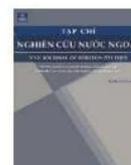




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## EXAMINING VIETNAMESE EFL LECTURERS' PREFERENCE FOR INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES USED IN ONLINE AND FACE-TO-FACE RECEPTIVE SKILLS LECTURES

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**Abstract:** This study investigated the instructional strategies preferred by Vietnamese English as a foreign language (EFL) lecturers in both online and face-to-face teaching environments, focusing on teaching receptive skills. Drawing from Walker's (2008) framework for effective lecturing, which emphasized the creative use of instructional strategies and technology, this research surveyed thirty-eight lecturers regarding their preferences. The survey revealed some strategies that had the same extent of preference and some being disliked in both settings. Additionally, some instructional strategies were preferred in online teaching over face-to-face teaching and vice versa. The interviews also identified some primary reasons for lecturers' preference for instructional strategies and their recommendation of choosing appropriate strategies for teaching receptive skills. These findings underscored the nuanced preferences of EFL lecturers in selecting instructional strategies for different teaching contexts, offering insights into the evolution of English Language Teaching in Vietnam.

**Keywords:** instructional strategies, preference, receptive skills, online and face-to-face teaching environments

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# CÁC CHIẾN LƯỢC GIẢNG DẠY ƯA THÍCH CỦA GIÁNG VIÊN TIẾNG ANH ĐỂ DẠY CÁC KỸ NĂNG TIẾP THU LĨNH HỘI TRONG MÔI TRƯỜNG TRỰC TUYẾN VÀ TRỰC TIẾP

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**Tóm tắt:** Nghiên cứu này điều tra các chiến lược giảng dạy được ưa chuộng bởi giảng viên dạy tiếng Anh người Việt Nam trong cả hai môi trường giảng dạy trực tuyến và trực tiếp, với trọng tâm là giảng dạy kỹ năng tiếp thu lĩnh hội. Dựa trên quan điểm của Walker (2008) về việc giảng dạy hiệu quả thông qua sử dụng sáng tạo các chiến lược giảng dạy và công nghệ, nghiên cứu này đã tiến hành khảo sát 38 giảng viên về mức độ yêu thích của họ đối với các chiến lược giảng dạy. Kết quả khảo sát đã chỉ ra một số chiến lược được yêu thích như nhau và một số chiến lược không được yêu thích trong hai môi trường giảng dạy. Bên cạnh đó, có những chiến lược được yêu thích trong môi trường giảng dạy trực tiếp hơn là trực tuyến và ngược lại. Kết quả phỏng vấn cũng đã xác định được một số lý do cơ bản cho việc yêu thích các chiến lược giảng dạy của giảng viên và một số gợi ý của họ về việc lựa chọn chiến lược phù hợp trong giảng dạy kỹ năng tiếp thu lĩnh hội. Những kết quả này nhấn mạnh sự ưa thích của các giảng viên tiếng Anh trong việc lựa chọn các chiến lược giảng dạy cho các ngữ cảnh khác nhau, đồng thời cung cấp cái nhìn bao quát về việc lựa chọn các chiến lược phù hợp trong giảng dạy tiếng Anh ở một số bối cảnh tại Việt Nam.

*Từ khóa:* chiến lược giảng dạy, sự yêu thích, kỹ năng tiếp thu lĩnh hội, môi trường giảng dạy

## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, there has been a notable global trend towards implementing substantial educational changes aimed at cultivating students' English language skills to enhance their ability to participate in the global workforce. Vietnam, like many other countries, has similarly pursued various initiatives directed at augmenting the English proficiency of its populace under governmental policies. Typically, The National Foreign Languages Project, titled "Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages in the National Education System, 2008-2020," was officially endorsed and launched on September 30, 2008, by the Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Its primary goal was to ensure that most Vietnamese graduates from vocational schools, colleges, and universities could proficiently use a foreign language on their own. On December 22, 2017, the Prime Minister signed Decision No. 2080/QĐ-TTg, which approved modifications and additions to the project from 2017 to 2025. The updated objectives aimed to modernize foreign language instruction and learning within the national education system, introduce new foreign language programs across all educational levels, enhance language skills for academic and professional purposes, and support the nation's development and global competitiveness. Moreover, it aimed to establish a groundwork for making foreign languages accessible to all students in general education by 2025. In addition,

on January 24, 2014, Vietnam's Minister of Education and Training issued Circular No.01/2014/TT-BGDĐT, which introduced the Vietnamese version of the Common European Framework of Reference, referred to as CEFR-V standards. This adaptation, akin to the original CEFR established by the Council of Europe in 2001, organizes proficiency into three primary levels: Basic User, Independent User, and Proficient User. Consequently, numerous universities in Vietnam have embraced this framework to set English proficiency benchmarks for tertiary education (Nguyen, 2023). Under current regulations, Vietnamese university students must reach level 3 in the CEFR-V to graduate.

