

# Statistical survey and optimal measures to improve teaching Vietnamese language

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**Abstract.** Researching and teaching Vietnamese language to foreign students is a basic and central requirement of lecturers at any research institute, center or university. Understanding the urgent need of foreign students in studying language practice subjects and specialized subjects, many lecturers teaching Vietnamese to foreign students are constantly improving their skills and knowledge in teaching and have “secrets” to attract international students to study subjects related to language, culture and language.

This paper explores the role and position of Vietnamese subjects from basic to advanced level, analyzes the current situation of learning Vietnamese and proposes ways to help learn Vietnamese language more effectively for foreign students. The statistical tools have been employed to analyse the survey data and to suggest optimal measures to improve teaching practices to foreign students in Vietnam learning Vietnamese language.

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## 1. Introduction

Currently, teaching Vietnamese language to foreign students at the faculty of Vietnamese Studies, University of Foreign Languages is a top priority in the process of approaching the current trend of global integration and development. Foreign students not only improve their Vietnamese language skills through language practice subjects but also hone their foreign

language skills and access culture and language in the most multidimensional and comprehensive way. Language practice subjects are the skills of “Listening”, “Speaking”, “Reading”, and “Writing”, divided into many levels from A1 to C2 and taught scientifically by instructors in the faculty from low to high levels to develop a student’s creative thinking about foreign languages.

Specialized subjects such as “Culture” and “Literature” are also integrated into the program by teachers so that students can better understand the cultural identity and spiritual aspects of life of the Vietnamese people. These are the subjects that play an important role in helping children better understand and love Vietnamese history, life and culture. How do we teach Vietnamese and specific specialized subjects effectively? In this article we will analyse in depth the differences between language practice subjects and specialized subjects. From there, we will clearly see the importance of language practice subjects and develop basic solutions to create passion and interest for students in absorbing specific specialized subjects because these are difficult but interesting subjects which helps improve student’s cultural knowledge about the Vietnamese people. The statistical tools have been employed to analyse the survey data and to suggest optimal measures to improve teaching practices to foreign students in Vietnam learning Vietnamese language.

## **2. Theoretical basis**

### **2.1. The role of teaching language and specialized practical subjects**

Language practice is an important subject in the process of teaching Vietnamese to foreign students. Usually taught at levels from easiest to most difficult: Listening-Speaking, Reading, and Writing, and with levels of

increasing difficulty ranging from A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2. Some of the basic topics that teachers often teach students are Sports, Weather, Shopping, Traffic, Shopping, Environmental Pollution, Learning Foreign Languages. When put into practice, they can practice these skills by creating groups so that students can hone their skills and apply their newfound speaking and presentation skills in front of a crowd. Writing skills include arranging words into sentences, writing letters, and expressing the students' feelings. Students typically organize their ideas and write according to the topics they want to write about, and the teacher will correct their errors and guide them on how to present the topic effectively.

Practising any language means giving students the right to proactively communicate and master their skills without fear of any mistake or embarrassment. Thanks to proper error correction, their level and knowledge of vocabulary that they "stumble with" will help them self-correct and master their vocabulary and know when to use it in appropriate situations.

Specialized subjects are also very important in the process of students being exposed to Vietnamese. These are advanced subjects including Language, Literature, and Culture. The author, myself, is assigned to teach specialized subjects related to Language and Literature. These are the subjects such as: Vietnamese specialized in administration, modern Vietnamese literature 1 and 2, and Vietnamese folk literature. These are difficult subjects and students need to invest time and effort to fully understand these subjects.

Learning a foreign language, especially the process of acquiring and mastering Vietnamese, is not a simple process. In order to help the process of teaching practical language subjects effectively, teachers should provide meaningful communication contexts to create more conversation opportunities.

In short, language practice subjects play an important role because these are the prerequisite subjects, which help decide whether students are interested in continuing to study Vietnamese language in later specialized subjects or studying at higher, more difficult levels or not. One school of thought states that similar to the process of learning grammar, the acquisition of pragmatic competence is a slow, incremental process, including many predetermined development stages. In particular, the two main factors that affect this capacity are the learner's inherent language capacity, and the translation factors of the mother tongue.

