

# Changes in Teaching Activities of General English and Evaluation Criteria Proposals at Sai Gon University

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Received: June 26, 2023

Accepted: August 8, 2023

Online Published: September 4, 2023

doi:10.5430/wjel.v13n8p84

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v13n8p84>

## Abstract

To explore the positive changes in teaching activities for General or non-specialist English and proposals for evaluation criteria at Sai Gon University, a methodological approach involving listing, describing, and synthesizing was employed. This approach aimed to identify the changes in non-specialist English teaching activities in the context of modern technology and the proposals for evaluation criteria that enhance the capabilities of both lecturers and students at Sai Gon University.

The purpose of the article is to clarify the effects of changing the results of non-specialist English learning and teaching at Sai Gon University and evaluation criteria in lecturers' teaching capacity and students' language learning ability at Sai Gon University.

The modifications in teaching tasks and assessment standards, as well as the results of the research through tables of changes in English skills outcomes in non-English majors at Sai Gon University and changes in the lecturer's teaching activities as well as student learning activities in non-specialized English teaching activities at Sai Gon University.

The article serves as a valuable reference for researchers investigating changes in educational activities and evaluation criteria within the field of language teaching.

**Keywords:** changes in teaching activities, non-specialist English teaching, evaluation criteria, Sai Gon University

## 1. Introduction

According to the Education Dictionary by Hien (2013), evaluating learning outcomes involves assessing the degree to which learners have acquired knowledge, skills, and techniques as compared to the requirements of the training program. The assessment encompasses the daily learning outcomes, as well as the results obtained from periodic tests and summative tests, which gauge the proficiency in knowledge, skills, and techniques related to each module.

Furthermore, in this section, author Hien (2013) explicitly highlights that evaluation requirements primarily focus on assessing the depth of understanding and the sustainability of knowledge, skills, and techniques in comparison to the standards set by the Training Program. Therefore, the assessment of learning outcomes serves as a crucial component in a lecturer's final evaluation of a learner's progress within a specific timeframe. During this assessment process, lecturers often make judgments and draw conclusions regarding the quality and proficiency level of the learners.

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has brought about significant changes in educational activities, driven by advancements in science and technology. Presently, the epidemic situation in Vietnam and other countries across the globe is nearly under control, and life has returned to normal. However, educational institutions, including Sai Gon University, continue to embrace digital transformation and maximize the application of modern scientific techniques in teaching and learning activities. This approach enables both lecturers and students to effectively adapt to the new circumstances of the country during its period of integration and development.

## 2. Sai Gon University Background Information

The predecessor of Sai Gon University is the Southern Vietnam Secondary School of Pedagogy, which was established in February 1972 at the base of the Central Department of the South. Ho Chi Minh City Pedagogical College was established according to Decision No. 1784/QD dated September 3, 1976 of the Prime Minister.

In April 2007, according to the Decision of the Prime Minister, Sai Gon University was established on the basis of upgrading the Ho Chi Minh City Pedagogical College. Sai Gon University is a public education and training institution under the People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City, under the State management of Education of the Ministry of Education and Training with the mission of "providing high-quality human resources to meet the requirements of the Human Resource Development Plan for Ho Chi Minh City and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam".

Sai Gon University is a multi-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary training school (technical, economic, cultural, social, political,

pedagogical) with many forms of training: formal training, in-service training, in-service system, second degree, etc. Graduating from Sai Gon University, learners are granted degrees: professional intermediate, Bachelor, Engineer, Master, Doctorate.

Currently, Sai Gon University is organizing training for:

- 1.05 Doctoral training majors.
- 2.12 Master's Degree Programs.
3. 03 majors of international training.
4. 33 majors of Formal Training.
5. 03 regular college majors.
6. 07 majors Second degree training.
7. 07 majors in-service training (university full time).
8. 19 majors in-service training (university transfer).
9. 21 types of short-term training.

