



# Attitude Towards Learning English: A Perspective from Students in Ho Chi Minh City

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**Abstract.** The aim of this study was to investigate the factors that affect students' attitudes regarding the study of English as a second language using the perspective of students of economics majors in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Another aim was to develop a method with which educators can improve Vietnamese students' learning attitudes and better engage their students. It was towards these goals that used qualitative research in conjunction with questionnaires and document reviews. Considering 4 out of 32 universities with thousands of students, only 375 respondents prevent the authors from having more immediately actionable recommendations. This was the main limitation of the research. The principal conclusion was that five factors which are internal factors, external factors, social factors, context factors, and needs factors influenced Vietnamese students' attitudes toward learning English. One conclusion indicated recommendations regarding teaching approaches and methods for teachers' instructions, influences of parents, and a hometown familiarity with a student's learning process. From this framework, policymakers and institutions can cooperate in educational development that can contribute to the prospect of Vietnamese students learning English. As the improvement in students' learning attitude continues to appear as a concern to all parties involved, this is a field where continuous research will be required.

**Keywords:** English language learning, Economics majors student, Educational Development.

## 1. Introduction

The demand for speakers of foreign languages, particularly English, has been increasing due to

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globalization and interconnected economies. In many parts of the world, including Vietnam, English is considered essential for success in life and education. The Vietnamese government has directed public universities to introduce English as a second language of teaching, further emphasizing its importance. However, learning a foreign language can be complex due to individual differences, learning conditions, and contexts. The article aims to explore these aspects to understand the challenges of learning English as a foreign language in Vietnam.

As English has been becoming a global language, the benefits of English fluency are widely understood. For Vietnam, a country on its way to merging with the globalization of economies, English proficiency is increasingly becoming an important factor for employers. However, in the case of Vietnam, according to research findings conducted in the past regarding the attitude toward learning English as a foreign language, Vietnamese students have shown little effort in trying to proficiently master English [1]. As a result, despite having English as a required subject in school as early as elementary school, it is apparent that many Vietnamese university-level graduates go to English centers after working hours to improve their English proficiency. It can be argued that this lack of English proficiency most likely stems from their unwillingness to improve their English skills early on during their elementary and secondary school years. Reasons for this absence will vary, but these reasons can be understood if people acknowledge the influence of different factors on the learning attitude of students. Furthermore, understanding the drives behind these influences can help students to boost their proficiency from an early age and build a more positive attitude towards their English learning process. The present study's focus is primarily on investigating the factors influencing attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language of Vietnamese students in the economic majors in Ho Chi Minh City.

The study aims to answer the following research questions related to the attitude of Vietnamese students in economic majors towards learning English. It seeks to identify the factors that positively and negatively affect their attitude towards learning English, and how these factors influence their learning attitude. The study also aims to provide recommendations to motivate students and encourage their enthusiasm towards English language learning.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Previous Studies**

This literature review explores the attitude towards learning English among Economics students in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Previous research has highlighted various internal factors, external factors, social factors, context factors, and needs factors that can influence students' attitude towards learning English [2]. Understanding the interplay between these factors and students' attitude towards learning English is crucial for designing effective language learning programs and interventions. Understanding students' motivations and challenges in learning English is crucial for educational institutions and policymakers [3]. By examining relevant research studies and identifying influential factors, this study aims to contribute to the existing knowledge and improve English language education for Economics students in Ho Chi Minh City, supporting their success in the globalized economy.

#### **• Internal Factors**

Previous studies have extensively explored the factors that contribute to a student's learning attitude and achievement. In the case of language subjects like English, mastering the language goes beyond grammar and vocabulary learned in school. Skills such as speaking, pronunciation, and critical reading require the student's abilities and reflexes to effectively communicate in a foreign language [4]. These challenges can arise due to various factors that originate from within the students themselves. Internal

factors encompass elements like free-will [5], individual and collective independence, strategies, aptitudes, intelligence [6], abilities, experiences, interests, skills, motivation, achievement motivation, and personalities [7]. This research will focus on understanding the impact of these internal factors on the learning process.

