



Relationship between Students' Adversity Quotient and their English Performance at a University in Viet Nam

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ABSTRACT

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Learning a foreign language (FL) is often characterized by challenges, setbacks, and the need to adapt to new linguistic and cultural contexts. Adversity Quotient (AQ) offers a unique perspective on individuals' ability to navigate and overcome these obstacles. For these reasons, the study was carried out to measure the AQ, FL competence and investigate the relationship between the AQ and FL competence of students at a university in Vietnam. The participants were recruited from 409 students at a university in Vietnam with different majors and different courses to measure the AQ index, FL competence and the relationship between the AQ index and students' FL competence. Two instruments were used i.e., the Adversity Response Profile (ARP) 1.0 was developed by Paul G. Stoltz to measure an individual's AQ and the ASK model (Attitude - Skills - Knowledge) in combination with the results of English subjects to assess students' competence in using English. SPSS 26 software was used for data analysis. The findings indicated that the students' AQ index is at a moderately low level; foreign language competence is at a moderately fair level and there is a low positive correlation between the student's AQ and FL competence.

Keywords:

Adversity Quotient;
ASK model;
Academic Performance, Students

1. INTRODUCTION

1. 1. Rationale:

In today's rapidly changing and interconnected world, the ability to adapt and overcome challenges is essential for personal growth and academic success. As students navigate their educational journeys, they encounter various obstacles that demand resilience and tenacity. Adversity Quotient (AQ), a psychological construct that assesses an individual's capacity to cope with adversity, has emerged as a crucial factor in determining how individuals respond to and navigate these challenges. Understanding the relationship between students' Adversity Quotient and their academic performance in specific subjects can shed light on the dynamics that influence their success in higher education.

The English language holds significant importance in the academic and professional spheres, serving as a bridge for effective communication across diverse cultures and

disciplines. Mastering English proficiency is essential for students pursuing various academic fields, as it impacts their performance in language-intensive courses and influences their ability to articulate ideas with clarity and precision.

AQ represents an individual's resilience, adaptability, and ability to respond positively to adverse situations. It is believed that a high AQ can lead to improved problem-solving abilities, enhanced emotional intelligence, and a more positive outlook towards learning and personal growth. Therefore, understanding the relationship between adversity quotient and academic performance has become a subject of increasing interest in educational research.

In the context of language learning, particularly the acquisition of English as a foreign language in Vietnam, students face a unique set of challenges. English language proficiency plays a pivotal role in global communication, academic achievement, and career prospects, making it a vital skill for students worldwide. However, the process of learning a new language can be daunting and demanding, often requiring resilience to overcome difficulties such as language barriers, cultural differences, and self-doubt.

"Adversity quotient is the intelligence that a person has in overcoming adversity and survival" (Stoltz, 1997). Individuals who possess a deficiency in adversity quotients tend to constantly depend on others, particularly their parents,

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peers, and various acquaintances. Achievement can be estimated by one's capacity to confront challenges throughout everyday life, including adaptability, persistence, and the capacity to deal with issues in their obligations and work. People who can handle difficulties efficiently have more control over the situation and a better likelihood of success (Phoolka and Kaur, 2012). In order to successfully face obstacles and perform their obligations and responsibilities in learning foreign language, students must have a high adversity quotient. If equipped with a higher adversity quotient, they can effectively manage the situation, capitalize on opportunities, and significantly increase their chances of achieving success.

Several studies have indicated the impact of adversity quotients on work, learning and teaching context. A study by Rohim AA, Kweldju S. (2019) examined relationship between Adversity Quotient and English Proficiency at the English Language Teaching Department. The findings revealed that AQ minor contribution to students' English Proficiency. Española R.(2016) examined Adversity Quotient (AQ) and Academic Performance Of Filipino Students. The results revealed that the AQ and academic performance were positively correlated with each other.

