

## **Non-English Major Students Perspectives Towards Teaching and Learning English for Hotels at the Faculty of Economics and Tourism, Souphanouvong University**

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### **Abstract**

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In this research project, the researchers aimed to find out the Non-English Major Students' Perspectives towards Teaching and Learning English for Hotels at the Faculty of Economics and Tourism, Souphanouvong University. The research consisted of five chapters (1-5). The instrument used for this study was a questionnaire and included 58 items to collect information to find the Students' Perspectives towards Teaching and Learning English for Hotels at the Faculty of Economics and Tourism with a total of 229 participants who studied in years 2, 3, and 4. The data was analyzed by using the program SPSS for Windows (Version 17) and Microsoft Excel 2019 to analyze information for frequency, average into percentage, mean value and standard deviation (S.D) of this research project.

The results of this research revealed that mixed methods of questionnaires and active learning-teaching sessions were used to collect quantitative data that addressed at the purpose of the study. The samples were students from both the Tourism and Hotel Departments at the Faculty of Economics and Tourism, Souphanouvong University. The Analysis of the data illustrated that the students at the Faculty of Economics and Tourism had a positive perspective towards five main components: namely, learning-teaching improvement, the perspectives of the students towards learning, the perspectives of the students towards teaching, the perspectives of the students towards curriculum, and the perspectives of the students towards textbook. The researchers found perspectives towards the Teaching and Learning English for Hotel at the Faculty of Economics and Tourism. However, the majority of the respondents claimed that the perspectives towards textbook were lower than the four kinds of teaching and learning English for hotels, such as learning-teaching improvement, learning, teaching and curriculum. In addition, the lowest perspective of students' personal information towards English learning for hotels; had an extra class at other government schools, were at the pre-intermediate level, and had never studied English by themselves at all. Moreover, the reasons for studying English; lowest percentage was that students would like to use English to study abroad.

**Keywords:** *Non-English Major Students, Perspective, Teaching and Learning, English, Hotels*

## 1. Introduction

Education has become the core concern for the development of the country since Laos gained independence in 1975. English language has become very important and is used at every level of education throughout Laos and it plays an important role in the country's socio-economic development. The Lao Government tried hard to strengthen education from the primary level to the higher education level. According to government policies, it has provided more opportunities to access education, and the number of students is increasing at all levels (Vongsouangtham, 2014). The Ministry of Education and Sports has implemented the national education policies of the Lao government by setting the strategic plan on education up to the year 2020, and the upcoming ASEAN Economic Community will definitely open doors to more opportunities for Lao people, focusing on expanding higher education to meet the needs of the new labor market and training professionals and intellectuals to have the capacity to apply modern science and technology to serve the needs of social and economic development (Souvanhxay, 2012). The Lao government has good vision and is able to see the future of the ASEAN Economic Community as well as the importance of education in order to provide education for students of all different ethnic groups in eight provinces of the northern part of Laos. Souphanouvong University (SU) is the first university in the northern provinces of Laos and the third university created after the National University of Laos and Champasack University. SU was established on 5 November 2003 and named after the first Lao president. Situated on the outskirts of Luang Prabang City, it has six faculties: Education, Economic and Tourism Management, Agriculture and Forestry Resource, Electronic and Computer Engineering, Architecture, and Languages.

SU is academically monitored by the National University of Laos (NOUL) in terms of curriculum implementation and the academic and professional development of the teaching

staff. The main objectives of the University are to educate and train Lao students with a good quality education in terms of knowledge, skills, morals, and values, as well as physical and spiritual health. The University tries to unify the students of eight Northern provinces in Laos (Annual Report, 2003). The Faculty of Economics and Management has also been established since 2003 and originally had two departments: economics and management. Since 2007, the Faculty of Economics and Management has been changed into the Faculty of Economics and Tourism, which consists of four departments: economics, general management, tourism, and hotel. The main objectives of this faculty are to build up students' abilities and knowledge in both theory and practice in their fields of economics and tourism. The English language is one of many subjects in the curriculum of the Faculty of Economics and Tourism, which is taught from the first to the final years. The general English is taught in the first year and the English for hotels and tourism is taught in the third and fourth year. The students have the opportunity to study English for four hours per week. Apart from their subject areas, the English language is often considered an essential tool for learners to apply it on their real work.

