

ENGLISH MAJORED SENIORS' FUTURE JOB CHOICE AT A UNIVERSITY IN VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT: In Vietnam in recent years, it is claimed that a number of graduates may pursue the job they are not oriented at university, causing a loss of resources for the training organization and the graduates themselves. However, little research on the issue which is related to English - majored seniors is documented in the context of the country. Motivated from such a scenario, a study on the English majored seniors' future job choice at a university in Vietnam was conducted. The study aims to find out the specific future job choice of the undergraduates together with the underlying justifications for such (a) choice(s) and their expectations in future job orientation. A survey questionnaire was the tool to fulfil the aims. It has been found out that the private sector attracted a majority of students. To be specific, most of them wanted to work as English teachers. Salary was the dominating factor in most students' future job choice. To increase the students' employability, teachers, university and companies were expected to interplay. The research findings can raise one more voice to the decision and action of all the stakeholders in empowering the students' readiness for the world of work.

Keywords: future job choice, English major, seniors, Vietnam

LỰA CHỌN CÔNG VIỆC TƯƠNG LAI CỦA SINH VIÊN NĂM CUỐI CHUYÊN NGÀNH TIẾNG ANH TẠI MỘT TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC Ở VIỆT NAM

TÓM TẮT: Trong những năm gần đây ở Việt Nam, không ít sinh viên tốt nghiệp làm những công việc không được đào tạo ở trường đại học. Thực trạng này gây ra sự lãng phí nguồn lực cho cơ sở đào tạo và cho chính bản thân sinh viên. Tuy nhiên, còn có ít nghiên cứu về vấn đề này liên quan đến sinh viên năm cuối chuyên ngành ngôn ngữ Anh tại Việt Nam. Trước tình hình này một nghiên cứu về lựa chọn công việc tương lai của sinh viên năm cuối ngành ngôn ngữ Anh ở một trường đại học ở Việt Nam được tiến hành. Nghiên cứu này nhằm mục đích tìm hiểu những lựa chọn công việc tương lai của sinh viên ngành ngôn ngữ Anh năm cuối, những lý do cho

sự lựa chọn và mong đợi của sinh viên về sự định hướng công việc. Kết quả nghiên cứu chỉ ra phần lớn sinh viên chuyên ngành ngôn ngữ Anh lựa chọn công việc là giáo viên tiếng Anh. Lương cao là yếu tố hấp dẫn nhiều sinh viên nhất. Thêm vào đó, sinh viên mong muốn có sự kết hợp chặt chẽ giữa trường đại học và công ty trong việc hướng nghiệp. Kết quả nghiên cứu đóng thêm tiếng nói vào quyết định và hành động của các bên liên quan trong việc bồi dưỡng năng lực sinh viên sẵn sàng cho thị trường lao động.

Từ khóa: lựa chọn nghề, chuyên ngành tiếng Anh, sinh viên năm cuối, Việt Nam

I. INTRODUCTION

Future job choices are the significant issue not only for undergraduates but the training institution since the success in the job can help the undergraduates earn their living and the institution affirm its reputation in the education market. Furthermore, their reasonable job choice can make the parents and the society satisfied in such a way that their investment proves to be effective. Nonetheless, complaints about the mismatch between the training and the actual chosen job were still heard (Manh Doan, 2022; My Ha, 2022; Siddiky & Akter, 2021). Such mismatches can cause the waste in education investment and reduce the success in that occupation. According to Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Manh Doan, 2022), Vietnam annually has 38% graduates who do not have job orientation, leading to an ambiguous job choice. This situation occurs in many majors while English major is assumed to be affected less. There is little research on the actual scenario of English majors' future job choice in Vietnam. Hence, this

current study is motivated, aiming at uncovering English majored seniors' future job choice. The study is significant for the majors and their family to reflect themselves, the university to have more effective career training and orientation, and the interested researchers to have more data in their coming research.

Three research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What future job do the English majored seniors at a university in Vietnamese choose?
2. What factors affect the future job of the English majored seniors at a university in Vietnamese choose?
3. What expectations do the English majored seniors at a university in Vietnamese propose in relation to their future job?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Conceptualisation of job

Prior to an investigation into the English majored seniors' future job choice a case study at a university in Vietnam, job as the key term of the research must be defined clearly.