Rangriz, H., & Khaksar, Z. (2018) explored the relationship between AQ and academic achievement among Iranian students learning English as a foreign language. The results showed a positive correlation between students' AQ scores and their academic performance in English language courses. Despite the growing interest in Adversity Quotient and its relevance in personal and professional settings, there is limited research on how AQ influences language learning outcomes, specifically in the context of university-level English education, especially in Vietnamese higher education context. Understanding the extent to which students' resilience and adaptability impact their performance in the English subject can provide valuable for this research.

1.2 Significance of the research

This study holds significant implications for both the academic and personal development of students. Understanding how adversity quotient relates to English language performance can help teachers tailor instructional strategies and support mechanisms to address the specific needs of students who may face challenges during their language learning process. Additionally, the findings of this research can contribute to the broader discourse on the importance of cultivating resilience and adaptability in educational settings.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Adversity Quotient (AQ):

The concept of Adversity Quotient (AQ) refers to the ability to overcome difficulties and turn challenges into opportunities. It was introduced by Paul Stoltz, an American

psychologist, who believes that the ability to overcome adversity is developed through facing and overcoming significant challenges in our daily lives. In his book "Adversity Quotient: Turning Obstacles into Opportunities," Stoltz defines AQ as a measure of a person's ability to cope and adapt to changes, pressures, and difficult situations. It explores why some individuals excel and succeed while others become discouraged and fail, even if they possess intelligence or good character. The difference lies in the variation of their AQ - the ability to effectively confront and cope with adversity and setbacks.

Stoltz (2000) stated that the AQ is the science of human resilience⁵. When faced with obstacles, both great and small, people who successfully use AQ perform at their best. In actuality, they not only develop coping mechanisms for these difficulties, but they also improve and speed up their responses to them.

The Adversity Quotient (AQ) can measure a person's level of ambition, effort, creativity, energy, physical health, emotions, and happiness. AQ is a comprehensive measure that assesses various aspects of an individual's resilience and ability to overcome challenges. It can provide insights into how individuals respond to difficult situations, their determination, adaptability, and overall well-being. It is also an indicator of four levels of life courage including (1) Facing difficulties; (2) Turning the situation around; (3) Overcoming adversity; (4) Finding a way out. By understanding these dimensions, AQ can help individuals and researchers gain a better understanding of their strengths and areas for growth when facing adversity.

2.2. The AQ indicators:

Stoltz (1997) identified four indicators, often referred to as CORE, to measure AQ.

- Control (C): This indicator assesses an individual's ability to exert influence and control over a situation. It measures how effectively one can positively impact a given circumstance and manage their own reactions to events or situations.
- Ownership (O): Ownership refers to taking responsibility for one's actions and outcomes. It measures the extent to which an individual accepts accountability for their choices and decisions, even in challenging circumstances.
- Reach (R): Reach evaluates an individual's willingness to step out of their comfort zone and embrace new opportunities. It measures the extent to which one is open to taking risks, exploring new possibilities, and expanding their horizons.
- Endurance (E): Endurance is an evaluation of an individual's capacity to persist and exhibit resilience when confronted with challenging circumstances. These four indicators, Control, Ownership, Reach, and Endurance, collectively form the CORE structure of the Adversity Quotient. They provide a framework for understanding and evaluating an

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individual's ability to navigate and thrive in challenging situations.

2.3. Competency Model

The notion of competence pertains to the integration of knowledge, skills, and individual traits essential for carrying out a role or task proficiently. Competence is not something that is inherently present in individuals but is developed and enhanced through activities and experiences. It encompasses the ability to apply knowledge, demonstrate proficiency in skills, and exhibit the readiness to take action and adapt effectively in changing circumstances. Benjamin Bloom (1956) is considered one of the pioneers in developing the concept of competence. He proposed three main categories of competence: Attitude (related to emotions and feelings), Skills (including manual or physical skills), and Knowledge (related to cognitive abilities).

