

## An Investigation into Non-English Major Students' Problems in Taking Aptis Listening and Reading

Tran Quang Hai

Hoa Sen University, Vietnam

Corresponding author's email: [hai.tranquang@hoasen.edu.vn](mailto:hai.tranquang@hoasen.edu.vn)

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### ABSTRACT

**Keywords:** non-English major students, problems, Aptis listening, Aptis reading.

In order to standardize non-English major students' English skills, Hoa Sen University develops English-language graduation criteria at the B1 level on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The university adopted Aptis as a standardized examination since it was created by British Council specialists in language testing and is based on the most recent assessment research. Therefore, the students have a continual struggle to obtain suitable Aptis test scores. Within the boundaries of the study paper, the objective of the piece was to identify the challenges that students commonly experience when doing two Aptis components: listening and reading. The participants are 67 non-English major students enrolling in Aptis preparation courses for the summer semester of 2021. After the pre-test, the first online questionnaire was sent out, and the second was delivered immediately following the post-test. After that, the data's average value, percentage, and standard deviation were calculated. Despite the fact that the Aptis pre-test caused substantial problems in every category, there were substantial changes in students' views after the post-test. Furthermore, students believed that the classes assisted them in improving their vocabulary, grammar, and confidence.

### Introduction

According to research conducted by the British Council (2014), the English language education industry has increasingly focused on the role of English in boosting student employment performance, particularly in Asian nations where English for professional development is more examined (Erling & Seargeant, 2013). In response to the growing need for English skills, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) undertook a series of top-down and bottom-up reforms, including the National Foreign Languages Project (NFLP) 2020, with the objective of putting English to the advantage of Vietnamese graduates (Bui & Nguyen, 2016). As a part of

NFLP 2020, significant efforts have been made to fundamentally reform language assessment and testing methods, including the establishment of the national foreign language proficiency framework, the Vietnam Foreign Language Framework (VFLF), which is compatible with the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR) (Nguyen et al., 2018). To be conferred a bachelor's degree, non-English majors must obtain level 3 of the VFLF, which is comparable to a B1 CEFR level (Phuong, 2017). Under this program, students can choose from a range of English proficiency examinations established by national or international testing organizations (Le, 2017). While most exams were paper-based assessments a few years ago, the trend toward computer-based tests is growing by the day (Chapelle & Voss, 2016). Although the British Council first introduced Aptis in Vietnam in 2013, it is widely regarded as the revolutionary new English language testing and assessment tool because it provides an innovative new tool to help organizations reach more people, connect with them, and raise English language standards (British Council, 2018). As a result, several institutions and colleges around the nation, notably Hoa Sen University, have begun utilizing Aptis to measure students' output English skills. In order to support students in taking Aptis, some preparation courses have been conducted. However, the question of whether these preparation courses are sufficient for students is not properly investigated. Hence, the purpose of this page is neither to describe the differences between a computer-based exam and a paper-based exam nor to list all four skills used by the Aptis test to assess English proficiency. In other words, the current study aimed at identifying student difficulties in taking Aptis listening and speaking tests. Also, the effectiveness of the preparation course would be considered from students' perspectives.

## Literature review

### *Problems of Listening comprehension skills*

Several research studies focused on the various issues and obstacles that language learners encounter listening comprehension. Underwood (1989) addressed listeners' experience in understanding what they heard more than three decades ago. As a result, the following are some potential roadblocks: (1) Listeners cannot always repeat words throughout the listening task, (2) the listener lacks vocabulary, (3) the listener may not understand the signs that the speaker is going from one concept to another, and (5) the listener may lack knowledge base.

