

Original Research Article

Impacts on the English Learning Process of Non-Majored Students at the University of Transport and Communication HCMC Campus

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Article History

Received: 03.04.2023

Accepted: 08.05.2023

Published: 12.05.2023

Abstract: This article presents the relationship between students' belief in their ability to learn English successfully, and the values that English will bring them influence on two factors: (1) language learning outcomes. English and (2) participation in English courses is based on data collected from 1,207 students. The article analyzes the differences between male and female students on these measures. Belief in the ability to learn English successfully is closely related to English learning outcomes, while belief in the useful value of English is closely related to deciding to take English courses.

Keywords: English, expectancy-value model, motivation, value.

1. INTRODUCTION

English is an important language in Vietnam's international integration (Pham Cuong, 2016), and is a major foreign language taught in the education system in Vietnam, especially at the university level. However, many studies have shown that the current situation of teaching and learning English in the education system is inefficient. These studies show that students can only communicate in basic everyday English with great difficulty (Nguyen Hoang Tuan & Tran Ngoc Mai, 2015).

Based on the experience of teaching English at university level, the author found that many students in non-English majors lack motivation to learn English. They study just to pass the exams.

There are many different explanations for the low status of English language learning results and the lack of motivation of students as mentioned above. To address this situation, a number of studies have been conducted, such as studies on developing self-study (Nguyen Cao Thanh, 2011); teaching methods (Nguyen Van Loi & Franken, 2010); and the development of teachers (Vo Thanh Long & Nguyen Thi Mai Hoa, 2010). However, there is still too little research to understand that the heart of learning is the learner. This article focuses on student motivation because research shows that motivation is a major factor affecting academic performance. The article then proposes solutions to improve the current teaching situation to help students achieve better English learning results, and increase student motivation.

2. AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The author studies students' belief in the ability to successfully study English and the belief in the value of good English learning based on Eccles's 'Success - Value' model and colleagues. The author believes that, up to this point, this is the first study using Eccles dynamics model in Vietnam, especially in the context of research on university students who are not majoring in English learn English as a foreign language.

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CITATION: Thai Thi Xuan Ha, Nguyen Kim Vu Bao (2023). Impacts on the English Learning Process of Non-Majored Students at the University of Transport and Communication HCMC Campus. *South Asian Res J Art Lang Lit*, 5(3): 71-75. 71

The purpose of the study is to find out in-depth about two components: (1) belief in the ability to successfully learn English and (2) belief in the value that English brings to university students in Vietnam. Does this pattern make sense in the context of non-Western cultures? Does this model help understand the motivation of Vietnamese students to learn English? Do gender differences between male and female students occur in the same way as studies in Western countries? Are there any specific characteristics of Vietnamese culture that can be added to Eccles' model to have a better understanding of students' motivation to learn English? Readers may question whether it is appropriate to use the model formed and developed in Western culture in the context of a Southeast Asian culture?.

3. MODEL 'SUCCESS – VALUE'

The theory of dynamics of Eccles (1993) and colleagues has been developed over the past 40 years to explain students' learning outcomes and attitudes. Currently of great interest to psychologists is the Possibility-Value theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 1995, 2002; Eccles, Wigfield, Harold, & Blumenfeld, 1993; Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998); Musu-Gillette, Wigfield, Harring, & Eccles, 2015; Parsons *et al.*, 1983; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000; Wigfield, Tonks, & Klada, 2016). According to this model, Success is defined as a student's belief in his or her ability to successfully learn a subject (Eccles & Wigfield, 1995). Values are defined to include four components: Intrinsic values refer to the enjoyment of learning that subject; Utility value refers to how the subject will benefit the learner in the future (for example, a student may not find interest in learning English, but finds English useful). useful in future work. In this case, the English course will be of high value to that student); Critical Values refer to the importance of doing well in a subject; and Values required are the sacrifices, hardships, and efforts that students must bear to successfully complete that subject.

Research shows that Eccles and his colleagues' belief in Success and Values in the Likelihood – Values model are strong influencers on learning outcomes and course participation. of students (Meece, Wigfield, & Eccles, 1990). In which, belief in the ability to learn the subject successfully is a strong factor that correlates with learners' learning outcomes, and belief in the value that the subject brings has a strong factor that is closely correlated with the students' learning outcomes. Learners' decision and actual participation in that course of study. For example, research by Meece, Wigfield, and Eccles (1990) shows that students' confidence in their ability to learn math successfully is a strong indicator of their academic performance. That is, the more students believe in their ability to succeed in their studies, the higher their learning outcomes will be. Watt (2005) found that students' decision to enroll in math is strongly correlated with students' belief in the value that math brings to their future work.

