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THE CURRENT SITUATION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR INCREASING ENGLISH LEARNING MOTIVATION OF STUDENTS FROM INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM, DAI NAM UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

The Business Administration International program (IBBA) at Dai Nam University is a pioneering educational model, emphasizing enhanced English language instruction to prepare students for English-language coursework. While the implementation of intensive English language instruction has been beneficial, it has also unveiled challenges in student motivation for English language learning. This research delves into an analysis of the current situation and proposes solutions to improve English language learning quality and enhance motivation among IBA students.

Keywords: English learning motivation, international program

1. Introduction

The Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) International Program is an evolution of the accredited BBA program that has established its reputation over 17 years of implementation. The program aims to: (1) Equip students not only with professional competence, specialized knowledge, and career skills but also with superior English proficiency and the ability to use English in specialized fields, preparing them for integration, work, and study in international environments through new, high-quality learning experiences; (2) Enhance the faculty's capabilities towards international standards, elevate the status of Dai Nam University, increase its attractiveness and competitiveness compared to other

universities in the region, and be ready to receive, cooperate, and implement international joint training programs in the future; (3) Explore the educational market, learning needs, and the demand for skill enhancement not only among DNU students but also within society for a high-quality training product offered by the university, providing a basis for evaluating, considering, and developing other similar training programs with the same objectives. The BBA International Program includes courses identical to those in the standard BBA program; however, the distinction lies in the language of instruction, the teaching schedule, and the focus on enhancing students' English proficiency.

Upon completing the BBA International Program, students will receive a BBA degree, with the diploma supplement indicating "International Program" and specifying the courses taught in English.

The aforementioned changes will lead to practical differences in program implementation compared to the standard program, with one of the most significant changes being that students will dedicate the majority of their first academic year (equivalent to three semesters) to improving and enhancing their English proficiency. English courses (from English 1 to English 4 and Business English 1 and 2) will be scheduled consecutively over the first three to four semesters, corresponding to the first year. By the end of the first academic year, students are expected to achieve an English proficiency level equivalent to level 3 in the Vietnamese language proficiency framework. This preparation is necessary for them to undertake core and specialized courses starting from the second year, using English as the medium of instruction and learning.

Motivation for bachelor students when studying English as a second language is a common topic for many researchers around the world. Working on different types of student academic motivation, Brophy (1983) divided this construct into two broad categories, namely "state motivation" and "trait motivation." State motivation refers to "students' attitude toward a particular course" (Guilloteaux and Dörnyei, 2008). Trait motivation, on the other hand, deals with students' general tendency toward the learning process (Csizér and Dörnyei, 2005). While students' trait motivation is typically constant during a whole course, their state motivation is open to drastic changes (Trad et al., 2014). In the domain of language education, students' academic engagement refers to their active participation in learning and mastering a new language (Hiver et al., 2021). However, the construct of academic engagement is multidimensional and covers several aspects, including cognitive, emotional, and behavioral, working together to demonstrate students' positive attitudes toward the learning process (Hiver et al., 2021). Yang (2022) also stated four themes that in students' motivation for studying English: cultural interest, ideal second-language self, enjoyment of English learning, and integrative reasons. However, with the distinctive characteristics of students at Dai Nam University, and since this is the very first international program to be launched, there are many separate factors - both external and internal that need to be discussed and analyzed.

2. The current situation and analysis

The IBBA Program commenced its admissions process in the academic year 2023-2024 through an internal selection for students within the Faculty of Business Administration. Initially, the program maintained a small class size, comprising only 26 students. For the K17 cohort, during the first year, students are required to undertake four levels of English courses within the IELTS studying program provided by outsourcing a famous unit in Vietnam, corresponding to four modules (English P1 to English P4) within the curriculum. Currently, as the end of the second semester approaches, the class size has decreased to 18 students who are continuing with the English P3 module. In order to understand more in-depth about the current situation, the author has interviewed 12 students of the current cohort, as well as analyzing the grade results of students throughout 2 semesters. Due to current security laws and regulations, the information of students and their results are not permitted to be public. After collecting

their feedback, analyzing their results, and watching their performances, here are the key issues that were generalized among students:

Issue 1. The entrance English proficiency levels of the students vary significantly, with the majority being subpar.

Despite all students starting from the first module, the initial English placement test scores of K17 IBBA students revealed considerable discrepancies. Some students had no foundational knowledge or ability to recognize and use English, while others possessed certain unstructured and incomplete knowledge. This disparity stems from the uneven and often limited English education received during high school. The internal admission process, which did not include filtering or selecting students with sufficient potential, also reduced the class's competitiveness. This situation presents a significant challenge for students as they navigate the uniform curriculum and teaching methods provided by the faculty.

