Factors Affecting English Capacity of Non-English Students at Dong Nai Technology University

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Abstract: **The purpose of the study is to find out the factors that affect English capacity of students in non-English major at Dong Nai Technology University. The study investigated 45 students at Dong Nai Technology University with a survey questionnaire. The findings show that there are some reasons affect students' capacity of learning English: as self-study, time management, motivation and attitude of learning. The author also gives some suggestions about the entrance standard, increasing the periods to learn English, especially listening skill.**

Keywords: **English capacity, non-English students, motivation.**

1. Introduction

The transformation of the training model to the credit institution has been carried out at many universities in our country. Dong Nai Technology University (DNTU) has conducted training under the credit system since the first semester, the 2013-2014 school year, and in 2018, the university applied a 127-credit program. With the goal of teaching English for non-English students, that they can use English for their future jobs, the English program determines the student's output standard to be proficient in the use of language skills (listening and listening)., speaking, reading, writing) equivalent to 6.5 on the IELTS scale or 80 points on the TOEFL iBT scale for professional purposes. Reference to the competency scale of the Common European Framework of Reference for Foreign Language Competency, the output of DNTU students must be equivalent to the C1 level. The 127-credit program as shown in Table 1 consists of three fields of knowledge, in which specialized knowledge accounts for only one third of the total amount of knowledge in the entire industry training program. Out of 548 specialized credits, the total number of credits in English language skills including listening, speaking, reading and writing is 22, equivalent to 275 classroom periods during four years.

The transition to a credit training system based on educational effectiveness that this institution can bring, as Nguyen Kim Dung (2005) described: Developing the ability to self-study, self-discovery and develop knowledge of students, reducing the knowledge cramming of the teacher; emphasizing the diversity of knowledge, promoting methods of understanding the world rather than knowledge. With its flexibility, it allows students to choose subjects that match their individual abilities and resources, proactively plan their study and execute that plan to fulfill the requirements for a degree, and to for their future career.

However, this model may or may have actually created some difficulties for learners in the Vietnamese context, as pointed out by some Vietnamese education researchers and some speakers at the Conference of credit training assessment celebrated at DNTU in April 2010: Students' initiative is low; they don't have the habit of self-study and research. It because of the profound influence of the learning habit in high school (the students only learn what the teacher teach and teachers just follow the curriculum) or due to the subjective and objective conditions of the university and because the services serving this model have not been able to keep up with the needs of the student's requirements.

For determining the effectiveness of the English training program, research by Nguyen Van Loi and Chung Thi Thanh Hang (2013) shows that about 60% of students get B1 and about 40% get A2 after two years of study. In this paper, we will continue to present and analyze a number of factors that can affect the development of students' English competence in order to contribute to clarifying the 'picture of credit training' in the context of scene of universities in Vietnam and especially DNTU.

2. The Factors Affecting Learners' English Capacity

Foreign language learning is a complex process in which the language development of learners is influenced by many factors. The theory of second language acquisition has mentioned many factors that have the potential to influence language learning and development, but this study only mentions the important factors that have been recognized through scientific research. These factors may be relevant to the teaching and learning process in a training program.

A. Self-study

Self-study plays a very important role in learning outcomes and is the most important element of the curriculum under the

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credit system (Tran Thanh Ai, 2013). According to Little (2007), the ability of foreign language learners to take responsibility for their own learning determines their success in learning that foreign language. Hedge (2000) has detailed this ability: that is, learners understand their needs and goals, try to achieve the set goals, exploit resources independently, and stay active in their thinking, know how to adjust learning methods to improve results and manage study time reasonably.

Some studies have demonstrated the importance of self-study for learning outcomes. Gradman and Hanania (1991) investigated the factors affecting the English ability of some 101 students enrolled in the seven-week Intensive English Course at Indiana University's English Center. These two authors used TOFEL scores to determine the student's progress and a questionnaire of factors that may affect the students' English proficiency. The study found that the most important factor affecting students' English ability is the initiative in exploiting resources through reading and listening activities outside the classroom. Another study in Korea used a grounded theory approach in which interview data was deepened to generalize into themes in order to understand the factors affecting the success of an English training program for Korean students at Biola University. The results show that learning method is one of the important factors; In addition, material and spiritual support also plays an important role in leading to good academic results (Kim, 2012). Chou (2007) used a 43-questions questionnaire for 604 students learning English as a foreign language at language institutes in the US about the factors affecting their English competency development. The results of factor analysis and regression show that the use of learning methods has the most impact on the development of English ability of the research subjects.

