



# Understanding Good Language Learners of Vietnamese as a Foreign Language

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## Abstract

The study of good language learners has received considerable attention in the field of second language acquisition. Previous studies have identified certain kinds of behaviours associated with successful language learning. This paper investigates a much under-researched topic: high-achieving learners of Vietnamese as a foreign language. Focusing on four case studies, using interviews and questionnaires as the main data collection instruments supplemented by learners' self-report journals, this exploratory study aims to shed light on the learners' common characteristics, motivation and learning strategies. Findings suggest that these learners share six common distinguishing characteristics, some of which are concurrent with the literature. Several implications for foreign language teaching research are also discussed.

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## 1 Introduction

The notion of best practice has been a topic of interest in different disciplines, especially education. In the field of second language acquisition, there have been a number of studies dedicated to the study of successful language learners, mostly of English language (Gan, Humphreys, & Hamp-Lyons, 2004; Gillette, 1987; Halbach, 2000; Naiman, Frohlich, Stern, & Todesco, 1978; Norton & Toohey, 2001; Rubin, 1981; Stern, 1975). Why some learners are very quick at learning, while others always seem to struggle is a question that many language teachers are concerned with.

Vietnamese is taught as a foreign language in many different countries such as Australia, China, France, Japan, Korea, Singapore, the United States, and Vietnam; to name just a few. However, Vietnamese is still an under-researched language, especially when it comes to Vietnamese as a foreign language pedagogy. There is a lack of theoretical and empirical research on Vietnamese language teaching and learning. Some of the limited second language acquisition research on learners of Vietnamese to date focuses on topics such as production of Vietnamese tones by American learners (Nguyen & Macken, 2008), errors in using classifiers by learners of Vietnamese (Nguyen, 2004), use of blogging in developing learners' reading and writing skills (Ho, 2009), and the production of Vietnamese apology speech acts by Australian learners (Ho, 2010). To the best of my knowledge, there is no research to date on successful cases of Vietnamese as a foreign language learning. Therefore, it would appear to be desirable to investigate the characteristics found in high-achieving Vietnamese language learners. This exploratory study of Chinese speakers learning Vietnamese as a foreign language is an attempt to bridge this gap in the literature. This study is part of a more extensive research plan including additional data collected from learners

from other language backgrounds such as English, French, and Korean, which will be presented in subsequent research papers.

I will first address some of the relevant theoretical background issues and then outline a brief description of the study. I will report on findings of the study and discuss some implications for foreign language teaching research and then present my conclusions.

## 2 Background

### 2.1 *Good language learners studies*

Since the pioneering study entitled *What the “Good language learner” can teach us* by Rubin (1975), there have been a number of studies conducted on successful language learning (Gan et al., 2004; Gillette, 1987; Halbach, 2000; Naiman et al., 1978; Norton & Toohey, 2001; Rubin, 1981; Stern, 1975). According to Ellis (2008, p. 708) earlier studies on good language learners showed five major aspects of successful language learning: (1) a concern for language form, (2) a concern for communication (functional practice), (3) an active task approach, (4) an awareness of the learning process, and (5) a capacity to use strategies flexibly in accordance with task requirements. In an earlier study, Rubin (1975) found seven strategies associated with good language learning as follows:

1. The good language learner is a willing and accurate guesser.
2. The good language learner has a strong drive to communicate, or to learn from a communication.
3. The good language learner is often not inhibited.
4. In addition to focussing on communication, the good language learner is prepared to attend to form. The good language learner is constantly looking for patterns in the language.
5. The good language learner practices.
6. The good language learner monitors his own and the speech of others.
7. The good language learner attends to meaning.

In more recent studies of good language learners, Halbach (2000) and Gan et al. (2004) found some differences in the kinds of strategies that successful and unsuccessful learners used. Gan et al. (2004) pointed out that previous studies had found that “successful students demonstrate a greater use of learning strategies or more appropriate application of strategies to the learning task” (pp. 229–230). It can, therefore, be concluded that there are distinguishing characteristics and learning strategies of successful language learning.

Since good language learning depends on such variables as aptitude, motivation and opportunity (Rubin, 1975), in the following part, I shall now briefly outline the literature which is available on motivation studies.

