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## Educational research methodology trends of Southeast Asia English major undergraduate theses: A content analysis

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### ABSTRACT

The present research study thoroughly examines the predominant research methodology trends and topics applied in a specific timeframe from 2019 to 2023 in educational research of the online searchable undergraduate theses in English major programs across Southeast Asia, utilizing a comprehensive content analysis approach. By employing qualitative and quantitative research methods, including keyword extraction, topic-specific modeling, and thematic evaluation, our objective is to ascertain the prevailing research methods and the themes from 347 undergraduate downloadable theses that have been investigated. The research findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the prevailing trends in educational research methods within the context of undergraduate thesis projects among English majors in Southeast Asia. This study examines the prevalence of quantitative, qualitative, mixed-methods, and action research methodologies in English language teaching. This analysis explores the possible ramifications of these patterns on the caliber of undergraduate research, English language instruction, and the broader education domain within the given area. This study aims to enhance our comprehension of the growing nature of educational research within the specific academic discipline of Southeast Asia's English major undergraduate theses by providing a detailed analysis of the dynamics of research methodological developments. This publication provides helpful information to researchers, educators, and institutions who aim to improve research mentoring and instruction for undergraduate English majors in Southeast Asia. Furthermore, the findings obtained from this study have the potential to contribute to the enhancement of curriculum design, instructional approaches, and distribution of resources in the English language education

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education has a pivotal role in advancing human growth and societal progress. The education process enables individuals to gain knowledge, cultivate skills, and actively participate in critical analysis, facilitating personal development and making valuable contributions to the socio-economic progress of nations. In the field of education, the language of English holds significant importance as a worldwide means of communication, fostering intercultural comprehension and providing individuals with opportunities to acquire extensive knowledge (Droubi et al., 2023; MacKenzie & Chiang, 2023). According to (Kam, 1998) English language education has emerged as a substantial focus in the Southeast Asian region, which comprises eleven countries: Brunei, Cambodia, East Timor (Timor-Leste), Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Laos, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. This emphasis on English language education reflects the region's increasing importance in the global context, characterized by its diversity and dynamism (Fang & Xu, 2022).

Completing undergraduate theses holds considerable importance within the academic trajectory of students pursuing a degree in English in universities in Southeast Asia (Briceño & Bergey, 2022; Maulina et al., 2021; Winskel, 2013). These theses not only signify the pinnacle of students' scholarly endeavours but also serve as a significant research resource within English language instruction, for instance as a pedagogical innovation (Chigbu et al., 2023; Dafouz et al., 2023; Guo et al., 2021), evidence-based practices (Sahan et al., 2023; Yin et al., 2023), assessment and feedback (Cope et al., 2021; Laverty, 2016), resource development (Lee, 2022; Mukherjee, 2017; Stein et al., 2022), and enhancing broaden culture awareness (CohenMiller et al., 2017; Khan & Takkac, 2021; Maulina et al., 2023). The theses' content and methods can provide valuable insights into current research on educational trends at a regional and international level. Additionally, they can offer practical perspectives on education systems and priorities specific to Southeast Asia (Chigbu et al., 2023; CohenMiller et al., 2017).

The majority of extant literature on trends in educational research methods within the field of English language education tends to focus predominantly on countries in the Western hemisphere. The existing body of literature needs more comprehensive coverage of the distinct patterns and methodologies observed in Southeast Asia, i.e., a region characterized by its own cultural, linguistic, and educational milieu (Bai & Pan, 2008; Hill et al., 2022; Vonkova et al., 2021). Identifying these research gaps holds significant importance for researchers in this field. It serves the purpose of delineating the study's boundaries (McBride & Abramovich, 2022), drawing attention to areas where novel insights can be generated (Parmaxi & Zaphiris, 2020), and ultimately contributing to a more comprehensive comprehension of the prevailing trends in educational research methodology within the context of English language education in Southeast Asia (Hall &



Malmberg, 2020; Maulina, Nasrullah, et al., 2022). To address this deficiency, this study aims to examine the prevailing patterns and themes in educational research methods as seen in the undergraduate theses submitted by English majors in Southeast Asia. Through implementing a systematic content analysis, our objective is to ascertain the prevailing research methodology and themes of fascination among English undergraduates in the specified region. This investigation facilitates comprehension of the dynamic nature of the English language education field, the prevailing concerns and obstacles being tackled, and how students actively participate in research within this academic domain.

The research holds considerable importance due to its ability to provide valuable insights to educators, policymakers, and academics regarding the present condition of English language education in Southeast Asia. Through a comprehensive analysis of the research environment (Beringer & Adomßent, 2008; Jacobson, 2020; Tight, 2016), it is possible to discern the strengths and areas requiring enhancement within the educational system. This discernment can serve as a valuable guide for informing future endeavours in curriculum creation, instructional strategies, and research goals (Droubi et al., 2023; Jaekel et al., 2022; Zhao & Cheah, 2023). Moreover, this research has the potential to provide valuable perspectives on the alignment between English language education in Southeast Asia and global educational trends (Droubi et al., 2023; Rapanta & Felton, 2019; Turnbull et al., 2021; Warf, 2017). This, in turn, can contribute to a more thorough comprehension of the region's position within the international educational community.