2.4. Foreign language competence

According to Canale and Swain (1987)⁶ foreign language competence refers to the overall ability of an individual to use a foreign language effectively in various communicative contexts. They proposed a widely cited model known as the "Canale and Swain Model" or the "Communicative Competence Model." The suggested framework for foreign language competence comprises four constituent elements:

- (1) Knowledge of language structure and meaning: This component refers to the understanding of the grammatical rules, vocabulary, and semantic aspects of a language.
- (2) Sociolinguistic competence encompasses the skill to utilize language appropriately in diverse social situations, considering cultural norms, politeness, and pragmatics.
- (3) Discourse competence: This component focuses on the ability to engage in effective and coherent communication, including organizing ideas, maintaining coherence, and using discourse markers.
- (4) Strategic competence: This component encompasses the ability to use various strategies to compensate for communication breakdowns, enhance comprehension, and express oneself effectively.

These components highlight the multifaceted nature of foreign language competence, encompassing not only linguistic knowledge but also the ability to use language in real-life situations.

There are two commonly used methods of determining language competence: proficiency scales and standardized tests of proficiency (Stern, 1983)⁷. These two ways are used in our study to determine the English level of the study subjects. Specifically, (1) we use the results of English language tests (2) we build a scale of students' foreign

language ability based on the ASK competency model (knowledge of English; skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing English and attitude to learning English).

III. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Research questions

This research is done in order to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the student's level of adversity quotient, and English language performance?
2. Is there a significant relationship between the student's level of adversity quotient, and English language performance?

3.2 Instruments

The Adversity Quotient of the participants was assessed by using the descriptive research method. This approach aims to depict specific phenomena and offer precise descriptions of situations or relationships between variables. The research involved 409 student participants from the University of Medicine and Pharmacy in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. The researcher collected data using a survey-questionnaire as the data collection instrument. Specifically, the researcher used the Adversity Response Profile (ARP) Quick Take from 1997 for the study.

To survey the student's adversity quotient, the study used the test method through the Adversity Response Profile® (ARP) QuickTake1.0 questionnaire that was adapted in Vietnam. The ARP is built in the form of a self-rating questionnaire in the form of a scale-based to detect and discover how an individual copes, reacts to difficult situations or challenges. This is a normative tool, meaning that higher AQ scores reflect higher resilience and are more desirable than low AQ scores. ARP QuickTake 1.0 consists of 20 sentences describing 20 scenarios. Each such sentence poses a hypothetical situation and is accompanied by a question. This situation is answered on a 5-point Likert scale. The questions and corresponding response levels are as follows:

Table 1. Dimensions of the Adversity Response Profile Scale

<i>Number</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Scale</i>
<i>1,7,13,15,17</i>	C = Control	1 - Not at all 5 - Completely
<i>2,6,11,16,18</i>	O = Ownership	1 - Not responsible at all 5 - Completely responsible
<i>3,5,9,12,20</i>	R = Reach	1 - Affect all aspects of my life 5 - Be limited this situation
<i>4,8,10,14,19</i>	E = Endurance	1 - Last forever 5 - Quickly pass

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AQ is determined by the following formular:

$$AQ = (C + O + R + E) \times 2$$

The average point is 147.5. The higher, the better¹

Table 2. Equivalent of the Adversity quotient

<i>Equivalent</i>	<i>Score range</i>
<i>AQ- High</i>	178 - 200
<i>AQ- Moderately High</i>	161 - 177
<i>AQ- Moderate</i>	135 - 160
<i>AQ- Moderately low</i>	118 - 134
<i>AQ- Low</i>	117 and below

To investigate the level of English competence of students, we used (1) the results of English grades (2) the survey form measuring English competence on the ASK model (Attitude - Skills - Knowledge) with 15 different items. Students will rate their level based on 1 – 4. Specifically: 1 – Disagree; 2 – Do not strongly agree; 3 – Agree; 4 - Strongly agree. Then we convert to 4 levels: low (1 – 1.70); moderate (1.75 – 2.50); fair (2.55 – 3.25) and excellent (3.25 – 4.00)