In terms of organization, the University currently has 01 Rector, 01 President of the School Council and 03 Vice Principals, 15 functional departments; 04 affiliated units; 06 centers; 02 research institutes; 19 Faculty of Training. Sai Gon University meets the quality standards of higher education institutions according to the standards of the Ministry of Education and Training.

In addition to the degree training, Sai Gon University is also allowed to train and grant certificates of Information Technology and Foreign Languages; Certificates of information technology application; Pedagogical Certificate; Professional certificates of equipment - library work; and other short-term training certificates.

The operating facilities of Sai Gon University include:

1. Head office: 273 An Duong Vuong, Ward 3, District 5, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.
2. Facility 1: 105 Ba Huyen Thanh Quan, Vo Thi Sau Ward, District 3, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.
3. Facility 2: 04 Ton Duc Thang, Ben Nghe Ward, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.
4. Campus 3: (Sai Gon Practical Primary School) 20 Ngo Thoi Nhiem, Vo Thi Sau Ward, District 3, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.
5. And Sai Gon Practical High School, 220 Tran Binh Trong, Ward 4, District 5, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

From the inception, Sai Gon University has determined its mission in accordance with its functions, tasks, resources and development orientation. The project of establishing Sai Gon University has clearly identified the suitability and coherence with the development strategy based on the short-term and long-term development plans up to 2020 and continue to 2035.

Mission: Sai Gon University is a public institution of higher education and scientific research, training human resources to meet the socio-economic development requirements of Ho Chi Minh City as well as whole Vietnam.

Vision: Sai Gon University innovate and contribute to the development of higher education in Vietnam, striving to 2035 to develop Sai Gon University into a research-oriented university that meets international standards.

Objectives: To build, develop and improve the quality of all aspects of Sai Gon University's activities to ensure sufficient conditions for international integration, contributing to meeting the socio-economic development goals of Ho Chi Minh City, specifically:

The objective of the non-specialist English training program was developed by the Faculty of Foreign Languages on the basis of the framework program issued by the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam and regulations and guidelines of Sai Gon University. The objectives of the non-specialist English training program are clearly defined, consistent with the mission and vision of Sai Gon University, and the goals of higher education specified in the Law on Vietnam Higher Education.

In addition, the output standards of the training program are also clearly defined, covering both general requirements and specific requirements that learners need to achieve after completing the training program. The output standards of the non-specialist English training program reflect the requirements of stakeholders, which are periodically reviewed, adjusted and publicly announced.

By 2020, Sai Gon University had a high rank in application-oriented higher education institutions with the optimal rank in application-oriented higher education institutions in Vietnam.

In the period from 2021 to 2025, Sai Gon University will reach the national higher education institution standard, the educational institution standard of the quality assurance network of Southeast Asian universities; establish basic scientific research institutions and applied research institutions in Vietnam.

In the period from 2026 to 2035, Sai Gon University will basically complete a number of preparation steps for a research-oriented university; access to international curriculum standards and educational institutions.

### 3. The Situation of Teaching and Learning English for Non-Specialists at Sai Gon University

#### 3.1 The Task of Teaching Non-Specialist English Courses

Non-specialized English courses are assigned as follows:

Table 1. Non-specialized English courses assigned to teach

Serial number (No)	Subjects	Class/course	Management Faculty
1	Enhanced English I	30	Department of foreign language
2	Enhanced English II	30	Department of foreign language
3	English I	30	Department of foreign language
4	English II	30	Department of foreign language
5	English III	45	Department of foreign language

We have compiled a list of 5 non-specialized English courses designated for the 1st semester of the 2022-2023 school year. Additionally, our school has strategically allocated these courses across the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd semesters, including an extra semester (intensive semester III), in order to alleviate pressure and reduce stress caused by a high number of student registrations and ensure better concentration within each class.

