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English As A Foreign Language Students' Motivation In Learning English Listening Skills: A Case Of Civil Engineering Students At Da Nang University Of Technology And Education

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Abstract
This study investigates the motivational profiles and perceptions of civil engineering students regarding English listening skills at Da Nang University of Technology and Education. This study used a mixed-methods case study examined 100 third-year undergraduates through surveys and interviews. Results showed that a hierarchical ecosystem of motivation, with external pressures such as institutional requirements, family expectations, exam obligations, and instrumental goals such as career advancement and academic certification. The research methodology and general classroom activities were positively rated, and the students perceived a relevance between the curriculum content and their specific professional needs. Integrative and ideal self-motivation also contributed, with personal enjoyment and future aspirations enhancing engagement. The study highlights the urgent need for more ESP-oriented curricula created for engineering students' real-world listening demands and underscores the complex, multi-layered nature of motivation in the context of a Vietnamese technical university. Future research will focus on other contexts of other universities with different populations.

Keywords: *Civil engineering students, curriculum, English for specific purposes (ESP), listening motivation, L2 motivational self-system, listening skills, technical university education.*

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I. Introduction

In the 21st-century globalized landscape, English has firmly established its role as the undisputed global lingua franca, indispensable for international communication, technological advancement, and economic integration (Crystal, 2003). For non-native English-speaking countries like Vietnam, proficiency in English is no longer a mere advantage but a critical necessity for national development and individual career progression. Consequently, English Language Teaching (ELT) in higher education aims to equip students with comprehensive communicative competence. This competence is built upon four foundational pillars: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Among these, the listening skill is often considered one of the most challenging yet fundamental abilities to master. As a receptive skill, it forms the basis for effective oral communication, enables participation in academic discourse, and provides access to a vast repository of global knowledge (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). However, developing listening proficiency requires sustained effort and exposure, making the internal drive of the learner a paramount factor in their success.

Central to the process of language acquisition is the concept of motivation, which is widely regarded as one of the key determinants of achievement in learning a second or foreign language (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Motivation in this context is not a monolithic entity but a complex, multifaceted construct encompassing the reasons, desires, and efforts that learners invest in their studies. Foundational theories often distinguish between integrative motivation, which involves a desire to connect with the culture and community of the target language, and instrumental motivation, which is driven by pragmatic goals such as passing examinations or advancing one's career (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). More recent models, like Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System, further elaborate on this by considering the learner's ideal future self and the practical steps they believe are necessary to achieve it. Regardless of the specific theoretical framework, there is a broad consensus that a highly motivated student is more likely to engage actively, persist through difficulties, and ultimately achieve higher levels of proficiency, particularly in a demanding skill like listening (Goh & Taib, 2006).

However, the nature and intensity of motivation are not uniform across all learner populations. A critical distinction must be made between students majoring in English and those studying in other specialized, non-linguistic fields. For students in disciplines such as civil engineering, the motivation to learn English is often shaped by a unique set of needs and professional aspirations. Their engagement with the language is typically more instrumental, driven by the need to read technical documents, understand project specifications from

international clients, collaborate with foreign experts, and enhance their global career prospects (Hyland, 2006). While reading skills may be perceived as having immediate utility, the motivation for developing listening skills can be more ambiguous. Students may not immediately recognize the relevance of classroom-based listening activities to their future roles as engineers, potentially leading to lower engagement and investment unless the connection to real-world professional contexts is made explicit. Understanding the specific motivational profile of these engineering students is therefore crucial for designing effective and relevant language instruction.

Despite the universal importance of motivation, there remains a notable gap in the research literature, particularly within the specific context of Vietnamese higher education. While the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has set English proficiency standards (such as the VSTEP framework) as a graduation requirement for universities nationwide, much of the existing research on language learning motivation in Vietnam has focused on English majors or high school students in general contexts. There is a dearth of empirical studies that specifically investigate the motivational dynamics of students in highly specialized technical fields, such as civil engineering. Furthermore, few studies have narrowed their focus to a single, challenging skill like listening. This lack of research represents a significant knowledge gap, as universities like Da Nang University of Technology and Education are tasked with preparing work-ready graduates who possess not only technical expertise but also the communicative competence required by the modern engineering industry. Without a clear understanding of what drives or hinders these specific students in their language learning, pedagogical interventions may remain generic and fail to address their unique needs.

