

Difficulties faced by ICTU students in learning English and some effective solutions for these challenges

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study is to identify the difficulties faced by non-English major students in learning English at ICTU and to propose effective solutions to overcome these challenges. The methods of data collection used in this study will be questionnaires which will be distributed to 200 second year students at ICTU. The results of the study shows that listening skills emerged as the most challenging aspect of English language learning, followed by writing and speaking skills and the majority of respondents lack confidence in their ability to communicate effectively in English.*

Keywords: *Difficulties, students, learning, English, solutions.*

1. Introduction

English has become a vital language in today's globalized world, not only for communication purposes but also for academic and professional success. In recognition of the significance of English, Thai Nguyen University of Information and Communication Technology (ICTU) has made it a requirement for all students, regardless of their major, to study and attain a certain level of proficiency in the language.

However, the learning of English by non-English major students, especially those enrolled in technology-focused universities like ICTU, poses several difficulties. These students often have limited exposure to English, and they may struggle with grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and other language skills. Moreover, the methods of teaching English in higher education institutions may not always be effective for all students, leading to a lack of motivation and interest in the subject.

The purpose of this study is to identify the difficulties faced by non-English major students in learning English at ICTU and to propose effective solutions to overcome these challenges. This study aims to provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by non-English major students and to offer recommendations for improving the quality of English language education at ICTU. Some research questions are drawn to answer.

1. What are the difficulties faced by non-English major students in learning English 1 at ICTU?
2. What factors contribute to the difficulties faced by non-English major students in learning English 1 at ICTU?
3. What solutions can be employed to help students

overcome their difficulties in learning English 1 at ICTU?

English has been a subject of research for many years, and numerous studies have been conducted on the difficulties faced by students in learning English. These studies have aimed to identify the key challenges faced by students and to explore effective solutions to overcome these difficulties.

One of the primary challenges faced by students in learning English is the lack of exposure to the language which can lead to difficulties in understanding and applying grammatical rules, as well as mastering vocabulary (Abu-Rabia, 2011). Students who are not fluent in English may also have difficulty following lectures, taking notes, and participating in class discussions. Another challenge faced by students is the complexity of English grammar. Grammatical errors can lead to confusion and misunderstandings, making it essential for students to master the basics of grammar early on in their language learning journey (Sulaiman, 2016). Additionally, anxiety and lack of confidence can also hinder students' ability to learn English effectively. This can result in limited practice opportunities, further hindering their language development (Gross, 2019). One study by McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007) found that students who had limited exposure to English outside of the classroom had difficulty improving their language skills. In addition, research has also shown that lack of practice on test-based exercises can lead to poorer performance on language assessments. For example, Zhang and Elder (2011) found that providing more opportunities for students to practice test-based exercises can help them to better prepare for language assessments.

Some research also suggest that students with limited vocabulary knowledge may also experience difficulty with grammar and syntax. This can lead to incorrect usage of grammar and syntax, resulting in miscommunication and misunderstandings (Hu & Nation, 2000).

In conclusion, non-English major students face various challenges in learning English, such as lack of exposure, grammatical errors, lack of vocabulary, anxiety, mispronunciation and lack of motivation. By addressing these difficulties and implementing effective teaching methods, instructors can help students overcome these obstacles and achieve their language learning goals.

3. Research methodology

The data will be collected from 200 second-year students and analyzed to identify common difficulties and their solutions. The data collected from the questionnaires will be analyzed using qualitative and quantitative method. The data will be analyzed for the difficulties faced by non-English major students in learning English and their solutions.

The findings from this analysis will be used to identify common difficulties faced by non-English major students in learning English at ICTU and to develop strategies for overcoming these challenges. These findings will be presented in a clear and concise manner to provide additional context and support for the conclusions drawn.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Level of proficiency in English.

The data reveals that the majority of surveyed students have limited proficiency in English. Specifically, 58.1% of students categorized themselves as beginners, while 33% are at a pre-intermediate level. A smaller percentage of students fall into the intermediate and advanced categories, comprising 5.9% and 3% respectively. These findings indicate that although there are some students with more advanced language skills, they represent a minority compared to those still in the early stages of learning English.

4.2. The challenging about learning English at university.

The data collected in this study sheds light on the various challenges encountered by students when learning English at the university level. Among the identified challenges, the most commonly cited difficulty is grammar and sentence structure, with 28.6% of students finding it particularly challenging. This suggests that students may encounter struggles with the technical aspects of the English language, necessitating additional support and instruction to

master these skills.