According to Cambridge Dictionary, Collin and Oxford Dictionary, the word job has a number of definitions, and the chosen definition for this study is the regular work that gets payment. That definition is exploited by MBN (n.d) and specified into three staple types, including trades, professions and unskilled jobs. The trade group concerns manual work with a course of training of practical work, for example plumber, electrician, etc. The professions require a university qualification like doctor and teacher. The last group needs the least and the shortest training, for instance, cleaner and guard. Another way to classify jobs based on the working hours divide jobs into part-time ones and full-time ones. In addition, jobs can fall into each of these categories as self-employment, consulting, odd jobs, seasonal, temporary, or contract. Indeed Editorial Term (2022) also defines a job as It full time or part time work and required a set of certain skills to fulfil it.

A closely-related term to job is career. As presented by Indeed Editorial Term (2022) and Johnson (2022), a career means the job(s) a person pursues during their working life and a long professional journey which earns a person a wide range of benefits including finance, interests and self-actualization. It requires ongoing training and advancement. Two terms are distinguished on the basis of its sustainability (Indeed Editorial Term, 2022). Interestingly, a job can become a

career if it performs a long-life professional goal and experiences a long-term training.

The selected participants in the present research are English-majored seniors, which means that they are more likely to discuss their job, to earn their living, than to imagine a lifelong professional goal. Therefore, the adopted working definition of the future job in this research is their future paid post of regular employment.

2.2. Popular jobs for English majors in Vietnam

As stated in the curriculum of many universities which have the English major training programme, a wide range of posts are proposed for the graduates. They can work as translators, interpreters, event organisers, tour guides, consultants, teachers and researchers in national and international companies, schools or other organisations (Haiphong University, Hutech, Yersin University, etc.). It is undoubted that the English majors have a wide range of job opportunities although among them there are jobs which require further training in addition to their English capacity, for example, teachers, consultants and tour guides. It depends on their capacity and ambition to choose the job they expect to pursue. In this research, the questions are, at the researched university, what jobs are most chosen by the students, what the underlying motivations for the choice are and what expectations they give about their future job orientation.

2.3. Factors affecting English majored graduates' career choice

The future job choice is believed to be the interplay of many decisive factors (Connor & Dewson, 2001; Looker & Lowe, 2001; Özlen & Arnaut, 2013; Reay, David, Ball, 2001; Siddiky & Akter, 2021). The orientation from their family and teacher(s) as well as the income dominates in all the studies.

Siddiky & Akter (2021, p.422) review two significant theories which determine students' future job choice: the social cognitive career theory (SCCT) suggested by Lent, Brown & Hackett (2002) and the social learning theory (SLT) by Ireh (2000). The first theory introduces self-efficacy, outcome expectations and personal goals as the interplay for job decision. Self-efficacy refers to the aptitude for the job and outcome expectations mean the benefits from the job while personal goals consider the intention to reach the efficacy and outcomes. By comparison, the second theory approaches a wider coverage of the career decision with four factors: genetic endowment, environmental conditions, learning experiences and task-approach skills. In this theory, the genetic endowment includes race, gender, colour, intelligence, special ability, etc. The environmental conditions base on the family, the teacher, the job market, etc. The learning experiences and task-approach skills are those related to the knowledge and methods the students prepare for the job. Those factors can

promote or hinder students on their career decision making.

From the previous research, this study will investigate the factors affecting the English majored undergraduates' future job choice in terms of two aspects: the external aspect and the internal one. The external aspect will be detailed into the family circle, the university conditions, and the job market. The internal aspect will be the undergraduates' ability and interests.

III. METHOD

The research was conducted at a foreign language department at a university in Vietnam. The department at the studied time had four classes of English majored seniors with the total number of students being 126 students. The future job decision was among the biggest concerns of almost all of them on the entrance of graduation. Therefore, they were purposefully selected as the respondents for the research. The curriculum for English majors includes the core subjects of an English major. However, unlike in the curriculum for pre-service English teachers, seven subjects relating to translation and interpretation are included while methodological subjects are excluded. The translation and interpretation subjects are assumed to be essential for their future career. A survey questionnaire was designed on the google form to investigate their choices and the underlying reasons. The survey method was selected by other researchers with the

same research interest (Connor & Dewson, 2001; Looker & Lowe, 2001; Özlen & Arnaut, 2013; Reay, David, Ball, 2001; Siddiky & Akter, 2021). The survey rubric contained four sessions. The first was the participants' demographic information. The second included their future job choice. The next related to the underlying reasons for those choices and the final session was extended to the students' expected about the job orientation at university. To ensure the reliability and validity, the questionnaire was piloted with four students randomly selected from each class, and the questions were adjusted slightly. Then, the survey was sent to the participants 85 feedbacks were received. The data were analysed descriptively then discussed in relevance to the findings from the previous research.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Demographics

At the researched university, most students studied the English language are females. 97.1% respondents were of the same gender. A relatively equal proportions of students in four English majored classes joined the survey, with the highest proportion at 31.4% of the students coming from English Major 2 Class. The number of respondents was promising for the further investigation.