#### 3.2 Changes in Learning Outcomes Through Sai Gon University's Non-Specialist English Skills

Students at Sai Gon University are admitted to the entrance exam in accordance with the regulations set by the Ministry of Education and Training. The majority of these students have demonstrated commendable academic performance during their high school years and possess a strong eagerness to learn.

Based on surveys conducted, the learning outcomes of students enrolled in non-specialized English courses have been progressively evolving in recent years. However, they still exhibit a tendency to undervalue common subjects in comparison to their major courses, leading to certain limitations when compared to the intended targets. For the survey, the author selected classes from the 2018-2019 school year (prior to the implementation of digital transformation) and the 2021-2022 school year (post digital transformation), involving a total of 350 students. The detailed results of this survey are presented in the following table.

Table 2. Changes in English skills outcomes in non-English majors

No	Subjects	Students/course	Skills	10 score scale	Results in 2018-2019		Results in 2021-2022	
					Students	%	Students	%
1	Enhanced English I, II	50	Listening	Good ≥ 8.0 - 10	0	0,0	5	10,0
				Fairly good ≥ 6.5 - 7.9	7	14,0	10	20,0
				Average ≥ 5.0 - 6.4	28	56,0	32	64,0
				Below average < 5.0	15	30,0	3	6,0
			Speaking	Good ≥ 8.0 - 10	0	0,0	3	6,0
				Fairly good ≥ 6.5 - 7.9	11	22,0	15	30,0
				Average ≥ 5.0 - 6.4	23	46,0	29	58,0
				Below average < 5.0	16	32,0	3	6,0
			Reading & writing	Good ≥ 8.0 - 10	0	0,0	3	6,0
				Fairly good ≥ 6.5 - 7.9	12	24,0	17	34,0
				Average ≥ 5.0 - 6.4	25	50,0	28	56,0
				Below average < 5.0	13	26,0	2	4,0
1	English I	100	Listening	Good ≥ 8.0 - 10	7	7,0	9	9,0
				Fairly good ≥ 6.5 - 7.9	22	22,0	27	27,0
				Average ≥ 5.0 - 6.4	52	52,0	61	61,0
				Below average < 5.0	19	19,0	3	3,0
			Speaking	Good ≥ 8.0 - 10	12	12,0	13	13,0
				Fairly good ≥ 6.5 - 7.9	26	26,0	27	27,0
				Average ≥ 5.0 - 6.4	57	57,0	58	58,0
				Below average < 5.0	5	5,0	2	2,0
			Reading & writing	Good ≥ 8.0 - 10	6	6,0	8	8,0
				Fairly good ≥ 6.5 - 7.9	14	14,0	17	17,0
				Average ≥ 5.0 - 6.4	69	69,0	70	70,0
				Below average < 5.0	11	11,0	5	5,0
3	English II	100	Listening	Good ≥ 8.0 - 10	10	10,0	12	12,0
				Fairly good ≥ 6.5 - 7.9	23	23,0	25	25,0
				Average ≥ 5.0 - 6.4	54	54,0	56	56,0
				Below average < 5.0	23	23,0	17	17,0
			Speaking	Good ≥ 8.0 - 10	11	11,0	13	13,0
				Fairly good ≥ 6.5 - 7.9	24	24,0	25	25,0
				Average ≥ 5.0 - 6.4	58	58,0	60	60,0

