



The Affective Factors That Influence Oral English Communication in Non-major EFL Classrooms

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Abstract

Affective factors have been shown to be an important factor in second language acquisition. However, they seem to be overlooked by many non-native teachers of English during classroom practices. Teachers' oral English is an essential input for EFL students because they are rarely able to use and practice English outside classrooms. Compared with majors, non-English major students mostly have a much lower level of English input, which may lead to their lack of interest and low learning motivation during classes. Hence, how to enhance English teaching efficiency in non-major EFL classes appears to pose many challenges and difficulties. This qualitative study investigates how affective factors are perceived to influence oral English communication in non-major EFL classes at two public colleges in Vietnam. Data were collected via individual and focus group interviews with lecturers and students. Findings show that symmetrical relationship, strong sense of belonging, and deep concern and understanding are the three affective factors that support EFL learning. Among these factors, concern and understanding about students influence both lecturers' pedagogical decisions and students' learning motivation. Therefore, EFL teachers are suggested to nurture a strongly emotional classroom culture to lower students' English anxiety and enhance their learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

The use of English as a medium of instruction and classroom-based communication has been prevailing in many English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching contexts. Researchers (e. g. Fan, 2013; Li & Wu, 2017; Simbolon et al., 2020; Sultana, 2014; Tran et al., 2020) have illustrated challenges and constraints associated to the use of classroom

English such as irrelevant teaching methods, inadequate English competences of both students and instructors, and lack of teacher training. Very few studies have been conducted to explore the direct influence of the affective domain on classroom oral English communication - an essential input for EFL students whose opportunities to use and practice English outside the classroom contexts are scarce. Therefore, examining different affective factors having an influence on oral English communication in EFL classes is of great importance, especially in non-English major classroom contexts where students can experience demotivation in studying English (Nguyen, 2015; Kim & Kim, 2015). Previous studies mostly examined classroom English communication from either the side of learners or teachers. This research addresses this gap by examining the issue from perspectives of both sides. Specifically, this research aims to explore what and how affective factors influenced Vietnamese tertiary EFL teachers' classroom language choice and use. Also, it studies the affective factors that Vietnamese EFL non-major students perceived to support their English learning motivation and acquisition. The present study has two research questions as follows:

1. What and how affective factors influence Vietnamese tertiary EFL teachers' classroom oral English communication?
2. What and how affective factors affect Vietnamese EFL non-major students' willingness to listen to teachers' oral English and learning motivation?

With the aim to enhance the quality of EFL teaching and learning in the Vietnamese education system, the Vietnamese government has set out many policies and initiatives. For instance, in 2008 the Prime Minister approved the National Foreign Languages Project 2020 with one of its important objectives being that learners at all school levels can be able to use English fluently by the year 2020 (Vietnamese Government, 2008). This important Project was later extended to the second phase from 2017 to 2025. The fact that this research was done and reported during the final phase of the Project also means findings and recommendations of the research can, to some extent, contribute to the success of the Project and enhance the overall efficiency of EFL education in Vietnam. Furthermore, because the

important content of education reform policy in Vietnam today are to take the learner-centred approach (Huynh, 2017), voices from students will be convincing database so that lecturers and tertiary institutions will propose suitable and relevant policies to better make the demand of students and improve English teaching efficiency.

The Affective Filter Hypothesis

Of the five hypotheses of Krashen's (1985) second language acquisition (SLA) theory, the affective filter is one key important concept. This kind of filter "determines which language model the learner will select, which part of the language the learner will pay attention to, when acquisition should stop, and how fast the language will be acquired" (Singh, 2008, pp. 18-19). Negative emotions such as low motivation and high anxiety cause high affective filter and serves as a mental block impeding input necessary to learners' acquisition. By contrast, learners' positive emotional states create low affective filter and can allow input to freely pass before it is acquired.

The affective filter hypothesis argues that comprehensible input is insufficient, and it needs to be supported by low affective filter to ensure successful SLA (Krashen, 1985). Thus, besides providing second language (L2) learners with comprehensible input in an interesting way, it is important to prevent the affective filter from rising in SLA and L2 learning. Firstly, it is critical for L2 learners to regard themselves as potential members of the user community of the learned language where they are not afraid to reveal their language weakness (Krashen, 1985). Secondly, a supportive classroom environment with activities based on students' needs and interests can create a low anxiety learning environment and better motivate students (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Lastly, since not all L2 learners experience the affective filter in the same way (Ruiz, 2019), teachers' good awareness of a mixed variety of students' learning styles can help increase language learning and acquisition.

