

XÂY DỰNG KHÓA HỌC KỸ NĂNG HỌC TẬP ĐẠI HỌC CHO SINH VIÊN CÁC CHƯƠNG TRÌNH LIÊN KẾT TẠI TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC HÀ NỘI

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Một trong những điều kiện để học viên có thể tham gia vào chương trình cử nhân quốc tế là điểm IELTS phải đạt từ 5.5 trở lên. Tuy nhiên, trong quá trình học, sinh viên vẫn gặp nhiều khó khăn trong môi trường học thuật sử dụng 100% tiếng Anh do sự khác biệt của hệ thống giáo dục. Nghiên cứu này sử dụng khung lý thuyết của Macalister và Nation (2012) để phát triển khóa học kỹ năng học tập đại học nhằm cung cấp cho sinh viên chương trình liên kết quốc tế của Trường Đại học Hà Nội những kỹ năng cần thiết để học thành công. Khóa học được xây dựng dựa trên phân tích môi trường học tập (phân tích tình huống), yêu cầu học thuật của chương trình liên kết (phân tích nhu cầu). Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy để xây dựng được một khóa học kỹ năng học tập có tính thực tế, cần đặc biệt chú trọng vào phân tích nhu cầu của sinh viên và yêu cầu của khóa học. Mô hình xây dựng khóa học này có thể được áp dụng để phát triển các khóa học dự bị đại học khác cho các chương trình liên kết quốc tế tại Việt Nam.

Từ khóa: kỹ năng học tập, chương trình liên kết quốc tế, EMI.

To enroll in international undergraduate programs, students must achieve an IELTS score of at least 5.5. However, students still encounter many difficulties in the English-speaking academic environment due to the differences between highschool and university systems. This study employed Macalister and Nation's (2012) theoretical framework for developing an academic study skills course for students of transnational programs of Hanoi University. The course developers examined the academic environment (situation analysis) and the academic requirements of the EMI program (needs analysis). The findings revealed that to develop a comprehensive and practical study skills course, students' needs and course requirements should be analyzed rigorously. The empirical recommendations of the research, as well as its model, can be implemented to develop other pre-university courses for international programs in Vietnam.

Keywords: study skills, transnational education program, EMI.

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DEVELOPING A UNIVERSITY STUDY SKILL COURSE FOR INTERNATIONAL JOINT PROGRAM STUDENTS AT HANOI UNIVERSITY

Introduction

Study skills are undeniably among the most important academic tools for undergraduate students, playing a vital role in unlocking their academic potentials. Without mastering these skills, the students' full ability may not be nurtured, which can hinder their success at university. If students are able to use study skills effectively, their studies can benefit tremendously as they may unlock their hidden talents and potentials (Tran & Nguyen, 2018). Therefore, the significance of imparting effective study skills to university students cannot be overstated. These skills serve as the cornerstone upon which academic success is built, enabling students to navigate the rigorous demands of higher education with confidence and proficiency.

Although the benefits of study skills have been emphasized, numerous students do not have adequate study skills. This deficiency frequently resulted in forgotten assignments, neglected readings, and a generally unprepared approach to class or even failing grades. Biggs (2003) noted that even though college students exhibited adequate meta-cognitive ability and self-control, they are still dubious of their ability and skills, especially in accomplishing academic tasks. In Vietnam, many freshmen struggle with their

university studies as they are unprepared for academic tasks at tertiary level. The differences in study methods between high school and higher education can leave many students feeling overwhelmed. Without proper training and support, their studies may fall behind their peers. Hence, it is of utmost importance to integrate study skills training into the curriculum for first year students.

Literature review

Study skills

Skills are essential to every area of human existence as they empower a person to excel in various endeavors. Regarding students, honing skills through academic instruction and practical experience is of great significance. In fact, the acquisition of essential skills at the initial phase in their academic journey is crucial for their future professional pursuits. The master of these skills can unlock numerous career opportunities and cultivate personal growth as along this journey, students are able to boost their confidence and increase their motivation. Consequently, embracing a skill-based approach enhances students' comprehension of concepts and strengthens their existing knowledge, which can be invaluable to their future (Podareducation, 2021).

