

# Foreign Students' Motivation in Vietnamese Language Course at Faculty of Vietnamese Studies, University of Social Science and Humanities – Hochiminh City National University, Vietnam

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## Abstract

The purposes of this study were to examine the motivation levels of full-time and part-time students and to evaluate the differences in motivation between them regarding Physiological needs, Safety needs, Social needs and Esteem needs toward learning while in the Vietnamese language course at Faculty of Vietnamese Studies, Social Science and Humanities University – Hochiminh city National University. The sample size in this study included 118 full-time students and 261 part-time students. Furthermore, the Cronbach alpha and Independent t-test was used to analyze the data in this study. The results and discussions showed both full-time and part-time students scored very high motivation level in items *“The Vietnamese Studies Faculty is located at a convenient site; The lecturers have good teaching methods; Vietnamese Studies Faculty is a reputable teaching place; Can help me have more friends; To improve my skills of teamwork; To improve the knowledge and language; To bring the respect of others and Can make me feel more confident”* (Sig > 0.05). Thus, there were not significant differences between them and this differed from the hypothesis. However, full-time students had higher motivation than part-time students in item

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*“The suitable learning program”* and they also scored very high levels while part-time students scored neutral and low levels in items *“Vietnamese Studies Faculty is a reputable teaching place; With flexible timetable”*. On the other hand, full-time students had lower motivation than part-time students in item *“Can bring me to higher standing in the society”*. Hence, there were significant differences between them in these items (Sig < 0.05) and these supported the hypothesis. In terms of conclusions for the item *“With flexible timetable”*, the Faculty of Vietnamese Studies should apply these results to renew the class time in a way suitable to part-time students in order to increase their motivation.

**Keywords:** motivation, Vietnamese language course, foreign students, Faculty of Vietnamese Studies.

## 1. Introduction

Over the past few years, the number of international students, especially from such developed countries as Canada, Australia, France, Korea, Japan and so on, enrolling in Vietnamese universities has been rapidly increasing (FPT University’s website). In addition, 78,000 foreigners working in Vietnam are holding high positions and earning high salaries in our big cities. Therefore, they have a need to learn Vietnamese because if they have a good command of Vietnamese, they will be at an advantage in their work and life. With their good Vietnamese, they can break their language barrier to communicate with their Vietnamese colleagues, their employees, their friends and acquaintances; above all, they can have more understanding of the Vietnamese people and culture (Khanh, 2012). To meet foreigners’ needs, Vietnamese teaching activities have become more and more diverse. There have emerged plenty of centers for the Vietnamese language teaching run by universities or private organizations; furthermore, the literature on studies related to Vietnamese teaching to foreigners has also grown. However, most of those studies have focused on how to teach Vietnamese and how to learn Vietnamese in the most effective way, yet there has been little research on

the motivations for learning Vietnamese among foreigners living and working in Vietnam. Brown (1994) said that learners with good motivations are much more likely to be successful. It is very interesting to know that motivation is considered as one of the deciding factors for success in second language acquisition by most researchers. Motivation is an integral part of students' learning process. It helps to determine the learning purpose and stimulate the learning process. Djigunovie (2001) also stated that motivation was one of the determining factors in foreign language learning. As a result, without motivation, learners will hardly make any attempts to fulfil assignments in the learning process. Consequently, managers and educators need to be fully aware of students' learning motivations and promote them through instruction, teaching methods, class organization and management. In addition, factors like the school facilities, teacher-student rapport, and friendship have an influence on students' learning motivations.

Motivation implies a need for fulfilment and success, curiosity, a desire for encouragement and new experiences. That is why, according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, human behaviors derive from human needs that are divided into low and high levels. Lower level basic needs consist of biological and safety ones whilst higher level growth needs include social ones, self-esteem and self-actualization. Maslow also stressed that satisfying lower level basic needs was easier than meeting higher level growth ones as the former are limited and could be satisfied from the outside.