## **2.2. The importance of combining language practice subjects and specialized subjects in the process of teaching Vietnamese language to foreign students**

In the process of teaching Vietnamese to foreign students (mostly from China, Laos, Thailand, America, France), we realize that all subjects include language practice as well as other subjects. Specialized studies are important in helping foreign students to push learners of Vietnamese language from easy to difficult levels, from beginner to intermediate and even advanced levels. According to people who have studied Vietnamese, to study well in specific language practice subjects, as well as specialized subjects in general, it is important for learners to pay attention to the keywords: input, noticing, monitor, practice and output.

In addition, learning Vietnamese and many other different specialized subjects such as culture, literature, and tourism help foreign students not get bored during their studies. Besides, students can also absorb and learn new and necessary things that are important to Vietnamese culture such as: literature, religion, beliefs, and rituals of Vietnamese people through specialized and specific subjects. It helps foreign students better understand

the customs, culture, and perspectives of Eastern and Asian cultures, which have differences that create uniqueness in cultural interaction and interaction with the West. From learning through books, movies, interacting with people, and the living environment in Vietnam, children will no longer feel surprised and experience "culture shock" when they encounter for the first time.

It can be seen that, whether specialized or not, subjects are extremely important to help students have solid knowledge and vocabulary. In addition, just like the saying "Do as the Roman's do", it also helps foreign students to become more confident, and gradually get used to a new life, new people, and a new culture in Vietnam.

### **3. Statistical preliminaries**

#### **3.1. Theoretical basis**

Statistics involves mathematics and relies upon calculations of numbers. But it's very important that are how the numbers are chosen and how the statistics are interpreted. So first our conclusion that statistics are not only facts and figures; they are something more than that. We are attention to apply statistics for choosing the sample since statistics are often presented in an effort to add credibility to an argument or advice. It is very clear that statistical evidence supports a stated conclusion.

In statistics, we often rely on a sample- that is, a small subset of a larger set of data-to draw inferences about the larger set. The larger set is known as the population from which the sample is drawn.

Of course, firstly the most straightforward is simple random sampling. Such sampling requires every member of the population to have an equal chance of being selected into the sample. In addition, the selection of one member must be independent of the selection of every other member. That

is, picking one member from the population must not increase or decrease the probability of picking any other member.

Since simple random sampling often does not ensure a representative sample, a sampling method called “*stratified random sampling*” is used in this case to make the sample more representative of the population. In our research, this method can be used because population has a number of distinct “strata” or groups (firstly, we divide our population to strata via nationality). *In stratified sampling, we identify members of our sample who belong to each group. Then we randomly sample from each of those subgroups in such a way that the sizes of the subgroups in the sample are proportional to their sizes in the population.*

“*Chi Square*” is a distribution that has proven to be particularly useful in statistics. We use the Chi Square distribution to test the difference between theoretically expected and observed frequencies. This use of Chi Square is so common that it is often referred to as the “*Chi Square Test*”.

With above theoretical points mentioned, we apply statistical tools to our case as follows:

### **3.2. Statistical analysis of data**

About random sample: We conducted a random survey with sample  $N = 100$  students studying language practice subjects and specialized subjects. Population: 850. We use the chi square ( $\chi^2$ ) distribution for testing the deviations of differences between theoretically expected and observed frequencies.

In fact, sampling is a very important content in our research because it is directly related to the representativeness of the group. The more representative the sample is for the group, the more valuable the survey data and the higher the reliability of the research. So in this paper, we will

discuss about our choosing the sample.

We will select the sample using the stratified random sampling method. This sampling technique divided the population of 850 into four strata (according to nationality): China, Laos, Thailand and others. And then in a strata we use the simple random sampling. We then chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test . We give the null hypothesis

$H_0$  : theoretically expected frequencies = the observed frequencies.

We compute the  $\chi^2$  via formula:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(\text{the observed frequency} - \text{theoretically expected frequency})^2}{\text{the observed frequency}},$$

and we have:

	China	Laos	Thailand	Others	Total
Population	450	200	120	80	850
Random sample	52	25	13	10	100
Expected frequency	53	23	14	10	100
$\chi^2$	0.018	0.173	0.071	0.0	0.262

Note that, the degrees of freedom (briefly,  $df$ ) in an independent stability test are calculated as  $(r - 1)(c - 1)$ , where  $r$  is the number of rows and  $c$  is the number of columns in the frequency table. In this case, we have  $df = 3$ .

With  $\chi^2 = 0,262$ ; critical values =  $p = 0,05$   $df = 3$  and  $\chi^2$ -distribution = 7.82, we see that  $0.262 < 7.82$  so  $H_0$  is accepted. We conclude that when choosing sample via nationality, there is no meaningful difference between observed and expected frequencies.

