less frequent occurring collocates of “back”)

Although scholars have classified collocations into various types, the categorization of grammatical and lexical collocations from the perspective of Lewis (2000, as cited in Boonraksa & Naisena, 2022) and Benson et al. (1986, as cited in Kuo, 2009) remains the most comprehensible. More specifically, **grammatical collocations** consist of content words (noun, verb, adverb, etc.) and functional words (prepositions) or other structures that served grammatical functions (an infinitive or clause), while **lexical collocations** only include content words with different word classes (noun, verb, adverb, etc.) and can be subdivided into several types which are going to be described.

### *Lexical collocation classification*

According to Benson et al. (1986, as cited in Bahns, 1993), lexical collocations are subdivided into six types, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Lexical collocation subtypes

(Benson et al., 1986, as cited in Bahns, 1993, p. 57)

No.	Type	Example
1	Verb + Noun	Withdraw an offer
2	Adjective + Noun	A crushing defeat
3	Noun + Verb	Blizzards rage...
4	Noun + Noun	A pride of lions
5	Adverb + Adjective	Deeply adsorbed
6	Verb + Adverb	Appreciate sincerely

### *Lexical collocation errors in writing*

EFL learners still perform poorly in writing skills and commit many types of errors. Refraining from denying the significance of other errors, the study only focuses on the collocation errors since lexical errors comprise a high proportion. As Llach (2011) highlighted that lexical

mistakes have been proven to be the most prevalent in several research investigations and identified as the most serious type of error. Nevertheless, committing errors is inevitable. By finding the errors and correcting them, learners can develop their writing further in any language learning path. Therefore, helping learners realize their shortcomings through error analysis effectively improves their language proficiency. Studies on collocation errors have been numerous in the international context.

In a study by Boonraksa and Naisena (2022) about collocation errors of Thai EFL learners, they employed a collocation test to collect the data. The findings indicated that students commit a high level of collocation errors both in grammatical and lexical collocations. The most popular lexical collocation error is Adverb + Adjective lexical collocation. This finding is interesting since it is inconsistent with results from other studies. For example, Harta, Bay, & Ali (2021) investigated lexical collocation errors of Indonesian students by collecting data from writing samples. The results found that students have problems mostly in Verb + Noun and Adjective + Noun combinations. Bartan (2019) conducted a study on lexical collocation errors in the translation of L2 learners of English. The study's findings agree with Harta et al. (2021) that Verb + Noun and Adjective + Noun take up the largest percentage of lexical collocation errors. Similarly, Shitu (2015) suggested that Verb + Noun collocation error occurs most frequently in students' essay writing. In the Chinese context, Quping and Pramoolsook (2014) studied collocational errors of non-English major students obtaining the same results that Verb + Noun and Adjective + Noun are the two most frequent lexical collocation errors in students' writing samples.

#### *Causes of lexical collocation errors*

##### *Interlingual errors*

Many studies attribute the sources of lexical collocation errors to interlingual interference and synonym misuse. Boonraksa and Naisena (2022) pointed out that the cause of lexical collocation errors is that Thai verbs are literally translated into English. Besides, Thai EFL learners also commit errors by using English words and phrases that have similar equivalents in Thai or adopting the synonym strategy. Likewise, results from other researchers also indicated the same reasons for lexical collocation errors (Bartan, 2019; Gitsaki, 1997, as cited in Setiarini, 2018; Harta, 2021; Huang, 2001; Mahmoud, 2005; Ridha & Al-Riyahi, 2011; Shitu, 2015; Trng & Thao, 2021).

Interlingual interference also refers to other interchangeable terms such as “native language interference”, “language transfer”, etc. According to Brown (1994, as cited in Erkaya, 2012), learners' first acquisition of language is their native language; such exposure exerts a significant influence on later language learning or the L2 acquisition process because native language plays a role as the primary reference for learners. Within lexical collocation errors, the majority of them are caused by L1 interference that writers make literal translations from their mother tongue to the target language.

### *Intralingual errors*

Apart from interlingual errors, other categorizations of errors resulting from the limited knowledge of learners in the L2 language are classified as intralingual errors. Concerning the use of wrong synonyms as another main cause of lexical collocation errors, it was explained that learners are able to use the right synonyms but fail to use the correct collocability of the word, for example, instead of using “accept with opinions” and “broaden with vision”, they wrote “receiving other people’s opinions” and “broaden your eyesight” (Kuo, 2009, p. 149).

Besides, lexical collocation errors can be traced back from other causes such as lack of collocation knowledge, overgeneralization of rules, approximation (Harta et al., 2021; Shitu, 2015), false concepts hypothesized, and ignorance of rule restrictions (Ridha & Al-Riyahi, 2011). False concepts hypothesized are due to the misunderstanding about the differences among words in the target language; for example, learners often use “make” and “do” interchangeably (ibid). In terms of an overgeneralization, Richard (1974, as cited in Sari, 2016) defined it as the way learners use incorrect structures of the target language based on their previous experience; for example, learners might add “s” to irregular plurals. In addition, an approximation is described as the use of incorrect structures or vocabularies; for example, the misuse of the word forms that take a noun to act as a verb, e.g., “success in our education” instead of “succeed in our education” (Dravishi et al., 2011, as cited in Harta et al., 2021, p. 24). In addition, the ignorance of rule restrictions refers to the inability of learners to observe and obey the restrictions of structure in the target language (Richard, ibid). Overall, the causes of lexical collocation errors can be summarized in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Causes of lexical collocation errors

No.	Error Causes	Subtypes
1	Interlingual error	A literal translation from L1
2	Intralingual error	False concepts hypothesized Wrong synonym usage Overgeneralization Approximation

### *Students’ Perceptions about collocations*

Although most EFL learners acknowledge that collocations are challenging to learn, they claim the importance of mastering collocations, especially in writing. D. Dang and D. Nguyen (2022) reported that more than 60% of students admitted the necessity of learning collocations that helps decrease colorlessness in writing, enhance vocabulary, and gain an understanding of the cultural features of native speakers. At the same time, more than half of the students confirmed the extreme difficulty of the learning process that they found it hard to recognize collocations and understand how words go together. Likewise, P. Nguyen (2021) suggested that 96% of students consider collocations difficult but essential. In the study by Duong and T. Nguyen (2021), EFL learners pointed out the two significant benefits of collocations in academic writing, which are collocations for obtaining better grades and collocations for the development of lexical resources. Turkish EFL learners also recognize several advantages of learning collocations, such as fluency in speaking English, collocation pattern awareness, quicker

vocabulary acquisition and simpler language learning (Yuvayapan & Yükselir, 2021).

EFL learners confess their limited knowledge of collocation concepts. For example, 90% of EFL learners who participated in the study by Chan and Liou (2005) are reported to not know about the concept of collocation. Ying and O’neill (2009) researched the effectiveness of learning collocations adopting the “AWARE” learning approach. Participants confessed that they did not pay attention to “collocations” before joining the study because studying words in a single form has long been a habit of learning new vocabulary. The researchers emphasized that unless learners are told to be aware of the importance of collocations, they can hardly recognize this aspect of learning a language.

Regarding learners’ opinions on collocation errors, only a few studies describe how students think about their collocation errors. While collocation errors are demonstrated mainly from the negative transfer of the mother tongue, Duong and T. Nguyen (2021) showed an interesting result in their study that students do not perceive the negative influence of their mother tongue as one of their problems (only 36.2%). In other words, students may not know the cause of collocation errors from L1 interference. In contrast, Yuvayapan and Yükselir (2021) indicated learners’ awareness of the negative influence of L1 interference on collocation errors or interlingual transfer from Turkish.

EFL learners also give comments on several collocations’ learning strategies. Some learners choose a way of learning collocations without the interference of a dictionary. Duong and T. Nguyen (2021) mentioned that students learn collocations by retaining those phrases in their memory without using tools. Similarly, C. Dang, Thai, Ngo and Tran (2022) described that learners do not rely on any tools to search for collocations. Instead, they imitate the expressions of other people on the Internet. However, the majority of EFL learners utilize online dictionaries as a useful tool anytime they write an essay of academic writing (Cao, 2023). They feel more confident using dictionaries for searching collocations since they believe in the native-like of these expressions. Other learning strategies include learning through visual channels (watching English movies), noting down collocations in reading, and using computer programs to test those collocations (Ying & O’Neill, 2009).

Overall, even though EFL students may have limited awareness of collocations in general and lexical collocations in particular because they are difficult to master, they still admit their crucial role in writing, and have turned to different ways of dealing with their own situation.

### *Research Questions*

To satisfy the purposes of the study, our research is going to answer the following questions:

Question 1: What is the distribution of each type of lexical collocation errors found in Vietnamese EFL learners’ essay writing?

Question 2: What are the causes of lexical collocation errors made by Vietnamese EFL learners?

Question 3: What are the Vietnamese EFL students’ perceptions of lexical collocation errors and collocation learning?

## Methods

### *Pedagogical Setting & Participants*

The study took place at a private university in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The authors employed a convenience sampling method, in which 104 participants volunteering to get involved in the study were English major students at a Foreign Languages Faculty. These students have completed and passed five writing courses which cover instructions of paragraph writing and essay writing. Overall, they have been taught and expected to acquire the following key skills:

Course 1 and 2: Students can write different kinds of sentences (basic, compound, complex, compound-complex sentences) effectively and can write a complete passage well.

Course 3 and 4: Students can write different types of essays (comparison, causes and effects, argumentative) on a variety of topics well and know how to deliver coherence and cohesion as well as identify grammatical and lexical errors.

Course 5: Students can paraphrase, summarize, and cite properly in their academic essay.

30 males and 74 females participated in the study, and they were nearly the same ages ranging from 20 to 21 years old. The participants' English proficiency level is intermediate (higher B1 to B2 level approximately). They are all expected to obtain a bachelor's degree in the English language after 4 years of studying.

### *Design of the Study*

This paper used both qualitative and quantitative data to fulfill the research questions. Written essays and a semi-structured interview are instruments employed in the study.

Students were asked to write an opinion essay of at least 250 words in 40 minutes. The essay proposition is "Nowadays many people choose to be self-employed, rather than to work for a company or organization. Why might this be the case? What could be the disadvantages of being self-employed?" (Cambridge IELTS 14, 2019, p. 95). A teacher observed the writing session to make sure that references were not allowed to minimize cheating. All writing compositions were recorded in an E-learning system to store and analyze efficiently.

In the interview session, participants were asked about their opinions on collocation concepts, errors, and learning. Interview questions were framed upon the literature review for relevancy and reviewed by two other colleagues to ensure disambiguation and comprehensibility.

