

## THE EFFECTS OF TEACHING METHODS ON ENGLISH LEARNING BEHAVIOURS OF NON-ENGLISH MAJORED STUDENTS AT NATIONAL ECONOMICS UNIVERSITY

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**Abstract.** The research has used empirical methods to evaluate the impact of English teaching methods on learning behaviours of non-language majored students at National Economics University. The study carried out an experiment with the selection of two research groups: the experimental group and the control group who learn Basic English module 1 by two different teaching methods. The research results reveal that the experimental group being taught by positive methods has more positive learning behaviours than the control group.

**Keywords:** English teaching methods, learning behaviors, non-English majored students.

### 1. Introduction

National Economics University (NEU) is the leading university in economics, management and business administration in the system of universities in Vietnam. NEU's mission is to provide the society with qualified education, research, consultancy and technology-transfer-services attaining regional and international level, and to contribute to national industrialization and urbanization in the context of global economic integration. Recognizing the importance of English, NEU has set an English outcome standard as a graduation requirement. Since 2017, it has been compulsory for all non-English major students to achieve 5.5 IELTS and equivalent level for other kinds of international English certificates such as TOEIC, TOEFL, TOEIC,...

Teaching is the process giving shape one's thought and action through instructions and/or performing practices that lead to a new behaviour and capacity in the students. Teaching can be conducted using several methods based on the nature of subjects and customized according to students. In the general context, the teaching of English at NEU has many objective and subjective limitations affecting the quality of learning such as: teaching methods are still in the traditional ways and lack of creativity which then do not evoke students' initiative and activeness; students' ability to communicate and apply English in life and work is still limited; some students are not interested in learning English; student learning behaviors in the classroom and outside the classroom is still passive ...

In Vietnam, there are not many studies on the influence of teaching methods on learners' English learning behaviors. Most of the researches focus on assessing the situation, analyzing the causes and proposing solutions to improve the quality of English teaching. Specifically, Nguyen Thi My Phuong (2006) conducted a study on strategies to improve the quality of English

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language teaching and learning for old students in the English Department of the University of Danang. In the study, the author outlined strategies related to English language teaching methods, English curriculum and proposed a learner-centered method, using activities to create learners' motivation. The author mentioned the innovation of teaching methods to improve the quality of English teaching and learning; however, the author did not assess the impact of teaching methods on learners' learning behaviors. Especially, the research focused mainly on the old students; therefore, the research results cannot be extended to other groups of students.

Hoang Van Van's study (2008) pointed out that many groups of causes leading to the poor quality in non English majored training at Hanoi National University such as inconsistent training programs, non-systematic teaching materials, poor facilities, shortage of the environment for practice, and unqualified teachers. In this study, the author gave comments and analysis but did not specify the impact of the factors on the quality of non-English majored training.

Nguyen Quy Thanh (2008) in the research on "*Perceptions, attitudes and practices of students with positive learning methods*" showed that students' correct perceptions of positive learning behaviors are absolute while the practice index is merely 62%. The author identified many factors affecting students' learning positivity, including the factors of teaching methods and facilities.

Nguyen Quy Thanh and Nguyen Trung Kien (2010) in their research on "*Student Positive Learning Practices*" proved that the traditional method of teaching is inversely correlated with the students' index of positive learning practice. Accordingly, the research showed that if teachers read and students write, it will reduce nearly 6 percentage points of students' positive learning practice. Conversely, teachers who provide students with self-study materials have positive effects on students' positive learning performance, specifically this index will increase by approximately 5%. This is the first study modeling the factors affecting learning positivity; however, the assessment of the influence on learning positivity is not really comprehensive.

Le Thi Hanh (2011) in the study on the influence of English teaching methods on motivation of first-year students in economics at Van Lang University concluded that teaching methods have more effective impacts on some learning behaviors such as homework and pre-class preparation.

