

USING EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE GRADE 8 STUDENTS' ENGLISH-SPEAKING SKILLS

Nguyen Thi Hong Chuyen¹ and Le Ngoc Mai²

¹Faculty of Foreign Languages Education, Thai Nguyen University of Education, Viet Nam

²Tan Phu Secondary School, Viet Nam

<https://doi.org/10.54922/IJEHSS.2025.1089>

Received: 26 August 2025/Published: 04 October 2025

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the enhancements in students' speaking skills, focusing on fluency and coherence, and to explore the attitudes of class 8A students at Tan Phu Secondary School (32 students) through an extracurricular speaking intervention. An action intervention model was applied, where students engaged in collaborative activities such as presentations, simulated interviews, and debate clubs. Speaking ability was measured using pre- and post-tests targeting fluency and coherence, while students' attitudes were assessed via a questionnaire covering cognition, affective, and behavioral components. The results indicated a significant increase in students' average scores, from 6.13 to 6.86. All students reported positive experiences, they felt more confident presenting in front of the class, experienced less stress, and expressed a desire for teachers to continue using this teaching approach. The study highlighted the effectiveness of pedagogical strategies in creating an experiential learning environment that reduces academic pressure and enhances engagement. Moreover, extracurricular speaking activities demonstrated potential for developing other language skills, including writing, listening, and reading, thereby strengthening students' overall competence in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.

Keywords: Extracurricular Activities, English Speaking Skills, Attitudes, Effectiveness, Action Research.

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized world, English has become one of the most widely spoken languages, with over seven hundred million people using it worldwide, underscoring its importance (Ethnologue, 2021). Learning English offers many benefits. Firstly, it enables effective communication and easy travel, bridging gaps between people from different countries. This is especially valuable in global business, where English serves as a common language for international collaboration (Crystal, 2012). Secondly, proficiency in English is a significant career asset, offering opportunities to engage with customers and colleagues worldwide without language barriers. Thirdly, English is the dominant language in media, publications, and academic research, making it vital for accessing information and resources related to one's field (Harmer, 2007).

Speaking skill is the most essential skill to accumulate overseas or second language studying. As defined by Alford Council of International English & Literature Journal (ACIELJ), Brown and Yuke (1983) say, "Speaking is the skill that the scholars might be judged upon most in actual lifestyles situations". Despite its importance, speaking skills are frequently overlooked in EFL classrooms, where traditional teaching methods prioritize reading and writing. This mismatch has

resulted in limited opportunities for students to practice oral communication in meaningful contexts, leading to gaps in their ability to use English effectively in real-life situations.

Extracurricular activities (ECAs), as supplementary to formal education, offer unique opportunities to address these gaps. ECAs create dynamic, learner-centered environments that foster practical language use, encourage collaboration, and motivate learners. While international studies (Vy Dang, 2023) have highlighted the broader benefits of ECAs such as improved teamwork, problem-solving skills, and increased engagement. There is a lack of research specifically examining their impact on developing English speaking skills, particularly in Vietnamese secondary schools.

At Tan Phu Secondary School, enhancing students' English-speaking skills have been compounded by exam-focused teaching approaches and limited exposure to communicative practice. This context underscores the need for innovative, student-centered approaches like ECAs. Furthermore, understanding the attitude of students is essential to implementing ECAs effectively. Teachers' strategies and students' experiences must align to create a supportive environment conducive to improving speaking skills.

Therefore, this study aims to bridge theoretical and practical gaps by investigating the effectiveness of extracurricular activities in enhancing English speaking skills among Grade 8 students at Tan Phu Secondary School. It also explores the attitudes of students to provide actionable insights for educators.

The author believes that the research of the thesis "Using Extracurricular Activities to enhance English speaking skills for grade 8 students: Action research at a Secondary school." can help flexibly organize teaching activities in and out of class, promote student interaction. Thus, teachers have more time to improve the speaking performance of students participating in class.

To achieve the objectives stated, the study is meant to find out the answer to the following two research questions:

Question 1: To what extent does the use of extracurricular activities enhance grade 8 students' English-speaking skills?

Question 2: What are the students' attitudes towards the use of extracurricular activities in enhancing English speaking skills?