### *Data collection & analysis*

#### *Students' essay data*

The researcher collected students' essays and stored documents online on the E-learning system and Google Docs. The data preparation and analysis followed the following process:

**Table 4.** Data collection and analysis process

Steps	Descriptions
1	Extracting lexical combinations adopting Benson et al. (1986) classification (as cited in Bahns, 1993)
2	Storing lexical combinations in Excel file
3	Checking MI score using British National Corpus (BNC)
4	Filtering out free word combinations
5	Checking collocations' accurateness using Online Oxford Collocation Dictionary & BNC
6	Calculating the distribution of errors in each subtype
7	Explaining sources of errors, and suggesting appropriate collocations

As mentioned above, the study does not involve analyzing free word combinations. This next step intends to exclude free word combinations from the data. To do so, the researcher had to set criteria to distinguish collocations from free word combinations. The study takes the MI (Mutual Information) score, which indicates the semantic bonding in words. "Pairs with scores above 3.0 can probably be considered collocations and below that, free combinations" (Patrick, 1990, as cited in Quping & Pramoolsook, 2012, p. 4). In this step, the researchers did not calculate the MI scores themselves but looked them up on BNC (British National Corpus). Any word combinations with an MI score below 3.0 were filtered out from the data.

After the classification process between free word combinations and collocations, the remaining collocations were checked for correctness using the Online Oxford Collocation Dictionary to extract lexical collocation errors. The errors then continued to be calculated and explained according to types suggested by Benson et al. (1986, as cited in Bahns, 1993)

#### *Interview data*

The researcher continued with collecting the semi-structured interview later. 104 students were invited to participate in the interview for in-depth investigations about their perceptions of collocations, but only eight students agreed to join in. In this article, the authors are going to use S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7 and S8 to refer to each of the participants. The interview session took place on MS Teams (approximately 20 minutes per interview) on a one-on-one basis and all questions were asked properly. The authors asked for permission to record the interview for research purposes from the interviewees. After the interviews, the interview data were transcribed, coded and stored in an Excel file for the content analysis.

## **Results/Findings**

### *Question 1: What is the distribution of each type of lexical collocation errors found in Vietnamese EFL learners' essay writing?*

After collecting and analyzing 104 essays (31596 words in total), the researchers gathered 2331 word combinations. The correct lexical collocations took up the most significant proportion with 1033 (44.4%); lexical collocation errors were 560 (24%); unidentified word combinations were 545 (23.3%); and finally, free combinations were 193 (8.3%). Correct collocations, free combinations (MI score < 3), and 545 word combinations that the researcher had insufficient evidence to conclude, were excluded from the study. Regarding 560 lexical collocation errors,

they were categorized into six subtypes adopting the classification of Benson et al. (1986, as cited in Bahns, 1993). Details can be found in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Lexical collocation errors subtypes distribution

No.	Types	Number of errors	Percent (%)
1	Verb + Noun	245	44
2	Adjective + Noun	202	36
3	Noun + Verb	8	1
4	Noun + Noun	53	9
5	Adverb + Adjective	14	3
6	Verb + Adverb	38	7

From the above table, it was found that students made errors mostly in Verb - Noun lexical collocations (44%), followed by Adjective - Noun (36%). The other types took up a small percentage, including Noun - Noun (9%), Verb - Adverb (7%), Adverb - Adjective (3%), and Noun - Verb (1%).

*Question 2: What are the causes of lexical collocation errors made by Vietnamese EFL learners?*

Sources of lexical collocation errors have been withdrawn, based on the lexical collocation errors learners made in their essays. Negative transfer, lack of competence, misuse of synonyms, and approximation are the main reasons for lexical collocation errors.

*Lack of competence*

There are several reasons for students' lack of collocation competence. Likely, they do not have significant exposure to collocations, resulting in a limited understanding of this type of word combination. This limited knowledge of collocations is derived from students' insufficient amount of collocation learning. Moreover, collocations are underestimated in curriculum design, and few English Language departments incorporate collocations in their teaching and learning materials. It largely depends on the teachers to actively guide and encourage their learners to pay close attention to collocation learning since it is hard for low-level students to recognize and acquire that knowledge in the language learning process. Errors stemming from lacking collocation competence are presented in the following table.

**Table 6.** Extracted lexical collocation errors due to lack of competence

No.	Lexical Collocation Error	Suggested Collocation
1	Start shop	Open a shop
2	Boring task	Tedious/mundane task
3	Newly graduated	New/recent graduate
4	Work individual	Work alone
5	Working trend	Employment trend



### *Negative transfer from L1*

As mentioned above, L1 exerts a profound influence on students' language learning since the mother tongue plays a role as the primary reference. Students commit this kind of error due to the literal translation from the L1 language. In the table of extracted collocation errors, "follow passion" is comparable with "theo đuổi đam mê" in Vietnamese ("...*There are several reasons why people might choose to be self-employed: flexibility, increased earning potential, following a passion*" ...). Apparently, the student adopted literal translation from their mother tongue, resulting in lexical collocation errors. Some examples can be seen in Table 7.

**Table 7.** Extracted lexical collocation errors due to negative transfer

No.	Lexical Collocation Errors	Suggested Collocations	Comparable phrases in Vietnamese
1	Follow passion	Indulge passion	Theo đuổi đam mê
3	Strong development	Rapid development	Sự phát triển mạnh mẽ
3	Constantly adapt	Quickly/readily adapt	Liên tục thích nghi
4	Work individual	Work alone	Làm việc cá nhân
5	Working trend	Employment trend	Xu hướng làm việc

### *Using synonym strategy*

A small proportion of lexical collocation errors in the study are due to the adoption of synonym strategy. This traces back to the intention of learners to diversify their vocabulary usage in writing to avoid repeated phrases or replace basic vocabularies with academic ones. Synonym strategy can be an effective way to reduce colorlessness in writing. However, writers may have failed due to using the incorrect collocability among words since not all words can be replaced perfectly by their synonyms. Several noticeable errors can be seen in Table 8.

**Table 8.** Extracted lexical collocation errors due to synonym strategy

No.	Lexical Collocation Error	Suggested Collocation
1	Allocate work	Allocate task
2	Self-employed individual	Self-employed person
3	Financial issue	Financial problem
4	Steady wage	Steady salary
5	Appealing option	Attractive/good option

### *Approximation*

Apart from the above causes, approximation is also one of the reasons for lexical collocation errors. Those errors were made by students because they used the wrong structure of the target language. In particular, they used false functions of word classes. For instance, an adjective is used as a noun in “*have passionate*”, a noun acts as an adverb in “*work efficiency*”, etc. More examples are in the following table.

**Table 9.** Extracted lexical collocation errors due to approximation

No.	Lexical Collocation Error	Suggested Collocation
1	Have passionate	Have passion
2	Work efficiency	Work efficiently/effectively
3	Technology advances	Technological advance
4	Developed technology	Advanced technology
5	Independent work	Work independently

*Question 3: What are the Vietnamese EFL students’ perceptions of lexical collocation errors and collocation learning?*

### *Students’ understanding of collocations*

In the first part, participants were asked three questions about how they defined collocations and whether they perceive collocations to be the same as idioms, phrasal verbs, and compound nouns.

Regarding students’ perceptions of collocation’s definitions, their first assumption toward collocations was:

S1: I think collocations are the order of words, right? [...]

S2: I have heard about collocations before, but I cannot explain it [...]

S3: Sorry, but I cannot define it [...]

S4: Collocations are phrases used frequently by native speakers [...]

S5: I don’t really know about it [...]

S6: It is phrases frequently used by native speakers? [...]

S7: I think collocations are word combinations [...]

S8: Collocations are phrases that look fancy helping you to get a higher score. They are often used by native speakers [...]

As can be seen, their understanding of collocations is still limited and somehow reflects some misunderstanding. Some even have no idea of what collocations are.

After being provided with three definitions of collocations, four students (50%) perceived collocations as “two or more word combinations that cannot replace any of their constituents with other words”. Three students (approximately 38%) thought collocations are “two or more word combinations that go together with a high frequency” which is the correct definition. Only one student chose the definition “Collocations are two or more word combinations that go together sometimes”.

Concerning participants' perceptions of the similarity or difference between collocations and other types of word combinations (idioms, phrasal verbs, and compound nouns), six students (75%) assumed that collocations are the same as idioms, phrasal verbs, and compound nouns. However, S3 assumed that short idioms are the same as collocations but not long ones. Only two students expressed that they did not see collocations as the same as idioms, phrasal verbs, and compound nouns.

#### *Students' perspectives of the lexical collocation use in their writing*

More than half of the participants claimed that they use a lot of lexical collocations in their writing, while others said that the frequency is just medium. When asked to pick up the two most common types of lexical collocations, the students chose Verb + Noun and Adjective + Noun as the two most frequent ones.

S1: I usually combine Adjective + Noun because they are easy to use and quite popular [...]

S2: I use the Verb + Noun combination most frequently since this is the most basic and simple [...]

S3: I use Verb + Noun because this is the easiest one to remember [...]

S4: I use Verb + Noun and Adjective + Noun because they are fundamental, easier than other types [...]

Participants in the study were not allowed to use any references during the writing session. However, in this part of the interview, they were asked whether they use any tools (collocation dictionary, website, etc.) to support their learning of collocation or not. The results show that only one student was aware of the online collocation dictionary, and the others suggested that they did not know about those tools.

S1: No, I don't know any sources [...]

S2: I use the dictionary called "Glosbe" which helps me to find the phrases in English by typing the phrases in Vietnamese [...]

S3: No, I just use collocations in my memory [...]

S4: No, I just consult general dictionaries, not the specific one for collocation [...]

S5: No, I don't have a specific collocation dictionary to refer to [...]

S6: Yes, I use Online Oxford Collocations Dictionary [...]

S7: No, I often use Grammarly and alter the collocation use by adopting the ones being suggested in the app [...]

S8: I just use Google [...]

#### *Students' perceptions of lexical collocation errors*

Participants attributed lexical collocation errors to the misunderstanding of vocabulary usage. In other words, they assumed that students have limited knowledge of collocation use and do not know precisely how words combine. Most of the students did not recognize the negative influence of the mother tongue until the researcher asked whether they agreed about the students' habit of literal translation from L1. They all confirmed the negative effect of the mother tongue on the use of collocations in writing.

S5: I think Vietnamese has affected me in the use of collocations. I often translate directly from Vietnamese [...]

Regarding their evaluation of the significance of lexical collocation errors, three students did

not consider these errors as serious. The rest agreed on the significant impact of lexical collocation errors but shared that it also depends on the examiners. Half of the participants did not think that collocation errors reflect the language proficiency of the writers, and the others admitted that learners' language competency is reflected through these errors.

S1: I would not say getting much knowledge of collocations means you are an excellent language learner [...]

S6: I think mastering collocations shows that you are advanced learners [...]

### *Students' perceptions of lexical collocation learning*

Being asked how to improve collocation knowledge, the participants shared various ways such as doing more reading, watching movies and adopting selective collocations, watching YouTube, practicing English with friends, native speakers, or advanced-level learners, and studying with the application. S1 especially puts an emphasis on the support of online platforms and applications.

S1: I think it would be best to make use of online resources available, including tools and apps on the Internet or mobile devices [...]

They also indicated several challenging problems in learning collocations. Some of them are the difficulty in memorizing without practicing, in understanding their meanings, and in acquiring a large amount of knowledge for writing. Indeed, S7 says that these problems are obvious in any EFL learners.