This study, therefore, aims to address this research gap by conducting an investigation into the motivation of civil engineering students in learning English listening skills at Da Nang University of Technology and Education. The primary objective of this research is to identify the types and sources of motivation (both instrumental and integrative) that influence these students, explore the specific factors they perceive as motivating or demotivating in their listening classes, and understand their overall perception of the importance of English listening for their future careers. By exploring this topic through a case study approach, this research seeks to provide valuable, context-specific insights. The findings are expected to have practical implications for multiple stakeholders. For English teachers at technical universities, this study will offer evidence-based recommendations for tailoring listening materials and activities to be more relevant and engaging for engineering students. For curriculum developers, the findings can inform the design of English programs that better align with the professional demands of the engineering industry. Ultimately, by shedding light on the crucial role of motivation, this study aims to contribute to the broader goal of enhancing the quality of English language training for future engineers in Vietnam, equipping them with the skills needed to succeed in an interconnected world.

II. Literature Review

Research problems in the global context

In the landscape of global education and professional development, English proficiency is universally acknowledged as a critical asset. This proficiency is comprised of four core communicative skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Among these, listening comprehension is frequently identified as a significant and persistent hurdle for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners worldwide. More than just a passive act of receiving sound, listening is a complex cognitive process involving decoding, inferencing, and the real-time construction of meaning (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Its mastery is fundamental for effective communication, yet it often proves to be the most challenging skill for learners to develop.

The success of learners in overcoming the difficulties associated with a demanding skill like listening is heavily dependent on a crucial internal factor: motivation. The field of second language acquisition has long recognized motivation as a primary driver of learner effort, persistence, and ultimate achievement (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Theoretical frameworks, from Gardner's (1985) distinction between instrumental and integrative motivation to more contemporary models, consistently highlight that learners' reasons and desires for learning profoundly impact their engagement and outcomes.

However, a significant problem in the global discourse is that research on motivation often treats language learning as a monolithic activity. Much of the focus has been on learners' general motivation to learn "English" as a whole. While valuable, this broad perspective can obscure the nuanced motivational dynamics related to specific language skills. There remains a relative scarcity of research that delves deeply into the particular nature of motivation for learning the listening skill. This is especially true for learners in specialized, non-linguistic fields, for whom the instrumental value of listening might seem less immediately apparent than that of reading technical manuals or writing professional emails. This represents an underexplored area in understanding the complexities of language learning motivation.

Research problems in the context of Vietnam

In Vietnam, the challenge of developing genuine communicative competence, particularly in listening, is especially acute. The Vietnamese educational system has traditionally been characterized by pedagogical

approaches that heavily emphasize grammar, vocabulary acquisition, and reading comprehension - skills that are more easily accessed through traditional written examinations (Tran, 2013). Consequently, listening and speaking have often been relegated to a secondary status in many classrooms, leaving students with underdeveloped aural and oral skills.

A significant tension has emerged with recent educational reforms. The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) now mandates specific English proficiency exit standards for university graduates (e.g., VSTEP, TOEIC), all of which contain substantial listening components. This creates a direct conflict between the new, high-stakes communicative requirements and the deep-seated learning habits and teaching methods inherited from a grammar-translation-focused tradition. Students are now required to demonstrate proficiency in a skill for which their previous education may have insufficiently prepared them.

While a body of research on the motivation of Vietnamese learners exists, these studies often focus on English majors or secondary school students as a general population. A conspicuous gap exists in the literature concerning the motivational profiles of non-English major university students, particularly those enrolled in demanding technical disciplines like engineering. The fundamental problem in the Vietnamese context is the unexamined nature of motivation as it pertains to the specific skill of listening within this key demographic. Without understanding what drives these future professionals to engage with (or disengage from) listening practice, institutional efforts to meet national proficiency standards may be inefficient and fail to foster the genuine skills required by the modern workforce.

Research problems at the research site

At Da Nang University of Technology and Education (UTE-UD), the implementation of a mandatory English proficiency exit standard creates a set of specific, on-the-ground challenges for its students, particularly those in the Faculty of Civil Engineering. These problems form the core rationale for this case study.

