

Students' Language Capacity at Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Tran Anh Tuan¹

¹*Faculty of Foreign Languages, Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam*

Date of Submission: 05-09-2023

Date of Acceptance: 15-09-2023

ABSTRACT

The human resources of each organization today need to be good in both expertise and proficiency in using foreign languages to meet the requirements of the labor market in the trend of international integration. This is also a requirement for universities to organize training (specialized training, foreign language training for students) to provide human resources to serve the development of society. This study analyzes the content related to foreign language training for students. The author limits the research content, which is: Input foreign language capacity of students; Foreign language learning capacity of students; output foreign language capacity of students. The research objective is to show the impact of the factor: "input foreign language capacity" and the factor "foreign language learning capacity" on the "output foreign language capacity" of students. The author built a theoretical research framework including these three scales and surveyed 350 final students (course 2019-2023) of the university representing Vietnam's technical universities - Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City. Survey results show that students' self-assessment is limited in their "input foreign language capacity", which has a great impact on the learning process and foreign language learning results (output foreign language capacity of students. From the results of this survey, the author draws research conclusions and discusses appropriate issues to develop foreign language skills applicable to students at Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City and many technical universities in Vietnam.

Keywords: Input foreign language capacity; Foreign language learning capacity; Output foreign language capacity; Vietnamese student.

I. INTRODUCTION

Vietnam is a developing country with a higher education system of 224 universities, of which the technical universities account for 14% (MOET, 2023). The Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City is located in the technical university

block and is ranked in the group of schools with a large scale in terms of students enrolled (over 10.000 students), providing a large percentage of qualified human resources technical training for national development (IUH, 2023).

Vietnam's higher education is facing high demands of the labor market in the trend of international integration. The reality is that Vietnam's trained human resources still do not meet the high requirements of the labor market: 22.6% of workers have technical and professional qualifications; only 10% of employees can meet the requirements of the business in the context of international integration (Nhat, H., 2022). This is a major limitation, and this limitation is not only caused by professional practice skills but also the limitation of foreign languages of human resources. The reality of the international integration process of countries shows that foreign languages provide opportunities to exchange and promote culture, creating opportunities for the country's economic development. However, foreign language learning and foreign language ability of students are influenced by many factors and need to be classified and researched to suit the characteristics of the school or type of training. Therefore, research on foreign language competency and factors affecting students' foreign language competency is necessary in the context of each country's higher education development.

In this study, based on building a theoretical framework for studying the foreign language competence of students (input foreign language capacity; foreign language learning capacity; output foreign language capacity), the author conducts a survey of final-course students at Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City, specifically: Survey subjects include 350 non-linguistic students (final-course students); The content of the survey on foreign language competency is English used in the university's training activities. The author hopes to provide empirical information to help university leaders and

many Vietnamese universities have more basis to develop more appropriate training policies.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Student's foreign language capacity

The term "capacity" is approached in many academic aspects to express an individual's ability to perform a specific job. According to Hung, L.D. et al. (2023), competency is the ability of an individual to perform a job and achieve results from that job. Anh, K.Q. et al. (2023) also have a similar research perspective when determining the connotation of the term "capacity", which is the ability to work to achieve work performance goals. Some linguists also build the concept of "capacity" according to the above content: Competence is the ability that individuals have, allowing them to achieve success in a specific activity (Lan, N., 2006).

It can be seen that the above research perspectives all emphasize the individual's ability to work to achieve specific work results when discussing the term "capacity". The author inherits the above research perspective and defines "capacity" as the ability (expressed in knowledge and skills) of an individual to effectively perform a certain job. For university students, foreign language competency is the foreign language knowledge and skills acquired during the study process at the university level to form the ability to use a foreign language for communication, research, and activities specialize. Foreign language knowledge here is defined as knowledge of vocabulary, phonetics, and grammar; foreign language skills are defined as listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

Many studies emphasize the content of forming students' foreign language competence, which is also the factor that impacts the process of forming and developing students' foreign language competence, including initial foreign language competence and foreign language competence foreign language learning ability of students during the process of studying at the university level (Tuyet, H.T., 2013; Loi, N.V. et al., 2014). The author continues to inherit the above content to build a theoretical framework when conducting his research.

a) Input foreign language capacity (IC)

Input foreign language capacity is the foreign language knowledge and skills that an individual acquires before becoming a university student. These are the knowledge and skills built according to the foreign language learning program at the high school level.