S7: It is undeniable that English learners find it hard to memorize all of this stuff, comprehend its meanings, and also, we cannot get much of it [...]

## **Discussion**

### *Common subtypes of lexical collocation error*

The findings suggest that Verb + Noun and Adjective + Noun are the most problematic subtypes of lexical collocations. The result is consistent with the study of Harta et al. (2021, p. 18) that "students largely deal with Verb + Noun/pronoun (prepositional phrase) combination problems". Likewise, Bartan (2019) found that Verb + Noun and Adjective + Noun are the two most serious errors. Shitu (2015) also concluded Verb + Noun is the most frequent error pattern. Similarly, Verb + Noun and Adjective + Noun are the two most common errors (Quping & Pramoolsook, 2014). Other studies presenting the same findings include Ridha & Al-Riyahi (2011) and Hong et al. (2022). This result strongly emphasizes that Verb + Noun and Adjective + Noun are the two most common and problematic lexical collocation errors among Vietnamese EFL learners.

The interview results also showed that students chose Verb + Noun and Adjective + Noun as the most frequent types adopted in their writing. However, Boonraksa and Naisena (2022) produced a different outcome suggesting the most frequent lexical collocation error is Adverb + Adjective. Although Verb + Noun and Adjective + Noun are the most popular errors, it cannot be concluded that Adverb + Adjective is easy for Vietnamese EFL students since they rarely use this kind of combination in their writing.

### *Causes for lexical collocation errors*

Lexical collocation errors are discovered to derive from students' lack of collocation knowledge, the negative influence of L1, the use of synonyms, and approximation. The result corroborates previous studies (Bartan, 2019; Boonraksa & Naisena, 2022; Harta et al., 2021; Huang, 2001; Mahmoud, 2005; Ridha & Al-Riyahi, 2011; Shitu, 2015). However, the finding is inconsistent with Kuo's (2009) conclusion that students make the lowest rate of errors in L1 interference, indicating learners' great awareness of the differences between L1 and L2.

### *Learners' perceptions about collocations*

The interview results suggest that there is still a limited understanding of students about collocations. Not many students choose the proper definition and are confused about the differences between collocations and other word combinations. In addition, Verb + Noun and Adjective + Noun are the two most common types of lexical collocations that students choose to incorporate in their writing.

The findings also show that the participants are unfamiliar with collocation searching tools. This study aligns with Duong and T. Nguyen (2021) that participants tend to use collocations in their memory rather than using any tools. C. Dang et al. (2022) also reported that students do not use collocation support tools, although they do assignments at home. Instead, they adopt collocations being used on the Internet.

The Vietnamese learners assumed that lexical collocation errors are due to the limited knowledge of writers and partly from L1 literal translation. Moreover, their attitude towards lexical collocation errors is relatively positive since not many take them seriously.

Several methods to improve collocation knowledge proposed by the students include doing more reading, watching movies and adopting selective collocations, watching videos on YouTube, practicing English with friends, native speakers, or advanced-level learners, and studying with applications. These practicing ways are similar to the "Acquiring Strategies" of the participants in the study of Ying and O'Neill (2009), in which they adopt methods of watching movies, learning with friends, etc. In this study, none of these ways are related to learning in corpus-based or dictionary. This result reaffirms that students do not utilize the above approaches to enhance their collocation knowledge.

## **Conclusion**

This study looks into lexical collocation errors in writing essays of intermediate English-major students at a Vietnamese private university. Findings indicate that Verb + Noun and Adjective + Noun are the two most frequent lexical collocation errors. Moreover, the causes of these errors are attributed to students' lack of collocation competence, negative transfer from their mother tongue, synonym strategy, and approximation. In addition, students' understandings of collocations are still moderate regarding their comprehension of collocation concepts, and the ability to differentiate between collocations and other word combinations. At the same time, students do not express a serious attitude towards lexical collocation errors. They also suggest several strategies to gain collocation knowledge.

This study proposes several pedagogical implications with the hope of making valuable

contributions. Firstly, teachers should become mentors to guide their learners in recognizing and acquiring collocations. This process can be done by listing vocabulary in the form of collocations in their lesson plans, giving collocation homework for students to get extra points, incorporating collocations in the test, and giving comments on collocation errors in students' writing works to make them pay more attention. Furthermore, teachers should emphasize the importance and benefits of gaining collocation knowledge so learners are more motivated to acquire it. Additionally, they should suggest appropriate learning strategies to students, especially encouraging them to utilize collocation dictionaries (Online Oxford Collocation Dictionary) and corpus-based websites (British National Corpus). However, learners should be more self-directed and must actively improve their collocation knowledge.

This study has some limitations related to research participants and the scope of the study. Due to the limited subjects in the curriculum, the study's findings may not represent all Vietnamese EFL learners. Moreover, the study solely covers lexical collocation errors and excludes grammatical ones. Thus, the data may not be sufficient to assess students' collocation competence in general. Future studies can expand the scope of the study, continuing researching lexical collocation errors in speaking, reading, or listening skills among different levels of students. These findings are necessary for the research field to compare results in writing skills and student types. Furthermore, studies may be carried out focusing on both grammatical and lexical collocation errors for better evaluation of students' awareness of collocations overall.

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## Gender Differences in Politeness Strategies in Negotiations in Sharktank America and Sharktank Vietnam: A Contrastive Analysis

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### ABSTRACT

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Levinson,  
negotiations

Gender and language have long been an interesting field in sociolinguistics and pragmatics. In the current study, politeness - one of the core issues of modern pragmatics, is adapted to hopefully shed great light on the issue in Vietnamese and American contexts to explore the gender differences in negotiations. Employing descriptive, qualitative, and quantitative methods, the data recorded from 10 conversations in Shark Tank Vietnam Season 3 TV program and 1 tenconversations in Shark Tank America were transcribed and analyzed to reveal the different strategies based on Brown and Levinson's theory (1987) used by gender group of Sharks (investors). The gender linguistic differences under the contrastive analysis theory feature the prominent politeness strategies used by investors in American and Vietnamese negotiations. Those are very significant to support the evaluation of language and gender in the current society and in a cross-culture context.

### Introduction

Gender and politeness have been an unlimited theme for research in phonetics, semantics, pragmatics, as well as sociolinguistics and applied linguistics for more than 40 years, which has proved a certain number of scientific facts about gender differences in interactions. There is quite a little research showing the differences in voices, sounds, even learning styles or speaking performance (Mahmood, A. S., Saad, N. S. M., & Nur, N. M., 2023; Nguyen, H. N., 2023; Candilas, K. S., Diane, X. M., Gaid, J. K., & Kolog, P. J., 2023). However, the issue has been concerned much more in pragmatics and sociolinguistics recently. Sociolinguistic research reveals that women are more polite than men in certain cases, proved by the number of polite signs in their speech. For example, women tend to compliment more than men and create close and friendly social relationships in same-sex dyads, while men in similar situations do not, and women have more tendencies to apologize, soften criticism, or express thanks than men do.

In Vietnam, several studies showing variations in politeness by gender have been conducted on the relationship between context and language use, such as gender and politeness in family conversations in Hanoi (Vu, T. T. H., 1999), (Chew, G. C. L., 2011), (Ton, T. N., 2022); Vietnamese greetings in Mekong Delta (Nguyen, D. T., & Le Khac, C., 2021), politeness in request emails written by Vietnamese students in Pham, T. M. T., & Yeh, A. (2020). However, research on gender and politeness in negotiations and in real TV programs, especially in contrastive analysis between the American and Vietnamese languages, has not been found.

One of the prominent motivations for conducting the research is the attractiveness of the Sharktank program, which is about real negotiations and the ground for start-ups to try their business ideas. Also, the negotiation conversations from Sharktank are surely reliable and natural data for social linguistics study, as well as for revealing the new changes in gender language in the modern time and business context.

This article will examine some gender differences in using the politeness strategies of Brown and Levinson in the context of business negotiations on a real TV program, as well as contrast those differences between the American version and the Vietnamese one.

### Literature review

Many researchers confirm that "*politeness is not something to be born but something which is acquired through a process of socialization.*" In everyday conversations, it is common knowledge that "politeness" refers to proper social conduct and tactful consideration of others. Yule, G (1996) defined "politeness" to be an interaction and social sense, including "emotion" used to illustrate the "self-image" of a person. Goffman, E. (1967), Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1978) concluded that politeness theory is related to the concept of the face, which is a picture of self-image in the social attributes, which then is set to be a universal framework for politeness the rough face.

Lakoff R (1975) investigated politeness from the theory from a new socio-pragmatic perspective. Based on the cooperative principle, she investigated politeness in the pragmatic rule structure to find out whether it is a pragmatically well-formed utterance or not. According to Lakoff, R (1975), politeness is defined to be a various system of interpersonal relations adapted to keep a minimum of conflict and confrontation in human interactions.

Being different from Lakoff R's approach, Leech G (1983) used the concept of "indirectness," in which politeness is clarified as a group of social performance to create respect and appreciation or harmony and coordination. Thus, 6 Leech, G's maxim concepts named "Tact, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement, Sympathy" were built to minimize rudeness degree and to maximize politeness.

Until recently, Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C's model (1987) was considered the most influential one in politeness. However, it has been criticized. In this model, the notion of "face," including positive and negative faces, is defined as follows: "*negative face is the design of every competent adult member for his actions to be unimpeded by others. Positive face is the desire of every member for his wants to be desirable to, at least, some others.*" (Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C, 1987). In ordinary conversations, face-threatening speech acts used with high frequency are not beneficial to the speakers' and/ or the addressee's facial desire. As a result, speakers have to adopt a variety of polite techniques to minimize face-threatening acts for both speakers and hearers.

Politeness is a wide scope to be investigated, so there have been previous studies concerning politeness and gender. Sociolinguistic research's prominent findings are that women tend to use more politeness strategies than men in their speech (Hobbs, P., 2003). Research about politeness is often conducted in the theory of speech acts which could intrinsically threaten the face of a hearer by a speaker as requests (Tanaka, N., 1988; Kitao, K., 1990; Takahashi, S., 1996); complaints (Olshtain, E., & Weinbach, L., 1993); apologies (Trosborg, A., 1987; Sienes, M. J. V., & Catan, J. E. C., 2021); refusals (Litvinova, A. V., & Larina, T. V., 2023). Among these acts, requesting seems to be the most favored act for Japanese researchers to investigate native/non-native differences in politeness strategies. Interestingly, Kitao K.'s extensive study on 3 groups, including Americans, Japanese studying in the United States, and Japanese living in

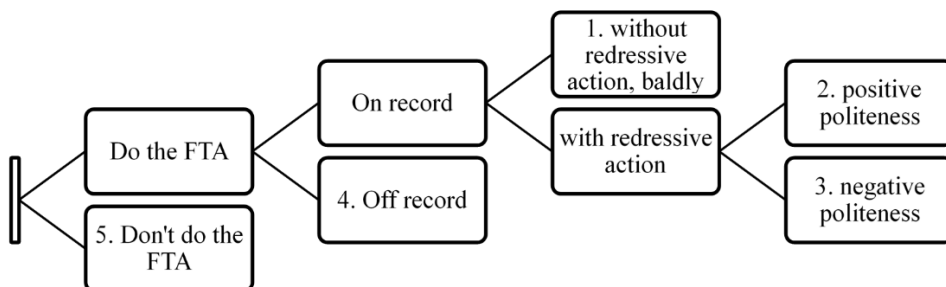
Japan, showed that "the higher the hearer's power in relation to the speaker, the higher the level of politeness used" and "The Japanese perceive negative politeness as less polite than Americans." However, the results failed to support the hypothesis that "the Japanese use fewer strategies than American do." (1990)

Besides studies related to politeness used in face threatening acts, researchers have conducted numerous investigations into face-flattering acts such as complimenting, which was reported that women pay more compliments than men (Herbert, R. K., 1990; Holmes, J., 1986; Johnson, D. M., & Roen, D. H., 1992), that women in same-sex peer conversations use a lot of positive-politeness strategies while men in similar situations do not (Pilkington, J., 1998), and that women tend to apologize, soften criticism or express thanks more than men (Tannen, D., 1994: 56-57).