2. RESEARCH METHODS

2.1. Participants

The target sample of the research consisted of 32 students (20 Females and 12 Males) from grade 8A at Tan Phu Secondary school. Although they have had six years of learning English, their English proficiency was at medium level. They are keen on English but sometimes they have not reached the result that they expected. They are friendly and very willing to join the study.

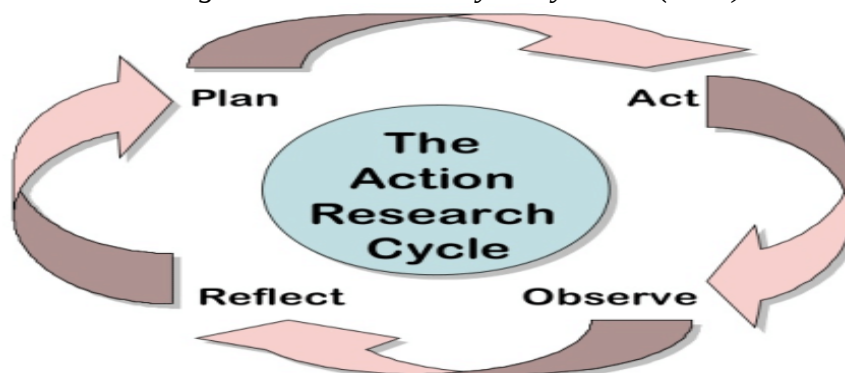
The study was conducted among 4 English teachers at Tan Phu Secondary school. All of the teachers are well-trained and rather professionally experienced. They have many opportunities to upgrade their teaching and a lot of teaching facilities as well as materials to facilitate their work. They are helpful, friendly and dedicated teachers. Most of them want to devote their whole lives for teaching. They all have a great desire to acquire knowledge of how to teach English well as well as how to widen their English background. Also, they are always willing to help their students with difficulties in learning.

2.2. Research design

The study employed action research, a participatory and iterative process aimed at improving educational practices. Action research is characterized by its cyclical nature, involving stages of planning, action, observation, and reflection (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). Adopting a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, this study explored the impact of extracurricular activities (ECAs) on students' English speaking skills. Mixed-methods research provides a comprehensive understanding of the research problem by integrating numerical data with descriptive insights (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

To represent the process of action research, the study employs the classical cyclical model comprising four stages: Planning, Acting, Observing, and Reflecting, inspired by Burns's (2010) approach. The "Act" and "Observe" phases are combined to streamline the process, addressing constraints of time and resources. This model facilitates systematic investigation, insight generation, and meaningful instructional improvements. This framework aligns with widely used models in education research, such as the work of Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), which provides a structured and practical approach to conducting the research, as illustrated in Figure 1 as below:

Figure 1: The 4-Stage Action Research Cycle by Burns (2010)



2.3. Data collection Instruments

2.3.1. Pre-test and Post-test

The study used pre-tests and post-tests to assess the enhancement of English speaking skills among 32 students of class 8A. For the pre-test, the researcher selected questions based on the Grade 8 English Textbook (I Learn Smart World). This test was administered at the beginning of the semester to establish a baseline for students' speaking abilities. The test consisted of 6 questions designed to assess fluency and coherence. Each pre-test was conducted in 20-minute sessions, with students grouped into small groups (4 students per group), with each group having the opportunity to complete the test individually. The questions ranged from easy to more challenging levels, appropriate to the students' A2-level language proficiency (Council of Europe, 2001).

The post-course test was held at the end of the semester, after all extracurricular activities had been completed. This test included six questions based on the combined content of the following topics: Unit 5: Science and technology, Unit 6: Life on other planets, Unit 7: Teens, and Unit 8:

Traditions of ethnic groups in Vietnam. The test was selected at the KET A2 equivalent level on the topics of the teaching unit. Students participated in the speaking test in groups. The speaking content included three activities: (1) presentations, (2) simulated interviews, and (3) debate clubs. All groups had 10 minutes of preparation time to discuss and exchange ideas, followed by 20 minutes to perform the speaking tasks.

