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STUDENTS' LEARNING INTEREST IN TRAVEL VLOG MAKING AND ITS BENEFITS IN DEVELOPING STUDENTS' TOURISM KNOWLEDGE AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Nhật ký hành trình du lịch: Niềm yêu thích học tập và lợi ích của nó trong việc phát triển kiến thức du lịch và ngôn ngữ của sinh viên chuyên Ngữ tại Trường Đại học Sài Gòn

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore EFL students' learning interest in travel vlog making and its benefits in developing students' tourism knowledge and language learning. 192 English-major juniors and seniors of the Faculty of Foreign Languages of Saigon University, who took part in an a-week field trip to the Southwest of Vietnam in 2nd semesters 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 and required to produce a travel video for their final project, were asked to complete an online survey related to the research purposes. The findings showed the multitude of the participants felt interested in travel vlog making. There were four benefits found: language skill improvement, gaining tourism knowledge, learner autonomy, and peer communication. 92.6% of learners admitted that speaking was the most skill enhanced. Additionally, the majority admitted to learn tourism knowledge through searching information and could remember interesting facts from tourist destinations. This activity also made students be independent in their language learning and highly promoted peer interaction via social media. Therefore, this study suggests that lecturers can use travel vlog in other courses that can aid students' oral communication skill development.

Keywords: *benefits, learning interest, language learning skills, Saigon University, travel vlog making*

TÓM TẮT

Nghiên cứu này nhằm tìm hiểu sự yêu thích của sinh viên chuyên ngữ của Khoa Ngoại ngữ, Trường Đại học Sài Gòn đối với nhật ký hành trình du lịch và những lợi ích của hoạt động này. 192 sinh viên năm ba và năm tư chuyên ngữ đang học tại Khoa Ngoại ngữ Trường Đại học Sài Gòn đã làm bài khảo sát trong hai học kỳ II năm 2020-2021 và 2021-2022. Những sinh viên này đã từng đi thực tế chuyên môn về miền Tây, Việt Nam và được yêu cầu làm nhật ký hành trình du lịch - hình thức nộp bài cuối khóa. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy, phần lớn sinh viên cảm thấy có hứng thú với hình thức học này. Kết quả cũng chỉ ra rằng có bốn lợi ích sinh viên từ làm nhật ký hành trình: cải thiện ngôn ngữ, cải thiện kiến thức du lịch, tính tự học và giao tiếp với bạn bè. 92.6% sinh viên thừa nhận kỹ năng nói được cải thiện nhiều nhất. Phần lớn sinh viên học được kiến thức du lịch khi họ tìm kiếm thông tin và ghi nhớ những dữ kiện thú vị về các địa điểm du lịch. Hoạt động này cũng giúp sinh viên tăng tính tự học và tăng khả năng giao tiếp với bạn bè thông qua mạng xã hội. Do đó, hoạt động này nên được phát huy ở nhiều khóa học khác để tăng khả năng nói tiếng Anh cho sinh viên và giảng viên nên sử dụng hình thức học này nhiều hơn.

Từ khóa: *nhật ký hành trình du lịch, sinh viên chuyên ngữ, trường Đại học Sài Gòn, yêu thích học, lợi ích.*

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1. Introduction

In this technical era, numerous technological innovations have been exploited in many aspects and fields of modern society, such as in marketing, in health care system, in business, means of media as well as in education. Undoubtedly, these days, technology has rapidly asserted its important role in language learning and teaching due to a fact that a multitude of teachers and educators have implemented more and more technological devices, software and hardware into their both physical and online classrooms in order to facilitate the teaching and learning process and the development of language skill activities. In fact, for example, in English language learning, Godwin-Jones (2017) claimed that mobile device usage and social media have been revealing several positive results in productive skills (speaking and writing skills) and receptive skills (reading and listening skills). In this context, the emergence of vlog making has become a very popular phenomenon and has sharply intensified a so-called superdiversity (Vertovec, 2007), which could alter "the face of social, cultural and linguistic diversity in societies all over the world over the past two decades" (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011, p.21). Thus, teachers and learners can possibly take advantage of the vlog genre to create their own products to involve themselves in the energetic environment of practicing languages. In reality, travel vlog project is one of the approaches that has been employed as the final project of English-major junior and senior students of Saigon University. They are required to record and produce a travel vlog when taking part in a one-week field trip to the Southwest of Vietnam. This activity can be beneficial for improving students' speaking skill, developing their tourism knowledge and learner autonomy. Acknowledging the potential benefits of this project-based learning with travel video blogs in English language skills, a group of authors made a decision to carry out this study to answer the following questions:

