English Majors' Perceptions of Group Work and English Use in Group Activities at Dong Thap University

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Abstract
Pair/group work is now widely applied in virtually all types of classroom, and it is one of the prominent features of the learner-centered approach and the communicative method in English as a foreign language (EFL) classes. This study aimed to investigate three core questions (1) What do English majors at Dong Thap University perceive of group work? (2) How much do they use English in group work engagement? (3) What do they think about the given suggestions for English speaking deployment in group work? The data were collected via a questionnaire from 150 third/fourth-year English majors, Dong Thap University, Vietnam, and interviews with ten target students who had answered the questionnaire and agreed to partake in the interview. The obtained results show that most students highly appreciated the significant role of group activities and English use in group work. They also confirmed that Vietnamese speaking is still dominant in practice, and mostly agreed on several given suggestions to maximize generic benefits and other language learning merits produced by group work. Accordingly, the current study strongly advocates English use as much as possible in group activities performed by English majors.

Keywords: English majors' perceptions, English use, group work

Introduction
Today's teachers generally recognize that group work among learners of most subjects, levels, and learning courses is one of the prominent features of learner-centered classroom, especially in communicative language ones for it is supposed to provide learners of all abilities and learning styles an equal opportunity to work, express themselves, speak out their minds in confidence and interactively learn from others/peers in one way or another. Also, benefits students gain from group activities can be transferred for long-term uses because "by learning the realities of group dynamics as youngsters, they will be better equipped to handle such hangers-on and will face fewer frustrations as adults" (Herreman, 1988, p.11). In this vein, if administered properly, group work in EFL classes of most contexts is highly promising to be a freely available tool for teachers to help learners not only practice speaking English communicatively but also improve the ability to work with others in collaboration to complete common goals and acquire other humanistic skills and values. Having been trained in group work at some points during their college training programs and in-service time after graduation from college/university, EFL teachers in general and college/university ones in particular throughout Vietnam are now more or less exploring group work in their classes.

Likewise, teachers of English from Dong Thap University (Dong Thap province, one of the remote areas in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam) are widely implementing pair/group work in the classroom. For these teachers, this type of instructional activity is now useful, and conducting group work in a variety of activities with unfixed group members during a formal class is one of the required competences for a qualified EFL teacher. Few would deny that the ability to conduct group work in the classroom is one thing, but turning it into a productive activity, providing an optimal opportunity for learners to act and meaningfully communicate in English effortlessly is quite another. In other words, English majors in Dong Thap University are generally encouraged to get engaged in group work as much as possible both inside and outside the classroom, but whether or not these students understand the nature and values of group work and enjoy it in effect, and how much they use English in group work as regular practice is still open to questions because little has been known about such questions based on research in Vietnam's setting, particularly from such provincial universities as Dong Thap University. Moreover, previous studies on related issues in EFL classroom such as Ababneh (2017), Alfares (2017), Baghoussi and Ouchdi (2019), Ekmekçi (2018), Ibnian (2012), John (2017), Othman and Murad (2015), Taqi and Al-Nouh (2014) in other countries have yet to gain conclusive results across the board or provide sufficient information about the role of the first language and how these EFL students (who all share the first language such as Vietnamese in the current study) used English while working in group activities or project-based assignments. More studies should, therefore, be done especially on English majors' perceptions of group work and their actual English discourse as well as mother tongue use in group work to provide more evidence for the values of group work in EFL classroom from the learner's point of view in current Vietnamese context particularly. This calling-for-deeper investigation status has motivated the present study as being one of the very first done in Dong Thap University to delve into the concerned issues related to English majors. To its end, the current study was aimed to address three core research questions: (1) *What do English majors at Dong Thap University perceive of group work*? (2) *How much do they use English in group work engagement*? (3) *What do they think about the given suggestions for English speaking deployment in group work?* Answers to these questions can further illuminate the role of group activities now

widely exercised in college EFL classroom (in Vietnam and other countries alike) and its expected effects on the learner regarding their target language development and other relevant gains. Thereby, alternative or modified strategies/techniques could be advocated for teachers to harness this useful tool in language instruction for the sake of the learner.