Nguyen Thi Thuy (2019) in her research on "*Renewing methods of teaching foreign languages in universities: Opportunities and challenges*" indicated that the current teaching method of foreign languages at universities is unreasonable and lack of application. Learners are still forced to learn new words mechanically, separating from specific situations and unrelated to practical situations. In other words, the use of teaching methods affects learners' attitudes and learning outcomes. However, the research was not illustrated by specific data; therefore, the results of the analysis are subjective.

In short, in Vietnam, there are no works to evaluate the influence of teaching methods on students' learning behaviors. With the aim of finding ways to improve the effectiveness of English teaching and learning processes for non-English majored students at NEU, the author evaluates the impact of current English teaching methods on students' learning behaviors through the use of experimental research methodology. This is a refreshing and scientific way to assess the impact of English teaching methods at NEU. Also, the research results are an important basis to propose a number of recommendations to increase students' learning activeness and initiatives, thereby contributing to help students achieve NEU English outcome standards and meet employers' demands.

## **2. Content**

### **2.1. Research methodology**

The experimental research has been carried out with first-year non-English majored students at National Economics University. The author chose two classes of 30 students studying the same Basic English 1 module for the academic year 2019 - 2020. The students' English level is quite similar, which is based on the English placement test, forming a pair of experimental group (NTN) and control group (NDC).

**Time of experimentation:** October 2019 to November 2019.

**Experimental content:** The experimental class and control class participate in English classes with the same course syllabus and duration. According to the curriculum, the BASIC 1 module with 6 credit duration is designed for students who have passed the English placement test. The two classes have their first 15 periods with the same teaching methods, the author evaluate the students' positive learning behaviors after they have finished the 15<sup>th</sup> period. The students' learning behaviour assessment is based on the data collected from the questionnaires for students and teachers. In the 16th period, two groups of classes will be taught by two different teaching methods. The experimental group is taught by many combined modern teaching methods such as case-based teaching, group teaching, mind maps, seminars,... while control class is taught by using current teaching methods. At the end of the experiment, students' learning behaviours of the two groups are checked and assessed according to the evaluation criteria.

**Experimental process:**

#### ***Step 1: Prepare the experiment***

*\* Select experimental group and control group*

The selection of the experimental group and control group is conducted on the principle that the cognitive level is based on the assessment of the English placement test. The selection is randomized by the list ensuring the equivalence of both the number of students of the two classes and the number of students in each group.

#### ***Step 2: Organize the experiment***

*\* Building evaluation criteria, measuring tools, and scale*

**Evaluation criteria:** The results are determined through the students' learning behaviors in the class and outside the class after experimental effects. To evaluate students' learning behaviours, the research is conducted on the positive learning behaviours as follows:

Positive class behaviours include:

- ✓ Attend class on time
- ✓ Sufficient attendance during the lesson
- ✓ Full lesson notes
- ✓ Understand, absorb, and apply the lessons well
- ✓ Have good attitudes and study attentively
- ✓ Express ideas
- ✓ Participate in discussions, group work, make presentations, and debate
- ✓ Discuss further with teachers / classmates if possible

Positive behaviours outside the class include:

- ✓ Do homework / prepare the lesson before class
- ✓ Research, read more materials for the lesson
- ✓ Practice the content of lessons
- ✓ Join English clubs, English courses,...
- ✓ Take time to learn English

- ✓ Combine many English learning methods (listening to music, watching movies ...)

**Measuring tools:** Using questionnaires for both groups of students to evaluate positive learning behaviours after experimental impacts.

**Scale:** Each indicator of positive learning behaviors is measured on the scale of 1 to 5 (poor to good).

**Step 3: Finish the experiment**

The assessment of students' positive learning behaviors is conducted by using measuring tools designed in the questionnaires. Experimental results were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively.

*\*Processing quantitative data:* Using the SPSS software to process data after the survey between experimental group and control group. The formulas used in the statistics section are:

**Mean value:** To calculate the average value of scores and average results of experimental group and control group

**Standardized deviation:** Used to describe the degree of score dispersion.

P value of t-test: P value is probability of random occurrence ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). To check whether the difference between the experimental group and control group before and after the experiment happened randomly or not, through the use of the T-test, the results can happen in the following cases:

If  $p > 0.05$ , the result difference of the experimental group and control group happens completely random, meaning that no difference effect still occurs.