1. How do students feel about travel vlog making?

2. What are benefits of travel vlog making towards students' tourism knowledge and language skills?

2. Literature review

2.1. Definition of travel vlog

Apparently, moments and events just experienced once in life can be immortalized in cult video blogs. Vlog has five main functions including documenting one's life, providing commentary and opinions, working out emotional issues, thinking by writing and promoting conversation and community (Nardi et al, 2004). More specifically, a travel vlog is a fleeting glimpse caught in a traveler's chronicling journeys, and then it can be shared on social media for gaining immense popularity, views and ratings.

2.2. Benefits of travel vlog making

Gradually, vlogging has been perceived an effective tool and educational resource for English teaching and learning process in the hope that students can enhance their speaking and presentation skills. It is found in Rahmawati, Harmanto & Indriastuti's research (2018) that students become more energetic, active, confident and interested in practising speaking English by video-blogging. Similarly, Maulidah (2018) highlights the

significance of vlog's implementation in students' speaking skill and pronunciation enhancement, which can also build up their learner autonomy.

Relating vlogs to English speaking skill improvement, Anil (2016) proposes benefits of exploiting vlogs for learning English. The first positive side of vlog is that the output of vlog can be utilized to measure fluency in speech which can be a decisive factor of assessing students' language competency. The next benefit of vlogging asserted in Anil's study (2016) is that this implementation enables the learners to practise their grammatical ranges and structures, improve their fluency and lexical resources, and reduce anxiety. This can help students to self-assess their own performance and appropriate knowledge before they submit their products to their teachers. According to Alessi and Trollip (2001), it is undeniable that video which is used in learning activities and instruction has been consisted of its motivational cause due to a fact that time for English learning activities in physical classrooms is limited; therefore, students rarely have opportunities to train their speaking, communication skills with other peers.

3. Methods

This study has been conducted since 2021 when travel vlog making was first applied in the field trip course. Therefore, the group of researchers took two semesters to collect data. Students chosen whose major is English Language have to study some specialist subjects such as Introduction to Tourism, Tourism Interpretation before they start their field trip as their practical experience in order for them to build up a foundation knowledge to become to-be tour guides.

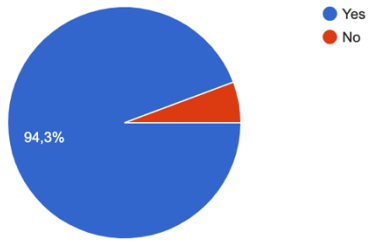
The sample consisted of 192 students who completed an online survey. 62.8% (120) was juniors, 69 (36.1%) were seniors. The mere minority was freshman and sophomore (only 1 for each). 136 (70.8%) was female students while 50 (26%) was male students. More than half of students (57.3%) have not made an English travel vlog or Vietnamese one before their field trip. This sample technique was not determined in advance but it was depended by the willingness of the students who made their travel vlogs.

The research instrument was a questionnaire to collect students' benefits through travel vlog activity data. The questionnaire was the form of Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A) to Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD) (1-4) respectively. Data analysis is calculating the percentage of the total and numbers as well.

4. Results

In this part, there are two findings whose data are analyzed. The first finding is students' interest in a travel vlog activity and the second finding is benefits of travel vlog making towards students' tourism knowledge and language learning.