*The Brown and Levinson model as the theoretical framework*

From the concept of face and threatening acts, it is impossible for people to communicate successfully without FTAs. Politeness, defined by Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987), consists of "a set of strategies that serve to minimize the risks to face or self-esteem whenever a speaker commits a face-threatening act." In particular, to implement an FTA, a speaker may choose at least one of four following strategies, which are arranged from the most to the least threatening.

**Figure 1:** Possible strategies for doing FTAs (Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C., 1978))



1. *Bald on-record*: Whenever speakers tend to do FTAs with maximum efficiency, they will choose the strategy "bald-record." In this case, the communicative purpose that led a certain actor to do a certain act is clear.

2. *Positive politeness strategies*:

Positive Politeness Strategies	
P1- Notice, attend to H (his/ her interests, wants, needs and goods)	P9 – Joke
P2 – Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H)	P10 – Assert or presuppose S’s knowledge of and concern for H’s wants
P3 – Intensify interest to H	P11 – Be optimistic
P4 – Use in-group identity markers	P12 – Include both S and H in the activity
P5 – Seek agreement	P13 – Give or ask for reasons
P6 – Avoid disagreement	P14 – Assume or assert reciprocity
P7 – Presuppose S’s knowledge of and concern for H’s wants	P15 – Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation)
P8 – offer, promise	

3. *Negative politeness strategies*:

Negative Politeness Strategies	
N1 – Be direct/ conventionally indirect	N6 – Apologize
N2 – Question, hedge	N7 – Impersonalize S and H: avoid pronouns “I” and “you”
N3 – Be pessimistic	N8 – State the FTA as a general rule
N4 – Minimize the size of imposition on H	N9 – Nominalize
N5 – Give deference	N10 – Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting H

4. *Off-record*: – record utterances are indirect uses of language; speakers say something that is not explicitly relevant and sometimes use metaphors, irony, vague, or ambiguity.

### Research Questions

The study investigated the gender-based differences in politeness strategies in negotiating conversations in the genre of Shark Tank Vietnam program and tried to explore the answer to these questions:

- (1) *What politeness strategies in Brown and Levinson did male and female Sharks (investors) use in the negotiations in Shark Tank America and Shark Tank Vietnam?*
- (2) *What are the similarities and differences in politeness strategies used by Sharks (investors) in negotiations in Shark Tank America and Shark Tank Vietnam?*
- (3) *What can be discussed from the findings related to the issue?*

### Methods

The study adopted the qualitative method, contrastive analysis, and descriptive method to investigate politeness strategies in Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C model (1987) in Shark Tank America and Shark Tank Vietnam. In addition, SPSS software, particularly the Pearson Chi-square test, was adapted to find out the correlation between politeness strategies and gender; similarly, the analysis methods in Candilas, K. S., Diane, X. M., Gaid, J. K., & Kolog, P. J. (2023). In order to implement the study, the data from 10 pitch conversations from Episodes 1 to 5 in Shark Tank Vietnam Season 3 program and 10 pitches from Episodes 1 to 7 in Shark Tank America Season 9 were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. In the pitches in Shark Tank programs, there are 5 investors (2 females and 3 males). In the genre of Shark Tank program as a genre of negotiation (Van Eemeren, F. H., & Grootendorst, R., 2003), there are 3 main parts of negation including the opening offer (presenting offer), confrontation stage (exchanging information), bargaining – argumentative stage. In each stage, speech acts in the Sharks' utterances are classified, then politeness strategies are identified in all FTAs.

**Table 1.** Number of politeness strategies used by Sharks in Shark Tank America

Shark Tank America	Female Shark	Male Shark
Bald on-record (BOR)	13	39
Positive Politeness (PP)	138	266
Negative politeness (NP)	40	83
Off-record (OR)	1	2
Total	192	390

**Table 2.** Number of politeness strategies used by Sharks in Shark Tank Vietnam

<b>Shark Tank Vietnam</b>	<b>Female Shark</b>	<b>Male Shark</b>
Bald on-record (BOR)	21	95
Positive Politeness (PP)	36	136
Negative politeness (NP)	44	168
Off-record (OR)	2	8
Total	103	407

### Findings and discussion

#### *Politeness strategies used by male and female Sharks in Shark Tank America*

**Figure 2.** Politeness strategies used by sharharks in Shark Tank America

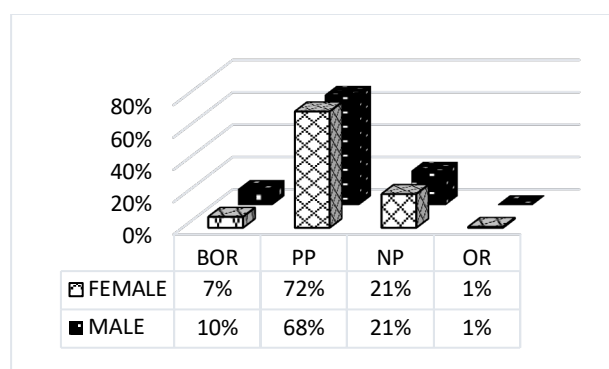


Figure 2 reveals the percentage of politeness strategies in Sharks' utterances in the negotiations in Shark Tank America, which reveals that American investors mostly adopted positive politeness (above 65%), just 21% of negative politeness, rarely used bald on - record and off-record. In gender, positive politeness is more favorably used by female than male Sharks by 4%, while male Sharks tended to talk more directly (10% of bald on - record) compared to female ones. Both negative politeness and off-record strategies were adopted at equal rates.

Investigating more specifically into sub-strategies of positive and negative politeness, the results are illustrated to generate the main linguistic features of male and female Sharks/ investors in the negotiation genre in terms of politeness.

#### *Positive politeness*

**Figure 2.1.** Politeness strategies used by Sharks in Shark Tank America

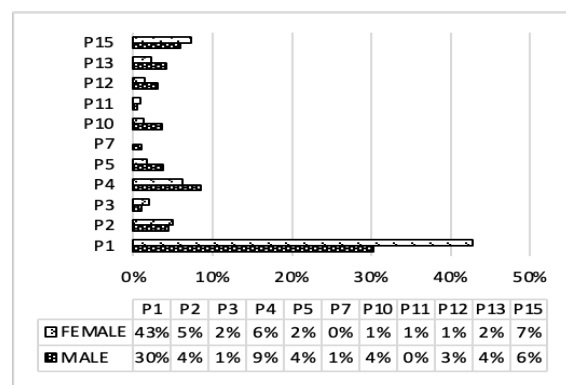


Figure 2.1 compares the frequency of sub-positive politeness strategies in male and female Sharks' utterances in negotiations in Shark Tank America. In detail, P1 is the main sub-strategy for both male and female Sharks; however, females (43%) showed more interest in hearer than males (30%) in the program. Besides, female Sharks in Shark Tank America preferred P2 and P15 to males, while male Sharks tended to adopt more P4, P10, P12, and P13 than females. The below examples are illustrated to see what polite language Sharks used.

### ***P1 – Notice, attend to Hearer***

This strategy is the most used in the negotiations in order to create harmony, understanding, or solidarity in the negotiations. Sharks use compliments like *"That's great!"*, and suggestions like *"Let's have it!"* to show their interest in the project/ presentation.

#### ***Example 1:***

Makenzie	<i>".... So, Sharks, who's ready to dip in and be delighted by a sweet deal?"</i>
Female Shark	<i>"Totally"</i>
Female Shark	<i>"Bring it on. <b>Let's have it.</b>"</i>
Makenzie	<i>"You are welcome."</i>
Male Shark	<i><b>"That's great."</b></i>
Female Shark	<i><b>"Wow, weird."</b></i>
Male Shark	<i><b>"Oh, my goodness. This is good."</b></i>

### ***P2 – Exaggerate (interests, wants, needs, goods)***

Sharks exaggerate their interests by showing their preference and impression of the project so that the players agree to choose their offer. In example 2, a male shark named Alex Rodriguez persuaded a player to choose him to be an investor for his project. Shark used P2 as an intimate way of communication to make effect on the player's decision.

#### ***Example 2:***

Shark Alex Rodriguez	<i>"First of all, let me just tell you, as someone who both of his parents are Dominican, I lived in Dominican from age five to about nine. <b>And I just love your passion. I love what you're doing. And I cannot tell you how proud I am. Everything that you've done resonates with me. It's just an amazing story. So, you had me at hello.</b>"</i>
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### ***P4- Use in-group identity markers***

Using in-group markers, especially using names to create a close relationship with the hearers, is one of the popular tools of American Sharks in negotiations. In example 3, before asking a question as a threatening act, Shark Mark added "Makenzie" – the name of the player to show the closeness and show a marker that they are in a group.

#### ***Example 3:***

Shark Mark	<i><b>"Makenzie, how'd you come up with the idea?"</b></i>
Makenzie (Player)	<i>"You know, we launched to shelves 13 months ago, and we actually just hit our million-dollar mark in gross sales."</i>

### ***P15 – Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation)***



P15 is used quite often in the negotiations, especially in the third period when both players and Sharks decide to accept or refuse the offers. Speakers tend to use wishes, sympathy speeches, congratulation, etc., as P15 sub-strategies in Brown and Levinson.

