

A CASE STUDY ON TEACHING READING ONLINE WITH THE SUPPORT OF CANVAS AND ZOOM

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ABSTRACT

COVID 19 has disastrous effects on the whole world; however, it has made a great contribution to teaching methodology. Almost all teachers have to change their normal teaching methods into online teaching because their students cannot come to class. Likewise, the author was assigned to teach a Reading class without providing students with their course books and other materials in advance, so she was really worried about whether she could carry out all activities like in a traditional class or not, interacting with her students, assigning and marking their homework. She came up with a new idea and she decided to carry out case study to see its effectiveness. In the case study, a Learning Management System named Canvas, CALL, Zoom and other applications such as Quizlet were applied to ensure the quality of her class and stimulate her students' interests in each online lesson. The findings, after 5 months, showed that with the support of these pieces of technology, not only could she run her class very smoothly, but she could also see her students' excitement in every lesson and their progress. As a consequence, the author is writing this article to address problems arising in and discuss the benefits of such technology in teaching and Reading online and share with other educators the way she combined these tools and ran her class in order to gain these significant achievements.

Key words: Distance education, CALL, LMS, Zoom, Quizlet

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Rationale

The outbreak of COVID 19 has led to a handful of transformations in education across the world. In Vietnam, distance learning has never been so popular as the year 2020 and the beginning of 2021. This form of learning and

teaching has been applied in almost all schools in Vietnam including The Academy of Journalism and Communication. Without prior preparation for this pandemic and experience in online teaching, the author had to teach Reading subject online for English-major students at her school. This is the reason why this case study was conducted.

1.2. Research objectives

This case study aimed at gaining in-depth understanding of the teaching Reading online with the support of Zoom and Canvas. To be more specific, the study would probe challenges during the course and give practical solutions to these challenges.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Key concepts

Joksimovic et al. (2000) defined distance education is teaching and planned learning where teaching and learning takes place in different places through technologies and special organization. Meanwhile, online learning is a form of distance education in which the learning process is facilitated by technology, but students and teachers are not requested to be available at the same time.

LMS stands for learning management system. According to Azizah (2018), LMS is a website-based integrative learning management system, which is suited to teaching and learning process. Typically, a learning management system provides an instructor with a way to create and deliver content, monitor student participation, and assess student performance. A learning management system may also provide students with the ability to use interactive features such as threaded discussions, video conferencing, and discussion forums. (Learning Management System, 2005)

CALL stands for computer assisted language learning. Levy (1997) defined that "the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning" (p.1). According to Davies (2016), Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is often perceived, somewhat narrowly, as an approach to language teaching and learning in which the computer is used as an aid to the presentation, reinforcement and assessment of material to be learned, usually including a substantial interactive element.

2.2. Related studies

Famularsih (2020) probed students' experiences in using online learning applications due to COVID-19 in English class room. In his study, he made a list of applications that could be used for online teaching and learning, and figured out several challenges when taught English online, namely slow Internet connection, inadequate facilities and the implementation of online learning activities, insufficient communication between lecturer and students, limited duration. He also pointed out that 37% of respondents said that they could not decide whether or not online learning engaged them in interesting reading lessons, while 40.5% strongly agreed and 17.5% strongly agree that online learning made their reading experience more intriguing. Especially, according to the study, students agreed that their reading skills were improved thanks to online learning. This study provided students' positive and negative experiences in learning four English skills online in general, including Reading skill, but it did not give deep insights into any skill. Therefore, it seemed to more effective for non-major English students in a general English class than for major-English ones who have to learn four skills as four separate subjects. Furthermore, while this study provided detailed information about how to use Whatsapp in English teaching, it only offered general information about learning management system by naming some popular LMSs.

In his study, Al Khoeri et al. (2021) figured out both the advantages and disadvantages of using Canvas, a popular learning management system, in online learning. He said Canvas improved teaching and learning process in English classroom due the fact that it was multi-functional with features for uploading materials, creating discussions, giving assignments. However, he pointed out that students needed a lot of mobile data, and stable Internet connection, so students had to while employing this management system. The study focused too much on the benefits of Canvas, but gave too little information about its drawbacks.