In Vietnam, the foreign language program at the high school level is built according to the 6-level foreign language competency framework prescribed by the Ministry of Education and Training, including A1 (level 1), A2 (level 2), B1 (level 3), B2 (level 4), C1 (level 5), C2 (level 6) [MOET, 2014]. This foreign language competency framework was developed based on the Common European Framework of Reference, combined with the actual situation and conditions of teaching, learning, and using foreign languages in Vietnam. The minimum level of foreign language input for university students is level B1 (level 3). Universities set foreign language entry standards by the above foreign language competency framework. The majority of technical universities, including Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City, determine students' input foreign language proficiency at B1 standard (level 3). Requirements for knowledge of level B1 (level 3) are determined: Students understand the main ideas of a clear, standard paragraph or speech on familiar topics at work, school, entertainment... (IC1); Students can handle most situations that arise when visiting an area where that language is spoken; Can write simple paragraphs related to familiar or personally interesting topics (IC2); Students describe experiences, events, dreams, hopes, ambitions and can briefly present reasons, explain their opinions and plans (IC3) [MOET, 2014].

Input foreign language capacity is regulated at a specific level, but the level of Input foreign language capacity of students in a university is also uneven. That is because the characteristics of Vietnam's general education are affected by many factors, such as cultural, educational, economic, and social characteristics of regions (islands, mountainous areas, rural areas, urban areas), leading to a difference in the level of knowledge between regions. This is a factor that has a great influence on the learning process, affecting the output foreign language capacity of students.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Input foreign language capacity has an impact on the output foreign language capacity of students in Vietnam's university.

b) Foreign language learning capacity (LC)

The foreign language learning capacity of students is formed and developed in the process of studying at university. That is the ability to study and acquire foreign language knowledge (vocabulary, phonetics, grammar), and foreign language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) according to the university training program of students. In

Vietnam, based on the prescribed 6-level foreign language competency framework (MOET, 2014), universities develop foreign language teaching content by the characteristics of training majors.

In fact, due to differences between majors in engineering, social sciences, etc., the content of foreign language programs for students depends on the university sector (technical universities; social science universities...) also have differences. However, the most common point of these training programs is towards the goal: University students are formed and develop new knowledge and skills in foreign languages compared to the input foreign language knowledge to suit their needs suitable for studying and researching in specialized fields.

The above goal also sets requirements for foreign language learning capacity for students to achieve output foreign language capacity according to university training programs. That learning ability is assessed by the university after completing each foreign language module in the program. The results of the assessment of foreign language learning capacity are shown in several contents: Vocabulary knowledge is supplemented, and promoted in communication and implementation of research activities in the field of specialized study (LC1); Grammar knowledge is supplemented and promoted in communication and research activities in the field of specialized study (LC2); Listening, speaking, reading and writing skills meet the requirements of expression in communication and research activities in the field of study (LC3).

With the formation of foreign language learning capacity, students affirm their foreign language ability, which is reflected in the achievement of foreign language competency output standards. In other words, foreign language learning capacity is a factor that affects the learning process and output foreign language capacity of students.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Foreign language learning capacity has an impact on the output foreign language capacity of students in Vietnam's university.

2.2. Output foreign language capacity (OC)

The output foreign language capacity is a framework of knowledge and foreign language skills that students need to acquire in the learning

process, built into a public standard by the university. In Vietnam, output foreign language capacity is developed by universities based on the 6-level foreign language competency framework according to the European reference framework, issued by the Ministry of Education and Training: A1 (level 1), A2 (tier 2), B1 (tier 3), B2 (tier 4), C1 (tier 5), C2 (tier 6) [MOET, 2014].