Sense of Belonging

In tertiary education, sense of belonging is defined as the sense that "one fits, matters, or belongs on the college campus and in the college community" (Lancaster, 2020, p. 3).

Sense of belonging refers to students' feeling of being connected to, cared about, respected, and important to the learning community (e.g. school or class) (Strayhorn, 2018). Students' strong sense of belonging in schools has been shown to be closely linked to their positive educational outcomes such as maintaining learning engagement (Gillen-O'Neel, 2019) or developing social-emotional functioning (Korpershoek et al., 2019). Therefore, it is the mission of tertiary institutions to create a strong sense of belonging among all students to ensure student success and teaching efficacy (Peacock et al., 2020; Thomas, 2012).

EFL teachers can create learners' sense of belonging to the class by providing supportive learning environment, interesting learning activities, or classroom decorations (e.g. pictures with English content) (Alhodiry, 2016). A sense of belonging can also be obtained through engaging learners in dialogic and interactional activities in EFL classroom (McRae & Guthrie, 2009). EFL students are more likely to persist and willing to seek for help when they feel that the learning community which they belong to as welcoming and encouraging (Cuellar & Johnson-Ahorlu, 2016; Museus et al., 2017). Thus, a supportive learning environment and teachers' classroom behaviours and activities are important in creating EFL students' positive sense of belonging to the class.

Teacher-Student Relationship

A teacher-student relationship refers to “an interpersonal relationship between a teacher and a student that contains whatever level of respect, understanding, and care that both require to make the relationship work for them” (Gibbons, 2019, p. 12). According to this definition, three key elements that can foster a productive teacher-student relationship are respect, understanding, and care, which is supported by researchers (e.g. Calhoun, 2019; Smit et al., 2014).

A positive and effective relationship between teacher and students can bring about many benefits in EFL educational contexts such as lowering students' English anxiety (Nijat et al, 2019; Wei et al., 2009), promoting learners' intrinsic motivation and interest in learning English (Bouras&Keskes, 2014; Joe et al., 2017), or fostering students' English self-efficacy

and learning strategies (Ma et al., 2018). Hence, it is suggested that EFL teachers should make their class into a respectful and cooperative learning space so that their students feel free to express their needs and more effectively acquire the language (Girón Chávez et al., 2017).

However, some factors have been identified to negatively affect the relationship between teacher and students, such as lack of interpersonal communication causing students to conceal their ideas in the lessons (Uysal&Güven, 2018) or teachers' overemphasis on negative students' attitude rather than praise (Agyekum, 2019). In most Asian, including Vietnamese education contexts, students are torn about accomplishing too many academic commitments and teachers are overloaded with teaching and related tasks, which can negatively impact their relationships (Huynh, 2017). In Vietnamese culture, the teacher-student relationship is perceived to be hierarchical and formal (Signorini et al., 2009). Learners "are expected to be recipients of knowledge and strictly follow what the teacher expects them to do ... and teachers' roles are assumed as the source of knowledge, the knowledge transmitter, and the moral guide" (Nguyen, 2019, p. 24). In this sense, the Vietnamese culture certainly affects teacher-student relationship, despite some recent innovations in EFL teaching and pedagogies.

Motivation

Motivation is an "important affective variable in second language acquisition" and has a close connection to "language achievement and proficiency" (Wang, 2006, p. 32). As for teachers, motivation is one crucial indicator of their high-quality of teaching (Fong et al., 2019).

As for EFL students, there are some factors that can motivate them in EFL learning, such as teachers' humour which can refresh students' minds and make them more cheerful (Hidayanti, 2019), or teachers' communicational behaviours which can make students more willing to communicate (Heidari et al., 2017). Students who have formed positive relationships with their teachers are more likely to listen to L2 actively and passionately and

thus have better motivation in their L2 learning (Ballester, 2015; Habash, 2010; Sheybani, 2019). A comfortable and pleasant classroom atmosphere is more likely to make EFL students persist and better motivate them in learning (Mutlu&Yıldırım, 2019). EFL students tend to be more active and motivated to practice English during internet-based learning EFL classrooms (Chairat, 2018).

