



Research Article

ENGLISH-MAJOR FRESHMEN'S PERCEPTION OF LEARNING MOTIVATION AND SELF-EFFICACY ON THEIR LISTENING COMPREHENSION

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the perceptions of 69 first-year English-major students regarding learning motivation and self-efficacy in relation to their English listening comprehension. A mixed-methods approach was employed, integrating quantitative data collected through questionnaires with qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews. The findings indicate a range of factors influencing students' motivational levels, with instrumental motivation emerging as the most prevalent. At the same time, substantial levels of intrinsic and integrative motivation were also observed. Students' self-efficacy was found to range from moderate to high across several dimensions, particularly with respect to listening comprehension ability. The results further highlight contextual circumstances that shape students' learning motivation and self-efficacy; in particular, internship experiences and exposure to English-language media. This study provides insights for a better understanding of the motivational and self-efficacy profiles of English-major students in Vietnam and contributes to further research on teaching methodologies and curriculum design in higher education institutions.

Keywords: learning motivation; listening comprehension; self-efficacy

1. Introduction

In the past few years, language learning processes, mainly self-directed learning motivation and self-efficacy, have increasingly integrated Second Language Acquisition (SLA) (Zhang, 2023). Listening is regarded as one of the most essential skills, as it provides the ground for the remaining language skills. However, many learners have to struggle with English listening comprehension due to the multitasking comprehension of spoken language, which requires both filtering the speech and comprehension of the nonverbal signals simultaneously.

First-year students at the University of Economics - Technology for Industries (UNETI) often find listening comprehension challenging, particularly in motivators for learning and self-efficacy. This could be attributed to various reasons, such as adjustment to

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the Western education system, stress incurred from the assessment system, and the necessity for student independence. In particular, the underdevelopment of self-efficacy beliefs hinders students' confidence and performance in language tasks. Understanding that there is a haven of research studies in the current literature demonstrating the relevance of motivation and self-efficacy to learning new languages. Hence, listening comprehension, the correlation of these factors, and their interaction regarding how they affect listening comprehension in English primary first-year students in Vietnam, remains unexplored. Therefore, there is an urgent need to investigate what possible English-major first-year students' perceptions concerning their motivation and self-efficacy to tasks in the English language are, especially regarding their listening comprehension.

1.1. *Language learning motivation*

It is apparent that in SLA, language learning motivation is essential as it affects the whole process and the interaction results (Gardner, 1985). Motivation, one of the most essential elements, drives the person to begin an action and enables the maintenance of the struggle with various difficulties through acquiring a language (Ames, 1990). It decreases discomfort from speaking and listening tasks (Parsons et al., 2001) and pushes learners to take risks and use the acquired language in practice. More motivated learners are more active in the learning process, use different ways of learning, and reach higher levels of language proficiency (Lightbrown & Spada, 1999).

It is generally accepted that factors affecting language learning motivation can be grouped into four main types: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, integrative motivation, and instrumental motivation (Noels et al., 2001). *Intrinsic factors* are exciting reasons for language learning and interest satisfaction in learning new things (Deci & Ryan, 2000). *Extrinsic* includes influences from outside sources, e.g., requirements to take specific courses, public presentation, and material benefits (Passer & Smith, 2004; Harmer, 1991). *Integrative motivation* is defined as the wish to be part of a foreign language-bearer community (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Dörnyei, 2005), whereas *instrumental motivation* is based on the achievement factors - taking such forms as levels or degrees in the language (Lanvers, 2017). They can also be grouped into some subtypes that help language teachers and researchers devise appropriate language teaching and learning methods.

1.2. *Self-efficacy in language learning*

Self-efficacy, which is understanding one's values and capabilities and being able to accomplish certain performance levels and achieve defined goals (Bandura, 1986), is relevant to acquiring a second language. In particular, it includes students' perceptions about their abilities to understand, speak, read, and write in the new language (Wang et al., 2018).

Self-efficacy in language learning may be influenced by several internal and external variables (Torres & Alieto, 2019). There are four principal sources: the mastery experiences which may increase when succeeding, self-efficacy, and decrease failing (Shi, 2021); social

comparison, modeling within the classroom, and vicarious experiences (Prat-Sala & Redford, 2010); social persuasions such as encouragement from others, teachers, peers, and even family members support (Raoofi & Maroofi, 2017); physiological and emotional states, where high motivation and happiness encourage self-efficacy while high anxiety and stress discourage it. Everyone has been linked to factors such as culture, past exposure or knowledge, circumstances under which the individual had to learn the language, the proportion of linguistic skill that is being acquired, and the level of intricacy of linguistic skills being learned (Riengthong, 2021).