The above foreign language competency framework is being applied to universities in Vietnam's national education system; is the basis for universities to cooperate internationally in education and training, recognizing diplomas and certificates with countries that apply the European reference framework. Universities, based on the content specified in this foreign language competency framework, compile programs and textbooks, develop criteria for tests and exams, and evaluate students' foreign language competency appropriately with the characteristics of the training specialties.

Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City as well as the majority of technical universities in Vietnam determine the output standards of students' foreign language proficiency according to the European reference framework with level B2 (level 4). The knowledge goal of level B2 (level 4) is determined: Students understand the main idea of a complex text on concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in the field own expertise (OC1); Students can communicate fluently and naturally with native speakers (OC2); Students can write clear, detailed texts on many different topics and explain their point of view on an issue, stating the advantages and disadvantages of different options (OC3).

From the above general research content, the author has built a theoretical framework for research on students' foreign language competence. The research model includes 3 scales: "Input foreign language capacity" scale, the "Foreign language learning capacity" scale (02 independent variables), and the "Output foreign language capacity" scale (01 scale dependent variable). The above scales include 9 observed variables, designed by the author into 9 questions in the survey questionnaire and measured using a 5-level Likert scale: 1 - Strongly disagree; 2 - Disagree; 3 - No opinion; 4 - Agree; 5 - Strongly agree (Table 1, Figure 1).

Table 1. Research theoretical framework

No	Scales	Encode	Rating levels				
			1	2	3	4	5
I	Input foreign language capacity	IC					
1	Students understand the main ideas of a clear, standard paragraph or speech on familiar topics at work, school, entertainment...	IC1					
2	Students can handle most situations that arise when visiting an area where that language is spoken; can write simple paragraphs related to familiar or personally interesting topics.	IC2					
3	Students describe experiences, events, dreams, hopes, ambitions and can briefly present reasons, explain their opinions and plans.	IC3					
II	Foreign language learning capacity	LC					
1	Vocabulary knowledge is supplemented, and promoted in communication and implementation of research activities in the field of specialized study.	LC1					
2	Grammar knowledge is supplemented and promoted in communication and research activities in the field of specialized study.	LC2					
3	Listening, speaking, reading and writing skills meet the requirements of expression in communication and research activities in the field of study.	LC3					
III	Output foreign language capacity	OC					
1	Students understand the main idea of a complex text on concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in the field own expertise.	OC1					
2	Students can communicate fluently and naturally with native speakers.	OC2					
3	Students can write clear, detailed texts on many different topics and explain their point of view on an issue, stating the advantages and disadvantages of different options.	OC3					

Source: Compiled by the authors from the literature review

Research models

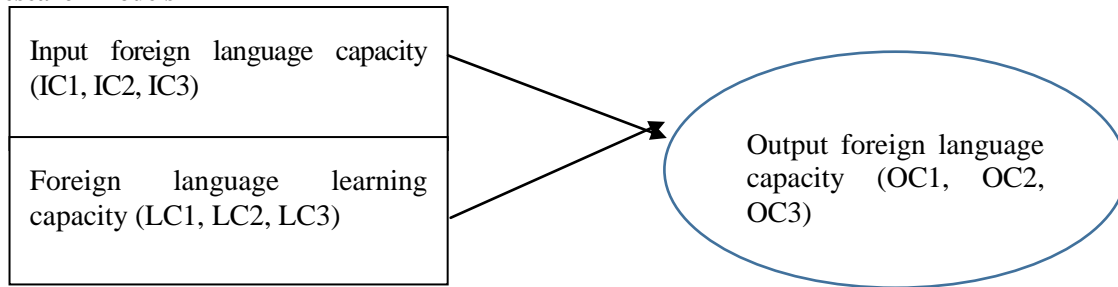


Figure 1. Research model

III. RESEARCH METHODS

a) Qualitative method

The author uses qualitative methods through in-depth questioning, organizing feedback on the overall research content, and comments on initial research assessments to complete the theoretical framework for research on students' foreign language capacity. The theoretical research framework was built, including the following scales: Input foreign language capacity (IC); Foreign language learning capacity (LC); and Output foreign language capacity (OC) [Table 1].

b) Quantitative method

The author uses quantitative methods by collecting and analyzing primary data by directly surveying 350 final-year students (course 2019-2023) at Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City. The survey content is designed according to the built theoretical framework. With the survey results obtained, the author conducted a regression analysis to test the relationship between the scales and the proposed research hypothesis.