The fourth industrial revolution is increasingly shaping the educational landscape by influencing learning opportunities, policy development, and teaching methods. The rise of the Internet of Things (IoT) has transformed curriculum design, introducing innovative pedagogical strategies for educators (Alakrash & Kazak, 2021). Technologies like blockchain, cloud computing, and cybersecurity are also expected to play a crucial role in enhancing learning outcomes and maintaining long-term student engagement (Elayyan, 2021). This revolution also offers learners more flexibility in English language learning regarding when and where they learn, which fosters greater confidence, independence, and motivation. It also encourages educators to integrate technology into their teaching practices (Arsaf, 2020). In Vietnam, online learning has become a key trend, gaining formal recognition from the government. The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has issued several directives to regulate online education at both secondary and higher levels. For example, Circular No. 08/2021/TT-BGDĐT allows up to 30% of university curricula to be delivered online. Similarly, Circular No. 09/2021/TT-BGDĐT outlines guidelines for online education at the secondary level, covering aspects such as lesson delivery, infrastructure requirements, and the responsibilities of stakeholders. These regulations have paved the way for the growing popularity of online learning in Vietnam. However, despite its popularity, online learning presents challenges for both teachers and students. In a literature review of factors influencing student persistence in online programs, Ho and Phan (2024) suggest that while online learning offers convenient opportunities for skill and knowledge improvement, high dropout rates remain a challenge that could be mitigated by fostering a collaborative learning environment.

The impact of social and industrial factors, alongside the rising demand for English proficiency among university students, underscores the need for effective teaching methods that align with institutional goals and promote language proficiency. As a result, educators and researchers are placing greater emphasis on identifying and implementing instructional strategies that boost motivation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning environments. In their teaching practices, educators often experiment with different approaches, gradually favoring methods that resonate with their teaching style. Given the high expectations for EFL teachers to possess strong pedagogical skills and deep content knowledge, identifying preferred strategies is essential. This allows for the generalization of successful techniques, encouraging other EFL instructors to consider integrating them into their own classrooms. To investigate the preferred instructional strategies for teaching receptive skills, this study explored the following questions:

RQ1: What instructional strategies do Vietnamese EFL lecturers prefer for teaching receptive skills in both face-to-face and online environments, and how do these preferences differ between the two settings?

RQ2: Why do Vietnamese EFL lecturers prefer certain instructional strategies for teaching receptive skills online and face-to-face?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Preference

The term 'preference' encompasses a variety of definitions, including “a greater liking for one alternative over another or others” as stated in the Oxford Dictionary, or “the stable likes and dislikes that individuals possess” as described by Sullivan (2016). This concept holds significance in both psychological and economic realms, where preference is often deduced from individual choice behavior (Ariely & Norton, 2008; Betsch, 2011; Dyer & Jia, 2013). Rational choice theory and revealed preference theory are two prominent frameworks used to understand preference formation (Ogu, 2013; Demuynck & Hjertstrand, 2019). The rational choice theory posits that individuals act rationally by weighing the benefits of various options to maximize their utility (Ogu, 2013). Conversely, the revealed preference theory suggests that observed choices reflect individuals' underlying preferences, particularly in demand behavior (Demuynck & Hjertstrand, 2019). In this study, we define 'preference' regarding instructional strategies as the degree to which EFL lecturers favor particular instructional strategies and the rational choice for them.

### 2.2. Instructional Strategies

Various perspectives in the literature offer interpretations of instructional strategies, also known as teaching strategies. One viewpoint defines instructional strategies using specific terms such as instructors' techniques (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Education & Hoskins, 2002; Akdemir & Koszalka, 2008), activities (George et al., 2018), or comprehensive sets of tasks (Hirumi, 2013) chosen by educators for implementation in their classrooms. Conversely, another perspective sees instructional strategies as general approaches selected by educators to deliver learning materials to students within a specific learning environment (Colombo, 2011; Akdeniz, 2016).

Although instructional strategies may be described using different terms ranging from a broad concept like “approach” to a more specific term like “technique”, they share the common goal of promoting learners' development and achievement. However, in language teaching, approach and technique are two different concepts related to the term “method”. Therefore, to identify instructional strategies in English language teaching, we must clarify the three key terms: approach, method, and technique.