Another case study conducted by Sepulveda et al. (2020) in Chile presented the challenges and opportunities in teaching and learning online during COVID 19 pandemic. To be more precise, online learning offered teachers the chance to work with software which they had never used before such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom, come up with new ideas to engage with their students actively on online platforms, improve their autonomy and accountability and reflect the socio-cultural context surrounding during the pandemic. It, conversely, posed several downsides, namely lack of direct

interaction with students, insufficient live teaching experience, possible distractions when teaching at home, lack essential equipment and poor facilities for online classes. It is clear that this research show the benefits and drawbacks of online teaching in Chile in detail; however, it does not include relevant solutions to the problems.

After analyzing these studies meticulously, the author decided to carry out this case study to bridge these gaps in the literature.

2.3. Research questions

- a. What are the challenges in teaching Reading online with the support of Zoom and Canvas?
- b. What are the relevant solutions to the challenges in teaching Reading online?

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to Gays M, Mills, and Airasian (2011), quantitative methodology concentrate on objective reality which is to be discovered, whereas qualitative method focuses on interpreting participants' perspectives. Therefore, mixed methods were used in this study, in order to combine the strengths of each method to gain complete understanding of a phenomenon. Firstly, online questionnaires were made and distributed to participants. Secondly, the research observed and took note her observations of her students' attitude after each online lesson.

3.1. Research site

The study was conducted in Faculty of Foreign Languages at the Academy of Journalism and Communication. With the approval of the Dean of Faculty of Foreign Languages, the case study was implemented by collecting data from undergraduates and observing their perspectives towards each online lesson.

3.2. Participants

There were 55 students (13 males and 42 females) were chosen to conduct this case study. All of them are freshmen. The number of

respondents was rather small in that there are from 45 to 55 students in every cohort in Faculty of Foreign Languages at the Academy of Journalism and Communication, and only these students studied Reading at the time when the case study was conducted.

3.3. Research instruments

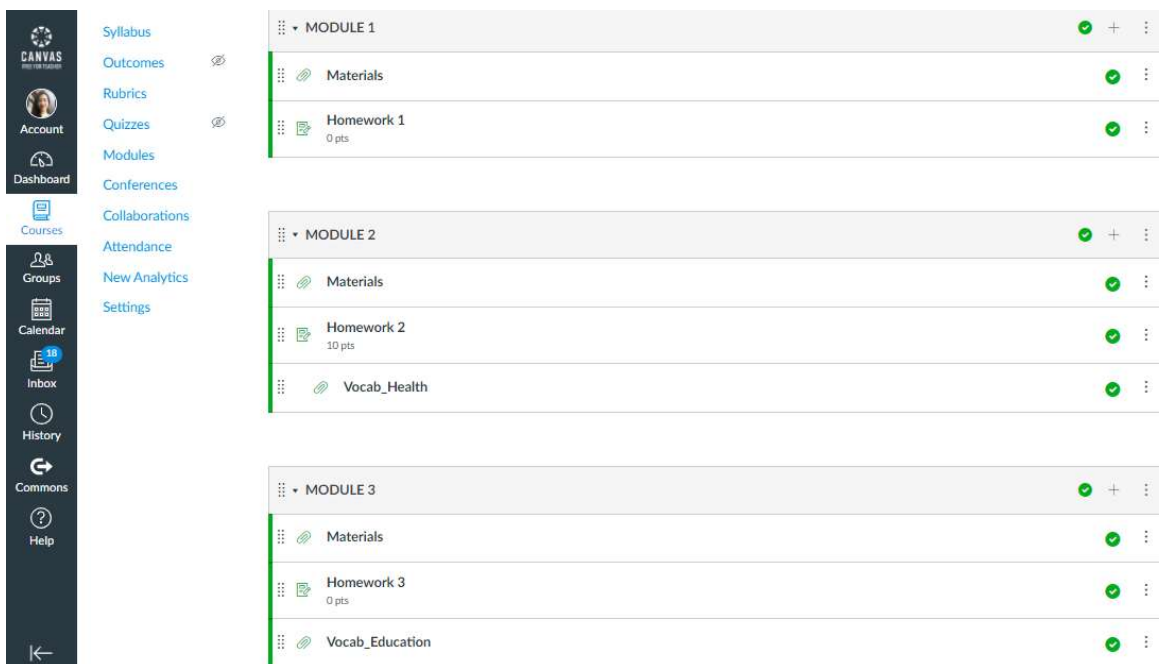
In this study, quantitative data was gathered through a questionnaire. There are ten questions in the questionnaire which was self-developed and piloted among 15 students. They were sent the online survey and were asked to join a meeting via Zoom while responding to the survey. The author observed their body language during the piloting period, and collected their feedback about the questionnaire. After that, problematic questions including confusing, and offensive ones were corrected to make sure that all the items were comprehensive without any ambiguity. It was also examined by a council of scientists in the Faculty of Foreign Languages before being sent to participants.

