Ed Process Int J

www.edupij.com

ISSN 2147-0901 (Print), 2564-8020 (Online)

EDUCATIONAL PROCESS
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

Validation of a Vietnamese Questionnaire on English Learning Investment Among University Students

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Research Article

Cite this article: Trang, N. H. (2025). Validation of a Vietnamese Questionnaire on English Learning Investment Among University Students. *Educational Process: International Journal, 1X*, e2025581. https://doi.org/10.22521/edupij.2025.19.581

Received August 23, 2025
Accepted December 1, 2025

Keywords: Agency, engagement, learning investment, motivation, necessity, undergraduate students

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Abstract

Background/purpose. Accurate measurement is crucial for effective instructional methods. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to develop a reliable and validated Vietnamese questionnaire to assess Vietnamese students' learning investment across different aspects.

Materials/methods. This study adopted the English version of the questionnaire by Dauzón-Ledesma and Izquierdo (2023), which was then translated into Vietnamese. This four-point Likert-scale questionnaire was designed to measure language-learning investment among undergraduate students in Vietnam, to develop a new version for the Vietnamese context following validation. The questionnaire was delivered to 351 students from three universities in southern Vietnam.

Results. The results revealed four key dimensions: Motivation, Necessity, Engagement, and Agency in the instrument. The motivation dimension plays the most substantial role in boosting students' learning investment. Fewer items were observed in this validated version.

Conclusion. Motivation, necessity, engagement, and agency are conducive to students' learning investment, with more emphasis on motivation. The results also suggest redefining these dimensions to minimize cross-factor loadings, thereby leading to more refined dimensions for this construct.

1. Introduction

Under the influence of globalization, English has expanded in the modern era from a national language to an international one, establishing itself as a world language (Halliday, 2019). There are many reasons why English dominates the world's languages. Galloway et al. (2020) suggested that economic and multilingual factors primarily motivated learners to learn English. Peirce (1995) explained that students invest in language learning to build competencies that may lead to peer recognition, career prospects, or financial gains—outcomes that help justify the effort involved in the learning process. While Lu and Shen (2020) stated that immigrant students invest in learning a language as it is vital to their engagement in social interactions and integration into a community beyond the classroom, learning a language, in this case, is referred to as learning a second language in language teaching (Francis, 2022). The role of English has also been growing increasingly in higher education. Many schools have used English as a means or medium of instruction (EMI). Historically, EMI originated in Europe and has since rapidly expanded to other non-English-speaking countries, such as Asia (Altbach & Knight, 2007). The trend of using EMI in Asia follows two directions: for economic reasons and in regions with multilingual backgrounds (Baker & Hüttner, 2017; Kim et al., 2021). Moreover, English is compulsory in many schools, including those in Vietnam. Hence, the nature of learning and the investment in learning can differ, as stipulated by the school. As Dauzón-Ledesma and Izquierdo (2023) state, language learning investment typically yields favorable returns, leading learners to invest in it to reap positive benefits. The reasons mentioned above can become more apparent when learners invest in it for economic growth, cultural understanding, social integration, high scores, or to pass their mandatory classes.

In this context, English proficiency can become challenging for many learners. As stated by the National Development Council (2021), English proficiency has become an essential skill for students worldwide, as it is critical to academic success and career advancement in increasingly globalized markets. National governments and individuals worldwide increasingly regard teaching English to all students in public schools as a vital strategy for enhancing human capital, which underpins future economic growth and political influence (Wedell, 2011). However, helping learners improve English can be difficult in the EFL (English as a foreign language) context. According to Ozaki (2023) and Bezborodova and Radjabzade (2022), although English has become an international language, it remains primarily a foreign language that is not commonly used in everyday communication, especially in countries within the Expanding Circle, such as Vietnam, China, and Japan. Therefore, Darvin and Norton (2015) inquired into more research examining how learners deal with this additional language and whether they are motivated to learn and invest in it.

In Vietnam, Ho and Suppasetseree (2025) found in their study that Vietnamese students lack cognitive engagement and emphasized the crucial role of the learning support system in EFL investment. Phan and Huynh (2025) identified high motivation for learning EFL, but this motivation varies, and the teacher's support and role in fostering learners' autonomy are important for enhancing learners' investment in learning. In their review of EFL motivation across Asia, Loan et al. (2025) found that students' learning motivation varied across countries. Loi and Hong (2025) stated that teaching methodologies could also affect students' learning engagement.

As seen, there are several challenges for EFL learners in mastering English, so greater investment in learning can mitigate these challenges. The study, hence, aims to develop a Vietnamese Likert-scale questionnaire to explore the construct and dimensions of language that may foster investment in EFL learning. The study should contribute to the literature by understanding EFL learning investment in the Vietnamese higher education context. This result can also help educators and researchers design effective instructional programs and support systems that better support Vietnamese undergraduates in learning English as a foreign language. In addition, other countries may view this study as an example for developing a similar Likert scale to measure foreign language

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learning investment among university students in their languages in Expanding Circle countries. To achieve the study's aims, the study poses the following question: What dimensions are conducive to undergraduate students' investment in learning English as a foreign language in a compulsory context?

