

# THE AWARENESS OF VIETNAMESE STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES TOWARDS THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH

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***ABSTRACT**--Vietnam has been developing and needs a lot of capable human resources. Being fluent in English will be one of the successful keys that helps students to have a bright future after they have graduated from universities. They will have more opportunities to open up great prospects and more competitiveness in a modern society. As a language teacher, how to encourage students to have more motivation to learn English effectively as well as they can recognize the importance of what they need to learn from the language is necessary. This paper was completed thanks to the responses of employees working at Gifu Software Company and FPT University students thanks to the method of investigation developed by Hancock (1998). Research results show that English is positively awared by both employees and students. This study also suggests some solutions for improving English through previous studies.*

***Key words**-- Competitiveness, English, Future, Motivation, Prospects.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Most Vietnamese students are weak at foreign languages like English although they play a very important role in deciding their potential jobs in the future as well as to integrate themselves into the globalization of the world. In fact, many new graduates are still excluded from the career recruitments because of their poor English skills. No one denies the importance of English which is existing in many areas of our life, including in the workplaces and the teaching-learning process. Mastering such a language certainly allows employees to access more opportunities to promote their position in the company and as a result, they will become more competitive candidates for the roles of leadership. Once they have been fully equipped with English ability and necessary knowledge, the economy of the country will develop much faster thanks to their effort [1].

### *Content The essence of English language*

Taking a specific example in the last few years can partly specify the essence of English. Since the renovation in Vietnam was created in 1986, the need of labour resources has always been increasing especially in big cities. Both domestic and foreign companies have put their investments in the country and tried to attract as well as recruited talented people to work for them. Due to better pay rates and benefits, hence, there were a lot of good graduates applying for jobs in foreign companies. They easily passed selecting exams relating to academic knowledge but were inadequate at English skills in listening, speaking, reading or writing so that they failed the foreign language testings. As a result, they lost their job opportunities. It is a very unfortunate problem for such students, but it is also a lesson for next generations who should take it into consideration. Nowadays, the

requirement for a good foreign language that can serve the jobs is changing with an increasing trend towards more than one foreign language in the foremost recruitment. Besides, other skills such as words typing, technological, social, soft skills are also necessary. Apart from previous experience, there is a fact that graduates applying in companies and offices are still excluded because they lack the skills in writing and printing though they have satisfactory knowledge in the field of the job. Above all, being good at a foreign language like English is paramount within recruiting criteria in most companies and organisations. Then, the reason why they should take a little time each day to improve their foreign language is really easy to understand [1].

In the age of integration and with the current trend of globalization, English is considered to be the most popular language in the world. Therefore, countries in general and Vietnam in particular always pay attention to investments in this field. Not only that, English is also a language bridge connecting different countries in all over the world together and has a positive effect in exchanging cooperation with different native speakers in the country. Therefore, in the society today, English is a compulsory and an important condition for students in the process of communication as well as applying for jobs [2].

This is a very important subject among the subjects students have to study in any institutions. In a society where economy is growing rather fast like Vietnam, company employers usually requires candidates to have knowledge of computer science, computer use, office software and a high level of English proficiency. Not only does English appear vital to apply for a job, but students should also be aware that using it in their daily life is essential since it is the key to open many opportunities in this world [3].

Learning foreign languages has a variety of benefits for the learners. Moreover, our society is also in need of good foreign languages to work with people from the countries in different continents. Students will have great chances in life as well as in the profession when they are fluent at least one foreign language. Furthermore, they will be an able to work in many different areas. If students are good at English then they can get very fast with something such as computer knowledge, business skills, etc. English is a key to success in any society, especially in Vietnam [4].

Today, a class of "world citizens" appears and they are global visionaries who have global thinking, can work in many parts of the world and can cooperate in projects. In order to become a global citizen, they have to master the tools they need. One of the essential tools is foreign languages. Once they have mastered a certain popular language, plus professional expertise, they are likely to integrate into the wider world, gain more exposure because of the massive information resources on the internet [5].

### ***Current methods of teaching and learning English***

Recently, the Ministry of Education and Training and Ministry of Internal Affairs issued Joint Circular No. 21/2015 / TTLT-BGDDT-BNV with a great ambition that teachers are compulsory to have foreign language certificates in accordance with the European framework of foreign capacity of six levels for Vietnam. However, actually if they try to study to get the A2, B1 or B2 certificate properly, apart from English teachers, the majority of the other teachers teaching other subjects absolutely find it difficult to achieve the goal. It can be seen that no one denies the importance of learning and using foreign languages. Nevertheless, learning a foreign language cannot be "learned" immediately. Not only do the learners have to spend a lot of time, but they also need to have the ability to do it. While a group of the teachers is now older, it is challenging to study as well.

It is hard to deny the role of foreign languages, especially English in the modern life. It has come to be more important when since Vietnamese party and government determined that "education is the top national policy". In order to educate students about the integration in Vietnam and the access to advanced education in the world, the ability to use English in work and communication must be professional. However, looking at the status of teaching foreign languages in the country in the past years shows a lot of challenges set for the whole education of the country. The application of English teaching textbooks at all levels in the past time probably brought about ineffectiveness, which made parents and the society unsatisfied.