First, there is a problem of perceived relevance. Civil engineering is a discipline deeply rooted in visual and textual information - technical drawings, mathematical formulas, structural analysis reports, and construction codes. Students are immersed daily in this highly specialized environment. Consequently, they may struggle to see the immediate, practical connection between the general, conversational topics often presented in their English listening classes (e.g., discussions about travel, hobbies, or shopping) and the specific linguistic demands of their future careers. This perceived disconnect can significantly dampen their intrinsic motivation.

Second, the primary driver for learning to listen is the extrinsic pressure of the high-stakes exit exam. This creates a significant risk of fostering narrow, test-oriented motivation. Students may focus on learning "tips and tricks" to answer multiple-choice questions correctly rather than developing authentic, holistic listening comprehension skills. This form of motivation is often fragile and may not translate into a lasting ability or desire to use the skill after graduation.

Third, there is a gap between classroom listening and authentic professional listening. The listening tasks in standardized tests and textbooks are typically clear, well-structured, and use standard accents. This differs starkly from the authentic listening challenges an engineer might face: participating in a conference call with international partners with diverse accents, understanding instructions on a noisy construction site, or negotiating with a foreign client. This disparity can lead to a sense of unpreparedness and may diminish students' confidence and motivation to invest in the type of listening practiced in the classroom.

Finally, engineering students face a conflict in resource and time allocation. Their core curriculum is exceptionally demanding, requiring immense time and cognitive effort to master complex technical subjects. From this perspective, the compulsory General English courses can be perceived as a lesser priority or even a distraction from their main field of study. This can lead to minimal effort and a surface-level investment in developing their listening skills, doing just enough to pass rather than aiming for mastery.

Site overview

This section provides a comprehensive overview of Da Nang University of Technology and Education (UTE-UD), a member of The University of Da Nang, which serves as the site for this research. The overview will cover its historical background, institutional mission and vision, and the academic programs it offers, with a particular focus on the English language curriculum for non-English major students. This contextual information is essential for understanding the academic environment in which the motivation of civil engineering students towards learning English listening skills is shaped and investigated.

Methodology and data collection

Da Nang University of Technology and Education has a long and distinguished history, beginning with its establishment in 1962 as the Technical School. Its primary objective was to train skilled technical workers to support the burgeoning industrial needs of Central Vietnam. Through various stages of development and several name changes, the institution consistently expanded its scope and enhanced its educational quality.

A pivotal moment in its history occurred in 1994 when it was officially integrated as a member institution of The University of Da Nang, one of Vietnam's leading regional university systems. This integration marked its transformation into a comprehensive university-level institution, prompting the name change to Da Nang University of Technology and Education. This new status allowed the university to broaden its academic offerings, strengthen its research capabilities, and solidify its reputation as a key center for technical and pedagogical training.

Since then, the university has experienced significant growth in both student enrollment and academic prestige, mirroring the rapid socio-economic development of Da Nang City as a major hub of technology, education, and tourism in the region. This growth reflects the increasing demand for high-quality engineers and technical educators who are not only professionally competent but also possess the language and soft skills necessary for international integration. The university's development is partially summarized in Table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1. Summary of University Development from 2010 to 2023

Academic Year	Total Student Enrollment	Number of Academic Staff
2010-2011	≈ 8,500	≈ 450
2013-2014	≈ 10,000	≈ 520
2016-2017	≈ 12,500	≈ 580
2019-2020	≈ 14,000	≈ 630
2022-2023	≈ 15,500	≈ 680

Mission

The core mission of Da Nang University of Technology and Education is "to train high-quality, practice-oriented human resources in the fields of technology and vocational education; to conduct scientific research and technology transfer that effectively serves the sustainable socio-economic development of Central Vietnam, the Central Highlands, and the nation as a whole."

To fulfill this mission, the university is committed to fostering a dynamic learning environment that bridges the gap between theory and practice. Its educational philosophy emphasizes hands-on experience, industry collaboration, and the development of professional competencies. The university aims to produce graduates who not only possess deep technical expertise but also exhibit strong critical thinking, problem-solving skills, professional ethics, and a commitment to lifelong learning, enabling them to adapt and thrive in a rapidly evolving global workforce.