Anthony (1963, as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001) explained that “approach” is a broad term, “method” is more specific, and “technique” is the most precise term. An approach includes assumptions and beliefs about language and language learning, a method outlines a plan that translates these theories into practical teaching applications for specific skills and content, while a technique is a specific trick, stratagem, or contrivance employed to achieve an immediate objective. In revising Anthony's conceptualization, Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 20-33) used “method” as an umbrella term to specify the relationship between theory and practice. According to them, approach and method determine objectives, syllabus, content, teachers' and learners' roles, and instructional materials at the design level, while the level of technique or implementation is replaced by “procedure”, a more comprehensive term. Theoretically, a method aligns with an approach, organized by design, and identified in practice through procedures (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 20). Celce-Murcia (2004, p. 9) summarized that 'approach' is general, while “method” and “technique” are specific. A method refers to a set of procedures relevant to an approach, and a technique is a typical learning activity employed in a method or some methods (Celce-Murcia, 2004, p. 9).

This study focuses on the typical instructional strategies applied by EFL lecturers in their English lessons, thus, instructional strategies are consistent with the specific term that instructional strategies are techniques or activities applied to engage learners in the learning process.

### ***2.3. Receptive Skills***

Proficiency in language entails the effective comprehension and expression of ideas, where receptive and productive skills are closely intertwined. Al-Jawi (2010) highlighted that receptive skills, involving understanding spoken or written communication through listening and reading, form a crucial aspect of language proficiency. Al-Jawi also argued that a solid grounding in receptive skills is vital for the development of productive abilities. Essentially, achieving fluency and competence in communication requires substantial engagement with listening and reading activities. In addition, Al-Jawi suggested that considering reading and listening as a combination of top-down and bottom-up processing is particularly advantageous. Sometimes, focusing on specific details aids in understanding the overall message, while other times, a broader perspective helps in comprehending individual elements. Therefore, incorporating both top-down and bottom-up processing strategies is beneficial in teaching receptive skills. Although there are specific strategies tailored for either listening or reading, generally, instructional approaches for teaching both skills share similarities.

### ***2.4. Previous Studies on Receptive Skills Teaching***

According to Duong & Pham (2023), one of the skills posing challenges for both educators and learners is listening comprehension. This skill necessitates learners to recognize the importance of pronunciation, stress, and intonation in understanding spoken language, as well as the connected sounds within the language, to fully grasp the speaker's intent or the substance of conversations (Duong & Pham 2023). Teaching listening often involves the utilization of both top-down and bottom-up strategies, as highlighted by several scholars (Nunan, 2001; Li & Renandya, 2012; Nemtchinova, 2013; Ismail & Aziz, 2020; Latupono & Nikijuluw, 2022). Nunan (2001) emphasized the importance of developing both bottom-up and top-down listening skills in EFL learners. Ismail & Aziz (2020) further suggested that three commonly employed listening strategies in teaching include bottom-up, top-down, and interactive strategies, which involve a combination of bottom-up and top-down approaches. Bottom-up strategies typically involve deriving meaning from individual lexical, grammatical, and pronunciation elements, whereas top-down strategies rely on pre-existing knowledge, concepts, and context (Nemtchinova, 2013). In essence, bottom-up strategies aid students in identifying vocabulary and grammar, guiding them through the listening process and helping them monitor their comprehension challenges. On the other hand, top-down strategies encourage students to use their background knowledge to predict and understand the content they are listening to (Latupono & Nikijuluw, 2022). Common bottom-up techniques encompass pronunciation instruction, focused activities on phonetic variations, aural-written verification, repeated listening, and dictation (Li & Renandya, 2012). Conversely, typical top-down methods include comprehension questions, prediction exercises, and listing activities (Nemtchinova, 2013). Although there have been a lot of instructional strategies for teaching listening, which ones are appropriate for online teaching has not been widely researched. Tarigan and Pohan (2022) suggested that in online teaching listening lessons, teachers should employ strategies that can achieve fun and motivate students. They recommended utilizing fun learning media like audio, video, films, and songs.

When instructing reading, educators should utilize methods to effectively improve students' comprehension (Nurdianingsih, 2021). Ahmadi and Gilakjani (2012) suggested that reciprocal teaching, involving predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing, positively impacts English reading comprehension. This approach was also highlighted by Nurdianingsih (2021), who referenced strategies recommended by Vacca & Vacca (1999), such as scaffolding, think-aloud, reciprocal teaching, SQ3R (surveying, questioning, reading, reciting, and reviewing), and question-answer relationship (QARs). Wibowo et al. (2020) identified questioning (both generating and answering), making predictions, summarizing, using dictionaries, monitoring comprehension, generating text, skimming, and scanning as dominant strategies for teaching reading comprehension. Cooperative methods like think-pair-share (Ugwu, 2019; Ariski et al., 2021) are also believed to enhance students' reading comprehension. Drawing from the insights of ten journal articles, Adawiah & Manurung (2021) proposed a range of strategies for teaching reading, including QARs, scaffolding, memorization, discussion, reading aloud, question generation, promoting dictionary use, evaluating comprehension, brainstorming, and text comprehension. Similarly, Nguyen (2022) found that at a university in Vietnam, the most commonly employed strategies were asking questions, making predictions, retelling stories, and visualizing like maps and picture matching or labeling.