Example 4:

Player                    *"We would love to take that deal, Richard Branson."*  
 Shark 1                 *"Right. Well done."*  
 Player1                 *"Thank you so much."*  
 Player2                 *"Good luck."*  
 Player1                 *"Excited. Excited."*  
 Shark 2                 *"Good luck."*  
 Player1                 *"Pleasure."*  
 Player2                 *"Thank you."*  
 Shark 3                 *"Congratulations, guys."*  
 Player1                 *"Who! That's what we wanted."*  
 Player2                 *"That's who we wanted!"*

*Negative politeness*

**Figure 2.2** Negative politeness used by Sharks in Shark Tank America

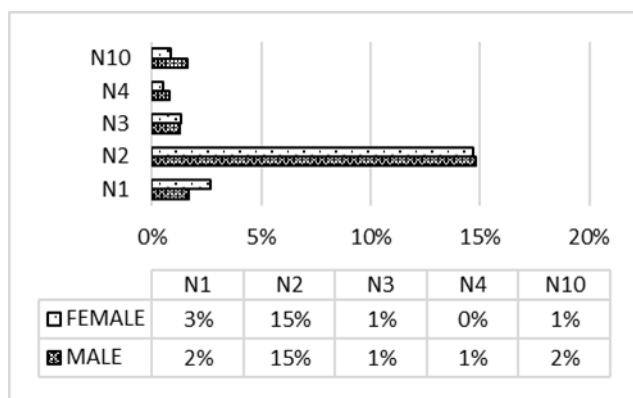


Figure 2.2 indicates that both male and female Sharks in Shark Tank America mostly used N2 as the main negative politeness strategy to avoid threatening the hearer's face when they made directive acts such as questioning, requesting, offering, etc. Not many significant differences were found in the utterances showing negative politeness sub-strategies between male and female Sharks. Some examples below are described:

***N2 – Question, Hedge***

N2 is the most commonly used strategy in both male and female American Sharks, which are known as hedges in questions as well as a way to soften threatening acts.

Example 5:

Shark Barbara Corcoran     *"Oh, I was wondering. What are your sales?"*  
 Shark Sarah                    *"So... So do you want two Sharks for \$225,000, 20% of your business, or do you want..."*  
 Nate Lawrie                    *"Would you guys be willing to match Daymond's offer? \$225,000 for 15%?"*

### *Bald on-record*

In Shark Tank America, male Sharks used more direct ways of utterances than females (by 3%). This way shows their directness in a speech in negotiations. To some extent, this also shows their strong effect on the speaking style of males.

#### Example 6:

*Shark John*

**"Whoa. Wait a minute, here."**

### *Off-record*

Off-record is the least strategy in negotiations which may result from the genre of negotiations demanding clearness in the speeches of negotiators. Therefore, implications or vague are not favorable. In example 7, the negative sentence "but you've hired no one yet." implies that Corcoran is not interested in the offer and the information provided in the negotiation without directly stating how she does not like it, but just giving a comment instead.

#### Example 7:

*Shark Kevin O'Leary*

*"Would you use this to hire one?"*

*Makenzie*

*"Yes."*

*Shark Barbara Corcoran*

**"But you've hired no one yet."**

Results of frequency in using 4 politeness strategies of Brown and Levinson model point out several values on gender differences in linguistic politeness in certain genres.

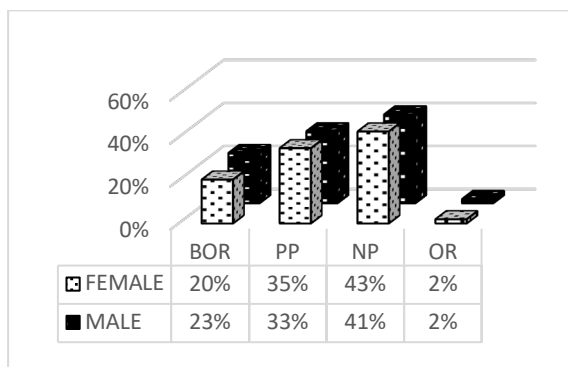
<b>In the genre of Shark Tank America</b>	
<b>Male Sharks</b>	<b>Female Sharks</b>
Speak more directly (higher rate of BOR)	Speak less directly (lower rate of BOR)
Use fewer positive politeness strategies	Use more positive politeness strategies
Use the same rate of negative politeness strategies	
Use the same rate of implicatures/ vague utterance (OR)	

From quantitative analysis, gender differences in using politeness strategies in American negotiations are clearly defined as follows:

- Male Sharks talk more directly. This finding is quite coincident with Holmes J. s' points (1986), which proved that men are direct, aggressive, and decisive in communication.
- Female Sharks remain in solidarity and friendliness in negotiations rather than male ones. They use mostly strategies of noticing or attending to the H, then giving gifts to the H, or exaggerating in their speech.
- Male and female Sharks protect Hearer's negative face by using hedges as the most common negotiation sub-strategy.

*Politeness strategies used by male and female Sharks in Shark Tank Vietnam*

**Figure 3.** Politeness strategies used by Sharks in Shark Tank Vietnam



From figure 3, male and female Sharks in the Vietnamese program share the same tendency to adopt politeness strategies in communication. They both used mainly negative politeness (more than 40%), then positive politeness (above 30%); comparing the strategies used by male and female Sharks, the findings partly reveal that more negative and positive politeness is in female Sharks' utterances than in male ones; whereas males used more bald on - record, which means male's talking is more direct than female's one. There is no difference in adopting off-record between male and female Sharks.

Studying, more specifically, sub-strategies of positive and negative politeness, the results are generated into a number of main linguistic features of male and female Sharks/ investors in the negotiation genre in terms of politeness.

*Positive politeness*

**Figure 3.1** Positive politeness used by Sharks in Shark Tank Vietnam

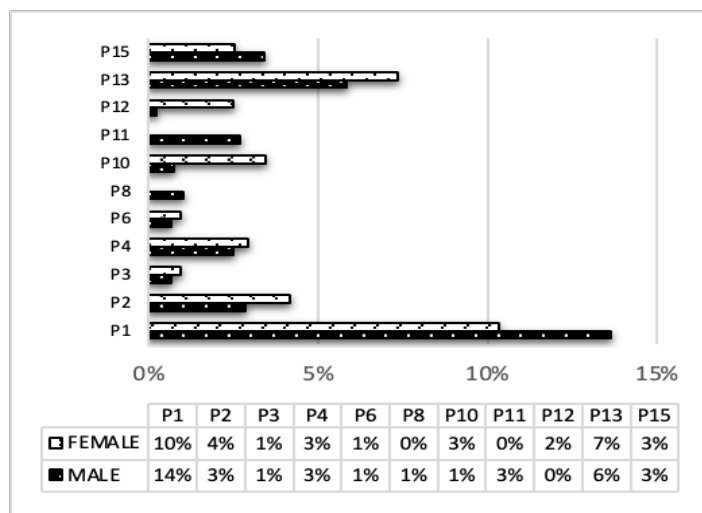


Figure 3.1 proved that P1 is the mostly used sub-politeness strategy, then P13, P2, P4, and P15 are at the second, third, and fourth rank of the frequency in use of the sub-positive politeness strategies by both male and female Sharks. Besides, the results indicate the differences in applying the sub-strategies by male and female Sharks. Specifically, male Sharks tended to attend to H (P1), use jokes (P8), and be more optimistic (P11) than females. In contrast, female Sharks preferred intensifying interest to H (P2), offering and promising (P10), including both a speaker and a hearer in the activity (P12), and giving or asking for reasons (P13) rather than male Sharks.

### **P1 – Notice, attend to Hearer**

P1 is also the most used strategy by both male and female Vietnamese Sharks. It may be in the form of asking for personal information or noticing new things from the hearers. Interestingly, male Sharks used more P1 than female Sharks in the Vietnamese version. In example 8, shark Viet asked about the place to work, which is considered a way of noticing and showing interest in the player's project.

#### Example 8:

Shark Viet: **“Em đang làm việc ở đâu? (Where are you working?)”**

Ngọc: **“Em đang làm việc ở Hà Nội. (I am working in Hanoi.)”**

### **P2 – Exaggerate (interests, wants, needs, goods)**

In Shark Tank Vietnam, P2 in the form of complementing, showing interest, and needs are the third most used positive politeness sub-strategy by both male and female Sharks. Female Sharks used more P2 than male ones. In example 9, the shark evaluates the value of the project positively before refusing to invest in the player's project, which is considered to be a tool to save the speaker's and hearer's faces.

#### Example 9:

Shark Dung: **“...và đây là điều mà mình thấy những cái bạn đang làm rất chi là giá trị. Tuy nhiên thì lĩnh vực này không phải là lĩnh vực mà tôi sẽ định dành nhiều thời gian thế nên tôi quyết định rút khỏi thương vụ này, tôi không đầu tư với bạn.”** (and this is what I think you are doing is valuable. However, ....)

### **P13 – Give (or ask for) reasons**

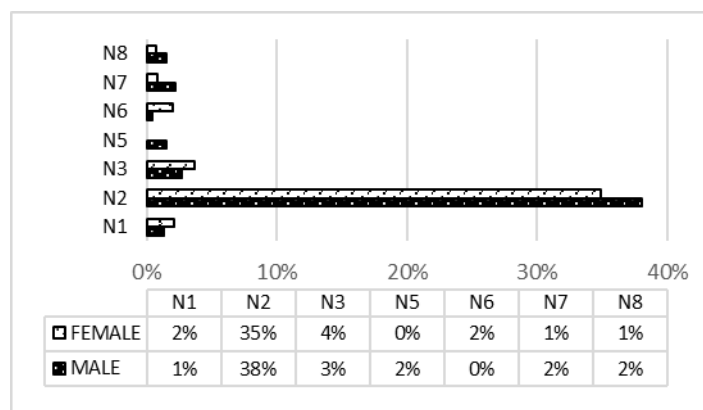
Giving reasons is shown to be the second most used politeness sub-strategy in Shark Tank by both male and female Sharks, with a tiny difference of 1 % between 2 genders in frequency. In example 10, Shark gave a reason for his incapability of investment to the project.

#### Example 10:

Shark Hung **“Mua tức là tiền đền bù...còn tiền thuế đất là nhà nước không thu cho nên anh không thể thế chấp vay vốn được..”** (That means the compensate..the land tax, the state doesn't ask to pay so you cannot mortgage.)

### *Negative politeness*

Figure 3.2 shows the distribution of sub-negative politeness strategies in male and female Sharks' utterances in Shark Tank Vietnam. As shown, N2 – hedges were the most prominent linguistic feature showing politeness in Vietnamese Sharks with more than 35% of frequency. Comparing the differences in using the sub-strategies between male and female Sharks, it can be concluded that male Sharks used more hedges (N2), gave more deference (N5), more impersonalized S and H, and stated the FTA as a general rule rather than females, while female Sharks preferred being conventionally indirect, showing more pessimistic, apologizing more than males.

**Figure 3.2** Negative politeness used by Sharks in Shark Tank Vietnam

### *N2 – Question, Hedge*

For Vietnamese Sharks, hedging is the most favorably – used negative strategy, and males prefer using it rather than females.

#### Example 11:

*Shark Thuy:* “**Anh có 1 thắc mắc ấy** ví dụ bây giờ em ghi đây là 300 năm trước là nước mắm tĩn đúng không, sang năm thì ghi nhãn hiệu là 301 năm à..”  
*(I am wondering that you labeled it 300 years ago, is this fish sauce Tin? Next year, will it last 301 years?)*

#### Example 12:

*Shark Dung* “**Em đang có mấy cái business cùng một lúc** thì nguồn thu nào là chủ yếu?”  
*(You are managing some business at the same time, so where is your main income?)*

#### *Bald on-record*

Bald on – record is used more by male Sharks than females in Shark Tank Vietnam. This feature is quite similar to that in the American version. Males still show their directness and strength in speech. In example 13, Sharks used direct questions to ask for the information with no polite linguistic markers. Example 14 shows how females directly criticized the player's project.

