

Exploring Taiwanese Students' Perceptions About Applying Vietnamese Language

Ngoc Phung Sai

Assistant Professor, Department of Leisure and Tourism Management,
Chihlee University of Technology

Daniel Steve Villarreal

Ph.D. National Taipei University of Business, Department of International Business

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to understand Taiwanese university students' perceptions about applying the Vietnamese language they have learned and what conclusions can be drawn from Taiwanese students' perceptions of applying Vietnamese. The research subjects were 85 students from different majors such as commercial foreign languages, art design, and commercial management. These students all participated in basic Vietnamese classes as a second foreign language. They were asked to answer an open-ended question about the use of Vietnamese and their answers were classified and analyzed by using the text content analysis method. Analysis results show that most students think about applying Vietnamese in their daily lives, and a few students think that they can apply Vietnamese in their respective fields of study, or can use Vietnamese for their future work. From the results of this research, we will better know students' learning goals and then make recommendations to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Keywords: Vietnamese Learning, Perceptions of Applying Learning, Applying Language Learning

Introduction

The concept of "Putting knowledge into practice" or "Applying what you learn" mainly emphasizes the importance of practice and application. Learning any knowledge or skill requires effort, but the greatest value can only be achieved by converting what you learn into real actions and applications. According to the definition from the Revised Mandarin Chinese Dictionary (2023), applying what you have learned means applying one's acquired knowledge to real life or work. "Applying what you learn" or "Putting knowledge into practice" is both an educational principle and an effective learning method. To learn is to understand, to learn is to practice, or in other words, to apply knowledge in one's practice.

In the modern era, the Vietnamese language plays a crucial and multifaceted role in various fields, including tourism, culture, business, investment, and education. Notably, Vietnam holds a significant place in the realm of investment. Vietnam has emerged as one of the fastest-growing economies in Asia. Grasping the Vietnamese language can assist entrepreneurs and investors in establishing effective relationships with partners and customers in Vietnam, thereby providing a competitive edge.

An increasing number of Vietnamese have chosen to settle and live in Taiwan. According to current statistics, there are approximately 200,000 Vietnamese residents in Taiwan (Ministry of Interior, 2023). This figure does not include people who already have Taiwanese nationality. As a result, Vietnamese is not only relevant in Vietnam but also in Taiwan.

When students undertake the study of a foreign language, their motivation is often influenced by their awareness of the language's value and relevance in their personal lives and careers. This awareness frequently stems from the recognition that proficiency in a foreign language can unlock numerous opportunities for them in the future.

Consequently, gaining insights into students' awareness regarding the use of Vietnamese for their own benefit is imperative. Doing so enables us to gain a deeper understanding of their learning objectives.

Literature Review

Educational concepts and advantages of applying what you learn

Applying what you learn or putting knowledge into practice to master a skill has been

proven effective through many studies and practice. Specific examples of this are language learning, sports, scientific research, art, and cooking of which learning a new language is a typical example. Research has proven that learning a language by practicing it through daily speaking, writing, and communication helps individuals master the language faster and more effectively than simply learning from a textbook. Children pick up new languages from their mothers or friends through everyday interactions, such as playing with friends every day and observing how their parents speak and behave (Hildreth, 1958). Students also expressed satisfaction when experiencing Vietnamese culture even in just one class session (Sai, 2022).

There are also theories that indicate that "learning" and "using it" will help contextualize learning activities and creative social practices. These theories posit that people participate in practice and in the process of creating and reproducing them as part of a community of practice such as situated learning of Lave and Wenger (1991).

Thus, the above examples show that learning and practicing together often result in increased performance and efficiency, helping individuals master knowledge and skills more deeply and practically. In other words, learning should be integrated into real-life situations rather than just referring to textbooks or classroom activities. The learners have to engage in social interactions and participate in situated learning, thus connecting to real life and community.

Applying what you learn to stimulate learning motivation

Applying what you learn is an education and learning philosophy that emphasizes applying learned knowledge and skills to actual situations to solve problems, create value, or achieve goals. This approach stimulates learning motivation as it makes learning more purposeful and relevant and helps develop students' positive attitudes toward learning.

Applying what you learn will make students clarify their goals and objectives, and link learning to practical goals so students know exactly why they need to learn specific content or skills. This can be for career advancement, solving personal problems, engaging in social activities, or fulfilling personal ambitions. In another study, Sai (2021) showed that students with clear learning goals will be highly motivated to learn, and when they have experience and an application environment, their interest in learning will be higher.

Applying knowledge into practice is the highest cognitive goal of people. This process not only helps students consolidate and improve their knowledge but also contributes to practicing the skills they have learned (Phan & Nguyen, 2017).

As Hsiao (2017) noted, applying what you learn combines the subject matter of the learning subject with students' interests to create higher learning motivation for students. In other words, applying what you learn is a powerful learning method that can help students see the value of learning and stimulate their motivation.