3.4. Research setting

The outbreak of COVID 19 started when almost all schools in Vietnam including The Academy of Journalism and Communication were not ready for distance learning and online learning. Teachers in this school were not familiar with using software supporting teaching online, especially senior teachers aged from 45 to 55 years old. They, however, were just trained to use Zoom and Microsoft Teams two days for carrying out distance learning. Students lived in different provinces including remote areas where there was no Internet or the Internet was very poor. Many of them, especially freshmen did not have computer or laptop. When the teacher knew that she had to teach Reading subject online without providing their students course books, she built her course on Canvas, and attached all materials on this learning management system.

Canvas was used to create a course with a certain number of modules. A Reading course named Reading was created in Canvas. Instructors can add different kinds of materials to a new module, including Assignment, Quiz, File, Page, Discussion, Text Header, External URL, and External Tool. However, in this case study, the teacher made use of some items including Assignment, Quiz, File, Discussion, and External URL. Firstly, Assignment was used to assign reading assignments to students at home. Secondly, a

Quiz about vocabulary and grammar was created to check students' retention after each lesson. This Quiz would be taken at the end of the lesson for post evaluation if there were enough time or at the beginning of the next lesson to check whether students studied at home or not. Thirdly, File function in this case study was be used to upload materials that teacher wanted to share with her students. Another item is Discussion which was used to create some discussions among students about their provided topics. Finally, External URL is a favorite function which allowed the teacher share some useful websites and materials to students. Quizlet was integrated in the course thanks to this function. In addition to vital function of Canvas above, Canvas was used to communicate with students. In this study, the teacher used Canvas to send announcements to students or inbox students like sending an email to students. Also, Canvas was used to check students' progress via a grade book which automatically saved students' results when they did a quiz or a graded assignment.



Picture 1. Reading course on Canvas

Quizlet.com is an important element in the action plan. The website quizlet.com and Quizlet app are popular with a great number of English learners. It is a good website for learning and teaching vocabulary. Quizlet.com, in the action plan was integrated in each module on Canvas thanks to External URL function.

With an upgraded account, the teacher created a vocabulary class on Quizlet.com named Reading and invited students to join the class by the

following link: <https://quizlet.com/join/SMFCPk8Wc>. Fourteen study sets were created by the teacher. The teacher provided one set to her students and asked them to study vocabulary at home. In online class, the teacher could create a live game for the whole class to let students play games in groups. The game made them excited and helped them reinforce the new words they had studied at home. After all, the teacher would ask her students to take a test for evaluation.