### 2.2 *Motivation*

According to Ellis (2008, p. 677) motivation is the single individual difference factor in language learning which has received the most attention. The key motivation constructs that have been studied are: integrative motivation, instrumental motivation, linguistic self-confidence, attributions, intrinsic motivation and self-determination, self-regulation, motivational phases, and the ideal language self.

Since there are so many different definitions of motivation, in this study I have adopted Gardner’s (1985) definition of L2 motivation as “the extent to which an individual works and strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity” (p. 10).

Different researchers have postulated different constructs of motivation. One of the most well-known frameworks of motivation is probably that of Dornyei's (1994). His components of foreign language learning motivation are as follows (p. 280):

Language Level	Integrative Motivational Subsystem Instrumental Motivational Subsystem
Learner Level	Need for Achievement Self-Confidence * Language Use Anxiety * Perceived L2 Competence * Causal Attributions * Self- Efficacy
Learning Situation Level	
<i>Course-Specific Motivational Components</i>	Interest Relevance Expectancy Satisfaction
<i>Teacher-Specific Motivational Components</i>	Affiliative Motive Authority Type Direct Socialisation of Motivation * Modelling * Task Presentation * Feedback
<i>Group-Specific Motivational Components</i>	Goal- orientedness Norm & Reward System Group Cohesion Classroom Goal Structure

This motivation framework has been chosen for this study due to its comprehensiveness and inclusion of language levels, learner levels, and learning situation levels. The most prominent aspects of this framework are integrative and instrumental motivational subsystems at the language level, and interest, satisfaction and group cohesion at the learning situation level. All of these components were relevant to the current study data and were considered in the analysis of the study data.

### 2.3 Learning strategies

Learning strategies are defined as “behaviors or actions which learners use to make language learning more successful, self-directed and enjoyable” (Oxford 1989, cited in Ellis, 2008). Different researchers classify learning strategies differently. The two most commonly cited taxonomies are probably those of O'Malley and Chamot (1990) and Oxford (1990).

Following is a summary of the two taxonomies reported in Ellis (2008, p. 707):

O'Malley and Chamot (1990)

- A. Metacognitive strategies, e.g. 'selective attention' (deciding in advance to attend to specific aspects of language input)
- B. Cognitive strategies, e.g. 'inferencing' (using available information to guess meanings of new items, predict outcomes, or fill in missing information)
- C. Social/affective strategies, e.g. 'question for clarification' (asking a teacher or another native speaker for repetition, paraphrasing, explanation and/or examples)

Oxford (1990)

A Direct

1. Memory strategies, e.g. 'grouping' (classifying or reclassifying materials into meaningful units)
2. Cognitive strategies, e.g. 'practising' (repeating, formally practising, recognizing and using formulas, recombining, and practicing naturalistically)
3. Compensation strategies, e.g. 'switching to mother tongue'

B Indirect

- 1 Metacognitive strategies, e.g. 'setting goals and objectives'
- 2 Affective strategies, e.g. 'taking risks wisely'
- 3 Social strategies, e.g. 'asking for clarification or verification'

In this study, I used O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) foreign language longitudinal study classification of learning strategies as the guiding coding scheme. Their classification in this study includes 22 strategies as follows (pp. 137–139):

A Metacognitive strategies

1. Planning
2. Directed attention
3. Selective attention
4. Self-management
5. Self-monitoring
6. Problem identification
7. Self-evaluation

B Cognitive strategies

1. Repetition
2. Resourcing
3. Grouping
4. Note taking
5. Deduction/ induction
6. Substitution
7. Elaboration
8. Summarization
9. Translation
10. Transfer
11. Inferencing

C Social and affective strategies

- 1 Question for clarification
- 2 Cooperation
- 3 Self-talk
- 4 Self-reinforcement

### 3 Method

#### 3.1 Participants

As previously mentioned, this study is part of an on-going research project which aims at documenting learners of Vietnamese as an L2 whose L1 is Chinese, English, French or Korean. This paper reports on the first group of participants which consists of two male and two female students majoring in Arts and Science from Chinese speaking background, whose ages ranged from 22 to

from 22 to 23. All of these participants studied Vietnamese as a foreign language at the National University of Singapore where Vietnamese is offered as an elective subject to Singaporean and international students with 6 modules: Elementary (Vietnamese 1 and Vietnamese 2), Intermediate (Vietnamese 3 and Vietnamese 4), Advanced (Vietnamese 5 and Vietnamese 6). At the time of the study, two of the learners had completed Vietnamese 4, while the other two had finished Vietnamese 5. All of the learners had visited Vietnam. Three of the four had been on an immersion trip in Vietnam for one month, with three weeks of intensive Vietnamese language study at one university in Ho Chi Minh City and the remaining time on the trip was spent in travelling around Vietnam.