### ***2.5. Teaching Environments***

In a traditional classroom setting, educators and students convene in the same physical space, enabling direct interaction between them, as noted by Black (2002). Within this context, instructors deliver lectures directly to students, fostering collaborative discussions around guiding questions, and offering immediate feedback, as highlighted by Redmond (2011). Additionally, students can draw motivation from both their instructors and peers (Black, 2002). According to Wuensch (2008), face-to-face classes offer unique benefits such as enhancing students' social and spatial awareness. They provide ample opportunities for interaction within the physical environment, allowing educators to gauge students' reactions through their facial expressions and body language in real time. Wuensch also emphasizes that collaborative activities in such settings promote active engagement, facilitating deep comprehension as students exchange and respond to each other's ideas.

As educational technology continues to evolve, online learning has become increasingly prevalent, reshaping how instructors and students interact in the classroom (Hsieh, 2010; Luyt, 2013; Kuama, 2016). In online teaching and learning, the physical presence of both students and instructors in the same classroom is not required, but communication technologies, such as digital platforms, are utilized to deliver lessons (Tallent-Runnels et al., 2006). This is facilitated through two primary modes: asynchronous and synchronous (Hrastinski, 2008; Moore et al., 2011; Afifi & Alamri, 2014). Synchronous learning, with video conferencing tools, allows for real-time interaction, mirroring the immediacy of traditional classrooms (Hrastinski, 2008). Conversely, asynchronous learning offers flexibility, enabling students to access lessons and media-supported activities at their convenience, often via learning management systems (LMS) (Hrastinski, 2008). While asynchronous methods promote independent learning, they may pose challenges for real-time feedback and engagement, which are critical in language learning.

This review of teaching environments, both traditional and online, is essential to understanding the instructional strategies Vietnamese EFL lecturers may favor in teaching receptive skills, such as listening and reading. Given the real-time interaction integral to both face-to-face and synchronous online teaching, this study focuses on how these environments

influence lecturers' preferred instructional strategies for teaching receptive skills.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Research Design

This study employed a sequential exploratory mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to explore the instructional strategies preferred by teachers and the reasons behind their choices. This approach provides fresh perspectives and deeper insights into the research problem (Creswell, 2015). The research process was conducted in two phases.

Phase 1 involved administering a questionnaire to collect baseline quantitative data on the instructional strategies favored by participants for teaching receptive skills. The questionnaire results also helped identify participants for the next phase of the study.

Phase 2 focused on investigating the factors influencing teachers' preferences for these instructional strategies within EFL teaching contexts. Using semi-interviews with open-ended questions, this phase sought to explore why certain strategies are preferred and how teachers' experiences, classroom dynamics, and pedagogical beliefs shape their choices.

#### 3.2. Research Setting and Participants

This study examined the instructional strategies preferred by Vietnamese EFL lecturers for teaching receptive skills in both face-to-face and online settings. The research employed a purposive sampling method to ensure the inclusion of participants with varying teaching experiences and from diverse geographical locations. Lecturers were selected from universities in central cities and provinces across Vietnam, ensuring representation from different educational environments. As the researcher resides in the Mekong Delta, participants from nearby areas such as Ho Chi Minh City, Can Tho City, and other Mekong Delta provinces were mainly included for logistical convenience, using convenience sampling for these locations. Participants were categorized into four experience-based groups: Novice (<6 years), Medium experienced (6-15 years), Experienced (16-25 years), and Very experienced (over 25 years). This classification allows the research to examine potential variations in instructional strategies that may arise due to differing levels of teaching experience.

Thirty eight lecturers participated in the survey. Table 1 shows their teaching experience. The majority of participants (63.2%) fall within the "medium experienced" category (6-15 years of teaching experience). Only 7.9% are classified as "very experienced" (>25 years).

**Table 1**

*Participants' Experience*

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	6-15 years	24	63.2	63.2	63.2
	16-25 years	11	28.9	28.9	92.1
	>25 years	3	7.9	7.9	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

In terms of participants' location (Table 2), the participants came from various regions, with the largest groups being from Can Tho (CT) and Tien Giang (TG) (26.3% each), followed by Ho Chi Minh City (HCM) with 18.4% and Dong Thap (DT) with 15.8%. Provinces like An

Giang (AG), Binh Duong (BD), Ben Tre (BT), and Hanoi (HN) are represented by only 1-2 participants each.