#### ● External Factors

In addition to internal factors, external factors also play a significant role in a student's learning attitude. These factors include the instructional methods employed, the curriculum followed, the future career pathway [8], the influence of culture and status, and access to native speakers [9]. Effective pedagogical practices, appropriate instructions, inputs, interactions, and opportunities for meaningful output are vital for promoting student success in language learning [10]. Access to native speakers is particularly crucial as it strongly influences a student's learning outcome. Moreover, the curriculum sets specific goals for the student's learning process and ensures that all students progress at the right pace, creating a conducive learning environment.

#### ● Social Factors

Social factors have a profound impact on a student's language learning process. Parents' influence, cultural background, economic status, teachers' influence, and peer groups [7] all contribute to a student's learning attitude [9]. Parents play a crucial role in reinforcing their children's language development by creating a positive learning environment at home and inspiring their children to be more engaged in their studies. Cultural and linguistic factors influence the language learning process, and teachers should consider students' cultural backgrounds to provide appropriate guidance and expectations. Social environments, including peer groups, can also affect language acquisition, with students from wealthier families having more advantages in terms of exposure to foreign languages and study abroad opportunities.

#### ● Context Factors

Contextual factors also play a role in shaping a student's learning attitude. These factors include the comfort of one's hometown [11], the learning situations experienced, the learning material available, the quality of classrooms, and the presence of comprehensible input [12]. Students' comfort in their living situation can impact their overall school performance and social skills. The learning environment, including the quality of classrooms and the availability of appropriate learning materials, influences the effectiveness of the learning process [10]. Additionally, the provision of comprehensible input, which refers to language input that is understandable to the learner, is essential for language acquisition.

#### ● Needs Factors

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs provides insights into the factors that can affect a student's English learning process. The hierarchy includes physiological needs, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization [13]. Physiological needs such as food, water, sleep, and shelter must be met for a student to effectively engage in learning. Safety needs, including emotional protection and financial security, are essential for creating a conducive learning environment [14]. Love and belonging can serve as powerful motivators for students, but some individuals may face challenges in fulfilling these needs due to circumstances such as frequent moves. Esteem, which encompasses the desire for respect and recognition, plays a crucial role in developing self-confidence and motivation. Finally, self-actualization, the realization of one's potential, drives personal growth and helps students identify strengths and weaknesses to improve their language skills.

## 2.2. Literature Gap

There has been little research on how learning attitudes affect Vietnamese students' progress in learning

English. Most Vietnamese articles on the subject focus on the benefits of learning English or methods to study it better. Foreign research studies have explored how attitudes can impact academic development, but they only examine a few attributes within each factor group. Therefore, it is difficult to understand the full scope of how these factors can affect foreign language learning. Additionally, past research has not explored this topic specifically in the context of Vietnam, a rising economy in Southeast Asia. This research aims to incorporate new factors, especially internal ones, to better understand the impact of attitudes on learning. By doing so, policymakers, researchers, and universities can design programs that meet students’ objectives and improve academic achievement.

3. Methodology and Research Model

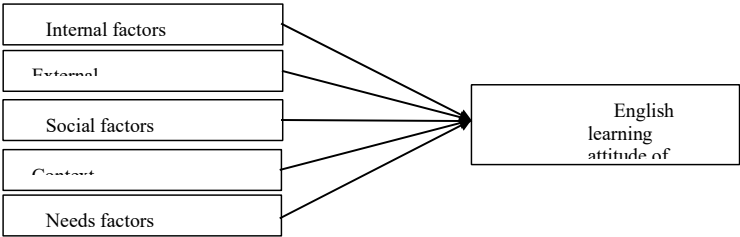


Fig. 1: English learning attitude of the student’s theoretical framework

Five hypotheses have been developed for this research:

- H1: There is a positive relationship between the English learning attitude of the students in economic majors and Internal factors.
- H2: There is a positive relationship between the English learning attitude of the students in economic majors and External factors.
- H3: There is a positive relationship between the English learning attitude of the students in economic majors and Social factors.
- H4: There is a positive relationship between the English learning attitude of the students in economic majors and Context factors.
- H5: There is a positive relationship between the English learning attitude of the students in economic majors and Needs factors.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Demographic Profile

The study employs a combination of qualitative research, questionnaires, and document reviews to achieve its objectives. 375 responses are collected, with the majority of responses from students who graduated from private universities in Ho Chi Minh City. Participants are categorized into four major groups based on their reported majors: Business Administration, International Business, Banking, and Finance. The majority of respondents are students with Business Administration and International Business backgrounds, comprising 85% of the total respondents. The study includes both public and private universities, with 49% of informants coming from public universities and 51% from private universities.