4.1. How do students feel about travel vlog activity?



Pie chart 4.1: Students' enjoyment in making travel vlog

Items	SA	A	D	SD
Creating vlog is an interesting experience	102	81	7	2
Learning English through travel vlog makes me happy	57	126	7	2
Travel vlog requires me to be independent in English learning	62	119	10	1

Figure 4.1: Their reasons for travel vlog interest

(1: Strongly Agree, 2: Agree, 3: Disagree, 4: Strongly Disagree)

As can be seen from figure 4.1, while the pie chart shows English language learners' interest in vlog making, the table illustrates the number of students who explained the reasons why they enjoyed this activity. Clearly, 94.1% which made up the vast majority of students enjoyed making travel vlogs for not only their field trip course but also in other courses/subjects. As the table shown, three main reasons made students enjoy producing their own vlogs. The most preferrable reason for creating a vlog was that is an interesting experience, 102 out of 192 participants that means over 50% of students strongly agreed with that reason and 81 students (nearly 42%) agreed. Most of the students admitted that learning English through this activity made them delighted. Also 119 students agreed that travel vlog could help them self-study in English and 62 strongly agreed with that idea. All things considered, both juniors and seniors had a positive attitude towards this activity based on their answers and their levels of interest in making a travel vlog for their final project.

According to Gardner & Lambert (1972), Crookes & Schmidt (1991) when learners who have positive attitude in the learning situation and have their reasons for learning create their motivational orientations, they can build up their learning strategies and make effort to get the achievement.

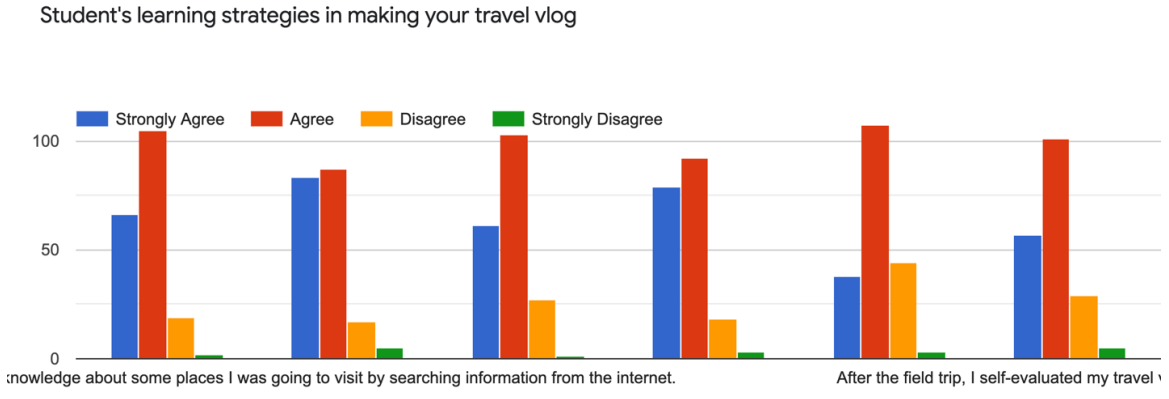


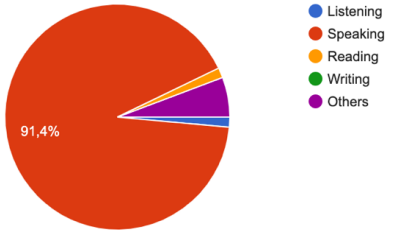
Figure 4.2: Students' learning strategies in making their travel vlog

In Figure 4.2, it shows the result of juniors and seniors' learning strategies in making a travel vlog. There are three stages: before the trip, during the trip and after the trip. Before the trip, 171 out of 192 students prepared their background knowledge about their destinations they were going to visit. At the same stage, 170 students learnt some video making techniques and chose one tool suitable for their final project. 174 travel vloggers also planned their content carefully. After the first stage, 171 students spent their time practicing their English speaking in front of the camera before they would do at tourist destinations chosen. At the final stage, although the number of students who felt confident when they had their English talk in some places was little fewer than the first stages, 125 was a number expected to show students' confidence thanks to this vlogging activity. More interestingly, 158 students admitted that their vlog was interesting.