B. Comprehensible input and meaningful output

The opportunity to be exposed to the corpus (Comprehensible input) and to use the language meaningfully (meaningful output) (Ellis, 1994) through learning activities inside and outside the classroom are also important factors that can influence language development. Gradman and Hanania (1991) confirmed that the factors mentioned above make an important contribution to the success of the learners. Similarly, Carhill, Suarez-Orozco and Carola (2008) studied 274 adolescent immigrants from China, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Mexico to the United States and found that language environment strongly influences language their English ability. Research shows that if learners spend more time interacting and using English in practice, their ability to use English will be better. However, the socio-cultural environment in these studies is completely different from the socio-cultural environment where English is taught and learned as a foreign language in schools. In particular, the amount of study time, which is synonymous with the amount of exposure and language use, also affects the language ability of learners. Kim and Lee (2010) use the method of economic statistics to analyze the factors related to the ability to use English of English learners from 64 countries around the world. TOFEL score is used as a measure of English ability, the influencing factors are divided into two

groups: linguistic factors and non-linguistic factors. Among non-linguistic factors, the number of years of study is related to the development of learners' English ability. This is a predictable outcome if other influencing factors are ignored.

C. Motivation and learning attitude

Motivation and learning attitude are also considered as one of the important factors in the process of second language acquisition (Ellis, 1994). According to Gardner (1985, p.5), motivation includes four factors: the goal to be achieved in the learning activity, the effort to achieve the goal, the desire to achieve success and the attitude towards the learning activity.

In the foreign language classroom, learners' attitudes will be expressed through teaching and learning activities (Ellis, 1986). Learner's attitude and motivation will determine learners' persistence when facing learning challenges or difficulties, this factor affects learners' level of language proficiency and alternately lead to success or failure in language development (Ellis, 1994). If a learner has a positive motivation and attitude (as a result of learning), it will continue to lead the learner to success, whereas a negative motivation and attitude will be a barrier to the language development of learners.

About motivations and attitudes to learn English, the regression analysis of Gradman and Hanania (1991) shows that learners' awareness of the need to learn English and the role of English in the future has an impact on their ability to their success in learning English. Chou (2007) also found that learning motivation is the second factor after learning method that affects learners' English ability.

D. Methods of testing and assessment

Although the assessment method factor is not mentioned in the theory of language acquisition, there have been studies that have found its connection to the development of learners' foreign language ability. A large and long-term study was conducted by Ross (2005) in the context of English language teaching and learning in Japan. The 8-year study involved eight groups of English learners participating in a 4-semester academic English program. Eight groups of 2215 learners were divided into two batches: The first four groups followed a program that used traditional assessment methods such as tests, homework, exams and project reports. The other group follows a program in which the assessment method is geared towards the learning process, such as self-assessment, group assessment, and collaborative project work. The TOEFL test is used to measure learners' English proficiency at three different points in the learning process. Research has shown that changing the assessment method towards assessing the learning process has an impact on learners' English ability.

The review of the above research shows that many factors can affect the development of learners' English ability. These factors include self-directed self-directed learning, learning motivations and attitudes, and duration of language exposure in a communicative context (although the study did not specify how long the period is reasonable to achieve good results); methods of assessing learning outcomes. These factors are directly related to the training program and the interaction

between the training program and learners. In addition, in this study, other factors such as family economic situation and part-time employment were also investigated.

3. Research Methods

This study aims to examine and determine the factors affecting the English ability of non-English students after two years of studying a 127-credit program at the Department of General English, Faculty of Foreign Languages, DNTU.

A. Research methods

To find out the influencing factors, the study uses a questionnaire designed based on the synthesis and analysis of previous research documents, focusing on a number of important factors that can affect the development of the learners' English ability. The questionnaire uses Likert's 5-scale to collect student data on factors such as self-study, motivational learning attitudes, English learning methods, and assessment methods applied in the program. Self-study includes questions about attitudes towards self-study and learning methods. The survey questions on learning motivation attitudes are based on the questions in the intrinsic motivation inventory (IMI) that were used in many researches. These questions are adjusting to the research objectives, tied to the credit program context. In addition, some information about learners is also collected such as part-time work, self-study time, gender. The entry level is determined by the TOEIC test scores taken at the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year. This result is transfer into a 9-point scale using the Cambridge English Exam (http://www.examenglish.com) session table.

To investigate the relationship between predictors and students' English proficiency level, the study used a multi-linear regression in which the overall average score of the IELTS English test was considered as the dependent variable and the independent variables are the investigated factors. The data of the independent variables obtained from the questionnaire are put into the standardized regression model to find the relationship between these variables and the dependent variable. Before running the regression, the explanatory factor analysis was used to determine the factors from the question clusters in the questionnaire based on the standard extraction index ($\geq .40.$) and the standard sample index from .60 and above (Larson-Hall, 2010).