As for EFL teachers, student-related factors including low/lack of learning motivation and disruptive behaviours were found to have the highest influence on teachers' motivation (Aydin, 2012; Javadi& Mohammad, 2014). This illustrates that students' behaviours, enthusiasm for learning, motivation, attitudes, and actions have a strong influence on teachers' motivation (GadellaKamstra, 2020; Pourtoussi et al., 2018; Sugino, 2010). Also, the teaching environment and contexts have various influences on teachers' motivation because changing contexts may lead to changes in practices and motivations (Dinham & Scott, 2000; Mercer et al., 2016). While EFL teachers' motivation appears to be mainly nurtured by inner factors (e.g. experience or confidence), their demotivation is closely linked to external circumstances (e.g. work overload or feeling of redundancy) (Csaba, 2018).

Oral English Communication

Unlike other forms of communication, oral communication is a way of “exchanging information through the sense of hearing and making meaning” (Elenein, 2019, p. 31). It refers to “not only spoken words, but also the employment of graphic and non-verbal elements to further facilitate the transmission of a message and its meaning” (Mahmud, 2014, p. 129). Since the present research examines this phenomenon within the framework of EFL teaching context, I use the term oral English communication to refer to a teacher's use of spoken English to conduct lessons and communicate with students during the lessons in order to enhance students' English knowledge and skills.

Oral English communication in EFL teaching is not necessarily similar to oral communication in a first language since it can be affected by foreign language anxiety and apprehension (Bengtsson, 2020). EFL teacher's spoken English via classroom interaction

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provides comprehensible input and meaning negotiation for students. Experiencing greater amounts of comprehensible input leads to faster language acquisition, and lacking access to it results in little or no acquisition (Long, 1983). Negotiation for meaning is “one of a range of conversational processes that facilitate SLA as learners work to understand and express meaning in the L2” (Foster & Ohta, 2005 p. 402). Therefore, L2 learners should be encouraged to negotiate meaning as much as possible during L2 interactions (Hartono, 2017). Hence, EFL teachers’ classroom oral English communication should generate not only a lot of comprehensible input but also plentiful opportunities of interacting with students. The more English a teacher speaks and more interaction students have with their teacher and peers in English, the more English knowledge and skills the students can gain. However, the classroom interactions in non-English classes seem to be limited because students do not have many opportunities for speaking English (Tran, 2018).

2. Materials and Methods

Participants

I used purposive sampling method which is “highly effectual in cases where a limited amount of individuals may serve as the principal data sources” (Ithnain et al., 2020, p. 123). Purposeful selection was found to be appropriate for this case study research since it helped me to select individuals who have special knowledge and experience in what is being studied (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). I first conducted surveys and sent them to all English lecturers and students from two classes of each lecturer to collect suitable participants. To make sure all participants who had high interest but worry about having to speak English to be selected, I noted right in the beginning that the language of interviews would be totally Vietnamese. As a result, there were five lecturers and 21 students from two public colleges in Da Nang, Vietnam participated in this research. The table below gives further details about the participants.

Table

Background of lecturers and students participating in the study

		College A	College B
Major sectors of education		Information technology	Tourism
L	Number	2	3
Lecturers of English	Years of teaching experience	5-10 years	5-15 years
	Number	7	14
Students of English	Level of English	Basic	Basic
		Lower-intermediate	Lower-intermediate

Assessments and Measures

This study adopts the qualitative research stance which enables the researcher to examine a phenomenon “as it naturally occurs” (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 338). I used interview with a hope “to broaden the scope of understanding investigated phenomena, as it is a more naturalistic and less structured data collection tool” (Alshenqeti, 2014, p. 40).

Instrument

Focus group interviews were chosen for student participants in order to find out students’ perceptions on what and how affective factors affect their willingness to listen to teachers’ oral English and their learning motivation. I used the audio-recorder to save the interview for later analysis. Five groups (from four to five students each) were interviewed, and each interview lasted from 60 to 90 minutes.

As for the lecturers, individual in-depth interviews were conducted. Since the merit of in-depth interviewing is “understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning

they make of that experience” (Seidman, 2006, p. 9), lecturers may find an interview situation more comfortable to share with the researcher their attitudes and perceptions. The researcher utilised audio-recording as a supportive tool to record the interview procedure because sound recordings allowed the researcher to concentrate on the discussion and to later listen to the same recording repeatedly (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Each teacher interview lasted from 60 to 90 minutes.