### 3.2 Research questions

Through the exploratory research in this paper the intention was to identify the most common learning strategies of these successful language learners, to look for common distinguishing characteristics, and to examine whether the findings have implications for further research on foreign language education. The following research questions were posed:

- 1) What learning strategies did the learners report using in their Vietnamese language learning?
- 2) What characteristics did the learners have in common?
- 3) What implications do the results of this study have for further research?

### 3.3 Data collection

Questionnaires, self-report journals and semi-structured interviews (see Appendices) were triangulated for the collection of data. The data were collected over a period of three months. The questionnaires were designed in order to provide information which would help to understand the students' motivations for learning Vietnamese. The questionnaires, adapted from Gardner (1985), consisted of 15 statements about possible reasons for learning Vietnamese, with a five-point Likert scale in which *strongly disagree* was marked as 1 and *strongly agree* was marked as 5. The self-report journals were designed in order to gain an insight into the students' process of learning Vietnamese. The students were asked to write four journals on their learning of speaking and pronunciation, listening, reading and grammar, vocabulary and writing. Each student was given written instructions on writing their self-report journals of their learning activities, based on Rubin (1981). After the students had finished writing all the journals, a semi-structured interview in English (which took about 30 minutes) was conducted with each student to clarify and facilitate the interpretation of their questionnaires and journals. All the information obtained through these instruments was compiled and analysed in order to provide answers to the research questions.

### 3.4 Data analysis

The collected data included the four learners' questionnaire answers, self-report journals and semi-structured interview transcripts. The data were analysed qualitatively with due references to the literature. Information regarding motivation and attitudes was analysed based on Gardner's (1985) framework and Dornyei's (1994) framework. Information about learning strategies was coded and analysed based on O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) taxonomy. The approach to data analysis was: looked for salient points from the data, organised them into categories, and then compared the findings with descriptions of good language learners reported in the literature.

## 4 Findings and discussion

### 4.1 Learning strategies

After the interviews and self-report journals were coded and categorised, the ten most common strategies used by the four participants were identified. Nine of these were also identified by

O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) in their longitudinal study of foreign language learners. With the exception of *Self-monitoring*, which is a metacognitive strategy, and *Question for clarification* and *Cooperation*, which are social and affective strategies, the rest of the ten strategies are cognitive ones. The following are the strategies used by the four participants in this study, arranged by order of frequency. The names and definitions of these strategies are quoted from O'Malley and Chamot (1990).

- Elaboration: Relating new information to prior knowledge, relating different parts of new information to each other, or making meaningful associations with the new information.
- Resourcing: Using target language reference materials such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, or textbook
- Repetition: Imitating a language model, including overt practice and silent rehearsal
- Keyword method: Remember a new word in the second language by: 1) identifying a familiar word in the first language that sounds like or otherwise resembles the new word, and 2) generating easily recalled images of some relationships with the first language homonym and the new word in the second language.
- Transfer: Using previous linguistics knowledge or prior skills to assist comprehension or production
- Inferencing: Using available information to guess meanings of new items, predict outcomes, or fill in missing information.
- Translation: Using the first language as a base for understanding and/or producing the second language.
- Questions for clarification: Eliciting from a teacher or peer additional explanations, re-phrasing, examples, or verification.
- Cooperation: Working together with one or more peers to solve a problem, pool information, check a learning task, model a language activity, or get feedback on oral or written performance.
- Self-monitoring: Check one's comprehension during listening or reading or checking the accuracy and/ or appropriateness of one's oral or written production while it is taking place.

The names of the strategies and their definitions by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) are self-explanatory, so there is no need for much further elaboration. Therefore, I would like to focus on the following strategies: *Resourcing*, *Transfer*, *Translation*, and *Cooperation*, this is because these strategies were typical of the learners in this study, and are somewhat different from the learning strategies used by foreign language students in O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) study.

