

AN INVESTIGATION ON NON-ENGLISH MAJORED STUDENTS' ATTITUDES ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AT A MEDICAL COLLEGE

Nguyen Thi Thu Huong¹, Bui Thi Huong Giang^{2*}

¹Thai Nguyen Medical College, ²Thai Nguyen University

ARTICLE INFO		ABSTRACT
Received:	24/10/2022	The study aims to investigate non-English-majored students' attitudes toward English language learning at Thai Nguyen Medical College. The subjects of the study were 312 first-year students at Thai Nguyen Medical College. Two data collection instruments were used in this study, including questionnaires, which has 30 items concerning language attitudes in terms of behavioral, cognitive and emotional aspects of attitude and semi-structured interviews which was used to confirm the information obtained from the results of the survey questionnaire. This study focused on investigating: (1) the students' attitudes toward English language learning at Thai Nguyen Medical College; (2) the influences on the students' attitudes towards English language learning at Thai Nguyen Medical College. Research results show that most learners were aware of the importance of English language learning. In general, the first-year students at Thai Nguyen Medical College had an average positive attitude towards English language learning. However, the data also revealed that the majority of students had negative feelings about practicing and applying English in real life. Furthermore, according to the analysis results, students did not have a really positive attitude towards learning English for such reasons as not determining the purpose of using this language after graduation, losing their previous knowledge of this subject, and not finding a suitable learning method.
Revised:	22/12/2022	
Published:	22/12/2022	
KEYWORDS		
Investigation		
Students' attitudes		
Behavioral		
Cognitive		
Emotional		

KHẢO SÁT THÁI ĐỘ CỦA SINH VIÊN KHÔNG CHUYÊN NGỮ ĐỐI VỚI VIỆC HỌC TIẾNG ANH TẠI TRƯỜNG CAO ĐẲNG Y

Nguyễn Thị Thu Hương¹, Bùi Thị Hương Giang^{2*}

¹Trường Cao đẳng Y Thái Nguyên, ²Đại học Thái Nguyên

THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO		TÓM TẮT
Ngày nhận bài:	24/10/2022	Nghiên cứu này nhằm mục đích tìm hiểu thái độ của sinh viên không chuyên ngữ đối với việc học tiếng Anh tại trường Cao đẳng Y tế Thái Nguyên. Đối tượng của nghiên cứu này là 312 sinh viên năm thứ nhất trường Cao đẳng Y tế Thái Nguyên. Hai công cụ thu thập dữ liệu được sử dụng trong nghiên cứu này, gồm bảng câu hỏi có 30 câu liên quan tới thái độ ngôn ngữ trên các khía cạnh nhận thức, hành vi và tình cảm và phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc được sử dụng để xác thực thông tin thu thập được từ kết quả của bảng câu hỏi khảo sát. Nghiên cứu này tập trung vào khảo sát: (1) Thái độ của sinh viên đối với việc học tiếng Anh tại trường Cao đẳng Y tế Thái Nguyên; (2) Những nhân tố ảnh hưởng đến thái độ học tiếng Anh của sinh viên tại trường Cao đẳng Y tế Thái Nguyên. Kết quả của nghiên cứu này cho thấy hầu hết người học đều nhận thức được tầm quan trọng của việc học tiếng Anh. Nhìn chung, sinh viên năm nhất trường Cao đẳng Y tế Thái Nguyên có thái độ học tập môn Tiếng Anh ở mức tích cực trung bình. Tuy nhiên, dữ liệu cũng tiết lộ rằng đa số học sinh có cảm giác tiêu cực về việc thực hành và ứng dụng môn tiếng Anh vào cuộc sống thực tế. Hơn nữa, theo kết quả phân tích, sinh viên chưa có thái độ học Tiếng Anh thực sự tích cực vì những lý do sau: không xác định được mục đích sử dụng ngôn ngữ này sau khi ra trường, mất gốc cơ bản của môn học, và không tìm được cách học phù hợp.
Ngày hoàn thiện:	22/12/2022	
Ngày đăng:	22/12/2022	
TỪ KHÓA		
Khảo sát		
Thái độ của sinh viên		
Thái độ		
Nhận thức		
Tình cảm		