B. Research objects

Table 1
Percentage of students by individual characteristics (n=45)

Characteristics	Number	Percentage %
Male	5	11.1%
Female	40	88.9%
City	11	24.4%
Countryside	34	75.6%

The survey was distributed to K16 non-English major students who volunteered to take part in the IELTS English proficiency test. Research subjects include 45 second-year students studying 127-credit program at DNTU, including 5 males and 40 females. Table 1 summarizes the parameters of this group of students.

4. Research Results

A. Factors predicting English proficiency results of students K36

Table 2 summarizes the results of descriptive statistics of the investigated factors, showing that in general, students' self-study learning attitude and motivation are above average. Students are not very active in self-study (M=3.43, SD=.39; M=3.56, SD=.44). The results show that students' level of access to the English-speaking environment is very low (M=2.63 SD=.47) compared to the average scale of 3.0. Specifically, students rarely participate in learning activities to practice more English in addition to classroom learning activities such as reading English books, listening to the radio or watching English movies, exploiting more English materials outside the program, or join the English club (M=2.63, SD=.47). Students almost regularly participate in learning activities in class, in the form of group discussions, presentations, listening to lectures and discussions with teachers (M=3.45, SD=.40). Self-study hours during the week are M=11, equivalent to 2 hours a day.

More specifically about the students' self-study method, it can be seen that the 'self-correcting' learning method has the lowest average score (M=3.4, SD=.58). Next is 'Exploiting learning materials' (M=3.52, SD=.68), and the highest is 'finding internship opportunities and using English' (M=3.77, SD=.66). This result shows that in general, students' self-study is not regular; Students do not have a high self-study sense.

Table 2
Descriptive statistics of variables used to run the linear regression model

Elements	Mean	Std.Deviation	N
Meanposttest	3.95	.71	75
Kinhtegiadinh	.53	.47	75
Lamthem	.52	.47	75
giolamthem_tuan	7.40	10.4	75
Sogiotuhoctuan	11.5	7.9	75
Tudieuchinh	3.40	.55	75
Timcohoisudungtienganh	3.76	.66	75
Renluyen themtiengAnh	2.63	.47	75
RenluyentiengAnhtrenlop	3.45	.40	75
Dongcothaidohoctap	3.56	.44	75
Trinhdodauvao	1.98	.26	75
Tutinvecachhoc	2.69	.75	75
Danhgiaketqua	4.2	.49	75
Danhgiatientrinh	2.7	.84	75

(1= never or completely disagree, 5= always or completely agree)

On average, one out of every two students has a part-time job (M= 0.53) and one out of every two students has a difficult economic situation to pay for their studies (M=0.52). The average number of overtime hours per week is M=7.4 hours and the difference in the number of overtime hours between students is very large (SD=10.6). The number of students' self-study hours per week also varied greatly (M=11.4, SD=8.16). The most frequently used assessment method is results-based assessment (M=4.2), while progress assessment is rarely used (M=2.7).

B. *Multilinear regression results*

Table 3 presents the results of testing the hypothesis that the regression model has indicated that this regression model is different from the null hypothesis, with high statistical significance. This means that the regression model is valid for predicting the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2001, citing from Larson-Hall, 2010), if the correlation between factors or independent variables is too high, ie the correlation coefficient $r >= .70$, the regression model does not significant, i.e. the ability to determine the relationship between the independent and dependent variables is not feasible. In this study, the multi-collinearity test after running the regression model shows that most of the correlation indexes between the independent variables are lower than the allowed level ($r < .60$), and the regression model has Statistical significance (p=.008).

Table 3
ANOVA[a] test on the hypothesis that the model has a predictive value of =0

Model		Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	14.41	17	.848	2.38	.008[b]
	Residual	19.89	56	.355		
	Total	34.30	73			

a. Dependent Variable: Mean post test
b. Predictors: (Constant), Trinhdodauvao, Danhgiatientrinh, Sogiotuhoctuan, Lamthem, Renluyenthemtieng Anh, Dongcothaidochoctap, Danhgiaketqua, MucdohailongveHP, Kinhtegiadinh, Hocthem, TimcohoitsudungtiengAnh, RenluyentiengAnhtrenlop, Tudieuchinh, Tinhtuhoc, giolamthem_tuan

Table 4 summarizes the regression results of independent variables or factors affecting students' English ability. The index R^2 =.42, SE=.59, p=.008 indicates that the sum of the independent variables explains 42% of the variation in students' English ability.