With a free account, students joined the class via the link provided by the teacher. Students could study new words at home, using Learning, Flashcard. Especially, they could play Match or Gravity games whenever they had time on their mobile phones. In class, students took part in a game to remember the new words more rapidly before taking a test for evaluation. They could revise any topics in the course on Quizlet.com whenever they wanted.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Data analysis

The first question was made to find out the technological devices that students used to learn Reading online 93% of the respondents had computer or laptop, while 7% of them had to learn Reading on their mobile phones.

The second question was made to find out whether Canvas was friendly to user or not.

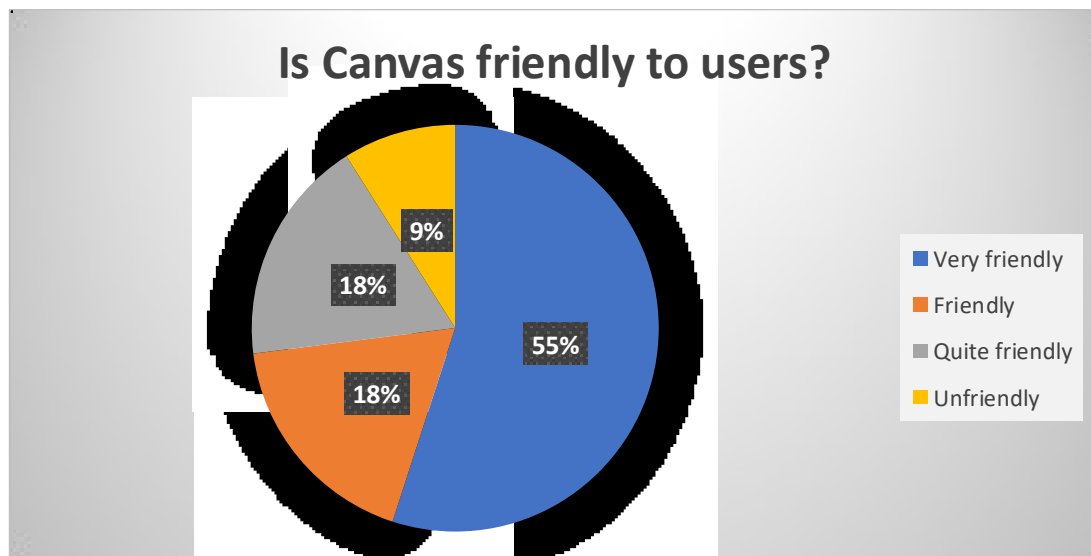


Figure 1. The friendliness of Canvas to users

55% of students said that Canvas was friendly to users, while the number of students who thought that Canvas was friendly and quite friendly accounted for an equal share of 18% each. Only 9% of students supposed that Canvas was unfriendly. It means that from students' experiences, Canvas was not really difficult for students to use in English classroom.

The third open-ended question was made to find out the possible reasons why students thought that Canvas was unfriendly to users. The fact that they had been not familiar with using an LMS before was by far the most popular reason. The second most popular reason is that it took quite a lot of steps to reset passwords if they forgot theirs. Finally, Canvas is so multi-functional that hardly can students learn how to use it quickly.

The fourth question was made to find out whether students felt satisfied with Zoom, the video conferencing software or not.