Now we continue to classify the above sample by subjects and we obtain:

	Natural Sciences	Social Sciences	Others	Total
Population	456	192	202	850
The above sample	55	23	22	100
Expected frequency	54	22	24	100
$\chi^2$	0.018	0.045	0.166	0.229

With  $\chi^2 = 0.229$ , critical values =  $p = 0,05$ ,  $df = 2$  and  $\chi^2$ -distribution = 5.99, we see that  $0.262 < 5.99$  so  $H_0$  is accepted. we conclude that when choosing sample via subjects, there is no meaningful difference between observed and expected frequencies.

**Conclusion.** The application of Chi square test to our research data, we conclude that **the sampling is reliable.**

## 4. Research results

### 4.1. Compare and contrast method

We carry out the comparison and contrast method to find optimal measures to promote the discovery of appropriate and effective measures in teaching language and practice subjects. At the same time, we compare subjects with each other to find strengths and weaknesses between subjects. From there, it helps teachers to improve teaching and learning methods for foreign students. This is the most important and effective method for research.

#### 4.1.1. Methods of collecting and processing data

About survey method, we used the closed questions, for example:

Question: How do you improve your Vietnamese?

- Study at school
- Read books, magazines
- Self study
- Communicate with Vietnamese friends and local people



- Learn through textbooks and lectures on the Internet
- Listen to music

Question: What are the main mistakes in Vietnamese that students often make?

- Spelling
- Grammar structure
- Word usage errors
- Text errors
- Punctuation errors
- Other errors

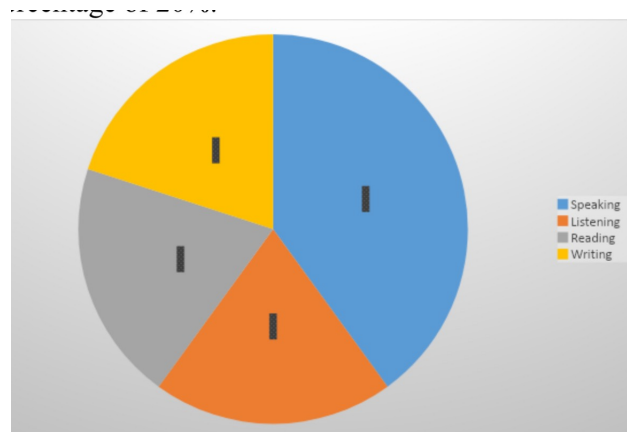
We also conducted surveys based on students' final exams.

## **5. Statistical survey and optimal measures**

We have used statistical survey methods and optimal measures to obtain accurate and appropriate data to improve efficiency in the teaching and learning process for foreign students at the University of Foreign languages, Hue University.

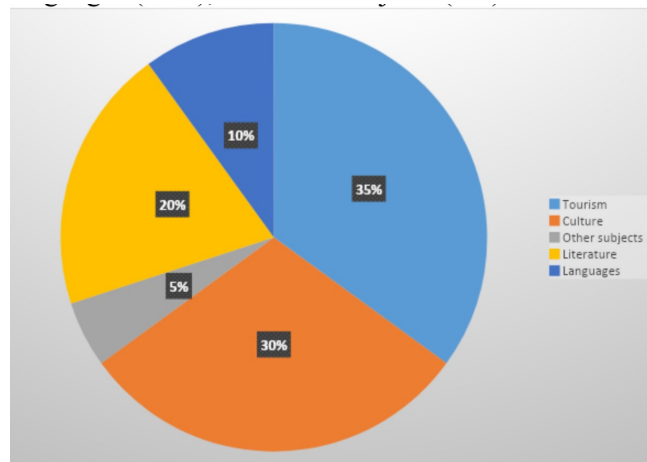
### **5.1. Survey results**

For language practice subjects, most students participating in the survey showed the highest level of satisfaction and interest in learning Speaking skills. According to them, this is the most important and necessary skill to maintain in order to understand Vietnamese language. Fluent and confident communication is an important factor in their path to conquering Vietnamese. Of the students in the study, the percentage of students who want to master the Speaking skills accounted for 40%, followed by Listening, Writing, and Reading, all accounting for the same percentage of 20% (Fig. 1)