**Table 2**

*Participants' Location*

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	AG	1	2.6	2.6	2.6
	BD	1	2.6	2.6	5.3
	BT	2	5.3	5.3	10.5
	CT	10	26.3	26.3	36.8
	DT	6	15.8	15.8	52.6
	HCM	7	18.4	18.4	71.1
	HN	1	2.6	2.6	73.7
	TG	10	26.3	26.3	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

In the second phase, four lecturers were selected from different geographical locations and experience groups for in-depth interviews to explore the reasons behind their instructional preferences. To ensure confidentiality, all participants were assigned pseudonyms.

### **3.3. Data Collection Instruments**

The questionnaire was divided into two main sections. Section 1 focused on identifying the instructional strategies for teaching receptive skills preferred by EFL lecturers. This section consisted of 22 closed-ended questions, grouped into two categories to address strategies used in different teaching environments (traditional and online), along with one open-ended question. The closed-ended questions used a Likert scale, where participants rated their preferences on a scale from 1 to 5: (1) Really dislike, (2) Dislike, (3) Neutral, (4) Like, and (5) Really like. The open-ended question asked participants to suggest any additional strategies they prefer to use when teaching receptive skills. Section 2 included five demographic questions (name, age, gender, teaching experience, and workplace). The demographic questions provided background information about the participants.

Following the questionnaire, interviews were conducted to gain deeper insights. Four lecturers from central cities like Ho Chi Minh City and provincial universities participated in these interviews. The interview questions are primarily open-ended, allowing flexibility for deeper exploration and clarification, which helps assess respondents' beliefs more accurately (Cohen et al., 2018, p.512). The questions are structured with main and sub-questions to ensure relevant data collection. The first serves as a warm-up, the second introduces the interview topic, the third explores instructional strategies for face-to-face teaching, and the fourth addresses online synchronous teaching. The fifth asks for recommendations, and the final question invites additional feedback.

### **3.4. Data Collection and Analysis Procedure**

Before commencing data collection, the questionnaire was distributed to two EFL lecturers with extensive experience over 15 years in teaching English at the tertiary level. These lecturers were excluded from later data collection. Subsequently, the researchers conducted interviews with them to explore the criteria guiding their selection of instructional strategies and the rationale behind their preferences. Following a pilot phase, minor adjustments were made to both the questionnaire and interview questions. For the main study, the questionnaire

was administered to 50 EFL lecturers using Google Forms, providing a convenient means of gathering data from diverse locations. Of these, 38 lecturers participated in completing the questionnaire. After that, 4 EFL lecturers, selected based on their willingness, were invited to participate in interviews lasting approximately 20 minutes each. With participants' consent, all interviews were recorded for subsequent data analysis.

Regarding data analysis, quantitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS software, employing descriptive statistics, and qualitative data from the interviews underwent content analysis.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. Reliability of the Survey Questionnaire

Internal reliability of the quantitative item survey was investigated using Cronbach's alpha  $\alpha$  and the result indicated that the alpha value of the survey was equal to 0.961. This means the survey was a reliable tool to investigate instructional strategies preferred by Vietnamese EFL lecturers when teaching receptive skills in both traditional and online settings.

### 4.2. Vietnamese EFL Lecturers' Preference for Instructional Strategies

To examine the preference toward the instructional strategies for teaching receptive skills, the Descriptive Statistics were valued based on the distance among the values of the 5-level Likert scale, which means the following.

1.00 - 1.80: Really dislike

1.81 - 2.60: Dislike

2.61 - 3.40: Neutral

3.41 - 4.20: Like

4.21 - 5.00: Really like

Table 3 below presents the extent to which EFL lecturers like instructional strategies in their teaching receptive skills in different teaching environments.