Data Collection and Analysis

When I first came to the research sites, I handed a detailed research information sheet and consent form, written in Vietnamese, to all people involved and answered any questions they had. After ensuring everyone understood the purpose of the study and the demands on individual participants, I obtained full written consent. Both lecturers and students were provided with information on the confidentiality and anonymity of data, and the right of the participant to withdraw at any time.

I firstly transcribed the audio recordings. Then I read through the entire dataset several times while listening to the recordings to make sure I would not miss any points. I started to have initial ideas by asking questions of the data. I took notes to save these early ideas in order to refer to them again later. I found this familiarisation step important since it enabled the remaining stages to produce more high-quality work (Terry et al., 2017).

After developing general ideas regarding the overall dataset, I began to produce codes, which helped label the segments of the data and simultaneously categorise and summarise each segment (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). I tried to include all quotes, identified, and labelled “all segments of interest and relevance within the dataset, and everything that is of relevance within those segments” (Terry et al., 2017, p. 17). I coded the data using Microsoft Word’s comment function and Microsoft Excel to tag and collate it. I compiled a list of codes that identified both patterning and diversity of relevant meaning within the data and collated data which was identified by the same codes.

I then took a closer look at the codes and combined, clustered, or collapsed them to form meaningful patterns. I thought carefully to identify similarities and relationships across a range of different codes to decide if they should be clustered together to make a key idea. I maintained my focus on the research questions to avoid getting lost in analysis and to keep the analysis relevant.

3. Results

This section reports the data collected from individual interviews with lecturers and focus group interviews with students. It is presented in the way how it have addressed the two aforementioned research questions.

What and how affective factors influence Vietnamese tertiary EFL teachers' classroom oral English communication?

Students' low learning motivations and practical study purposes were perceived by most teachers to be important barriers to their use of oral English communication, as elaborated in the extracts:

Because English is not the main subject, non-English majors are not highly motivated learners. They study just enough to pass or just to get enough grades and have no high motivation for self-study and putting in any effort. Thus, lecturers are not motivated to help them understand their English. (Ellen)

The majority of non-English major students are often not aware of the important role and benefits of English in this era. Their lack of motivation affects our teaching; we are not really satisfied because we cannot fully implement the monolingual method as we have always intended and desired to. (Amy)

Basing on her teaching experience, Ellen felt that non-English major students had low learning motivation: they seemed to have pragmatic approaches to study such as studying just to get enough points to pass the subject. She further stated that students' low motivation also had a negative effect on lecturers' efforts to get them to understand their spoken English.

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Amy also supported Ellen's ideas, expressing the view that non-English major students often lacked motivation to learn English. This made lecturers feel unsatisfied with their featuring because they could not successfully implement their plans and pedagogical intentions into practical teaching. The findings reveal that students' negative learning habits and their own resulting demotivation were regarded as barriers to lecturers' speaking English in class, which was then thought to affect their teaching motivation.

Despite the above barrier, the interview data also demonstrate that lecturers' motivation to speak English is closely related to their concern for students. For example, when answering why she felt motivated to speak English in low-proficiency level classes, Olive shared: "I see students are trying to learn English for their future jobs". Amy had the similar ideas: "Some of my students are eager to listen and respond to my English speaking". The lecturers' opinions illustrate that students are an important source of motivation for the lecturers to keep speaking English, despite some other barriers such as some students' negative reactions and low learning motivation.

Moreover, lack of understanding about students at the interpersonal level was perceived by all the lecturers to be an extreme barrier to their use of English as the medium of teaching and communication in non-English major classes:

Perhaps since I normally teach each class for one semester, I do not have enough time to understand students' levels, habits, and aspirations. I do not know whether I should speak English more or less; faster or more slowly. (Polly)

If lecturers have a better understanding of students' aspirations regarding the use of English, they will be more confident and can better prepare for it. (Amy)

Polly thought that her lack of understanding about students was due to the regular rotations of lecturers in charge of one class, which led to her not having enough time to get a better understanding of different students' needs. Therefore, she did not have ideas about what students actually expected her to do regarding the amount or speed of oral English in

those classes. In the same vein, Amy reported that if she had a better understanding about the students' learning goals, her use of oral English would be more effective in that she would be better-prepared for her English speech and then perform more confidently. These have shown that the lecturers' pedagogical use of oral English was closely linked to the degree they understood the students' learning goals.

These findings have demonstrated a strong correlation between affective factors and lecturers' motivation and pedagogical decisions of using oral English in the classroom.

What and how affective factors affect Vietnamese EFL non-major students' willingness to listen to teachers' oral English and learning motivation?