2. Literature Review

2.1. National policies related to foreign language teaching in Vietnam

In Vietnam, where economic integration and international business activities are rapidly expanding, English competency is particularly crucial for students pursuing business-related degrees. Due to the need for international integration, Vietnam's prime minister issued Decision No. 1400/QD-TTg. on September 30, 2008, approving the Scheme Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages/STALFL in the National Education System between 2008 and 2020" (Ministry of Education and Training or MOET, 2008). The goal is to renovate foreign language teaching and learning in the national education system, introducing new programs at all levels and training human resources to use foreign languages confidently by 2020 (Chinhphu.vn, 2024). However, as the program had not achieved satisfactory results, this project was extended for another period, as per Decision No. 2080/QD-TTg. was made on December 22, 2017, approving adjustments and supplements to the STALFL in the National Education System between 2017 – 2025" (Thư Viện Pháp Luật, 2017). These policies have led to the growing prevalence of IELTS preparation, the rise of second-career language teachers, and the emergence of communities of practice among English teachers (Tran–Thanh, 2025). Although these policies have supported the learning and use of English, many existing challenges need to be addressed, such as insufficient time allocated for teaching English skills, limited teaching materials and lesson plans, limited English proficiency, and inadequate English practice environments (Do, 2017; Nguyen, 2017; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2018).

Vietnam even aims to establish English as the second language for all general education students by 2035, with full implementation through 2045; announced on 7 March by the MOET, the plan seeks to integrate English as a key language for teaching and daily communication nationwide, while Vietnamese remains the official language (LaoTian Times, 2025; Viet Nam News, 2025).

2.2. Language Learning Investment Dimensions

Peirce (1995) regarded learning investment as a learner's willingness to learn something they believe will give them a good return on that investment. This concept of language-learning investment views motivation as a dynamic relationship between learners and the sociocultural contexts in which language learning occurs. Likewise, a language learner can be highly motivated but still lack investment in classroom or community language practices if these are exclusionary or if their views on good teaching differ from the teacher's. Thus, motivation alone does not guarantee investment in the language practices of a given setting (Darvin & Norton, 2023). A more recent model of investment proposed by Darvin and Norton (2015) views language learners' investment as being jointly influenced by ideologies (reflecting social factors, particularly power relations), capital (encompassing learners' resources and perceived benefits related to language learning), and identity (how learners position themselves). From this perspective, language investment can be enhanced by different factors. More specifically, learning investment can be affected by students' individual needs (Norton et al., 2020), engagement (Hiver et al., 2024), and agency (Harrison et al., 2013). In short, investment in language learning is not just about money or time; it is about motivation, expectations, and how learners perceive the value they will receive (Huber et al., 2022). In Vietnam's context, policies on STALFL can be seen as supportive; this social tendency makes a foreign language, mainly English, compulsory and worthy to learn.

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This study limited its learning investment to four dimensions: motivation, necessity, engagement, and agency, as outlined by Dauzón-Ledesma and Izquierdo (2023). This investigation examines whether these investment dimensions are suitable for learning English as a foreign language in Vietnam. First, motivation refers to the reasons that drive an individual's behavior toward achieving a goal. It directs intentions and actions (Brown, 2007; Darvin & Norton, 2023). Learning orientation refers to the underlying reasons for language learning, while motivation is the means that guides the learner's orientation toward the goal (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991). Ryan and Deci (2000) even classified motivation into two types: extrinsic motivation (doing something because it is inherently enjoyable or satisfying, with the activity itself serving as the reward) and intrinsic motivation (doing something to achieve an external outcome or reward, not because the activity itself is enjoyable). Huber et al. (2022) found that language-learning motivations are influenced by individual characteristics and broader country-level factors, and that learning motivation is closely connected to and inseparable from the learning process (Lăpădat & Lăpădat, 2023; O'Rorke & Ortony, 1994).

Necessity plays an important role in learning a foreign language. First, at the state level in Vietnam, Decision No. 1400/QD-TTg. Issued on September 30, 2008, the mandate enhances foreign language proficiency, particularly in English, across all educational levels in Vietnam, making it a must-learn language. Second, at the school level, Łącka-Badura (2021) said that studying a language is a requirement in their program. For instance, students enrolled in a business course need ESP to master their specific subjects effectively and pass the required exams. Therefore, the classroom teacher and curriculum developer must develop a learner-based, goal- and task-oriented approach to meet their specific needs. These necessities can also be influenced by individual motivation.