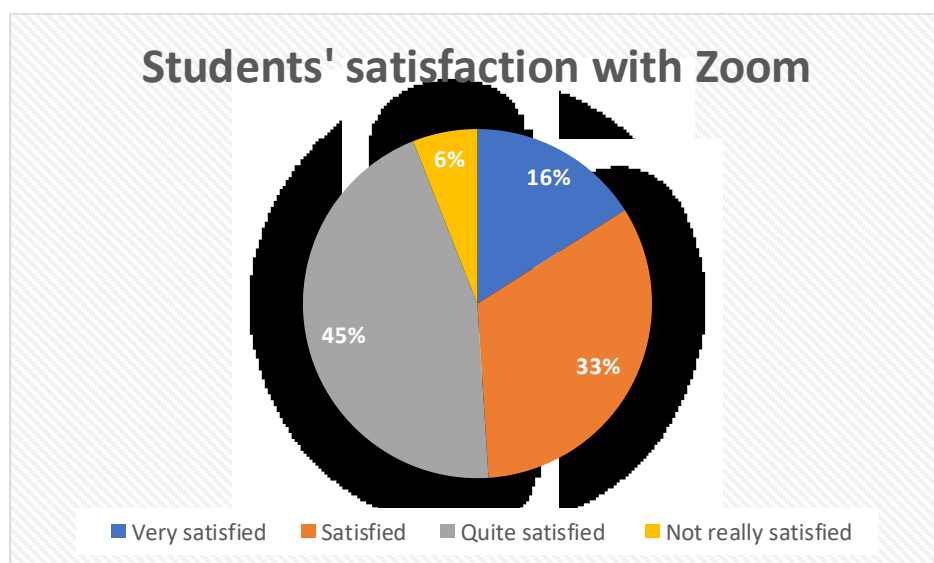


Figure 2. *Students' satisfactions with Zoom*

Over two thirds of the participants felt satisfied and quite satisfied with Zoom, while only 16% of them were very satisfied with it. The number of students felts not really satisfied with Zoom was 6%.

Another open-ended question was the problems that students encountered while using Zoom. One of the biggest problems was the Internet connection instability, which prevented them from listening to their teacher and raising their voice. Another problem was that those who used mobile phones found it a bit harder to use their functions, especially when they wanted to send message to their teacher, they could not see their teacher's slides.

The subsequent question was made to figure out whether students thought teaching Reading online with the support of Canvas and Zoom was effective. Nearly half of the respondents (45%) said that they found the online lessons productive, followed by 27% of students who said that online reading lessons were very effective. Meanwhile, 22% of students thought teaching reading online was rather effective, and only 6% claimed that it was not really effective.

The effectiveness of teaching Reading online

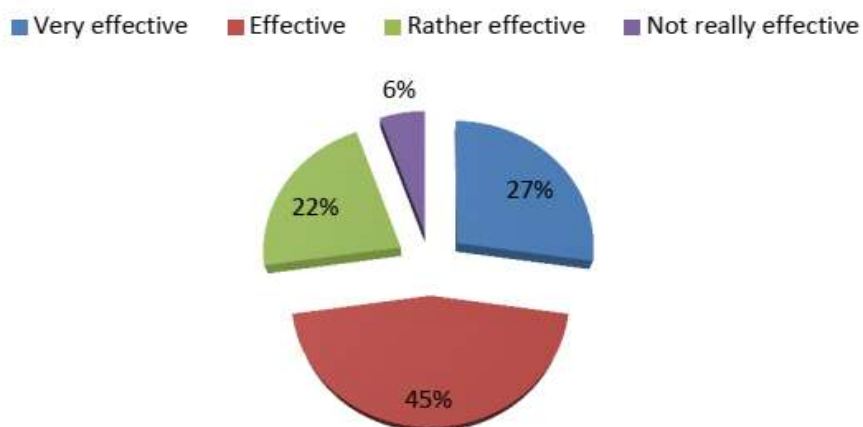


Figure 3. *The effectiveness of teaching Reading online*

The next question was made to find out the possible reasons why students find teaching Reading online with the assistance of Zoom and Canvas not really effective. Firstly, respondents said that due to poor Internet connection, they sometimes could not hear their teachers' lecture, affecting their understanding of the lesson. Secondly, they felt less motivated when they could not interact directly with their teacher and their friends. Thirdly, they got easily distracted by social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and games on the Internet, which reduced their concentration on their teacher's lecture.

Another question related to the effectiveness of learning Reading online with the support of Zoom and Canvas.