The focus group data reveal that lecturers' concern about students' comprehension ability was believed to be important in helping students improve their communication skills and affecting their willingness to pay attention, as illustrated in the interviews:

She speaks very quickly and does not seem to care whether we have understood her speech or not. During this time, I feel stressed and do not want to listen any further. (IS1)

It is easier to listen to lecturers and improve our skills when they check with us if we have understood them and rephrase their sentences if we have not. (TS6)

According to IS1, she was more likely to feel stressed and lack listening motivation since the speed of her lecturer's English was a challenge to her combined with no comprehension check. From TS6's perspective, students' listening comprehension would be facilitated if lecturers cared for the students' comprehension and modified their speech so that it would better match their level. Since even the clearest instructions can be hard to comprehend, teachers' effort to make sure that students have understood is important, especially when it comes to low level learners. This is supported by this study's findings on the majority of students expecting lecturers to check students' comprehension more regularly, which they believed to be a sign of lecturers' concern and care for students.

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Besides comprehension level of in-class knowledge, some students also believed that there was not a satisfactory communication at the interpersonal level between them and their lecturers. The students' perception on the insufficient connection between them and their lecturers aligned with the lecturers' beliefs. This issue is discussed in the focus group interviews:

Lecturers rarely try to know more about us such as our hobbies, preferred teaching methods or activities. I wish they would understand us more so that the lessons would be more interesting to us. (TS9)

One lecturer of mine used to ask us about our preferences in front of the whole class at the beginning of the term. But only a few students voiced their opinions. I was shy and also thought we did not have much time to answer. I think she should have conducted a simple survey so that all students could express themselves. (IS2)

The above students felt that they did not have many opportunities to express their opinions to the lecturers regarding what would work best for them. As revealed by IS2, his lecturer used to give her students an opportunity in the beginning of the course. However, it seems that it was not effective to discuss this topic with the whole class as students were too shy to share their ideas. This might be due to students' shyness and the Vietnamese classroom's culture where most students tend to be reluctant in expressing their ideas and comments regarding their teacher's behaviours.

The focus group interview data also revealed an interest in symmetrical power in classrooms among some students, which was believed to bring about a more relaxing and comfortable learning environment. As mentioned in 2.3, the relationship between teachers and students in Vietnamese culture is considered particularly hierarchical and formal (Signorini et al., 2009). This can be reflected in the way students stand up to greet and respond to teachers during the lessons. A lot of students in our study thought that the tradition of students' standing to give responses to lecturers' questions created an asymmetrical

relationship between lecturers and them, which hindered their learning. The students' perceptions are further demonstrated in the following extracts:

I prefer to keep sitting when speaking English because when I stand, I will attract the eyes of my classmates and will be shy and unable to speak. Hence, lecturers should allow and encourage all their students to keep seated during classroom communication. (TS9)

I think during English lessons, it is easy for students to exchange ideas with each other and with their lecturers when they are sitting. Having to stand up to speak means they are the focus of the other students. I am afraid of losing face should I make errors, so I think it would be better if we could speak sitting down. (IS7)

I hope that my English teachers will introduce a new rule that allows students to keep seated when replying to them. This will make our English lessons more relaxing. (TS14)

Both TS9 and IS7 expressed the view that having to stand up to speak had made them shy because they were then at the centre of the attention of their classmates. Actually, they both thought that standing might be potentially face-threatening in the case that they might make errors when speaking English. Similarly, TS14 even expected a policy set by her teachers that all students should sit during classroom oral interaction with the teachers. From those students' perceptions, an English classroom would be more relaxing and pleasant if the traditional power imbalance was eliminated. In this way, they could speak more freely without worrying about losing their face.

A lot of students also perceived the seat arrangement/designs and decorations of classrooms to affect their learning motivation:

The lecturer desk should be eliminated since it creates a power distance between us; it makes it hard for those sitting in the back rows to hear her speaking at her desk. Our seats should be arranged in a U-shape so that we can all be face-to-face

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with the lecturers and be physically closer to them. The classroom atmosphere will be then more supportive; and we would feel more relaxed to study in it. (IS6)

I really like to have an individual movable seat like what [name of his friend] has said. The classroom should be decorated with pictures, posters, or slogans in English to remind us that we are learning English. The students would be more interested and motivated to learn in such a decorated classroom. (TS11)

Most of the interviewed students thought that the current seat arrangement and designs of their English classes had a negative impact on their learning motivation and hampered classroom communication. From IS6's opinion, when the teacher was speaking at front by her desk, it was difficult for the students in the back to hear and see them clearly. Noticeably, the student felt that the presence of teacher desk combined with the seating arrangement created unequal power in class. Thus, a more inclusive seating arrangement in class would help establish a more supportive and friendly learning environment. Sharing the same view, TS11 believed that the English classroom should be decorated in the way that it would make students develop a sense of belonging to an English class. Data has shown that a classroom decorated with visual means and designed to students' taste would motivate them more than a plain and traditional one.