The pre- and post-course tests were selected from the KET A2 test pool with consistent format, content, and difficulty level to ensure reliable and valid results. Each test was graded on a 10-point scale, based on fluency and coherence using the A2 scale of the CEFR. Thus, in this study, the researcher participated in organizing teaching and learning, implemented the four steps according to the Burn model (2010), and was responsible for testing, evaluating, and monitoring students through the extracurricular speaking activities described above to ensure the reliability of the data in enhancing speaking skills and addressing research question 1.

2.3.2. Questionnaires

The researcher conducted a survey of students' attitudes toward the use of extracurricular activities to improve the English speaking skills of Grade 8A students participating in the intervention model, using a questionnaire. Student information was kept confidential; learners could fill in their personal information in the questionnaire or leave it blank. The survey items were constructed on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, specifically ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree." The questionnaire items were based on Vizconde (2006) and included three specific components as follows: The cognitive component includes nine survey questions (questions 1 to 9) to assess students' perceptions after experiencing the learning intervention using extracurricular activities to improve English speaking skills, focusing on fluency and coherence. The affective component includes three survey questions (questions 10 to 12) to investigate learners' feelings after completing the intervention using extracurricular activities to improve English speaking skills. The behavioral component includes two survey questions (questions 13 and 14) to examine students' intentions and wishes after completing the intervention using extracurricular activities to improve English speaking skills.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The results of pre-test and post-test

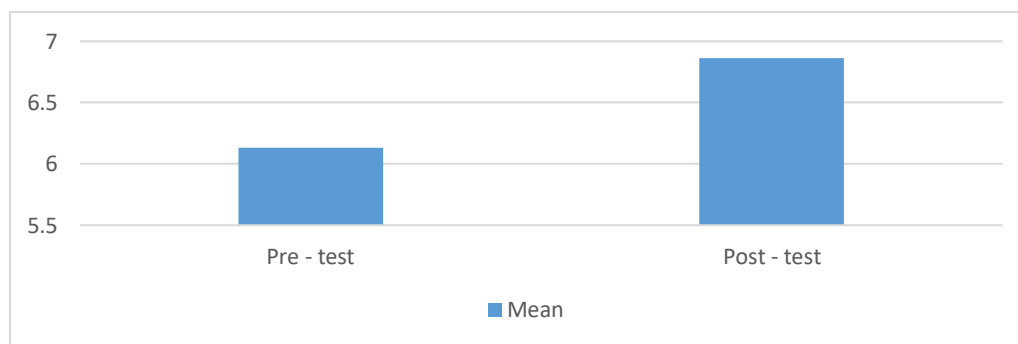
The researcher compared similar pairs of data based on the criteria for assessing students' speaking skills. The comparison was made through two pre- and post-tests collected from class 8A of Tan Phu Secondary School, evaluating students' English-speaking ability through the traditional teaching method versus the teaching method with extracurricular activities intervention. The results are shown as follows:

Table 1. Comparison results of pre-test and post-test scores

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre - test	32	5.0	7.5	6.125	.8231
Post - test	32	5.5	8.5	6.859	.8056

To show the difference in scores through the pre-test and post-test, the researcher compared the criteria on SPSS data in the form of a chart of the average scores achieved by students, specifically, as follows:

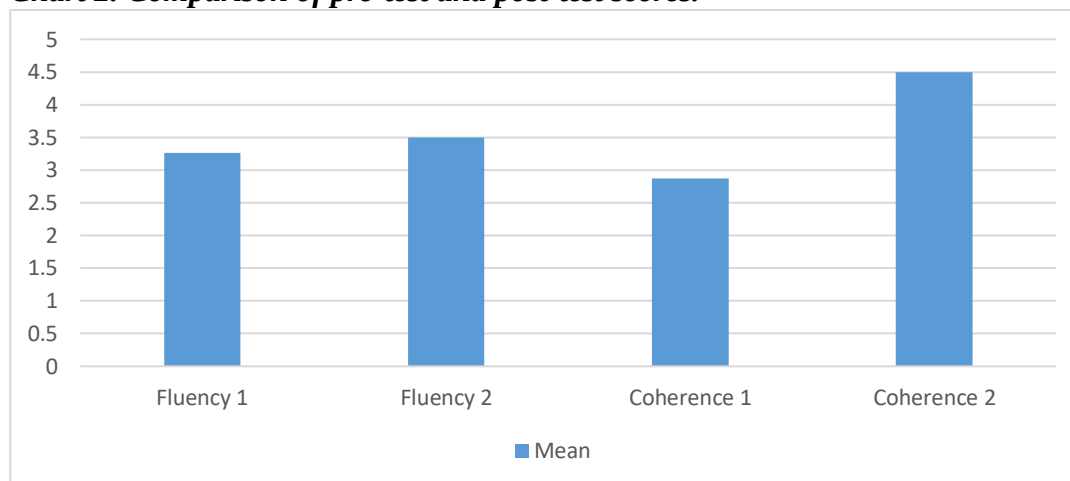
Chart 1. Comparison of mean between pre-test and post-test