Literature Review
What is group work? In broader terms, group work comprises any learning tasks or activities that require students to work in *pairs* or *groups/teams of three or more members*. Group work is principally based on *collaborative learning theory*. Cooperative learning (Golub, 1988; Johnson & Johnson, 1990; Slavin, 1995; Smith & MacGregor, 1992) refers to a variety of teaching methods in which students work in small groups to help one another learn academic content; in cooperative classrooms, students are expected to help each other, to discuss and argue with each other, to assess each other's current knowledge and fill in gaps in each other's comprehension, i.e., mutually searching for understanding, solutions, or meanings, or creating a product. It is "a deliberate attempt to take advantage of differing perspectives through the interaction of individuals and their ideas in a reciprocal or alternating action" (Sills, 1988, p.21). Notably, "collaborative learning has as its main feature a structure that allows for student talk: students are supposed to talk with each other....and it is in this talking that much of the learning occurs" (Golub, 1988, p.1). The learner's role in this mode of learning is further modified by Jacob, (2006, as cited in Al-Yaseen, 2014, p.96): (a) facilitator is the member who coordinates the group's works; (b) recorder's responsibility is recording what the group has accomplished; (c) reporter tells others about the group's work; (d) timekeeper helps the group be aware of time constraints, keeps the group on tasks and fills in for missing group members; (e) observer of collaborative skill checks if group members are using a particular collaborative skill deemed critical to the group's interaction. In terms of individual accountability in group work, it involves students' understanding that they will be held accountable for their contributions to the group, that free-loading will not be tolerated, and that everyone must contribute (Gillies, 2007). Meanwhile, the teacher's role is "constantly on the move: monitoring the group's progress, offering advice if the youngsters seem confused or stuck, suggesting alternatives if student plans go awry, demonstrating how to behave as a contributing member of the group, and taking care of behavioral problems" (Whitworth, 1988, p.15), and "one must also train students to develop specific collaborative learning skills to ensure that they can work productively and harmoniously in pairs and small groups" (Golub, 1988, p.2).

Concerning the operational procedure, the 5D model should be applied: Direct (the teacher directs students how to go about the group work), Discuss (students discuss among themselves), Develop (students develop the content for presentation), Deliver (students deliver the content in front of the class), and Document (the teacher documents the feedback) (John, 2017, p.7).

Group work benefits in the language classroom
For its various advantages in second language learning, group work has long been supported by pedagogical arguments (Long & Porter, 1985). Harmer (1991) believes that group work facilitates students in readily taking part in activities and reducing anxiety to promote language fluency in language classes. Additionally, Brown (2001) confirms that group work provides a context in which individuals help each other; it is a method of helping groups as well as helping individuals; and it can enable individuals and groups to influence and change personal, group, and

organizational and community problems. In the same line, Alfares (2017) states that group work benefits language learners in the learning process from cognitive, emotional, and motivational aspects. Groups are helpful for students because of its independence, thanks to the encouragement from learners to learners. Language learning can be promoted by group activities in the following ways (Long & Porter, 1985): (1*) Language input*: Group work is one of the most valuable sources of input if it is properly handled; (2) *Fluency*: Students attain fluency in the use of language items already learned; (3) *Communication strategies*: Students learn strategy of (i) negotiations to control input (seeking information and conformation, checking information, repetition); (ii) keeping a conversation going in speaking activities. Thus, if English is frequently used in group activities among English majors as much as possible, this will turn out to be a favorable channel for them to improve the target language fluency per se and other social skills related as well.