To explain this, the author would like to discuss the concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Learners may learn a language because they need to pass this language exam and obtain high scores or rewards (Deci & Deci, 1975). In this case, learners learn a language, possibly deriving from extrinsic motivation. This view sees engaging in an activity to achieve a separate goal: doing something now to obtain a desired outcome in the future, which ultimately leads to the end of motivation. However, Locke and Schattke (2019) argued that money should not be used as an extrinsic motivation reward because it means different things to individuals and groups. They consider extrinsic motivation to involve doing something to gain a future benefit or avoid a future loss. Acting with future goals is essential for happiness and survival, not inferior to other motivations (Locke, 2018; Locke & Schattke, 2019).

Regarding sociocultural backgrounds, outcomes, and expectations, Baker and Hüttner (2017) and Kim et al. (2021) noted that most learners study English for economic reasons, particularly in regions with prevalent multilingualism. These goals can be influenced by extrinsic motivation to some extent. On the other hand, learners with intrinsic motivation tend to learn a language to satisfy themselves rather than to gain external rewards (Deci & Deci, 1975). Even Locke and Schattke (2019) refer to intrinsic motivation as the pure pleasure derived from an activity independent of other factors.

The third factor to be considered is learners' engagement in language learning (Harrison et al., 2013). Engagement refers to learners' self-regulation, increased exposure, focus, and time spent contributing to the acquisition of skills and/or content knowledge associated with activities (Sundqvist & Uztosun, 2024). This definition features learners' actions for investment (Norton et al., 2020). This definition also includes Hiver et al.'s (2024) behavioral dimension of engagement, which focuses on learners' active, willing participation in a task. Regarding this willingness to invest, Sundqvist and Uztosun (2024) also validated a learning engagement scale for English learning that assesses how often learners voluntarily engage with English informally outside of school. Again, as discussed earlier, the different motivation types within an individual, as well as conditions such as

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personal needs, learning environment, and teaching methodology, can influence the intensity of each engagement. However, motivation itself will not lead to success without actual engagement. Engagement is a valuable process and outcome that fosters successful learning (Angelovska et al., 2021; Artamonova, 2020).

The last dimension related to language learning investment in this study is learners' agency (Harrison et al., 2013). Research on learners' agency in learning English as a foreign language remains in its early stages (Maretha & Waluyo, 2022). Harrison et al. (2013) defined learners' agency as actions students take to shape their own learning, thereby increasing their investment in the process. This definition highlights an association between agency and investment, as learners anticipate gaining valuable outcomes in exchange for the effort and time they devote to activities pursued with a clear goal (Dauzón-Ledesma & Izquierdo, 2023). An individual's engagement can be seen as the initial stage of agency, while an individual's acting and perseverance represent its final stages (Naderpour, 2022). In the same vein, learners' agency refers to actions driven by their own internal desires; agentic language learners typically act as active participants who shape and control their learning (Ranjan et al., 2021). Agency in higher education is seen as students' ability to access and utilize resources within their study environments—encompassing individual, interpersonal, and contextual factors—that enable them to engage in purposeful, intentional, and meaningful learning activities (Jääskelä et al., 2017). Maretha and Waluyo (2022) found an empirical link between learners' agency and English proficiency.

In summary, investment, motivation, necessity, engagement, and agency are interconnected during language learning, collectively supporting the learning process and achieving the learning goal. Goal achievement is akin to the so-called 'achievement motivation' described by Locke and Schattke (2019), which means wanting to do well. An individual can enjoy doing something and not care how well he or she does it. Dauzón-Ledesma and Izquierdo (2023) noted that agency involves greater effort, driven by initiative, determination, and perseverance.

2.3. English as a Foreign Language at University Level

My discussion here excludes English majors and related fields, such as English Education, English Studies, and English Teaching, which are typically studied in non-English-majored classes. English has been promoted in higher education worldwide in various forms, including CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), EMI, ESP (English for Specific Purposes), and EFL. While EMI prioritizes learning the subject matter through English instruction, the EFL approach focuses on learning a foreign language as a subject. Whereas CLIL aims to teach both content and the foreign language equally, its purpose is to make learners acquire the instructional language and content simultaneously. In contrast, ESP addresses learners' specific language needs (Thompson & McKinle, 2018). The amount of foreign language instruction in CLIL varies slightly across institutional contexts (May, 2017). Regarding CLIL and EMI, a university decides which strategy to choose contingent on its academic goals and the subjects in each field of study. They plan to improve both students' and content teachers' English proficiency to enhance their learning and teaching.

In Vietnam, English can still be a barrier for many EFL students. Tran (2020a) found that English classes in non-specialized programs need redesigning to shift their focus, incorporate more culturally oriented and interactive activities, and allocate more time and resources to better meet the diverse needs of tertiary-level teaching and learning. It was found that lecturers and students had many challenges with EMI in Vietnamese. Lecturers struggled mainly with students due to their limited English proficiency, while students felt pressured by final exams conducted in English (Pham et al., 2023; Tran, 2020b). Students also noted difficulties arising from the scarcity of textbooks, a heavy curriculum, limited time, and ineffective teaching methods. Despite government efforts to improve English, shortages of qualified teachers, low proficiency, grammar-focused exams, and Confucian

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teaching methods have hindered effective learning (Bang, 2024). Regarding global debates about the investment in language learning, many scholars encourage future research to examine how learners invest in their foreign language learning in higher education. For example, a motivated language learner may still have a low investment in a classroom or community if it holds discriminatory views or if their idea of sound teaching clashes with the teacher's approach (Darvin & Norton, 2023).