Table 1: Demographic Profile

No.	Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
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		(N = 375)	(%)	
1	Major	Business Administration	184	49
		International Business	135	36
		Banking	34	9
		Finance	22	6
2	Academic Year	First - Second	116	31
		Third	68	18
		Fourth	71	19
		Graduated	120	32
3	University	University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City, VNU HCM	95	25
		University of Economics and Laws, VNU HCM	90	24
		Van Lang University	98	26
		Hong Bang International University	92	25

#### 4.2. Reliability Analysis of the Scales & Exploratory Factor Analysis

The study measured various variables using a Likert scale to assess their means, factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) values. All factors had factor loadings ranging from 0.708 to 0.885, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this factor ranging from 0.870 to 0.889 is typically considered a good measurement scale, and an Alpha of 0.7 is also acceptable.

Table 2: Mean, Factor Loading, Cronbach's Alpha, KMO

No.	Variable	Mean	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	KMO
IV1	<b>Internal Factors</b> (Eigenvalue 2.582, % of variance 10.328)			0.886	0.854
IF3	Free-will-whim, individual and collective independence, and discursive	3.44	0.860		
IF5	Strategies	3.65	0.842		
IF1	Aptitudes, intelligence, abilities, experiences, interests	3.30	0.814		
IF4	Skills, motivation, achievement motivation	3.64	0.792		
IF2	Personalities	3.18	0.737		
IV2	<b>External Factors</b> (Eigenvalue 2.413, % of variance 9.652)			0.870	0.854
EF2	Instruction	3.10	0.866		
EF1	Curriculum	3.00	0.830		
EF4	Future career pathway	3.05	0.818		
EF5	Culture and status	3.09	0.756		
EF3	Access to native speakers	3.11	0.728		
IV3	<b>Social Factors</b> (Eigenvalue 6.649, % of variance 26.595)			0.889	0.854
SF5	Parents' influence	3.56	0.863		
SF1	Cultural background	3.47	0.835		
SF2	Economic status	3.49	0.810		
SF4	Teachers' influence	3.58	0.786		
SF3	Peer groups	3.76	0.741		
IV4	<b>Context Factors</b> (Eigenvalue 3.602, % of variance 14.410)			0.886	0.854
CF5	Comfort hometown	3.70	0.885		
CF2	Learning situations	3.64	0.809		

CF4	Learning material	3.97	0.803		
CF3	Classrooms	3.57	0.795		
CF1	Comprehensible input	3.55	0.768		
IV5	<b>Needs Factors</b> (Eigenvalue 1.980, % of variance 7.919)			0.874	0.854
NF1	Physiological	3.33	0.854		
NF4	Self-actualization	3.30	0.836		
NF3	Love and belonging	3.21	0.763		
NF2	Safety	3.13	0.722		
NF4	Esteem	3.58	0.708		
Five factors were extracted with eigenvalues greater than 1 and explaining 68.905 % of the variance.					

The KMO value of 0.854 in this study indicates that the variables used to measure the factors influencing Vietnamese children’s attitude towards learning English as a second language are appropriate for conducting a factor analysis and exploring the underlying factors. These five factors together explained 68.905% of the variance, providing valuable insights into the factors influencing Vietnamese children’s attitude towards learning English as a second language.

4.3. Exploratory Factor Analysis

In order to calculate the sampling adequacy for testing the case against the variable ratio, a Kaiser-Meyer-Okin (KMO) & Bartlett’s Sphericity Test was used. In most academic and business studies, as the KMO test can emphasize an important role in recognizing sample adequacy, we see the need to incorporate the test in this research. The generally accepted range index for the KMO test is 0.6 or higher, given the standard range from 0 to 1. Additionally, Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity links to the significance of the analysis and demonstrates the validity as well as suitability gathered through the analysis. The two tests are illustrated in Table 2, and based on the results, the KMO value reaches 0.854, and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity reaches a statistical significance of  $p = 0.00$ , thus supporting the factor analysis. Furthermore, the research incorporates a total variance explained analysis in order to extract the eigenvalues of the factors studied. Table 2 illustrates that there are five factors extracted with eigenvalues greater than 1, and the five factors explain 68.905% percent of the variance.

