

NHẬN THỨC CỦA SINH VIÊN KHÔNG CHUYÊN TIẾNG ANH ĐỐI VỚI LỢI ÍCH VÀ THÁCH THỨC CỦA VIỆC ỨNG DỤNG CÔNG NGHỆ THÔNG TIN TRONG TỰ HỌC TIẾNG ANH

*NON-ENGLISH MAJORS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES
OF USING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY FOR AUTONOMOUS ENGLISH LEARNING*

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<p>Ngày nhận: 12/12/2025 Ngày nhận lại: 02/02/2026 Duyệt đăng: 12/02/2026 Mã số: TCKH-S01T02-2026-B15 ISSN: 2354 - 0788</p> <p>Từ khóa: Việc học ngôn ngữ, khả năng tự học, sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh, công nghệ.</p> <p>Keywords: Language learning, learner autonomy, non-English majors, technology.</p>	<p><i>Bài báo nhằm tìm hiểu nhận thức của sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh về lợi ích và khó khăn trong việc sử dụng công nghệ thông tin trong việc tự học tiếng Anh. Dữ liệu của nghiên cứu định tính được thu thập bằng phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc đối với 10 sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh từ các chuyên ngành khác nhau và được phân tích theo các chủ đề nhằm xác định các chủ đề chính phản ánh góc nhìn của người học. Kết quả thu được thể hiện rằng sinh viên nhận thức được công nghệ thông tin tạo ra nhiều thuận lợi cho việc tự học tiếng Anh như khả năng tiếp cận nguồn tài liệu học đa dạng, trải nghiệm học thú vị và sự linh hoạt. Tuy nhiên sinh viên cũng cho rằng đôi khi gặp khó khăn trong khi học như giảm sự tập trung, quá tải thông tin và việc duy trì tính kỷ luật. Bài báo cung cấp cái nhìn sâu hơn về trải nghiệm của người học, đồng thời đưa ra các khuyến nghị cho giáo viên và sinh viên về tiềm năng của công nghệ thông tin trong việc thúc đẩy việc tự học tiếng Anh cho sinh viên.</i></p> <p>ABSTRACT <i>The study aimed to examine non-majors' perceptions of the merits and pitfalls of technology in boosting their autonomous English learning. The data of this qualitative study were obtained through semi-structured interviews with ten non-English major students from different disciplines at a higher education institution. The data were thematically analyzed to identify key themes reflecting learners' perspectives. The findings reveal that students perceive the use of information technology as offering multifaceted benefits for autonomous English learning, comprising convenience and access to diverse learning materials, interactive and engaging learning experiences, and flexibility. However, several challenges were also identified, including reduced focus and learning efficiency,</i></p>

information overload, and difficulties in maintaining self-discipline. This study provides deeper insights into learners' experiences and offers salient recommendations for students and teachers regarding the potentials of technology in fostering autonomous English learning.

1. Introduction

Learner autonomy is one of the prime elements of education. An autonomous learner is more likely to achieve higher academic performance as he/she is willing and able to work independently and cooperatively with others to achieve the desired learning outcomes. In the era of industry 4.0, human knowledge has been constantly updated, learner autonomy is therefore more vital than ever. With the outstanding development of information technology, the application of digital tools into education has become increasingly prevalent. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting, educational technology has been proven to be beneficial for students' English language skill development, plus the promotion of learner independent work, particularly the out-of-class activities (Darwin & Burhan, 2021; Warni et al., 2018).

Educational institutions have attached special importance to applying information technology in training programs and fully appreciated English mastery among students. Nevertheless, English language learning, especially among non-English majors, has remained challenging due to limited English proficiency, low learner autonomy level, and negative attitudes towards learning English. Although technology has been recommended as a rewarding medium for learner autonomy promotion, many students are still unmotivated to be autonomous in case of unrestricted technology use, without teachers' proper guidance and control (Kamilah, 2017). A question raised to the writers is whether information technology is useful for fostering autonomous learning among non-majors' English. In order to use educational technology

for promoting learner autonomy for non-majored students, understanding how they perceive and the difficulties they experience in the autonomous technology-based English language learning is worthy. Accordingly, this paper aims to investigate non-majors' perceptions on using Information and Communication Technology for their English self-learning outside the classroom. To achieve the research objective, the present study attempts to find out the answers to the questions as follows:

How do non-English majored students perceive the benefits of technology in enhancing their language learning autonomy?