Understanding the role of English in modern society, most parents have been investing a lot of money for their children. Accordingly, the students not only learn at school but most of them are also sent to foreign language centers or study at teachers' houses, but the results are not much improved towards English in practical skills. After seven years studying English from grade 3 to grade 9, they cannot speak English well or use it for communication purposes. Simple words, greetings, introductory names and common words cannot help them to tell a short story in English.

Teaching English in the classrooms is still within the traditional methods. While the number of students is now rather large, the interaction between teachers and students is ineffective. Therefore, listening and speaking skills are limited. First, the methods of teaching listening should be considered. The most common listening way for students when learning the language is to pre-read, translate into Vietnamese and then listen. They cannot accept a sentence that they do not understand. The next problem is reading comprehension. When learning about reading, students often read each sentence and try to understand the meaning of each word or phrases by the support of the dictionary or teachers' translation. By applying this method, English becomes less interesting and it causes depression and pressure on the students. Then, the method of teaching writing should be changed. In writing lessons, students often write English essays in the thought of Vietnamese and then translate the content into English. In a word, the mechanical and traditional translation methods have made many students as well as learners difficult to find suitable vocabulary and feel very difficult to write [6].

Besides, English textbooks are also frequently changed. There is no consistency in the curriculum. Every year, when participating in big examinations, it is easy to see that many of the students are absent, even if they are the normal tests at the school. Besides, only few students can do their own homework. Although teachers have worked very hard, almost the whole examination room could only answer some questions, then the students are failed in the examination.

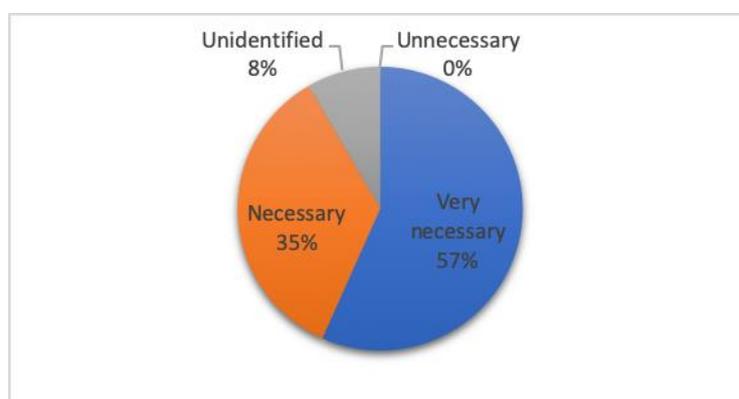
This is very clear in the results of the annual tests. English always has the highest rate of weak students. In the national high school's examinations, the English test scores are often the lowest. Although the fact that the teaching and learning of English in schools are very limited due to the history, there are inadequacies of the training of English teachers and the approachable ways as well as knowledge in the current textbooks at all levels. However, over the last few years, the national education sector has been opening some bilingual classes in the general level in some subjects to hopefully improve the English language skills for students and teachers in class. Anyway, the improvement of teaching and learning English in the national education has remained challenging towards educators in the country.

## II. METHODOLOGY

A survey was conducted of over 60 respondents. There were 30 employees working at Gifu Software Company and 30 studying at FPT University. In the form of direct interviews and completing the questionnaires, findings were found with several different aspects towards English. The findings are clearly presented in the next content.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

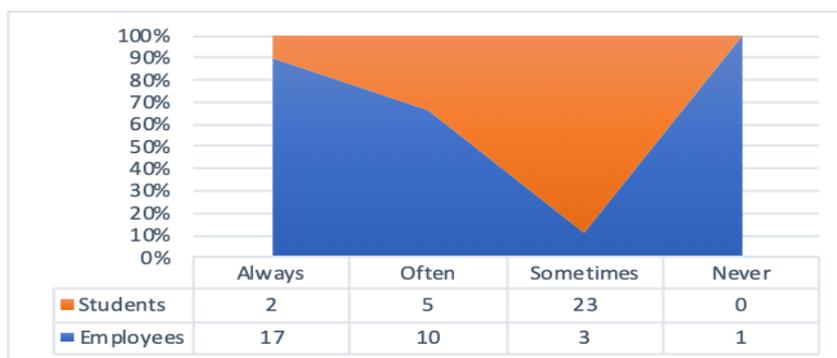
The first closed-ended question addressed in the survey, along with four options, are to determine the importance of foreign language proficiency in the respondents' thought towards their future jobs: "What do you think about the importance of English?". Three optional answers include "Very necessary", "Necessary", "Unnecessary" and "Unidentified". The findings are illustrated in the following chart [Fig. 1].