The research is organized into distinct areas: method, data analysis, findings, and conclusions. Through the implementation of meticulous content analysis, our objective is to offer a thorough and all-encompassing examination of the prevailing trends in educational research methodologies (Saeed & Al Qunayeer, 2021) within the realm of undergraduate theses pursued by English majors in Southeast Asia. The primary objective of this study is to provide a valuable contribution to the continuing academic conversation surrounding English language teaching (Bonyadi, 2023; Courtright & Mackey, 2020; Maulina, Ignacio, et al., 2022; Wyatt, 2014). Additionally, it aims to provide relevant information to educational stakeholders and encourage subsequent research endeavours to improve the overall quality of educational institutions in the region.

## 2. METHODS

The present study utilizes a content analysis methodology to thoroughly investigate the content of online published undergraduate theses in English language instruction from Southeast Asian universities, covering the period from 2019 to 2023. Using content analysis (Ary et al., 2010) as a methodological approach is suitable for discerning and classifying prevalent patterns in research procedures, subjects, and other pertinent attributes within an extensive data collection.

Subsequently, the whole texts of the chosen studies and publications from the preceding phase were acquired for the purpose of conducting content analysis. It screened for eligibility, resulting in 347 searchable online undergraduate theses in English language education in Southeast Asia using the purposive sampling approach. This method was utilized to ensure the selection of a representative sample. The objective of the sample was to encompass theses from multiple nations within the region to represent a wide range of variation. The data were obtained from repositories affiliated with online resource centers and academic databases. The inclusion criteria were centered on theses generated by individuals majoring in English, with a preference for those completed in the past ten years to encompass contemporary developments. The collected theses were subsequently subjected to coding for many variables, encompassing research themes, research procedures, data-gathering methodologies, sample characteristics, and indications of



academic excellence. The coding process was carried out by researchers who had received appropriate training to maintain a high level of consistency.

Furthermore, the ethical considerations of this study were upheld by implementing measures to safeguard the privacy and anonymity of the writers of the theses, with no disclosure of personally identifiable information. In addition, the validity of content analysis was strengthened by implementing measures to develop inter-coder reliability. This was achieved through rigorous training sessions and regular assessments to guarantee consistency in data coding. Additionally, the data are triangulated using a combination of quantitative and qualitative evaluations, bolstering the study's overall trustworthiness.

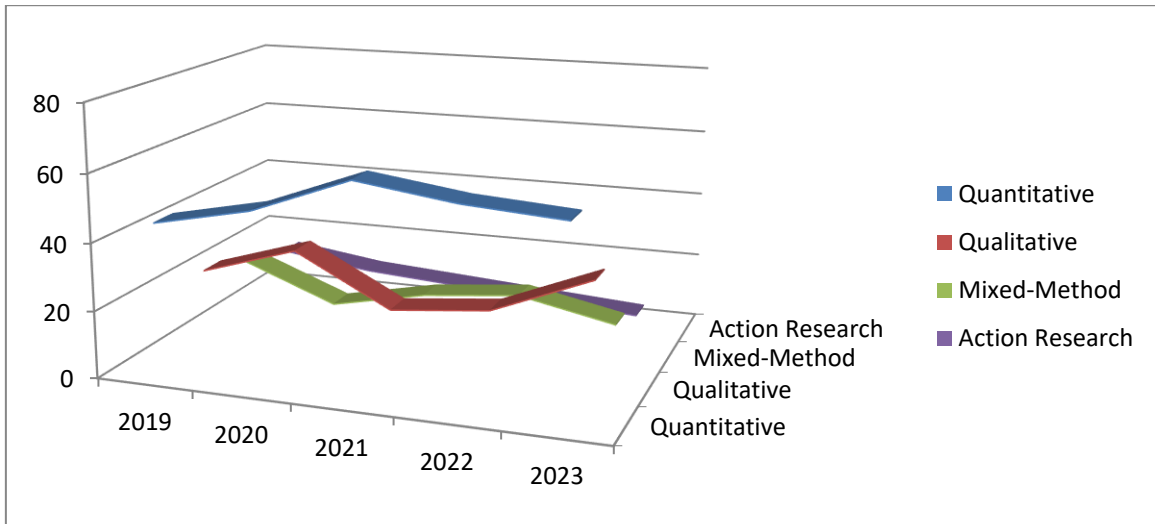
Two methods were employed for the analysis of the data. Thematic areas were found by the utilization of both deductive and inductive approaches. The deductive approach involved the utilization of major topics outlined as part of the Terms of Reference, while the inductive approach involved the identification of additional themes that emerged during the study. Initially, descriptive statistics were employed to quantify patterns in research methodology, study topics, and other pertinent factors. The process encompassed the computation of frequencies, percentages, and percentage averages to present a thorough portrayal. Furthermore, qualitative content analysis approaches were implemented to discern and ascertain prevalent themes and patterns within the research topics and procedures. The process entailed classifying and analyzing written information to get a more profound comprehension of its substance. This study employed cross-tabulations and correlation analyses to investigate the associations between various factors, including the connection between research methodology and specific research themes. The study employed visual and textual methods, such as charts and descriptive narratives, to effectively communicate the observed trends and patterns in the research procedures of undergraduate theses in the field of English studies in Southeast Asia. The discussion revolved around the findings within the current body of literature framework, examining their relevance to the stated research deficiencies and the distinctive attributes of English language teaching in Southeast Asia. The study was finished by providing a concise overview of the primary discoveries and their ramifications for English language instruction in Southeast Asia. Additionally, recommendations were made for prospective avenues of future investigation within this domain.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section reveals the tapestry of inquiry methods woven by aspiring undergraduate students in the region through a meticulous content analysis. We delve into the widespread adoption of different methods of research, cast light on newly emerging patterns, and assess these findings' implications for the quality and importance of research on education in Southeast Asia.