#### Example 13:

*Shark Việt* “**Doanh số có mấy năm rồi?**” (*How long does your sales last?*)  
*Shark Hưng* “**Phân phối bằng cách nào?**” (*How do you distribute?*)  
*Shark Liên* “**Ai cấp phép** cho câu chuyện chơi này?” (*Who issued this games?*)

#### Example 14:

*Shark Liên* “**Tôi cực ghét** chơi game, nường thời gian trên màn hình là **tôi không thích**. Bất kể là ai tôi nhìn thấy là **tôi khó chịu** rồi.”  
*(I really hate playing games; kill the time in front of the screen. Whenever I see that, I feel very annoyed.)*

*Off-record*

Off-record is the least popular strategy, with a frequency use of 2%. There are no differences in using off-record in male and female Sharks' utterances. Vietnamese Sharks tend to use idioms, and proverbs to imply the meaning of utterances.

*Example 15:*

*Shark Viet*            **“Ngày xưa em như chim sáo mà sống lâu năm em thành đại bàng, đến lúc em thành đại bàng rồi thì anh làm sao đi theo em được? Thế nên ta cứ rõ ràng... tỉ lệ anh sẽ thấp hơn...”**

**(once upon a time, you were a bird that lived for a long time and would become an eagle. Until you become an eagle, how can I follow you? So, let's be clear; my rate is lower.)**

Results of frequency in using 4 politeness strategies of Brown and Levinson model point out several values of gender differences in linguistic politeness in certain genres.

<b>In the genre of Shark Tank Vietnam</b>	
<b>Male Sharks</b>	<b>Female Sharks</b>
Speak more directly	Speak less directly
Use fewer positive politeness strategies	Use more positive politeness strategies
Use fewer negative politeness strategies	Use more negative politeness strategies
Rarely use off-record and at the same rate of frequency	

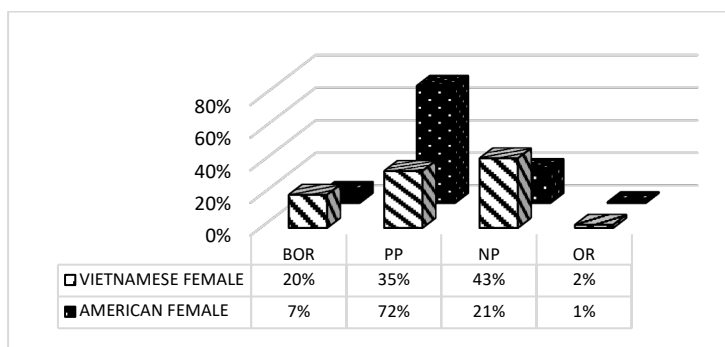
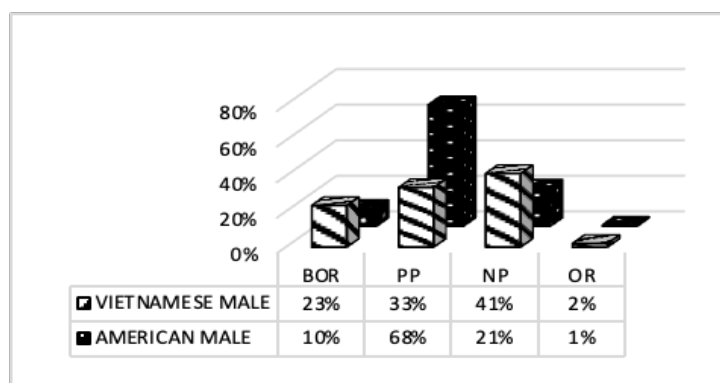
From quantitative analysis, gender differences in using politeness strategies in American negotiations are clearly defined as follows:

- Male Sharks talk more directly than female ones.
- Female Sharks use various politeness strategies in negotiations rather than males.
- Both male and female Sharks in Shark Tank Vietnam preferred negative politeness strategies, especially using hedges as the most popular sub-strategy. Whereas they rarely use implicatures or vague information in their speech.

*Similarities and differences of linguistic politeness strategies used by male and female Sharks in Shark Tank America and Shark Tank Vietnam*

From the politeness strategy aspect, the study proved gender differences in communication style, especially in negotiations between males and females at high social status as businessmen (CEOs, founders, etc.), as well as those in different cultures of America and Vietnam.

The results in Figures 4 and 5 reveal significant differences in adopting politeness strategies by male and female Sharks in Shark Tank America and Vietnam.

**Figure 4.** Politeness strategies used by female Sharks in Shark Tank America and Shark Tank Vietnam**Figure 5.** Politeness strategies used by male Sharks in Shark Tank America and Shark Tank Vietnam

Clearly, both male and female Vietnamese Sharks used more negative politeness and bald on record and off-record than American Sharks. In contrast, male and female American Sharks applied more positive politeness than Vietnamese Sharks. Interestingly, P1 (attending to H) and N1 (being indirect) are the most popular sub-positive and negative politeness strategies of female and male Sharks in the 2 programs.

From the findings, gender features in using politeness strategies in 2 programs show significant contributions of the research to sociolinguistic studies, in which the similarities and the new results are identified in the scope of the study.

The investigation assures that Vietnamese negotiators prefer negative politeness strategies while Americans favor politeness. Moreover, Vietnamese people keep their distance in communication and use more implicatures but show more power in speech rather than Americans in negotiations when they are in higher positions or in the active status of making decisions. These findings are quite similar to those in the Japanese or Chinese research context, which is considered to be in the same Eastern culture region as Vietnam. However, it was supposed by Kitao, K. (1990) that Japanese people are too accustomed to negative politeness, and it seems a norm to show this type of politeness, especially in conversations between lower to higher positions. On the contrary, American investors/ Sharks tend to use more positive strategies to show their closeness, and harmony in conversation, which are also found in several previous studies about American communication styles and politeness in low-context cultures, such as Holmes, J. (1986), Herbert, R.K. (1990), Tannen, D. (1994), Pilkington, J. (1998). Hopefully, the findings reveal several further research approaches in the field in various contexts.

## Conclusion

The study has been conducted to investigate the similarities and differences in using politeness strategy by male and female Sharks/ investors in Shark Tank America and Shark Tank Vietnam under the shade of Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. model (1978). The research has shown certain proofs for ideologies in gender speech as well as for the changes in gender communication style in the specific contexts of negotiation on television. Furthermore, the results confirm the same communication style between males and females in the same culture. In brief, male and female Sharks in Shark Tank America show their friendliness, solidarity, and closeness in interaction by using more positive politeness, while male and female Sharks in Shark Tank Vietnam show directness but deference as well as less pressure on hearers by using more negative politeness. The findings have provided significant contributions to gender language research, pragmatics as well as sociolinguistics. Due to time and space constraints, the research has remained several limitations in clarifying the cultural contexts and needs further studying.

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## Verbal instructional modeling: An intervention to improve students' perceived level of confidence in critical thinking skills

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### ABSTRACT

**Keywords:** critical thinking, modeling, observational learning, confidence, Verbal Instructional Modeling

Verbal instructional modeling is a concept put forward by Albert Bandura (1977) under Observational Learning which assumed that when certain explanations and descriptions were presented, learning was enhanced. This study banks on this concept and confirms whether Verbal Instructional Modeling helped improve the perceived confidence of Grade 10 students from a private school in the Philippines in terms of their critical thinking skills. The study made use of a practical action research design and used a 6-point Likert Scale Questionnaire. Employing convenience sampling, the researchers collected the data pre- and post-implementation, describing the perceived level of confidence of the participants before and after the intervention. The data was then analyzed and interpreted with the use of the T-test. The study's results confirmed that Verbal Instructional Modeling improves the respondents' perceived confidence level in their critical-thinking skills. Therefore, the researchers recommend continued use of Verbal Instructional Modeling in classroom interactions.

### Introduction

A student behaves, approaches challenges, and engages with others are significantly influenced by their self-confidence (Shore, 2019). One of the foundational elements of academic success is favorable or high self-esteem because it gives a solid framework for learning. Low-esteem learners tend to study less, concentrate less, and not take chances. This means that a student's degree of confidence is a significant factor in determining their academic success. A student's grades will result directly if he or she starts to lose confidence in class. He or she may even alter his or her ambitions, dreams, and plans. Students with poor self-esteem could feel unworthy of accomplishing their goals or that doing so is impossible.

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This self-esteem drop was apparent when students returned to face-to-face classes after almost three years of studying online. In the junior high school the researchers have studied, students have reported feeling anxious, unprepared, and frustrated when it comes to their overall classroom and learning experience. This drop in self-esteem is brought about by several factors, including ambiguity concerning academic achievement, the sudden disruption of their social life, and future careers, among others (Aristovnik et al., 2020).

Moreover, as the COVID-19 pandemic started, educational institutions closed, and online classes became the norm. However, studies show that the online education system has not produced adequate results for the students and that they lack confidence in their ability to succeed after mastering the material covered in the online lectures. Many students suffer from poor self-esteem, which in turn results in insufficient participation and inadequate improvement even after spending a lot of time in class. Students are most likely to have low self-confidence when it comes to accomplishing tasks, especially when there is no further explanations/instruction from the teacher (Gopal, Singh, and Aggarwal, 2021).

As a response to these difficulties present, the researchers chose to study modeling, specifically Verbal Instructional Modeling, and its effect on students' perceived levels of self-confidence, particularly in their critical thinking skills. Both modeling and the use of models in educational contexts have always been widely used as instructional strategies. Singh (2022) notes that "most teachers use it every day even without being consciously aware of it." An example would be a music teacher who shows his/her students how to play a specific musical instrument or the steps of solving a mathematical problem (Creekmore, 2019). Reading aloud is also one of the examples of modeling in the classroom.

Imagine a scenario wherein an English teacher asks her students to write a synthesis paper without teaching them how to make one. The students do not know what the final product and the goal should look like, nor do they know the process or steps they need to go through to come up with the assignment. Without a clear model of expectation, the students will not be able to do what is expected of them (Riches, 2019). In a similar manner, Singh (2022) noted that modeling will give the students a high possibility of getting the right outcome. This is the reason why a purposeful integration of modeling and the use of models in instruction is a must. Until the learners know how to properly demonstrate and master the task, their teacher should give them assistance and support (Lipscomb et al., 2010). Teklu and Terefe (2022) also mentioned that the more the teacher demonstrates or performs modeling, the less likely there will be misunderstandings in the classroom.

Modeling will reduce the number of errors in the students' work because it somehow creates a roadmap for learning. It would be best to provide students with explanations along with demonstrations for them to achieve the desired results. Riches (2019) believed that nothing gives a class more confidence than watching their teacher modeling the task required of them.