1.3. Previous studies

According to Nguyen (2022), in Vietnam, English learners were highly motivated and mostly instrumental, which meant looking for practical outcomes such as finding a job or education. The research underscored the significance of a positive classroom environment in increasing learners' participation and motivation. Tokada (2017) advocated that first-year college students in Japan were shown to have English listening skills and self-efficacy, which was positively correlated with self-efficacy. The study highlighted the importance of establishing specific language learning goals and activities to enhance learners' self-efficacy. It is recommended that motivation be built up before performing the activity and developing self-efficacy. Wu et al. (2022) investigated how anxiety, motivation, self-efficacy, and English achievement are related among a targeted group of well-performing university undergraduates in China. They demonstrated that worries about English use and motivation for knowledge acquisition were correlated with, and indeed predicted, English use outcomes, which illustrated the more complex facets of learning motivation. Zhang and Chinokul (2023) in Thailand have researched the motivation and academic self-efficacy of Chinese high school students as L2. They noted that self-efficacy was moderate, while motivation was low, although age and language proficiency displayed some trends. It was found that gender, ethnicity, and learning period were not essential factors.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research design

The present study utilizes a mixed-method design to assess the learning motivation and self-efficacy of English-major first-year students, focusing on listening comprehension. This design, supported by Creswell and Clark (2017), is appropriate for research in the area of language acquisition of these intricate cognitive elements. The quantitative section employs survey instruments, primarily using Likert-scale items, to measure multiple dimensions of motivation and listening self-efficacy.. These variables are operationalized quantitatively, enabling statistical analysis of patterns, relationships, and trends. The qualitative component seeks to capture students' insider perspectives on motivation and self-efficacy in English language learning through semi-structured interviews. This interpretive strand provides deeper explanations for the observed quantitative findings and

contextualizes how and why these psychological constructs are shaped in students' learning experiences.

2.2. Setting and participants

The research was conducted at the University of Economics - Technology for Industries (UNETI), a multidisciplinary institution with campuses in Hanoi and Nam Dinh Province, Vietnam. As a diverse university, UNETI enrolls students from both urban and rural backgrounds. The study participants included 69 first-year English majors, who were at an early stage of their tertiary education and undertaking specialized English language studies. This cohort represents a critical transitional phase, as students are adjusting to new academic environments and heightened expectations for language learning. . At this stage, learners' levels of motivation and self-efficacy, and their listening comprehension abilities, are still developing and subject to variation.

All participants were using *Cambridge Unlock 2: Listening and Speaking* as a core instructional textbook during the period of data collection.

2.3. Research questions

The study aims to explore students' perceptions of learning motivation and self-efficacy on their listening comprehension by addressing two questions:

- How do English-major freshmen perceive their learning motivation in relation to their listening comprehension?
- What are English-major freshmen's self-efficacy beliefs regarding their listening comprehension?

2.3. Data collection instruments

In the present research, this study applied Zhang's (2023) questionnaire, which measures English language acquisition motivation and the self-efficacy of first-time students majoring in English. The instrument employs a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* and consists of three sections. There are three sections to the questionnaire. Section 1 collects the demographic information, including gender, age, and experience in learning English. Section 2 examines students' English study behavior with a focus on motivations for learning English, comprising intrinsic motivation (6 items), extrinsic motivation (6 items), integrative motivation (4 items), and instrumental motivation (4 items). Section 3 assesses four determinants of English self-efficacy, namely mastery experience (7 items), vicarious experience (1 item), social persuasion (3 items), and physical and emotional states (7 items). The questionnaire was administered to participants online using Google Forms. The semi-structured interview questions were designed to elicit in-depth insights into English-major first-year students' perceptions of learning motivation and self-efficacy in listening comprehension. . Participation in the interviews was entirely voluntarily. Five students indicated their willingness to take part in the interviews through the questionnaire and were subsequently scheduled at times convenient for them. This shows

respect for their time commitment and may enhance their comfort level towards the interview. To ensure research ethics and participant confidentiality, all interviewees were assigned pseudonyms. The interviews were conducted online via Google Meet to accommodate participants' availability and accessibility. Each interview lasted approximately 15 to 20 minutes, allowing sufficient time to address key questions while maintaining participants' engagement and focus.

2.4. Data analysis

The data analysis in this study employed a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research.

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS 25.0. Table 1 indicates that Cronbach's Alpha is 0.938, which suggests the questionnaire items are highly interrelated.