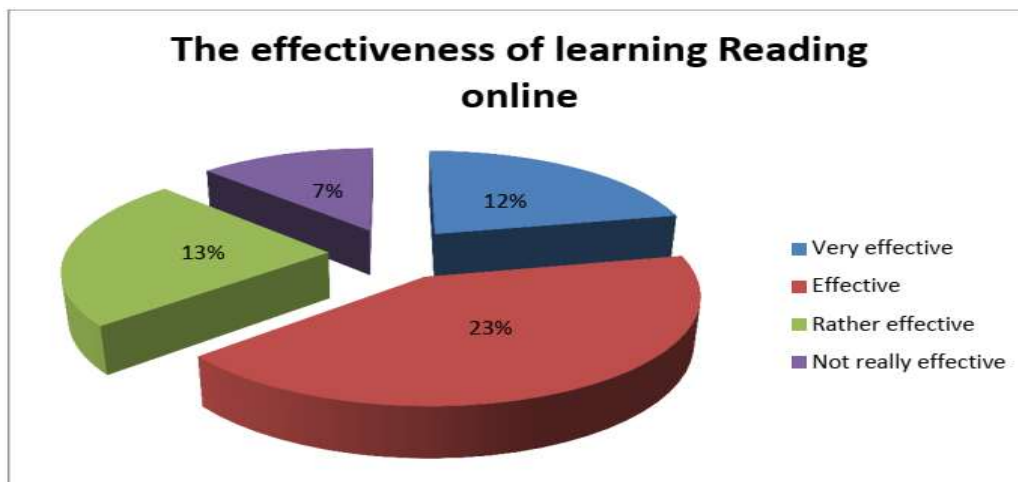


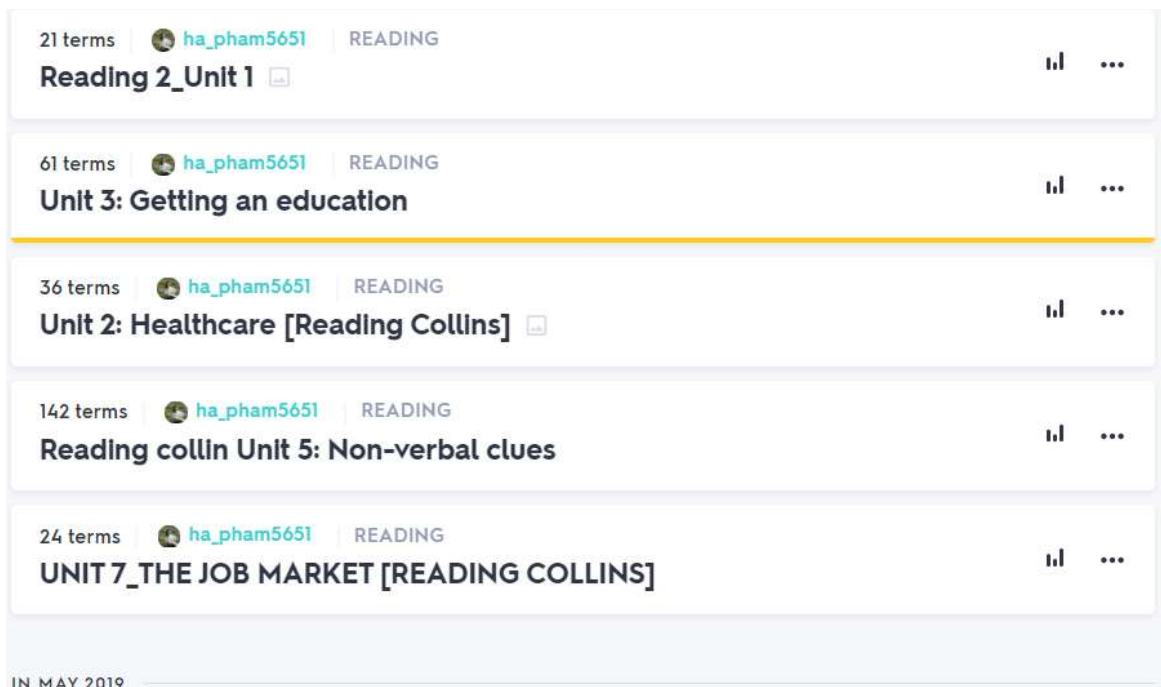
Figure 4. *The effectiveness of learning Reading online*

Nearly a quarter of students said that this form of learning is really effective, while the number of students who thought that learning Reading from home was effective and rather effective accounted for three quarters of the chart. Only 2% of the total respondents said that learning this subject online was not really effective.