Vision

The university's vision is "to become a leading, research-oriented university in Vietnam and a reputable institution in Southeast Asia in the fields of technology and vocational education, recognized for its innovation, high-quality education, and deep integration with the international community."

By 2030, UTE-UD aims to have several of its key academic programs accredited by regional and international quality assurance networks (such as the ASEAN University Network-Quality Assurance, AUN-QA). The university envisions an academic culture where innovative teaching methodologies are widely adopted, and research activities are strongly promoted to generate new knowledge and practical solutions for industry and society.

Looking ahead to 2035, the university plans to strengthen its international partnerships for joint training programs, faculty and student exchanges, and collaborative research projects. This global outlook is intended to enhance the learning experience, provide students with international exposure, and solidify the university's position as a forward-thinking institution ready for global challenges.

Academic programs

In accordance with the training regulations of The University of Da Nang and the strategic development plan of the university, UTE-UD offers a wide range of academic programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. This study focuses on the undergraduate population.

For undergraduate Programs, the university provides training in numerous engineering and technology disciplines, organized into faculties such as Mechanical Engineering, Electrical and Electronics Engineering, Information Technology, Chemical Engineering, and the Faculty of Civil Engineering, which is the specific focus of this research. An undergraduate program typically requires students to complete a set curriculum of approximately 150 credits, encompassing general education, foundational core subjects, and specialized major-specific courses.

For the English language curriculum for non-majors, a crucial component of all undergraduate programs at UTE-UD is the mandatory English language requirement. In line with national policies and the demands of the

modern labor market, the university mandates that all students must achieve a minimum level of English proficiency to be eligible for graduation. This is typically benchmarked against standardized tests, such as a required TOEIC score (e.g., 450-500) or a B1 level on Vietnam's VSTEP framework. The specific benchmarks are summarized in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2. English Proficiency Graduation Requirements at UTE-UD

Standardized Test	Minimum Required Score / Level	Primary Focus of the Test
TOEIC (Listening & Reading)	450 - 500	Workplace and international communication
VSTEP (Vietnam's Standardized Test of English Proficiency)	Level 3 (B1)	General academic and social communication
IELTS	4.5	General academic English (often for study abroad)

To help students meet this requirement, the university offers a set of required General English classes. These classes, usually called "English 1," "English 2," "English 3," and "English 4," are made for students who are not majoring in English. The classes are planned to improve the four main language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The main goal is to help students use English in real situations and get them ready for the graduation English test. The order and focus of these four classes are shown in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3. General English Program Pathway for Non-Major Students at UTE-UD

Course Name	Target Level (CEFR)	Primary Objectives	Key Skills Developed
English 1	A1 - A2	Build foundational knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Develop basic communicative competence.	- Listening for basic information (names, numbers). - Simple sentence writing. - Basic introductions and daily conversations.
English 2	A2	Review grammar. Expand vocabulary for common topics. Improve confidence in basic and simple communication.	- Listening for main ideas in short talks. - Speaking on familiar topics. - Reading short descriptive texts.
English 3	A2+ to B1	Develop integrated skills. Introduce academic reading and listening strategies.	- Listening to short lectures and taking notes. - Writing a simple descriptive paragraph. - Participating in group discussions.
English 4	B1	Prepare for the standardized graduation exit exam. Focus on test-taking strategies.	- Integrated listening and reading practice. - Timed practice for TOEIC/VSTEP formats. - Structuring short essays and presentations.

The Faculty of Civil Engineering offers a strong program designed to train professional engineers for the construction industry. Students in this faculty, like all others at the university, are required to follow the prescribed General English pathway. They attend the same English classes, which are designed to serve a diverse student body from various engineering disciplines. Therefore, their motivation or reason for learning, particularly for a receptive skill like listening, is formed within this general, university-wide academic context, which may not always seem closely linked to their civil engineering studies.