Possible problems of group work in the classroom and teacher roles

Beebe and Masterson (2003) confirm four following drawbacks: (i) there may be pressure from the group to conform to the majority opinion. Most people do not like conflict and attempt to avoid it when possible. By readily acquiescing to the majority opinion, the individual may agree to a wrong solution just to avoid conflict; (ii) an individual may dominate the discussion. This leads to members not gaining satisfaction from the group because they feel isolated in the decision making process; (iii) some members may rely too heavily on others to do the work. This is one of the most salient problems that face groups. Some members do not pitch in and do not adequately contribute to the group; (iv) it takes more time to work in a group than to work alone. It takes longer to accomplish tasks when working with others. Added to these, students do not always have improvement based on group work (Taqi & Al-Nouh, 2014) and tend to use their first language/mother-tongue (Parrott, 1993). Furthermore, Smith and MacGregor (1992) warn that "for students, learning to learn well in groups doesn't happen overnight" (p.17).

As a consequence, rather than just watch and let students work by themselves during group activities, teachers (Brown, 2001) have to monitor students' progress by moving around the classroom, pausing briefly beside each pair/group, listening to them and noting any language error or communication problems to facilitate their practice as well as help them manage disagreements. Additionally, it is useful for teachers to use a small notebook or a piece of paper on which he or she can jot down any common mistakes. Some of them can be corrected immediately, but some common problems should be reminded for the whole class after finishing the activity.

Thus, though advantageous to language classes, group work is by no means free from any problems, and EFL teachers should be well aware of and get prepared to deal with them promptly and rationally by taking on multiple roles as being not only a planner, organizer, observer, and evaluator but director, motivator, supporter in case problems somehow occur and especially a stimulator for English use on purpose. Teachers should also know that success in classroom group work can transfer its merits to real life because "in teaching our students how to work effectively in a group setting, we are teaching them far more than that day's material; we are teaching them about democracy and about life, and also about how to live more successfully" (Herreman, 1988, p.6).

Methods
Participants
They were all English majors, third-year and fourth students (2018 – 2019 academic year, aged between 20 and 22) from Dong Thap University, speaking Vietnamese as the first language and approximately reaching the intermediate-level proficiency of English or upper-level. They come from different provinces around the Mekong Delta, South of Vietnam. Thus, the participants (with none ever living in an English speaking country) share the social-cultural background, the field of study, learning setting, and years of the age range, which validates the collected data in terms of group homogeneity. Given the 4-year training schedule, the target group was chosen because with more than two years' experience studying at college, i.e., more than half-way program completion; they are presumably familiar with working in groups and able to speak English comfortably in group interactions on both general/everyday and specific academic topics.

Research instruments and data collection
To obtain sufficient data for the target research questions, two instruments were used in the current study.

(1) **The questionnaire**: It was designed by the current authors and was based on a theoretical framework and previous studies. In the current study, the questionnaire was aimed to measure the target group's perceptions of group work activities and their use of English while working in groups across different subject classes in their major training program. After two times of revision based on the experienced colleagues' comments and suggestions, the final questionnaire version (in Vietnamese for ease and clarity in thorough comprehension to the participants) includes three main clusters of 17 items as follows:

Table 1. *Questionnaire items division*

	Contents	**Items**
Cluster 1	Perceptions of group work	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Cluster 2	English speaking in group work	6, 7, 8,
Cluster 3	Given suggestions: -for students -for teachers	9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18 15, 16, 17

In this 5-point scale questionnaire, the participants were asked to choose their answers by marking individual items, ranging from *Strongly disagree/Never (1), Disagree/Rarely (2), Unsure/Sometimes (3), Agree/Often* (4) to *Strongly agree/Very often (5)*. All scale values are then summed to give overall positive scales. Therefore, it is decided that the high score on the scale will imply the positive perception/belief/engagement, i.e., items would be scored 5 for "strongly agree/very often" down to 1 for "strongly disagree/never".