Despite the mentioned benefits and advantages of modeling and the use of models, there is no sufficient information about the use of models in research subjects and its effect on the students' perceived level of confidence in their critical thinking. Learning by observation is an essential indicator of effective education. Therefore, it is fitting to evaluate how modeling improves the

learners' performance based on their perceived level of confidence as to their critical thinking. Moreover, it is also very important to determine what factors affect the said modeling in terms of its effectivity with regard to the students' performance and to what extent it shall be implemented for better results. These factors are very crucial in the performance of every learner to ensure that it scaffolds their skills and does improve their overall capabilities.

## Literature review

### *Self-Confidence and Modeling*

According to Verma (2017), self-confidence is notably one of the most known driving causes of how people get motivated, which is apparent in how they behave and think on a daily basis. The phrase "self-confidence" has also been used to refer to how people perceive their capacity to perform at a specific level. Being self-confident, therefore, is necessary, especially in learning as students perform better and achieve more because they know they can.

In a supportive environment that promotes performance achievements, people's expectations are greatly influenced by their level of confidence in their ability to perform the skill. This is because the accomplishments that they received and obtained and the skills they mastered serve as one of their motivations to become confident. Self-confidence can help students improve their participation, enjoy the learning process, reduce test anxiety, increase their interest in goal-seeking, help them be more comfortable with their lecturers and classmates and as well as help them share their experiences and opinions in the class. (Akbari & Sahibzada, 2020).

One of the means of developing self-confidence comes in the form of modeling. Modeling is a teaching strategy where the learners are shown by their teachers in a clear and detailed manner on how they will complete their tasks. According to Coleman (2020), utilizing modeling in the classroom will immensely be useful as a teaching tool and will also serve as effective classroom management.

Students who need extra help in completing the task or the assignment will ask their teachers considerably less frequently if they illustrate how it should be done. Salisu and Ransom (2014) asserted that using models as learning tools has two main advantages: it gives students accurate and practical representations of the knowledge they need to solve problems in a particular field, and it facilitates their understanding of the field of knowledge because it is presented in a visual way. In a study by Gage & Berliner (as cited in Salisu & Ransom, 2014), it was found out that students who were able to see or study a model before class discussions can actually remember at least 57% of questions about the lesson contents compared to students who were given the same instruction yet not given the opportunity to see any models. Coleman (2020) also mentions how "modeling gives a clear picture in a student's mind as to how to manage the task at hand... will give them the confidence in how to finish the assignment." In other words, it lessens their difficulty in completing the assignment. Through this guidance, students will be steered in the right direction because it is very frustrating when instructions are already given, yet students still do not have any idea of what they are working toward and how they are going to start. Modeling can remove frustrations like these and can contribute to the betterment of classroom management (Coleman, 2020).

There are many possibilities for employing modeling in a language-learning classroom. For instance, when a teacher demonstrates, they describe and follow through the cognitive processes involved, especially in reading and writing. The typical demonstration process includes modeling, describing, and showing how writing and reading generate cognition. A good example of this is when a teacher demonstrates how to write a piece in front of the class on an overhead projector (Salisu & Ransom, 2014). Aside from verbal instruction, visuals that support the instruction also make a great modeling tool. In order for students to visualize the ultimate product and know what they are working toward, completed examples of previous assignments should be provided. These can be used by teachers to explain expectations for their students (Coleman, 2020). Since verbal instructions can be overwhelming and ambiguous, video explanations of assignments will make it much easier for English Language Learners (ELLs) to understand them. Therefore, when teachers provide video explanations explaining how to execute the activity at hand, ELLs will be able to perform and do it successfully. Aside from that, ELLs will feel less anxious and confused while working on the task if a teacher also demonstrates the instructions and provides examples (Coleman, 2020).

This is especially true if a task is to be completed independently by the students. As Riches (2019) mentions, it is inspiring for a class to watch the instructor model what is expected of them first. Modeling or demonstrating how to perform, for instance, science experiments or physical education exercises, how to properly pronounce or articulate the foreign language you are teaching, and how to solve mathematical equations or word problems allows the learners to feel at ease doing and performing these tasks because these were demonstrated or modeled first to them. The teachers should also take note when modeling or when using models as a scaffolding approach. Learners do it at their own pace after teachers have modeled it for them. The teachers should also repeat the models to learners with learning difficulties. According to Salisu and Ransom (2014), modeling is necessary to improve one's self-confidence in accomplishing certain performances or tasks as it gives a higher possibility of successfully accomplishing said undertaking. In turn, students should be observant and be mindful of how the models behaved and demonstrated the skills in order for the modeling to become very effective.

### *Critical Thinking and Modeling*

To put it plainly, critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating. This is in line with a multidisciplinary approach to assisting pupils in the development of higher-order thinking. One of the greatest educational proponents, Benjamin Bloom, saw the progression of critical thinking as a sequential process, where one must successfully finish one level before moving on to the next. He laid this out in his taxonomy, where Knowledge is defined as the capacity to recollect (remember) the proper language previously learned, particular facts, and strategies for addressing specifics (conventions, trends and sequences, classifications and categories, criteria, methodology), as well as generalizations and field abstractions (principles and generalizations, theories and structures). Comprehension, a step higher than Knowledge, is the process of understanding informative materials' meanings. Application is the utilization of formerly gained knowledge in fresh, practical contexts to address issues with a single, correct

solution. Higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) begin with Analysis, which is carving up informational materials into their component sections, looking at and attempting to figure out how such information arrives at different conclusions by determining the motivations and drawing conclusions. This is followed by Synthesis is the creative or divergent application of previous skills and knowledge to create or produce an authentic piece, and Evaluation which refers to the process of determining the worth of a piece of information based on personal values or opinions to create a final product with a specific purpose, and there is no real right or wrong answers (Dasmo, 2020). The elements of a theoretical model must be put into practice in order to achieve the ultimate objectives of a critical thinking model, specifically, to encourage people to develop mature critical thinking and logical reasoning skills. There is no question that teachers have been exposed to certain particular frameworks, models, and practices for critical thinking abilities in actual educational settings.

The challenge, therefore, is to have teachers incorporate critical thinking skills into their lesson plans and provide their students the chance to recognize the material they are working with, analyze it, classify it, and think about its parallels and contrasts. An article from Fahim and Eslamdoost (2014) suggest ways on how to include critical thinking activities into classroom activities, such as giving students the time and space to brainstorm through discussions; expecting them to identify tasks and problems to solve for themselves; giving them a chance to compare and contrast and categorize the current situations; and, finally, encouraging creativity and avoiding teacher-prepared projects.

Research has shown that modeling examples have been demonstrated to be an effective way to teach complicated abilities and develop critical thinking skills, especially in unstructured settings. In a study by Pedersen & Lui, as cited in Frerejean et al. (2018), it was found that when students see a teacher think aloud in a problem-based learning situation, their problem-solving skills improved the most, compared to when the teacher provided direct instruction or gave no advice. Accordingly, it is also important that students fully comprehend the roles, purposes, and limitations of models. Models are helpful learning tools that can be utilized to enrich explanations, initiate conversation, provide representations of complex topics visually, and develop mental models.

### *Self-Esteem and Critical Thinking*

Self-esteem is tied to critical thinking and vice versa. Self-esteem boosts critical thinking as without self-esteem, people cannot trust their own decisions and solutions- both of which are crucial parts of critical thinking (Richardson, 2016). This is also supported by a study from Iran by Khavanin et al. (2021) which showed a direct and significant relationship between critical thinking and the self-esteem of students. It also suggests promoting and improving students' critical thinking by strengthening and raising self-esteem. Finally, Barkhordary, Jalalmanesh, and Mahmodi (2009) as cited in Demirag (2019), discovered strong correlations between student critical thinking and self-esteem. This means that the more confident a student is in his or her abilities, the better they perform said abilities.

Critical thinking is also linked to better self-esteem. In a study done in 2022, Gavilan-Martin et al mention that there is a positive relationship between effective personality, one of its

components being self-esteem, and critical thinking, with the traits "being enthusiastic", "developing positive self-esteem" and "having self-confidence" correlating most strongly with critical thinking. A similar study conducted by Demirag (2019) zoomed in on the components of critical thinking closely related to self-esteem and found that students' inquisitiveness and open-mindedness positively predicted self-esteem and had the highest association with self-esteem compared to the rest of the subscales of critical thinking which include analyticity, truth-seeking, and systematicity. While this study does not go into these components specifically, it is helpful to note that critical thinking helps in developing students' self-esteem as well.

It is with this knowledge that the researchers postulate that modeling improves the comprehension of topics and the perceived level of confidence of the learners. It makes learning ideas easier to understand, and students can successfully model their own practice after the teacher's examples without any uncertainty that might otherwise encourage poor self-confidence. Furthermore, while the literature states that confidence has an influence on the students' academic standing, there is still a gap in research and literature linking modeling and perceived level of confidence, specifically among Filipino learners.

### *Research Questions*

This study sought to discover whether Verbal Instructional Modeling improved the perceived confidence of students in terms of critical thinking. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the learners' perceived levels of confidence in critical thinking before the intervention?
2. What are the learners' perceived level of confidence in critical thinking after the intervention?
3. Is there a significant difference in the learners' perceived level of confidence in critical thinking before and after the intervention?

## **Methods**

### *Pedagogical Setting & Participants*

The study was conducted at a private school in Cagayan de Oro City, Mindanao, Philippines. The researchers used the convenience sampling technique in order to come up with 25 students from the Grade 10 level from the said institution who are currently taking the English Research subject. The researchers utilized this sampling because the participants were available, accessible, and willing to participate.



Furthermore, since the participants of the study are minors, the inclusion criteria of this study were confined to those participants whose parents have signed the Informed Consent Forms to ensure that the participants have been provided full approval to participate in this study. This also ensured that the data collected and processed from the participants was constant throughout the study's implementation phase. The exclusion criteria of this study were to those participants whose parents did not sign the Informed Consent Forms. The withdrawal criteria are to those participants who wish to withdraw consent and unprocessed data previously supplied at any time.

### Design of the Study

The study made use of a practical action research design. Action Research is a formative study of progress commonly practiced by teachers in schools. Basically, action research is a spiral process that includes problem investigation, taking action & fact-finding about the result of an action. It enables a teacher to adopt/craft the most appropriate strategy within its own teaching. (Yasmeen, 2008).

A highly interactive method, action research is often used in the social sciences, particularly in educational settings. Particularly popular with educators as a form of systematic inquiry, it prioritizes reflection and bridges the gap between theory and practice. Due to the nature of the research, it is also sometimes called a cycle of action or a cycle of inquiry. The main purpose of practical action research is to address school-wide problems. Since it is only a small-scale research project, it gives emphasis on a specific issue and is usually conducted by teachers. This study did not just allow educators to identify problems, gather information, and analyze the data collected but also to reflect on their own practices. They were given the opportunity to develop and implement an action plan/intervention through this action research that might help them solve the problem. For instance, they can develop innovative approaches to enhance their work in the classroom and throughout the school.