Organizational structure

The organizational structure of Da Nang University of Technology and Education (UTE-UD) is set up to support good management, new ideas in teaching, and strong administration. It shows the university's aim to become a leading technical school. This structure shows the roles and duties of leaders, teachers, and support units. It helps create a teamwork-based and effective environment for teaching, doing research, and serving the community. This section explains the three main parts of the structure: the Board of Management, the Teaching Staff, and the academic Faculties and administrative Offices

Board of management

The highest governing body of the university is the University Council, which is responsible for setting the institution's overarching strategic direction, approving development plans and major financial policies, and ensuring the university's mission and vision are upheld.

The day-to-day operations and management are led by the Rector, who is appointed by and reports to the University Council and higher authorities. The Rector holds the ultimate responsibility for the quality of academic programs, scientific research, personnel management, and the overall functioning of the university. Working in concert with the Rector are the Party Committee, the Trade Union, and the Youth Union, which guide the political, ideological, and social activities within the university community, aligning them with national educational goals.

Supporting the Rector in managing specific domains are three Vice-Rectors:
Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs: Responsible for all matters related to undergraduate and graduate training programs, curriculum development, enrollment, and academic quality assurance across all faculties.
Vice-Rector for Scientific Research & International Cooperation: Manages all research activities, technology transfer projects, intellectual property, and the development of partnerships with domestic and international institutions.
Vice-Rector for Student Affairs & Facilities: Oversees student services, campus life, infrastructure management, university facilities, financial planning, and general administration to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment.

Teaching Staff

The teaching staff at UTE-UD is a diverse and highly specialized body of lecturers, researchers, and experts dedicated to advancing knowledge and delivering high-quality education. For the 2024-2025 academic year, the university employs approximately 680 academic staff members. The university places a strong emphasis on advanced qualifications, with a significant percentage of its faculty holding doctoral and master's degrees.

The teaching staff for specialized subjects are organized within their respective faculties. For instance, the Faculty of Civil Engineering, the focus of this study, comprises a dedicated team of experts in construction and engineering. The English language instruction for these non-major students is primarily delivered by lecturers from the Faculty of General & Fundamental Sciences or a dedicated Foreign Language Center, which reflects the university's commitment to providing foundational skills across all disciplines. The distribution and qualifications of the academic staff in selected key faculties are presented in Table 1.4.

Table 1.4. Statistics on Academic Staff by Faculty

Faculty / Department	Total Staff	Prof. / Assoc. Prof.	PhD	Master's	Bachelor's / Other
Mechanical Engineering	75	8	35	30	2
Electrical & Electronics Eng.	70	7	32	28	3
Civil Engineering	65	6	28	29	2
Information Technology	60	5	30	24	1
Chemical Engineering	45	4	20	20	1
General & Fundamental Sciences	55	3	18	32	2
Others	310	15	95	175	25
Total	680	48	258	338	36

Departments

To ensure specialized academic focus and efficient administration, UTE-UD is organized into a network of faculties, departments, and administrative offices.

Faculties are the primary academic units responsible for training and research in specific disciplines. They develop and manage their curricula, conduct research, and are the academic home for students and lecturers.

The main faculties include:
Faculty of Mechanical Engineering
Faculty of Electrical and Electronics Engineering
Faculty of Information Technology
Faculty of Civil Engineering
Faculty of Chemical Engineering
Faculty of Automotive & Power Engineering

Faculty of Economics

Administrative Offices are functional units that support the university's overall operations. These offices manage key administrative, academic, and student-related processes. The key offices include:
Office of Academic Affairs
Office of Scientific Research & International Cooperation
Office of Student Affairs
Office of Planning & Finance
Office of Administration & Human Resources
Office of Quality Assurance

Description of the language curriculum

The English language curriculum for non-major students at Da Nang University of Technology and Education is designed as a structured and pragmatic language program. It is built upon the primary objective of advancing students from varying high school proficiency levels to meet the university's mandatory English exit standard. While fully compliant with the overarching framework suggested by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) for higher education, the curriculum is characterized by its dual focus: developing general communicative competence while systematically preparing students for the format and demands of standardized proficiency examinations.