The questionnaire was administered right in the classroom during the regular break time on campus. Permission from the teachers in charge of the classes and consent from the students was fully obtained before the questionnaire administration. On mutual arrangement, the researchers came to each class, explaining the purpose of the questionnaire and delivering its copies to the students (who were allowed to ask questions concerning the questionnaire and decline

to complete it just in case). It took them approximately 10 minutes for completion. The completed copies were then collected. After two weeks of administration, a total of 150 completed copies were qualified for data analysis.

The data results were computed to confirm its reliability with the Statistics Package for Social Science (SPSS 20.0 for Windows). The Reliability Analysis on all the 5-point scale items showed that the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was acceptable (α=.835).

(2) *Interview*

The interview was applied to collect further evidence/confirmation for the target research questions. The participants were randomly selected from 150 students who previously participated in the questionnaire and were invited for the interview. Upon their consent, ten students took part in the interview with five semi-structured questions (see below). The interviews were done on campus (Dong Thap University), face-to-face, one by one, on adequate arrangements for the students' convenience and avoiding possible distractions. The Vietnamese language was used for ease and sufficient clarity in interaction. Each interview took approximately 7 minutes and was recorded for later analysis. One week later, the interview transcriptions were written in Vietnamese were sent back to each interviewee by email for confirmation before further treatments.

Findings
Questionnaire results

Table 2. *Students' perceptions of group work*

No.	Questionnaire items	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	In your opinion, group work in the classroom is essential and helpful.	3.7200	.80368
2	You currently enjoy group work activities in the classroom.	4.0067	.66045
3	In your opinion, group work outside the classroom is also useful.	4.0467	.81378
4	Group work is more beneficial if all group members can communicate in English.	4.1800	.61382
5	Successful communication in group work will encourage students to foster their English learning.	4.3333	.58696

With the mean scores of all five items between 3.7 and 4.0 (out of 5), Table 2 displays that students have positive perceptions about its necessity and benefits that group work brings to the EFL classroom. Notably, the highest mean scores are recorded in Item 4 (M=4.18) and Item 5 (M=4.33) with small standard deviations of 0.61 and 0.58, respectively, showing that they all agree with the good impacts resulting from group members' mutual attempt to communicate in English.

The following is the students' reflections about their engagement and English use in group work activities across English majored classes:

Table 3. *Students' English speaking in group work*

No.	Questionnaire items	Mean	Std. Deviation
6	In English majored classes, you participate in group work activities	4.2867	.70793
7	Do you speak English in group work activities?	3.1000	.88044
8	In your observation, students only speak Vietnamese in group work	4.2400	.58711

With a mean score of 4.28, Item 6 indicates a high frequency of student participation in group work activities; however, English speaking seemed not to be optimally used in group interaction (Item 7, M=3.1). In other words, the Vietnamese language is usually found in group communication among the target students, which is confirmed by Item 8 (M=4.2).

However, Item 18 (Table 4) earned a high mean score (M=4.26 with a small standard deviation of 0.63), signaling that students now understand the benefits of speaking English while working in groups.

Table 4. *Students' opinion on given suggestions*

No.	Questionnaire items	Mean	Std. Deviation
9	In your opinion, students should reduce the amount of speaking Vietnamese and increase English use in group work inside and outside the classroom	4.1867	.62805
10	Students should develop the habit of speaking English in group work	4.2333	.70869
11	Students should develop the habit of speaking English in group work beginning with short, useful utterances such as "*Stand up; Come here; Let's get started; Let's discuss ...; I'll speak first; Now your turn; Do you agree?; What about you?; What makes you think so?; We have only 5 minutes for discussion;....*"	4.0533	.78396
12	Students should self-compel one another to speak English in group work	4.2400	.66231
13	Students should assist one another how to improve English speaking in group communication	3.9333	.68215
14	Students should be self-regulated by the principle of equal English speaking opportunity for all group members in group work	4.1067	.56931
15	Teachers should encourage students to speak English in group work both inside and outside the classroom	4.1067	.56931
16	Teachers should grant some sort of rewards or added grades to those exclusively speaking English in group work	4.2800	.56900
17	Teachers should apply some sort of fine or reduced grades to those only speaking Vietnamese in group work	4.1533	.68284
18	From now on you will increase English speaking in group work	4.2667	.63104