Table 4
Summary of regression model results

Model	R	R^2	AR^2	SE of the Estimate
1	.648[a]	420	.244	.596

Predictors: (Constant), Sogiotuhoctuan, Thaidovoituhoc, trinhdodauvao, Khaithactailieu, Kinhtegiadinh, HoctiengAnhtrenlop, Tutinvecachhoc, giolamthem_tuan, Dongcohoctap, Timcohoithuctaptienganh, HoctiengAnhngoailop, Tudieuchinh, Khanangtuchiutrachnhiem, Lamthem
Dependent Variable: Mean post test

Table 5 shows that the regression model has statistically significant t-test results. The t-value and the index are statistically significant, showing that there are 5 factors that predict the change in students' English proficiency or ability. square correlation, called Sr2 in the Section column. (partially) supplement the level of impact of each independent variable on the dependent variable (Extracted in Larson- Hall, 2010, p.194). Five variables that can predict the change in students' English ability with statistical significance at the 95% level include: (1) overtime, (2) overtime per week, (3) self-adjustment learning methods, (4) seeking opportunities to practice English and (5) entry level.

The most important factor is working part-time because it has the highest correlation coefficient (Sr^2 =.34, t=3.3, p=.002). Next is the input level factor (Sr^2=.239, t=2.3, p=.022), and followed by two factors belonging to the group of learning methods, seeking English internship opportunities (Sr^2= -.211, t=-2.0, p=.042), and self-adjusting learning methods (Sr^2=.212, t=2.8, p=.042). Meanwhile, the number of overtime hours worked during the week has a low negative correlation coefficient (Sr^2=-.200, t=-1.9, p=.055). The other factors have very low correlation coefficient, almost =0 and not statistically significant t-test.

5. Discussion

According to the statistical results, the improvement in English skills of students enrolled in the 127-credit training program is an improvement over time and depends on each individual's efforts. Student performance is influenced by factors related to individual time management more than others. Part-time employment has the most impact on students' academic quality. The negative correlation of the number of overtime hours with the English proficiency results indicates that the more hours a student works in a week, the lower the English language learning results. While the results may seem unconventional, this finding has not been found in previous studies. Outcomes may be related to each individual's family economic circumstances. It is often argued that students with difficult circumstances may be inclined to work part-time to cover their lives and study, so their study time will be affected,

Table 5
Correlation between factors affecting students' English proficiency

Model	Std. Coeff Beta	T-value	Significance	95.% confidence Interval for B		
				LB	UB	Part.
(Constant)		2.5	.016	.728	6.75	
Hoc them	.23	1.9	.057	-.012	.774	.198
Kinhtegiadinh	.19	1.6	.112	.-650	.607	.164
Lamthem	.52	3.3	.002	.286	1.14	.340
giolamthem_tuan	-.29	-.19	.055	-.039	.000	-.200
Tudieuchinh	.29	2.8	.042	.026	.714	.212
Tim co hoi su dung tieng Anh	-.28	-2.0	.042	-.565	-.010	-.211
Ren them tieng Anh	-.01	-.06	.950	-.531	.410	-.006
Ren tieng Anh tren lop	.07	.50	.619	-.361	.404	.051
Tinh tu hoc	-.24	-1.6	.102	-.923	.087	-.169
Dong co hoc tap	-.07	.51	.610	-.316	.534	.052
Trinh do dau vao	.28	2.3	.022	.108	1.35	.239
Gio tu hoc trong tuan	.17	1.5	.152	-.015	.024	.044
Danh gia ket qua	-.05	-.46	.647	-.407	.255	.-047
Danh gia tien trinh	.03	.23	.823	-.174	.218	.023

Dependent variable: English ability

so their academic performance will also be affected. affect. However, in this study, the positive correlation coefficient between family economic situation and private tutoring (r=.255), with part-time work (r=.122), and negative correlation with number of self-employed hours study during the week (r=-.215) indicates that students with good enough family income tend to work longer hours and study less on their own than students from slightly disadvantaged families. The data (Sr^2= -.20, p=.055) shows that the more hours a student works, the slower his academic progress. This may be due to students' lack of interest and persistence in self-study, which is reflected in the low overall average score of attitude and motivation to study (M=3.56, SD=.44).