National and local policies

The entire English program is anchored in the national policy requiring Vietnamese universities to implement English proficiency exit standards (often benchmarked at B1 of the VSTEP framework) to enhance the global competitiveness of graduates. UTE-UD's local policy is the direct implementation of this through a mandatory, four-course General English program that all non-major students, including those in the Faculty of Civil Engineering, must complete. The program is divided into two distinct stages:

Foundational Stage (English 1 & English 2): The primary goal at this stage is to homogenize the diverse English backgrounds of incoming freshmen and build a solid foundation. The curriculum focuses on consolidating essential grammar, expanding functional vocabulary, and developing basic communicative skills. The methodology aims to bring all students to a consistent A2/A2+ level on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

Proficiency Development Stage (English 3 & English 4): This stage serves as a direct pathway to the required B1 exit standard. The curriculum shifts towards integrating the four language skills and introduces students to the specific formats and strategies required for standardized tests like the TOEIC and VSTEP. This university-level initiative is designed to explicitly equip students with the test-taking skills necessary to meet their graduation requirement.

Materials

The university employs a standardized, textbook-driven material strategy to ensure consistency and quality across all non-major English classes.

Core Materials: The primary teaching material for the four-course sequence is a single internationally recognized textbook series, such as Life (National Geographic Learning) or Solutions (Oxford University Press). This ensures a consistent pedagogical approach and systematic progression of content.

Supplementary Materials: To complement the core textbook, lecturers provide additional materials. These include customized grammar and vocabulary worksheets, supplementary listening tracks, and practice tests designed to mirror the TOEIC and VSTEP formats. Many of these resources are made available through the university's Learning Management System (LMS).

Authentic Materials: The use of authentic materials, such as short YouTube clips, news headlines, or simple online articles, is encouraged but occurs occasionally as a means to supplement textbook topics and expose students to real-world language use.

Teaching methods

The pedagogical approach for the General English program can be described as a pragmatic, blended methodology, combining traditional instruction with communicative practice.

The dominant teaching method is a teacher-fronted, structural approach where grammar points and vocabulary are explicitly explained. This is followed by controlled practice activities. This method is integrated with principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), where students engage in pair work and group discussions to practice the language in simulated communicative contexts. The teacher's role is primarily that of

an instructor and guide, who presents new information, facilitates practice activities, and provides corrective feedback to ensure linguistic accuracy.

III. Assessment And Discussion

Assessment

Assessment practices at UTE-UD are designed to measure students' progress throughout the semester and their readiness for the final examination. A dual assessment system is in place for each English course:
Continuous Assessment (50%): This formative component tracks ongoing student progress and typically includes scores for class participation, homework, several short quizzes (often vocabulary or grammar-based), and a comprehensive mid-term examination.
Final Examination (50%): This summative assessment is a formal, written examination conducted at the end of the semester. Its structure closely mirrors the standardized exit exams, testing listening comprehension, reading comprehension, and writing skills under timed conditions.

Oral proficiency, while practiced in class, is often assessed as part of the continuous assessment score (e.g., a short presentation or group discussion). A typical rubric for such an oral assessment is presented below.

Table 2.5. Sample Rubric for Oral Presentation Assessment

SKILL	CRITERIA	SCORE
Fluency & Coherence	- Speaks at a reasonable pace without undue hesitation. - Connects ideas logically using cohesive devices.	2.5
Lexical Resource	- Uses a sufficient range of vocabulary for the topic. - Uses vocabulary accurately.	2.5
Grammatical Range & Accuracy	- Uses a mix of simple and complex sentence structures. - Produces sentences with an acceptable level of accuracy.	2.5
Pronunciation	- Is generally intelligible. - Shows acceptable control of word and sentence stress.	2.5
TOTAL		10 points

Course outline

The General English program is structured as a sequential, four-semester pathway. The content progresses from general, everyday topics to more complex and test-oriented themes.
English 1 (Foundation I): Themes revolve around personal and immediate experiences (e.g., "Personal Profiles," "Daily Life," "Food and Drink"). The focus is on mastering basic tenses and building a core vocabulary of high-frequency words.
English 2 (Foundation II): Builds upon English 1 with themes like "Travel and Holidays," "People and Places," and "Entertainment." Students practice past tenses and future forms, and further expand their vocabulary.
English 3 (The Bridge to B1): Themes become more social and abstract (e.g., "Technology and a Changing World," "The Environment," "Education Systems"). The curriculum introduces more complex grammatical structures (e.g., conditionals, passive voice) and focuses on integrating reading and listening skills.
English 4 (Test Preparation Focus): The course outline is explicitly structured around the skills and strategies needed for the graduation exit exam. A typical weekly schedule might include: "Week 1: TOEIC Listening Part 1 & 2 Strategies," "Week 2: Reading for Main Ideas (VSTEP Reading)," "Week 3: Writing a Formal Email (VSTEP Writing Task 1)," etc. The primary goal is to maximize students' performance on their final proficiency test.