The first point to note here was the learners' use of *Resourcing*. These learners made good use of online dictionaries and Google to double check the usage of certain phrases and expressions. One learner mentioned that whenever he was unsure about how to use new vocabulary and expressions, he would Google to see how these were used in a Vietnamese context and generalise about the rules:

Sometimes dictionary helps. I try to find these words, then I go online, paste these words into Google and see a few passages, and I glance through the passages to see how it is used.

Another student wrote about the usefulness of one dictionary software in his Vietnamese language learning:

There is one software which I highly recommend: 'LacVietmtd'. During my free time, I will randomly search for new words using this dictionary software. I will then look at how they form sentences using that word. Many times, I will discover new sentence structure/ grammar apart from just learning a new vocabulary. I will then incorporate this new sentence structure which I have just picked up into my composition/ blog assignment.

It is apparent that compared with some other languages, there are relatively few Vietnamese language textbooks available; therefore, making use of online resources is useful, as one student put it:

When I needed help with vocabulary, I always seek the online Vietnamese dictionaries for help. It is useful and convenient to access the online Vietnamese websites.

Another notable finding was the students' use of *Transfer* and *Translation*. All of the students are native speakers of Chinese which bears some similarities to Vietnamese in terms of pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary. In their opinion, their Chinese speaking background was an important asset in their Vietnamese learning. They constantly compared and contrasted, drawing on the similarities between the two languages to assist their acquisition of the Vietnamese language. For example, on learning pronunciation, one student wrote:

In a way, Vietnamese language is similar to *Han Yu Pin Yin* (pronunciation of the word through spelling out the language in the Roman alphabet) of Chinese language, which is my first language... At the beginning, I relied on writing the Chinese equivalents beside the words as the Chinese language has four tones somewhat similar to Vietnamese language. So in other words, I used knowledge from my first language to help me acquire this second language.

Other students explained how the similarities between the two languages facilitated their learning of Vietnamese grammar rules:

I felt that some of the grammar rules were quite similar to Mandarin and I could somehow guess where the sentence sounds grammatically correct or incorrect when I translate the sentences into Chinese. I guess this is an added advantage for Singaporean Chinese or Chinese in general to learn Vietnamese.

Since Vietnamese language has a little of Chinese language's influence, I will sometimes rely on relating the Vietnamese syntax to the Chinese syntax. It is interesting to note that certain sentence structures are also similar to that of English.

One student elaborated how he transferred some knowledge of his native language and another foreign language into learning Vietnamese:

I find that the grammar structure of Vietnamese is a mix of Malay and Chinese grammar. The adjectives parts are same as Malay, where the adjectives come after the noun, while the overall sentence structure is highly similar to Chinese. I was lucky to grow up in a Chinese speaking environment and knowing some basic Malay also made learning Vietnamese a little easier.

In fact, the learners repeatedly commented in the journals and interviews on the similarities between Chinese and Vietnamese and how they made good use of their mother tongue in learning the target language. This is definitely an added advantage that was not shared by participants of English, French or Korean speaking backgrounds.

As for the *Cooperation*, these learners actively participated in a great deal of cooperative learning which involved their Vietnamese teachers, classmates and Vietnamese friends. These students made constant efforts to learn from their classmates and got feedback on their language production, especially on pronunciation from their Vietnamese friends.

With the awareness that my pronunciation needs to be more accurate in order to be really understood by the native Vietnamese speakers, I usually get my Vietnamese friends to correct my pronunciation and they will say the words out in their own way. After some time, the speaking and pronouncing will naturally improve with repeated practice, and correction by the Vietnamese.

Another student elaborated on seeking native speakers' help in practicing listening and pronunciation:

The only way to improve my listening skills is to engage a Vietnamese conversation with my Vietnamese friends. In my opinion, this is one of the most effective ways to improve your listening skills as compared to other form of audio aids because it is more interactive. I could ask the Vietnamese speaker to repeat their sentences or words several times if I could not catch what they are saying. At the same time, they could correct my pronunciation of the Vietnamese words.

One student wrote about learning from classmates' writing styles:

I also enjoy reading Vietnamese essays written by my classmates. Whenever the teacher uploaded on essays, I will make it a point to read through a few essays written by others so that I can have a taste of the different types of writing styles.