The mismatch between the students' conceptual or cognitive capacities and the learners' English proficiency level often causes problems for students because the students' learning style and teachers' teaching approach do not match, and the English course does not relate to the students' needs and interests (Hutchinson & Waters, 1991). Susanna (2007) also claimed that weak students usually have poor strategies and give up easily when they struggle. Dincer, Takkac & AKalm (2010: 235) stated that "the analyses of the student compositions showed that some frequently experienced problems negatively affect the foreign language education process. The most common of the problems were related to English teachers and English courses at schools, as well as those stemming from teaching

environments and teacher characteristics in Turkey" Sindkhedkar (2012: 194) indicated that the teachers' abilities in teaching English in India are limited by a lack of good teaching techniques, a lack of interest in knowledge books, and a syllabus that may not cater to the needs of the students. In the recent year, Solck (2015: 109) suggested that foreign language teaching is an important problem in Turkey, such as curricula and the lack of sustainability from the primary school to secondary education, and that teachers of English in the department lacked well-trained quality. In addition, the teaching approaches of teachers were teacher-centered rather than learner-centered, and materials did not comply with learning styles in the Turkish culture, which was another reason for failure. Hiew (2012: 11) suggested that teachers should make effective lesson plans because the teaching methods were important for students' learning styles. Also, for students who had strived to improve their English language proficiency until they were able to achieve their maximum ability. Korolyova & Voyakina (2014: 47) agreed that teacher was the important part of teaching and learning activities that the lesson plan preparing would give opportunities for the teachers for improving the quality of learning such as considered teaching strategies need to be involved using subject-based such as activities, goal, relevancy-oriented tasks which had to be communicative and practical.

The situation of English language teaching and learning in Laos would somewhat be similar to the situation of teaching and learning in developing countries, as aforementioned in the last session. There are some studies that could provide some background information about the situation of English teaching and learning in Laos, from secondary school to university level. In the past, there were few studies regarding English education in Laos. Most of the work provided general information and a history of English language education in Lao secondary schools (Appleby et al., 2002; Goh & Vonchith, 2003; Sithirajvongsa & Goh, 2004). During the

2000s, there were some empirical studies from the secondary school level to the university level. Souvannasy (2004) found that there were factors that affected students' achievement, such as a shortage of teachers, textbooks, and curriculum. Likewise, Soulignavong (2007) found that there were several problems with the students at the university level who had a major in English. She found that there were problems with the curriculum, materials, and teaching approaches. The students had a very low level of vocabulary, and they had problems with grammar and reading even though they were in their final year, as could be seen through the results of the test. She concluded that those students had problems with all skills in English. Souvanhxay (2012: 27) stated that teachers and students agreed on most areas in which students performed weakly; namely, students do not have a good English background, they did not learn extensively, on the other hand, they did not have independent learning skills, they did not ask teachers in the classroom, they did not have opportunities to use English in real-life situations, and they were not encouraged to use libraries.

For the reasons mentioned above, the researchers have set two objectives in this research project: 1) To investigate the perspectives of non-English major students towards teaching and learning English for hotels regarding curriculum, textbooks, teaching, and learning. 2) To give suggestions for further improving teaching and learning English for hotels at the Faculty of Economics and Tourism (FET), Souphanouvong University (SU).

## 2. Materials and Methods

In this research project, quantitative research was used by using questionnaires that researchers developed to collect the information of Non-English Major Students' Perspectives towards Teaching and Learning English for hotels at the Faculty of Economics and Tourism (FET), Souphanouvong University (SU), and bringing the collected data to analyze, sequence, and find the frequency, average, percentage, Mean value, and Standard Deviation by using the

program SPSS for Windows Statistics Package of Social Science (SPSS) for Windows (Version 17) and Microsoft Excel 2019 in analyzing data.

The sample soft this research project were the non-English major students at the FET, SU. The sample group was 229 randomly selected students who studied in years 2, 3, and 4, and was analyzed using descriptive statistics only.