Deployment of the language curriculum

The effective deployment of the General English curriculum at UTE-UD depends on the capabilities of the teaching staff, the specific characteristics of the student cohort, and the adequacy of university facilities.

Teaching staff

The lecturers responsible for delivering the General English program are typically part of a dedicated faculty or center (e.g., Faculty of General & Fundamental Sciences). They are experienced in teaching English to large, mixed-major classes and are well-versed in the requirements of standardized tests like the TOEIC and VSTEP. In their classes, they primarily act as instructors and guides. Their main responsibilities include delivering the standardized curriculum content, clarifying complex grammatical points, facilitating communicative practice, and providing students with effective strategies to succeed in the mandatory exit examinations. A key challenge for the teaching staff is to maintain student engagement and cater to diverse learning needs within a structured, test-oriented curriculum.

Students

The students in this study are undergraduates from the Faculty of Civil Engineering. This cohort is characterized by a strong focus on their technical major and a demanding workload of science and engineering subjects. Their prior English proficiency levels vary significantly based on their high school backgrounds.

From a motivational standpoint, their engagement with the General English program is often highly instrumental, driven primarily by the pragmatic need to pass the mandatory exit exam to be eligible for graduation. Consequently, students may sometimes struggle to perceive the immediate relevance of general English topics (e.g., holidays, entertainment) to their specific career path in engineering. A central point of investigation for this study is to understand how this standardized, non-specialized English program influences the motivation of these engineering students, particularly in developing a skill like listening, which requires sustained engagement.

Facilities

The university's infrastructure supports the delivery of the General English program. Most teaching occurs in standard lecture halls or classrooms equipped with essential technology, including projectors, screens, and sound systems adequate for listening practice.

Beyond the classroom, students have access to the University's Central Library and Self-Access Learning Centers. These facilities provide additional resources for independent study, including a collection of English textbooks, grammar and vocabulary practice books, and computer workstations with internet access for online learning and practice tests. A campus-wide Wi-Fi network allows students to use personal devices to access the university's Learning Management System (LMS) and other online educational resources.

Statistics of outcomes

The institutional outcomes for the General English program are clearly defined and primarily quantitative. The ultimate goal is to ensure that all graduating students meet the university's mandated English proficiency standard.

The primary target is for every student to achieve a minimum score of 450 on the TOEIC (Listening & Reading) test or a Level 3 (B1) certification on the VSTEP exam. The success of the curriculum's deployment is often measured by the pass rate of students in these exit examinations. While test scores are the main objective, a secondary, implicit goal is for graduates to possess sufficient functional English proficiency to read basic technical materials and engage in simple professional communication in an international context.

IV. Conclusion

Summary of the main findings

In conclusion, this study has navigated the context of English language learning within the demanding environment of 21st-century higher education, where English proficiency is a critical component of professional readiness. It highlights that among the four core language skills, listening comprehension often presents a significant challenge for EFL learners. The study affirms the central premise that success in mastering a difficult skill like listening is not solely dependent on curriculum or teaching quality, but is profoundly influenced by the learner's internal motivation.

Focusing on the Vietnamese context, the study identifies a significant tension between the national policy requirement for communicative competence (evidenced by standardized exit exams) and a traditional educational background that has often prioritized grammar and reading skills. This creates a challenging learning environment, particularly for non-English major students. At the research site, Da Nang University of Technology and Education, students from the Faculty of Civil Engineering face a unique set of concrete obstacles. These include a perceived lack of relevance of general English topics to their technical field, an over-reliance on extrinsic motivation driven by test pressure, a disconnect between classroom listening and authentic professional needs, and a conflict in time allocation with their demanding core curriculum. These on-the-ground problems underscore a critical gap in understanding the specific motivational profile of this student demographic.