Study skills can be defined by Tabberer (1987 as cited in Walker & Masterman, 2006) as the reading and thinking skills requisite to any study task: i.e. those necessary to define, analyse, solve and report on a problem in a disciplined and independent way. By equipping learners with a comprehensive toolkit encompassing time management, critical thinking, note-taking, and research techniques, educators empower them to not only excel in their coursework but also cultivate a lifelong capacity for self-directed learning. Furthermore, these skills foster a sense of autonomy, self-efficacy, and adaptability, preparing students to confront the multifaceted challenges of the modern world and contribute meaningfully to society. In essence, the teaching of study skills transcends the classroom, fostering holistic development and resilience in individuals.

There has been an ongoing debate on what skills should be given priority in the teaching of undergraduate students over the past few decades. According to Menz (2021), a number of students lack the requisite job-related skills even when they complete their bachelor degree after a few years. Nevertheless, Hermida (2009) believes that the focus should be diverted to the teaching of academic skills, especially for first-year students as they are deprived of necessary basic academic skills such as reading and writing as these skills are considerably different from the type of reading and writing students encounter in

high schools. Therefore, students need to be provided with academic skills before or along with job-related skills in order to succeed in their respective majors.

Course development process

From a scientific perspective, learning materials design and development is considered a product and a process (Macalister & Nation, 2012). From a product perspective, the learning materials serve as the instructor's guide to develop teaching activities. From a process perspective, building and developing learning materials is a scientific process, including many different steps including researching and collecting information related to learner needs, curriculum and teaching. The researcher will then arrange the collected data according to priorities related to the learning outcomes. Next, the researcher will rely on these learning outcomes to build learning activities to achieve the predetermined goals. Afterwards, the product must be tested, received feedback and edited before it is officially put into practice. According to Macalister and Nation (2012), curriculum and learning materials developers need to research the principles of developing learning materials, analyze the learning environment (including information related to learners, course duration, professional knowledge and pedagogical skills of teachers and facilities) and examine learning needs (students' current abilities and skills, students' desires, output standards to be achieved).

“Learning environment analysis” (Tessmer, 1990, p. 55) or “context analysis” (Richards, 2001, p. 90) is defined as the process of investigating factors that may influence teaching goals, teaching content, the delivery methods and general assessment of the course. These factors include learners, teachers, the teaching and learning environment. The results from analyzing the learning environment can be ranked according to the impact of each factor on the teaching situation.

Analyzing learning needs is directly related to the goals and content of learning materials. The results obtained from needs analysis will provide information about the learner's current capacity and the disparity between the current level and the desired end goals. Conducting a needs analysis survey ensures that the learning materials developed will include content that is relevant and useful to students. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), learning needs can be classified into target needs (the context outside the classroom where the language will be used and learners need to perform effectively) and learning needs (what learners need to learn effectively).

Analysis of target needs is conducted through determining:

- Essential needs: towards language use situations, stylistic and pragmatic features. For example, do learners have to paraphrase what they understand when writing answers to exam questions

or do they just need to recite it accurately?

- Deficiencies: What do learners lack and what do they need to learn? For example, are there any aspects of writing that learners have not yet mastered?
- Desire: What do learners want to learn and what are their expectations?

The results obtained from the needs analysis process are a realistic list of learning objectives and essential language skills that learners should achieve after completing the designed course based on their current language proficiency as well as their future needs and desires. Therefore, the process of developing teaching materials is, in fact, the selection of the most important problems to be solved and the most basic goals to be achieved in order to develop teaching and learning activities (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018). These are factors directly related to the process of developing materials and teaching. If these factors are not carefully considered, the product of the teaching materials development process may not be suitable for real situations, and the teaching and learning process may not achieve the desired effect.