What challenges do non-English majored students encounter when utilizing technology for language learning autonomy?

The study hopes to provide some insights for teachers to consider how to enhance students' language learning and learner autonomy with the use of technology in order to achieve the desired learning outcomes.

2. Literature review

2.1. Learner autonomy in english language learning

Learner autonomy is a multifaceted construct with different interpretations. Learner autonomy is understood as a capacity to take responsibility and make decisions for one's own learning independently (Holec, 1981 & Littlewood, 1996). It is also considered as an ability to cooperate with others as a socially responsible person (Dam, 1995). Learner autonomy, according to Little (2007), comprises students' active participation in the learning process, especially their readiness to assume accountability for choices pertaining to learning objectives, approaches and assessment. These ideas are in line with modern teaching strategies

that prioritize learner-centeredness and self-directed learning. In FFL context, Benson (2011) notes that learner autonomy plays a crucial role in language learning, as learning cannot be confined to formal classroom instruction and requires learners to take control of their learning beyond the classroom.

The current study examines learner autonomy in the context of learners using Information Communication Technologies for their autonomous English language learning outside the classroom without or with little teachers' direct intervention. In particular, students are motivated and have positive attitudes towards English learning, as well as the ability to make decisions for their own study and actively study English outside the classroom.

2.2. The use of information technology in autonomous English learning: Benefits and challenges

Technology-based learning is the learning through electronic technology, e.g., the Internet, digital programs and tools, web-based social networking (Facebook, blogs, Twitter, YouTube, or wiki), M-learning, etc.. Technology provides learners with a personal learning environment in which they are free to choose any technological tools appropriate for their needs and interests (Fiedler & Våljataga, 2011). They can choose time, place, learning pace or any circumstances convenient for their own learning (Mutlu & Eroztuga, 2013) as well as have freedom to select content, learning activities, ways to complete the tasks or self-evaluate their learning process and learning outcomes (Ankan & Bakla, 2011). These choices boost students' engagement in learning, resulting in a sense of ownership to monitor their learning and feel more responsible for their own learning. Moreover, English language learning with technology gives students new learning experience that they have never had before by using apps, online dictionary, online courses and social networking sites. Consequently, students are more likely to develop language learning

strategies and find out the most appropriate learning strategy to achieve the learning goals.

Information technology has been considered as a beneficial tool for promoting learner autonomy in the EFL context. Students are motivated to learn English and support them to develop the four English language skills (Ahmed et al., 2020) as students can surf the internet and get more exposed to online English materials and learning resources (Warni et al., 2018; Janah et al., 2022). Moreover, virtual learning environment and social media platforms assist students in having more opportunities to interact with more peers and teachers beyond the classroom, which helps to enhance their self-confidence and social skills (Saeed, 2021).

Nevertheless, students face many difficulties in terms of limited digital devices, slow internet connection or technical issues when learning online and lack effective online learning strategies (Janah et al., 2022; Saeed, 2021; Warni et al., 2018; Tran & Duong, 2021). Alhumaid's (2019) study emphasizes how widespread use of technology without pedagogical structure can weaken learners' capacity to manage their own learning, even though it does not specifically examine self-regulated learning. This is because when technology takes the place of guided educational interaction, students become isolated and their fundamental academic competencies deteriorate. This bolsters the idea that a risk factor for ICT-based autonomous learning is a lack of self-regulation. Additionally, Hoang (2017) notes numerous students stated that they found it difficult to stay accountable and focused when using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to manage their own learning. This implies that even in cases when students have access to technology, a lack of learner accountability might limit the potential advantages of ICT and impede effective independent learning.

These prior studies mainly focus on EFL teachers' and students' perceptions and

experiences of using technology to self-study independently at graduate, undergraduate and high school levels in various learning contexts. However, research in non-English majors' perceptions on autonomous learning through technology, especially in the context of Vietnam has not been fully examined so far. Therefore, the present paper is intended to investigate non-majors' perceptions on using technology for their autonomy promotion, particularly outside the classroom.

