

Factors Influencing English-Majored Vietnamese Students' Decision to Choose a Specialization

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Abstract: Choosing a specialization is a crucial issue for undergraduate students. The purpose of this study is to explore the factors affecting the decision to choose a specialization of English-majored Vietnamese students in the context of Faculty of Foreign Languages (FFL), Nguyen Tat Thanh University (NTTU), Vietnam. The data collected from 153 second year English-majored students of the FFL. The study findings showed that 4 key factors that influence their choice of specialization including academic factors, personal factors, economic factors and influence from others.

Keywords: Choosing a specialization, English-majored Vietnamese students, personal factors, academic factors, economic factors.

1. Introduction

In a student's life, they will have to make important decisions about their studies and their future. Completing the high school graduation exam and entering the university gate is a standard course of study to get a bachelor's degree before students enter the labor market. The first important step is identifying the right faculty to pursue their passion, then they will have to consider a right specific area for their specialization. Din et al. (2014) stated that the professional decision is as important as deciding to buy a new house, car or investing money in the right business for maximum profit. The specific area of expertise can actually create or break a person, so choosing a specialization is one of the most significant decisions in a student's life. According to Feng, Z. (2022), when choosing a specialization, students now choose a specialization with good economic benefits and good employment prospects for a future practitioner, or a specialization that suits their family situation and the inheritance needs of the family business. There have been many previous studies on the topic in the past with different disciplines. However, as far as we know, little research has been carried out for English – majored Vietnamese students in term of factors influencing their choice of a specialization. Thus, this paper aims at exploring the factors that affect the choice of specialization of English – majored Vietnamese students.

2. Literature Review

The choice of a specialization greatly affect the future of students. Therefore, many outstanding studies have been carried out in this area. The study by Waseem & Zarif (2012)

explored the core reasons and factors behind the students' attitude while selecting management studies as their study option for degree in Business Administration with 3 factors: Larger Number of Management Institutes (LMNI), Market Trend (MT), High Employment Opportunities (HEO). The study result found that high employment opportunities on the basis of an MBA/BBA degree and availability of larger number of business institutes did have a significant impact on students' attitude on selection of management studies. Muhammad et al. (2015) investigated students' perception regarding selection of specialization in MBA. This research investigated ten perceptions, such as student own Interest, friend's opinion, numerical approach, theoretical approach, specialization scope, nature of specialization, financial interest, faculty, professor opinion and physical attributes. The results showed that the most important perception of students regarding selection of specialization in MBA was "own interest".

Singh et al. (2020) explored factors responsible for selecting a particular specialization among postgraduates' students as market uncertainty and job security, efforts required being ready for job, exposure from social media, platforms, recommendations from others, institutional resources, aligning self for future jobs. At the same time Abdullah & Ashral (2020) found out factors as personal factors, academic factors, job opportunities, future prospects and social factors.

Wardaya et al. (2021) used Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to study Indonesian undergraduate students' choice of educational administration as their major of study. The theory involves three exogenous variables: Attitude (AT) is evaluation of the positivity or negativity of their choice of choosing Educational Administration as their major of study; Subjective Norm (SN) it is determined by Perceived pressure from family, friends, leaders in the decision to choose a specialization; Behavioral Control (BC) is ability of student to perform in an educational administration major; Facilitating Condition (FC) is the university infrastructure to support the major. Each element is established in relation to Behavioral Intention (BI) that is defined as the effort students' expect to apply to keep continuing their study in educational administration major leading to actual behavior. The study's findings informed that SN the influence of society and PBC ability of student had significant roles in predicting BI of the students choosing educational administration as their specialization.

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The study by Obate (2023) stated 12 factors including program reputation, university reputation, types of equipment, quality education, proximity of the campus, class size, tuition fee, program’s best practice, student to faculty ratio, classrooms, uniqueness of the programs in the locality and learning environment that influenced students’ choice of computers and electronics as their specializations.

Many studies have been carried out in term of this topic in various fields and disciplines, however, in the context of Vietnam, little research has been conducted for Vietnamese students.

3. Methodology

A. Research Questions

In order to fulfill the objectives stated above, this study is structured to seek the answers for the following questions:

1. What factors affect the decision to choose the specialization of English – majored Vietnamese students
2. What is the difference between the factors that affect the choice of specialization of English – majored Vietnamese students?

B. Participants

The population of the study comes from the FFL-NTTU, Vietnam which means that they have been instructed under the same educational system. The sample consists of 153 second year English-majored students.

C. Research Instrument

The survey questionnaire includes 12 items focusing on 4 factors: individual factors (items 1 through 3), academic factors (items 4 through 6), economic factors (items 7 through 9), influence from others (items 10 through 12). After the data collection process completed. Microsoft Excel were used to analyse the collected data.

4. Data Analysis and Results

The influence of academic factors on the student’s decision to choose a specialization included items: specific future job, ability to study the program and easiness of the subjects.