Based on these perspectives, this study aims to explore the learning investment of undergraduate students in English within the mandatory curricula at both state and school levels, so that participants recognise the importance of learning English during their education and understand that personal motivation and attitudes influence the quality of language learning. It is hoped that this will help learners and related stakeholders understand learners' learning investment and, to some extent, address English learning and teaching challenges in Vietnam.

3. Methodology

3.1. Materials and stages involved

In the first stage, the author obtained ethics approval for this research from the Department of Research-Development and Global Engagement (Approval No. 3742/NCPTGKTC, dated August 25, 2025). The study used the English version of the questionnaire by Dauzón-Ledesma and Izquierdo (2023), which consists of 51 items distributed across four dimensions, rated on a four-point Likert scale (1: Totally Disagree, 2: Partially Disagree, 3: Partially Agree, and 4: Totally Agree). Next, the author translated the questionnaire following Brislin's (1980) guidelines for back-translation to ensure the accuracy of the English-to-Vietnamese translation and vice versa. This technique has been used in many studies, e.g., by Hsieh et al. (2021). The study examined the questionnaire's content validity, as it is crucial for obtaining reliable data (Almohanna et al., 2022). Thus, the author, with a background in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, translated the questionnaire into Vietnamese. Then, the translated version was sent to her colleague, who holds a master's degree in English Education and a doctorate in Applied Linguistics, for review of meaning and clarity. Finally, the improved translated version was sent to another lecturer, who holds a bachelor's degree in English Education and a master's in educational psychology, for review. In the second stage, the author conducted the pilot test. The purpose is to gather participants' opinions on the clarity of the questionnaire items and the survey timing. To have the participants for the pilot test, the author contacted a classroom teacher who teaches General English at a university. Then, he helped organise this survey meeting. For the online pilot test, participants were invited to complete the survey honestly during their break time, and they were willing to do this. The author then asked them to provide feedback on the items, and they expressed satisfaction with the questionnaire, suggesting no additional information was needed. However, they estimated that the survey would last approximately five to seven minutes. SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 25 (IBM, 2017) was used to analyze data from both the pilot and official tests.

Regarding the pilot test results, no missing data were found, and Cronbach's alpha (α) was 0.97, suggesting that the questionnaire items are consistently related to one another and measure the same underlying construct.

In the third stage, after scrutinizing the pilot's results, the author finalized her decision and officially sent invitations to non-English-major students at three universities via the classroom teachers' media network.

3.2. Participants and sampling

This study used the participant recruitment method following previous scholars, such as Dauzón-Ledesma and Izquierdo (2023), Hsieh et al. (2021), and Merritt (2024), who used convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling technique in their studies, to select the study participants who

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are easiest to access or reach while still targeting the expected population groups. The specific information was presented in Table 1 below. For the official survey, 351 students from three different universities in southern Vietnam were recruited. This population sample reached the criterion of 'good' (DeVellis & Thorpe, 2021; de Winter et al., 2009). In addition, their majors vary, e.g., Finance and Banking, Business Administration, Tourism, Management of Tourism and Travel Services, Corporate Accounting, Marketing Technology, International Business and Banking, and Digital Business.

The group was homogeneous in terms of their nationality but heterogeneous in terms of their fields of study and university locations. Both the author and participants agreed that the consent was informal, meaning no formal consent forms were obtained from participants. After the participants listened to the classroom teachers' instructions and read the survey's guidance, the students were willing to explore the survey items. During the break interval, the classroom teachers remained in the room to guide the students in answering the online survey questions until they had completed it. After two days, the author collected enough samples to validate the questionnaire.

Table 1. Demographic information

Sampling	Number of participants	351
Gender	Male	30.2%
	Female	69.5%
Year of study	First-year students	78.1%
	Second-year students	17.7%
	Third-year students	4.3%
Ages	18-20	86.3%
	21-22	12.5%
	Over 22	1.1%

As seen in Table 1, the sample is large enough for the questionnaire validation. The majority of the participants are female (69.5%). Participants aged 18-20 make up most of the population (86.3%). Regarding the year of study, the majority were in their first year of study (78.1%).