4.4. Correlation Analysis

The research conducts Pearson correlation analysis to examine the linear correlation relationships between the dependent variable (English learning attitude) and each independent variable, as well as among independent variables.

Table 3: Pearson Correlations Matrix

	Internal factors	External factors	Social factors	Context factors	Needs factors	English learning attitude
Internal factors	1					
External factors	.270**	1				
Social factors	.215**	.173**	1			
Context factors	0.055	0.076	.270**	1		
Needs factors	.315**	.234**	.358**	.327**	1	
English learning attitude	.417**	.382**	.451**	.352**	.415**	1

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results show that social factors have the highest correlation with English learning attitude, followed by internal factors. The other three factors (Needs, External, and Context) also have significant

correlations with English learning attitude. However, there are indications of multicollinearity among the independent variables, so multiple regression analysis is conducted to address this potential issue.

4.5. Multi-Regression Analysis

A multimodal regression analysis method is applied for all five independent variables with one dependent variable of the English learning attitude of students in economic majors of private universities in Ho Chi Minh City. The model is thus tested using linear regression analysis. The result of the regression analysis is displayed in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Model Multivariable Regression Coefficient

Model	R	Std. The error in the Estimate		F	Sig.	
		R Square Adjusted R Square				
1	.657 <sup>a</sup>	0.432	0.424	0.55811	56.098	.000 <sup>a</sup>
a. Predictors: (Constant), Needs, External, Context, Internal, Social						
b. Dependent Variable: Attitude						

The analysis results indicate an R square of 0.432 with an adjusted R square of 0.424. Thus the results suggest that the volatility of the English learning attitude can be collectively expressed by the model’s niche at 42.4%, of the model’s independent variables.

4.6. Study of the Difference in English Learning Attitude by Group

The study used ANOVA to determine the statistical significance of the five independent variables on the regression model. Results showed that all five variables significantly contributed to the model’s fitness. A one-way ANOVA test found that International Business and Business Administration majors had the highest agreement on the factors affecting English learning attitudes. A test of homogeneity of variances and ANOVA test was performed to check for differences between and within groups based on major, revealing a significant difference in agreement between major student groups.

Table 5: Study on the Difference in English Learning Attitude by Group

Attitude	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Test of Homogeneity	ANOVA	
				Sig.	F	Sig.
Business Administration	184	3.3728	0.69307	0.676	32.376	0
International Business	135	3.4015	0.64715			
Banking	34	2.3941	0.53140			
Finance	22	2.5364	0.57698			

First – Second Year Student	116	2.9224	0.48330			
Third Year Student	68	2.8206	0.43040	0.112	108.604	0
Fourth Year Student	71	2.9465	0.63782			
Graduated	120	3.9750	0.57952			

The research uses a test of homogeneity of variances and an ANOVA test to examine differences between and within groups of students based on major and years of experience. For major groups, there is a significant difference in agreement on how factors influence English learning attitudes between groups. Graduated students strongly agree that the factors have a positive influence, while other groups only slightly agree. For years of experience, there is also a significant difference in agreement between groups.

These findings suggest that only when students move beyond the classroom environment do they fully realize how these factors contribute to their studies.

4.7. Summary of Hypotheses

Given the results from multiple data analyses, the five aforementioned hypotheses of this research are proven to be supported. The findings are summarized in table 6 below.