For item 1, the majority of participants (over 66%) agree that

the current major helps them to know the specific job in the future. Like other specialization in the English language, each specialization is trained with specialized credits to serve the relevant profession in the future. For example, the specialization of teaching methodology will train students for classroom management, teaching plan preparation, and teaching styles to meet the requirements for a teacher. For the specialization of translation and interpretation, the curriculum will visualize the translation process and help students know how to work in that field. Therefore, specificity in the future job, is a decisive factor for students’ choice. For the item 2, over 65% agreed that the curriculum suitable for their learning capacity decided their choice of specialization. However, just 43.1% of respondents stated that the easiness of the subjects influenced their choice of specialization. It can be said that one of the most significant factors for students’ choice of specialization is the job prospect in the future.

The personal factors including own interest, future job passion, and learning goal. The result showed that the factor of own interest is a decisive one for the choice of specialization with 72.5%. While 58.8% of the respondents stated the future job passion on their decision to choose a specialization. Pursuing the future job passion helps them persevere, have more motivation to achieve success in that field. However, just 47% of the respondents agreed with the statement “I have set a learning goal to pursue it”.

The economic factors consist of 3 factors of high salary, job opportunities and a future table job. The surveyed results showed that 51% of the respondents agreed a high salary is a factor affecting the decision to choose a specialization. While 58.9% agreed with the current major to provide them more job opportunities. The factor of a stable job accounted for 60.8% on the students’ decision to choose a specialization. These results match with a study by Abdullah et al. (2020) that for many students, it is very important to know about the future career prospects and opportunities after graduation from the university.

It can be seen from the findings that 39.2% of respondents agreed to rely on their relatives to choose a major. Obviously, the opinions of the relatives do not greatly affect the decision to choose a specialization of the English language students at NTTU, Abdullah et al. (2020) argued that friends and family influencing the decision-making process is high debatable. It is

Table 1
Regarding academic factor

Factors	Items		Number	%
Academic	I choose this specialization since the education program helps me know specifically what my future job will be	Strongly agree	27	17.6%
		Agree	75	49%
		Neutral	33	21.6%
		Strongly disagree	9	5.9%
		Disagree	9	5.9%
	I choose this specialization because the curriculum is suitable for my capacity.	Strongly agree	21	13.7%
		Agree	81	52.9%
		Neutral	39	25.5%
		Strongly disagree	9	5.9%
		Disagree	3	2.0%
	I choose this specialization because of the easiness of the subjects	Strongly agree	21	13.7%
		Agree	45	29.4%
		Neutral	42	27.5%
		Strongly disagree	24	15.7%
		Disagree	21	13.7%

Table 2
Regarding personal factors

Factors	Items		Number	%
Personal	I choose this specialization because I am interested in it	Strongly agree	30	19.6%
		Agree	81	52.9%
		Neutral	21	13.7%
		Strongly disagree	9	6%
		Disagree	12	7.8%
	I choose this specialization because I have set a learning goal to pursue it	Strongly agree	21	13.7%
		Agree	69	45.11%
		Neutral	45	29.4%
		Strongly disagree	6	4%
		Disagree	12	7.8%
	I choose this specialization because it helps me get a future job that matches my passion.	Strongly agree	27	17.6%
		Agree	45	29.4%
		Neutral	51	33.3%
		Strongly disagree	18	11.8%
		Disagree	12	7.8%

Table 3
Regarding economic factor

Factors	Items		Number	%
Economic	I choose this specialization because of the high salary.	Strongly agree	30	19.6%
		Agree	48	31.4%
		Neutral	63	41.2%
		Strongly disagree	3	2%
		Disagree	9	5.9%
	I choose this specialization because there are many job opportunities.	Strongly agree	31	21.6%
		Agree	57	37.3%
		Neutral	39	25.5%
		Strongly disagree	9	5.8%
		Disagree	15	9.8%
	I choose this specialization to have a stable job.	Strongly agree	18	11.8%
		Agree	75	49%
		Neutral	39	25.5%
		Strongly disagree	12	7.8%
		Disagree	9	5.9%

Table 4
Regarding influence from others

Factors	Items		Number	%
Influence from others	I choose this specialization because of the opinions of my relatives (teachers, family, friends).	Strongly agree	15	9.8%
		Agree	45	29.4%
		Neutral	24	15.7%
		Strongly disagree	42	27.5%
		Disagree	27	17.6%
	I choose this specialization because of other people’s success in this specialization	Strongly agree	12	7.8%
		Agree	39	25.5%
		Neutral	63	41.2%
		Strongly disagree	27	17.6%
		Disagree	12	7.8%
	I choose this specialization because of the opinion of the majority.	Strongly agree	18	11.8%
		Agree	51	33.3%
		Neutral	39	25.5%
		Strongly disagree	12	7.8%
		Disagree	33	21.6%

related to their career path. Their decision should be based on sufficient information and knowledge.

For Item 11, the results showed that just 33.3% of respondents agreed with the factor of other people’s success in this specialization that influence their choice. While for Item 12, only 45.1% of respondents agreed that the influence of others on their decision to choose a specialization. The results shows a mismatch with the study by Singh et al. (2020) that students believe that the closed ones could guide them in the right direction, while some believe that senior’s expert may help and be afraid of the differences they will face in a particular domain.

5. Conclusion

This study explored 4 factors influencing the Vietnamese English-majored student’s decision to choose a specialization including academic factors, personal factors, economic factors, and influence from others. The surveyed results shows that personal factors are the most decisive factors the Vietnamese English-majored students when choosing a specialization. Thus, it is important for students to realize their own interest before they choose a specialization to study in their university year life.

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