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha value of the questionnaire

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's alpha	No. of items
.938	38

The theme-oriented qualitative analysis employed is relevant when such phenomena are explored qualitatively (Braun & Clarke, 2006). They also employ pattern recognition and interpretation in the analysis and presentation of the data. The themes used were set in advance and corresponded to existing theoretical models of motivation and self-efficacy. In motivation, four themes were employed for analysis: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, integrative motivation, and instrumental motivation. In self-efficacy, the analysis adopted four significant themes drawn from the self-efficacy theory of Bandura: mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physical and emotional states.

3. Findings and discussion

3.1. Students' perceptions of English learning motivation

Analyzing first-year English primary motivation toward English learning demonstrates significant patterns in their motivational aspects (Table 2). Students learning English show the highest motivation levels according to instrumental motivation among all orientations ($M=3.804$). Standards-based motivation, followed by motivation based on external factors and intrinsic motivation, kept the lowest mean scores, while integrative motivation yielded the minimum score.

Table 2. Overall mean score and rank of specific English learning motivation

	Overall mean	Rank
Extrinsic motivation	3,705	2
Intrinsic motivation	3,478	3
Integrative motivation	2,945	4
Instrumental motivation	3,804	1

The evaluation of instrumental motivation items demonstrated that students displayed their highest agreement toward statements about career advancement and educational progress. Table 3 demonstrates the participants' viewpoints about English learning stimulation on their English listening comprehension.

Table 3. Students' perceptions of intrinsic, extrinsic, integrative, and instrumental motivation

Extrinsic motivation			Integrative motivation		
	Mean	SD		Mean	SD
extri.mo.6	3,710	,9717	inte.mo.1	3,188	,8791
extri.mo.7	3,623	,9717	inte.mo.2	2,841	,9014
extri.mo.8	3,609	,9270	inte.mo.3	2,913	,9194
extri.mo.9	3,667	,9497	inte.mo.4	2,841	,9014
extri.mo.10	3,841	,9014			
extri.mo.14	3,783	,8201			
Intrinsic motivation			Instrumental motivation		
	Mean	SD		Mean	SD
intri.mo.15	3,478	,7398	instru.mo.5	3,304	,8796
intri.mo.16	3,478	,6776	instru.mo.11	4,043	,9461
intri.mo.17	3,232	,6218	instru.mo.12	3,855	,8094
intri.mo.18	3,536	,6769	instru.mo.13	4,014	,8134
intri.mo.19	3,478	,7785			
intri.mo.20	3,667	,7410			

High mean scores were found only in items about instrumental motivation during the motivational items. The students believed that their lives would become more challenging, especially if they did not comprehend spoken English ($M=4.043$), and that educated citizens would need to have good English listening comprehension ($M=4.014$). This indicates that students have practical and future-oriented reasons for wanting to enhance their English listening skills. The result comes out strongly in the interviews. Mai described how she would need English in her future profession when she said, *"Imagine going to international conferences and working with foreign educators."* Tuan also mentioned how crucial English would be for his future career in management. As an English major, this high instrumental motivation is consistent with their field of study and future career aspirations.

Additionally, extrinsic motivation also appears to be relatively high. Students stated they were concerned about perfecting their English listening skills to make their teachers, family, and friends proud. They scored highly when people admired them for being good at English listening ($M=3.841$ and 3.710 , respectively). The statistic comes out to some extent, albeit not very strongly, during the interviews. Tuan cited concerns about supervision regarding his performance appraisal of his internship, which referred to concerns about people's judgment. However, most respondents did not stress the need to make others proud

or gain their admiration, suggesting that for English majors, extrinsic motivation might be less pronounced than suggested by the questionnaire for the rest of the student population.

While still positive, the intrinsic motivation score is still the least compared to the extrinsic and the instrumental motivation. Concerning this factor, many of the study participants reported having liked the atmosphere created in the English listening classes and that practicing English listening comprehension is fun ($M=3.478$), which is above the midpoint, but is not as high as some extrinsic factors. Still, the results revealed that integral motivation scores were the lowest compared to the other endorsements, which were extrinsic and instrumental motivation. However, the discussions with the students showed more intrinsic motivation. Mai's attempts to follow K-pop interview content and Linh's interest in environmental TED talks showed genuine eagerness to receive English material. Based on this, the participants may have internal motivation that exceeds the average student population illustrated in the questionnaire.