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34238/tnu-jst.6759>

* Corresponding author. Email: bhgiang@tnu.edu.vn

1. Introduction

In the context of the global integration era in the 21st century, English become more and more popular and it can connect people all around the world. English as a window into the world does play a vital role in our social context. In addition, Nishanthi [1] stated that it cannot be denied and ignored about the importance of this international language, he also emphasized English is the greatest common language spoken universally. Thus, English language learning is very useful for the young generation. The fact that there are many factors that influence English language learning. According to Khasinah [2], there are some factors that greatly influence someone in the process of his or her second language acquisition such as motivation, attitude, age, intelligence, aptitude, cognitive style, and personality. Nguyen [3] confirmed that achievement in language learning usually depends on both students' ability and attitude. If students have a negative attitude, it can lead to some detrimental effects. In the same way, Vo [4] concludes that there are a lot of factors that influence the effective learning of a second language. A learner's attitude towards language learning is one of the main factors determining success or failure. Closely related to this point, through the studies on attitudes and motivation in language learning, Dörnyei [5] confirmed that attitudes and motivation are strongly intertwined. They also explain that if a learner has a positive attitude towards the language, it can lead to increased motivation, which then results in better learning achievement.

To examine Vietnamese learners' attitudes toward English language learning, the researcher conducted the paper "An investigation on non-English majored student's attitudes toward English language learning at a medical college". The study is led to respond to the research questions below:

1. What are the students' attitudes toward English language learning at Thai Nguyen Medical College?
2. What are the factors affecting the students' attitudes towards English language learning at Thai Nguyen Medical College?

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

There were 312 participants, 57 (17%) male and 259 (83%) female, chosen from the first-year students at Thai Nguyen Medical College. Their majors are nursing and pharmacy. Most of them were at the age between 18 and 21. A few of them were 22 or older.

2.2. Data collection instruments

In this study, two data collection instruments, namely Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used. Firstly, this study employed a questionnaire to collect data on non-English major students' points of view regarding their attitudes towards English language learning at Thai Nguyen Medical College. Questionnaire is widely and useful instrument for collecting survey information. According to Salkin [6], a question is a useful tool in educational research since "individuals can complete them without any direct assistance or intervention from the researchers". Moreover, the questionnaire is one of the most basic tools used to conduct surveys. Attitudes towards learning English would be measured by a questionnaire adapted from the questionnaire of Abidin et al. [7] and Ahmed [8] which consisted of 30 items concerning language attitudes in terms of cognitive aspect (10 items), behavioral aspect (10 items) and emotional aspect (10 items). The researcher decided to utilize solely closed-ended items in the questionnaire due to a lack of time, the ease of analysis, and to avoid confusion. The questionnaire was designed using a five-point Likert-type scale for both negative and positive items and the learners were given the option of ticking one of the scales

based on their personal preferences. The number of respondents who checked the boxes for 5 and 4 (Strongly Agree and Agree), respectively, revealed that they had positive views. On the other hand, the percentage of students who rated the choice “Strongly Disagree” and “Disagree” were summed up to show the students who had negative attitudes. Finally, the percentage of students who rated “No idea” showed the two extremes mentioned above separately. In addition, the mean was calculated to identify students’ attitudes toward English language learning.

Since the respondents were considered ‘weak’ in the English language by the teachers, the questionnaire was translated into Vietnamese to enable the respondents to answer. The gathered data were analyzed using frequency counts and converted to percentages. The researcher adopted the questionnaire in this research because the present study shared the same aim of the researchers Abidin et al. [7] and Ahmed [8], and it was easy for the students at Thai Nguyen Medical College to understand and respond.

Secondly, the researcher was aware that the survey questionnaire could not cover the specific problems and effectiveness that students might encounter in productive courses. Thus, an interview was carried out to investigate students’ comments and opinions about English learning. The feedbacks taken from students were very great usefulness to the study.

In order to make the findings of the research more reliable and to clarify some issues collected from questionnaires, the researcher decided to have informal, semi-structured interviews with 15 random first-year students at Thai Nguyen Medical College. It seems that the participants would feel more comfortable expressing their opinions and judgments in Vietnamese because of their mother tongue. Therefore, the researchers used the questions written in Vietnamese and the short questions were very understandable.

2.3. Procedure of data collection

Before delivering the questionnaire, the researchers explained briefly and as clearly as possible about the study and the aim of the questionnaire as well as its feature of confidentiality. Participants started answering the questionnaire under the observation of the researcher. There were 312 questionnaires, which were distributed and returned.