The Faculty of Vietnamese Studies under the University of Social Science and Humanities – Hochiminh city National University was established in 1998, it is currently a Vietnamese teaching site in Vietnam, with a large number of foreign students, especially with the learning program of Bachelor and Master's degree for foreigners. In addition, the Faculty also organizes specialized Vietnamese courses for student groups in oversea universities. However, there have been no researches addressing students' motivation for learning Vietnamese language within the faculty. Therefore, this study made to determined the difference in the motivation of full-time students and part-time students who are learning Vietnamese. Its purpose is to help managers see the differences in motivation of the two groups clearly and also help them to improve the quality

of management, teaching and service as well as to arrange the curriculum to achieve the scientific goals that the Vietnamese Studies Faculty has set out. (Website of Vietnamese Studies Faculty, 2012).

The objectives of this study were to examine the students' motivation level and to evaluate the difference in motivation between full-time and part-time students learning Vietnamese language course at Faculty of Vietnamese Studies, University of Social Science and Humanities–Hochiminh city National University. Therefore, this study came along with the hypothesis: there is a significant difference in motivation between full-time and part-time students toward learning in Vietnamese language course at the Faculty of Vietnamese Studies.

## 2. Methods

**2.1 Participants:** the researcher recruited 400 students by using random sampling method, students were asked to respond to the questionnaire with completed items. Then, the researcher reviewed all the data and discarded the questionnaires in, which some items were left unanswered. Hence, the final sample size was 379 students which included 118 full-time students and 261 part-time students.

### 2.2 Measurement

#### 2.2.1 Measurement of instrument

The instrument was developed based on the principles of Maslow's needs theory containing 12 items to answer to the fourth level of that theory: physiological needs, safety needs, social needs and esteem needs. After that, 12 items were coded table 1.

**Table 1.** Coding items

No	Coding	Items
<b>Physiological needs</b>		
1	PN1	The Vietnamese Studies Faculty is located at a convenient site.
2	PN2	The suitable learning program.
3	PN3	The lecturers have good teaching methods.
<b>Safety needs</b>		
4	SaN1	Vietnamese Studies Faculty is a reputable teaching place.
5	SaN2	Help students find well – paid jobs.
6	SaN3	With flexible timetable.
<b>Social needs</b>		
7	SoN1	Can help me have more friends.
8	SoN2	To improve my skills of teamwork.
9	SoN3	To improve the knowledge and language.
<b>Esteem needs</b>		
10	EN1	To bring the respect of others.
11	EN2	Can make me feel more confident.
12	EN3	Can bring me to higher standing in the society.

Then, students responded on 5-Likert scale which includes 5 items: “strongly disagreed, code 1”, “disagreed, code 2”, “neutral, code 3”, “agreed, code 4” to “strongly agreed, code 5”.

### 2.2.2 Item purification of instrument

The instrument for measuring foreign students’ motivation was proposed in a Vietnamese version. But, most of the part-time students can not understand Vietnamese at this level so it was necessary for it to be translated into English by using a back translation method with the help of four bilingual experts (US Census Bureau, 2007).

### 2.2.3 Validity of instrument by Content Validity Index (CVI)

Three experts have been expertised and professional in application psychology that were asked to validate the instrument by using the CVI which was

developed by Waltz & Bausell (1983). First is lecturer of Bangkokthonburi University, Thailand; second is lecturer of Burapha University International College, Thailand; third is lecturer of Hochiminh city University of Technology, Vietnam. They were asked to rate each item based on relevance, clarity, simplicity and ambiguity on the two point scale, (2 point means “agree” = 1 and “disagree” = -1). Then we computed a CVI for individual item. CVI was calculated as follows:

$$\text{CVI} = \frac{\text{(Number of agreed individual item)}}{\text{(Total numbers of experts)}} \times 100\%$$

Following Lynn (1986), she recommended that with a panel of five or fewer experts, all must agree on the content validity for their rating to be considered a reasonable representation of the universe of possible ratings. In other words, the CVI should be 100% when there are five or fewer judges. Furthermore, the adequacy of the final content of the test instrument would be based on the collective opinion of these experts based on their professional assurance (Kelly, 1999). Finally, CVI of all instruments in this study were 100%.