			Reading & writing	Below average < 5.0	7	7,0	2	2,0
				Good ≥ 8.0 - 10	7	7,0	9	9,0
				Fairly good ≥ 6.5 - 7.9	16	16,0	17	17,0
				Average ≥ 50 - 6.4	69	69,0	71	71,0
			Listening	Below average < 5.0	10	10,0	3	3,0
				Good ≥ 8.0 - 10	14	14,0	15	15,0
				Fairly good ≥ 6.5 - 7.9	29	29,0	30	30,0
				Average ≥ 50 - 6.4	53	53,0	54	54,0
4	English III	100	Speaking	Below average < 5.0	4	4,0	1	1,0
				Good ≥ 8.0 - 10	12	12,0	13	13,0
				Fairly good ≥ 6.5 - 7.9	27	27,0	29	29,0
				Average ≥ 50 - 6.4	55	55,0	58	58,0
			Reading & writing	Below average < 5.0	5	5,0	0	0,0
				Good ≥ 8.0 - 10	15	15,0	16	16
				Fairly good ≥ 6.5 - 7.9	20	20,0	21	21
				Average ≥ 50 - 6.4	60	60,0	63	63
<b>Total</b>		350	Listening	Below average < 5.0	5	5,0	0	0,0
				Good ≥ 8.0 - 10	31	8,6	41	11,4
				Fairly good ≥ 6.5 - 7.9	81	22,5	92	25,6
				Average ≥ 50 - 6.4	187	52,0	203	56,4
			Speaking	Below average < 5.0	61	16,9	24	6,6
				Good ≥ 8.0 - 10	35	9,7	42	12,0
				Fairly good ≥ 6.5 - 7.9	88	24,5	96	27,4
				Average ≥ 50 - 6.4	193	53,6	205	58,6
			Reading & writing	Below average < 5.0	33	9,2	7	2,0
				Good ≥ 8.0 - 10	28	8,0	36	10,3
				Fairly good ≥ 6.5 - 7.9	62	17,7	72	20,6
				Average ≥ 50 - 6.4	223	63,7	231	66,0
				Below average < 5.0	37	10,6	11	3,1

From the results of Table 2, it can be seen that the number of students who obtained the survey results on listening, speaking, reading and writing skills of non-specialized English in the academic year 2021 - 2022 is higher than the results of the academic year 2018 - 2019.

In listening skill, the number of students achieving excellent level increased by 2.8%, good level increased by 2.9%, average level increased by 4.4%, and below average level decreased by 10.3%.

In speaking skill, the number of students achieving excellent level increased by 2.3%, good level increased by 3.1%, average level increased by 5%, and below average level decreased by 7.2%.

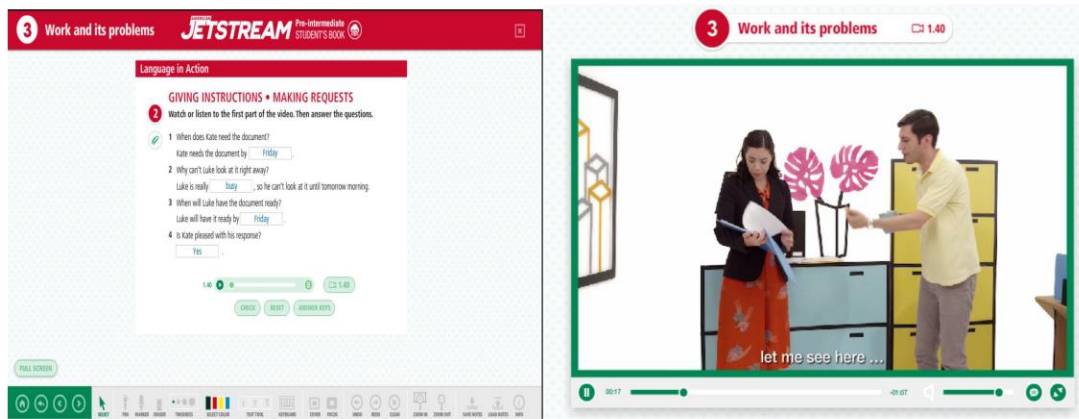
In reading and writing skills, the number of students achieving excellent level increased by 2.3%, good level increased by 2.9%, average level increased by 2.3%, and below average level decreased by 7.5%.

This proves that the application of digital technology in teaching activities is one of the important and necessary issues in the process of improving the quality of teaching and learning at Sai Gon University.