In quantitative research, the minimum sample size needed to perform regression analysis for this study's model of 3 scales and 9 observed variables is $N = 9 \times 5 = 45$ (Hai, D.H., 2019). The author surveyed the opinions of students at Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City with a sample size of $N = 350 > 45$ to ensure the reliability of data collection. The survey results are: 350/350 students agreed to answer and 350/350 valid answer sheets, reaching a valid response rate of 100%.

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS

With data collected from the opinion survey of 350 final students (course 2019-2023) at Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City, the author conducted a Cronbach's Alpha test to identify the degree of reliability of measurement scales and observed variables in the research model. According to Hai, D.H., (2019), the conditions for scales to be reliable are Cronbach's alpha > 0.6 ; The condition for observed variables to be reliable is Corrected Item-Total Correlation > 0.3 . The test results show that all 3 scales and 9 observed variables are reliable (Table 2).

Table 2. Statistical and scale testing results

Scales	Observed variables	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach' Alpha	Corrected Item-Total Correlation
1. Input foreign language capacity (IC)	IC1	350	1	5	3.75	.628	.643	IC1 = .463
	IC2	350	1	5	3.68	.641		IC2 = .482
	IC3	350	1	5	3.56	.639		IC3 = .479
2. Foreign language learning capacity (LC)	LC1	350	1	5	3.99	.583	.658	LC1 = .544
	LC2	350	2	5	3.84	.579		LC2 = .532
	LC3	350	1	5	3.89	.581		LC3 = .526
3. Output foreign language capacity (OC)	OC1	350	2	5	3.96	.654	.687	OC1 = .562
	OC2	350	1	5	4.01	.592		OC2 = .557
	OC3	350	1	5	4.02	.634		OC3 = .563
Valid N (listwise)		350						

Source: Authors' survey results

Table 2 data shows:

+ Observations on the scales “Input foreign language capacity” (IC), “Foreign language learning capacity” (LC), and “Output foreign language capacity” (OC) are all evaluated at Mean > 3.5, statistically significant according to the defined Likert scale (1-5). However, the observed variables of the scale “Input foreign language ability” (IC) are rated at the lowest level with Mean (IC1) = 3.75, Mean (IC2) = 3.68, Mean (IC3) = 3.56, shows that students' foreign language knowledge and skills before entering university are at a low level. This is a factor that affects the learning process and English

language learning results of students at Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City.

+ All 3 scales and 9 observed variables in the model have standardized test values: Cronbach's alpha > 0.6; Corrected Item-Total Correlation > 0.3. These scales continue to be used to perform a regression analysis to examine the relationship of the independent variables “Input foreign language capacity” (IC), and “Foreign language learning capacity” (LC) with the dependent variable “Output foreign language capacity” (OC) [Table 3].

Table 3. The outcomes of multivariable regression

Coefficients ^a		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	VIF
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
Model 1	(Constant)	.568	.217		2.776	.000	
	Input foreign language capacity (IC)	.331	.086	.287	4.571	.000	1.654
	Foreign language learning capacity (LC)	.547	.077	.493	7.897	.000	1.654

a. Dependent Variable: Output foreign language capacity (OC)
 R Square = .673; Durbin-Watson = 2.002

Source: Authors' survey results

The regression analysis data in Table 3 shows that:

+ R Square = .673, confirming that the scales “Input foreign language capacity” (IC) and “Foreign language learning capacity” (LC) can explain 67.3% of the variation in the “Output foreign language capacity” (OC).

+ VIF = 1.654 (1 < VIF < 2), showing that the regression model does not have multicollinearity; Durbin-Watson = 2,002 (1 < d < 3), showing that the regression model does not have autocorrelation. This confirms that the scales “Input foreign language capacity” (IC) and “Foreign language learning capacity” (LC) are independent, and have the same impact on the scale “Output foreign language capacity” (OC).