#### **2.2.4 Reliability of instrument by Pilot test**

A pilot test was conducted to evaluate the reliability of the instrument by using a Cronbach’s alpha. Then, 30 students were tested with those instruments for internal consistency with the same criteria as the subjects at the Vietnamese language course – Faculty of Vietnamese Studies. Furthermore, table 2 showed the coefficient alpha values in the interval of .7383 to .8979 for 4 subscales (physiological needs, safety needs, social needs and esteem needs) which are above the minimum level of 0.7 recommended by Nunnally & Bernstein (1994).

**Table 2.** Internal Consistency Analysis of Student' satisfaction scale

Subscales	Numbers of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Physiological needs	PN1, PN2, PN3	0.7383
Safety needs	SaN1, SaN2, SaN3	0.7895
Social needs	SoN1, SoN2, SoN3	0.8979
Esteem needs	EN1, EN2, EN3	0.7462

### 2.3 Data collection procedures

First, the researcher developed the questionnaire based on the principles of Maslow's needs theory, then conducted a back translation method with four bilingual experts. Second, this questionnaire was checked and edited by the three experts. Moreover, the researcher conducted a pilot test with 30 students to evaluate the reliability of the instrument. Third, full-time and part-time students received a questionnaire measuring their motivation in learning Vietnamese language. Finally, the researcher reviewed all the data and discarded the questionnaire in which some items were left unanswered. Thus, there were 118 full-time students and 261 part-time students selected by using a random sampling method.

### 2.4 Data analysis procedures

Mean and standard deviation were used to examine the level of students' motivation. Independent t-test was used to evaluate the difference of motivation between full-time students and part-time students with the principles of Maslow's needs theory.

### 3. Results

**Table 3.** Results of Mean, Standard deviation and Independent t-test of full-time and part-time students' motivation in 4 level of Maslow's needs theory factor (n = 379)

Items	Students	n	Mean	SD	Motivation level	t	Sig
PN1	Full-time	118	4.58	.530	Very high	1.638	.102
	Part-time	261	4.47	.598	Very high		
PN2	Full-time	118	4.14	.876	Very high	10.992	.000
	Part-time	261	2.94	1.182	Neutral		
PN3	Full-time	118	4.53	.609	Very high	.451	.653
	Part-time	261	4.49	.630	Very high		
SaN1	Full-time	118	4.43	.685	Very high	-.674	.270
	Part-time	261	4.48	.671	Very high		
SaN2	Full-time	118	4.41	.695	Very high	19.188	.000
	Part-time	261	2.72	.979	Neutral		
SaN3	Full-time	118	4.49	.793	Very high	27.489	.000
	Part-time	261	2.08	.790	Low		
SoN1	Full-time	118	4.67	.472	Very high	-.315	.753
	Part-time	261	4.69	.465	Very high		
SoN2	Full-time	118	4.58	.528	Very high	-1.711	.089
	Part-time	261	4.68	.475	Very high		
SoN3	Full-time	118	4.57	.562	Very high	-1.508	.133
	Short-time	261	4.66	.506	Very high		
EN1	Full-time	118	4.68	.504	Very high	-1.085	.279
	Part-time	261	4.74	.467	Very high		
EN2	Full-time	118	4.58	.496	Very high	-1.095	.275
	Part-time	261	4.64	.482	Very high		
EN3	Full-time	118	2.89	.651	Neutral	-15.776	.000
	Part-time	261	3.98	.558	Very high		
Total	Full-time	118	4.30	.262	Very high	15.958	.000
	Part-time	261	3.84	.263	High		

$p < 0.05$

**Remark** Motivation level (1.00 – 1.80: very low; 1.81 – 2.61: low; 2.62 – 3.42: neutral; 3.43 – 4.23: high; 4.24 – 5.00: very high)

Firstly, table 3 indicated in the physiological needs dimension that both full-time and part-time students had very high motivation level in items **“The Vietnamese Studies Faculty is located at a convenient site; The lecturers have good teaching methods”** so there were not significant differences between them in two these items (Sig  $>0.05$ ). However, full-time students had higher motivation than part-time students in item **“The suitable learning program”** so there was a significant different between them in this item (Sig  $<0.05$ ).