4. Discussion

Affective variables act as a filter which can determine how much the learner will pay attention to the language model and how fast they can acquire the language (Singh, 2008). Findings on the lecturers' and students' perceptions have highlighted that lecturers' deep concern for and understanding about students, demonstrated both during classroom interaction and at an interpersonal level, lecturer-student symmetrical relationship, and students' strong sense of belonging to English classes positively affect classroom oral English communication and thus mediate EFL teaching and learning.

Deep Concern and Understanding

Results show that lecturers' concern about students motivated them to use a high proportion of English, despite negative experiences they had with some students' low motivation in listening to their English speaking. This may be because, as teachers, they desired to concern about all students. This was the reasons why two lecturers tried to keep using a lot of English when possible in response to some students who were eager to listen and respond to their English speaking and made a great effort to learn English for their future careers. In these cases, the students' positive learning attitude urged those lecturers to maintain speaking a lot of L2 in non-English major classes. This finding aligns with previous research (e.g. Aydin, 2012; GadellaKamstra, 2020; Javadi& Mohammad, 2014) which has shown that student-related factors are one of the main sources of motivation and demotivation for EFL teachers. Specifically, students' enthusiasm for learning and positive attitudes directly influence L2 lecturers' classroom practices (Pourtoussi et al., 2018; Sugino, 2010). This is the case for the two lecturers in this study who felt motivated to maintain L2 use since they concerned about some students' special academic needs.

Besides their concern for students on an interpersonal level, most of the lecturers also believed that a deep understanding of students' needs would have a positive influence on their pedagogical use of oral English communication. On the other way around, the lecturers believed that being unaware of students' language levels, habits, and aspirations would leave lecturers feel unsure about the quantity and speed of their English speaking so that it will not negatively affect students' comprehension, which can lead to a lack of confidence in their in-class performance. This suggests that the lecturers were conscious about the need for understanding about students; and that they were willing to adapt their practices to better match students' interests and competency levels. Here it seems that a deep concern for and better understanding of learners' needs and interests can help lecturers mould their L2 use to the class preferences, thereby optimising students' L2 learning.

Furthermore, a majority of students regarded lecturers' personal interest in their ability to understand the lesson and about their English use as the main motive for their

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listening to lecturers' English. Students' being aware of their lecturers' concern for them could strengthen the lecturer-teacher relationship, which could promote their intrinsic English learning motivation (Bouras&Keskes, 2014; Calhoun, 2019; Joe et al., 2017). This, in turn, was likely to decrease students' L2 anxiety and make them more comfortable to speak in the L2 (Nijat et al., 2019; Wei et al., 2009). In addition to concern, data suggested that lecturers' awareness of students' needs and expectations regarding how English should be taught facilitates students' L2 learning in that they feel more motivated to improve their L2 communication skills.

A deep concern and understanding about students' needs is argued to be the most influential affective factor in EFL classes since they were perceived to affect both teachers' pedagogical practices and students' learning motivation.

Symmetrical Relationship

Strictly hierarchical and formal teacher-student relationships are the norm in Vietnamese classrooms (Signorini et al., 2009). This is clearly reflected by students' standing up to speak, which has been established as a component of classroom culture for years. From students' perspective, the asymmetrical power between them and their lecturer hindered their English learning, making them feel stressed and worried, which further increased their reticence to use English in class. What is more, some students believed that having to stand up when speaking L2 amplified their fear of face loss since they were then turned into the focus of attention of both their lecturer and classmates. They felt that standing increased the degree of face loss in the case that they would make errors in their speech. Hence, the students hoped their lecturer to allow or encourage them to keep seated during oral interaction. Therefore, teachers' allowing students to remain seated will both reduce the hierarchical classroom dynamics and alleviate students' fear of losing face. Accordingly, students' L2 learning anxiety can also be reduced, which will lower the affective filter and therefore ensure successful SLA (Krashen, 1985). A perceived less asymmetrical power will strengthen a positive lecturer-student relationship and promote students' intrinsic learning

motivation and interest in learning English (Bouras&Keskes, 2014; Joe et al., 2017; Ma et al., 2020).