2.3. Theoretical framework of the study

This study employs a theoretical framework that focuses on how non-majors in English see the use of IT for self-directed English learning. The literature on learner autonomy and instructional technology serves as its foundation. Learner autonomy is the capacity of students to independently plan, carry out and evaluate their English learning. Information technology is viewed as a tool for education that facilitates this process by providing resources and learning settings. The idea is that students' opinions have a big impact on how technology is used for autonomous learning. These perceptions are divided into two main categories: (1) perceived benefits of utilizing technology for independent English study and (2) perceived challenges encountered when using technology for autonomous English learning.

The study intends to obtain a thorough grasp of students' educational experiences and viewpoints by using a qualitative methodology. This theoretical framework offers a basis for examining how information technology helps or hinders non-English majors' independent English learning in higher education.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Research design

A qualitative research approach was chosen to gain a deep understanding of how 10 students perceive the use of technology in enhancing

their language learning autonomy. This method allowed the researchers to explore the central theme of student perceptions, focusing on emotions, thoughts and experiences, which are often challenging to extract through traditional research methods (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

For this study, the researcher have opted for a collective case study method (Stake, 2000). Collective case study involves the investigation on multiple cases to gain a well-rounded understanding of a particular phenomenon or condition. This approach aligns with the conviction that examining multiple cases enhances our ability to grasp the complexities and nuances of the research topic, enabling us to draw more robust insights and explanations.

3.2. Participants

The participant pool consists of 10 non-English majored students who are part of the researchers' own classes at a higher education institution. These students were selected due to the context of the study, where technology-assisted language learning is a fundamental part of the curriculum. Given the close accessibility of these participants and their direct involvement in the subject matter, the authors employed a convenience sampling approach to include them. Prior to participation, each participant was told of the study's goal and gave their agreement to guarantee ethical concerns.

3.3. Purpose and research question focus

The research questions and interview focus centered around understanding the experiences of these 10 students with technology in the context of language learning autonomy. The questions were open-ended, allowing students to express their thoughts and experiences related to the benefits, challenges and potential solutions of technology-enhanced language learning. The specific questions and prompts were tailored to the research objectives and might evolve during the data collection process. The study concentrated

on learners' perspectives, experiences and thoughts on technology-supported self-learning rather than assessing the efficacy of technical instruments.

3.4. Data collection

Data were collected through individual interviews with the 10 students in person. Semi-structured interviews were chosen given that they are “one of the most powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow human beings” (Fontana & Frey, 2000), aiming to create an open and comfortable environment for students to express their perspectives freely. The theoretical framework of learner autonomy and technology-supported learning served as the foundation for the creation of an interview questionnaire. The discussions centered on their experiences with technology in language learning, with a particular focus on perceived benefits and obstacles. Each interview was conducted in Vietnamese and lasted roughly fifteen minutes to allow participants to comfortably and effectively convey their thoughts. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for subsequent analysis.

3.5. Data analysis

The data analysis process employed a thematic analysis approach. All students were given codes (e.g., P1, P2, P3), which are used consistently throughout the findings and discussion sections to guarantee participant confidentiality. The researcher examined the interview transcripts to identify recurring themes related to the students' perceptions of technology in language learning autonomy. Preliminary codes were created to find significant segments pertaining to students' opinions of technology use, independent learning practices, advantages and difficulties. The codes were then continuously compared between examples to form more general groups and themes. The researcher was able to find recurrent trends and variations in the experiences of the participants thanks to this

cross-case study. Themes were identified through a detailed line-by-line coding process, and categories emerged from the data.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the researcher employed methods of respondent validation and member checking. This involved providing participants with an opportunity to review the summary of findings to confirm their viewpoints and gain their approvals for the use of their direct quotes.

3.6. Limitations and scope

Potential limitations were identified in relation to the relatively small participant group of 10 students, as well as the data collection method within the researchers' own classes. The generalizability of the findings could possibly be constrained to the specific group of students investigated in the study. Furthermore, the researcher's existing relationship with these students may pose potential biases that need to be considered in the data interpretation process.