### Data collection & analysis

The researchers first sent a formal letter to the principal to ask permission to conduct an action research study, and once given permission, a letter with an Informed Assent Form for Minors or Children and Informed Consent Form for Surveys were given to the participants. The researchers informed the participants that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, even after the Informed Consent and Assent forms had been signed. Together with the said letters were the Likert Scale Questionnaires which were given through the Grade 10 participants' corresponding English Research teacher. The teacher was the one who disseminated these forms and questionnaires to the participants. Before the actual data gathering, the researchers explained to the respondents the importance of their participation in the study and how their responses would remain confidential. The researchers also simplified several terminologies to the respondents so that they could answer the Likert questionnaire with full knowledge of their responsibility as the subjects of the study. The research instrument used underwent a process of validation and reliability check to ensure the quality and accuracy of the results gathered. To examine and strengthen the reliability of the questionnaire, the researchers administered a pilot-tested it to students from the same level and was computed using Cronbach Alpha. The reliability coefficient was 0.77 which means the reliability level of

the researcher-made instrument is 'Acceptable'. For the actual data gathering, the reliability coefficient before the intervention was 0.73 which means it is 'Acceptable' while the reliability coefficient after the intervention was 0.89, meaning it has a 'Good' reliability level.

The partner English teacher was the one who spearheaded the implementation of the said intervention and was a help to the researchers in finding out what the outcome of the study would be. Before the intervention, the researchers gave an orientation to the respondents to clarify the purpose of the study and for the respondents to understand the terms being used in the study. The partner English teacher then distributed the pre-intervention survey questionnaire to the respondents which the researchers analyzed.

The five-day implementation of the intervention started right after the pre-test. The implementation was limited to five days as this was the number of days the subject area met in the quarter, given the flexible learning arrangement followed by the school. Throughout the five-day implementation, the partner English teacher made use of the proposed intervention by explaining verbally and demonstrating the concepts, topics, and models to the class. The class was also given worksheets that model the product expected from them.

After the intervention, the partner English teacher distributed the post-intervention survey questionnaires. Students were also asked about their experiences during the intervention using a focus group discussion.

The researchers used the total mean of the two tests to describe the respondents' perceived level of confidence in critical thinking before and after the intervention. As they needed to determine whether there was a significant difference between the scores of the students before and after the intervention, a t-test was also utilized.

## **Results/Findings and Discussion**

The results of using Verbal Instructional Modeling as an intervention to improve the learners' perceived level of confidence in Critical Thinking are shown in the tables below in accordance with the following research questions:

- 1. What are the learners' perceived level of confidence in critical thinking before the intervention?*

**Table 1.** Learners' perceived level of confidence in critical thinking before the intervention

		Mean	Descriptor
1	I am able to produce a more creative product/output compared to the models shown to us.	4.64	High
2	I can easily identify what kind of quality output is expected from us when we are provided with models.	5.23	Very High
3	I can easily organize my thoughts on how to complete the task by analyzing the model first	5.20	Very High
4	Through models/modeling, I can easily comprehend the content/lesson.	5.07	High
5	I am capable of generating original ideas for my output despite being exposed to models/modeling.	4.93	High
6	Having an unfamiliar task/output modeled to us first by the teacher improves my understanding of the lesson/expected output.	4.60	High
7	Having an example assignment already completed to show the finished product creates a picture in my mind so that I'll know what I will be working toward.	5.34	Very High
8	When the teacher models what needs to be done, I ask fewer questions.	4.97	High
9	It makes me easily recall the lecture/new information taught to us when there are models.	5.40	Very High
Overall		5.11	High

Table 1 interprets the perceived level of confidence of the twenty Grade 10 respondents before the intervention based on the total mean of their scores and standard deviation. The total mean of the respondents' answers is 5.11 while the standard deviation is 0.49.

Considering the result of the total mean in the scale range of 4.33-5.16 found on the Data Analysis Plan, it can be inferred that the respondents have a High perceived level of confidence in their critical thinking even before the intervention.

The reason why the total mean of their scores is already High is that most of their answers in every question are Slightly Agree (4), Agree (5), and Strongly Agree (6). Meaning, the respondents are confident enough to believe that they can do the things mentioned in every statement found on the questionnaire. For instance, Statement no. 9 "It makes me easily recall the lecture/ new information taught to us when there are models" got the highest mean since most respondents Strongly Agree to this statement as they believe that they can actually easily recall newly acquired knowledge with the help of models. This is similar to the findings of Salisu & Ransom (2014) who mentioned that it is easier for students to recall and understand newly acquired information with the help of models since they serve as the visual representation of the topic.

2. *What are the learners' perceived level of confidence in critical thinking after the intervention?*

**Table 2.** Learners' perceived level of confidence in critical thinking after the intervention

		Mean	Descriptor
1	I am able to produce a more creative product/output compared to the models shown to us.	5.05	High
2	I can easily identify what kind of quality output is expected from us when we are provided with models.	5.43	Very High
3	I can easily organize my thoughts on how to complete the task by analyzing the model first	5.61	Very High
4	Through models/modeling, I can easily comprehend the content/lesson.	5.40	Very High
5	I am capable of generating original ideas for my output despite being exposed to models/modeling.	5.41	Very High
6	Having an unfamiliar task/output modeled to us first by the teacher improves my understanding of the lesson/expected output.	5.28	Very High
7	Having an example assignment already completed to show the finished product creates a picture in my mind so that I'll know what I will be working toward.	5.61	Very High
8	When the teacher models what needs to be done, I ask fewer questions.	4.90	High
9	It makes me easily recall the lecture/new information taught to us when there are models.	5.33	Very High
Overall		5.37	Very High

Table 2 also interprets the perceived level of confidence of the Grade 10 respondents after the intervention based on the results of the total mean and standard deviation. The total mean is 5.37 while the standard deviation is 0.57. With these results, it means that the respondents' perceived level of confidence in terms of critical thinking is Very High after the intervention has been implemented. Comparing the results of the two tests, there is an increase in their scores. This indicates that through Verbal Instructional Modeling, the respondents' perceived level of confidence changed from 'High', which means that they believe that they can work with very little support, organize, analyze and generate ideas when needed, and have a general idea of which direction to take in making the task, to 'Very High', which means that they believe that they can work with independently, organize, analyze and generate ideas most of the time and have a clear path or direction to take in making the task in just a short period of time.

In the second test, after the intervention has been implemented, most of the answers in almost every statement are Strongly Agree (6), resulting in a higher total mean than the first one. Among the 9 statements, the statement that got the highest mean of 5.61 is Statement no. 3 "I can easily organize my thoughts on how to complete the task at hand by analyzing the model first." Most of the respondents Strongly Agree to this statement as they believe that they can do it with the help of models. As stated by Wilson et al. (2020), through modeling it helps students to be organized since they can easily make connections between concepts that, at first glance, appear to be unrelated.

*3. Is there a significant difference in the learners' perceived level of confidence in critical thinking before and after the intervention?*

**Table 3.** Test of Significant Difference of the Learners' Perceived Level of Confidence in Critical Thinking

	Mean	T-value	P-value
Before the intervention	5.11	-1.86	0.04
After the intervention	5.33		

**SIGNIFICANT**

Table 3 shows the difference between the before and after intervention tests based on the t-test results. In the first test, the total mean is 5.14, in which no intervention was implemented, and 5.41 is the total mean in which the Verbal Instructional Modeling was already implemented. Clearly, the score has increased by 0.27. Meanwhile, the t-value result is -1.85 and the p-value is 0.04. These results provide clear evidence that there is still a significant difference in the students' perceived level of confidence before and after the intervention even if the scores of the respondents before the implementation are already High. Apart from this, it can also be implied that the intervention improved the respondents' perceived level of confidence in terms of their Critical Thinking Skills. This is also because students were more participative in the learning process. As Phan (2022) mentioned, active learning can help learners to upgrade their critical thinking skills. During the observation and conduct of the study, it was noticed that while the intervention was being implemented, students were able to work more independently, that they asked fewer questions and came up with creative solutions to the problems presented in the tasks they encountered. While this is so, there are also other reasons which might have contributed to the varied results of the participants before and after the intervention which includes, but are not limited to, a better understanding of the lessons learned after the intervention which might not have been directly because of the intervention itself, the enthusiastic delivery of the participating teacher, and even because of the activities which scaffolded the main task at hand.

These results are also reflected in the focus group discussion where students mentioned that the activity provided them "inspiration in coming up with topics and inspiration in making the products" which shows that the intervention helped in the HOTS 'Analysis' and 'Synthesis'. Another student mentioned how "it was easier to make the product because I already have an idea what to do and I shouldn't", the same student also mentioned how they don't ask too many questions from their teacher as they were given a model to follow as well as clear instructions on how to go about the activity. Most students agree that the intervention "really helped in making outputs or products related to the subject".

These results support the findings of Gopal, Singh, and Aggarwal (2021) who mention that students are more self-confident when it comes to accomplishing tasks, especially when there are clear explanations and instructions from the teacher. In this study, it was seen how modeling-exceptionally verbal instructional modeling, gave the students a clear picture of how to manage the task at hand, and knowing the processes involved, along with the product expected, gave

them the confidence to finish the task, as Coleman (2020) mentioned in an earlier study. The significant relationship between critical thinking and the self-esteem of students is also echoed in Khavanin et al.'s (2021) study. Similarly, Castle Learning (2019) mentioned on their blog titled "The Academic Benefits of Modeling" confirms that modeling or the use of models can empower the students to begin their tasks giving them the confidence to proceed and even allowing teachers to monitor their students who need extra support. Do et al. (2023) re-assert the importance of teachers in becoming mentors and models to guide their learners in acquiring skills needed in the language learning classroom.

Furthermore, modeling or the use of models not only gives the students confidence in terms of how well they accomplish tasks but also helps them improve their confidence in their critical thinking skills. As the students take part in the activity being completed, they will be able to better understand how to do it, thus giving them the confidence in their own faculties to accomplish it.

## Conclusion

Looking into the perceived confidence level in Critical Thinking skills of the Grade 10 respondents within five days, this study showed how the proposed intervention, Verbal Instructional Modeling, influenced learners' perceived level of confidence with the use of both verbal and visual examples. Using the model, it assisted learners in conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information. This finding echo that of Salisu & Ransom's (2014) study, which found that modeling is necessary to improve one's self-confidence in accomplishing certain performances or tasks as it gives a higher possibility of successfully accomplishing said undertaking. This also confirms Bandura's theory on observational learning, which mentions that when certain explanations and descriptions were presented, learning was enhanced.

This paper amply demonstrated that Verbal Instructional Modeling can be applied at any time to assist in learning a new skill, carrying out a task more successfully in terms of the success criteria, developing thinking abilities and cognitive processes, etc. With the given results, the researchers recommend that teachers use, if not continue using, Verbal Instructional Modeling in their classes as this can improve the students' perceived level of confidence in critical-thinking skills. Future research can also be done more specifically on the different components of critical thinking and measuring actual levels of critical thinking instead of students' perception of their own. As this study was done in just five days, a longer duration for the observation and implementation of the intervention is also suggested.

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