#### 3.1. Findings

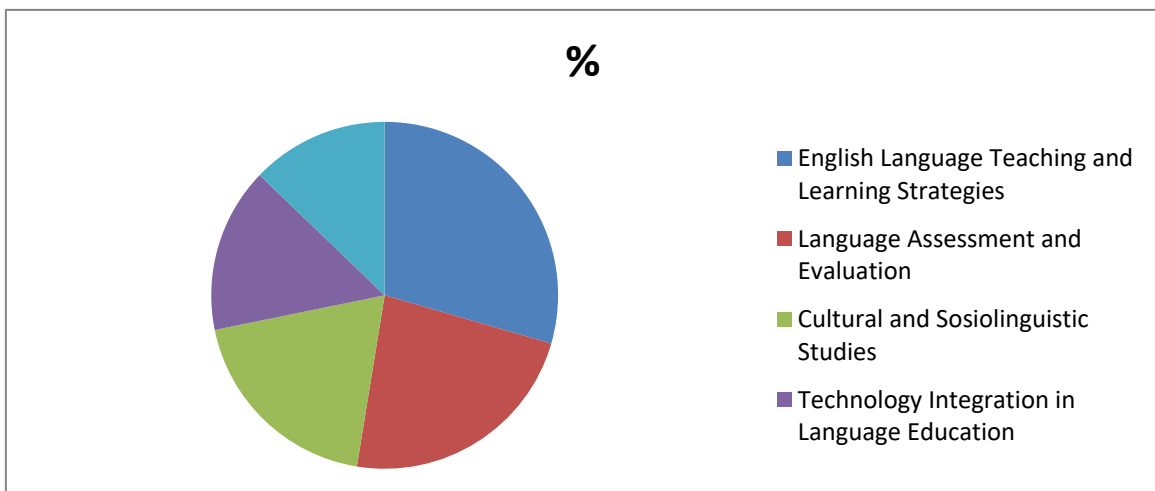
##### 1. Prevalent Research Methodologies



**Figure 1.** Prevalent Research Methodologies Implemented by Undergraduate Theses of English Major in Southeast Asia

The predominant research methodologies employed in undergraduate theses within the English major field in Southeast Asia from 2019 through 2023 were quantitative as shown at Figure 1. These methodologies, encompassing surveys, experiments, descriptive research, ex-post facto studies, and correlational research, were utilized in approximately 54.5% of the theses on average for five years. Moreover, the research conducted in this study primarily adopted qualitative methodologies, with around 24.8% of the theses utilizing qualitative approaches such as case research, content analysis, interviews, and internet-based virtual ethnography. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that a considerable proportion (12.8%) of the theses incorporated a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies in their study design, suggesting a discernible inclination towards utilizing mixed-method methods. A lower proportion (8.4%) of the theses was employed in action research, specifically focusing on Classroom Action Research (CAR).

**2. Research Themes**



**Figure 2.** Research Themes



The research themes within the domain of English language instruction exhibited considerable diversity, although several common themes were identified. The prevailing research themes encompassed:

- "Strategies for Teaching and Learning English" (23%)
- "Language Assessment and Evaluation" (18%)
- "Cultural and Sociolinguistic Issues" (15%)
- "The Integration of Technology in Language Education" (12%)
- "Teacher Professional Development" (10%)

5 The findings of this study attempt valuable contributions to the understanding of the research approaches commonly utilized in undergraduate theses within the field of English studies across Southeast Asian countries. These observations provide valuable information on the current state of research in English language education in the context and present possibilities for critical analysis and enhancement.