According to Goh (2000), listening comprehension challenges are difficulties that listeners experience during the three phases of perception, parsing, and utilization. Listeners' failure to detect intonation, stress and varied accents in a speech stream is the first cause of perception difficulties (Anderson, 1995). Listeners are confronted with numerous primary obstacles at this phase: phonological and lexical issues. In addition, learners' listening comprehension may be harmed by rapid speech speeds and unfamiliar terminology. Moreover, in addition to parsing issues, listening comprehension processing can also have syntactic and semantic issues. Listeners may not be able to construct a mental representation from the words heard since they forget what they've heard quickly. Finally, utilization addresses the issues that EFL/ESL

students frequently confront when it comes to discourse. Listeners, for example, may struggle to recognize the overall structure of ideas in a text. In a research conducted by Nguyen (2021) on listening skills training using Google Classroom, the students reported that they considered Google Classroom to be helpful and convenient. However, the lack of Internet connectivity and the device's limited capability in enabling contact between students and teachers prompted two concerns.

Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) discovered that unexpected listening themes might also impede students' listening comprehension while investigating listening comprehension in TOEIC exams. Furthermore, the issue might be caused by the listeners' capacity and the audio quality (Anandapong, 2011). Chonprakai (2009) claims that due to the rapid speed of the recordings, test-takers cannot recognize the main concept; even native speakers' normal speaking speed is too fast for them to comprehend. Another study by Khamprated (2012) found that the issues are still in the regional accent, which has an impact on the answers.

#### *Problems of Reading comprehension skills*

Aside from listening comprehension, a wide range of research has been conducted on the concerns students have with reading comprehension. Tokunaga (2008) discovered that participants were unable to comprehend the meaning, grasp, and identify the main concept of the passage owing to a lack of vocabulary when studying test takers' issues with the reading comprehension component of the English test. He went on to explain that most test-takers obtain poor scores as they lack the essential test-taking techniques and strategies.

Furthermore, according to Cohen (200), test takers lacked reading comprehension abilities and could not comprehend the reading exam's material. Garcia, Ramayan, Sepe, and Silor (2014) discovered that test participants forgot the vocabulary they had acquired while assessing their reading tasks. Many additional research studies (Hall, 2012; Zuhra, 2015; Tartila et al., 2013) found that a lack of vocabulary has a significant impact on reading ability, in which grammatical knowledge is one of the major elements. Students have difficulties with long and complicated texts containing a variety of review phrases, according to Zuhra (2015). When it comes to reading comprehension, especially when taking a test, students struggle to construct good sentences that are cohesive and consistent with the text. As per Atikah (2009), if students have a sufficient vocabulary and strong grammatical comprehension, the length of the text would not be an issue, and they will be able to quickly grasp and answer the question. The research of Bui (2021) showed that in order for learners to successfully read information from the Internet, it is necessary for them to first establish their reading goals. Learners themselves should be self-sufficient and possess strong independent learning abilities. Furthermore, because of the large quantity of diverse material available on the Internet, learners are required to grasp accurate websites and succinct information. Tokunaga (2008) discovered that the participants were unable to comprehend the contents of the reading texts and grasp and identify the major concepts included within them.

Furthermore, the exam takers have a restricted understanding of language. Furthermore, Cohen (2006) points out that the test takers do not have enough reading comprehension abilities and do not comprehend the topic of the reading exam in question. Tokunaga (2008) believes that many test-takers get poor results because they lack sufficient understanding of the exam's methods and tactics. The provision of TOEIC preparatory training for test-takers, according to Sewell (2005), maybe one of the answers to the issues highlighted. Previous research has mostly focused on two main factors that lead students to fail reading comprehension tests: a lack of vocabulary and an inadequate grammatical basis.

Because there has been relatively little research on Aptis, particularly on Aptis reading and listening, some prior studies on difficulties experienced by test-takers on the TOEIC exam were utilized as the basis for this study's literature review. Furthermore, the discussion of difficulties that learners experience in their listening and reading comprehension skills is presented with the goal of clarifying the issues that students confront in their learning.