The researcher interviewed after completing the questionnaires for a week. The interview consisted of two parts: interviewing and transcribing. The direct interviews were conducted with 15 students. Before starting, the researcher provided information about the research to the interviewees. Then, the main questions were asked in turn by the researcher. Finally, closing and giving thanks were exposed to the interviewees. The researcher transcribed all the data collected from the interview.

3. Results

3.1. Questionnaire results

3.1.1. Results of general information about the participants

Table 1. General information about the participants

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	53	17.0
	Female	259	83.0
Number of years of learning English	< 10 years	103	33.0
	>10 years	209	67.0

As can be observed from Table 1, female students outnumbered male students; 259 (83.0%) females and 53 (17.0%) males were included in the study. Most of the students had learned English for more than 10 years, accounting for 67% of the total. There were a smaller number of students learning English for less than 10 years.

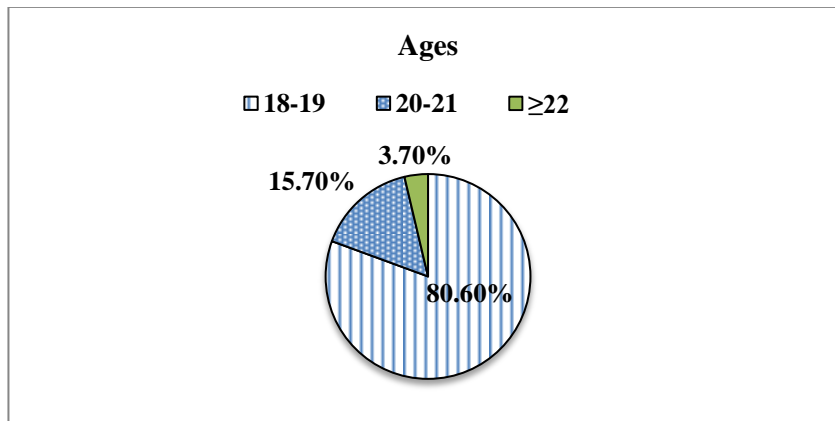


Figure 1. *The ages of the participants*

Figure 1 presented the majority of the participants are the ages of 18 and 19, it accounts about 80.6% (251 respondents). The remainder aged 20 - 21 accounted for 15.7% (49 respondents) and 22 years and older accounted for 3.7% (12 respondents).

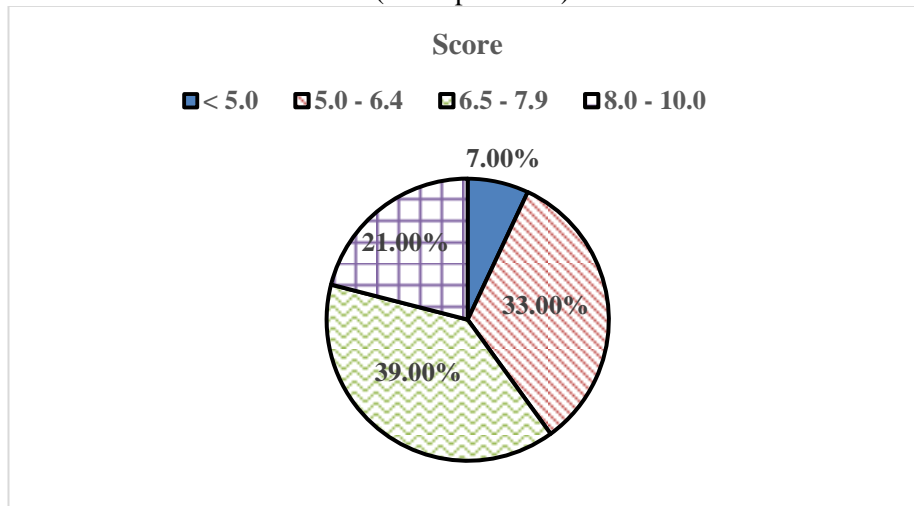


Figure 2. *Score of English subject in the nearest semester*

As seen on Figure 2, in terms of students' English scores in the nearest semester, students with scores below 5.0 accounted for a very small percentage of 7%. Besides, the good score from 6.5 to 7.9 had the highest rate of 39% of participants. The number of participants with an average score of 5.0 to 6.4 also accounted for a rather high, 33% of the total. The remaining 21% said they had scores above 8.0. This suggests that the majority of participants' English scores are average to good.