The correlation between the perceptions of "applying what you learn" in language learning and the achievement of foreign language learning

Firstly, applying knowledge means applying learned knowledge and skills to real-life situations to solve problems or achieve results. When students are able to apply what they learn to practical situations, they are more likely to achieve good academic results because such application helps deepen their understanding and retention of knowledge and improves their problem-solving skills. When learning becomes practical and meaningful, students are more likely to put in more effort and achieve better grades (Sai, 2022; Koirala, 2019).

Secondly, as mentioned above, when applying knowledge to real-life situations, learning motivation will be stimulated. Learning motivation is the key factor in foreign language learning achievement (Dörnyei, 1998; Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Finally, when learners realize that what they learn can help develop themselves or connect what they have learned to themselves, it will promote increased effort in learning, as stated by Deci and Ryan (2000), who assert that the relatedness in self-determination theory is when learners know how to connect what they learn with personal development. Jiao et al. (2022) also show how personal development motivation plays an important role in students' academic achievement. Another study by Sai (2021) also indicates that internal motivation is a key to learning Vietnamese.

In summary, through exploring the above studies and theories, we know that students have to recognize and be aware of whether they can use the knowledge they have learned in the field of study or personal development. If they can determine that what they have learned is an important part of their life and career, they will be

more interested and persistent in learning, and especially in learning languages, perseverance is needed to succeed (Liu, 2022). Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore:

- What are Taiwanese student's perceptions about applying the Vietnamese language in their personal development?
- What conclusions can be drawn from Taiwanese students' perceptions of applying Vietnamese?

Methodology

Objectives

The research subjects of this study are sophomores from the following colleges: the School of Business and Management, the School of Business Foreign Languages, and the School of Media Design and Information Management. A total of 85 people participated in the study.

Study Tool

The study used an open-ended question, that is, "Based on your situation, in what ways do you think Vietnamese language courses can be used? Please give three examples." The researcher asked students to answer this question through a Google form to collect data.

Method

This study used content analysis to classify students' responses into the following three categories: "Applications of Vietnamese in my daily life", "Applications of Vietnamese in my academic field" and "Applications of Vietnamese in my future". For example, if a participant answers "It can be used when traveling to Vietnam," "I occasionally meet Vietnamese guests at my workplace," "I use it to communicate with my family," or "I have some Vietnamese friends" these answers will be categorized as "Applications of Vietnamese in my daily life". If participants answered "It may be helpful in finding a job", "I may work in Vietnam in the future," or "It may be useful in the future," these answers were classified as "Applications of Vietnamese in my future". Answers regarding the academic field will be categorized as "Application in my academic field"; such a classification is helpful in understanding students' cognitive application of Vietnamese.

Next, we used Excel software to conduct statistical analysis and calculate the number of differences between the two researchers in terms of classification answer content. We then divided this number of differences by the total number of times (109) to calculate the classification

difference rate. Finally, we obtained the classification consistency results between the two researchers.

Results

A study of the data shows how the classification of impressions of Vietnamese application functions turned out, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 The type of Vietnamese application as per students' perspectives

Application type	Content	Number of People (percentage)
Applications of Vietnamese in my future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One more foreign language and one more job opportunity. • I may go to Vietnam to do business in the future and I will be able to communicate in Vietnamese. • May be used in future work • Increase job opportunities • Learning another language may be helpful for future work. • The development of Vietnam may be good in the future. If there is a chance in the future, I will go to Vietnam to work. 	30 (28%)
Applications of Vietnamese in my academic field	Knowing more than one language is very beneficial to me, and I can also check information on the Internet. If you can read Vietnamese, you can also find more information that cannot be found in Chinese.	2 (2%)
Applications of Vietnamese in my daily life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding when watching Vietnamese programs • It will be easier to communicate when I go back to Vietnam in the future to have fun and travel. • Travel • Talk to my Vietnamese grandparents • Communicate with Vietnamese restaurant boss • Using it for my part-time work. Vietnamese customers will come to my workplace. 	77 (70%)

Note: The percentage is calculated by dividing the frequency by total number of times (109).

Most students do not realize that Vietnamese can be used in their studies.

According to Table 1, only 2 out of 85 individuals, which is equivalent to 2%, believe they possess the capability to apply Vietnamese in their academic pursuits. This includes activities such as searching for and utilizing business-related materials in Vietnamese on the internet, as well as using it during their internships in Vietnam. One student said that "Vietnam's recent economic trend is developing very well, and many manufacturers have begun to invest in Vietnam. I think that knowing Vietnamese literature well will be of great help to my future work. Knowing more than one language is very beneficial to me, and I can also check information on the Internet. If you can read Vietnamese, you can also find more information that cannot be found in Chinese. Mainly, I think it will be of great help in finding a job". This perception can be attributed to their currently only basic proficiency in the Vietnamese language, which may not suffice for effective use in their academic endeavors. However, should students choose to undertake internships in Vietnam, they still retain the potential to apply the language in real-life situations.

The fact that only 2 out of 85 individuals believe they can utilize Vietnamese in their academic field suggests that there is a need to enhance information dissemination and promotion regarding the application of Vietnamese in academic settings. This is especially important for those considering internships in Vietnam.

