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The demand of learning English among office workers in Hanoi

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to survey the English learning needs of office workers in Hanoi during the period when Vietnam is gradually developing industrialization and modernization. Research data includes 120 employees working at offices in Hanoi. Quantitative methods are applied in questionnaires, each classification item, and comparative analysis. Based on the analysis theory, learning English is the need of many office workers. The study results show that: The need to know English accounts for the majority with 94 (80.3%); the rest do not need to learn English with 26 (19.7%). Based on these results, most office workers in Hanoi need to learn English. However, they still face many difficulties in learning English, such as time, learning method, the cost for each course, etc. From the above research results, the researcher proposes some solutions. To help groups of office workers have the opportunity to study and improve their skills to be more confident in using English.

Keywords: demand for learning English, Hanoi, officers, office workers

1. Introduction

It is indisputable that each person's capacity to utilize other languages, mainly English, has become an urgent requirement when Vietnam progressively advances industrialization and modernization to integrate with the global economy.

The Ministry of Education and Training's project "Teaching and studying foreign languages in the national education system for 2008-2020" was authorized in 2008. The Government approved and altered the Project "Teaching and studying foreign languages

in the national education system for 2017-2025" by Decision No. 2080/QD-TTg in 2017. As a result, the project has reintroduced the purpose of teaching and studying foreign languages in the national education system. It is being implemented at all levels of education, training, and enhancing foreign language proficiency. Prominent foreign language education such as English is considered the most effective measure to improve the competitiveness of human resources in the period of economic integration, creating a foundation for the universalization of general education by 2025. This requirement places educators in the immense task of training civil servants to use English fluently and effectively in their work. Therefore, this topic focuses on analyzing office workers' theoretical bases and practical needs, thereby proposing valuable solutions to get the appropriate investment in the program and practical training and fostering sufficiently and adequately meet the demand for English to work in offices.

2. Scientific basis and research methods

This topic references the framework for analyzing the foreign language needs of Dudley-Evans and John (1998) to build a questionnaire and a theoretical basis to find out the current situation of usage, ability, and the desire to learn English of office employees in Hanoi. At a comprehensive and detailed level, this model provides information related to needs survey research, including:

- Personal information about respondents (Gender, age, marital status, occupation)
- Information about current English level.
- The gap between current English capacity and objective needs of the profession.
- Current expectations (Needs to learn English; Methods, places to learn English)
- Daily time investment and the monthly cost for English.

2.1. Research subjects

Subjects of the study are employees working in offices in Hanoi. Specifically, 120 civil servants are working in different departments of the public offices (divided into groups: Financial Services, Communications, Consumer Goods & Retail, Hospitality & Tourism, Engineering - Technology, Construction, Others).

TABLE 1. Information about the target group participating in the survey

Demographic		Quantity	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	56	46,7
	Female	64	53,3
Age	20 - 25	22	18,3
	26-30	38	31,7
	23-35	42	35
	Above 35	18	15
Marital status	Single	48	41,7
	Married	67	58,3

Profession	Financial Services	13	10,8
	Communications	27	22,5
	Consumer Goods & Retail,	25	20,8
	Hospitality & Tourism	11	9,2
	Engineering - Technology	13	10,8
	Construction	14	11,7
	Others	17	14,2

2.2. Research methodology

The study used many different research methods, including questionnaires, methods of data analysis, and synthesis.

3. Results and Discussion

The following are some results of the analysis of the needs of people working in the research areas:

3.1. Results of the survey

According to the poll results, not all offices in Hanoi need English regularly. In particular, 18.5 percent of survey participants never use English at work, 54.6 percent use English but not often, and just 26.9 percent use English at work on a regular basis. When it came to the necessity to learn English, the majority of survey participants studied for the purpose of working. The following table contains further information:

TABLE 2. Purpose of learning English

Purpose	The number of respondents	Percentage (%)
For work	75	64,7
As a hobby	39	33,6
Others	2	1,7

Regarding selecting skills to practice, speaking (communication) and listening are the two most focused skills. Next, reading skills and writing skills with a lower number of people selected. Through this, it is possible to predict that grammar is not emphasized compared to communication skills such as listening and speaking.

TABLE 3. Information on foreign language skills that need to be improved

Skill	The number of votes	Percentage (%)
Listening	76	64,4
Speaking (communication)	101	85,6
Reading	28	23,7
Writing	19	16,1

In the current survey of English proficiency, 50% of the total survey respondents are at an average level. 13.6% is good; 6.8% was excellent, and 29.7% was poor.

Regarding the current demand for learning English, the majority of the surveyed group with a rate of 80.3% need to improve their proficiency in this foreign language.

TABLE 4. Duration spent on studying English per day

Duration	The number of respondents	Percentage (%)
15 mins - 30 mins	27	25,5
30 mins - 1hr	62	58,5
1hr - 2hrs	12	11,3
> 2hrs	5	4,7

TABLE 5. Number of sessions can attend to learn English in a week

Session/week	The number of respondents	Percentage (%)
1 session/week	19	18,3
2 sessions/week	59	56,7
3 sessions/week	19	18,3
> 3 sessions/week	7	6,7

Tables 4 and 5 show that most of the survey group will spend 30 mins-1hrs/day studying English and can attend two evenings a week. It is beneficial information for centers designing programs and organizing English teaching in the most reasonable way.