### 3.3 Changes in Non-Specialized English Teaching Activities at Sai Gon University

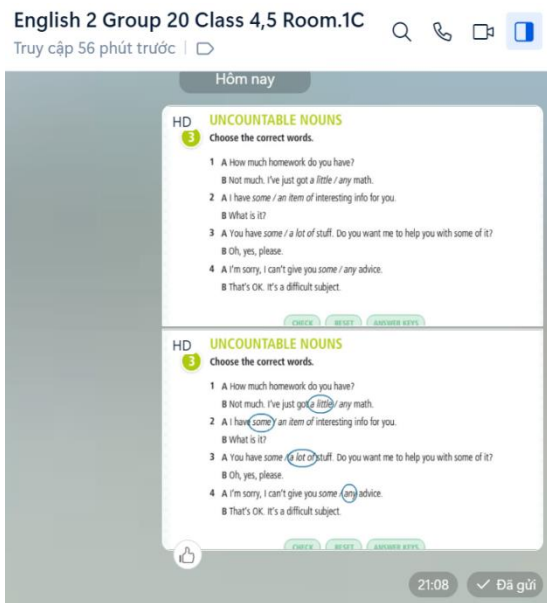
#### 3.3.1 In the Lecturer's Teaching Activities

Since the onset of the pandemic, the extensive integration of cutting-edge digital media into teaching activities has created a more comfortable and stimulating learning environment for both lecturers and students. Visual aids relevant to the lesson content are presented, complemented by engaging video clips and vivid imagery. These elements have significantly contributed to enhancing students' ability to absorb knowledge during the learning process. For example: We timely used the American Jetstream textbooks in non-specialized English teaching. The authors' these books are Jane Revell & Mary Tomalin. They were published by Helbling Languages Publishing House. American Jetstream textbooks are one of series of 6-level digital application books: American Jetstream - Elementary A/B (Student's book & Workbook). American Jetstream - Pre-intermediate A/B (Student's book & Workbook), American Jetstream - Intermediate A/B (Student's book & Workbook). These are brand new books for adults. The books are installed through the EZON Learning software system with its own code, so teachers and learners can teach and learn anytime, anywhere. The American Jetstream books are carefully balanced in pacing and challenges to provide a fun learning experience that encourages students to use English effectively in work and life.



Picture 1. Non-specialized English teaching content

The interaction between lecturers and students has become easier, faster, and more convenient, transcending physical limitations and allowing for seamless engagement anytime and anywhere. Lecturers actively foster cooperation and knowledge exchange in teaching non-specialized English, both within and outside their subject area, utilizing platforms like Zalo, Facebook, and internet groups, ect. Example:



Picture 2. Lecturer post assignments and answer keys on the Zalo Group

Furthermore, lecturers consistently incorporate real-life situations into classroom practices. They employ advanced teaching methodologies alongside modern technical tools, resulting in positive changes in teaching quality and improved student learning outcomes. The application of software in teaching activities grants lecturers greater convenience in designing group discussions, hypothetical scenarios, and problem-solving exercises to foster active engagement among students. This approach facilitates active English usage in class, thereby enhancing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

Lecturers find it effortless to create assignments, provide reminders for exercise completion, offer feedback, and share scores with students through technological applications. Additionally, digital technology's modern features enable lecturers to closely monitor students' progress and learning outcomes.

Example: Lecturers must be proficient in customizing forms for students to submit their work.

Picture 3. Customizing forms for students to submit their work

- Submission types: The lecturer can ask students to submit assignments or tests through online text or file submission, or both.
- Online text: Students will enter text content into the text input box.
- File submissions: Students will submit one or more files of their work.
- Word limit: If you choose the online text submission method, the lecturer enters the word limit of the student's work.
- Maximum number of uploaded files: Specify the maximum of files that students can submit.
- Maximum submission size: Specify the maximum size of the work file to be uploaded.
- Accepted file types: In some cases, lecturers may require students to only submit their work files in one/several categories, such as: only text files or image files, etc.