#### *Aptis is a Standard English Language Proficiency Test*

The British Council developed Aptis to provide institutions with English as a Second or Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) assessment services for a variety of requirements, according to Zheng and Berry (2015). The test values are represented as a scale of scores (0-50) or a level of difficulty (CEFR). Grammar and vocabulary, reading, listening, writing, and speaking are the five components of the Aptis test. As a contestant, one must prepare for fundamental grammar and vocabulary, which are both essential (Aptis Candidate Guide, 2018). Many Aptis activities are available on the internet to help individuals learn what they need to accomplish. The following two components are particularly discussed in this article.

In terms of the reading component, there is a total of 35 minutes allocated for this section, which is divided into four parts. The first part is sentence comprehension, in which the candidates complete the sentences by selecting one right answer from a three-choice multiple-choice question. The second part of the test is text cohesion, in which students must arrange sentences in the correct sequence to create a story out of seven jumbled sentences. Part three focuses on comprehending brief texts, in which candidates build sentences by selecting the most appropriate word from a list. The fourth element is a lengthy text comprehension task in which the test takers must match headings to paragraphs. There are seven paragraphs and eight headings as a whole (Aptis Candidate Guide, 2018).

#### *Previous studies on students' perceptions towards problems with Aptis*

Test-takers' views of Aptis, according to Jin & Cheng (2013), may have influenced their performance. Their responses tended to concur that the speaking test was tough, but they disagreed about the difficulty of the other four activities. This disparity raises the question of how closely test takers' perceptions of task difficulty correspond to the real difficulty of individual problems and the entire exam. Brown's (1993) research participants mentioned a number of variables that contributed to the difficulty of these exams, including the test length. Unfamiliar terminology, the speed of voices on the tape, the lack of voices on the tape,

confusing prompts, too much input data to assimilate, and lack of familiarity with the task type are all factors that attributed to the test results not being as predicted, as per this study. When compared to other international examinations, participants rate Aptis lower than IELTS, TOEFL, and GRE. While the Aptis test has some similarities to other tests, it also has notable differences. All exams appear to be designed to fully evaluate listening, speaking, reading, writing, and other English abilities, according to test takers. Aptis may represent the participants' linguistic ability, they realized. The Aptis exam is seen to be more closely connected to ordinary life and communication, as indicated in the questionnaires and interviews, which is congruent with Aptis' original objective. Aptis, as previously said, strives to deliver a flexible, cheap, and trustworthy English language evaluation for practical applications such as recruiting and career development (O'Sullivan, 2012).

Previous research only looked at test-takers views of the overall difficulties they had when taking the Aptis exam in its entirety. However, no study has been done on the issues that students' issues when taking Aptis listening and reading examinations, particularly the changes that students undergo after taking an Aptis preparation course. As a result, research of these underappreciated concerns is required.

#### *Effectiveness of preparation courses for English language tests*

Because there has been almost no previous research on this issue in relation to Aptis, it is necessary to cite papers related to preparation courses for other standardized tests. The majority of research on the impact of test preparation on language exams has concentrated on two main testing systems, TOEFL and IELTS. A study conducted by Ward and Xu (1994) looked at the impact of summarizing skills training on TOEFL results. A 6-week training program on summarizing abilities using written materials resulted in a 5 standard deviation score increase on the TOEFL for participants. Nguyen (2007) examined the impact of a preparatory course on the TOEFL iBT Listening and IELTS Listening exams. Nguyen found that test preparation had an impact on the IELTS and TOEFL iBT scores. Hayes and Read (2004) found a strong positive connection between test preparation and IELTS Listening test results in another research.

#### *Research Questions*

This research seeks to investigate the students' issues in taking Aptis listening and reading in light of the current situation and the gap in the literature described above. As a result, the research question is as follows:

What are Hoa Sen University students' experiences and perceptions of Aptis listening and reading issues before and after the Aptis preparation course?

## Methods

### *Pedagogical Setting & Participants*

During the summer semester of the academic year 2021, 80 students registered in three Aptis preparation courses at Hoa Sen University in Ho Chi Minh City. The study included 67 non-English major students who completed the pre-test and post-test questionnaires.