The main instrument used in this quantitative research was a questionnaire and consisted of two main parts for collecting data. Part one captured personal information; Part two, the Perspectives of the Students towards Teaching and Learning English for Hotels (Curriculum, Textbook, Learning, Teaching, Learning, and Teaching Improvement), as detailed below:

1. The researchers did an analysis of the non-English major students' personal information and found out the number and percentage of age, extra class, English level, duration of self-study, and reasons for studying English represented on tables (1–5).

2. The analysis of the perspectives of the students towards Curriculum, Textbook, Learning, Teaching, and learning and teaching improvement in these parts, the researchers analyzed descriptive statistics, such as Frequency, Percentage, mean, and Standard deviation, and represented them on tables (6–10).

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Personal information

The results of this research found that most of the population aged 15-25 had 226 people, which equals 99.6%. Age 26-35 had 1 person, which equals 0.4%. And two students did not respond to the questionnaire. The number of people aged 15-25 is highest, and the number of people aged 26-35 is lowest. 107 students obtained more English lessons at private colleges, which equals 83.2%. 104 students had an extra class at other government schools, which equals 13.1%. And 18 students did not respond to the questionnaire. Means that students obtained more English lessons at private colleges were highest, and the lowest students had an

extra class at other government schools. 103 students were at the intermediate level, which equals 21.0%. 56 students were at the beginner level, which equals 14.0%. 32 students were at the Elementary level, which equals 6.1%. 24 students were in pre-intermediate, which equals 4.4%. And 14 students did not respond to the questionnaire. Means that the intermediate-level students were the highest, and the lowest students were at the pre-intermediate level. 125 students spent between 30 minutes and 2 hours learning English by themselves, which equals 54.6%. 74 students spent more than 2 hours learning English, which equals 32.3%. 30 students had never studied English by themselves at all, which equals 13.1%. Means that spent between 30 minutes and 2 hours to learn English by themselves were the highest, and the lowest students had never studied English by themselves at all. 149 students were for future jobs, which equals 49.8%. 53 students were selected for their current work, which equals 23.1%. 13 students got a provincial scholarship, which equals 17.8%. 7 students were interested in language and culture, which equals 3.1%. 4 students would use English to further study at the higher level, which equals 1.8%. And 3 students would like to use English to study abroad, which equals 1.3%. It means that the Reasons for studying English for future jobs of students were the highest, and the lowest reason was that students would like to use English to study abroad.

#### 3.2 General information asked about the Non-English Major Students' Perspectives towards Teaching and Learning English for Hotels

The results of this research found that the perspectives of the Students towards Learning and Teaching improvement on the Table 6 the researchers found that teaching materials, such as LCD, tape, video, computers, the internet, and others were used in teaching and learning to help students study English more easily had the highest impression. The teaching material, such as LCD, tape, video, computer, internet, and others, motivates Classroom activities and

exercises have positive impacts on the development of English skills. Classroom activities and exercises are interested in studying English. Teaching materials, such as tape, radio, video, movies, and others have positive impacts on English skills development. The research result found that the perspectives of the students towards learning were slightly lower than the learning and teaching improvement. There was classroom learning and individual learning styles. The satisfaction towards learning, their learning styles, skills improvement, and extra learning apart from classroom learning. The research result found that the perspectives of the students towards teaching were also lower than both learning and teaching improvement. The teacher attended class on time and regularly. The teacher's pronunciation was similar to that of a native speaker. The teacher always followed the teaching schedule, prepared the lesson before class, explained the lesson clearly, and answered all students' questions. Moreover, the teacher gave students the opportunity to share ideas in learning, then asked questions outside class and made some exam questions under the content in the textbook, let students do exercises during the lesson, gave homework for each lesson, gave comments on homework, gave students the solving methods, and always checked students' understanding after the lesson. The research result found that the perspectives of the students towards curriculum were also lower than the learning, teaching, and curriculum improvement. The aim of the curriculum was the needs of the students: curriculum was suitable for the students' level of English; teaching practice; revision in the curriculum; courses were completed in each semester; examination times were arranged; various activities for skills; curriculum was suitable for skills development (listening, reading, writing, and speaking); curriculum was suitable for students' needs of English; curriculum taught students to use English in their major field; curriculum motivated students to learn English; Students were able to learn more vocabularies. They had