3.1.2. The cognitive aspect of attitude towards English language

Table 2 indicated that students generally had a positive cognitive attitude toward English language learning. There were 10 items that were developed for the first part. Items 1 to 10 were intended to measure students' cognitive attitudes whether they had positive attitude or negative one. Furthermore, items 1 to 4 and 8 to 10 were worded positively while items 5 to 7 were worded negatively. As presented, the first significant item 1 ($M = 3.94$) and item 10 ($M = 3.94$) had the same mean score. However, respective percentages of them were different, the first item had 81.4% of participants who agreed or strongly agreed that studying English was important

because it would make them more educated, while the number of participants agreed and strongly agreed that they liked learning English because it sounds modern was lower, only 44.8% of the participants. For items 2, 3 and 4, it was seen that the positive attitude about some benefits of English language learning was high. The percentage of participants who disagreed with these views was very low. Only 13.8% of the participants disagreed and strongly disagreed with the proposition that being good at English helped learners study other subjects. The percentage of participants who disagreed and strongly disagreed with item 3 ($M = 3.83$) and item 4 ($M = 3.87$) were the same, accounting for 9.6%.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Cognitive aspect of attitude toward English language learning

Items	Mean	SD (%)	D (%)	No (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
Studying English is important because it will make me more educated.	3.94	9.6	1.6	7.4	48.3	33.1
Being good at English will help me study other subjects.	3.61	6.4	7.4	20.8	50	15.4
Learning English will help the growth of my mind.	3.83	6.4	3.2	12.8	56.4	21.2
I look forward to studying more English in the future.	3.87	4.8	4.8	13.8	51.6	25
I cannot summarize the important points in the English subject content by myself.	3.29	11.2	12.2	20.2	49	7.4
Frankly, I study English just to pass the exam.	2.61	20.2	28.2	27.6	18.6	5.4
I cannot apply the knowledge from English subject in my real life.	2.80	17.6	22.4	25.9	29.8	4.3
I like studying English because it will open more job opportunities for me.	3.74	6.4	4.1	18.6	50.6	20.3
Studying English makes me feel more confident.	3.44	5.4	6.4	14.4	57.4	16.4
I like English because it sounds modern.	3.94	7.4	15.4	32.4	37.2	7.6
Total	3.43					

In this aspect, there were items 5 to 7 that are negative cognitive attitudes. Although many students (56.4%) believed they could not summarize the important content of the lesson on their own, it was very encouraging that the number of participants who disagreed and strongly disagreed with the option of studying English just to pass the exams with the high rates, the agreed response was only 18.6% and the strongly agreed response was 5.4%. For item 7, the average mean score was assessed ($M = 2.80$). Even if most students were aware of the importance of English language learning, a few of them could really put in the effort in the learning process.

The majority of participants (70.9%) believed that studying English would provide them with greater work options. 74% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that studying English made them feel more confident.

3.1.3. The behavioral aspect of attitude towards English language

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Behavioral aspect of attitude toward English language learning

Items	Mean	SD (%)	D (%)	No (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
I do not like studying English. *	2.60	17	33	27.6	17.6	4.8
I am not relaxed whenever I have to speak in my English. *	2.62	16	31.4	32	15.4	5.2
I do not pay any attention when my English teacher is explaining the lesson. *	3.46	6.4	4.8	37.8	38.8	12.2
Speaking English makes me feel comfortable.	2.8	5.8	39.4	30.8	16	8
Studying English helps me have good relationships with friends.	3.60	5.1	7.4	20.8	55.8	10.9
I like to give opinions during English lessons.	3.29	6.4	10.6	39.4	34.6	9
When I hear a student in my class speaking English well, I like to practice speaking with him/her.	3.61	4.8	8.0	23.4	49.0	14.8
Studying English makes me confident in expressing myself.	3.76	5.8	6.4	16	50	21.8
Studying English helps me improve my personality.	3.77	5.8	4.8	16	53.2	20.3
I prefer to learn English in an all-English setting.	3.32	4.8	9.6	42	36.2	7.4
Total	3.32					

The behavioral aspect of attitude towards English language learning represents the lowest mean score (3.32). The proportion of participants who did not like studying English was only a

small portion, about 22.4%. Besides, a low rate of participants had negative behavioral attitudes and they felt not relaxed whenever they had to speak in English class; it was only 20.6% of the total respondents. The last negative item in the behavioral aspect of attitude toward English language learning had the highest mean score ($M = 3.46$). 51% of participants did not pay any attention when their English teacher was explaining the lesson.