Therefore, this study establishes the rationale for an in-depth investigation into the motivation of civil engineering students for learning English listening skills. The aim is to move beyond generalized assumptions and gain empirical insight into their unique experiences, needs, and perspectives. Examining these crucial factors, the research seeks to provide evidence-based knowledge that can help bridge the gap between university language policy and the actual classroom experience, ultimately leading to more effective and motivating language instruction for future engineers.

Implications

The problems identified in this study carry significant implications for various stakeholders involved in the educational process at Da Nang University of Technology and Education and in similar technical university

contexts. The following sections outline practical recommendations for administrators, teachers, and students to enhance the effectiveness of the English language program and foster stronger learning motivation.

For administrators

For university administrators, including the Board of Rectors and Heads of Faculties, the findings underscore the need for strategic, top-down support to create a more integrated and motivating learning ecosystem.

First, to address the "perceived lack of relevance" and the "time allocation conflict," administrators should facilitate and encourage stronger collaboration between the English teaching department and the technical faculties like Civil Engineering. This could involve developing optional or integrated "English for Specific Purposes (ESP)" workshops that use authentic engineering materials, co-hosting seminars with industry professionals who can speak (in English) about their work, or creating interdisciplinary projects. This would help students see the direct value of English within their chosen field.

Second, to mitigate the negative effects of purely extrinsic, test-oriented motivation, administrators could support a review of the assessment policies for the General English courses. While the final exit exam is fixed, continuous assessment within the courses could be diversified to include tasks that are more professionally relevant, such as listening to a short technical lecture and writing a summary, or participating in a simulated project meeting. This would signal that the university values practical skills, not just test scores.

Finally, to bridge the "gap with authentic professional listening," administrators should consider investing in more specialized learning resources. This could include subscriptions to technical video libraries (e.g., engineering documentaries, conference proceedings), advanced language lab software with discipline-specific content, and upgrading classroom audio-visual equipment to ensure a high-quality listening experience.

For teachers

For English teachers, who are at the forefront of instruction, the implications are directly related to classroom practice and pedagogical creativity.

First, to combat the "perceived lack of relevance," teachers should actively function as "bridge-builders." This involves making explicit connections between general English topics and the students' engineering world. For instance, a listening exercise about travel could be extended with a discussion about the engineering of airports or bridges. Teachers should consistently highlight how strong listening skills are crucial for understanding international clients, participating in global teams, and staying updated with international technological trends.

Second, to foster a more balanced motivation beyond just passing the test, teachers should supplement test-preparation drills with activities that promote genuine listening for communication and enjoyment. This could include using engaging, authentic materials like TED Talks by famous engineers, short podcasts on technology trends, or even scenes from relevant movies. The focus should be on building comprehension strategies (like inferencing and predicting) that are useful in any context, not just on the exam.

Finally, given the diverse proficiency and motivation levels, teachers must employ robust differentiation strategies. For students who are struggling, teachers can provide more scaffolding, pre-teach key vocabulary, and use shorter listening segments. For more advanced or motivated students, teachers can provide more challenging, authentic materials or extension activities that connect to their major.

For students

For civil engineering students, enhancing their own learning experience requires a proactive approach and a shift in mindset.

First, students are encouraged to adopt a broader, long-term professional perspective. Instead of viewing English as just another compulsory subject to pass, they should see it as a critical, career-long professional tool that will open doors to better job opportunities, international collaboration, and higher earning potential.

Second, to overcome the limitations of a general English curriculum, students should take ownership of their learning. They can actively seek out listening materials related to their own interests within engineering, such as watching documentaries on mega-structures, following YouTube channels about construction technology, or listening to podcasts on architecture and urban planning. This self-directed learning will make the experience more relevant and enjoyable.

Finally, students should shift their focus from solely "passing the test" to "building a skill." This involves practicing active listening in various contexts, not being afraid to listen to materials that are challenging, and focusing on understanding the message rather than just catching keywords for a test question. By viewing listening as a practical competency to be developed, students can derive far greater and more lasting value from their English courses.

Collectively, these implications provide a roadmap for enhancing the quality of English language training for Vietnam's future engineers, better preparing them for the demands of a globalized world.

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