### 3.3.2 In Student Learning Activities

Students benefit from the continuous efforts of lecturers to conduct research and provide a wide range of exercises sourced from internet platforms, enabling students to consolidate their knowledge, acquire more suitable vocabulary, and enhance their English skills.

The advancements in digital media have created an increasingly innovative learning environment, allowing students to engage in flexible, active, and dynamic learning experiences. Mobile applications, websites, and social networking sites such as Facebook, Zalo, and Instagram provide students with new and captivating avenues for learning.

The active participation of students in classroom interactions and completion of exercises on online platforms plays a vital role in transforming the evaluation process within the learning journey.

Furthermore, the introduction of innovative open learning materials and resources allows lecturers and students to access, share, and exchange a wide array of educational materials. This connectivity facilitates instant and unlimited access to global libraries, promoting a rich and diverse learning experience.

## 4. Proposals on Evaluation Criteria in Non-Specialized English Teaching and Learning Activities at Sai Gon University

### 4.1 Criteria for Assessing the Capacity of Lecturers Participating in Non-Professional English Teaching Activities

Lecturers must have good political qualities, morals, modern civilized lifestyle, sociability and fun.

Lecturers must always build a positive, close and friendly learning environment to make it more convenient to capture students' thoughts.

Lecturers have the ability to design and present lecture slides suitable for each student's level.

Lecturers should apply creative teaching methods in the teaching process to elicit students' strengths; and attract students' attention and concentration in each lesson and lesson content.

Lecturers always add and update new knowledge to provide timely for students to meet the increasing demands of society.

Lecturers always encourage and create conditions for students to increasingly develop their creativity and problem-solving abilities.

Lecturers also need to be flexible, objective, fair and public in the results and achievements of students.

The lecturers always update, self-improve and improve their ability to use informatics and information technology in accordance with the standards set by the Ministry of Education and Training.

Lecturers must have sufficient knowledge and proficiency in foreign languages in accordance with the requirements to teach students to meet the output standards of the Ministry of Education and Training.

Lecturers who teach English in general to non-specialized students as English for majors in general must have good thinking, awareness and communication to guide students about relevant knowledge content, characteristics, typical culture of mother tongue and second language, intercultural language, similarities and differences between languages.

Lecturers can apply their knowledge of the culture of English-speaking countries to enhance the value of their lectures.

Lecturers must always promote their creativity, flexibly apply new teaching, test and assessment methods, in accordance with the student's

qualification framework.

Lecturers must have a teaching plan and be proactive and flexible in the process of participating in teaching activities in accordance with the actual conditions of each class.

Lecturers must have a plan to build effective lessons to develop students in the direction of developing the qualities and capacities of each specific student.

Lecturers must always fulfill annual appropriate research obligations according to the teaching standards regime and annual scientific research obligations of Sai Gon University.

Lecturers must always have a teaching strategy in line with the school's goals, vision, and mission.

#### *4.2 Criteria for Assessing Students in the Process of Learning English for Non-Specialist Students at Sai Gon University*

When assessing students' progress, lecturers should base on a 10-point scale of the coefficient of 4 part scores (attendance, study attitude + mid-term test + assignments) and the system course score 6, the result is rounded to one decimal place.

For the grammar content, the evaluation criteria for students must understand and master 50% or more of the knowledge content learned through the application of the content to the exercises and successfully complete the real tests.

Listening students understand the content of the listening lesson at each appropriate level and complete the exercise requirements.

Students can speak, express and present their ideas and opinions according to topics and answer related questions through intonation, pronunciation, fluency, using words richly, suitable for the required content.

Students read, understand, analyze information and successfully complete the required content and questions of the reading passage.

Students write correctly, with correct grammar and can complete complete paragraphs and articles according to the appropriate requirements.

Students participate in class sessions, participate fully in activities as well as interact regularly with lecturers and friends in class.