If  $p \leq 0.05$ , the difference is not random, it means that the method used to affect the experimental group can make a change compared to the control group. That result is statistically significant.

*Processing and analyzing experimental results:*

Through the t-test by SPSS software comparing the average value of the behaviors achieved by the experimental group and control group to determine the significance of difference:

Hypothesis H0:  $\bar{X} = \bar{Y}$  (The difference between the results of average value of the experimental group and control group after the experiment is not significant).

Hypothesis H1:  $\bar{X} \neq \bar{Y}$  (There is a statistically significant difference between the average value of the experimental group and control group after the experiment)

**2.2. Findings and discussion**

**2.2.1 Influence of teaching methods on English learning behaviors of non-English majored students in classroom**

Through the process of implementing the experiment, the results of assessing the experimental group and control group on English learning behaviour are shown in the following table:

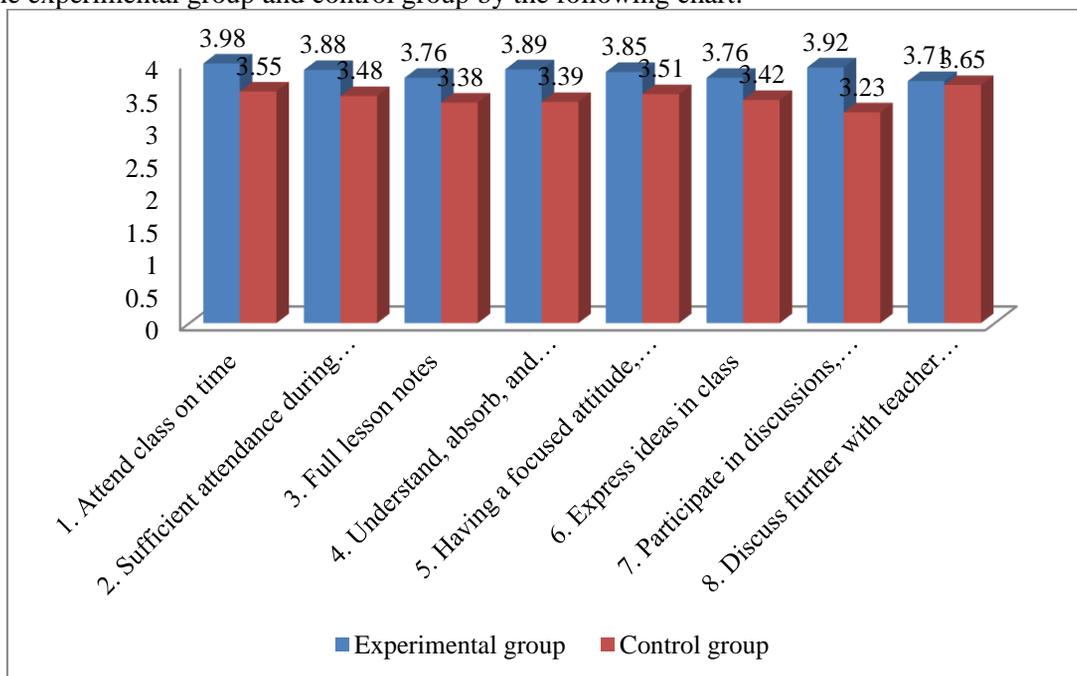
**Table 1. Mean value of students' positive learning behaviors of the experimental group and control group**

Behavior	Experimental group		Control group		T	Sig
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation		
1. Attend class on time	3,98	0,672	3,55	0,547	2,964	0,011
2. Sufficient attendance during the lesson	3,88	0,738	3,48	0,617	4,01	0,012