3.3. The Questionnaire

The author translated the adopted questionnaire, including four dimensions: motivation (11 items), necessities (9 items), engagement (20 items), and agency (11 items). Although the author acknowledges that other factors can influence learning investment, she was unable to explore additional dimensions that may affect the learning investment in learning EFL due to time and context constraints. For instance, learners may exert greater effort if they value the language they are learning (Ali, 2021; Darvin & Norton, 2023). Learners' self-efficacy can also influence learning engagement. For example, learners' confidence in completing a task helps enhance their learning engagement (Bandura, 1999; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). Their goal orientation can also influence their learning engagement (Mai, 2024).

Likert-type scales are widely used, though they can vary in the number of response options or points (Sundqvist & Uztosun, 2024). It can be a three-point scale (De Wilde & Eyckmans, 2017), a four-point scale (Toffoli & Sockett, 2010), a five-point scale (Peters et al., 2019), a six-point scale (Lai et al., 2015), and a seven-point scale (Busby, 2021). A Likert-scale questionnaire was deemed appropriate for exploring these dimensions, as such scales enable social science researchers to measure opinions, attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions (Iwaniec, 2019). Regarding simplicity and clarity, fewer points (e.g., three- or four-point) simplify decision-making for respondents, reducing cognitive load and sometimes encouraging clearer choices. Hence, the author follows the work of

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Dauzón-Ledesma and Izquierdo (2023), who developed a four-point scale to explore undergraduate students' learning investment in learning English as a compulsory foreign language.

In this study, participants were instructed to respond to a series of prompts in Vietnamese by selecting an ordinal value on a four-point Likert scale (ranging from 1: 'strongly disagree' to 4: 'strongly disagree'), with a total of 51 items.

3.4. Analysis Procedures

The missing values were handled using the SPSS version 25 Missing Value Analysis - EM before the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted. The study follows the extraction method proposed by Watkins (2021). Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) was selected to identify the underlying structure of the observed items because the present data did not meet the assumption of normality. Then, the Rotation Method with Promax, using Kaiser Normalization, was employed. Although the default loading value of 0.30 (Costello & Osborne, 2005) was applied, this study used a benchmark of 0.50 to ensure better validity. The author used this analytical advice to determine whether to retain or remove items and the number of factors, based on data from the pattern matrix. When conducting EFA with oblique rotation, the pattern matrix is considered the most appropriate for evaluating item loadings and making decisions about item retention or removal, as it reflects the unique contribution of each item to the factors while controlling factor intercorrelations (Watkins, 2021). This approach aligns with best practices in psychometric research and scale validation (Almohanna et al., 2022; Boateng et al., 2018). Any factors with one or two items, items with factor cross-loadings, or below the benchmark were removed from the analysis (Costello & Osborne, 2005).

4. Results

The KMO value of 0.892 suggests strong adequacy for factor analysis. The significant Bartlett's Test ($p < .001$) confirms that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix, which further validates the suitability of the data for EFA analysis (Sürücü et al., 2022). The study labelled M for motivation, N for necessity, E for engagement, and A for agency. After rotating the matrix, nine dimensions (D) were extracted. Of these, six dimensions are qualified, and the other three were excluded as they contain two items and are therefore deemed unsuitable for confirmatory factor analysis. However, when examining the items in these six qualified dimensions, the two dimensions still contain mixed items between factors or dimensions. For example, D1 contains Item M4 and E3-6, and D4 contains M5, E11, E12, E19, and E20 (Refer to the appendix). Hence, the author removed these dimensions, resulting in four dimensions for analysis of this construct, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Dimensions of learning investment

	Loading	α	Eigenvalues	Total% of variance
D1: Motivation		.818	6.980	30.795
M2: I am very perseverant in completing my English class activities.	.503			
M3: I enjoy the time I spend on my English activities.	.674			
M7: I am very enthusiastic about learning English	.888			
M8: I enjoy doing English activities.	.882			
M10: I am interested in studying English more than other subjects.	.514			
D2: Necessity		.770	1.896	6.416
N1: I need English to communicate with other people.	.666			
N2: I need English to interact with people from other cultures.	.730			

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N3: I need English to be part of communities from other countries.	.541			
N4: I need English to obtain a scholarship.	.549			
N5: I need English to have access to updated information.	.503			
N6: I need English to get a well-paid job.	.652			
D3: Engagement		.812	1.714	5.969
E13: I make an effort to complete the reading exercises, even if they are difficult for me.	.535			
E14: I do all the writing exercises, even if I have to spend a lot of time on them.	.566			
E15: I make an effort to speak English during class even if I don't feel confident.	.640			
E16: I do my best to understand what others say, even if it is difficult.	.507			
D4: Agency		.813	1.333	3.934
A1: I search for videos on the Internet to improve my English.	.556			
A2: I look for readings in English (internet, magazines, or books) to complement what I see in English class.	.564			
A3: I watch movies with English subtitles to improve my listening comprehension.	.626			
A5: In my free time, I listen to English songs to improve my English.	.531			
A7: Outside of the classroom, I use applications on my cell phone with English games to improve my vocabulary.	.694			
A8: If I use apps on mobile devices, I can improve my English grammar.	.820			