Item 14 was ranked the lowest ($M = 2.8$) in the categories of the positive behavioral aspect of attitude. The majority of participants gave the negative response by marking the "Disagreed" box and "Strong disagreed" box, rated 45.2% of the total respondents. The research of Pham et. al [7] also found that most of the participants were not comfortable whenever speaking English. As can be seen from Table 3, learners liked to do some activities when studying in English classes such as giving opinions and practicing English with other learners. From the positive behaviors of attitudes towards English language learning, a large number of participants agreed that learning English helped them to be more confident in themselves ($M = 3.76$). The same with this proportion, the highest mean score ($M = 3.77$) was rated for item 19 "Studying English helps me improve my personality."

Table 4. *Descriptive Statistics of Emotional aspect of attitude toward English language learning*

Items	Mean	SD (%)	D (%)	No (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
I feel proud when studying English.	2.79	17.6	24	26.6	25	6.8
I feel excited when I communicate in English with others.	3.37	6.4	6.4	40.4	37.2	9.6
I do not get anxious when I have to answer a question in my English class.	3.10	9.6	14.4	39.4	29.2	7.4
Studying English make me have good emotions (feelings).	3.45	5.4	7.4	36.6	40.4	11.2
I prefer studying in my mother tongue rather than any other foreign language.*	3.13	9.6	17.6	34	27.6	11.2
I feel embarrassed to speak English in front of other people. *	3.94	4.5	1.9	5.4	67.6	20.6
I enjoy doing activities in English.	3.27	7.4	10.6	36.2	39.4	6.4
I wish I could speak English fluently.	3.70	8	4.8	18.6	46.8	21.8
To be honest, I really have little interest in my English. *	2.88	14.4	21.8	28.8	31.4	3.6
Studying English make me able to create new thoughts.	3.63	3.2	8.7	25.6	46.8	15.7
Total	3.68					

The responses regarding the emotional aspect of attitude towards English language learning were quite different from those of the behavioral aspect and the mean score was 3.67. Table 4 shows that most of the respondents stated that they felt excited when they communicated in English with others ($M = 3.37$). They also thought that studying English madethem have good emotions ($M = 3.45$) and they enjoyed participating in activities in English ($M = 3.27$). However, almost all the participants admitted that they felt embarrassed when speaking English in front of other students ($M = 3.94$). It can be seen that the results of the negative emotional attitude items were not too high. The number of participants said that they had little interest in English ($M=2.88$) and preferred to learn their mother tongue ($M=3.13$) was fewer than the number of participants who indicated that they wished they could speak English fluently ($M = 3.70$), and learning English enabled them to generate new thoughts ($M = 3.63$).

3.2. Results of interviews

By talking directly with the first-year students of Thai Nguyen Medical College, most of the participants thought that English was very interesting. However, only one respondent said that they were confident in their English ability. The majority of participants had been exposed to modern tools while learning English such as soft books, English learning software, or websites. And through those tools, they also found it more interesting to learn English. The interview also exposed some reasons why learners were not interested in English language learning. Three of the 15 respondents said that they were not interested in English language learning because they had lost the basics of learning English and they could not find suitable learning

methods. Two other participants told that English was not their favorite subject and they thought it did not relate to their major.

All respondents assessed the English subject at Thai Nguyen Medical College was easy. In their opinion, it was easier than the English program which they learned in high school; and it was suitable to non-English major students. Participants trusted that English language learning was very important in the current integration era. One respondent told that: "Learning English is very important. It helps me have more good job opportunities, along with my salary will be higher. Besides, I can have a chance to get promoted."

It can be seen that most of the participants understood the importance of English and they also had quite positive attitude towards English language learning at Thai Nguyen Medical College.

4. Discussion

This study's results showed that the learners had a quite positive attitude toward English language learning at Thai Nguyen Medical College. Based on the exposes of the questionnaire and interviews, this part focused on the discussion of the findings that responded to the two research questions.

4.1. Research question 1: What are the students' attitudes toward English language learning at Thai Nguyen Medical College?