In this research, the convenience sampling approach was used (also known as Haphazard Sampling or Accidental Sampling). Convenience sampling is a kind of non-probability or non-random sampling in which members of the target population are included in the study if they meet certain practical criteria, such as accessibility, geographic closeness, availability at a specific time, or a willingness to participate. Captive subjects, such as students in the researcher's own organization, are prominent examples of convenience sampling (Dörnyei, 2007).

### *Description of Aptis preparation course*

All of the participants enrolled in EIC6 courses, HSU's highest level of English for non-majors. The EIC program uses Aptis as its output standard. To satisfy Hoa Sen University's English requirements, EIC 6 students must obtain a CEFR B1 level or above with an Aptis score of 90 to 200. Specifically, in terms of listening abilities, the students can follow clear speech directed in ordinary conversation in a familiar accent; typically follow the major points of extended discussions that people speak clearly; generally follow the main points of extended discussions if people speak clearly; follow TV shows on topics of personal interest when people speak clearly; and understand the information in announcements. Regarding reading skills, students can grasp the essential points in simple texts on personal or professional interests, recognize content that may be of practical value, and comprehend the significant points in short, clear, formal letters related to personal and professional interests.

### *Design of the Study*

The descriptive study was employed in this research since the goal of this study was to find out how students felt about their APTIS issues before and after the preparation course.

### *Research Instrument*

The questionnaire was employed as the primary research tool due to the nature of the survey research and the goal of this study. Questionnaires are primarily employed in quantitative research, according to Rowley (2014), especially when researchers seek to investigate behaviors, attitudes, frequencies, or views on certain scales. Furthermore, Creswell (2014) found that questionnaire surveys can assist researchers in collecting huge volumes of data in a short amount of time. Furthermore, it is advised that the questionnaire might take many different forms, such as paper, mail, or internet forms, specific to the research cost. The questionnaire for this study was created in the form of a Google form and distributed to participants over the Internet. Multiple-choice questions were used to gather responses for students' information. Other responses regarding their difficulties were tallied using a 5-point Likert scale ranging



from "1" strongly disagree to "5" strongly agree. The data were evaluated for Mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) and Standard deviation (SD) after it was collected (Std.).

In terms of designing the research instrument, the questionnaire was adopted and adapted from the study of Kantarin et al. (2013). The modifications were implemented to make the research more suitable. In order to examine the effectiveness of the preparation course on students' perception towards the difficulties in taking Aptis test listening and speaking, there were two versions of questionnaires. Particularly, the first questionnaire was distributed to the student at the beginning of the preparation course, and the second one was distributed after they finished the course. In addition, before and after taking the preparation course, the students were required to take the simulation tests, which had the same format and level of difficulty as the original Aptis test. Therefore, the questionnaires were distributed after the students took these two simulation tests.

The first online questionnaire was divided into two sections, each containing 18 questions. Section 1 asked participants about their gender, experience, and preparation for the Aptis reading and listening test before they started the course. Apart from analyzing difficulties during the reading and listening in section 1, the second section also contained questions about students' opinions of the Aptis preparation course in section 2.

### *Validity & Reliability*

Some approaches were employed in the research to assure the research's validity and reliability. The questionnaire has been modified and adjusted based on Kantarin's study (2013), as indicated in the "Research Tools" section. Then, with 67 participants, a questionnaire survey was undertaken to determine the measuring capabilities of all items. After that, minor improvements were made to the questionnaire to generate the final version. In the discovery part, further approaches connected to the statistical indicators in the program will be discussed.

## **Results/Findings**

### *Descriptive Statistics*

Table 1.

Students' genders

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	25	37.3
Female	42	62.7

Table 1 shows a total of 67 students from three EIC 6 courses took part in the study. The females outnumbered the men by a ratio of 42 to 25.

Table 2.