### 3.2 Discussion

#### 1. Prevalent Research Methodologies

##### a. Quantitative Research

The prevalence of quantitative research methodologies in Southeast Asia, The utilization of English major undergraduate theses is a noteworthy aspect, observed in 54.5% of the theses, as mentioned earlier. Utilizing various methodologies such as surveys, experiments, and statistical methods presents a notable benefit in producing empirical data that can be subjected to rigorous analysis. Surveys are systematically gathering data from a subset of persons, typically through organized questionnaires or interviews. Researchers employ surveys as a means to assess the attitudes, opinions, habits, and features of a certain group. Experimental research entails modifying one or more independent variables to observe and analyze their impact on a dependent variable. 15 The primary objective of this study is to establish causal linkages, frequently employing control groups. In addition, descriptive research provides a comprehensive depiction and summary of facts, refraining from drawing causal assumptions. This document comprehensively examines a certain phenomenon, population, or sample.

Moreover, ex post facto research investigates the impact of independent variables unrelated to manipulation, such as gender, age, or ethnicity. Moreover, correlational investigations investigate the statistical associations between variables and ascertain their interrelationships. While they do not establish a causal relationship, they are useful in identifying patterns and relationships. Using quantitative methodologies demonstrates a dedication to conducting research in English language instruction grounded in empirical data.

The finding that quantitative research methods were the predominant research methodologies used in undergraduate theses of English majors in Southeast Asia from 2019 to 2023, with an average utilization percentage of 54.5%, is a significant observation that prompts various important considerations and reflections on the academic landscape within this particular discipline and region.

The predominance of research using quantitative methods in this set of theses indicates that students and academics in English major programs in Southeast Asia have exhibited a notable preference for empirical and data-driven methods in their research endeavors. Quantitative methodologies are appropriate for examining precise and quantifiable elements of literature,



language, and associated subjects. These approaches benefit from generating outcomes that can be subjected to statistical scrutiny and extrapolation. Consequently, the widespread acceptance of these findings may indicate a dedication to thoroughness and impartiality in scholarly investigations about this particular discipline.

The declaration highlights a range of quantitative methodologies, including surveys, experiments, descriptive research, ex-post facto, and correlational research, which provide various tools for conducting inquiries in English studies. Surveys provide researchers with the means to collect data on attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, whereas experiments promote controlled investigations to establish cause-and-effect links. Descriptive research provides complete overviews of phenomena, while ex-post facto research enables the exploration of elements and conditions beyond manipulation. In contrast, correlational research enables the investigation of associations between variables without the ability to establish causation.

The prevalence of quantitative research methodologies implies that English majors in Southeast Asia may emphasize using empirical evidence and implementing systematic frameworks to investigate different facets of language and literature. This methodology could enhance the comprehension of the subject matter by incorporating evidence-based and analytical perspectives. It is imperative to acknowledge that the selection of research methodology ought to be congruent with the study inquiries and objectives (Turnbull et al., 2021). Although quantitative methods are appropriate for a wide range of inquiries, certain research problems can be better explored using qualitative approaches. Qualitative methods provide a further understanding of the complex and nuanced nature of human experiences and viewpoints.

The prominence of quantitative research is a significant phenomenon that warrants attention, yet it is imperative to underscore the significance of adopting a well-rounded approach to research methodology. English studies span a diverse array of subjects, including but not limited to the examination of literary texts, the exploration of language learning, the investigation of cultural phenomena, and other related areas of inquiry. An inclusive strategy incorporating quantitative and qualitative methodologies might yield a more holistic comprehension of the intricate characteristics inherent in the subject matter.

In summary, the prevalence of quantitative research methodologies in undergraduate theses within the English major field in Southeast Asia throughout 2019 to 2023 highlights a dedication to empirical investigation within this particular academic discipline. This dedication is to the discipline's requirement for methodical and evidence-based inquiries. Nevertheless, upholding an equitable perspective towards research methodologies is imperative, recognizing that selecting a method should be influenced by research inquiries and goals (McBride & Abramovich, 2022; Wyatt, 2014). It is also important to acknowledge that quantitative and qualitative approaches possess distinct merits in enhancing our comprehension of English studies within the region.

## b. Qualitative Research

Qualitative research approaches were widely utilized in undergraduate theses within the English major discipline in Southeast Asia. Approximately 24.8% of the studied theses utilized qualitative methodologies, including case studies, content analysis, interviews, and internet-based virtual ethnography. The high occurrence of this phenomenon indicates a significant inclination towards investigating the intricate elements of English language instruction in the Southeast Asian region. Qualitative research is a comprehensive discipline comprising a diverse range of methodologies to collect and evaluate non-quantitative data to investigate social phenomena, behavioral patterns, and lived experiences. To begin with, the in-depth interviews encompass