Asked about learning methods, the majority (52 people equivalent to 51.5%) chose to study English online. It is a new trend in recent times, primarily due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Online learning can both ensure efficiency and save immuting time. However, this form requires learners to concentrate fully. Besides, learning English at a foreign language center is also quite popular, with 32.7% of respondents choosing it.

TABLE 6. Information on the choice of study form

Study form	The number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Learn at a language center	33	32,7
Learn on the Internet	52	51,5
Participate in English club	6	5,9
Learn on your own at home	10	9,9

The tuition fee is also an essential criterion influencing the location and form of English learning. According to the poll, most people can afford a monthly tuition charge of 200,000-400,000 VND. Based on this data, language centers may design English courses appropriate for students' financial conditions.

TABLE 7. Ability to pay for learning English monthly

Tuition fee/ month (VND)	The number of respondents	Percentage (%)
<200.000	15	14,7
200.000-400.000	45	44,1
400.000-600.000	22	21,6
600.000-800.000	12	11,8
800.000 - 1.000.000	3	2,9
> 1.000.000	4	4,9

To choose an appropriate foreign language learning place, most people prefer a center near their home, with a long-standing reputation. Based on this information, training institutions need to build and develop brands and stabilize the teaching quality to attract students.

TABLE 8. Information on choosing a studying location

Location	The number of respondents	Percentage (%)
A leading prestigious center	40	37,7
A center near where you live	44	41,5
Another popular hub	7	6,6
Private lessons with friends or teachers	27	25,5
Other	6	5,7

In the survey about difficulties in learning English, most respondents chose the options of not keeping up with the program and not being motivated enough to continue the course. Other challenges are the fear of extremely high tuition fees beyond the current financial capacity. Because, to communicate fluently in English and perseverance, you also need to have strong enough finances to serve the learning process.

TABLE 9. Information on difficulties in learning English

Difficulty	The number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Fear of not keeping up with the program	52	50,5
Fear of not being motivated enough to continue the course	72	69,9
fear of extremely high tuition fees beyond the current financial capacity	36	35

3.2. Recommendations

The author, from finding the need to learn English of office workers in Hanoi to making implications for the compilation of programs, textbooks, and methods of organizing basic and specialized English classes, would like to give some suggestions as below:

3.2.1. Compilation of programs and curricula

To achieve high efficiency in English training for office workers to serve well at work, experts who compile programs and textbooks need to pay more attention to actual needs and applicability factors to make knowledge and skills documents suitable for each subject. Teaching time also needs to be organized more rationally and scientifically. Based on the research results on the need to learn English of office workers, each class should not last more than 2 hours and should only study 2-3 sessions per week. Thus, there should be a proper allocation of knowledge in each lesson. It helps learners to absorb knowledge easily without causing boredom.

3.2.2 Promoting virtual teaching programs

The survey shows that most office workers want to learn English via the internet to save time. In particular, the intense outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in recent times has

also greatly affected the education industry. Therefore, the construction of online classes and online courses is entirely consistent with current objective conditions.

It is necessary to have visual images accompanied by real-life situations to absorb quickly. In addition, the content of the lecture also needs to be rich and diverse to avoid boredom. At the same time, there should be an interaction between students to create excitement in each lesson.

3.2.3. Access to modern teaching materials

Teaching materials are considered an essential factor contributing to the success of an English course. In Vietnam, there have been many sets of books on teaching English for communication and skill development imported from famous publishers in the world such as Oxford, Longman, Cambridge. However, specialized English teaching materials are still not diversified. Most of the people working in the office today are still using English documents published many years ago. Therefore, it is necessary to have a strategy to approach modern teaching materials to practice skills and acquire English knowledge both easily and scientifically.

In addition to new book sets for teaching business English, business English, salespeople or secretarial English, English for negotiation, English for tourist guides, etc., from well-known publishers such as Oxford, Cambridge, or Longman, McGraw-Hill needs to be more suitable for the 4.0 era. For example, the records should compile in a communicative style with many suggested activities and a rich body of knowledge for comprehensive skill training and close to real situations, or videos with subtitles instructing pronunciation, intonation, and sharing tips for memorizing vocabulary.

3.2.4. Practice English communication at work

If you want to enhance your English level, apart from study hard in each class, you need to practice in your daily life and take advantage of every opportunity to practice English at your workplace. You can chat in English with your colleagues or find foreigners at work to have a meal together.

Direct communication with foreigners is the most effective technique to develop listening and speaking skills in English. Alternatively, exchanging emails with foreign partners and customers on a regular basis also helps improve English proficiency quickly.

4. Conclusion

The research has generalized the current situation and needs of using English of office workers in Hanoi city in the context of global integration. Quantitatively, most office workers need to learn English. Not all professions require this foreign language in the working process. However, this is still a powerful tool in today's era, and many office workers still need to learn English. Apart from serving work, many office workers need to learn English to satisfy their interests or other purposes. But there is a worrying thing

that their ability and level of using foreign languages are still limited. Because most of them never use a foreign language for work or use it occasionally, it is restricted to a few areas. Furthermore, office professionals frequently do not have enough time to learn English owing to the fast-paced nature of their jobs. Not only that, but the cost of each English course is also a big concern of office workers. Because if you want to master this foreign language, it takes a long process, which means you have to invest both time and money and have a severe attitude in the learning process.

Thus, it is necessary to have appropriate and effective foreign language teaching and learning policies specifically for office workers to create human resources with fluent English proficiency to keep up with modern trends, globalization today.

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