3. Full lesson notes	3,76	0,701	3,38	0,715	5,109	0,001
4. Understand, absorb, and apply lessons well	3,89	0,845	3,39	0,667	3,819	0,002
5. Having a goods attitude, studying attentively	3,85	0,658	3,51	0,801	2,633	0,013
6. Express ideas	3,76	0,764	3,42	0,755	2,87	0,015
7. Participate in discussions, group work, make presentations, and debate	3,92	0,753	3,23	0,693	3,568	0,000
8. Discuss further with teacher / classmates if possible	3,71	0,882	3,65	0,906	3,064	0,334

(Source: Summary of experimental results)

The results in Table 1 show the t-test with the coefficient Sig. (2 tails) of seven behaviors from 1 to 7 are all less than 0.05. This proves that there is a statistically significant difference in the mean value after experimentation on all 7 behaviors between the experimental group and control group. It is possible to represent the difference in average value of learning behavior of the experimental group and control group by the following chart:



**Graph 1. Mean value of students' positive learning behaviors of the experimental and control groups**

The results on Graph 1 show that after experimental the mean value of students' positive learning behavior of the experimental group is in the range from 3.71 to 3.98, this means the experimental group of students are relatively active in studying. The mean value of students' positive learning behaviours of the control group is from 3.23 to 3.55, which is the average level. Thus, it can be seen that the students of the experimental group have higher positive learning behaviours than the control group.

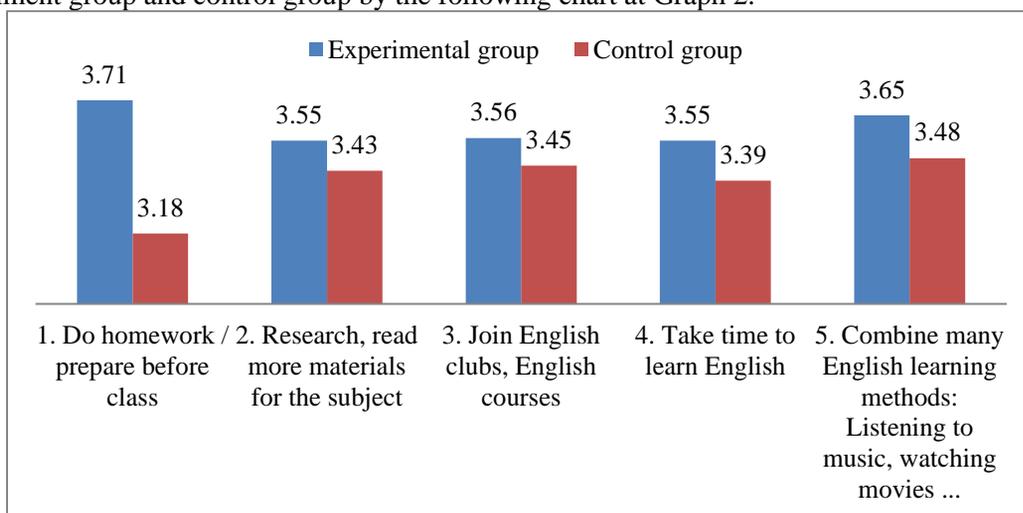
**2.2.2. Influence of teaching method on English learning behavior of non-English majored students outside the classroom**

*Table 2. Mean value of students' positive learning behaviors outside the classroom of the experimental group and control group*

Behavior	Mean	Experimental group		Control group		T	Sig
		Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation		
1. Do homework / prepare before class		3,71	0,758	3,18	0,892	2,378	0,008
2. Research, read more materials for the subject		3,55	0,771	3,43	0,748	3,719	0,312
3. Join English clubs, English courses		3,56	0,547	3,45	0,812	3,897	0,426
4. Take time to learn English		3,55	0,845	3,39	0,667	3,44	0,034
5. Combine many English learning methods: Listening to music, watching movies ...		3,65	0,88	3,48	0,913	4,221	0,124

(Source: Summary of experimental results)

The results in Table 2 show t-test with the coefficient Sig. (2 tails) of 1st and 4th behaviors is less than 0.05. This proves that there is a statistically significant difference in the mean value after the experiment of the behavior "Doing homework / preparing lessons before going to class" and the behavior "Taking time to learn English" the experimental group and control group. Particularly, the experimental group has higher average value of the positive learning behavior than the control group in both behaviors. However, in the 2nd, 3th, 5th behavior, the significance level is all greater than 0.05, which means that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean of the behavior "Research, read more documents for the subject." "Joining English clubs, extra English programs" and the behavior "Combining many methods of learning English". It is possible to represent the difference in average value of learning behavior of the experiment group and control group by the following chart at Graph 2.