Thus, based on the results of input data analysis from the score sheet organized by the researcher for teaching and assessment, it can be seen from Table 1 that students' scores changed significantly through the pre-test and post-test assessments. The minimum score of the pre-test was 5.0, while the minimum score of the post-test increased by 0.5, reaching 5.5. The maximum score of the pre-test was 7.5, while in the post-test it reached 8.5. The mean score shown in Chart 1 increased from 6.13 in the pre-test to 6.86 in the post-test. These analyzed data all had reliable standard deviations according to Fraenkel et al. (2019), as the standard deviations were all below 1.5, specifically, the pre-test had an SD = 0.82 and the post-test had an SD = 0.81. Therefore, students' speaking results were enhanced due to the intervention of teaching activities, with extracurricular activities guided by teachers to support students' active participation in class.

Table 2. Results of comparing t-test data pairs.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Fluency 1	31	2.5	4.0	3.258	.4808
Fluency 2	31	3.0	4.5	3.500	.4472
Coherence 1	31	2.0	3.5	2.871	.4649
Coherence 2	31	2.5	4.0	3.355	.4689

Chart 2. Comparison of pre-test and post-test scores.

Thus, based on the results in Table 2 and Chart 2, the researcher found that:

Firstly, the fluency criterion changed significantly between the pre-test and post-test. Specifically, the students' scores in the pre-test were minimum = 2.5, maximum = 4.0 on a maximum scale of 5 points, mean = 3.26, SD = 0.48. After the intervention, the scores for this criterion changed significantly in speaking fluency, with a minimum of 3.0, a maximum of 4.5, mean = 3.55, SD = 0.45. This showed that students made efforts to improve their speaking ability, with the average score increasing slightly by 0.29 points in the post-test.

Secondly, the coherence criterion before the intervention indicated that students' speaking ability was at a relatively low level, specifically, minimum = 2.0, maximum = 3.5 on the maximum scale of 5 points, mean = 2.87, SD = 0.45. After the intervention using extracurricular activities to improve English speaking skills, students' speaking ability was significantly enhanced, with a minimum of 2.5, maximum of 4.0, mean = 3.36, SD = 0.47. Before the intervention, students were still afraid of crowds and had difficulty focusing on the main speaking points, which led some students to speak without sticking to the main point. After completing the intervention, through the three extracurricular teaching activities presentations, simulated interviews, and debate clubs students were able to interact, discuss, and debate freely. Teachers supported students to approach the speaking content with the right focus and the correct topic, which helped students enjoy speaking and increased interaction during speaking lessons.

4.1.2. Data from the questionnaire

After the end of the speaking skills teaching intervention, the researcher distributed a questionnaire to collect students' opinions on their attitudes when participating in speaking classes through extracurricular activities aimed at enhancing English speaking skills in two aspects, including fluency and coherence. The content collected quantitative data through the survey results of each student on the Likert scale from 1 to 5, ranging from completely disagree to completely agree. Thus, 32 students participating in the experimental class completed this assessment survey in three aspects: cognition, affective, and behavior of the learners, specifically:

Table 3. Survey results of the students' attitudes

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Cognitive component					
1. I feel more motivated to practice speaking English.	0%	0%	0%	31.25%	68.78%
2. I can express my ideas clearly and logically in English.	0%	0%	0%	21.88%	78.12%
3. My speaking ability enhances significantly.	0%	0%	0%	46.88%	53.12%
4. I feel that my speaking speed is more fluent.	0%	0%	0%	28.13%	71.87%
5. I do not feel nervous or anxious when speaking English.	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
6. I am less afraid of making mistakes when speaking.	0%	0%	0%	40.63%	59.37%
7. I feel that my ability to interact with my classmates in speaking activities is better.	0%	0%	0%	21.88%	78.12%
8. I feel that the content I convey is appropriate for the communication context.	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
9. I can speak English appropriately to the required content and with less hesitation.	0%	0%	0%	31.25%	68.78%
Affective component					
10. I feel comfortable with the content presented in extracurricular activities.	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
11. I feel excited about the extracurricular activities.	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
12. I am confident to participate in debate on the topic.	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Behavioral component					
13. I am interested in extracurricular English speaking activities.	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
14. I hope to continue learning English speaking through extracurricular activities in the future.	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%

Data from Table 3 shows that the students expressed positive opinions, either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the method of teaching speaking skills based on extracurricular activities, specifically:

For the cognitive component, the results showed that students' motivation to learn English speaking was significantly enhanced. Specifically, 31.25% of students agreed, and 68.78% of

students strongly agreed that they felt motivated to prepare for and participate in speaking in front of the class. They no longer felt afraid of speaking in front of a crowd and could freely express their opinions on the speaking content for example, through the debate club, to express right or wrong views, agree or disagree, or refute the opinions of classmates; or through presentation activities, which helped students' bond with each other, freely discuss, and support each other to prepare good speaking content appropriate to the topic. These activities also helped students supplement knowledge related to speaking skills, such as vocabulary and word structure, thereby making the speaking process more fluent. Additionally, 21.88% of students agreed, and 78.12% of students strongly agreed with the above viewpoint. Therefore, 48.66% of students agreed, and 53.12% of students strongly agreed that their English-speaking skills had improved significantly when they participated in speaking lessons through extracurricular activities.

When participating in the survey to evaluate speaking speed, 28.13% of students agreed, and 71.87% of students strongly agreed that their speaking fluency was enhanced through the teacher's extracurricular teaching method. All students (100%) strongly agreed that they were less anxious and afraid when participating in speaking classes. They could freely participate in debates, speak through interviews, and present on content topics as assigned, receiving support from teachers when necessary. They were supported by teachers to correct mistakes, so they were no longer shy when speaking in front of the class. Specifically, 40.63% of students agreed, and 59.37% of students strongly agreed with this viewpoint. In addition, through extracurricular speaking activities organized in groups, students significantly changed their interactions with the class and classmates when participating in English speaking activities. 21.88% of students agreed, and 78.12% of students strongly agreed that they had made positive changes in these aspects during the process of exchanging and participating in discussions. All students participating in class 8A strongly agreed that they could access the speaking content coherently and accurately according to the topics assigned by the teacher. They increased their attention and concentration to complete their individual speaking tasks well and enhanced the knowledge needed to develop their speaking skills.

Next, the researcher assessed the students' attitudes through the affective component. The results showed that all students (100%) felt comfortable, relaxed, and confident when participating in the classes. They experienced a more ideal learning environment through extracurricular speaking teaching methods and were confident in supplementing and improving the necessary knowledge about speaking skills.

Finally, the researcher assessed students' attitudes through the behavior of class 8A when participating in the intervention class aimed at enhancing speaking skills through extracurricular activities. The results showed that all students (100%) expressed their passion as well as their intention to improve their English-speaking skills through extracurricular speaking activities. These activities helped them feel comfortable, and their ability to absorb knowledge caused less pressure in improving their speaking skills.

3.4. Discussion

The findings from both the pre-test and post-test clearly reveal that extracurricular activities (ECAs) had a positive and measurable effect on students' English-speaking ability. The improvement was consistent across all 32 participants, with score increases ranging from +0.8 to +1.4 points. This means that every student, regardless of their starting level, showed some level of progress. The overall average post-test score was significantly higher than the pre-test, showing that the ECAs did not just help a few individuals but contributed to the progress of the group as a whole. This pattern aligns with findings from Alruwilia and Elsaywy (2024), who also reported that learners' speaking skills improved significantly following story-based extracurricular tasks.