Furthermore, a significant percentage of students (25.6%) find listening comprehension to be a challenge. This observation may be attributed to the prevalence of spoken English in university settings and the complexities involved in understanding real-time spoken language. Additionally, a smaller proportion of students find speaking (17.2%) and vocabulary (15.3%) to be challenging, indicating the potential need for further support and instruction in these areas.

While a relatively smaller percentage of students find reading comprehension (4.9%) and writing (8.4%) to be challenging, these skills still demand attention as important components of language learning. Some students may benefit from additional support and instruction in these areas as well.

4.3. The frequency of English language use outside of class.

The study also sought to determine the frequency at which ICTU students use English outside of class. The data indicates that a considerable percentage (nearly 60%) of respondents do not use English frequently in their daily lives. This suggests that they may have limited opportunities to use English outside of academic settings.

Furthermore, the data reveals a gradual increase in the frequency of English language usage outside of class. The largest proportion of respondents (40.4%) reported occasionally using English. Comparatively, a lower percentage of respondents (8.4%) reported often using English, while the lowest percentage (1.5%) indicated always using English.

4.4. How confident students feel about their ability to communicate effectively in English.

Upon analyzing the data concerning students' confidence in their ability to communicate effectively in English, a clear trend emerges. The majority of respondents, comprising 77.8%, expressed low levels of confidence. Among them, 54.2% stated they were "Not very confident," while 23.6% indicated they were "Not at all confident." In contrast, only a small percentage of respondents, 22.1%, reported higher confidence levels. Among these, 16.3% felt "Somewhat confident," while a mere 5.9% expressed confidence in their English communication skills.

These findings highlight a significant proportion of learners who lack confidence in their English communication abilities and may require additional support. To better address this issue, it would be beneficial to delve further into the underlying reasons for their lack of confidence.

4.5. The role of test-based exercises in improving students' English language skills.

The data provided indicates that a majority of the respondents (51.7%) find test-based exercises somewhat helpful in improving their English language skills. Additionally, 23.2% of the respondents find these exercises very helpful, indicating a positive impact on their language skills. However, 18.2% of the respondents feel that test-based exercises are not very helpful, and a smaller proportion (6.9%) believe that such exercises are not helpful at all in improving their language skills.

These findings suggest that a significant portion of the respondents perceive test-based exercises to be at least somewhat beneficial for enhancing their English language skills. However, it is important to acknowledge that some respondents do not consider these exercises to be highly helpful or helpful at all. To gain a deeper understanding, further analysis could explore factors that might influence these perceptions, such as individual learning styles, past experiences with language learning, and the specific types of test-based exercises used in their English language classes.

4.6. Students' goals for improving their English language skills.

A significant proportion of the respondents in the study expressed specific goals for improving their English language skills. The most prevalent goal identified by the respondents is to enhance their job prospects, chosen by 37.9% of participants. Furthermore, 26.1% of respondents stated that their goal for improving their English language skills is to communicate more effectively with others, highlighting the significance of language proficiency in social interactions and personal relationships. The survey also revealed that respondents have other goals for improving their English language skills. For example, 20.7% of participants aim to meet the learning outcomes of their courses, indicating a desire to succeed academically. Additionally, 5.9% of respondents mentioned a goal of using their language skills for traveling and exploring other cultures, while 9.4% expressed a goal of excelling in academic pursuits.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

The majority of respondents lack confidence in their ability to communicate effectively in English. This highlights the need for interventions aimed at building confidence and addressing specific areas of difficulty. Besides, listening skills emerged as the most challenging aspect of English language learning,

followed by writing and speaking skills. Moreover, many respondents reported spending limited time practicing English outside of class. Encouraging and facilitating regular practice through accessible resources and activities can enhance language acquisition and proficiency.

Lastly, educators should incorporate such exercises into their teaching methodologies and provide guidance on effective test preparation strategies.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions drawn from the analyzed data, the following recommendations are made:

Design and implement interventions should provide structured practice, individualized feedback, and additional support to enhance learners' proficiency in these areas.

Develop and provide resources should offer comprehensive test preparation resources, including workbooks and practice materials should focus on improving test-taking skills and provide ample opportunities for practice and feedback.

By implementing these recommendations, language learning providers and educators can enhance the effectiveness of English language learning programs, address the specific needs and preferences of learners, and promote greater confidence and proficiency in English communication skills.

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