Secondly, the safety needs dimension revealed that there was not a significant different between full-time and part-time students (Sig  $>0.05$ ) in item **“Vietnamese Studies Faculty is a reputable teaching place”** because both of them scored very high motivation. But, there were significant differences (Sig  $<0.05$ ) between them in two items **“Help students find well – paid jobs; With flexible timetable”** because full-time students score very high in both while part-time students scored neutral and low motivation.

Thirdly, there were not significant differences between them in all three items of the social needs dimension (Sig  $<0.05$ ) because both full-time and part-time students scored very high motivation level in the three items **“Can help me have more friends; To improve my skills of teamwork; To improve the knowledge and language”**.

Finally, the esteem needs dimension showed both full-time and part-time students had very high motivation level in two items **“To bring the respect of others; Can make me feel more confident”** so there were not significant differences between them in two these items (Sig  $>0.05$ ). However, full-time students had lower motivation than part-time students in item **“Can bring me to higher standing in the society”** so there was a significant difference between them in this item (Sig  $<0.05$ ).

Totally, there was a significant difference between them in four levels (Sig <0.05) because full-time students scored higher motivation (Mean = 4.30) than part-time students (Mean = 3.84).

#### 4. Discussion

With the physiological needs dimension, there were not significant differences between full-time and part-time students in items “**The Vietnamese Studies Faculty is located at a convenient site; The lecturers have good teaching methods**”, these differ from the hypothesis of the study. However, this result is understandable because the University of Social Science and Humanities is located in District 1 which is the central district of Hochiminh city. Other government offices, consulates of foreign countries, and foreign companies are nearby with high rise buildings and houses of ancient architecture concentrated in this district with convenient shopping. Some of is the largest and most beautiful places in the city are with high rise buildings and houses of ancient architecture, some left behind by France and the United States. In addition, the lecturers of Faculty of Vietnamese Studies always provide access to knowledge, fresh ways of thinking, and new teaching (Website of Faculty of Vietnamese Studies, 2012). These are two important points which attract both full-time and part-term students to study at the Faculty of Vietnamese Studies. However, for item “**The suitable learning program**”, there was a significant difference between them so this supports the hypothesis by showing that full-time students were satisfied with the courses, while part-time students said that the program was not diverse and somewhat inconsistent with the level of their Vietnamese ability (Website of Faculty of Vietnamese Studies, 2012).

With the safety needs factor, there was no significant difference between them in item “**Vietnamese Studies Faculty is a reputable teaching place**”. This differs from the hypothesis but it is consistent with the fact that Faculty of Vietnamese Studies is the most prestigious teaching Vietnamese place in Vietnam at present. In addition, with financial resources and facilities funded by the managing

board of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities as well as Hochiminh city National University, it ensures the sustainable operation of the faculty. Besides, the faculty always has relationships with a wide range of universities and research institutions both in the country and abroad. However, there was a significant different between them in two items **“Help students find well – paid jobs; With flexible timetable”**. These support the hypothesis because there are currently about 12,000 foreign workers from 73 countries working in Hochiminh city and the number has risen in the last two years; therefore, full-time students said that learning Vietnamese will help them have the opportunity to find a good job in Vietnam with a suitable salary, so most of them agreed with very high level in item **“Help students find well – paid jobs”**. However, only part-time students scored at the neutral level for this item because most of them are those who have jobs and for an objective reason they have to live in Vietnam such as: their companies open branches in Vietnam or they get married with Vietnamese, etc. In addition, full-time students also scored very high levels in item **“With flexible timetable”** so that point shows that they were very satisfied with class time as well as the number of hours for a session. As for part-time students, they scored at low levels to demonstrate that they were not satisfied because most of them are adults with jobs and only have time in class in the early morning or on Saturday, Sunday, etc...