4. Findings and discussion

The theoretical framework served as an interpretive lens to understand students' perspectives rather than forcing a prescriptive model on the facts.

4.1. Merits of technology use in students' English learning autonomy

The thematic analysis of the data from semi-structured interviews revealed the perceived merits of technology use in autonomous English learning for non-English majors, encompassing convenience and accessibility to diverse learning materials, interactive and engaging learning experiences and independence.

4.1.1. Convenience and accessibility

Convenience and accessibility emerged as a prominent theme from the interview data. All participants agreed that using technology (e.g., mobile applications, websites and English learning software) helped them get exposed to more English learning resources from various

platforms in a much more straightforward manner for their self-study. P3 noted, “Technology brings convenience to self-study English. Mobile applications, websites and English learning software are rich and easily accessible.” This perception indicates that modern technology with its availability allows learners to engage with English learning materials from anywhere and at any time. Students are provided with much more flexible learning environment to take greater control of their own learning beyond the classrooms, which is a vital aspect of learner autonomy. This result echoes the one by Fiedler & Väljataga (2011) and Mutlu & Eroztuga (2013) who state that information technology assists students’ learning much more conveniently regarding their free choice of time and place to study at their own pace. In a nutshell, the exposure to online learning resources conveniently enables students to make their independent decisions regarding their learning timetables, locations and approaches.

4.1.2. Abundance of learning materials

Another theme emerged was the abundance of online learning materials and guides available. These resources include websites and learning platforms about vocabulary, pronunciation, reading skills and listening practice. These materials were reported to be particularly helpful to boost students’ English language skills and develop their vocabulary pools as well as grammar practices. Modern technologies not only broadened their English knowledge but also altered their ways of learning English. The participants recognized that technology fills the gap in direct communication with native speakers by providing listening opportunities through videos and tests. They can also communicate with foreigners directly through online chat platforms or software for them to practice speaking skills and pronunciation. P1 highlighted, “We cannot communicate directly with native speakers or

converse in English with those around us; instead, we can listen through videos or take up tests to enhance our abilities”. Actually, modern technologies provide students with new learning experience that they cannot achieve in real life or only in traditional classrooms. Overall, the respondents perceived that technology has facilitated the acquisition of English language skills by providing a wide range of resources and opportunities for practice opportunities. This finding is in line with the one in the previous studies by Warni et al. (2018) and Saeed (2021) in which the participants can get exposure to online materials and quizzes from multiple learning resources on the internet, which supplements the knowledge in the coursebooks. The access to diverse learning materials increases students’ motivation to engage to autonomous English learning. Students can have freedom to choose their own materials that they are interested to study with. They can make independent choices about learning content based on their needs and interests, which is also an indicator of learner autonomy.

4.1.3. Interactive and engaging learning

All the participants agreed that technology has made learning more enjoyable and engaging through the use of videos, educational games, and natural language communication apps. As stated by P2 “There are more websites, English apps, free online resources, free English teaching YouTube channels, TOEIC and IELTS self-study groups, etc.”. Consequently, technology has redefined the learning process, making it more interactive and enjoyable for learners. According to Cavus & Kanbul (2010), information technology has diverse mediums, e.g., the Internet, digital programs and tools, web-based sites or M-learning. Ankan & Backla (2011) also insist that students can get exposed to various contents and learning activities to meet their own interests and preferences. This finding indicates that interactive and engaging learning environments increase learner

engagement and learning interests. It means that modern technologies support the willingness for students to learn English autonomously.

4.1.4. Independence

Learner independence was also another significant theme. All the participants emphasized that technology empowers them to set their personal goals and monitor their own progress. They highlighted how online courses and learning materials are greatly available and across various devices, providing learners with the flexibility to adapt their study schedules to their own preferences. In this sense, technology promotes self-reliance in the learning process, enabling individuals to learn English to meet their own preferences and interests. Contrast to the study by Kamilah (2017), technology does not always promote learner autonomy, sometimes it even hinders students' autonomous learning as students can cheat and plagiarize more straightforwardly. This result indicates that technology fosters learner responsibility and ownership of their own learning process, as well as their willingness to self-direct their learning.