IV. RESULTS

4.1. The Adversity Quotient

Table 3. Summary of the Student's Level of Adversity Quotient

<i>CORE dimensions</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
<i>C</i>	14,69	3,99	5	25
<i>O</i>	15,07	4,23	5	25
<i>R</i>	14,12	4,35	5	25
<i>E</i>	15,22	4,04	5	25
Total AQ	118,20	23,06	40	200

AQ = Adversity Quotient; C= Control; O= Ownership; R= Reach;

E= Endurance; M=Mean; SD= Standard deviation

Table 3 showed that the lowest student AQ score obtained was 40 and the highest student AQ one was 200. The average score was 118.20 ± 23.06. The average score of components O and E is 15.07 ± 4.23 and 15.22 ± 4.04 respectively, higher than C (14.69 ± 3.99), R (14.12 ± 4.35).

Table 4. Correlation between components C, O, R, E

<i>AQ</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>E</i>
<i>C</i>	1			
<i>O</i>	0,357**	1		
<i>R</i>	0,183**	0,308**	1	
<i>E</i>	0,220**	0,316**	0,454**	1

The findings show a low and moderate positive correlation among components C, O, R, E in the scale of AQ index. Specifically, there is a low positive correlation between C and R (r = 0.183, p < 0.01), C and E (r = 0.220, p < 0.01); There was a moderate positive correlation between C and O (r = 0.357, p < 0.01), O and R (r = 0.308, p < 0.01), O and E (r = 0.316, p < 0.01), R and E (r = 0.454, p < 0.01). There is a positive correlation between the weak and the moderate level of components C, O, R, E in the scale of AQ index. Specifically, there is a weak positive correlation between C and R (r = 0.183, p < 0.01), C and E (r = 0.220, p < 0.01); There was a moderate positive correlation between C and O (r = 0.357, p < 0.01), O and R (r = 0.308, p < 0.01), O and E (r = 0.316, p < 0.01), R and E (r = 0.454, p < 0.01).

In terms of C and O, it means that when students have high controllability, they will be able to take on high responsibility and vice versa. That is, the degree to which students show resilience and strength of will try to improve, change the situation and be ready to take responsibility for everything they will do. For components R and E, it means that when students have the ability to control the extent and limit the influence of adversity on their lives, the higher the learning, the more they will perceive the sustainability of adversity, the existence of an adversity. As such, these components influence each other and may even modulate each other under circumstances. This shows that the index convergence validity is moderately low. All indexes point to a conceptual structure and constitute the index of difficulty.

Table 5. Distribution of Respondents According to the Overall AQ Score

Overall AQ	Frequency									
	178 - 200 (High)		161 - 177 (Moderately high)		135 - 160 (Moderate)		118 - 134 (Moderately low)		117 and below (Low)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
118.2	4	0.98	4	0.98	73	17.85	156	38.14	172	42.05

The results shown in Table 5 show that the number of students with moderately low and low level of AQ accounts for the largest proportion of the total possible respondents, the number of students with high and moderately high level of AQ are equal. This shows that they are likely to face challenges in their studies, and their academic performance and overall learning experience may be impacted. They may

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find it hard to handle academic pressure, leading to increased stress and anxiety during exams, assignments, and other academic tasks. They may struggle to bounce back from academic setbacks or failures, potentially leading to a loss of motivation and self-confidence.

4.2. Student's performance in English subjects:

Table 6. Student's English grade and classification

Classification	English 1	English 2	English 3
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Excellent (A)	34 (8,3)	31 (7,6)	52 (12,7)
Very Good (B)	81 (19,8)	86 (21,0)	73 (17,9)
Fair (C)	202 (49,4)	189 (46,2)	195 (47,7)
Poor (D)	75 (18,3)	93 (22,7)	82 (20,0)
Very Poor (F)	17 (4,2)	10 (2,5)	7 (1,7)

From the data interpretation on the table above, the performance of students according to English grades of English 1, English 2, and English 3 is most concentrated at Fair level (C) with the rate of 49.4%, 46.2% and 47.7%, respectively. Excellent level (A) accounted for the highest percentage in the English 3 with 12.7%; Good (B) and Poor (D) level accounted for the highest percentage in English 2 at 21% and 22.7%, respectively; English 1 is categorized as Very Poor based on scoring classification with 4.2%.