It was clear from my own observation as the learners' Vietnamese instructor, and from their journals and interviews that these students leveraged on each other and their contact with native speakers to constantly brush up and perfect their linguistic production.

To sum up, I have shown that the analysis of the data has helped identify some common strategies used by Chinese L1 learners of Vietnamese. The range and types of strategies they used showed some similar patterns to those reported in literature on learning strategies but also had some distinctive features. These findings suggest possible issues for exploration in subsequent studies of learners of Vietnamese from other language backgrounds.

#### 4.2 *Characteristics of the learners*

From previous studies reported in literature reviewed for this paper, it is evident that there are several distinguishing features of successful language learners. This study also sought to identify any common distinguishing characteristics in these successful learners of Vietnamese. From the analysis of the questionnaires, self-report journals, and interviews as well as from my own observation when teaching these learners, I found a number of common features that characterised them. Their common characteristics were: being highly motivated, being active, personalising their learning, differentiating language registers and styles, being self-reflective, and being keen to go "native". In the following section, I will examine these characteristics, comparing and contrasting them, where possible, with good learners of other languages.

- **Motivated**

Motivation has been shown to be an important variable in good language learning (Rubin, 1975). According to Dornyei (1998) motivation is one of the key factors that influence the success of L2 learning. The four learners in this study were all highly motivated in a way similar to what was reported of many of the learners in the studies covered in the literature review. All of them were highly interested in Vietnamese language and culture. This was linked to a motivation that reinforced their desire to continue learning Vietnamese because of the great sense of satisfaction they experience when they receive positive feedback on their higher level of proficiency.

Of all the fifteen statements about motivation to learn Vietnamese, there were five statements for which there was strong agreement from all the four participants (rating of 5 out of 5).

Item 2	It will allow me to meet and converse with Vietnamese people.
Item 6	I would like to be able to speak to the Vietnamese people if I travel in Vietnam.
Item 7	Learning Vietnamese is fun and enjoyable.
Item 9	The more I get to know the Vietnamese people, the more I want to be fluent in their language.



Item 13	I want to travel in Vietnam.
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Three statements were rated 5/5 by three participants and 4/5 by one participant.

Item 1	Knowledge of a foreign language will make me be a better educated person.
Item 3	I think it will help me to better understand Vietnamese people and way of life.
Item 15	I am interested in Vietnamese culture.

It is clearly seen from the data that an interest in Vietnamese culture, people and way of life motivated the students to learn Vietnamese. Their strong drive to communicate in Vietnamese, to better understand the Vietnamese people, and to express themselves better in the target language encouraged them to continue learning Vietnamese to reach higher levels. In the interviews, three of the students mentioned that after having some contact with Vietnamese people, they wanted to start learning Vietnamese so as to know more about Vietnamese culture. One student mentioned that even though he did not receive a very good grade in one semester, he still kept on learning because he enjoyed learning Vietnamese so much and really wanted to become more proficient at the language. It can be inferred that these students' motivation is integrative and intrinsic in nature.

From the interviews with these students, it was evident that they not only enjoyed learning Vietnamese, but they were also passionate about sharing their knowledge of the Vietnamese language and culture with other people. Two students had volunteered to share their Vietnamese language learning experiences with new students at an Introductory Lecture for the Vietnamese Language Programme held at the beginning of each semester for the past two years. Two students had been teaching basic Vietnamese to their teammates in some youth expedition programmes to do voluntary work in Vietnam. One student said: "When teaching simple terms, I enjoy seeing people like Vietnamese and they are interested in the language."

- Active

These students were active learners who constantly took charge of their own learning. This is concurrent with finding from the literature that good language learners take "an active approach to the task of language learning" (Norton & Toohey, 2001, p. 309). From their journals, it was apparent that they went the extra mile to accomplish their essays. From my own observation during the learners' immersion trip to Vietnam and their process of learning Vietnamese in Singapore, I found that the learners took the initiative to communicate with Vietnamese people whenever they had an opportunity to do so. This finding concords with Rubin (1975) who stated that the good language learner is not inhibited and has a strong drive to communicate. In addition, these learners were also eager and enthusiastic to share their knowledge of Vietnamese with their friends and classmates, as exemplified in the above part on their motivation.