4.2. Undergraduates' future job choice

With regards to the future job choice, two major questions were raised, including the selected working sector and the specific career. The first question offered three options: state-owned companies, private companies and self-employment.

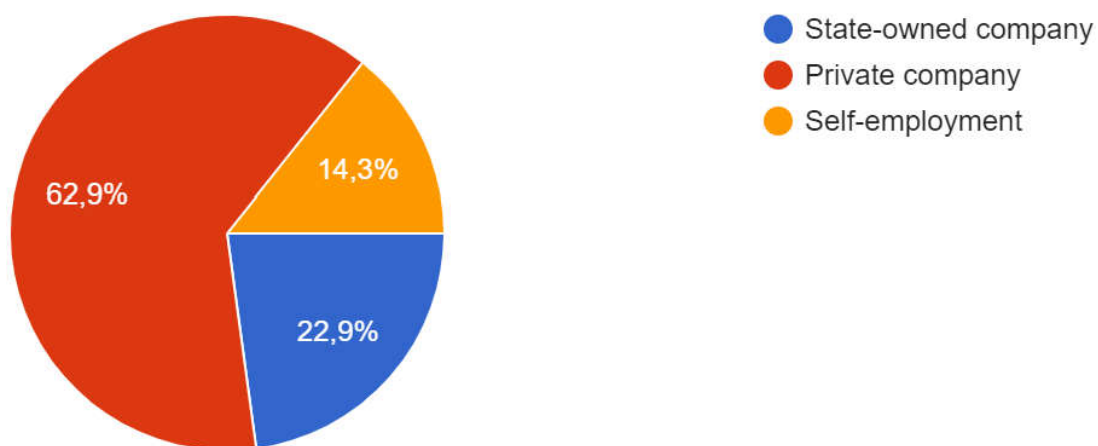


Chart 1. Undergraduates' chosen job sectors.

It is prominent from the chart that over half of the respondents selected the private sector, while a small number dared to work for themselves. In Vietnam, working in the private sector is said to suit those who are young, active and enthusiastic (Dang, 2022; Huynh, 2022; HR Insider, 2022). The finding was different from that in Siddiky & Akter (2021) where many students expected to work in the public sector.

The second question sought the undergraduates' intended career choices.

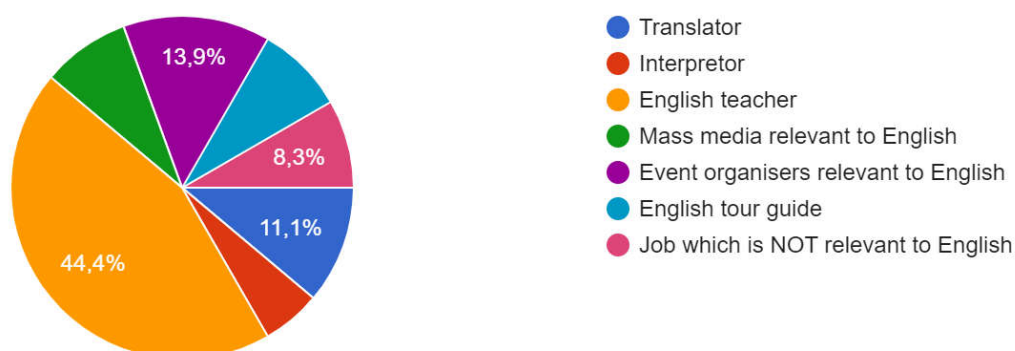


Chart 2. Undergraduates' chosen jobs

There was one more question which was open to the students' choice, which is "job which is NOT relevant to English". The feedback were businessmen and receptionists. According to Bui (2021, cited in My Ha, 2022), Ministry of Education in Vietnam released that only 56% graduates did the job they were trained at university. Compared to the data in this research, the students did not select the job they were directly trained. Nonetheless, almost all the selected jobs were relevant to

Surprisingly, the respondents belonging to the majored English classes which were not purposefully trained as English teachers reported nearly half of them wanted to work as an English teacher. The subjects of translation and interpretation which they were trained a great deal seemed not to significantly affect their future job choice. Only 11,1 % and 5,6% of the surveyed undergraduates expressed their expectation to work as a translator and interpreter correspondently.

English. That means the English major can play a supportive role for the students to extent their future job choice.

4.3. Factors affecting the future job choice

The future job choice was assumed to be affected by a number of factors. The current study found out the factors in terms of two aspects: the external one of the family circle, the university conditions, and the job market and the internal one of the undergraduates' ability and interests.