*Graph 2. Mean value of students' positive learning behaviors outside classroom of the experimental and control groups*

The results on Graph 2 show that after the experiment, the mean value of “Do homework / prepare before class” of the experimental group is 3.71 (fair level), much higher than the control group’s mean value, 3.18 (average level). Similarly, the behavior “Take time to learn English”, the experimental group has an "Research, read more documents for the subject. "Joining English clubs, extra English programs" and "Combine many methods of learning English” have no statistically significant difference in mean value. This can be understood that after the experiment, the above behaviors have not changed yet.

**Some recommendations:**

Students must be self-aware of the importance of English as a compulsory graduation requirement, build proper attitudes, learning motives, appropriate learning methods, have specific goals, and a specific English learning pathway to achieve English outcome standards. Students need to actively participate in group activities, English clubs, exchange programs with international students, English Olympic competitions,... to help themselves maintain interest and motivation in learning English.

Teachers need to promote self-study, self-training and improve their professional skills. It is of great importance to master active teaching methods to diversify teaching methods, especially focusing on using IT in English language teaching process, exploiting the advantages of IT in improving the efficiency of lectures, helping students increase interest in learning English and achieve English outcome standards.

NEU needs to create the necessary conditions and appropriate mechanisms to motivate, encourage lecturers, raise their awareness and responsibility in self-research, exploration and creativity in the innovation of English teaching methods. NEU should actively expand exchanges with partners, domestic and international universities, thereby contributing to opening opportunities to exchange experience and access effective educational methods to foster, improve teaching methods. Especially in the context of the 4.0 era, it is necessary to pay attention to the mode of exchange of experience in online teaching, blended learning model, ...

The Faculty of Foreign Languages and the English departments need to create a positive pedagogical environment, serving as a basis for each lecturer to maximize their positivity, initiative and creativity in English teaching innovation. In order to improve the effectiveness of students' self-study English, the Faculty needs to coordinate with experts to design and integrate an English self-study module into the main course programs. However, this self-study activity should be conducted under lecturers’ management and guidance.

### **3. Conclusion**

The research used data collection methods through experimental activities for the experimental and control group, the results are as follows:

The current situation of English teaching methods: For the Basic English module 1, the research shows that the majority of teachers are currently using traditional teaching methods focusing on presentations, conversations, reading - writing methods while modern teaching methods such as case studies, projects, and visual presentation are used not very often in class.

The current situation of students' learning behaviors: The study conducted a survey on students’ learning behaviors in the class and outside the class, the results reveal that most of the students have inactive learning behaviors, mainly focusing on writing notes and being fully present in class; do not actively participate in English learning activities. For learning behaviors outside the class, the students show that they do not regularly and actively prepare lessons and read learning materials before class. However, due to the learning environment at NEU with many clubs and extracurricular activities, the students tend to join many clubs, combining many methods of self-study English at home.

Experimental results: The mean value of students' positive learning behaviors in class (7 out of 8 behaviors) of the experiment group taught by positive methods is higher than the control group taught by current traditional methods. For learning behaviors outside the class, changing the teaching methods for the experimental group only made the average value of some behaviors (2 out of 5 behaviors) higher than the average value of the control group.

*In summary, by using experimental methods, the research illustrates that teaching methods affect learning behaviors. They strongly affects learning behaviors in class and has medium influence on learning behaviors outside the class. This is an important basis of the research to propose a number of recommendations to improve the quality of teaching, and students' learning behavior, activeness, initiative and creativity.*

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