Transnational Education in Vietnam

In the era of globalization, international education has become a common development trend of countries around the world, including Vietnam. International

education programs, also known as transnational education programs (TNE), are programs designed and delivered by universities and educational institutions to students in other countries. In Vietnam, there is a growing focus on the development and promotion of TNE. Currently, Vietnam has more than 200 international education programs provided by universities and educational institutions from countries such as the US, the UK, Australia, Canada, Korea, Japan, Taiwan and China. In these educational initiatives, the significance of English as a medium of instruction is pivotal for international education programs. First, using English helps students access the latest learning materials and scientific research. This is important, especially in the fields of science, engineering, technology, and business, where new research and information are constantly being updated. Second, English helps students communicate effectively with teachers and other students. This not only helps students improve their language skills but also helps them become capable of working in a multicultural environment. Therefore, having the ability to use English effectively brings many different benefits to students of international programs (Nguyen et al., 2016) because students can hone their English writing and reading skills, helping them become more confident when working with study materials and research materials. Additionally, students can learn about the culture and lifestyle of other

countries. This fosters students' cultural understanding and enhances their adaptability to various environments.

Among the practical English skills that need to be acquired to study effectively in an international educational environment, academic writing skills are skills that students always have difficulty with (Alexander, 2008). One of the main factors behind this reality is the limited language ability of students. Such a limitation makes it difficult for students to express their ideas clearly and effectively; therefore, students may encounter difficulties in meeting the standards set by international universities (Flowerdew, 2019). Another problem students encounter is a lack of understanding of the conventions of academic writing which includes aspects such as appropriate citation techniques, argument structure, arguments in English and the ability to synthesize information from different textual sources. The fundamental cause of this challenge stems from the significant disparity between the learning culture in Vietnamese high schools and international universities. Such differences frequently result in issues such as improper citation, plagiarism, and potential disciplinary issues for students (Murray & Moore, 2018). In addition, the change in learning culture from high school to university also leads to difficulties related to students' time management skills and allocation of study tasks (Magyar & Robinson-Pant, 2011). Many students have difficulties balancing their academic

workload with other responsibilities, such as work and family obligations, leaving them with little time to devote to developing their study skills and academic writing competency. Consequently, assigned assignments are completed hastily without meeting the necessary academic standards. In addition, writing anxiety can also be a significant barrier to success when undertaking academic writing. Students may feel overwhelmed by assigned essays, have difficulty writing, or lack confidence in their writing abilities. This can hinder learning ability and can even lead to students abandoning essays altogether and dropping out in favor of an easier learning environment (Flowerdew, 2019).

To overcome the challenges of the first stages of their university studies, students of international bachelor's programs need support from various resources and, most importantly, guidance on effective study skills and academic writing rules right from the intensive English learning stage to achieve necessary foreign language competencies (Murray & Moore, 2018).

Research Methodology

Research Context

Hanoi University has implemented joint training programs and issued international bachelor's degrees from 2002 to present. To apply for these international joint programs, students are required to achieve an international IELTS or HANU Test level of 5.5 or higher (depending on the

partner university's requirements). For students who meet the foreign language requirements, they can enroll in the official program immediately after receiving the results of the high school graduation exam. For students who want to study in international programs but do not meet the foreign language proficiency requirements, they will participate in an intensive English course at the Center for International Education, Hanoi University, with a duration of 600 to 1000 hours of study. From the time the program was established until 2019, the Intensive English program focused mainly on language skills and focused on developing test-taking skills to achieve the requirements. However, even when achieving minimum foreign language proficiency standards, students still encounter many difficulties when studying their major, especially with skills related to academic writing in particular and general college study skills. These difficulties also affect their learning outcomes and the level of absorption of specialized knowledge, causing some students to lose motivation and eventually drop out.

Recognizing the challenges faced by students and the importance of the Intensive English course, International Education Center - the host unit of the Intensive English program implemented improvements. New modules in the Intensive English program are available. The program has introduced English for specific purposes (ESP), university study

skills, and academic writing skills to provide the necessary knowledge and skills to help students be confident when learning their major. With ESP, finding suitable books has never been an unchallenging task. While exploiting and teaching is relatively easy, finding resources related to university study skills and academic writing that are suitable for the program's students is more challenging. First, the difficulty lies in the fact that most of the documents written are for international students with an English level of 6.5 or higher and will study abroad in English-speaking countries. In addition, the price of these textbooks is very high and cannot be easily purchased at foreign bookstores in Vietnam. Therefore, compiling documents to serve teaching this skill is urgent to meet the requirements of the university curriculum and the actual learning situation of students.