As can be seen in Table 4, all the items but one (Item 13, M=3.93) score above 4 (out of 5 points). Thus, almost all of the students appear to perceive well what they should do to improve English communication in group work (Items 9 – 14, 18), and they also mutually agree on expecting

teachers to give encouragement and apply some practical measures to foster English speaking in group activities (Item 15 – 17).

Interview results

As mentioned above, ten students who previously completed the questionnaire were randomly invited to join the interview by answering five questions raised by the researcher. Before the interview, they were informed of the purpose of the interview and that their answers had nothing to do with their learning outcomes (before or after the interview). Additionally, their names were strictly kept confidential. Upon their consent, the arrangement for each student was made to suit their conveniences, and the interviews were fully recorded by a smart-phone for later analysis. The interview was administered on campus and in Vietnamese for absolute clarity and comprehension between the interviewer and interviewee. The interviewed students were chronologically coded by S1 (Student 1), S2 (Student 2), S3 (Student 3), and so on, respectively.

Table 5. *Students' answers in summary*

Code	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5
S1	Yes; for socialization and problem-solving	Yes; for better understanding and scoring added	Most Vietnamese; at times English as requested by the teacher	Yes; helpful for English speaking, listening skills	Yes.
S2	Yes; for mutual support, ideas shared	Yes; showing responsibility	Some English, most Vietnamese as a habit	Yes; helpful for soft skills, error correction	Yes.
S3	Yes; for sharing ideas, a better understanding	Yes; showing confidence, soft skills improved	Most Vietnamese to express complex ideas	Yes; helpful for error correction in pronunciation	Yes.
S4	Yes; for speaking and listening skills improved	Yes; showing responsibility	Most Vietnamese, challenging to express in English	Yes; making it a habit; the developing responsive ability	Yes.
S5	Yes; creating an English speaking environment	Yes; enjoy using English communication	At first English, then Vietnamese mostly	Yes, definitely	Yes.
S6	Yes; helpful for problem-solving more quickly	Yes; improving communication skills	Most Vietnamese for lack of English vocabulary	Yes, for English fluency	Yes.
S7	Yes; learning experiences from others	Yes; finishing assignments more quickly	Most Vietnamese for quick expressions and responses, at times English	Yes; for error correction in pronunciation and grammar	Yes.
S8	Yes; for supplementing one another	Yes; sharing experiences	Most Vietnamese, difficult for expressing in English	Yes, for improving communication skills; error correction	Yes.
S9	Yes; speaking skills in public	Yes; solving problems more quickly	Most Vietnamese as a habit	Yes, forming a habit, for error correction	Yes.
S10	Yes; improving soft skills, speaking, listening skills	Yes; showing responsibility	Most Vietnamese, challenging to express in English	Yes, forming a habit, for error correction	Yes.

Question 1: *Do you think group work activities (between 2 – 5 students) both inside and outside the classroom are necessary and useful to English learning? Why?*

Question 2: *Do you actively participate in group work activities assigned by the teacher in class? Why?*

Question 3: *In your observation, do most of the students speak English or Vietnamese when working in groups? Why?*

Question 4: *Do you think students should speak English when working in groups to improve their communication in English?*

Question 5: *Should you increase speaking English when working in groups in the coming time?*

Discussions and Implications

As presented above, the current study attempted to address three research questions: (1) *What do English majors at Dong Thap University think of group work*? (2) *How much do they use English in group work engagement*? (3) *What do they think about the given suggestions for English speaking deployment in group work?* On the results obtained from the questionnaire and interview data collection instruments, the answers to the research questions are discussed below.