The further open-ended question was made to see the advantages and disadvantages of learning Reading online with the support of Zoom and Canvas. One of the biggest benefits was thought by the respondents that they could continue their learning during the pandemic and quarantine. Another benefit was they could access learning materials systematically on Canvas. The next benefit was that they could follow the lesson easily on their computer or mobile phone screen when their teacher corrected Reading assignments. A final benefit was that they received emails reminding them whenever their teacher gave assignments to them and they could see their deadlines right under the assignments. They, however, mentioned several disadvantages. Firstly, learning Reading meant they had to read many words at the same time on screen, making their eyes strained and their learning performance less productive. Secondly, there were some interruptions during the lesson due to the Internet connection, muddling their understanding. Thirdly, the learning environment at home was thought to be not as good as at school due to lack of essential facilities, equipment and unwanted noise. Finally, they supposed that each lesson lasted too long, and hardly could they focus on the lesson for three consecutive hours.

4.2. Observations

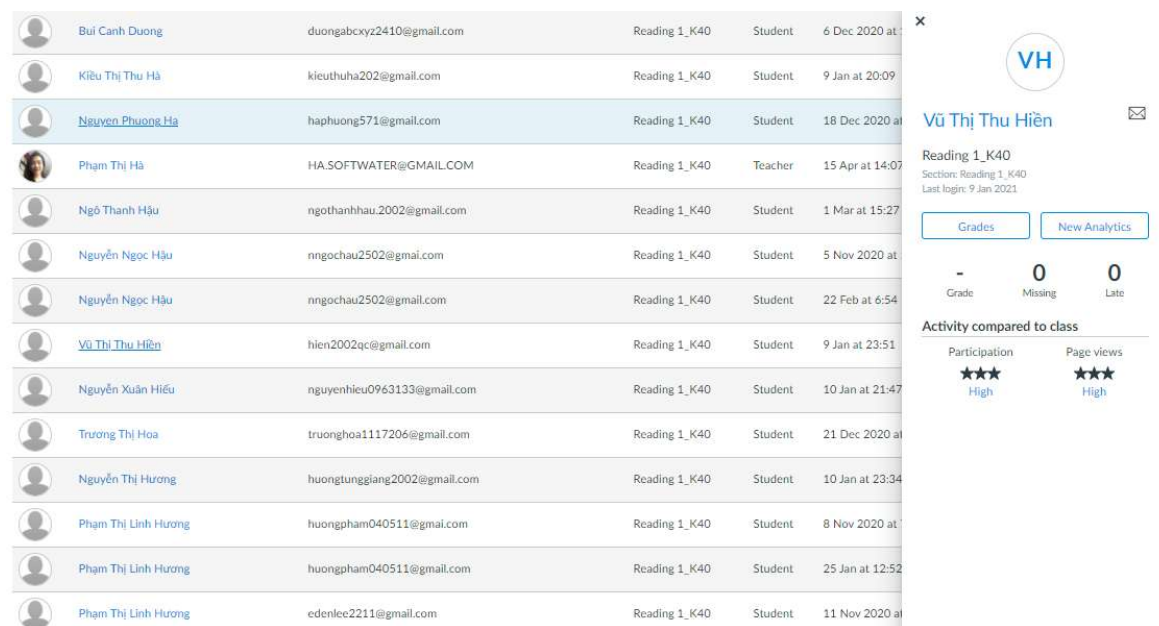
During each lesson, the teacher observed her students' attitude toward learning and took note in her notebook. In the first week when students did not get used to learning online and using technology, they made a lot of questions and sent them to their teacher to ask about how to create an account on Canvas, how to use Canvas and Zoom, especially those who were technophobes. In the second week, becoming familiar with these tools and online learning, they became more eager in each lesson, particularly when they were invited to join a vocabulary game on Quizlet at the beginning of the lesson. They also felt happy when they could work with their friends in smaller groups. However, at the end of the lesson, they often felt tired, which was shown on their face and voice. When doing reading exercises online, students using mobile phones tended to do more slowly than those who used computers or laptops.