Qualitative data from questionnaires reinforced these observations. Students reported that they felt "more confident" and "less afraid of making mistakes" after the program. Several mentioned that before the intervention, they hesitated to speak because they were worried about incorrect grammar or limited vocabulary. After participating in role-plays, debates, and group discussions, however, they felt more comfortable speaking spontaneously, even if mistakes occurred. This shift in attitude is important because it shows that ECAs lowered students' affective filter, making it easier for them to practice language without the fear of constant evaluation. These findings align with previous research. Alruwilia and Elsaywy (2024) found that story-based extracurricular tasks significantly enhanced EFL learners' fluency and accuracy, while a Vietnamese study also reported strong gains in speaking when students engaged in interactive activities outside the traditional classroom. The similarities suggest that the benefits of ECAs are not limited to one context but can be observed across different educational environments.

The qualitative evidence collected from questionnaires and open-ended responses shows that students' attitudes toward extracurricular activities (ECAs) were overwhelmingly positive. In the post-intervention survey, nearly all students indicated that they found the activities both engaging and beneficial for their English learning. The positive attitudes observed in this study are consistent with previous research. For example, studies conducted in Morocco and other EFL contexts have shown that extracurricular English clubs are generally viewed as motivating, enjoyable, and effective for developing speaking skills. These findings resonate with our students' reflections, as they also emphasized increased interest in English and decreased anxiety. Notably, no participants in our study expressed negative views about the program, which strengthens the conclusion that ECAs are well-received by learners.

In summary, the evidence from both quantitative and qualitative sources demonstrates that ECAs had a strong and positive impact on students' speaking ability. Students became more fluent, more accurate, and more confident, and their speaking improved across different aspects, including vocabulary use, pronunciation, and interactional skills. This confirms that ECAs can serve as an effective complement to classroom instruction, addressing some of the limitations of traditional lessons and providing a practical pathway for students to develop their speaking competence.

4. CONCLUSION

This study has provided compelling evidence that extracurricular activities are not merely supplementary practices but an essential pedagogical strategy for enhancing English-speaking competence among secondary school learners. Through structured yet engaging formats such as debates, storytelling, and drama, students were able to practice language in authentic communicative contexts, leading to measurable improvements in fluency, pronunciation, and

vocabulary use. Equally important, students reported increased confidence, stronger motivation, and reduced anxiety, which together created a more supportive and effective learning environment. At the same time, the study also highlighted certain limitations, particularly in terms of sample size, intervention duration, and assessment methods that call for cautious interpretation and provide a foundation for further inquiry. Suggestions for future research, including longitudinal studies, comparative analyses of different activity types, and broader skill assessments, point to promising avenues for extending the current findings and refining pedagogical practices.

Taken as a whole, the results of this study affirm that integrating extracurricular activities systematically into English instruction can shift language learning from being largely exam-driven and textbook-centered to becoming more communicative, learner-centered, and transformative. For Vietnamese secondary schools, this approach represents a practical and forward-looking path toward equipping students with not only linguistic competence but also the confidence and motivation necessary to use English as a tool for genuine communication in academic, social, and global contexts.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Alruwili, A. A., & Elsayy, H.-E. A. (2024). Story-based extracurricular tasks for improving EFL learners' speaking skills. *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 10(1), 254–268
- [2]. Brown, G. A., & Yule, G. (1983). *Teaching the spoken language*. Cambridge University Press.
- [3]. Burns, A. (2010). *Doing action research in English language teaching: A guide for practitioners*. Routledge.
- [4]. Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- [5]. Crystal, D. (2012). *English as a global language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- [6]. Dang, V. (2023). *Employability development through extracurricular activities: A case study of AIESEC membership* (Bachelor's thesis). Aalto University, School of Business.
- [7]. Ethnologue. (2021). *Languages of the world*. SIL International.
- [8]. Harmer, J. (2007). *The practice of English language teaching* (4th ed.). Longman.
- [9]. Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (1988). *The action research planner* (3rd ed.). Deakin University Press.
- [10]. Vizconde, C. (2006). Attitudes of student teachers towards the use of English as language of instruction for science and mathematics in the Philippines. *The Linguistic Journal*, 1(3), 7–33.