**Table 3**

*Descriptive Statistics of Preference for Instructional Strategies to Teach Receptive Skills in Online and Face-to-Face Environments*

Items	N	Online		Face-to-face	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Predicting	38	3.92	.749	3.95	.804
Pre-teaching Vocabulary	38	3.92	.850	3.79	.875
Questioning	38	4.00	.771	4.13	.741
Arranging pictures in the correct order	38	3.87	.844	3.82	.926
Discussion	38	3.89	.727	4.24	.820
Retelling after reading or listening	38	3.97	.822	3.97	.822
Reviewing the vocabulary that was prepared in pre-	38	3.79	.843	3.82	.865
Helping students identify lexical items	38	3.97	.822	3.89	.831
Reading while listening	38	3.37	.883	3.58	.858
Repeated listening	38	3.45	.950	3.58	.889
Dictation	38	3.03	.915	3.18	1.010
Comprehension questions	38	3.97	.716	4.03	.788

Items	N	Online		Face-to-face	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Scaffolding	38	3.87	.844	3.95	.928
Think aloud	38	3.63	.852	3.63	.942
Asking for clarifying	38	3.97	.677	4.05	.837
Summarizing	38	3.87	.704	3.95	.957
Letting students select or create reading texts	38	3.63	.852	3.74	.950
Monitoring comprehension	38	3.68	.809	3.92	.818
Scanning and skimming	38	3.92	.818	4.08	.850
Think-pair –share	38	3.92	.850	4.13	.741
Recounting stories	38	3.42	.826	3.61	.823
Visualizing	38	3.89	.831	4.05	.733
Valid N (listwise)	38				

(Source: SPSS 20)

Based on the results presented in Table 3, most of the instructional strategies were generally liked in both teaching environments, with many receiving moderately high ratings. However, there were notable differences between online and face-to-face preferences. Dictation received neutral responses in both contexts, with mean scores of 3.03 for online and 3.18 for face-to-face, suggesting that it was not strongly favored in either setting. Additionally, "reading while listening" was moderately favored in face-to-face teaching ( $M = 3.58$ ), but less so in online instruction ( $M = 3.37$ ).

Lecturers favored specific strategies more in face-to-face environments, such as discussion ( $M = 4.24$ ), questioning ( $M = 4.13$ ), and think-pair-share ( $M = 4.13$ ), indicating a preference for interactive and collaborative methods. Other well-liked strategies in face-to-face teaching included repeated listening and recounting stories.

In online environments, strategies such as questioning ( $M = 4.00$ ), talking after reading or listening ( $M = 3.97$ ), and reviewing pre-prepared vocabulary ( $M = 3.79$ ) were the most preferred. Lecturers also favored activities like monitoring comprehension, scaffolding, and helping students identify lexical items in the online setting.

Some strategies, like thinking aloud and retelling after reading or listening, showed consistent popularity across both ( $M = 3.63$ ) and ( $M = 3.97$ ) respectively in online and face-to-face contexts. Discussion, though used in both environments, was more highly favored in face-to-face settings ( $M = 4.24$  vs.  $3.89$  for online).

In addition to the instructional strategies listed in Table 1, participants recommended other methods they enjoy using when teaching receptive skills. These include task-based learning, group activities, incorporating music and poetry, role-playing, drama, storytelling, and skits, as well as using videos to prompt discussions on new vocabulary and grammar rules. These strategies were appreciated in both traditional classrooms and online instruction, reflecting the versatility of these methods across different teaching modalities.

#### 4.3. Reasons for EFL Lecturers' Preference of Instructional Strategies

The qualitative data from interviews with EFL lecturers revealed both the instructional strategies they employ and the reasons behind their preferences when teaching receptive skills in different contexts. Through analyzing these strategies pedagogically and contextually, it is possible to understand the factors influencing their choices and recommendations.

### 4.3.1. Online Teaching Strategies

In online teaching, lecturers consistently favored strategies that empower students to take more control of their learning. Common strategies such as predicting, identifying keywords, skimming, and scanning are valued for their ability to help students process information efficiently and manage their own learning.

For instance, one lecturer stated:

“I really like metacognitive strategies, including predicting, noticing keywords, and evaluating. These strategies help students control their own learning” (NTA).

The emphasis on metacognitive strategies is aligned with theories of learner autonomy and self-regulation, where students are encouraged to monitor their own comprehension and manage tasks independently. These strategies, particularly in online settings, cater to the need for independent learning, where students are less physically monitored by the teacher. Online platforms inherently demand greater self-management, making these strategies more appropriate.

Another lecturer emphasized how these strategies promote critical thinking and student interaction:

“I like to utilize strategies that stimulate students to think and interact, such as predicting, skimming, and discussion” (MD).

The importance of student engagement in online environments also surfaced through the use of interactive tools like games, podcasts, and videos. These tools not only make lessons more dynamic but also combat the challenges of keeping students engaged in a virtual space:

“I love to apply media on the internet like songs, podcasts, and videos or design games through apps such as Kahoot and Quizizz” (MD).

This reflects a key shift in pedagogy for online environments, where technology-enhanced learning becomes central to maintaining student motivation and interaction. These strategies demonstrate an adaptation to the medium, recognizing that the absence of physical presence can be compensated by creating more interactive and multimodal content.