**Figure 1: Foreign students' level of interest in language practice subjects**

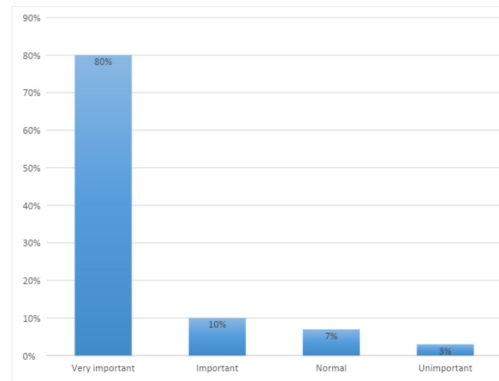
Regarding specialized subjects, according to our survey, students seem to be most interested in subjects such as: Tourism (35%), Culture (30%), Literature (20%), Languages (10%), and other subjects (5%) (Fig. 2)



**Figure 2: Students' level of interest in specialized subjects**

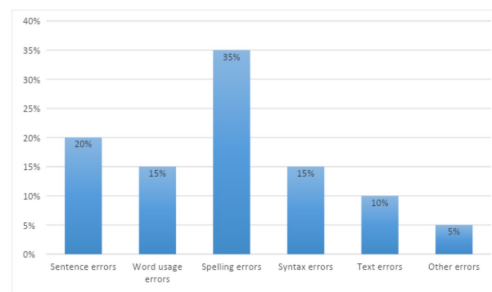
Also according to our survey, most students highly appreciated the importance of language practice subjects and specialized subjects (80%),

10% of students rated it as important, 7% of students rated as normal, only 3% rated as unimportant (Fig. 3)



**Figure 3: Students' comments on the importance of all subjects**

During the learning process, the survey counted the frequency of errors in the learning and practice process related to language practice subjects and specialized subjects. The errors that foreign students learning Vietnamese language often make are: spelling errors (35%), sentence errors (20%), word usage errors (15%), syntax errors (15%), text errors (10%) and other errors (5%)... (Fig. 4)



**Figure 4: Common mistakes students make in all subjects**

## **6. Proposed measures to improve the effectiveness of teaching practical language subjects and specialized subjects to foreign students**

**On the students' side:** Students must be truly proactive in understanding the resources available to them. Outside the class, they can improve their foreign language skills by communicating with native speakers, go to the market, watch reality shows in Vietnamese, interact with Vietnamese students, watch news programs, quizzes, find online resources, watch movies and music in Vietnamese, learn about the culture and customs of Vietnamese people. All are extremely valuable resources for foreign students to expand their knowledge and help themselves become more and more confident in communicating in Vietnamese. When dealing with problems in class, students should discuss issues that they don't understand directly so that the teacher can answer directly, avoiding the situation of "being afraid to ask" which leads to passive and reactive learning of Vietnamese language.

In addition, group study is very necessary. Most students feel that class time becomes more interesting when individual students present their own perspective, no one is the same, and each can add their own opinions, and check for errors during presentations and group work. Students become bolder, more independent, more united and avoid the constrained and monotonous feeling they receive in the process of studying alone.

**On the teachers' side:** The teacher is the proactive person in the teaching process, and the teacher's task is not simple: the teacher must be someone who loves teaching, someone who is responsible, pledges to always improve and help students, and prepare lesson plans and teaching materials appropriate to the students' levels.

In addition, s/he must make the lessons more and more interesting, practical, useful, arousing interest and desire to learn, creating enthusiasm in each student and helping discover the beauty of the Vietnamese language. Teaching in language practice subjects requires perseverance and patience, going from easy to difficult problems, while specialized subjects help students become more thorough and clear about literary and cultural issues, history, customs, and beliefs of Vietnamese people. Theoretical teaching must go hand in hand with practice. In addition to classroom teaching hours, teachers should take students to see Vietnamese festival programs, enjoy local cuisines, local music, royal dancing, singing, and visiting scenic spots so students can better understand the unique cultural aspects of the Vietnamese people, thereby making them love the language they are studying.

## **7. Conclusion**

With the help of the statistical survey and optimal measures, the research described how students have perceived the importance of learning Vietnamese language from basic to advanced in order to be effective and limit errors in using sentences and grammatical structures. The paper also pointed out the main causes leading to the above errors, thereby proposed corrective measures. Specifically, the survey results presented in the paper is expected to help and improve the efficiency in the process of teaching and learning the basic and advanced subjects for foreign students at the university level.

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