Table 7. Student's performance in English subjects based on ASK model

ASK score	M ± SD	Min	Max
Attitude	2,54 ± 0,45	1	4
Skill	2,42 ± 0,57	1	4
Knowledge	2,41 ± 0,51	1	4
Overall	2,46 ± 0,42	1	4

The average score of student's performance in English subjects according to the ASK model is 2.46 ± 0.42. The mean scores of the categories of attitude, skills and knowledge are 2.54 ± 0.45, 2.42 ± 0.57 and 2.41 ± 0.51 respectively.

After converting the level of English competency scale to 4 levels including Poor - Moderate – Fair - Good, the results are as follows:

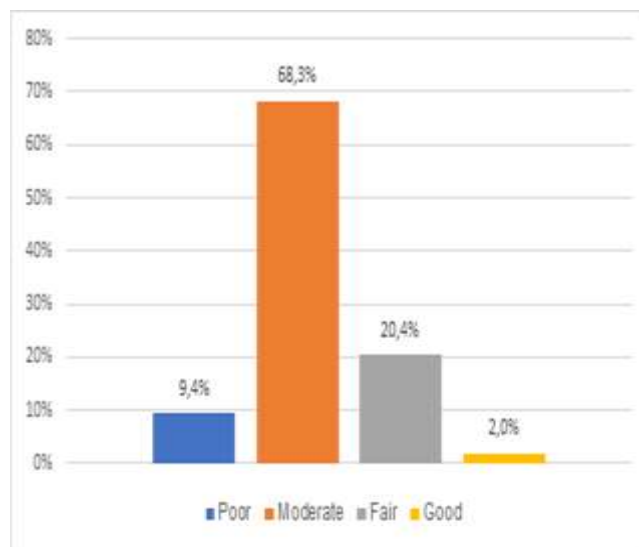


Fig.1 English performance based on ASK model.

Figure 3 shows that the majority of students rated their English ability at an average level (68.3%). The above figure also shows that, although students have gradually become conscious of self-studying foreign languages, it is possible that because the learning environment cannot meet the learning needs, and they do not have many conditions to improve their English skills, so they feel that in terms of skills, they are still weak and not up to standards. This result is quite similar to the results of measuring the English performance of students based on the results of the exams.

Table 8. The Correlation Coefficients of CORE and AQ with English grade

ASK model		M ± SD	F- Scheffe	P
A	I. Low	95,64 ± 45,26	11,114 III; IV > I; II	< 0,001
	II. Moderate	114,14 ± 22,47		
	III. Fair	121,85 ± 19,11		
	IV. Good	139,00 ± 36,15		
S	I. Low	115,31 ± 33,20	4,240 IV > I; II; III	0,006
	II. Moderate	117,15 ± 20,61		
	III. Fair	118,18 ± 21,84		
	IV. Good	137,75 ± 32,39		
K	I. Low	107,81 ± 29,85	5,834 IV > I; II; III	0,001
	II. Moderate	117,45 ± 20,92		

Overall I	III. Fair	118,95 ± 23,09	8,547 <i>IV > II; III > I</i>	< 0,001
	IV. Good	141,50 ± 33,75		
	I. Low	92,55 ± 39,56		
	II. Moderate	117,27 ± 21,37		
	III. Fair	119,75 ± 21,19		
	IV. Good	138,83 ± 36,29		

A= Attitude; S= Skill; K= Knowledge

F: value of ANOVA statistic; M: Median; SD: standard deviation

There is a statistically significant difference in the mean score of the index of Adversity quotient with Overall English competence level ($F = 8,547, p < 0.001$), Attitude category ($F = 11,114, p < 0.001$), and skill category ($F = 4.24, p < 0.01$), and knowledge category ($F = 5.834, p < 0.01$). This shows that some students with high difficulty scores will have positive expressions of English competency. In fact, when students have an awareness of the importance and essential level of English competence, they will make efforts to overcome the influencing factors to improve their English competency. It can be concluded that English competency according to the scale based on the ASK model has a low correlation with the AQ index, that is, the higher the score, the more positive a person will have. language ability and vice versa.