Research Objectives & Questions

This research aims to (1) identify the specific academic skills that students of transnational programs often lack, hindering their success in higher education and (2) investigate the cultural and linguistic challenges faced by students in the academic context, which may impact their learning and performance.

The research questions are:

- What specific academic skills do students of international programs at Hanoi University perceive as challenging, and how do these

challenges impact their academic performance?

- What specific academic skills do students of international programs at Hanoi University need to have as recommended by lecturers?

Data collection process

The research team conducted a detailed analysis of the learning environment of major degree programs, namely the academic requirements of their major, language proficiency and technical skills together with students' current learning abilities.

The research team collected data through the following forms:

- A group meeting with 12 instructors teaching English in the Intensive English program, who have taught in the program for three years or more. This meeting focuses on identifying strengths and weaknesses of the existing curriculum, problems with student learning, and suggestions for improvement from the academic director. This meeting lasted for 3 hours.
- A group meeting with 8 lecturers who have been teaching in different majors. This meeting is intended to determine assignment types and requirements, common classroom activities in the major, and faculty expectations regarding student competencies. This meeting was also held for 3 hours.

- A collection of the results of IELTS format language proficiency tests from a sample of 200 students approaching the conclusion of an IEC course.
- A group meeting with 20 first and second year students to discuss the challenges students face after completing the intensive English course and starting their majors. This meeting lasted for 3 hours.

Data analysis

Teacher & Student Interview: The analysis of teacher and student interview data concerning academic learning needs is a methodical and insightful process. Initially, transcribing the interviews transforms spoken words into written text, preserving the nuances of both students and educators' responses. Coding is then employed to systematically categorize and label segments of the text, allowing for the identification of recurring themes related to academic learning needs. Both inductive and deductive coding approaches are utilized, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the data. Themes are refined through an iterative process, emphasizing key aspects of students' academic requirements as perceived by teachers and students. Patterns and variations across interviews are meticulously examined, providing a holistic understanding of the diverse perspectives expressed by educators. Finally, the synthesized findings contribute to a nuanced understanding of the academic learning needs, offering

valuable insights for educational improvement and curriculum development.

Student's writing and major subject course syllabus analysis: The course syllabus is scrutinized to understand the curriculum's objectives, structure, and assessment methods. Concurrently, student writing is evaluated to gauge their proficiency and grasp of the subject matter. Through thematic analysis, common patterns, strengths, and areas of improvement are identified. This process aids in pinpointing academic learning needs, uncovering where students may require additional support or resources. The synthesis of information from the syllabus and student writing provides valuable insights for tailoring teaching strategies and curricular enhancements to address specific academic challenges and foster a more effective learning environment.

Findings

What specific academic skills do students of international programs at Hanoi University perceive as challenging, and how do these challenges impact their academic performance?

Students' English proficiency when entering the program ranged from IELTS 1.5 to 4.5 and they must achieve IELTS 5.5 before starting their majors. At first, students had difficulties with university lecturers' communicative language teaching methods because they were familiar with the grammar translation and

test preparation approaches at high school. Besides, students were overwhelmed by the amount of assigned work and it often took them about 3 to 4 weeks to get used to the new environment.

Students in the first and second years of the major said the intensive English course should be more content- related to future courses in the major and provide additional guidance so that they are better prepared for that period. Specifically, academic writing skills should be taught so that students can excel during the initial semester of their chosen major.

The results of analyzing detailed syllabi of first-year subjects of the bachelor's programs show that the main tasks students have to undertake during this period include listening to lectures, participating in activities, and performing tasks, doing assignments and taking written tests. A significant number of required assignments and presentations during a semester have rigorous academic requirements that include the use of referencing and citation of APA 7, the source References are up to date, using Turnitin plagiarism checking software and the article must be at least 2000 words in length. Bachelor's programs focus heavily on critical thinking and the ability to explain what is learned with concrete examples. Exact memorization is not recommended and may be the cause of poor performance, even failing grades.

To complete these requirements of each subject, students must possess a large amount of academic vocabulary and

terminology for effective listening and reading. In addition, students must be able to write assignments in descriptive, analytical and comparative forms.

An important part of a learning needs analysis involves investigating the student's understanding of the course requirements, existing study skills, and student expectations. The results obtained show a significant difference between the capacity and understanding of students when enrolling in international bachelor's programs and the requirements of these international programs. They are accustomed to memorizing and replicating the information presented to them, believing that this method ensures exam success and high scores.