4.2. Challenges to autonomous English learning through technology

The pitfalls of relying extensively on technology for self-studying English encompass various themes that shed light on the challenges learners may encounter in their educational journey. These obstacles are relevant to reduced focus and efficiency, information overload and self-discipline.

4.2.1. Lack of self-regulation

One major problem reported was reduced focus and learning efficiency by digital distractions. As highlighted by some respondents, spending too much time on screens, whether for language learning apps, videos or online courses, can lead to decreased attention spans and a tendency to shift the students' focus to unrelated content. P7 shared his concern and suggested his thoughtful idea,

“However, I also realize that excessive use of technology can lead to loss of focus and reduced study efficiency. Therefore, I always consider and manage my time wisely when using technology in my English studies. I use technology as a supportive tool, not a replacement for traditional learning. I still focus on reading books, writing and practicing grammar by hand to improve my writing skills”. This finding is consistent with the one in Alhumaid's study (2019) which mentions the negative impact of technology on education, in particular, students' proficiency of reading and writing is reduced. This response reveals that autonomous learning through technology requires disciplines or strong self-regulation skills. Otherwise, technology may mitigate rather than boost learner autonomy.

4.2.2. Difficult decision-making

The second obstacle was information overload. The vast and ever-expanding landscape of online study resources, although beneficial, can also be overwhelming for learners. With numerous websites, apps and materials available, it becomes challenging to select the most appropriate and effective ones. This information overload can lead to confusion and frustration, as learners may struggle to discern the most relevant content. P7 reported, “A lot of study resources make it difficult to select and can lead to frustration”. This difficulty discloses that while students had exposure to diverse learning resources, they did not always master skills to make decisions independently about suitable learning materials.

4.2.3. Lack of responsibility

The final hindrance was lack of persistence. English self-study, facilitated by technology, places a considerable burden on personal discipline and perseverance. Unlike traditional classroom settings, self-study lacks the external support and guidance provided by teachers or tutors. Therefore, learners must possess the

motivation and self-discipline to maintain a consistent study routine and progress steadily. Those who lack these qualities may find it challenging to stay on track with their language learning goals. P8 acknowledged, "Because it's self-study, if I lack effort and perseverance, it can be challenging to achieve my goals". Likewise, Hoang (2018) claims that technology can be a distractor for students' learning as they tend to entertain and visit social networking sites when surfing the internet. Although they are aware of the fruitfulness of the internet, they have little effort and no effective strategies to implement their own learning. It calls for teachers' attention to finding appropriate teaching methods to instruct students on the best learning strategies in technology-based learning. This finding suggests that learner autonomy is limited if students are not able to sustain their learning habits to take responsibility.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

In conclusion, the perspectives of non-English majors regarding the use of computer technology for independent English learning were investigated in this qualitative study, which highlighted both perceived benefits and pedagogical difficulties. The results show that most students thought technology was a useful tool for improving learner autonomy. Convenience and accessibility, which allowed learning beyond time and location limits, and the wealth of learning resources, which let students choose resources that suited their requirements, were important advantages. Additionally, participants highlighted the impact of technology in promoting learner

independence as well as interactive and captivating learning experiences that boosted motivation.

However, the study also identified a number of obstacles that could prevent autonomous learning from becoming successful. These included a lack of self-control, a lack of accountability for maintaining regular self-directed learning activities and challenges in making wise learning decisions because of the abundance of information. Overall, the results indicate that although information technology can facilitate independent English learning, its efficacy is mostly dependent on students' capacity for self-control and responsible participation.

Despite the valuable insights gained from this study on the merits and pitfalls of technology use in English learning autonomy, it is essential to acknowledge and address several notable limitations that may impact the generalizability and scope of our findings. The research may suffer from sampling bias, as the findings are based on the responses of a specific group of participants. Therefore, the findings may not be representative of the broader population of English learners. In addition, the study's findings may not be easily generalizable to other contexts, such as different age groups, proficiency levels or cultural backgrounds of English learners. The benefits and pitfalls of technology use in English learning may vary significantly depending on these factors. The study may not have examined the long-term effects of technology use in English learning. It is possible that some of the challenges and benefits identified may change over time.

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