V. DISCUSSION

The results show that the range of AQ scores obtained by the students is quite broad, with the lowest score being 40 and the highest score being 200. The average AQ score for the participants is 118.20, with a standard deviation of 23.06. This indicates that the students' AQ levels vary significantly, with some students demonstrating higher levels of resilience and adaptability to challenges compared to others.

The study also analyzed the individual components of the AQ scale, namely Control, Ownership, Reach, and Endurance. On average, students scored higher on Ownership and Control components, suggesting that they possess relatively higher levels of self-motivation and a sense of personal responsibility. On the other hand, Reach and Endurance components received slightly lower average scores, indicating that students may struggle with pushing beyond their comfort zones and persevering in challenging situations. The study found low to moderate positive correlations among the different components of the AQ index. In particular, there were low positive correlations observed between Control and Reach, as well as Control and Endurance. This indicates that students who score higher in one aspect of AQ generally tend

to score higher in other components as well. Besides, the majority of students in the study exhibited moderately low and low levels of AQ, suggesting that they may face challenges and obstacles during their academic journey. Additionally, an equal number of students demonstrated high and moderately high AQ levels, indicating that a significant portion of the students possesses relatively higher resilience levels.

The minor impact of Adversity Quotient on academic achievement, particularly in English proficiency, was supported by the results of simultaneous and partial regression, providing clear evidence for the relationship between Academic Performance and English Grades: The analysis of English subject grades revealed that the majority of students obtained Fair level grades in English 1, English 2, and English 3. The percentage of students achieving Excellent level grades in English 3 was relatively higher, while Good and Poor level grades were more prevalent in English 2. English 1 had the lowest percentage of students achieving Very Poor level grades. These results suggest that there is a need for improvement in students' English performance. The majority of students rated their English ability at an average level. This perception aligns with the performance data from exams, indicating that students' self-awareness of their English skills corresponds with their actual achievements.

The findings are consistent with prior studies on intelligence or AQ by other authors such as Kuhon, (2020) in term of the students who excelled in academic performance were the students whose test results showed that they were classified with high level of Adversity Quotient and Safi'i et al., (2021) about adversity quotient were significant constructs affected on students' achievement, students learning autonomy and student performance.

The study found a statistically significant difference in AQ scores concerning the overall English competence level, as well as the attitude, skill, and knowledge categories of English. This suggests that students with higher AQ scores tend to have a more positive expression of English competency. When students are aware of the importance of English and its essentiality, they are more likely to make efforts to overcome challenges and improve their English skills.

In summary, the study provides valuable insights into the relationship between students' Adversity Quotient and their academic performance in the English subject at the university level. It highlights the diverse levels of resilience among students and indicates the potential impact of AQ on their English performance and overall learning experience. These findings could be significant in developing interventions and support systems to enhance students' resilience and academic outcomes in English subject areas.

VI. CONCLUSION

Several conclusions were reached in light of the study's findings. First, the students at the university in this research have a somewhat low of Adversity Quotient index. Second, the academic performance in English subject of the respondents was moderately fair, ranging from fair to good. Third, there is a low positive correlation exists between AQ and English performance among the students. Fourth, the AQ only addresses one type of adversity; however, the capacity to accept responsibility for them may be a crucial factor in determining academic success. This information can help parents, educators, and guidance counselors help college students cultivate these skills. The research also contributes to the development of more holistic approaches to enhance students' overall well-being and academic success in the university setting.

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VIII. DISCLOSURE

The author reports no conflicts of interest in this work.

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