Table 6: Hypotheses Summary

No.	Variable	B	t	Sig.	VIF	Conclusion
H2	External factors	0.247	5.431	0	1.115	Supported
H4	Context factors	0.214	5.014	0	1.161	Supported
H3	Social factors	0.194	5.966	0	1.209	Supported
H1	Internal factors	0.178	5.876	0	1.180	Supported
H5	Needs factors	0.128	2.685	0.008	1.347	Supported

The summary of regression results is summarized in table 6. As noticed, none of the coefficients are negative, indicating that all independent variables are thus positively and significantly correlated to the dependent variable of English learning attitude. Among these independent variables, the External factors indicate the strongest significantly positive correlation with English learning attitude, with a coefficient of 0.247 and a p-value of 0.000 (less than 0.05). Context factors have the next strongest significantly positive correlation with English learning attitude, with a coefficient of 0.214 with a p-value of 0.000. As follow, the other independent variables, namely Social factors, Internal factors, and Needs factors, also have a significantly positive correlation with English learning attitude, with coefficients of 0.194, 0.178, and 0.128, respectively. All of the three later independent variables are also proven to be statically significant as all of their p – values are less than 0.05, with Needs factors having a p-value slightly higher than the rest (p = 0.008).

The VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) was used in the study to check for collinearity between variables. If the VIF value is higher than 10, it can suggest multi-collinearity. However, in this study, all five independent variables had a VIF of less than 10, indicating that there is no close relationship between them. Thus, the study concludes that the relationship between these independent variables does not significantly impact the outcome of the regression model.

#### **4.8. Discussion**

The analysis consists of five independent variables, namely internal factors, external factors, social factors, context factors, and needs factors, and each of the variables is further divided into five sub-factors as defined above. The regression results suggest that all factors have a positively correlated relationship with the dependent variable, English learning attitude, with internal factors (B = 0.178), external factors (B = 0.247), social factors (B = 0.194), context factors (B = 0.214), and needs factors (B = 0.128).

The influence of internal factors: The study highlights the significant role of internal factors, such as aptitudes, intelligence, abilities, experiences, and interests, in shaping Vietnamese students' attitude towards learning English. Future research could further explore the specific mechanisms through which these internal factors affect language learning attitudes and identify strategies to enhance these factors in educational settings.

Understanding external factors: The analysis reveals the impact of external factors, including instruction, curriculum, future career pathways, culture, and access to native speakers, on students' attitude towards English learning. Further investigation could delve into the specific aspects of these

external factors that contribute most significantly to positive attitudes and investigate ways to optimize their influence in language learning environments.

**Social factors and peer influence:** The study identifies the importance of social factors, such as parents' influence, cultural background, economic status, teachers' influence, and peer groups, in shaping students' attitude towards learning English. Future research could explore the dynamics of peer influence in language learning and investigate strategies to harness the positive impact of social factors on students' attitudes.

**Context factors and learning environments:** The analysis underscores the role of context factors, including learning situations, learning material, classrooms, and comprehensible input, in shaping students' attitude towards English learning. Further exploration of specific aspects of the learning environment that have the most significant impact on attitudes can inform the design of effective language learning environments and instructional practices.

**Needs factors and motivation:** The study highlights the influence of needs factors, encompassing physiological needs, self-actualization, love and belonging, safety, and esteem, on students' attitude towards learning English. Future research could delve deeper into the relationship between these needs factors and motivational processes, exploring how they contribute to students' engagement, persistence, and overall language learning outcomes.

The study found that Business Administration students had the highest English learning attitude, while first and second-year students had lower attitudes. Tailored interventions should be implemented to address these differences and promote positive attitudes among all students.

These discussions provide avenues for further research in understanding and enhancing students' attitudes towards learning English as a second language, particularly among students of the economic major in Ho Chi Minh City. By addressing these research areas, educators and policymakers can gain valuable insights to inform effective language learning practices and create supportive learning environments for students.

## 5. Conclusions

Based on the results, the overall conclusion was that the five identified factors all have a positively strong correlation to private university students' attitudes toward learning English. From this framework, policymakers, researchers, and teachers from other universities as well as English institutes can understand the motivations that influence a student's learning process, and develop a strategy accordingly to best support the students. Despite the results, we acknowledge the current limitations of this study. By being able to incorporate more students in our survey date, the study would have captured more responses from the student body, and thus would have better represented the entire student body of the university. The quality of English learning has always been a concerning challenge for policymakers and school officials, as many students and families aim to study abroad for their undergraduate instead of studying domestically. The goal of this research is to help policymakers understand the motivations of students when choosing a place to spend the most important four years in their student years, and how to prepare and equip them with the best English knowledge and skills to be ready for the real practical and professional working world.

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