The integrative motivation items comprise imagining oneself using English in other situations and scoring moderately. For example, they could imagine themselves quickly being able to follow conversations in movies or TV programs in English ($M=3.188$), which means their ability to imagine themselves as good listeners in English is moderate. However, the interviews carried out with English majors pointed out a deep level of integrative motivation. Hoa's wish to communicate with international students and Linh's intent to belong to a global fan base displayed integrative motivation. This trend of high integrative motivation among English majors is quite reasonable given their major and complements their individual interests and aspirations.

3.2. *Students' perceptions of English self-efficacy on their listening comprehension*

The following part provides a clearer picture of students' attitudes towards English self-efficacy on their listening comprehension. First-year English majors demonstrate a specific order of self-efficacy sources discovered through their analysis of English self-efficacy in Table 4.

Table 4. Overall mean score and rank of specific English self-efficacy

	Overall mean	Rank
Mastery experience	3,213	3
Vicarious experience	3,029	4
Physical and emotional states	3,368	2
Social persuasion	3,483	1

Social persuasion seems to be the leading source of self-efficacy and received the highest mean score of $M=3.483$, followed by physical and emotional states ($M=3.368$) and mastery experience ($M=3.213$), then vicarious experience ($M=3.029$). The research pattern reveals that first-year English majors primarily receive their self-efficacy strengthening from outside feedback and social backing, despite peer comparison influences being the weakest.

Table 5. Students' perception of mastery experience, vicarious experience, physical and emotional states, and social persuasion

Mastery experience		Physical and emotional states			
	Mean	SD		Mean	SD
mas.ex.21	3,159	,7597	phy-emo.24	3,493	,6558
mas.ex.22	3,493	,7975	phy-emo.25	3,435	,7372
mas.ex.23	3,623	,7878	phy-emo.27	3,116	,8666
mas.ex.26	3,101	,7886	phy-emo.30	3,797	,7392
mas.ex.34	3,246	,8118	phy-emo.32	3,623	,7297
mas.ex.35	2,928	,9443	phy-emo.36	3,261	,8162
mas.ex.37	2,942	,8381	phy-emo.38	2,855	,8957
Vicarious experience		Social persuasion			
	Mean	SD		Mean	SD
vica.ex.33	3,029	,8220	soc.per.28	3,159	,8335
			soc.per.29	3,435	,6962
			soc.per.31	3,855	,7128

Concerning the mastery experience demonstrated in Table 5, the students expressed the conviction that they may acquire good English listening comprehension ($M=3.623$), but when the average score reveals that the learners were not ready for the test, ever reaching a score of 2.942. This trend is apparent in the extracts from the interviews. Mai's watching of the same documentary and Minh's engagement with the guest lecturer all seem to have some tough times in the beginning, which then get better with time. The students are more conscious of their listening comprehension development and the associated problems than the four students, probably because of more exposure to English.

With regard to social persuasion, the highest mean is 3.855, which the respondents reinforce their agreement that their efforts in practicing English listening will reap the rewards, and the lowest is 3.159, which states that they do not believe in their capability and comprehend English listening, as other students are different. In other words, individuals respect the idea of working hard, but they have poorer beliefs about their assessment than their mates. This was partially confirmed in the interviews. Every respondent outlined strategies based on immense effort, in conformity with the importance of the use of effort. However, they appeared relatively more self-assured in their capabilities than their average peers. Still, they recognized a difference in ability between them and native speakers.

For physical and emotional states, the majority of the students completed their English listening homework before going out with friends ($M=3.623$), but they hardly believed in their own natural ability to understand spoken English ($M=2.855$). The statistic indicates a significant desire for practice but an absence of self-belief regarding inherent talent, reflected in the interviews. Some students, such as Tuan and Linh, reported practicing regularly.

However, as English students, they appeared to have advanced techniques for dealing with emotional issues, such as Linh's internal dialogue and Minh's technological motivation.

There is a single aspect concerning vicarious experience in which students believe they have shown a better understanding than their peers when listening to English. With 3.029, it belongs to the moderate category as students have fairly categorized themselves compared to their peers. The interviewees with better English proficiency felt superior to other students while remaining inferior to the native speakers. Therefore, English-major students may have higher self-efficacy than other students who represent the questionnaire.