First, the target students generally perceive the nature and significance of group activities inside and outside the classroom. Four out of 5 items in Cluster 1 (Table 2) achieved high mean scores, and all ten interviewed students gave their positive responses to Question 1 (Table 5). Therefore, they reported that they enjoyed group work (Item 2) and actively participated in group activities administered by teachers (Item 6 with M=4.28, Table 3; Question 2 with 10 Yes responses). This is mostly because they solidly understand that this type of collaborative learning performance is an opportunity for them to practice and enhance English communication (Item 4, 5), especially speaking-listening skills (S4, S5, S9, S10), cultivating soft skills (S10), showing confidence and responsibility (S2, S4, S10), sharing ideas and experiences (S2, S3, S7, S8), better-solving problems, finishing assignments quickly (S1, S6, S7) and so on. Thus, at the second half of the training program and after more than two years' experience of working at college, third/fourth-year English majors at Dong Thap University (current Vietnamese context) hold positive attitudes toward group work and recognize its multiple values of verbal communication, collaboration, social bonds, mutual benefits, and personality development. This again definitely confirms the substantive merits specifically attributed to group work in language classroom as having been repeatedly highlighted by many scholars and researchers in the language education line (Al-Yaseen, 2014; Brown, 2001; Gillies, 2007; Harmer, 1991; Hornby, 2009; Long & Porter,1985; Slavin, 1995, Zhang, 2010; etc.). The students' positive attitudes to group work found in the current study are also in line with previous research reported by Meteetham (2001) in Thailand, Taqi and Al-Nouh (2014) in Kuwait, Alfares (2017) in Saudi Arabia, Ababneh (2017) in Jordan and Masruddin (2018) in Indonesia. Noticeably, 7/10 interviewed students (S2, S3, S4, S7, S8, S9, S10 – Question 4) revealed that group work participation helped them correct errors in English pronunciation and grammar. This backs up the suggestion that "interaction in the classroom may help language learners to gain the appropriate feedback that will enable them to identify grammatical errors, thus leading them to produce accurate utterances in the target language" (Alfares, 2017, p.253), and further implies that the students can rely on their partners'

resources rather than exclusively on the teacher, thus leading their way to increasing collaborative and autonomous learning, which is one of the ultimate goals of tertiary foreign language education.

Secondly, as seen above, although the students' perception and engagement in group activities are positive, English communication/speaking is rather (if not *very*) limited. As found in Table 3, Item 7 (*Do you speak English in group work activities?*) gains the lowest mean score (M=3.1), while Item 8 (*In your observation, students only speak Vietnamese in group work*) wins a high mean score (M=4.24). Added to this, the ten interview responses to Question 3 (Table 5) primarily go to Vietnamese rather than English. The interview discovers that Vietnamese mostly used as a communicative medium in group activities was due to the students' established habit for years (S2, S9), a lack of available English vocabulary (S6), an inability to express complex, challenging ideas in English (S3, S4, S8, S10) and an ease to produce quick expressions/responses (S7). These accounts about the reasons why learners of EFL/SL (L2) use their mother tongue/first language (L1) in the English classroom have been reported in the previous studies (Al Sharaeai, 2012; Ekmekçi, 2018; Paker & Karaağaç, 2015; Parrott, 1993). Other reasons for L1 use (Choffey 2001, as cited in Ekmekçi, 2018) are (1) Students' L1 is a means of relating the learning activities to the students' experiences, (2) If students come across some specific lexical items between the mother tongue and target language culture, they will learn how to deal with, (3) L1 use enables students to establish a kind of strong relationship between L1 and L2. There is no doubt that L1 can serve as an effective mediator in the second language (L2) classroom, especially at the early stages of L2 learning ever seen in the Grammar Translation Method. However, since the participants in the present study are all third/fourth-year English majors with the intermediate or upper level of English proficiency, they should maximize the target language as much as possible for both accuracy and fluency reinforced and to gradually free themselves from relying on L1 too much. Past research has proved that "the more the learners hear the target language, and are exposed to it, the sooner they will learn and internalize the language" (Ekmekçi, 2018, p.75). This, as we – teachers of English - already know, is the ultimate aims of the Communicative and Task-based Language Teaching Methods, which have been widely applied throughout Vietnam over the past years. As a result, it would be far more beneficial if English communication is optimally deployed when it comes to group activities among EFL learners in Vietnam and in other countries, where English speaking environments are scarce outside the classroom.