4.2. Benefits of travel vlog making

4.2.1. Language skill improvement

Figure 4.3 provides the information about language skills that students improve most and its aspects improved. 72,4% (139 students) expected travel making could help them to improve language skills.



Pie chart 4.2: Language skill improvement

Items	SA	A	D	SD
I got many new words in English	61	107	22	2
I showed my speaking style in my own way	80	100	11	1

Figure 4.3: Its aspects of language

The first benefit of making travel vlog was speaking enhancement. 91,4% language learners admitted that speaking was the most skill improved after making vlog. The vast majority of students showed their progress in speaking English through producing a travel vlog although they had been taught how to speak English in public before. In terms of new words, 61 students strongly agreed that they got many new English words, 107 students also agreed with that idea. That means new words ranked first because their lexical resources are expanded based on their tourist destination choice. For example, if Ba chua Xu temple was chosen in a student's vlog, words related to traditional customs or ceremonies must be brushed. With respect to language skill, 180 students believed that through travel vlog, they could share their speaking style in their own way because they could have different ways to lead in their vlog to attract viewers.

4.2.2. Student Learning Autonomy

The second benefit of travel vlog making is student learning autonomy. That is students can improve their learning autonomy. At first, they liked this activity, then they had reasons for producing it with their learning strategies. Littlewood (1996) introduced a framework for promoting language learning autonomy that is (a) the ability to engage in independent work (e.g. self-directed learning), and (b) the ability to use appropriate strategies, both inside and outside classroom.

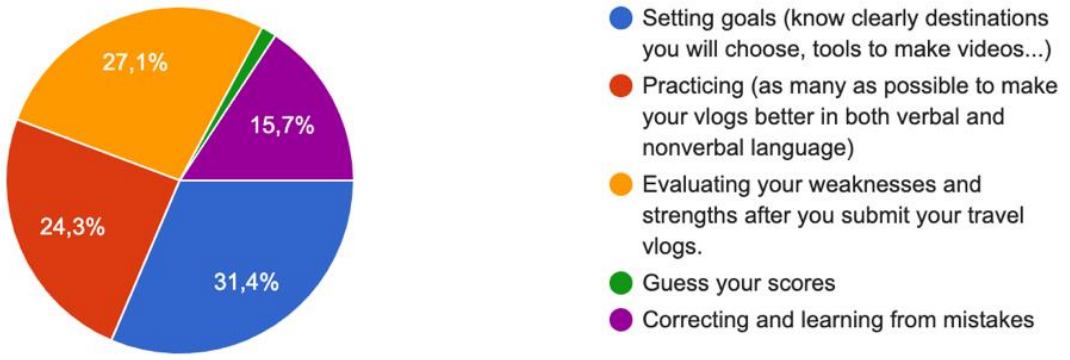


Figure 4.4: Students' learning autonomy in travel vlogs

From figure 4.1, 117 students agreed that vlog make them required to be independent in language learning while 62 of them strongly agreed. Only 1 student disagreed. As the result of figure 3.4, setting goals in students' activity ranked first which made up 31.4%, students knew clearly destinations they would choose and even tools to make videos. Thanks to making travel vlog, students had a chance to evaluate their weaknesses and strengths after they submitted their travel vlog themselves. Clearly, the relationship between students' interest and student learning autonomy is close to each other. When students find their learning interest, they can have learning autonomy for their learning such as setting goals, planning, practicing and then evaluating their language skills.

4.2.3. Knowledge Achievement

The third advantage of travel vlog making is students' achievement in their tourism knowledge. In table 4.1, 60.9% of students who took part in the field trip and produced the vlog for their final project got knowledge about culture and tourism. That suits their needs for their future job and this makes the curriculum of the department of foreign language be more qualified. Apart from gaining knowledge, learning through field trip and evaluating students' outcomes through travel vlog can make students remember interesting facts that they found out more.