Table 2 presents the EFA findings for the learning investment construct, comprising four dimensions: motivation, necessity, engagement, and agency. Each dimension includes a set of items with factor loadings greater than 0.50, indicating a strong relationship with the respective latent variable (Raubenheimer, 2004). The α values for all four factors range from 0.770 to 0.818, suggesting high internal consistency. The Motivation dimension, with the highest eigenvalue (6.980), explains 30.80% of the total variance and includes items reflecting students' interest, enjoyment, and enthusiasm for learning English. Kaiser (1960) suggested retaining all factors or dimensions with eigenvalues greater than 1. The Necessity dimension explains 6.42% of the variance and reflects students' perceived need for English in their academic, social, and professional lives. The Engagement dimension accounts for 5.97% of the variance and includes items measuring students' effort and persistence in English learning activities. Finally, the Agency dimension contributes 3.93% of the variance and represents students' self-initiated actions to improve their English outside the classroom, such as using mobile apps and media content. The cumulative variance explained by these four factors is 47.11%, which is considered acceptable in social science research (de Winter et al., 2009).

The study defines discriminant validity as the extent to which constructs, factors, or dimensions are measured as intended, and each construct, factor, or dimension is genuinely distinct from the others (DeVellis & Thorpe, 2021). It shows that each factor or dimension captures something unique, without overlapping or duplicating measurements across factors or dimensions. Table 3 below shows the result of the dimension correlation matrix.

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Table 3. Dimension correlation matrix

Dimensions	1	2	3	4
1: Motivation	1.000	.487	.601	.461
2: Necessity	.487	1.000	.520	.409
3: Engagement	.601	.520	1.000	.542
4: Agency	.461	.409	.542	1.000

As shown in Table 3, Promax with Kaiser Normalization is a common oblique rotation technique. For oblique rotation, the correlation between any two factors should not exceed 0.70 (Beauducel & Hilger, 2023). If factor correlations exceed 0.70, it may suggest that the factors are too similar (not sufficiently distinct), which can be a problem for discriminant validity. All correlations in the table (between .409 and .601) are below 0.70, which means the factors are reasonably distinct and meet the discriminant validity criterion.

5. Discussion

Compared to the original questionnaire about learning investment, with Motivation dimension (11 items), Necessity dimension (9 items), Engagement dimension (20 items), and Agency dimension (11 items), this validated version has fewer items with Motivation dimension (5 items), Necessity dimension (6 items), Engagement dimension (4 items), and Agency dimension (6 items). As a result, the initial 51-item scale was refined to a 21-item scale in the Vietnamese version. This study offers a psychometrically sound instrument for assessing learning investment. These findings can be explained as follows:

Notably, the Motivation dimension is the strongest predictor in this model, explaining 30.80% of the variance. These findings align with the growing recognition of motivation as a primary driver of language learning investment in prior research (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Huber et al., 2022). However, motivation alone does not guarantee investment in language practices (Darvin & Norton, 2023). According to Huber et al. (2022), motivation is shaped by both personal traits and wider national factors, and learning motivation is deeply intertwined with the learning process, making them inseparable (Lăpădat & Lăpădat, 2023; O'Rorke & Ortony, 1994).

Next is the Engagement dimension, which explains 5.97% of the variance. However, based on the analysis, the Engagement dimension was divided into three subdimensions, and only one of these contained all the items from the Engagement dimension; therefore, this dimension was retained.

Notably, the other two Engagement dimensions included items from Motivation. Hence, this result may suggest that when an item intended for the Motivation dimension appears to load on the Engagement dimension, it reflects a common challenge in scale validation, particularly in cross-cultural contexts. Motivation and engagement, though theoretically distinct, often overlap in empirical settings due to their close conceptual relationship (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Hiver et al., 2024). This overlap reflects a common challenge in cross-cultural research, where respondents' interpretations of constructs may vary due to linguistic and cultural factors (Nguyen et al., 2023; Brislin, 1980). In the Vietnamese context, this overlap may be exacerbated by differences in how respondents interpret these constructs linguistically and culturally (Nguyen et al., 2023).

The third dimension, Necessity, explains 6.41% of the variance. Learning EFL should be important in Vietnam. First, as supported by the STALFL campaign, English is compulsory at all educational levels (Chinhphu.vn, 2024; MOET, 2008; Viet Nam News, 2025). However, necessity alone cannot help much in learning engagement without learning motivation. Second, like many other countries, Vietnam emphasises the importance of English, which is believed to broaden academic knowledge and research, and especially to boost its economic competitiveness worldwide. Nonetheless,

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challenges such as a shortage of qualified teachers, low proficiency levels, and exams focused on grammar (Do, 2017; Nguyen, 2017; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2018).