- Personalise

The students always tried to make their learning process as personal and meaningful to themselves as possible. Whether it was about learning new vocabulary or grammatical structures, or about reading something or writing an essay, they tried to relate to their personal experiences and make it personally meaningful to them. These students also bonded very well with each other and other classmates and used Vietnamese to communicate with each other outside classroom. They said that Vietnamese was their secret language when they did not want other people to understand what they were saying while commuting by public transport.

- Differentiate

The students paid due attention to distinguishing different genres, language registers, different accents of Vietnamese and they made special attempts to code-switch whenever they could in order to communicate more effectively. For example, one student said that when conversing with a

Vietnamese native speaker, she would first listen to see whether that person were speaking Northern or Southern accent, then she would change her accent accordingly. Another student commented on the differences between different genres of writing and the skills needed to writing each genre well. In her opinion, “writing well is not only about using appropriate and correct vocabulary and writing grammatically-correct sentences. Writing essays or stories is about the content, expression of ideas stemming from writer and the style of writing.”

- Self-reflective

The learners in this study also shared another aspect of successful language learning reported in the literature in their awareness of the learning processes. The students constantly reflected and monitored their learning. They reflected on their learning and were able to identify their own strengths and weaknesses. They were aware of the learning strategies that worked for them, and continued applying those strategies in their learning.

- Keen

Another distinguishing characteristic of these students was their keenness to go native. They were interested in Vietnamese culture and Vietnamese people and they were keen to learn and try to sound as Vietnamese as possible, be it speaking with the right accent or using the natural expressions and proverbs.

To sum up, in this section I have argued that the learners in this study shared some distinguishing characteristics, many of which are similar to those reported in previous studies. Unfortunately, since “previous studies on differences between successful and unsuccessful language learners have focused mainly on learning strategies” (Gan et al., 2004, p. 230), comparisons of other variables or features are not always available.

## **5 Implications for further research**

From the results of this preliminary study, several points related to foreign language teaching pedagogy emerged as particularly salient. These points suggest that in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of the factors that contribute to good language learning, additional empirical and action research on the following topics would deem desirable.

### ***5.1 Integrate target language culture into language teaching***

Due to the interrelationship between language and culture, it is important to incorporate cultural elements in language teaching, as language teaching should consist of four elements: language learning, language awareness, cultural awareness and cultural experience (Byram, 1989). It is evident from my observation and preliminary research that the inclusion of different elements of Vietnamese culture in the teaching programme provides motivation to students. This raises the question of how to integrate different elements of the target culture that are relevant and useful to students, and at the same time suitable for their proficiency level? In other words how to make the best use of the target culture in order to facilitate language acquisition? It is hoped that further research would provide an insight into integrating culture and language in language classrooms.

### ***5.2 Make the learning process more personal and meaningful to learners***

I believe that language that is meaningful to students promotes learning; and also that due attention should be paid to individual differences and motivation to ensure successful second language acquisition. The personalisation of the language learning process can be done through the selection of tasks, topics and assessment. It is apparent that authentic and meaningful tasks would be more beneficial and encouraging to students. In addition, when students can personally relate to

the content of the language curriculum and the components of course assessment are more practical and meaningful, they may be able to learn more effectively. Further action research on this topic may be useful to provide a more personally meaningful and effective language curriculum for learners.

### 5.3 Encourage learners to reflect on their learning and share experiences with each other

Students should not only limit their experiences by learning from their teachers or native speakers. They could also learn a great deal by self-reflecting on their own learning and learning from their fellow classmates. It was found from this study that the students could improve their language proficiency by self-monitoring their own learning process, and discussing and working together with their classmates. In fact, the four students who participated in this study were members of a close-bonding group who usually met up for outings and used Vietnamese outside their classroom.

In a language class, there are always successful and unsuccessful language learners. There are learning strategies that may work well and other strategies that may not work at all. When we encourage learners to reflect on their own learning and share their learning strategies with each other, we encourage reflection and sharing of best learning practice.

## 6 Limitations of the study

Despite the best efforts of the author in planning and conducting all the steps in this research, some limitations were unavoidable. The biggest limitation lay in the small number of the participants. Since there were only four participants in this study, who speak the same language, sharing the same cultural and learning environment, it is not possible to argue that the results of this study can be regarded as immediately generalisable for all language learners from similar backgrounds. However, it did produce meaningful results and suggested a set of questions which need to be further investigated in future studies. In addition, this study had to rely on self-report data, which may be problematic as they may be subjective.