Table 4.1: Knowledge Achievement

Items	Number	Percentage
I got knowledge about culture and tourism	117	60.9%
I could remember interesting facts about destinations because I was there to interpret them	75	39.1%

4.2.4. Peer communication

Table 4.2: Peer communication among students in sharing their travel vlogs

Items		Number	Percentage
Number of views	Under 500 views	130	67.7%
	Over 500 views but under 1000 views	36	18.8%
	Over 1000 views	17	8.9%
	Others	9	4.7%
	Total	192	100%
Number of shares	Under 5 shares	79	41.1%
	From 5 to 10 shares	61	31.8%
	Over 10 shares	52	27.1%
	Total	192	100%
Number of reactions	Love	63	32.8%
	Like	111	57.8%
	Wow	3	1.6%
	Haha	15	7.8%
	Angy	0	0
	Total	192	100%
Number of comments	Under 20 comments	96	50%
	From around 20 to 49 comments	65	33.9%
	Over 50 comments	31	16.1%
	Total	192	100%

Table 4.2 demonstrates four ways that students communicate with their friends when they post their final project, a travel vlog on social media such as Facebook or Youtube based on their friends' reactions, number of views, shares, comments. In general, students tended to interact positively with their friends in the way they reacted their friends' posts. The most popular way to create peer communication is to react "like" which was 57.8% of travel vloggers doing that and 32.8% of students reacted "love" towards their friends' products. The percentage of positive reactions was much higher than that of negative ones. Although most of the students did not care about number of views, shares or comments, the way they interacted was good as well. This could be explained that this was the first time they had done this activity and they seemed not to be familiar with this format of

communication. For each product a student made, he/she had to post it on their social media like YouTube or Facebook to get attention from others. This can decide whether a person's product is well-qualified highly-recommended-to-watch or not through reactions such as likes, shares or comments. In order to attract their friends or other social friends, students had to connect or interact to each other to receive feedback on their works from others. Gradually, peer communication was created. Those who got the highest views, shares or comments approved that they maintained good peer communication via social media. However, we think this activity cannot stop in developing peer communication, a travel vlog can be a form to advertise the image of Vietnamese tourism to those who love travelling and enjoy watching real reviews from local young people. Therefore, a new way to evaluate students' learning outcomes which can be accepted can bring benefits towards many: school, teachers, students and society as well.

5. Discussion

Based on the benefits of travel vlog making in literature review, our findings were consistent to some in the theory of Maulidah (2018) and Rahmawati, Harmanto & Indriastuti's research (2018). Particularly, speaking improvement, learner autonomy is similar to the previous studies.

The two research questions were answered. First of all, most of the students at Department of Foreign Language were eager with travel vlog making and they had clear reasons for doing that. The first reason can come from students themselves and another can come from the requirement of the department. However, as can be confirmed that students majoring in English Language had clear reasons for learning and built up their learning strategies before, while and after making travel vlog well. Accordingly, they felt more happy than worried.

Secondly, from the results of the survey on benefits of travel vlog making, a group of researchers found four main benefits: (1) language skill improvement – speaking skill was improved most. This could be explained due to their further practice in this skill more than other skills. Thence, the lexical resources could be expanded too; (2) learner autonomy – setting goals was always done first. In this aspect, our group of researchers realize the connection between students' interest and their learning autonomy. This can make them study better and actively out of classrooms; (3) knowledge achievement – it is undeniable that students gained a lot of knowledge about tourism, technological skills and culture as well during the time they make their own video. This can be a good thing for applying this activity in other subjects for students to maximize their knowledge; (4) peer communication – in the digital era, students cannot interact in person any more, they can communicate with their friends via social network. This finding shows that students get their interactions from their friends in a very positive way.

Although we put our effort into doing the study during two semesters, our study could not avoid some unexpected limitations. It would be better if we used more than one technique to get more data such as interview or test from lecturers who join with students in the field trip and mark students' products. It would be better

if we had more samples as usual. Additionally, this study focused only on English majoring students. Future research should explore diverse groups in terms of age, culture, and types of travel. Finally, this study highlights opportunities for further studies of could develop in other language aspects.

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