Vietnamese is perceived by students as a language that may be useful in the future.

When students are questioned about utilizing Vietnamese, one possible response is that they might think about doing so in the future, especially if they want to apply for jobs. This reflects students' awareness of the competitive nature of the job market and their understanding that proficiency in a second foreign language (one other than English) can broaden their job prospects. However, the percentage of students who believe that Vietnamese will be used in the future remains low, at only 28%, 30 out of 85 individuals (Table 1).

Additionally, students also anticipate that their future careers may demand the use of

Vietnamese. For instance, they mention phrases like “there might be opportunities to work in Vietnam after graduation,” “Vietnam may experience substantial growth in the future, making additional knowledge of Vietnamese beneficial,” “There may be opportunities to use it in the future,” “Because I am a student in the Department of International Trade, I may have opportunities to trade with Vietnam when looking for a job in the future” or “acquiring a foreign language can be an asset in securing future employment.” However, the use of the word “can” indicates that students still perceive that the Vietnamese language has not been fully and effectively applied to their future development.

Vietnamese is perceived by the majority of students as having applications in life.

Students perceive that Vietnamese finds its primary application in daily life. The majority of students, 77 out of 85 (70%) (Table 1), believe that Vietnamese is relevant to their everyday lives. In particular, students feel that they can use Vietnamese when traveling to Vietnam, communicating with Vietnamese friends in Taiwan, or conversing with family members who are of Vietnamese origin. For example, some express that “there are Vietnamese people where I work”, “When I return to Vietnam, I can speak Vietnamese with my family”, “When I buy Vietnamese food, I can converse with the owner”, “My mother is Vietnamese, I want to communicate with her in Vietnamese”, “Watching shows in Vietnamese”, “My neighbors are Vietnamese”, and “making friends with Vietnamese people”. This demonstrates that students prioritize the practical use of the foreign language they have acquired in their daily lives, rather than restricting it solely to their professional or academic endeavors.

Hence, the establishment of an environment that facilitates students in applying the knowledge they have acquired in real-life situations becomes significantly important. Such real-life venues provide the practical language learning that they need.

Conclusions and Suggestions

This study indicates that the majority of students believe that the Vietnamese language learned in the classroom can be used in daily life, mainly when communicating with relatives when returning to Vietnam or when traveling. A few students think that they can use Vietnamese as a qualification to use in job searches. Even fewer students think that they can use Vietnamese to research more deeply about the field they are

studying or use Vietnamese to read their studies’ material. This shows that Vietnamese is not considered an important part of personal development. Students do not use Vietnamese in career development, so we may ask: what will be Taiwanese students’ motivation to learn Vietnamese?

As the previously mentioned theories stated in the literature review, if students know how to apply the knowledge they have learned into practice, it will boost their learning motivation and create interest in learning. So, in a context where students only know how to use Vietnamese to communicate with relatives when returning to Vietnam or when traveling, if this does not happen often, will it promote students’ investment in learning Vietnamese? Applying Vietnamese in personal career development to stimulate learning motivation and maintain it to achieve success in learning Vietnamese is a difficult and long process that requires dialogue between parties.

Therefore, teachers and schools need to help students realize that they can use Vietnamese to develop their careers and that their studies will be long-term, but with permanent benefits. For example, a high level of Vietnamese proficiency can enable one to come to Vietnam to work or launch a start-up.

Besides, schools need to further connect learning and practice. For example, they may establish internship programs in Vietnam, short-term study abroad programs in Vietnam, etc.

The Taiwanese government should promote more development opportunities in Vietnam, such as in some cases in which Taiwanese start-ups in Vietnam were successful. There are opportunities for Taiwanese to get rich in Vietnam due to its investment and employment environments.

Teachers, in addition to teaching authentic content that is easy to understand and that reflects real life, should help students better understand the country of Vietnam, the living environment, and the culture of Vietnam to eliminate previous prejudices about the war in Vietnam or their perceived image of Vietnam’s backwardness.

Although this study shows a picture of Taiwanese students’ awareness of using Vietnamese, from which we can better understand students’ motivation to learn Vietnamese, the limitation of this study is that it has not clearly identified the connection between perception of the application of the Vietnamese language and Vietnamese language learning achievement. Therefore, it is recommended that

future research should explore the relationship between the perception of application and achievement in learning Vietnamese. Secondly, the scope of this study is limited because its research subjects are only within one school.

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作者簡歷

姓 名： 蔡玉鳳 / Ngoc Phung Sai
現 職： Assistant Professor of Vietnamese
學 歷： Ph.D. in Education
經 驗： Vietnamese language
研究專長： Educational Psychology

姓 名： 萬丹青 / Daniel Steve Villarreal
現 職： Assistant Professor of English
學 歷： Ph.D. in Foreign Language Education
經 驗： He has over 20 years of experience teaching languages (EFL and Spanish), both in person and online, in diverse venues, and 10 years of Translation & Interpretation experience (Spanish-English)
研究專長： Teaching of languages—Spanish-English translation & interpretation