Many studies (Eccles & Harold, 1991; Eccles *et al.*, 1993; Eccles *et al.*, 1998; Jacobs, Lanza, Osgood, Eccles, & Wigfield, 2002; Parsons *et al.*, 1983) show male students female students tend to believe in their ability to successfully study in the natural sciences or sports (two fields often seen as masculine) than female students. While girls tend to believe in academic success more strongly than boys in subjects that are perceived as feminine, such as English, music, art, and social sciences. Research by Watt (2005) shows that female students believe in their ability to learn English well more strongly than male students, while male students' confidence in their ability to successfully study math is higher than female students. .

To date, most of the studies using the Eccles Possibility-Value model have taken place in Western countries. Eccles and colleagues call for studies using their model in cultures other than Western countries (Wigfield *et al.*, 2016). Could this model be a means of understanding student motivation in Southeast Asia like Vietnam?.

4. METHOD

4.1. Participants in the Study

There were 1,207 students from many different courses at the university of transport and communication Ho Chi Minh City campus (46.1% male and 53.9% female) participating in the study. All students are studying economics, and English is their non-specialist subject.

Among 1,207 students who answered the survey questionnaire, 72 (50% male, 50% female) students participated in the interview after answering the survey questionnaire. To help students exchange their thoughts in the best way without being dominated by the opposite sex, the interview groups were divided into groups that were all female and groups that were completely inclusive include male students. There were 12 groups, six boys and six girls, each consisting of six students because small groups created a more comfortable space for students to discuss the topic of the interview.

4.2. Research Method

4.2.1. Questionnaire Survey

The survey questionnaire consisted of 38 questions adapted from the questionnaire of Eccles and colleagues (Eccles & Wigfield, 1995; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). The questions inquired about students' confidence in their ability to successfully study English and how much they assessed the value of doing well in English. Eccles and Wigfield's

questions are used because they exhibit clarity in factor structures, distinguish them from different measurement constructs, and have good metrological properties (Jacobs *et al.*, 2002).

The author develops some new questions to learn about the value that the author named the family value in the context of a Western research model applied in the Vietnamese cultural context, where the Family values are valued and can be a powerful factor affecting student motivation to learn. The questions focused on whether wanting to honor the family, or to show gratitude for parental sacrifices were values that influenced students' motivation to learn.

The answers are presented on a Likert scale from 1 to 6. For example, 'How useful do you think learning English will be when you get a job after graduating from university?' For To this question, students answer by choosing from 1 to 6, with 1 representing 'Not helpful at all' and 6 representing 'Very helpful'. Note that in Eccles' questionnaire, responses are presented on a Likert scale from 1-7. However, Anderson and Bourke (2000) suggest that Likert scale responses should be designed with even numbers ie from 1-6 instead of 1-7 to avoid the situation that respondents choose too much. Many answers are middle numbers (neutral), leading to a decrease in response diversity.

4.2.2. Group interview questions

The interview question consists of 4 main questions. These questions are designed to correlate with Eccles's Model of Success and Values structure, and explore the current state of English language teaching in universities from the student's point of view in order to gain a deeper understanding. English learning motivation of students in Vietnam, using the Western motivational model. The purpose of the interview is to confirm what students answered in the survey questionnaire, and to find out what the survey questionnaire, which is used in Western countries, may not be showing. All motivational factors related to Vietnamese students.

4.3. Data Analysis

Data from survey questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS statistical program. The relationship between students' belief in the ability to successfully learn English, Value values, important values, intrinsic values, family values, gender, choice to participate in learning English classes outside the prescribed classes at the university or not at the present time and in the future after graduating from university, and English subject scores were analyzed, using the SEM (structural equation) model modeling).

Data from interviews were coded and classified according to the two-stage process of Saldana (2009). The author considers to classify groups of common topics about learning English.

5. RESULTS

All question groups gave high results in terms of statistical reliability. Seven questions are used to measure students' confidence in their ability to learn English successfully. Statistical reliability (Cronbach Alpha) of this group of questions is .91. The three questions used to measure intrinsic value have a Cronbach alpha of .74. Eight questions were used to measure the Attainment value and Importance value groups with a Cronbach alpha of .76. The six questions to measure Cost value have a Cronbach alpha of .84.

SEM linear structural model analysis shows that students' confidence in their ability to successfully learn English is the strongest factor closely related to student learning outcomes. Besides, belief in Values and Values is the strongest factor related to students' participation in English courses. These results are similar to those found by Eccles, Wigfield and colleagues when they studied Western students (Musu-Gillette *et al.*, 2015; Trautwein *et al.*, 2012).

The family value added to Eccles' model is indirectly related to learning outcomes and participation in English classes and directly affects the Value of Benefit in the model (see the model in Fig. first).

SEM analysis shows that gender directly predicts confidence in learning success, usefulness value, intrinsic value, and participation in additional English courses, and final English grade. Female students expressed a stronger belief in successful English learning than male students. Female students also rate the importance of English higher than male students. Not only did female students have better results in the end-of-semester English test than male students, but they also demonstrated a stronger willingness to take English courses outside of the university than male students.