## Students' experience in Aptis

Question	Responses	
	Yes	No
Have you taken Aptis listening and reading before?	7	60
%	10.4	89.6

Table 2 reveals that just 7 students had previously taken an Aptis test, with the majority (60) having never done this.

Table 3.

## Students' preparation for Aptis

Question	Responses		
	Not yet	A little	Well-prepared
How much did you prepare for the test?	15	51	1
%	22.4	76.1	1.5

Table 3 depicts the students' Aptis preparation. Only 4 students were well-prepared, 15 of them did nothing, and the remaining 76% did a little.

*Students' problems with listening pre-test*

Table 4.

## Students' problems with listening pre-test

Questions		Mean	Std.	Level
1	You don't understand the instructions	3.76	1.06	high
2	While listening you were translating into Vietnamese	3.97	0.97	high
3	You had to skip a question or section due to still answering the previous one.	4.22	0.97	high
4	The unfamiliar voices were a problem.	3.94	0.99	high
4	The time between each listening was long enough.	3.70	1.09	high
6	The lack of vocabulary was a problem in the test.	4.09	0.81	high
7	You don't have enough time to check your answers	3.49	1.08	moderate
	Average	3.9	1.00	

Table 4 depicts the students' perspectives on the Aptis listening pre-test. In general, the students believed they had major issues with the pre-test in every subject. There are 2 factors that stand out: skipping a question or section ( $\bar{X} = 4.22$ , Std.= 0.99) and the lack of vocabulary ( $\bar{X} = 4.09$ , Std.= 0.81). However, when asked if they thought the exam gave them adequate time to check their responses, the average level of agreement was attained ( $\bar{X} = 3.49$ , Std.= 1.08).



*Students' problems with reading pre-test*

Table 5.

Students' problems with reading pre-test

Questions	Mean	Std.	Level	
1	You don't understand the instructions	2.08	0.99	low
2	While read, you had to translate into Vietnamese	3.48	1.02	moderate
3	You had to skip some questions because you didn't understand the reading texts.	3.61	0.98	high
4	The time for reading texts was not long enough.	3.40	1.16	moderate
5	The lack of vocabulary was a problem in the test.	3.94	1.09	high
6	You don't have enough time to check your answers.	3.27	1.12	moderate
7	You don't understand the questions.	2.92	1.03	moderate
8	Having understood the questions, you were still unable to find the answers.	3.24	1.21	moderate
	Average	3.2	1.08	

Table 5 displays the results of the analysis of the students' perceptions of their pre-test reading difficulties. The participants rated their pre-test reading difficulties as moderate on average ( $\bar{X} = 3.2$ , Std. = 1.08). With the greatest average score (3.94) and a standard deviation of 1.09, the absence of vocabulary fell into the high agreement zone. When taking examinations, it appears that many students tended to translate texts and questions into their home tongue ( $\bar{X} = 3.48$ , Std. = 1.02). The lack of time to finish texts was rated at 3.40, with a standard deviation of 1.16, indicating that some students strongly agreed with this statement. Furthermore, a lack of time to double-check your answers and an inability to locate the answers are still major issues. On the contrary, just a small number of students indicated that they did not comprehend the exam instructions ( $\bar{X} = 2.08$ , Std. = 0.99).

*Students' problems with listening post-test*

Table 6.

Students' problems with listening post-test

Questions	Mean	Std.	Level
1 You don't understand the instructions	1.50	0.66	low
2 While listening, you were translating into Vietnamese	2.40	1.01	low
3 You had to skip a question or section due to still answering the previous one.	2.74	1.60	moderate
4 The unfamiliar voices were a problem.	2.51	1.38	moderate
4 The time between each listening was long enough.	2.13	0.96	low
6 The lack of vocabulary was a problem in the test.	2.18	1.326	low
7 You don't have enough time to check your answers	2.29	1.107	low
	2.25	1.15	

Table 6 reflects the students' perceptions concerning their difficulties with the Aptis post-test listening. The students, overall, had a low opinion of their post-test issues ( $\bar{X}=2.25$ , Std.=1.15). The number of students who agreed with the difficulties they faced reduced significantly as compared to the pre-test. Only a tiny fraction of participants believe they did not comprehend the exam instructions ( $\bar{X}=1.50$ , Std.=0.66). Unfamiliar voices ( $\bar{X}=2.51$ , Std.=1.38) and skipping questions ( $\bar{X}=2.74$ , Std.=1.60) were decreased from "high" to "moderate."