open-ended, individualized dialogues with participants, aiming to get a comprehensive understanding of their viewpoints, encounters, and viewpoints. The interviews can be categorized into two types: structured interviews, which involve preset questions, and unstructured interviews, which are more conversational. The case study entails a comprehensive examination of either a singular instance or a limited group of cases. This approach is frequently employed to acquire a comprehensive comprehension of a specific phenomenon, organization, or individual. In addition, the theses of undergraduate students majoring in English include content analysis, which is the methodical examination of textual, visual, or auditory elements, such as documents, texts, photos, or videos, intending to discern recurring patterns, themes, and significations. Furthermore, as the internet and online communities continue to expand, undergraduate researchers specializing in English studies engage in ethnographic investigations inside virtual environments, such as online forums and social media platforms, employing the methodology of online and virtual ethnography. Qualitative research methods are relevant for examining the socio-cultural and contextual elements that impact language acquisition and instruction, a matter of special significance in this region characterized by its diversity and cultural abundance.

The finding that a significant portion, specifically 24.8%, of the dissertations examined in the research study chose to utilize qualitative research methods serves as a noteworthy indication of a prevailing pattern within the realm of undergraduate research in English majors in Southeast Asia during the period spanning from 2019 to 2023. The statement highlights that qualitative methods encompass various approaches, such as case studies, content analysis, interviews, and internet-based and virtual ethnography. These methods provide distinct advantages for gaining in-depth insights into the intricacies of language, literature, and related fields.

One of the prominent advantages of employing qualitative research methods lies in their capacity to explore the intricate details and complexities inherent in human experiences, standpoints, and cultural contexts. This holds significant importance within English studies as it enables scholars to delve into literary works, the process of acquiring language, cultural occurrences, and the many facets of interpersonal relationships from a comprehensive and contextual perspective. Case studies, for example, provide a comprehensive analysis of particular occurrences or phenomena, thoroughly comprehending practical circumstances and their consequences.

<sup>16</sup> Content analysis is categorized as a qualitative research method that facilitates the methodical examination of textual, visual, or auditory resources to identify recurring patterns, themes, and underlying meanings. This approach can be employed within English studies to analyze many forms of textual material, including literary works, media artifacts, and digital content. Its purpose is to reveal latent meanings, cultural depictions, or changes in linguistic patterns.

Interviews provide researchers with a direct and intimate data collection method, enabling them to actively engage with participants and delve into their perspectives, experiences, and narratives. Within the realm of English major theses, interviews can be applied as a profitable tool for obtaining a deeper understanding of reader interpretations, language acquisition experiences, and the creative methodologies adopted by writers.

Including Internet-based and virtual ethnography highlights the dynamic characteristics of qualitative research methodologies in the contemporary digital era. With the growing significance of online spaces for interpersonal interaction and cultural expression, scholars in English studies are inclined to analyze these platforms to examine the manifestations of language, literature, and culture within virtual environments.

The observed frequency of qualitative research methods in this particular context indicates that a substantial proportion of students and academics involved in English major programs in Southeast



Asia acknowledge the significance of qualitative investigation. This statement demonstrates a dedication to investigating language and literature's subjective, contextually influenced, and culturally ingrained elements (CohenMiller et al., 2017; McBride & Abramovich, 2022). Furthermore, it is worth noting that qualitative research methodologies frequently demonstrate a strong affinity with the humanistic and interpretive paradigms prevalent within English studies. These paradigms are concerned with comprehending the intricate nuances of human expression and communication.

It is imperative to acknowledge that the selection of research methodologies, whether qualitative or quantitative, should be guided by the study questions and objectives at hand. Quantitative approaches are characterized by their statistical rigor and ability to generate generalizable findings, whereas qualitative methods are distinguished by their capacity to provide in-depth insights and contextual understanding. An equitable strategy that considers the merits of both methods can enhance a holistic comprehension of the many aspects of English studies.

To conclude, the findings reveal that a considerable proportion of the theses (24.8%) demonstrate the substantial adoption of qualitative research methodologies. This highlights the significance of delving into the subtle complexities and intricacies within the domain of English studies. These methodologies enable scholars to uncover the cultural, linguistic, and human aspects of language and literature, enhancing scholarly dialogue and contributing to a comprehensive comprehension of the subject matter. The presence of several research methodologies in Southeast Asia's English major undergraduate degrees is indicative of a dynamic and ever-changing academic environment.

### c. Mixed-Method

Another significant observation is the rise of mixed-method approaches, as evidenced by 12.8% of the theses incorporating a blend of qualitative and quantitative methodologies. This emerging pattern indicates a growing acknowledgment of the advantages associated with triangulating data from several sources to attain a more holistic comprehension of intricate educational issues. Furthermore, this observation acknowledges the necessity of employing a comprehensive methodology in educational research to effectively tackle the complex and ever-changing landscape of English language instruction in Southeast Asia.