Students have a positive learning attitude, always exploring to improve knowledge.

Students have the ability to use and apply English in real life today.

Students must always strive to meet the non-specialized English output standards to be eligible for university graduation according to the regulations of Sai Gon University (Hung, 2020) and the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training as one of the levels of certificates:

- Level 3 (B1)/6 levels of the Vietnam Foreign Language Competency Framework Certificate Vstep.
- 460-477 score of TOEFL PBT Certificate.
- 450-595 score of TOEIC Certificate (Top score: 990).
- 45-53 score of TOEFL iBT Certificate (Top score: 120).
- 4.0-4.5 score of IELTS Certificate (Top score: 9.0).
- PET (pass) of Cambridge English Certificate (Top: CPE).
- Aptis (B1) Certificate of a test system conducted by British Council.

All efforts, achievements and results achieved by students are recognized by the faculty and the school, and depending on the level, there are appropriate rewards.

#### *4.3 Discussion*

Sai Gon University has always actively implemented innovation, striving to reach the national higher education institution standards by 2025. The school has the task of training human resources for high schools, agencies in Ho Chi Minh City and the whole country in particular, therefore, to contribute to improving the quality of the University in particular and promoting the For the development of Vietnam's higher education as well as the Faculty of Foreign Languages needs to have a team of highly qualified and qualified lecturers and researchers for training and scientific research.

In the development strategy to 2025 and vision to 2035, Sai Gon University clearly states the goals, solutions and action program for human resource development of Sai Gon University. This is also an important premise to maintain, develop the scale, improve the quality of training and scientific research of our faculty of Foreign Languages Department.

Sai Gon University always builds a contingent of officials and lecturers who are synchronous, sufficient in quantity. All lecturers must have appropriate qualifications, good moral qualities, good lifestyle, and professional ethics to meet the training and scientific research requirements of Sai Gon University and the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam.

Students or learners are the center of the training process. The quality of students or learners will determine the upward development in the field of training and scientific research of Sai Gon University. Sai Gon University in particular and other universities in general must develop a clear and specific enrollment policy.

The method of admission must always be publicly announced, the system to monitor the progress of students' learning and training, the learners must always be transparent; counseling and support activities for students and learners should be carried out in a timely and regular manner; positive psychological and social environment, beautiful surrounding landscape and utilities, thereby improving the quality of students and learners and supporting activities for students and learners to contribute to improving the quality of training.

Students need to increase their sense of responsibility for their own training, and democratize education as: students should participate in all stages of the training process from structuring subjects based on an elective system, to planning that training process according to own conditions and financial capacity and time budget.

To help students, Sai Gon University and the Faculty of Foreign Languages always create the most favorable environment and conditions to support and help students.

## 5. Conclusion

In summary, the remarkable advancements in digital technology and the evolving outcomes of non-specialized English learning at Sai Gon University demonstrate the transformative impact of modern science on teaching and learning activities.

We have put forward suitable evaluation criteria to encourage lecturers to approach their teaching activities with enthusiasm, pro-activity, flexibility, and creativity. Simultaneously, students are encouraged to maintain a positive, dynamic, curious, and exploratory mindset in order to enhance their learning and meet the prescribed output standards outlined by the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam today.

With the goal of "both lecturers and students are always trained in moral qualities, talents and experiences to meet standards, step up and integrate" of the school, the Faculty of Foreign Languages develops training goals, output standards and human resource training according to the trend of international integration, the ability to study and work according to the current labor orientation. Lecturers choose to be student-centered in order to arouse self-discipline, proactive and creative skills when solving knowledge-occupying problems, but still have to adhere to the Output Standards declared in the program training of the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Sai Gon University.

The design of the evaluation criteria are all towards the Output Standard, clearly defining the goal of catching up with regional and international standards. Learners not only focus on cultivating language skills, but also on the ability to apply information technology to their profession and integrate with the trend of the digital world.

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