*Students' problems with reading post-test*

Table 7.

Students' problems with reading post-test

Questions	Mean	Std.	Level
1 You don't understand the instructions	1.37	0.75	low
2 While reading, you had to translate into Vietnamese	3.49	1.02	moderate
3 You had to skip some questions because you didn't understand the reading texts.	2.54	1.19	moderate
4 The time for reading texts was not long enough.	2.37	1.25	low
4 The lack of vocabulary was a problem in the test.	2.22	1.23	low
6 You don't have enough time to check your answers.	2.50	1.32	moderate
7 You don't understand the questions.	2.56	0.82	moderate
8 Having understood the questions, you were still unable to find the answers.	3.29	1.24	moderate
Average	2.54	1.10	moderate

The students' perceptions of their issues with the Aptis reading post-test are shown in Table 7. Overall, the students had a moderate perception of their issues ( $\bar{X} = 2.64$ , S.D.=1.10). When compared to the pre-test, the number of participants who agreed with the questions is likewise significantly lower. Concerning translating texts and questions into Vietnamese ( $\bar{X} = 3.29$ ), it appears that some students still had significant difficulty, while the percentage of students who were unable to answer questions remains around 3.2 standard deviation is at 1.24. Other issues have a tendency to diminish or drastically decrease consent.

### *Students' Opinions on Aptis Preparation Course*

Table 8.

#### Students' Opinions on Aptis Preparation Course

Questions	Mean	Std.	Level
1 The Aptis lessons gave you more confidence in taking the test.	3.85	0.885	high
2 The lessons improved your test-taking strategy.	3.63	0.809	high
3 The lessons improved your vocabulary.	3.97	0.810	high
4 The lessons improved your grammar and structure.	4.28	0.619	high
5 The lessons improved your listening skills.	3.68	0.969	high
6 The lessons improved your reading skills.	3.74	0.857	high
7 The course was long enough.	3.68	0.953	high
8 You are confident of scoring at least 90 in a real Aptis test.	2.71	1.134	moderate
9 Practicing listening and reading tests in Aptis format on Mlearning helps you to be more confident.	3.85	0.80	high
	3.71	0.87	

Table 8 shows that the students had a high level of agreement with the Aptis preparation course's provision ( $\bar{X} = 3.71$ , Standard = 0.87). The only thing that sticks out is the confidence in scoring 90 on an actual test with an average of 2.71 (Std. = 0.80).

There was a decrease in agreement on not comprehending the exam instructions in terms of listening abilities, with the average decreasing from 3.76 to 1.50. This demonstrates that classroom practice, as well as activities on the Mlearning system, had assisted students toward becoming used to the method of performing listening comprehension skills. Similarly, a lack of vocabulary was cited as a difficulty in the listening section, which dropped from 4.10 to 3.66. Other challenges, such as skipping questions, a lack of vocabulary, or hearing strange voices, had a considerably lower average rate. Apparently, the course equipped students with critical test-taking abilities and methods, as well as new vocabulary and exposure to various native-speaker accents. Elsewhere in the reading section, students virtually failed to translate texts and questions into Vietnamese, with a pre-test average of 3.48 and a post-test average of 3.49. Similarly, comprehending the question but not being able to discover the correct answer maintained the average at 3.2. This demonstrates that students' tendency to translate when

reading passages for exercises is an issue that should be carefully considered when designing a course, and teachers should work on improving students' background knowledge and test-taking capacities. Hence, students may determine the most appropriate response once they have grasped the question. Other issues with reading comprehension abilities improved noticeably. The comments of the students on the course were almost unanimous. Many students, in particular, felt that preparing listening and reading examinations in Aptis format on mlearning helped them gain confidence. However, the majority of students remain skeptical that they will get a score of 90 or better on the Aptis exam. This is reasonable since students may be concerned about the differences between the sample exam and the actual examination, as well as other affecting elements such as sound quality, nerves, and so on.