The regression coefficients of the two independent variables “Input foreign language capacity” (IC) and “Foreign language learning capacity” (LC) are both statistically significant with Sig. = 0.000 (Sig. < 0.05) and has a positive value: B (IC) = 0.331, B (LC) = 0.547, confirming the positive relationship between the two independent variables “Input foreign language capacity” (IC), “Foreign language learning capacity” (LC) and 01 dependent variable “Output foreign language capacity” (OC); Hypotheses H1, H2 are accepted.

Applying the generalized regression model of Hai, D.H. (2019): $Y = B_0 + B_1 * X_1 + B_2 * X_2 + \dots + B_i * X_i$, the author determined the regression model of the study. This is as follows:

$$OC = 0.568 + 0.331 * IC + 0.547 * LC$$

Based on the unstandardized regression coefficients of the scales as independent variables: B (IC) = 0.331, B (LC) = 0.547, it can be confirmed that the degree of correlation of the independent and dependent variables according to the ascending order is: “Input foreign language capacity” (IC), “Foreign language learning capacity” (LC).

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of testing the scale and the results of regression analysis mentioned above, the research conclusion is confirmed: Students at Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City have limited self-assessment of their input foreign language ability. This is also the situation that occurs in many universities because the level of foreign language knowledge of high school students is uneven across regions in the country (mountainous areas, islands, rural areas, urban areas), leading to differences in the level of input foreign language

capacity of high school students when admitted to university.

The above reality is hurting the foreign language learning process of students at the university level; and affects the output standards of foreign language proficiency of students in Vietnamese universities. From the conclusion of this research, the author suggests related solutions to improve the quality of foreign language training for students, which are: Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City as well as many universities in the technical sector. It is necessary to research and evaluate the level of students' input English knowledge to have appropriate training programs.

Implementing the above solution will help Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City and many other universities be proactive in developing training programs and plans. When students are classified according to their input foreign language capacity, they will be given a balanced mentality and interest in learning; Lecturers will also have advantages in developing lecture content and choosing appropriate teaching methods. With that meaning, the author hopes to provide empirical information to help Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City and many universities in Vietnam to better see the reality of first English foreign language proficiency input from students so that appropriate solutions can be found in university administration.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Anh, K.Q.; Trung, N.S.; Huong, N.T.M.; Van, P.T. (2023). "Assessing the core capacity, working practice capacity of local civil servants in Vietnam". *Journal of Namibian Studies*, Vol. 33, <https://doi.org/10.59670/jns.v33i.3476>
- [2]. Hai, D.H. (2019). *Econometrics*. National Economics University Press.
- [3]. Hung, L.D.; Khanh, T.T.B.; Trang, N.T.; Phong, N.V.U.; Phuong, N.T.T; Trung, N.S. (2023). "Qualifications and practical capabilities of local Vietnamese civil servants". *Russian Law Journal*, Vol.11, No.2, <https://www.russianlawjournal.org/index.php/journal/article/view/660>
- [4]. IUH - Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City (2023). "Student", address <https://iuh.edu.vn/vi/sinh-vien-fi23>.
- [5]. Lan, N. (2006). *Dictionary of Vietnamese words and phrases*. Ho Chi Minh City General Publishing House.
- [6]. Loi, N.V; Hang, C.T.T. (2014). "Factors affecting English ability of English pedagogical students, Can Tho University". *Journal of Science Can Tho University*, No. 32.
- [7]. MOET - Ministry of Education and Training (2014). Circular No. 01/2014/TT-BGDĐT dated 24th January, 2014 promulgating the 6-level foreign language competency framework for Vietnam.
- [8]. MOET - Ministry of Education and Training (2023). "List of educational institutions", address <https://moet.gov.vn/cos oGiaduc/Pages/list-sach.aspx>
- [9]. Nhat, H. (2022). "Only 10% of Vietnamese workers can meet the requirements of enterprises". *Dan Tri newspaper*, address, July 23, 2022.
- [10]. Tuyet, H.T. (2013). "Development of university programs according to competency approach: Trends and needs". *Journal of Development and Integration*.