What specific academic skills do students of international programs at Hanoi University need to have as recommended by lecturers?

These lecturers all have a Master's degree or higher, most of whom graduated with a major in teaching methods and have an IELTS certificate of 8.0 or higher. All lecturers graduated from Vietnamese universities or from universities abroad. Teachers are assigned to teach a specific language practice skill for a semester and can use additional self-written materials in addition to the main textbook while teaching. All lecturers are aware that their teaching not only focuses on IELTS test preparation but also needs to involve practical use of the language. However, these instructors encounter difficulties

designing supplementary materials to enhance students' language competence for their future majors due to their limited familiarity with the learning activities employed in bachelor's programs.

Instructors of the bachelor's programs must have a Master's degree or higher and an IELTS certificate of 7.0 or higher to be able to teach in the bachelor's programs. Most lecturers of the bachelor's programs are satisfied with students' language skills, especially presentation skills. However, these instructors believe that students should be introduced to reading articles with the same difficulty level to the reading documents in the bachelor's programs because it will help students read more effectively later. In addition, the faculty group suggested that students should have the opportunity to practice conducting basic research related to the fields of Business, Accounting, Management and Marketing so that when they study the bachelor's programs they will perform better.

Interviews with eight lecturers also showed that when teaching, these lecturers did not pay much attention to the grammatical accuracy of writing but were more interested in students demonstrating their understanding of the rules, writing academically and being able to demonstrate their knowledge effectively.

Final course product

The results obtained after conducting research on the learning environment and learning needs indicate that the developed

set of materials needs to provide students with basic university study skills related to effective listening and reading, selecting documents, reading and synthesizing information. In addition, to improve students' academic abilities, the set of materials needs to provide students with skills to handle long reading articles and projects, and at the same time gives them the opportunity to apply these skills in performing exercises that simulate real-life exercises when studying the major. The set of materials should also give students the opportunity to explore topics related to the study of their majors. Finally, this document should serve as a handbook to help develop students' university study and independent research skills.

Course overview

The study skills course for students enrolled in the Intensive Language program of Hanoi University's international bachelor's programs spans 16 weeks, including 16 sessions. The course is designed to equip students with essential skills for academic success.

In Sessions 1 to 8, students will receive a comprehensive overview of university study skills. They will learn how to listen to lectures effectively, read books efficiently, and know to locate information sources for academic articles. These sessions also will provide an insightful overview of academic writing skills.

Regarding Sessions 8 to 16, students will study advanced writing techniques,

explore effective structural frameworks, and the common types of writing encountered in their majors.

Course content

Each session in the course has the following components:

Learning Objectives

This section provides students with information about the learning content and skills they will gain after each session.

Understanding the key learning point of each session

This section is designed in the form of readings ranging from 3 to 5 pages in length with the goal of helping students become familiar with reading specialized documents, familiar with memorizing, and summarizing important related information to a topic.

Practice tasks

The types of tasks in this section are designed from easy to difficult level, from practicing basic skills to synthesizing skills to complete an assignment. The tasks in this practice section consist of specialized content, aiding students in acclimating to academic writing within a university environment.

Conclusions and recommendations

This article has synthesized and summarized the process of building a set of academic writing materials for students of Hanoi University's international bachelor's programs. The materials are built upon

comprehensive needs analysis of the learners with the aim to facilitate their further research and study at tertiary level. However, this material should be evaluated after a period of application in order to triangulate the practicality and validity. Based on the results of these assessments, further amendments and adaptations could be made to accommodate the needs of both learners and teachers within the framework of international bachelor's programs. The process of building this kit as well as the model used to compile the content can be applied to develop material for other skills.

Limitations of the research study include a potential lack of generalizability to diverse academic contexts as it focuses solely on international bachelor programs. The findings may not be universally applicable to various institutions or academic disciplines, limiting the broader relevance of the study. It is important to bear in mind that each skill has specific features and requirements which should be taken into thorough consideration while developing the set.

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(Ngày nhận bài: 27/10/2023; ngày duyệt đăng: 28/12/2023)