### 4.3.2. Face-to-Face Teaching Strategies

In face-to-face teaching, many of the same strategies are employed, but lecturers note several differences in how they are implemented. For example, pre-teaching lexical items and grammar rules are considered more convenient in an in-person setting:

“I find it more convenient to teach students new vocabulary and grammar rules face-to-face” (MD).

This highlights the teacher-centered aspects of face-to-face instruction, where lecturers can more easily deliver direct instruction. The face-to-face environment also allows for more immediate interaction and feedback, making traditional methods like giving different types of exercises more effective in sustaining student motivation:

“I realize that my students become more motivated when I give them different types of exercises to practice” (MD).

Another key feature in face-to-face instruction is the flexibility to adjust strategies based on student responses. One lecturer mentioned combining strategies such as predicting and eliciting questions to build on students' existing knowledge:

“I really like predicting, which helps students think of the topic based on their background knowledge. Eliciting questions helps them engage further” (HV).

These strategies are rooted in constructivist approaches, which emphasize the active role of learners in constructing meaning from new information. In face-to-face settings, where there is more room for immediate interaction, these strategies can be more seamlessly integrated into the lesson flow.

### **4.3.3. Comparative Analysis of Contextual Factors**

The differences between online and face-to-face teaching environments significantly influence the choice of instructional strategies. In the online context, learner autonomy and the use of interactive technology are prioritized, driven by the need to maintain engagement in a remote setting. In contrast, face-to-face teaching allows for more teacher-led instruction and immediate feedback, making traditional strategies more effective.

The lecturers' use of similar strategies across both environments (e.g., predicting, skimming, and scanning) suggests that these are foundational approaches to teaching receptive skills. However, the way they are implemented and their effectiveness can vary depending on the mode of delivery. In online teaching, there is a greater need to promote self-directed learning and use technology tools to simulate interaction, whereas face-to-face instruction benefits from direct interaction and immediate feedback.

### **4.4. Recommendations for Strategy Selection**

Lecturers also provided recommendations for instructional strategies in different contexts. In face-to-face settings, strategies like jigsaw reading, pair work, and discussion are highly recommended to increase student interaction:

“Jigsaw reading is one of the effective strategies in face-to-face teaching” (NTA).

“We should utilize strategies like jigsaw reading, pair work, and discussion to enhance interaction” (MD).

These recommendations align with collaborative learning principles, where students work together to construct knowledge, benefiting from the immediacy of face-to-face communication. The suggestion to use visualizing also adds a multimodal dimension to face-to-face teaching, making abstract concepts easier to grasp through imagery or diagrams.

In online teaching, games were frequently cited as a way to motivate students, leveraging apps like Kahoot and Quizizz to make lessons more engaging:

“Using games like Kahoot and Quizizz is a good way to motivate students in online lessons” (MD).

However, lecturers emphasized that selecting strategies should be based on the objectives of the lesson:

“Lecturers should select the appropriate strategies that meet the teaching objectives and bring the best results to learners” (NTH).

This underscores the importance of aligning strategies with learning outcomes, ensuring that the chosen methods are not only engaging but also effective in achieving the educational goals.

## **5. Discussion and Conclusion**

This study sought to explore EFL lecturers' preferences for instructional strategies when teaching receptive skills in both face-to-face and online environments. The data analysis revealed several key findings.

## **5.1. Discussion**

### **5.1.1. Challenges in Teaching Listening Skills**

According to Duong & Pham (2023), listening comprehension remains a complex skill for both students and educators. This aligns with the study findings, where the effectiveness of strategies like "dictation" (which received neutral ratings) suggests that lecturers may face difficulties selecting optimal techniques for teaching listening, especially in online environments. This is supported by previous literature suggesting that learners must grasp pronunciation, stress, and intonation to succeed in listening comprehension (Duong & Pham, 2023). It might be worth exploring why dictation, despite being a widely-used bottom-up approach, was not strongly endorsed by lecturers, perhaps due to its passive nature or limited student engagement.

### **5.1.2. Adaptation of Instructional Strategies in Online and Face-to-Face Settings**

The findings highlight distinct preferences for certain strategies depending on the teaching environment. For example, strategies like "discussion" and "think-pair-share" were highly favored in face-to-face contexts, which aligns with traditional interactive teaching approaches. These strategies promote collaboration and engagement, elements more easily facilitated in physical classrooms. This supports previous research by Nemtchinova (2013), who emphasized the importance of interactive strategies like top-down approaches in enhancing listening and reading comprehension. The higher preference for strategies like questioning and scaffolding in online settings reflects the increased need for maintaining engagement and encouraging self-directed learning (Tarigan & Pohan, 2022).