The results from the interview also show that 89% of students, in addition to having to study English as a compulsory subject at university, want to participate in additional English courses outside of school because they believe that English is a tool needed for a job after graduation. The students commented that they wish to learn the two most practical skills for their future jobs, which are speaking and listening skills in English.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Research results show that the most important factor affecting students' English learning results is their belief in their ability to successfully learn this subject. Therefore:

Before assigning students assignments, organizing classroom activities, games, and tests, teachers should pay attention to psychological factors to design activities so that can increase students' confidence in their ability to successfully carry out such activities. If students believe that they cannot successfully perform the activities and assignments, it may lead to poor academic performance, and loss of motivation in students.

The level of difficulty and complexity of the activities is necessary to stimulate learning but must be considered so that its challenge is not beyond the student's level. For example, when designing a test, the issuer needs to design the test according to the knowledge taught. There shouldn't be too many challenging questions. If students believe that if they study hard, and learn all that is taught, they will do well on the test, then students will study hard and get good results.

Regular classroom activities need to help students achieve a sense of success and need to maintain this positive perception at all times. For example, when asking students to work in groups to discuss a certain question in the textbook, teachers need to consider whether the topic of discussion is suitable for students' ability or not, in order to take appropriate measures. Adjusted to suit the level and circumstances of Vietnamese students, it is not necessary to stick mechanically to everything in the curriculum which is appropriate to the context in Western countries because it is written by Western authors. If the topic is too foreign to students, the interaction between group members will not be achieved, creating the psychology of sitting and waiting for time, boredom in students, affecting the atmosphere of the student's class.

6.2. Research results show that the most important factor influencing students' participation in English courses is their belief in the benefits of learning English well. Group interviews revealed that the main reason why students take part in English classes is that they believe that good English communication (rather than doing well on paper assignments) is the means by which they can get a job good deed in the future. Therefore:

Every effort to increase students' awareness of the benefits and importance of learning English, especially listening and speaking skills is essential.

- a. First at the classroom level, a teaching approach that emphasizes the design of how students can apply the knowledge they have learned in practice, especially for work after graduation, needs to be done. Interview results show that students believe that if they can use English well (especially listening and speaking skills), it will be very beneficial for future jobs. If students find that even if they study hard, they can only do well in exams without being able to use that English. This can lead to discouragement, frustration, and abandonment of their learning efforts.
- b. Instructors can encourage students to practice communication through field trips by assigning groups of students to meet foreigners (possibly tourists that students can easily meet in public places) members, West Quarter), to communicate and the group will write a report or present in class about what they have learned from that field trip.
- c. When designing the semester exam, the percentages are divided for each skill, should be carefully considered to allocate so that listening and speaking skills are emphasized. When students see that if they focus more on listening and speaking skills they can do better in English that semester, they may put more effort into learning these two skills. Although interviewing students emphasized the benefits of listening and speaking skills, they were unable to invest their energy in learning these two skills because they needed to invest a lot of time in grammar and reading skills. Writing to get a high score due to grammar and these two paper-based skills account for a higher percentage of the total semester grade than the semester score for the listening and speaking skills.

At the management level, the school should launch activities to improve English communication skills, implement policies that can arouse students' interest in English; make students aware understand the importance and benefits of this subject. These activities could be:

- d. Organize free English speaking clubs regularly; call for the participation of teachers even non-English teachers. If due to funding problems do not hire foreigners to join the club, we can encourage lecturers and students to invite their friends who are from English-speaking countries to join.
- e. Pioneering in creating a wide English communication environment beyond the narrow range of classes. Designate areas on campus as areas where everyone communicates in English. Students, lecturers and staff who want to practice English can come to these areas to communicate in English. In addition to these areas, all students, faculty and staff are encouraged to communicate in English whenever possible. From there, students can have an English communication environment like studying in an English-speaking country, and at the same time have a higher awareness of the importance of English through the school's determination. For students who love English, maybe this is an opportunity for them to use English regularly when going to school without hesitation. For students who are still weak in communication skills, this is an opportunity for them to learn from

other students when communicating, creating a spirit of learning determination to survive in an environment of frequent English communication. The author believes that with the dynamism, youth, and desire to be fluent in English in communication as the students presented in the interview, such an English communication environment will be well received by the students. This environment will be very good for students to develop their listening and speaking skills during their four years of study at the school because students are able to communicate in English regularly every day, not just a few hours in an English class but a week. There are only two classes as of now.

- f. Set up an English self-study room. This room should be equipped with English learning books, disks, internet, computers, tea, cakes, sweets, so that any student can come here to relax, communicate and learn English, connect Friend.
- g. Organize English classes with the same curriculum as English classes other classes, but taught by teachers from English-speaking countries so that students can choose to pay for these classes. Interview results show that many students want to take communication classes at foreign language centers because they study with foreign teachers. Although they know they will have to pay high tuition fees if they study at these centers.

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