more opportunities to use their English knowledge, and the knowledge gained from this course could help students use it in many hotel business areas. The research result found that the perspectives of the students towards textbooks were lower than four kinds of teaching and learning English for hotels. There were the content of the textbook contains more theories than practices; the content of the textbook could be used in daily life; the content of the textbook was too difficult; the content of the textbook was suitable for the student's major field; the content of the textbook was understandable; the lessons ranged from easy to difficult; Each lesson in the textbook had enough exercises. Listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills were arranged properly in the textbook. The levels of the lessons in the textbook were suitable for the time provided. The textbook content was suitable for the level of the students. The textbook content was attractive and interesting. The textbook contains different activities and many assignments. From the overall results of the general information asked about the non-English major students' perspectives towards teaching and learning English for Hotel, it was found that learning and teaching improvement were the most important impressions from curriculum, textbooks, learning, and teaching.

#### 4. Discussion

This research aims at the non-English major students' perspectives towards teaching and learning English for Hotels at the Faculty of Economics and Tourism, Souphanouvong University. Therefore, the finding of the study can be discussed as the detail below:

The result revealed by the general information asked about the non-English major students' perspectives towards teaching and learning English for Hotels at the Faculty of Economics and Tourism found that learning and teaching improvement were the most impression from five main components for the non-English major students followed by the curriculum, textbooks, learning, and teaching on the teaching and learning English language for Hotels at the

Faculty of Economics and Tourism. The result is consistent with the past research works, (Sindkhedkar, 2012:194) indicated that the teachers' abilities in teaching English in India are limited by a lack of good teaching techniques, a lack of interest in knowledge books, and a syllabus that may not cater to the needs of the students. In the recent year, (Solck, 2015: 109) suggested that foreign language teaching is an important problem in Turkey, such as curricula and the lack of sustainability from the primary school to secondary education, and that teachers of English in the department lacked well-trained quality. In addition, the teaching approaches of teachers were teacher-centered rather than learner-centered, and materials did not comply with learning styles in the Turkish culture, which was another reason for failure. Furthermore, (Hiew 2012:11) suggested that teachers should make effective lesson plans because the teaching methods were important for students' learning styles. Also, for students who had strived to improve their English language proficiency until they were able to achieve their maximum ability.

In addition, the result was consistent with theoretical findings, (Soulignavong, 2007) found that there were several problems with the students at the university level who had a major in English. She found that there were problems with the curriculum, materials, and teaching approaches. The students had a very low level of vocabulary, and they had problems with grammar and reading even though they were in their final year, as could be seen through the results of the test. She concluded that those students had problems with all skills in English. The result revealed that the curriculum was suitable for students' needs in English; the curriculum taught students to use English language in their major field; the curriculum motivated students to learn English; Students were able to learn more vocabulary; Students had more opportunities to use their English knowledge; and the knowledge gained from this course could help students use it in many hotel business areas.

## 5. Conclusion

The study was carried out to find out the non-English major students' perspectives towards teaching and learning English for hotels at the Faculty of Economics and Tourism, Souphanouvong University. The results illustrated that the non-English major students at the faculty had a positive perspective towards five main components: curriculum, textbook, learning, teaching, and learning-teaching improvement. In this result, most non-English major students were impressive in terms of learning and teaching improvement, especially in teaching material, classroom activities and exercises in classroom. In addition, students were satisfied with the classroom learning, individual learning styles, skills improvement, and extracurricular learning apart from the regular classroom. Students were also impressive on examination questions based on the content of the textbook, followed by a teaching schedule that prepared the lesson before class, explained the lesson clearly, gave more opportunities for students to join the classroom activities to share ideas and feedback and do homework. Students were also impressed with the curriculum use in the Faculty of Economics and Tourism, which helped students build up their basic knowledge of English for their future work. Moreover, they were impressed with the text book because the lessons taught from easy to more difficult levels. Furthermore, the textbook contained many different attractive and interesting activities, and all four skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking) were well organized. Apart from this, the informants could also use their English knowledge in their daily lives by applying and relating lessons learned to other subjects to support their further major field of study.

## 6. Conflict of Interest

We (the research team) certify that all of this research information has no conflict of interest with any financial organization regarding the material discussed in the manuscript. Even if there is any violation of this research project, we are pleased to take our sole responsibility.

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