It could be concluded that the learners were aware of the importance of English language learning because it was a compulsory subject, and if they were good at English, they could easily get a good job. They also had a quite positive attitude towards English subject at Thai Nguyen Medical College. However, they were still not interested in English much and they also did not have appropriate "behaviors" to learn English better. Students enthusiastically joined and practiced English activities in class. The questionnaire showed that the total mean score of the cognitive aspect of attitudes was the average level ($M = 3.43$), the behavioral aspect of attitudes was the lowest ($M = 3.32$), and the emotional aspect of attitudes was the highest ($M = 3.67$).

Regarding the interview results, the majority of interviewees expressed that they were interested in English. But there were still some negative attitudes that were presented. The respondents emphasized "I know English is very important for me, but I do not have any interest in it. Perhaps, because I had not paid attention to find out the method to learn it better". The importance of English is clearly shown in this section. 100% participants said that "English is very important".

On the basis of the study results, students haven't known what to do to have more interest in English and learn English better. As a result, a part of the teacher's responsibilities is crucial. Teachers should understand their learners' cognitive, behavior and emotion to help students develop positive attitudes toward English through various actions such as selecting appropriate learning techniques or grabbing students' attention in class.

4.2. Research question 2: What are the factors affecting the students' attitudes towards English language learning at Thai Nguyen Medical College?

The factors affecting the students' attitudes towards English language learning at Thai Nguyen Medical College included self-confidence, anxiety, learning situation, teacher, learner's peer group, sex and age. A few participants responded that they were interested in the subject of English and confident in their English ability. Those people had quite high scores in English. The results of their survey questionnaire also clearly show that they liked to practice and learn in an English environment. Learners also expressed the opinion that they would learn English better if they found the right learning method and knew more modern tools to support learning English. Respondents aged 22 or over and female students had a more positive learning attitude than those aged 18 to 19 and male students.

5. Conclusion

The study was carried out to find out the answers to the two research questions. Briefly, the attitude idea is an important aspect of language learning. Thus, a positive attitude should be the foundation of language learning. Before considering cognitive ability, English teachers should respect and consider students' emotions and behaviors. According to the students' needs and their individual differences to build up positive attitudes towards English, teachers should build English curriculum and classroom activities that involve effective aims. As a result, the affective perspective, particularly attitude, should be taken into account in language study.

Acknowledgement

To finish this paper completely, I have received a lot of support and encouragement. As a result, I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who helped me complete this paper.

First and foremost, it is my pleasure to be supervised by Ms. Bui Thi Huong Giang to whom I would like to express my deepest gratitude. Without her all-around supervision, careful guidance, and encouragement, this paper really could not be completed.

With no less sincerity, the researcher would like to thank all of the lecturers and staff at School of Foreign Language - Thai Nguyen University, who gave me a lot of useful knowledge to be able to complete this paper.

In addition, my thanks should go to 312 first-year students from Thai Nguyen Medical College for their enthusiastic and responsible participation in the research.

TÀI LIỆU THAM KHẢO/ REFERENCES

- [1] R. Nishanthi, "Important of learning English in today world," *International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 871-974, 2018.
- [2] S. Khasinah, "Factors influencing second language acquisition," *Englisia: Journal of Language, Education, and Humanities*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 256-268, 2014.
- [3] T. T. D. Pham and H. T. Nguyen, "A Study on Attitudes towards English language learning among non-english majored students at Tra Vinh university," *Vietnam Journal of Education*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 47-54, 2020.
- [4] V. V. Vo, "Undergraduate Students' Attitude Towards Learning English: A case Study at Nong Lam University," *VNU Journal of Science: Education Research*, vol. 33, no. 4, pp. 1-7, 2017.
- [5] Z. Dornyei, *Motivational strategies in the language classroom*. Cambridge University Press, vol. 1, 2001.
- [6] N. J. Salkind, *Exploring Research*, Pearson Education, Inc. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, vol. 7, 2007, pp. 49-63.
- [7] M. J. Z. Abidin, M. Pour-Mohammadi, and H. Alzwari, "EFL students' Attitudes towards learning English language: The case of Libyan secondary school students," *Asian Social Science*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 119-134, 2012.
- [8] S. Ahmed, "Attitudes towards English Language Learning among EFL Learners at UMSKAL," *Journal of Education and Practice*, vol. 6, no. 18, pp. 6-16, 2015.