Thirdly, though Vietnamese is still very often used by English majors, the current study shows very promising potential. As found in Table 4 above, the mean scores of all items are high, around 4 (out of 5). Also, all interview responses to questions 4 and 5 (Table 5) are affirmative. It demonstrates that virtually all the students at this point in their training program (the second half-way) do understand the importance of English communication. They all agree on making attempts to take concrete actions like "*reduce the amount of speaking Vietnamese and increase English use in group work inside and outside classroom; develop the habit of speaking English in group work beginning with short, useful utterances; self-compel one another to speak English in group work; be self-regulated by the principle of equal English speaking opportunity for all group members in group work*" and so on. Concerning classroom instruction, they also agree that teachers should "*encourage students to speak English in group work both inside and outside classroom; should grant some sort of rewards or added grades to those exclusively speaking English in group work; apply some sort of fine or reduced grades to those only speaking Vietnamese in group work,*" etc.

These, therefore, not only reflect the students' awareness of the necessity to use English in communication but also serve as implications for teachers and students of English to optimize the space of group work mediation for the target language acquisition and other humanistic benefits. Accordingly, the current study strongly argues that if both teacher and student harmoniously keep right on the shared track, minimizing the noted problem of L1 overuse (Parrott, 1993), the expected fruits of the two parties' effort would be enormous and rewarding.

Further suggestions for consideration, especially at *Document phase* done in classroom (the teacher documents the feedback, [John, 2017, p.7]) are that teachers should exactly *document* students' presentation/reports of group work results by not just listening but jot down main points/key-words from their presentations or even better write them clearly on the board so that all class can easily view; then read loudly and slowly for the entire class to pay attention, checking for confirmations within the same group and across-groups or calling for further opinions by purposely inviting weaker students or those who seem to speak little in the group. Then if time is permitted, the entire class should come up with a shared list of solutions/agreements/ideas in discussion. Thus, virtually all are engaged, and each has opportunity to use English and develop cognitively in an English speaking environment meaningfully, ensuring "the voice of every group member is heard" (Merchant, 2011, p.296), and creating "a collaborative environment is nurtured by a teacher who considers everyone to be a resource, which allows risks to be taken and mistakes to be made, and who doesn't always have the right answer" (Gilles & VanDover, 1988, p.31). Behind that, during such a course of social interactions, in some way, students will better sense the significance of group, class, community, and individual contributions in the process of getting things done in human life mutually via the dual principle of independence and interdependence.

Conclusion
The current study attempted to probe how third/fourth-year English majors perceive of group work and how they use English in group activities at Dong Thap University. The obtained findings are very gratifying because the target students generally got positive perceptions of its benefits and further ones if they spoke English rather than Vietnamese in current group work practices both inside and outside the classroom. They also recognized what they should do to increase English communication in group activities. The findings from the current study provide further information about the role of group work in the EFL classroom of the current Vietnamese context. Accordingly, it strongly advocates English speaking in group activities performed by English majors as such to maximize its language learning advantages and other humanistic merits for English majors. This does not end there but calls for further studies on larger scales and more empirically in the field throughout the country of Vietnam as well as beyond to (1) test those initial suggestions given in the current study or to (2) investigate in which cases English use in group work will genuinely help and when students will likely decline to the L1 resource.

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