The current study discovered that instrumental motivation was the most important among the students with high mean scores regarding the relevance of knowledge and skills in English associated with future employment. This result is consistent with Nguyen's (2022) findings in the Vietnamese context, which similarly reported that students were predominantly instrumentally motivated. However, this study shows a different story for English-major freshmen. Even though instrumental motivation is still high, there are some signs of purposive, integrative, and intrinsic motivation, particularly in conversational interview responses. This finding contrasts with the results of Zhang and Chinokul (2023) in Thailand, where learners of Chinese as a foreign language were reported to exhibit relatively low levels of learning motivation. This study's extrinsic and intrinsic motivation regarding self-determination and task motivation is consistent with Wu et al. (2022), who found that high achievers exhibited several motivational factors. This study not only provides a thorough examination of the motivational orientations of first-year English-major students but also sheds light on how and why these motivations emerge. To make such high estimations is more due to self-efficacy beliefs than to the actual knowledge, especially for listening to spoken English which the university students pay specific attention to. These results align with those among Japanese students reported by Tokada (2017) that good English listening abilities positively impact self-efficacy. Rather, this study further examines the interplay of self-efficacy and the types of motivation experienced by English-major first-year students. It was apparent from the interviews that students developed self-efficacy in most instances as they advanced in their studies, and this was consistent with Tokada's (2017) assertion that language skills and self-efficacy are interlinked. This study also evokes this as it sheds light on the fact that the English self-efficacy of the students is related to their narrowing down to the language in question, thus filling the void in the papers regarding the influence of subject specialization on such psychological features.

The findings further highlight the role of contextual variables in forming motivation and self-efficacy. The interviewees articulated that some particular circumstances, such as an internship or using English-language media, enhanced their self-efficacy and motivation. This correlates with Nguyen (2022), who also noted external classroom incentives as

surrounding factors for students' motivation. Still, this research offers deeper explanations of how these factors work for English majors.

4. Conclusion

This study focused exclusively on the learning motivation and self-efficacy perceptions of first-year Vietnamese students majoring in English, targeting their listening skills. The results suggest that all three types of motivation are strongly interrelated, and while instrumental motivation is the most pronounced type, intrinsic and integrative motivation also stand at noteworthy levels. Students were estimated to have self-efficacy ranging from moderate to high and were quite optimistic about their capacity to improve their listening skills. Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. The sample size is relatively small and drawn from a single university in Vietnam, which restricts the transferability of the findings. Moreover, the cross-sectional design of the study captures students' perceptions at a single point in time, and therefore does not allow for examination of changes or developmental patterns over time. Furthermore, using self-reported data entails risks of social desirability and self-awareness biases. In order to overcome these shortcomings, future research could adopt a longitudinal design to examine changes in motivation and self-efficacy across different stages of students' degree programs. Expanding the scope of investigation to include multiple universities and regions would enhance analytical precision and allow for the exploration of institutional and geographical influences. Comparative studies between English majors and non-English majors may also provide valuable insights into discipline-specific motivational patterns and self-efficacy beliefs. Finally, developing pedagogical interventions aimed at fostering both intrinsic and instrumental motivation, as well as strengthening self-efficacy among English-major students, could contribute to more effective learning processes and more satisfying academic experiences.

❖ **Conflict of Interest:** Author have no conflict of interest to declare.

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**NHẬN THỨC CỦA SINH VIÊN NĂM NHẤT CHUYÊN NGÀNH TIẾNG ANH
VỀ ĐỘNG LỰC HỌC TẬP VÀ NIỀM TIN NĂNG LỰC LÊN KHẢ NĂNG NGHE HIỂU**

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TÓM TẮT

Nghiên cứu tìm hiểu nhận thức của 69 sinh viên năm nhất chuyên ngành tiếng Anh về động lực học tập và niềm tin năng lực lên khả năng nghe hiểu. Phương pháp nghiên cứu hỗn hợp kết hợp dữ liệu lượng sử dụng bảng câu hỏi và dữ liệu định tính thông qua phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc. Kết quả cho thấy tự tồn tại của các yếu tố đa dạng ảnh hưởng đến mức độ động lực, trong đó động lực công cụ là yếu tố phổ biến nhất, nhưng đồng thời cũng có sự hiện diện đáng kể của động lực nội tại và động lực hội nhập. Niềm tin năng lực ở mức trung bình đến cao trên nhiều phương diện, đặc biệt là khả năng nghe hiểu. Kết quả cũng đề cập các hoàn cảnh đặc biệt liên quan đến động lực học tập và niềm tin năng lực của sinh viên; cụ thể là bối cảnh kinh nghiệp thực tập cũng như việc tiếp xúc với phương tiện truyền thông. Nghiên cứu này là nguồn tham khảo về động lực học tập và niềm tin năng lực của sinh viên chuyên ngành tiếng Anh, đóng góp vào việc nghiên cứu các phương pháp giảng dạy hoặc thiết kế chương trình ở các cơ sở giáo dục đại học.

Từ khóa: động lực học tập; khả năng nghe hiểu; niềm tin năng lực