Strong Sense of Belonging

Findings demonstrate that a comfortable English learning space was described by students to have general classroom appearances such as pictures and other visual decorations related to the English language. Such an eye-catching classroom can promote students' EFL learning in that it can maintain students' learning persistence and create their learning motivation (Alhodiry, 2016; Mutlu&Yıldırım, 2019). This is particularly important for non-English major students who normally have low motivation and felt burdened with regard to learning English (Nguyen, 2015; Kim & Kim, 2015). Besides, most of the interviewed students thought that removable desks and a U-shaped seat arrangement of English classrooms would better facilitate classroom communication in that it would enhance students' visual engagement with the lecturer and help ensure that all students could hear well. This physical classroom layout can mediate students' L2 learning in that the students will feel more confident in speaking English in a supportive atmosphere, which is also important for the successful implementation of English-only classes (Dearden, 2014; Selvi, 2014). This demonstrates that a favourably designed EFL classroom should better motivate non-English major students and better mediate their learning than a traditional one.

The supportive and pleasant English learning environment as desired by many student participants implicitly reflect their desire to feel a sense of belonging to and connection within their classes (Lancaster, 2020; Strayhorn, 2018). Since these students are non-English major students, they might have a common feeling that English subject is not much linked to their future career, which can lead to a lack of interest and motivation for English learning among them. Therefore, when the learning atmosphere creates a sense of classroom belonging for those students, it is more likely that they consider themselves important parts of the class and tend to actively engage with the class activities (Cuellar & Johnson-Ahorlu, 2016; Gillen-O'Neel, 2019; Museus et al., 2017). The strong sense of belonging to English classes create students' positive affective responses (Tovar & Simon, 2010) or develop

social-emotional functioning (Korpershoek et al., 2019), which will help reduce high affective filter and allow students to get more input for successful acquisition of the language.

5. Limitations of the study

Despite my efforts to build trust and confirm the findings, I was still aware of some potential limitations in the research methodology and data analysis. Firstly, the results of qualitative research might be affected by researchers' subjective consciousness (Anderson, 2010), which could be a potential limitation for this qualitative-dominant study. Furthermore, I relied on individual experience and subjective judgement to design questionnaire and interview questions for the research. To enhance the internal or external validity, interview transcripts and key findings were sent to lecturers and students so that they could see if the data accurately reflected their intents and meanings, which belongs to the category of a member-checking technique (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011; Hay & Singh, 2012). Data were collected from

This study is descriptive in nature, which was not purposefully designed to delve into characteristics or strategies of teachers' and students' classroom oral English communication. Future research could look into these issues and address the question of what strategies teachers use when communicating with students and how their use of those strategies actually helps students' English learning. The answers to these questions can contribute importantly to the debate surrounding how teachers can take best advantage of classroom oral English in their EFL teaching contexts, especially when teaching students with really limited English knowledge and communication level, as the case of non-English major students.

6. Conclusion

This research aims at finding out the roles of affective factors in EFL teaching and learning in non-English major classes at two public colleges in Vietnam. It identified a deep concern and understanding about students, a symmetrical lecturer-student relationship, and a strong sense of belonging as three important affective factors which affect EFL teachers'

motivation and practical use of oral English communication and EFL students' willingness to listen and learning motivation. Among them, concern and understanding about students are the most influential.

The findings of this study have also led to some pedagogical implications for EFL teaching and learning, particularly in the Vietnamese context. Firstly, lecturers' communication behaviours (e. g. checking for students' comprehension) could help establish a good rapport between EFL lecturers and non-English major students and thus facilitate L2 learning. Secondly, results demonstrate that non-major EFL students regarded both physical and emotional features of classrooms as having a strong effect on their emotional states and learning motivation. Thus, it is argued that non-major EFL classrooms need to be innovative (e. g. eye-catching and well-designed physical classroom layout) so that they can bring students' strong sense of classroom belonging and learning motivation, which helps achieve their learning goals. Lastly, since a deep concern and understanding about students play a central role, EFL teachers need to learn from the students as to what the students need to learn and what helps them to learn better.

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Conflict of interests

I declare that there is no conflict of interest related to the publication of this research.

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