With the social needs factor, there were not significant differences between them in all items **“Can help me have more friends; To improve my skills of teamwork; To improve the knowledge and language”**, so these differ from the hypothesis. Because of their studies, both groups of students also participate in social activities and the wider community to promote their capabilities as well as increase the knowledge of social and, communication skills and teamwork (Website of Faculty of Vietnamese Studies, 2012). In many cases, the students also participate in activities such as: music performances, sport for students, cultural festivals and, social work such as helping the poor, disabled children, solitary individuals, blood donation, etc. Therefore, participation in social activities as well as cultural exchanges with Vietnamese students has helped them improve

their communication skills in the Vietnamese language as well as to get a better, deeper grasp of the cultural and human dimensions of Vietnam.

With the esteem needs factor, there were not significant differences between them in two items **“To bring the respect of others; Can make me feel more confident”**, these also differ from the hypothesis. Full-time students confirmed that since they can speak Vietnamese and they have more confidence in front of the crowd, they can say their opinion confidently in front of their teachers and friends. Besides, Vietnamese friends also listen to their ideas or comments on a problem because they use Vietnamese. This helps people understand them and so they feel friendly and closer. It is also factor that allows them to gain respect from others. Part-time students also said that when they use Vietnamese they very easily make friends, learn from business partners, as well as easily exchange or debate their views in meetings in the company. All of this, makes them feel very confident in their work and in daily life. Besides, they found that they always get the respect from their partners and colleagues in the company when they speak or talk about work in Vietnamese. With item **“Can bring me to higher standing in the society”**, the majority of full-time students answered for this item at the neutral level because due to their age students find it is difficult to increase their social value and social status. But for part-time students, they scored at a very high level because they said when they speak Vietnamese fluently they can work at in a more professional manner, and there are always opportunities for innovations and new job skills. That makes them feel satisfied with the social values and makes them more likely to rise to higher positions at work in the future. Thus, there are significant differences between them in this item and this also supports the hypothesis.

## 5. Conclusion

In summary, we found that most full- time and part-time students demonstrated very high motivation, but part-time students had low motivation in item *“With flexible timetable”*. So to give them more motivation, the Faculty of Vietnamese Studies should apply this finding to revise the class time in a manner more suitable to part-time students.

## 6. Recommendation for implementations

The results shows that part-time students reach a low level of motivation in item **“With flexible timetable”**, average level in item **“The suitable learning program”** and **“Help students find well – paid jobs”** while full-time students reach average level in item *“Can bring me to higher standing in the society”*. As a consequence, the Faculty needs to take measures to enhance the students' motivation as well as meet their needs such as:

- to provide part-time students with a better service, the Faculty of Vietnamese Studies should apply the results of this study by providing a more varied schedule like offering Saturday and Sunday classes with the aim of fulfilling the students' needs and increasing their level of motivation for learning Vietnamese. Moreover, curriculum designers need to pay more attention to different fields of jobs, which is an important factor in attracting part-time students and increasing the number of students joining classes. Additionally, the students must be informed that mastering Vietnamese helps them to gain more new job opportunities, which means they can earn more than what they received with their current job.

- the Faculty's lecturers have to always welcome the full-time students' ideas, and reward or commend the students for their learning efforts to let them experience how learning Vietnamese at the University can help to boost their social values even if only on a small scale.

## 7. Limitation of the study

According to the definition and explanation of Maslow's needs theory, it is beyond the capacities of the university student reach level 5 (self-actualization) so the researcher eliminated this level in the questionnaire.

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