## Discussion

The study's objective was to discover the challenges faced by non-English major students at Hoa Sen University when taking the Aptis reading and listening test. It is possible to detect a number of issues that kids have with both listening and reading comprehension skills in the literature.

Students' issues with listening comprehension included a lack of vocabulary, grammar, background knowledge, and grasping the notion that the speaker is attempting to express. These are inextricably linked to previous research by Underwood (1989), Anderson (1995), and Goh (2000). Additionally, one of the most difficult problems for students was dealing with a variety of voices, which is comparable to Khamprated's study (2012). Finally, the findings of this study reveal that most students translate into their mother tongue, which is comparable to what Kantarin et al. (2013) discovered. There was a deficiency in vocabulary, which has been confirmed as having a significant impact on reading skills in earlier studies (Hall, 2012; Zuhra, 2015; Tartila et al., 2013). The grammatical understanding was also identified as a barrier in the study, which is similar with Zuhra's findings (2015).

Aside from these similarities, this study has shown several noteworthy findings. First, this is one of the few studies on the Aptis test's reading and listening comprehension skills. Although there is a great deal of research on reading and listening comprehension, as indicated in the introduction and literature review, there is practically little study on the issues that students' issues with these two skills on the Aptis exam. Second, the study also demonstrates how students' perceptions of the challenges they encounter when taking the test vary before and after they take a preparation course. Finally, this study was carried out in the setting of COVID-19, when students were required to complete all of their coursework online. The pre-and post-test questionnaire replies provided a diverse variety of outcomes, indicating that the Aptis preparation course may significantly improve students' academic performance. At the beginning of the course, students in three EIC 6 classrooms had insufficient knowledge and experience taking the Aptis test; however, this improved substantially as the course continued. The post-test results were significantly higher than the pre-test results. The concerns raised in this study will be useful to instructors and educators when creating a course with the objective

of improving Aptis exam outcomes. Cohen (2006) found relatively similar findings as this research when he looked at students' difficulties in taking TOEIC tests. According to the author, a better learning approach for students is to encourage them to improve their English language abilities rather than simply providing them with exam preparation courses. As a result, pupils' lack of vocabulary knowledge is a significant issue, and greater focus should be placed on improving vocabulary knowledge before providing test preparation instruction. Furthermore, Sewell (2005) proposes that additional TOEIC vocabulary training for test-takers be implemented as one of the answers and that instructors should offer students with instructions and methods for taking the exam (Tokunaga 2008). The study's drawback is that it only involved 67 students in three classes during the summer semester of 2021. Investigations with a larger sample size and research into two additional skills, speaking and writing, are required.

## Conclusion

The research revealed the problems non-language majors at Hoa Sen University had with the Aptis listening and reading components. Through convenience sampling, 67 people were recruited. Pre-test and post-test questionnaires were provided to participants over the internet, based on prior research. Students were asked to complete online surveys to identify the difficulties they experienced and understand how their perceptions of these issues changed before and after the preparatory course. The results from the data analysis were given in detail in the findings section and compared to other research to determine the study's originality. With an increasing number of educational institutions using the Aptis exam to measure students' English output standards, this study can be viewed as valuable. However, larger-scale surveys incorporating the remaining Aptis test components should be undertaken.

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**Biodata**

*Tran, Quang Hai is currently an English lecturer at Hoa Sen University, Vietnam. His accumulated experience from working at various educational institutions has equipped him with ample confidence and skills in language teaching. His interests are Linguistics, Virtual Communities, and Teaching Learning Practices.*