The final dimension is Agency, explaining 3.93% of the variance and showing the least influential factor for EFL learning investment. This result can be attributed to the learning culture influenced by the Confucian-based learning and teaching methods (Bang, 2024). As described by Truong et al. (2017), this culture features social distance and power relationships, making teachers powerful knowledge transmitters, while Harrison et al. (2013) defined learners' agency as the actions students take to influence their own learning. Agentic language learners are usually proactive participants who take charge of and influence their learning (Ranjan et al., 2021). In addition, in higher education, agency is claimed to work well when students can access and make use of resources in their learning environments (Jääskelä et al., 2017).

Overall, the four dimensions explain 47.11% of cumulative variance for learning investment, indicating a moderate level of explanation (de Winter et al., 2009). When a questionnaire originally structured with four dimensions was translated into Vietnamese and administered to Vietnamese respondents, it yielded more dimensions—in this case, nine—due to several potential reasons. First, cultural and linguistic differences often lead respondents to interpret items in ways that reveal finer distinctions among underlying factors, thereby making the factor structure more complex (Nguyen et al., 2023; Brislin, 1980). This can challenge questionnaire developers to propose to construct equivalence across languages and cultures, where conceptual clarity and relevance must be carefully ensured (Boateng et al., 2018; DeVellis & Thorpe, 2021). Second, EFA with matrix rotation can reveal latent sub-dimensions that were not originally specified in the source version. Different rotation techniques produce item loadings on distinct factors, sometimes splitting broad dimensions into multiple, more specific ones based on empirical data (Costello & Osborne, 2005; Watkins, 2021). This suggests that the Vietnamese context may require a more nuanced model to capture respondents' perspectives accurately. Therefore, the increase to nine dimensions underscores the importance of thorough scale adaptation, including cultural validation and possible refinement of the theoretical model to fit the target population's conceptualization of the constructs (Iwaniec, 2019; Hiver et al., 2024).

In addition, respondent heterogeneity can reduce the number of items in each dimension. The Vietnamese student sample may have different levels of exposure, motivation, or engagement patterns than the original population, making some items less relevant or consistent across the two groups. Differences in perceived language proficiency, socio-economic background, or fields of study could influence how items perform (Hiver et al., 2024; Lu & Shen, 2020; Mai, 2024).

Finally, psychometric fit and model specification can reduce the number of items per dimension. The factor structure assumed in the original questionnaire may not fit the Vietnamese data perfectly, necessitating the removal of items to improve model fit and clarity (Boateng et al., 2018; Costello & Osborne, 2005; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2018; Taber, 2018; Watkins, 2021).

6. Conclusion

This study successfully developed and validated a Vietnamese-language four-point Likert-scale questionnaire measuring undergraduate students' investment in studying English as a foreign language in a compulsory context in Vietnam. The EFA applied the four dimensions: motivation, necessity, engagement, and agency, with motivation explaining a significant portion of the model for language learning investment. These dimensions align well with theoretical models and reflect key socio-cultural and educational factors shaping English learning investment among Vietnamese students. The findings highlight nuanced differences in how language-learning investment is conceptualized and experienced in the Vietnamese context compared to the original English version of the instrument. Additionally, in this context, fewer items were identified in each dimension,

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needing consideration. Although the original questionnaire was validated based on responses from undergraduates studying English as a foreign language, the item reduction in the Vietnamese context raises concerns. The original questionnaire was developed and validated in Mexico. Hence, the context differs from the Vietnamese culture.

7. Limitations and Recommendations

7.1. Limitations

The study has some limitations to consider. First, students were recruited from three universities in southern Vietnam; the use of convenience samples may limit the generalizability of the findings. Second, other influential factors can be incorporated into the construct, such as self-efficacy, goal orientation, academic nature, and socioeconomic status. Third, this study employed a self-report questionnaire, which may lead to inaccurate responses due to response bias, such as social desirability bias and variations in participants' perceptions, understanding, and interpretations of learning investment. Finally, the context-dependent nature of language learning investment can change over time and locally; therefore, longitudinal research would be beneficial for understanding how investment evolves in response to educational and societal changes. Moreover, definitions of the investment dimensions need to be refined and more focused. Finally, more constructs should be incorporated to examine how students learn English in their specific contexts, rather than focusing solely on learning investment.

7.2. Recommendations

Based on the validated Vietnamese version of the English learning investment scale, educators and policymakers should consider contextual and cultural factors—particularly the influence of Confucian educational values that emphasise respect for authority, collective harmony, and effort-based achievement. Practitioners should design learning environments that optimise learning investment in EFL, balancing traditional respect for authority with opportunities for active participation and valuing autonomy. English teachers can use this validated version as a diagnostic tool to monitor students' motivation and engagement and to tailor instructional interventions accordingly.

Future research may want to conduct CFA to verify the factor structure identified in this study and test the stability of the reduced Vietnamese version. It can also be a good idea to further validate this questionnaire across different regions and student groups in Vietnam. Comparative studies between Confucian-influenced and non-Confucian contexts could also help identify how cultural frameworks shape learning investment differently.