The discovery that around 12.8% of the theses examined in the study employed a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods, offers significant insights into the changing research environment in English major undergraduate programs in Southeast Asia between 2019 and 2023. The employment of mixed-method research indicates an increasing acknowledgment among students and academics of the advantages of incorporating many data sources and procedures to solve intricate research inquiries thoroughly.

Mixed-method research provides a distinct advantage by leveraging the respective strengths of mixed-method methodologies. Researchers can comprehensively grasp the subjects being studied by integrating the depth and context offered by qualitative methods with the statistical rigor and generalizability of quantitative approaches. This approach holds significant advantages in delving into the intricate dimensions of language, literature, and associated phenomena within English studies (Maulina et al., 2023; Rapanta & Felton, 2019).

One notable advantage of employing mixed-method research is its inherent flexibility. This enables researchers to customize their methodology following the particular study inquiries and goals they aim to investigate. For example, a research investigation examining the effects of a literary intervention program on students' reading comprehension may include quantitative



measurements to evaluate proficiency in reading and qualitative interviews to obtain a deeper understanding of students' experiences and perspectives regarding the program.

The increasing prevalence of mixed-method methods in theses within the English major discipline in Southeast Asia indicates that scholars in this domain acknowledge the significance of conducting multidisciplinary and comprehensive inquiries. Language and literature are intrinsically intricate and can greatly benefit from various research perspectives. Integrating qualitative and quantitative methodologies enables researchers to employ triangulation, validate outcomes, and establish a more comprehensive basis for deriving conclusions.

In addition, mixed-method research is congruent with the multidisciplinary character of English studies, which frequently incorporates elements from fields such as linguistics, psychology, sociology, cultural studies, and other related disciplines. The capacity to incorporate a variety of methodologies and data sets has the potential to enhance the examination and understanding of research outcomes, resulting in more extensive and refined observations.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that the execution of mixed-method research can present difficulties. The successful execution of this task necessitates meticulous strategic preparation and proficiency in qualitative and quantitative methodologies and frequently involves a greater allocation of time and money. In addition to the referred points, it is imperative for researchers to give due consideration to the amalgamation of data, hence to guarantee the qualitative and quantitative aspects harmonize with one another and collectively contribute to a cohesive study.

In summary, the rise of mixed-method methods, as seen by the utilization rate of 12.8% among theses, signifies a positive trend within the research landscape of English undergraduate programs in Southeast Asia. As mentioned earlier, the tendency highlights the significance of integrating qualitative and quantitative methodologies to address research inquiries in a more comprehensive manner and to attain a more profound comprehension of language, literature, and other disciplines. The above statement highlights a research culture characterized by its dynamic and developing nature. This culture aims to use the advantages of various approaches, thereby making a valuable and diverse contribution to the study of English in the region.

#### d. Action Research

The discovery that a comparatively lower proportion, namely 8.4%, of the theses examined in the study centered on action research, primarily Classroom Action Research (CAR), presents various significant aspects for deliberation. This insight illuminates the research landscape within the academic topic under inquiry and prompts contemplation regarding the preferences and trends in research approaches among students or scholars in this area.

A plausible rationale for the somewhat lower incidence of action research in theses may stem from a need for more knowledge or instruction on this methodology among students and instructors. It is imperative for educational institutions to acknowledge the significance of providing their students and faculty with the requisite dependabilities and knowledge to engage in action research proficiently. Promoting the integration of action research into academic programs and offering instructional support on its implementation may lead to an increased prevalence of theses that employ this methodology in subsequent years.

Moreover, the limited utilization of Classroom Action Research (CAR) in academic dissertations may indicate a more widespread inclination toward other research approaches within the discipline. In educational research, conventional approaches have long favored the implementation of mixed-method research methodologies, including surveys, experiments, and content analysis. Although there are merits to these methodologies, action research provides a



unique advantage by actively engaging <sup>18</sup> both teachers and students in the research process. Therefore, according to (Bonyadi, 2023; Parmaxi & Zaphiris, 2020) it is imperative for institutions to cultivate a research culture that recognizes the significance of many research methodologies and promotes the exploration of other approaches, such as action research, when deemed suitable by both students and faculty.

An alternative hypothesis to account for the reported proportion could be the pragmatic difficulties inherent in carrying out action research. Implementing action research frequently necessitates continuous engagement with educators and students, the ability to observe educational environments and a dedication to iterative processes of introspection and enhancement. These demands can discourage certain researchers from using this strategy, particularly when confronted with restricted resources or time limitations. Hence, it is recommended that institutions and funding agencies contemplate offering assistance and rewards to scholars and students who exhibit interest in action research as part of their thesis endeavors.

In summary, the discovery that a mere 8.4% of the theses examined in the study included action research, particularly Classroom Action Research (CAR), underscores a promising avenue for advancement and progress in education and its associated fields. This statement highlights the significance of promoting knowledge and understanding of the advantages of action research, delivering appropriate training and resources to ensure its successful execution, and cultivating an environment of research that welcomes a wide range of approaches. As the efficacy of action research in enhancing educational practices continues to be substantiated, it is anticipated that there will be a rise in the proportion of theses that adopt this methodology. This trend is poised to augment the existing corpus of study on the subject, resulting in a more comprehensive and influential body of knowledge.