Issue 2. The intensified English learning workload and schedule are relatively demanding.

Students must complete four English modules in the first year, with continuous sessions ranging from 4 to 5 times per week. The volume of knowledge and study hours in this format is double the credit hours compared to regular English courses, yet the timeframe is compressed to half (in terms of the number of study weeks). This creates significant stress for students, particularly for those with lower initial English proficiency and slower learning capabilities. Additionally, the continuous nature of the English classes affects student attendance; if students face health issues, they cannot afford prolonged absences without falling behind.

Issue 3: The self-study and practice habits in English among the students are inconsistent and lack systematic approach.

A segment of the class has developed the awareness to practice independently at home and seek additional English learning opportunities, actively addressing their knowledge gaps through various methods. However, the majority still focus solely on completing assigned tasks. This results in relatively passive learning, as students are not yet able to actively and flexibly use English in different contexts.

Issue 4: The differences in the training schedule arrangements have led to a lack of interaction with the responsible faculty in managing students

Unlike the standard program students, IBBA program students have very few modules related to their field of study in the first academic year, with only one module in each of the second and third semesters (while BBA standard program students typically have 2 to 3 modules each semester). The intensive schedule and high demands of English learning make it difficult for these students to participate in departmental and university activities. Additionally, the pressure of exams and grades builds up more quickly and intensely compared to their standard program peers. Consequently, motivational activities for English learning can only be conducted through direct teaching in class (currently outsourced, not taught by departmental or university faculty), and homeroom lecturer (who are also busy-scheduled with Vietnamese lectures and other departmental duties).

3. Suggestions

To improve and enhance the effectiveness of English learning for students in the International Bachelor of Business Administration Program, and to create motivation rather than pressure for students

to continue their studies, several solutions need to be implemented systematically and promptly for both the K17 cohort and subsequent cohorts as follows:

Solution 1: Structured Admission Announcements and Selective Student Admissions

Admission announcements should clearly provide information about the training program, English proficiency requirements, tuition fees, and the advantages for students. The selection of students for the International Program should be based on the results of the National High School English Examination, English study records over the past three years of high school, and interviews, rather than accepting all applicants indiscriminately as done in the first cohort.

Solution 2: Adjustment of Intensive English Learning Schedule

The pace and schedule of intensive English courses need to be adjusted to reduce the stress of continuous high-intensity learning and testing. Consider reducing the number of weekly sessions from five to four, with a scientifically arranged schedule that incorporates specific extracurricular activities. The schedule should also be well-organized to avoid "dead" periods, where students have to wait 1-2 weeks for retakes and contract renewals.

Solution 3: Facilitation of the English Club of Faculty of Business Administration

The English Club of the Faculty of Business Administration, which initially saw enthusiastic participation from students, has stalled due to new oversight and management requirements from Dai Nam University. This is regrettable, especially for International Program students who have a more intensive study schedule and value every opportunity to practice and interact in English. Therefore, university oversight should aim to support student clubs to the maximum extent possible, rather than manage them through bureaucratic procedures.

Solution 4: Adjustment of Stipends for International Program Homeroom Lecturers

As previously mentioned, during the first year, IBBA students have limited interaction with faculty members of the Faculty of Business Administration, primarily through the homeroom lecturer. In addition to handling administrative tasks, daily activities, and student orientation, the homeroom lecturer for the International Program must also motivate, guide, and interact with students regarding English learning, based on their own experience and English proficiency (International Program homeroom lecturers are required to be capable of teaching in English). Given these high demands and responsibilities, the stipend for International Program homeroom lecturers should be adjusted accordingly, rather than being equivalent to that of the standard program.

Solution 5: Training for External Instructors on Dai Nam University's Teaching Culture

Throughout the first year, International Program students primarily interact and receive motivation for English learning through external outsourced instructors via continuous intensive English courses. Therefore, these instructors need to have a certain understanding of Dai Nam University's teaching culture, integrate well with the regular faculty, and ensure that the spirit and culture of Dai Nam University are consistently conveyed, especially to these students.

4. Conclusion

Through the analysis of the implementation status for the K17 students in the International Business Administration Program, the

article has proposed detailed and specific solutions to enhance students' motivation for learning English, thereby contributing to the overall improvement of the Program's training quality. For these solutions to be implemented systematically and effectively, there needs to be close coordination between various departments, divisions, and offices within the University, as well as regular supervision and evaluation by relevant stakeholders.

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