Students who regularly use self-correcting learning methods in learning have more progress than students who do not regularly use these methods, although the correlation coefficient is not high (Sr2=. 212). However, in general, the fact that students participate in extra English practice outside of class time has no impact on learning outcomes. This result may be because students almost self-study very little time, on average only 2 hours a day, study without clear direction, do not understand how to learn, or do not actively seek learning methods. practice, rarely participate in activities to practice more English skills outside of classroom hours as the results presented in the described table. This can explain why a large number of students have not made progress after having spent a similar period of time with their classmates. As mentioned in the theoretical basis, one of the difficulties when converting the program to the credit system is that students are not used to self-study, not ready for the ability to self-study to keep up with the change from academic year to credit program. Although the data show that self-study has a positive effect on the improvement of some students' English proficiency, in general, the effect is not large and not popular. This result reflects the results of previous studies on the impact of self-study, and reflects the true situation of students' self-study as presented at the Conference to assess the situation of students' two self-study periods in January, 2011.

Statistical results and assessment methods also confirm the results of previous studies (Ross, 2005); Specifically, assessment testing emphasizes that results have no impact on student progress. In the context of DNTU, lecturers are entitled to test and evaluate; However, due to the influence of the results-based assessment tradition, many lecturers do not consider using assessment to influence the learning process of students.

In addition, because of their freedom, many lecturers do not want the pressure of having to spend a lot of time checking and evaluating the learning progress. The results of descriptive statistics show that lecturers frequently use assessment forms that emphasize results.

Interestingly, student entry level was the second most important determinant of student progress in the 127-credit program over the past two years (Sr^2=.24, p=.022). The correlation between entry level and English learning experience (students have tutoring at English teaching institutions before entering university) and English ability after two years, although very small (Sr^2= .24, p=.022 and Sr^2=.20, p=.057) demonstrate that students with good entry English ability make more progress than students with poor entry level. This result also reflects the concern of many lecturers about the very low English university entrance exam scores of many students, because DNTU's enrollment has not multiplied the English subject coefficient for many years.

To confirm the theoretical basis stated, this study has shown that the factors of attitude and learning motivation in the interaction with the implementation of the program have almost no effect on the progress of students' English competence. This can be explained by the low mean score of students' attitudes and motivation.

6. Conclusion and Suggestions

Although the study's limitation is that it has not assessed students' speaking skills, it can be temporarily concluded that during the two-year period of intensive study from 2010-2012, students' progress is very slow. The factors affecting these results are related to individual factors such as the management of students' study time and part-time work as well as entrance qualifications. With this result, the study has the following recommendations:

- Pay attention to students' English test scores for the entrance.
- Increase the amount of time for specialized knowledge, especially English skills and additional language knowledge such as grammar and phonetics. The English training program should pay attention to enhancing listening skills because this is a new skill for students. With the current number of periods for skills courses at 420, it is difficult to raise students' level to the standard level of C1, when the starting point is relatively low (equivalent to A2). According to the estimate of the National Foreign Language Project 2020, learners need at least 300 class periods and 100 self-study periods to raise their level one level. Thus, with B1 level, students need at least 600 more lessons and practice English skills to get C1. The skills study program ends at the end of year 2, and although there are some subjects that can further support English language development such as American English Literature, Extended Reading, Language Arts study, but if students do not make efforts to improve their English skills in the last two years, it will be difficult to achieve the expected output level of the program. To train a professional, professional and scientific knowledge is the core. The students must first be strong in the scientific expertise that he or she is about to undertake at the workplace, the professional quality must first correspond to the actual training content (Tran Thanh Ai, 2013).
- At the same time, it is necessary to have measures to manage students' self-study to help them practice self-responsibility for self-study. Including self-study content in the course assessment to stimulate students to improve their English skills outside of class time is one of the measures that can be taken. DNTU should also

institutionalize the use of information technology to manage students' self-study. Currently, DNTU is equipped with an E-learning system that can be used, but the system needs to be upgraded to ensure sufficient technical capacity to support teaching and learning. We completely agree with the author Tran Thanh Ai (2013) that: Schools should also "institutionalize" the responsibility of teachers for 'two hours of self-study' by applying the ECTS calculation of the European Communities (ECTS credits of a module including class time and self-study). Only when self-study is recognized as an official activity and associated with the teacher's teaching hours, can self-study be done well.

However, if the number of credits in specialized subjects is increased, it must also be increased reasonably because the important factor is still self-study; Increasing the amount of time means that the time students can use self-study will decrease. It is agreed that when self-study is not properly promoted, "the training program will become sketchy and unsatisfactory" (Tran Thanh Ai, 2013), but if it is increased too much, it will go against the view of positive teaching and learning which emphasizes autonomy and self-responsibility in learning of learners. There is not an assessment of the quality of English output of previous courses (150 and 138 credits program) to compare, so increasing the number of credits again needs to be considered on training effect with this changes. Any change has both positive and negative effects; It is important to view them objectively with a scientific spirit so that appropriate adjustments can be made to achieve the best training results.

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