## 2. Research Themes

The multitude of research topics and themes highlighted in this study reflects the complex and diverse character of English language teaching. While the research covered diverse subjects, certain reoccurring themes emerged as prominent. The key study subjects that have evolved are "Strategies in English Language Teaching and Learning (23%)," "Language Assessment and Evaluation (18%)," "Cultural and Sociolinguistic Studies (15%)," "The Integration of Technology in Language Education (12%)," and "Teacher Professional Development (10%)."

The study reveals a wide range of research subjects and themes that accurately reflect the complex and ever-evolving character of English language teaching. Scholars and educators in this discipline actively explore diverse topics that exemplify the intricate relationship between language, culture, education, and technology. A wide range of study topics is evidence of the robustness of English language education as an academic field and its ability to respond to changing educational environments and societal demands (Bai & Pan, 2008).

### a. Strategies in English Language Teaching and Learning

This theme embodies an essential element of English language instruction. The significance of studies in this domain highlights the continuous pursuit to develop pedagogical approaches and boost language acquisition encounters (Saeed & Al Qunayeer, 2021). The wide range of methods and approaches observed within this thematic area demonstrates a strong dedication to identifying efficient and contextually suitable methods for promoting language acquisition.

### b. Language Assessment and Evaluation

Language proficiency evaluation plays a crucial role in language education (Jaekel et al., 2022), as it provides valuable insights for instructional purposes and establishes a system of



responsibility. The prominence of research in this field underscores the ongoing endeavors to create evaluation instruments that are both accurate and reliable, tackle concerns regarding equality and cultural awareness, and analyze the efficacy of language programs. This subject exemplifies the commitment to upholding the integrity and excellence of language instruction.

### c. Cultural and Sociolinguistic Studies

The interconnection between language culture and society is essential, and scholarly investigations in this field acknowledge the significance of comprehending language within its wider framework. The themes encompassed within this category pertain to sociolinguistic phenomena, variations in language, policy concerning languages, and intercultural communication. Recognizing cultural and sociolinguistic research highlights the understanding that language education comprises more than only linguistic proficiency but also the cultural aspects of communication.

### d. The Integration of Technology in English Instructions

Technology has emerged as a formidable instrument for facilitating language instruction and acquisition in the ever-expanding digital landscape. The inclusion of this particular issue within scholarly investigations demonstrates a dedication to using technology, such as internet-based materials, virtual settings, and digital platforms, to augment the field of language instruction. The investigation into technology integration highlights the aspiration to enhance language education by increasing engagement, accessibility, and adaptability to meet modern learning requirements.

### e. Teacher Professional Development

Educators<sup>13</sup> play a pivotal role in the efficacy of language instruction programs. Research conducted in this field emphasizes the importance of continuous teacher professional development to uphold the instruction standard. The subjects within this area encompass teacher training, professional growth's influence on the way teachers teach, and the significance of reflective instruction in enhancing language learning. The prioritization of teacher development underscores a commitment to provide educators with the necessary knowledge and competencies to support the growth and development of language learners successfully.

In brief, the comprehensive scope of English language instruction is effectively encapsulated by the wide array of research subjects and the repeating themes that have surfaced. The topics mentioned above exemplify the field's dedication to achieving high standards in pedagogy and knowledge acquisition, recognizing the significance of cultural and societal factors, incorporating technology into educational practices, and fostering ongoing professional growth among educators. The extensive nature of these studies enhances the progress of English language instruction, guaranteeing its continuing significance and efficacy in a constantly changing global context. The active participation of educators, researchers, and stakeholders in the area is essential for influencing the trajectory of English language education, effectively addressing its inherent obstacles, and capitalizing on its potential prospects.

The themes mentioned above follow the wider conversation within the domain of English language education. They indicate that scholars in Southeast Asia actively engage with significant matters about language teaching methods, evaluation methods, intercultural communication, and the incorporation of technology. Nevertheless, the high occurrence of such themes also prompts inquiries regarding the equilibrium of study subjects and the potential underrepresentation of specific facets of English language instruction within dissertations.

## 4. CONCLUSION

The present study investigated the research strategies commonly employed in undergraduate theses within the field of English studies across Southeast Asian universities. Through a



comprehensive analysis of the content of these theses, our objective was to reveal the research landscape and identify prevailing trends in English language instruction within the region. The results of this study offer beneficial contributions to our understanding of the methodologies and topics influencing scholarly investigation and educational approaches in Southeast Asian institutions throughout the period spanning from 2019 to 2023.