## 7 Conclusion

In this paper, I have provided an outline of the major literature related to motivation, learning strategies and successful language learning. I have also reported on the findings of my exploratory study on successful Vietnamese language learners. Ten common learning strategies were identified. Although the study was limited by various constraints, which meant that it had to be highly focused in some areas, it had clearly pointed to the need for future longitudinal studies of good language learners with bigger samples.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Questionnaire (Adapted from Gardner, 1985)

The purpose of this survey is to find out about the motivation of students learning the Vietnamese language. Your support will be very much appreciated, as the results of this survey will be very important to our research. The information you provide will be kept confidential and your identity will not be revealed in any circumstances. Your truthful responses to this questionnaire are essential to the success of this research, so we urge you to be as accurate as possible. Thank you for your cooperation.

Please provide the following information about yourself.

1. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Sex: M / F (Please circle the appropriate option)
3. Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Duration of Studying Vietnamese: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Profession: \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate your opinion about the following statements by circling the alternative which best indicates the extent you agree or disagree with that statement. There is no right or wrong answer.

Strongly Disagree (1)	Moderately Disagree (2)	Neither disagree nor agree (3)	Moderately Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
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#### I am studying Vietnamese, because:

1.	Knowledge of a foreign language will make me be a better educated person.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	It will allow me to meet and converse with Vietnamese people.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I think it will help me to better understand Vietnamese people and way of life.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I think it will someday be useful in getting a good job.	1	2	3	4	5

5.	I love learning foreign languages.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I would like to be able to speak to the Vietnamese people if I travel in Vietnam.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Learning Vietnamese is fun and enjoyable.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I enjoy meeting and listening to people who speak other languages.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	The more I get to know the Vietnamese people, the more I want to be fluent in their language.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I think the Vietnamese economy is growing very fast.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	My friends will respect me if I speak a foreign language well.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	I might go to Vietnam for a student exchange programme.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I want to travel in Vietnam.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	I would really like to be fluent in at least one foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	I am interested in Vietnamese culture.	1	2	3	4	5

## Appendix B

**INTERVIEW** (Adapted from Gan, Humphreys, & Hamp-Lyons, 2004, and Gardner & Lambert, 1972)

Key questions asked in the interviews

1. When did you start learning Vietnamese?
2. How did you feel after you had the first Vietnamese lesson?
3. What was the main reason for your studying Vietnamese then?
4. In your opinion, how would you say that learning Vietnamese differs from studying other subjects?
5. How would you describe your present state of motivation for learning Vietnamese?
6. Your friend has just started learning Vietnamese and asks for your advice about Vietnamese language learning. What advice would you give him/ her?
7. What advantages do you think there are for being able to speak Vietnamese?
8. What disadvantages do you think there are for not being to speak Vietnamese?
9. What type of personal satisfactions do you think you would experience if you could speak Vietnamese well?
10. Of all the four language skills? Which one do you like the most? Which one do you think is most native-like? What helped you reach that level?

## Appendix C

**SELF-REPORT JOURNALS** (Adapted from Rubin, 1981)

### Instructions to students on self-report journals of their learning activities

We are conducting a study to learn more about how different people go about learning a language. What we are looking for are the special strategies which you use to learn Vietnamese? What special tricks do you have to memorize or learn new words? How do you learn new grammar structures? How do you practice your pronunciation?

More particularly, we are interested in what each student does when he meets or hears a native speaker. When you meet a Vietnamese and he begins a conversation, can you understand what he is saying? How do you figure out what the other person is saying?

When you are sitting in class, what kinds of questions pop into your head (whether or not you ask the teacher)? Or when you are reading, what kinds of questions do you ask yourself? Do you have a system for keeping track of new words you encounter? Do you have a way of studying these? What is it?

When you have to speak Vietnamese, do you have any tricks you use to make yourself understood? When you write in Vietnamese, how do you organize your ideas and find expressions?

In order to get some ideas of what you personally do to help with your own learning, we would like to ask you to write a report of your activities you do when you practice: speaking + pronunciation, listening, reading + grammar + vocabulary, and writing.

Please try to be as detailed as possible when describing your learning activities.