Picture 2. *Vocabulary lessons on Quizlet.com*

Thanks to the support of Canvas, the teacher could observe and analyze students' progress and check students' homework easily.

VIETTESOL INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION 2020 INNOVATION AND GLOBALIZATION



Picture 3. Students' progress on Canvas

4.3. Findings from quantitative and qualitative data

After data collection, and analysis and observations, it is clear that there were some challenges in teaching reading online. Firstly, students had not been familiar with LMS and distance learning before the pandemic. Therefore, they found it difficult to use it, submit assignments and download materials from it. Secondly, the screen time was too long, which affected students' concentration, eyes and made them tired at the end of the lesson. Thirdly, the Internet connection was unstable, which had adverse influences on students' understanding throughout the lesson. Fourthly, learning Reading on computers was much more straightforward than on mobile phones. Fifthly, students felt less motivated when they learned Reading online due to lack of direct interactions with their teacher and friends. Subsequently, the learning environment at home was not as good as in class due to distractions from parents, sisters or brothers and unwanted noises from the surrounding environment, which makes it tough for students to stay focused on the lesson. Finally, the inadequacy of equipment is a hindrance to the implementation of teaching and learning online, and it is one of the most challenging problems to solve, in order to ensure no students are left behind.

5. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1. Implications for Vietnamese context

With the development of online learning and distance learning in many parts of the world, and the complicated development of COVID 19, it is important for educators and universities in Vietnam to carry out this form of learning and find solutions to overcome the challenges posed by it.

Firstly, it is important to train educators to use software supporting online teaching learning. Teachers should join these courses to get familiar with technologies. Furthermore, they should actively take part in several forums such as Microsoft Innovative Educator to actively learn from their colleagues nationwide and enroll in a lot of workshops held by VietTESOL and RELO to improve their teaching methodology. It is also essential to have workshops for students to improve their learning autonomy and methods. The workshops should give students advice and tips to build a good learning environment at their own home. By providing such courses, both students and teachers become more active and professional in each online lesson.

Secondly, schools should have short term and long term plans for emergency circumstances like COVID 19. They should improve their facilities, equipment and the Internet connection to ensure the quality of the lesson through video conferencing. In the long term, they should make video lessons as soon as possible because it takes a lot of time to build a sufficient source of video lessons and should have available online courses which can be used for online learning or blended learning.

Thirdly, online curriculum should be designed appropriately in terms of time and contents in each unit because students could not sit in front of computer or mobile phone screen for too long, which can affect their health. Curriculum developers in Vietnam should spend more time on online learning programmes.

Fourthly, if teachers use Canvas in their courses, they should require their students to write down their username and password and send to them privately. When their students lose their passwords, teachers can send it back to them because it is quite complicated to reset password on Canvas. In addition to this, teachers should record videos that provide students with instructions for Canvas. This can help them save a lot of time, and make it easier for students to use this learning management system.

Finally, teachers should have more interesting lessons, making use of technology to create games in each lesson. Also, they should hold more

group work, so that students have the chance to interact with each other and their teacher. This could awake their interests and create more motivation in students' learning process.

5.2. CONCLUSION

No one can deny the significance of distance education and online learning, especially after the pandemic COVID 19, quarantine and social distancing. The case study was conducted with a view to presenting challenges and implications for further or later studies. Thanks to it, the author found a brilliant combination between Canvas and Zoom, which could help her students learn Reading subject without printed materials given in advanced. After this disaster, schools across the world in general and schools in Vietnam in particular will gain more experience and motivations to build productive online courses.

Word count: 3719

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