Examining research approaches utilized in undergraduate theses within the English major in Southeast Asia from 2019 to 2023 showcases a multifaceted and ever-evolving environment within the realm of English teaching and its associated fields. The popularity of methods for quantitative study, which account for 54.5% of the theses, highlights the importance of employing empirical and data-driven methodologies. Utilizing different research approaches, such as surveys, experiments, descriptive research, ex-post facto, and correlational studies, plays a crucial role in examining diverse aspects related to language, literature, and pedagogy. The inclination towards quantitative approaches in research within the region can be attributed to a dedication to rigor and impartiality.

Concurrently, the notable prevalence of qualitative research methodologies, accounting for 24.8% of the total, indicates a growing acknowledgment of the significance of investigating the human dimensions of culture, language, and communication. Qualitative research methods, including case studies, content analysis, interviews, and internet-based virtual ethnography, facilitate a more profound comprehension of English studies' experiences, situations, and socio-cultural aspects.

In addition, it is worth noting that there has been a noticeable increase in the utilization of mixed-method approaches, accounting for 12.8% of the theses examined. This trend suggests a growing inclination towards integrating diverse data sources and methods in research. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach to studying language and literature acknowledges the intricate nature of these subjects. It recognizes that a thorough comprehension often requires incorporating a combination of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints.

On the other hand, the comparatively lower proportion of 8.4% allocated to action research, namely Classroom Action Research (CAR), could indicate a requirement for enhanced recognition and advocacy of this pragmatic and cooperative research approach in English education. Action research can serve as a conduit between research and practice, promoting ongoing enhancements in the realm of teaching and learning.

The fluctuating proportions of research methodologies employed in the undergraduate theses of English majors in Southeast Asia during this five-year timeframe demonstrate a dedication to exploring a wide range of research inquiries, utilizing inventive methods, and enhancing the comprehension of language, literature, and pedagogy within the field. The field of English studies is continuously evolving to adapt to global trends and local settings. Consequently, scholars and educators in the region are well-positioned to make valuable contributions to this academic subject's continued growth and enhancement. The selection of research procedures should be determined by the particular study objectives and inquiries, guaranteeing that each methodology follows the desired results and contributes to advancing our shared understanding of the discipline.

Furthermore, the wide range of study subjects and themes identified highlights the complex and diverse nature of English language instruction in Southeast Asia. A wide range of issues were examined, with specific recurring themes such as "Strategies in English Language Teaching and Learning," "Language Assessment and Evaluation," "Cultural and Sociolinguistic Studies," "The Integration of Technology in Language Education," and "Teacher Professional Development" emerging as prominent areas of research. The themes mentioned earlier encompass the current and



urgent issues in language pedagogy, assessment procedures, intercultural dialogue, and technology innovations.

The trends observed in research methods exhibit variations across different institutions and regions, and these variations can be attributed to various variables like academic culture, faculty expertise, and emerging pedagogical approaches. The research approaches commonly employed in undergraduate theses in English literature, as previously indicated, may also be applicable within the specific setting of Southeast Asia. However, a more targeted and geographically specialized research endeavor would be necessary to identify the precise patterns for a particular year and location.

The data mentioned earlier indicate that the field of English language instruction in Southeast Asia exhibits a wide range of research approaches and study subjects. Using qualitative research methods in English language teaching within the region may indicate a scholarly inclination to investigate the intricate socio-cultural aspects. While many theses showcased a comprehensive understanding of research methodology, a specific subset displayed deficiencies in research design, data analysis, and citation procedures. This underscores the necessity for ongoing prioritization of research training and the development of academic writing abilities within English language education programs. As an illustration, certain theses specifically examined regional difficulties, such as the correlation between the acquisition of English and local languages or the ramifications of socio-cultural elements on pedagogical approaches. However, further research is required to thoroughly examine and tackle these challenges peculiar to the given situation.

The ramifications for English language instruction in Southeast Asia are manifold, as indicated by the findings of this study. First and foremost, our results serve as a foundation for educators and policymakers to gain insight into the prevailing research patterns in the region. This understanding empowers them to harmonize educational practices and policies with the existing research goals. Furthermore, the prioritization of qualitative research methodologies implies the necessity for ongoing assistance in qualitative research education and developing skills in the area.

Potential avenues for future study may encompass cross-cultural comparative studies, which aim to investigate the similarities and differences in research methodology and issues between Southeast Asia and other regions. These studies have the potential to enrich our comprehension of worldwide patterns in research of English language instruction.

In summary, this study has shed light on the prevailing research approaches and themes found in undergraduate theses focusing on English studies in Southeast Asia. Although qualitative research methods are prevalent, quantitative methodologies and mixed-method designs are also frequently utilized in academic research. The wide range of study topics in English language education indicates its complex and diverse nature. The discoveries made through these studies offer unique perspectives that can improve research and education in the specific location.

This hypothetical discussion section presents a comprehensive summary of the primary findings, their implications, and potential avenues for further research and enhancement in the domain of English language teaching in Southeast Asia.

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