Regarding the objective reasons, a third proportion of students chose the job their parents advised. Most of them, 61.1% wanted the job which was different from their parents'. It was a good sign that 44.4% students though they selected the job because they were trained it at university. Friends were also influential in students' job selection, at 16,7%. From the data, most students did not have their parents do the job they wanted to do but many had their parents

suggest them to choose that job. Amongst these objective factors, the job factor was significant to the students. High salary was noted as the most attractive factor to choose a job, at 58,3%. Being ranked the second attractive factor was the training opportunity. Opportunities for travelling, promotion, flexible working time, comfort, challenge accounted for the relatively equal number. Pension drew their least attention.

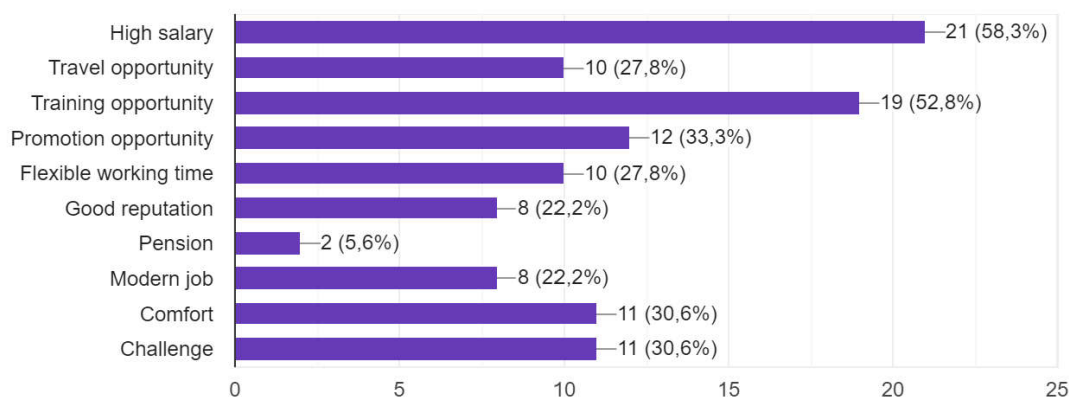


Chart 3. The job-itself factors

Also related to the job factor, the students who wanted to work in the state-owned sector reported its advantages as high salary, stability and gentleness for women, training opportunity and friendly environment. By comparison, those interested the private sector or self-employment expected the same above benefits except that they did not expect the stability but challenge and experience with different jobs.

There were a number of suggested personal reasons for the choice. Gender

was the factor which affected the students the least, at 5.6%, By contrast, their internship experience made the biggest impression on the students, at over a half of students choosing this. Part-time job, like experience made some meaning to the students' choice. In addition, their consciousness of their personalities and ability added the important reasons for the choice although they did not weigh as much as the knowledge the students got from the job through their internship and part-time job.

4.4. Students' expectations

On investigating the future job choice, students' expectations in relation to the issue are worth considerations. Three options for their expectations were offered, including having more job orientation from companies in the first year, having more job orientation from companies in the fourth and last year, and having more internship. A majority of students (48,6%) selected the second option of job orientation in the final year. The final option of the practicum seemed to be the least importance to them. An open-ended question was raised for other students' expectations. Not all the students gave their feedback; some answers were irrelevant; and many answers shared the ideas. The relevant answers can be arranged into three groups: expectations about the major, expectations about the companies, expectations about the orientation. For the major, the students said that "I wanted the teachers to expand the knowledge about the subject of translation and interpretation." and "more speaking skills with foreign teachers". In addition, they hoped the university would link the students with the companies from the first year or in the final year so that they had more choices. Some students wished to work for the non-governmental organisations. The orientation was

interested by many respondents. They suggested the workshop of the major and the soft skills. Knowing and meeting these expectations can help the university to increase their undergraduates' employability.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, a majority of English majored seniors expected to work in the private sector, as an English language teacher, having high salary. To facilitate their future job choice, job orientation was expected in the final year. The role of a teacher was not the focused training in the English major programme at the researched university; therefore, another short training must be required for the post.

The study promotes the better link among the career guidance, work market and the students. Another recommendation is the provision of the teacher training short courses for English majors at university; hence, they can be ready for their needs in the work market.

There exist certain limitations in the study which can be solved in the future investigation. In terms of the method, this study mainly used the quantitative data while qualitative data should be collected to make the triangulation, increasing the data value. According to the participants, there was the restriction to the English majored seniors at a university. The participants can be widened to other institutions in Vietnam.

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