These insights could guide future research on how communication and engagement differ between physical and virtual classrooms, potentially adjusting strategies for online learning.

### **5.1.3. Role of Technology in Online Learning**

The lecturers' preference for technology-driven strategies in online learning (e.g., using podcasts, videos, and gamified tools like Kahoot or Quizizz) emphasizes the shift in pedagogical practices when teaching remotely. As MD mentioned in the interviews, these strategies help maintain motivation in online environments, addressing the frequent challenge of reduced attention spans in virtual learning. This shift toward technology-enhanced learning is consistent with findings from Tarigan & Pohan (2022), who recommend using multimedia and interactive activities to create more engaging online lessons. The reliance on such tools may also highlight the need for further professional development in technology use among EFL lecturers.

### **5.1.4. The Importance of Metacognitive Strategies**

Lecturers' preference for metacognitive strategies in both environments, particularly in online teaching, points to the importance of fostering learner autonomy. The strategies mentioned by NTA (such as predicting, identifying keywords, and evaluating) are closely tied to self-regulation theories, suggesting that students in online environments benefit from developing skills that help them manage their own learning process. This aligns with the findings of Ahmadi & Gilakjani (2012), who argue that teaching strategies encouraging active student participation, like reciprocal teaching, enhance reading comprehension.

In the face-to-face setting, metacognitive strategies like predicting and eliciting

questions continue to be valued, though the context allows for more immediate scaffolding from the teacher. The flexibility of these strategies to function across both environments indicates their foundational role in receptive skill instruction.

### **5.1.5. Implications for Teaching Receptive Skills**

The similarities in preferred strategies across both settings, such as thinking aloud, questioning, and predicting, suggest that certain approaches are universally effective in teaching receptive skills. However, the variations in their implementation highlight the importance of contextual adaptation. For instance, while questioning was highly favored in both contexts, the nature of questioning in an online environment may require more structured scaffolding due to the lack of physical presence, as noted by Wibowo et al. (2020).

Additionally, strategies such as task-based learning, storytelling, and role-playing, though not the highest-rated, were recommended by participants for both online and face-to-face instruction. This suggests that lecturers value dynamic, engaging strategies that can be flexibly applied across teaching modalities.

### **5.1.6. Impact of Experience and Location on Strategy Preference**

While the data does not specifically analyze the influence of lecturer experience or geographic location on strategy preference, future studies could explore whether less experienced lecturers are more inclined to adopt newer, technology-driven strategies compared to their more experienced counterparts. Similarly, it would be insightful to analyze whether lecturers from urban areas with better technological infrastructure (e.g., Ho Chi Minh City) favor different strategies than those from more rural provinces.

### **5.1.7. Limitation**

One limitation is the sample size and geographic focus. With 38 participants primarily drawn from universities in central cities and provinces in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam, the sample may not fully represent the diversity of EFL lecturers across the country. Another limitation is the reliance on self-reported data from surveys and interviews, which may introduce response bias. Participants might have reported strategies that they believe align with current teaching trends or institutional expectations, rather than their actual preferences or practices. Furthermore, the study does not empirically measure the effectiveness of these preferred strategies on student outcomes, particularly across the online and face-to-face teaching contexts. As a result, while the research highlights lecturer preferences, it does not provide direct evidence regarding the impact of these strategies on student learning or engagement.

For future research, it would be beneficial to expand the sample size and include participants from a wider range of geographical locations across Vietnam, including more rural and northern regions. This would offer a more comprehensive understanding of the instructional strategies used by EFL lecturers in diverse educational settings, considering the potential influence of local resources, cultural factors, and institutional support. Additionally, future studies could focus on empirically evaluating the effectiveness of various instructional strategies on student learning outcomes, particularly comparing online and face-to-face environments.

## **5.2. Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the instructional strategies preferred by

Vietnamese EFL lecturers for teaching receptive skills in both online and face-to-face environments. While many strategies, such as questioning, predicting, and skimming, were favored in both contexts, there were notable differences in their application. Face-to-face teaching allowed for more interactive, teacher-centered approaches, such as discussion and immediate feedback, whereas online instruction emphasized learner autonomy and the use of digital tools to engage students. These findings highlight the adaptability of lecturers in response to different teaching modalities, yet also underscore the need for tailored strategies that align with the specific demands of each environment.

Despite its valuable insights, the study's geographic and sample limitations suggest that future research should explore a more diverse range of regions and empirically test the effectiveness of these strategies on student outcomes. Nonetheless, this research provides a useful foundation for understanding the evolving landscape of English language instruction in Vietnam, especially in the context of blended learning environments.

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