**Figure 1:** The awareness towards the importance of English.

According to the pie chart, 57 percent of respondents considered English was very necessary while 35 percent believed it was a little bit less necessary. However, there were 8 percent having no ideas about the importance of English. Besides, no one denied its necessity. Through the collected data, it can be obviously seen that most respondents were aware of the importance of English, which is also the second language at school and at works in Vietnam. However, some respondents found it difficult to decide whether or not it was necessary although they have been learning it. They said they had never decided what jobs they would work after their graduation so that they had no ideas about it. Surprisingly, most employees considered that English was very important as well as necessary for them because it was one of the factors to help them get promotion in their job in comparison with the students. It represents the fact that the importance of English is properly recognised when the people are in a certain situation while it is just at necessary level in such a case of students who are not in the same circumstance as the employees' one.

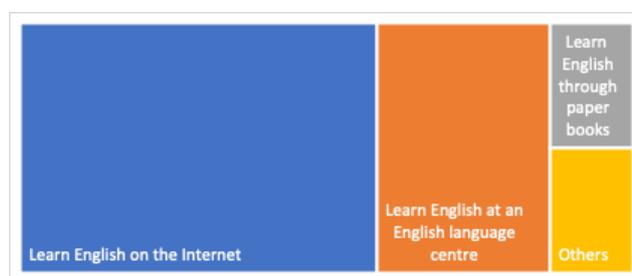
The second question in the questionnaire aims to determine the frequency of using English in the respondents' work of the employees as well as in university life of the students. It is "How often do you use English?" with four choices including "Always", "Often", "Sometimes", "Never". The results are shown as below [Fig. 2].



**Figure 2:** The frequency of using English

There are an opposite between students and employees in the frequency of using English. Most employees said they always use English especially in reading and writing because they often work with documents in English as well as they have to write English emails. Due to different positions of the employees in the company, there were still some people who sometimes or never use it. In contrast, over three quarter of students only used English when they were in the English lessons and in the English examinations except those who were in English major. In general, most respondents showed the necessity of practical English, depending on their situation. Anyway, if they have good language skills, they find it easy to access variety of materials or communicate with people [3].

The third question is “What have you done to improve your English?”, along with “Learn English on the Internet”, “Study English at an English language centre”, “Learn English through paper books”, “Others”.



**Figure 3:** General ways to improve English

According to figure 3, Internet was chosen to be the most common way to study English by 35 respondents. It is followed by going to an English centre to learn the language by 17 people. Meanwhile, there were only four people using traditional books and four people following other ways to improve their English. The data shows that English has become a common choice for the language learners due to its convenience, especially for busy people.

#### IV. SOLUTIONS

Due to the findings from the current study, English is vital in many aspects of life such as works, studies, communication, examinations, etc. Along with such a thing, recommendations for improving English are highly suggested thanks to the study of previous research as well. With a mission to provide high quality human resources, the standardization of specialized curricula in English as well as the graduation of the English proficiency of graduates will be one of the obvious demonstrations for the determination of the school in contributing to the development of the country and its integration with the world. In the coming schemes, the school will continue to import and spread other advanced programs of domestic universities that have successfully implemented and opened a number of high-quality programs for training in international programs [1].

Everyone has their own motivations and goals for learning English, but most of them aim to improve and develop themselves in the time of integration. They need to define their learning goals so that they can motivate themselves to strive, to persist in learning English, to be confident when we are discouraged or give up. In order to improve the quality of teaching informatics, it is necessary to take specific measures for both lecturers and students.

For teachers, each of them must design suitable teaching plans and detailed practice plans for each subject and for each teaching class. Lecturers also need to continue to maintain and improve the effectiveness of theoretical teaching methods combined with practicing in the computer rooms when teaching the related subject, while also helping students to understand the theory and can manipulate the contents and requirements of the lesson [5].

Teachers need to guide students to fully and clearly understand the role and influence of English during teaching activities in general and self-study in particular. Besides, the teachers should organize training courses for students on how to use this language in presenting, testing and even in evaluation. This creates a new environment for students to understand and use language in research activities before assigning the task of studying for students, discussion group exercises. The following requirements must be met including syllabus, assignments or lesson topics. Students need to be introduced, guided to explore documents from the Internet addresses and the Website to make and add to the subject [6].

Particularly, during the practice, teachers should observe students whether they are well aware and practice correctly according to the content and requirements set out. The teacher also needs to arrange good students closer to the weak students to help each other in their studies. In addition, teachers should actively propose that they are able to share practical shifts for larger classes than the number of computers provided in a computer lab and ensure that students have practical conditions.

On the student side, they must have an active, positive, self-conscious, and creative attitude in activities to create knowledge. Students also need to practice their ability to self-assess their academic results so that students themselves can adjust their activities according to the set objectives.

## V. CONCLUSION

To sum up, most respondents were aware of the importance and necessity of English. Improving students' English skills is not a simple task at all since we need more time to change the habit of learning that has become

obsolete and is no longer suitable in the new situation. Moreover, in order to have a perfect skill, students need enough time to practice, there must be close cooperation between the teacher and the learners. Of course, good learning and teaching methods will be the key to the students' success.

## VI. LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

A limitation of this study was that we could not carry out the survey much more carefully, that is, we need to interview more respondents and design our survey in detail in order to achieve our major goal. However, we strongly believe that we will contribute to the contribution of better results in the future when we have the most suitable conditions, including time and scope of research subjects.

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