8. Implications

The result of this validated questionnaire can be adopted in higher education with a similar context. However, future questionnaire developers may want to improve the questionnaire by assigning greater weight to motivation to better understand the motivational and behavioral factors influencing English-learning investment among Vietnamese university students. In addition, the results urge questionnaire developers in Expanding Circle countries to consider their own contexts when investigating university students' investment in English as a foreign language. It can help educators identify students' specific needs and tailor instructional strategies that foster stronger motivation, engagement, and learner agency. Finally, for thoughtful considerations in questionnaire development, Bryman (2016) and DeVellis and Thorpe (2021) emphasized that developers should consider length, as excessive length can fatigue respondents, often resulting in lower data quality and higher dropout rates. However, the questionnaire still needs to capture the necessary information to ensure validity and reliability.

https://doi.org/10.22521/edupij.2025.19.581 Published online by Universitepark Press

Declarations

Author Contributions. Nguyen Huynh Trang wrote the manuscript and made revisions based on her colleagues' comments.

Conflicts of Interest. The author declares no conflict of interest.

Funding. Not applicable

Ethical Approval. This research complies with the ethical guidelines and standards set forth by the University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The ethical considerations have been reviewed and approved to ensure the protection of participants' rights and well-being. By adhering to these principles, we affirm that the primary data used in this submitted research is free from collecting any personal information and poses no harm to the respondents. Respondents were given a clear explanation of the questionnaire's purpose and asked to confirm their voluntary participation. The study maintains the confidentiality of the students' names. The goal of this work is to consider how to optimize students' learning investment in English as a foreign language in Vietnam and, possibly, in other EFL contexts.

Data Availability Statement. The data were provided upon request.

Acknowledgments. I extend my gratitude to the University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City (UEH), Vietnam, for their financial grant supporting this research.

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Appendix I.

Motivation dimension
M1: I am interested in having the materials prepared for the class.
M2: I am very perseverant in completing my English class activities.
M3: I enjoy the time I spend on my English activities.
M4: I enjoy solving the English exercises that the teacher gives us.
M5: I think speaking English in front of my classmates makes me nervous.
M6: I recognize that solving the English activities involves an effort that I am willing to make.
M7: I am very enthusiastic about learning English.
M8: I enjoy doing English activities.
M9: I am proud to be able to conclude the class activities successfully.
M10: I am interested in studying English more than other subjects.
M11: I believe that the investment of time and money to learn English is well worth it.
Necessity dimension
N1: I need English to communicate with other people.
N2: I need English to interact with people from other cultures.
N3: I need English to be part of communities from other countries.
N4: I need English to obtain a scholarship.
N5: I need English to have access to updated information.
N6: I need English to get a well-paid job.
N7: I need English to get a job abroad.
N8: I need English to access technology.
N9: I need English to earn more money by demonstrating more competencies than others.
Engagement dimension
E1: Attending English classes regularly is important to me.
E2: Having the material that I need for the class is a priority for me.
E3: Doing well on the work that is assigned to me during class is a worthwhile endeavor.

E4: Doing the homework is useful for me to review what I covered in class.
E5: Paying attention to the teacher's explanations is necessary for me.
E6: Doing the written activities that are assigned by the teacher is useful to me.
E7: Participating in the assigned speaking activities increases my speaking confidence.
E8: Taking notes during class makes me feel confident.
E9: Listening attentively when my classmates participate is important to me.
E10: Copying the activities from my peers implies less effort to me.
E11: Waiting for others to respond to the teacher's requests prevents me from stressing out.
E12: I study the materials the teacher gives me, even if they are not of interest to me.
E13: I make an effort to complete the reading exercises, even if they are difficult for me.
E14: I do all the writing exercises, even if I have to spend a lot of time on them.
E15: I make an effort to speak English during class even if I don't feel confident.
E16: I do my best to understand what others say, even if it is difficult.
E17: I speak English with my classmates outside of the class, even if I don't feel confident.
E18: I speak English with the teacher outside of the class, even if it's hard for me.
E19: I complete the English classroom activities, even if I feel uncomfortable with them.
E20: I study just enough to pass the exams.

Agency dimension

A1: I search for videos on the Internet.
A2: I look for readings in English (internet, magazines or books) to complement what I see in English class.
A3: I watch movies with English subtitles to improve my listening comprehension.
A4: I participate in online communities of videogame players to practice my English.
A5: In my free time, I listen to English songs to improve my English.
A6: I take English classes at other institutions to enhance my English language learning.
A7: Outside of the classroom, I use applications on my cell phone with English games to improve my vocabulary.
A8: If I use apps on mobile devices, I can improve my English grammar.
A9: If I am involved in my learning, I will increase my proficiency level.
A10: I learn more independently if there is virtual interaction with other people.
A11: My confidence increases as my level of performance in communicating in English improves.

https://doi.org/10.22521/edupij.2025.19.581 Published online by Universitepark Press