

Research on the effect of culture and logical thinking on learning Mandarin for Vietnamese students

Nghiên cứu ảnh hưởng của văn hóa và tư duy đến việc học tiếng Trung Quốc của sinh viên Việt Nam

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Abstract

In the process of learning a new language, the logical thinking ability and the language structure of the mother tongue are of vital important. With the reality of Chinese tourists and investment in factories, more and more people in Vietnam trying to learn Mandarin. Based on the premise that Vietnamese students learn Mandarin, this chapter deeply discusses the differences in cultural deposits that affect logical thinking and ways of thinking, as well as the correlation and mutual influence between Vietnamese and Mandarin. Combined with the author's personal teaching experience, found that Vietnamese students learn the advantages of Mandarin is very significant. From the input of cultural background to the language tone reduction, the similarity of grammatical structure, a large number of sino-Vietnamese words, then the author put forward to improve the Vietnamese students currently existing intonation and part of the pronunciation problems, hoping to play a helpful role for beginners, and can strengthen students to learn Mandarin confidence. So that the two cultures can better blend and promote each other.

Keywords: Vietnam students, Mandarin, culture influence, logical thinking.

Tóm tắt

Trong quá trình học một ngôn ngữ mới, khả năng tư duy và cấu trúc của ngôn ngữ mẹ đẻ đóng vai trò rất quan trọng. Hiện nay với sự gia tăng của lượng khách du lịch và các nhà máy sản xuất từ Trung Quốc, ngày càng có nhiều người Việt Nam học tiếng Trung Quốc. Trên cơ sở của việc sinh viên Việt Nam học tiếng Trung Quốc, bài báo này sẽ đi sâu phân tích những khác biệt về mặt văn hóa ảnh hưởng đến lối tư duy, suy nghĩ, cũng như sự tương quan, ảnh hưởng lẫn nhau của tiếng Việt và tiếng Trung. Kết hợp với kinh nghiệm giảng dạy cá nhân của tác giả, thấy rằng học sinh Việt Nam học tiếng phổ thông có lợi thế rất đáng kể. Từ đầu vào của nền tảng văn hóa đến sự giảm thanh điệu ngôn ngữ, sự tương đồng về cấu trúc ngữ pháp, một lượng lớn từ Hán Việt, sau đó tác giả đưa ra đề cải thiện ngữ điệu và một phần vấn đề phát âm của sinh viên Việt Nam, hy vọng sẽ phát một vai trò hữu ích cho người mới bắt đầu và có thể củng cố sự tự tin của học sinh khi học tiếng Quan Thoại. Để hai nền văn hóa có thể hòa quyện và thúc đẩy nhau tốt hơn.

Từ khóa: Sinh viên Việt Nam, tiếng phổ thông, ảnh hưởng văn hóa, tư duy.

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1. Introduction

With the increase of Chinese tourists from China, Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia, Vietnam has seen a boom in learning Mandarin. Moreover, learning Mandarin always brings more employment opportunities since the opening of the factory to foreigners. According to statistics, from 2015 to 2019, the number of Chinese tourists to Vietnam increased by 2.3 times, with an average annual growth rate of 34.4 % [1]. Until 2019, China remained the largest market for Vietnamese tourism, with 5.8 million Chinese tourists visiting Vietnam. Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, the passion for learning Mandarin was not affected.

Learning a new second language always creates many thoughts. As a mandarin teacher for Vietnamese students, I make many interesting thoughts to help learning Mandarin funny based on the differences between Mandarin and Vietnamese. herefore, this study focuses more on the impact of mother tongue interference and cultural influences on the cognitive aspects of Vietnamese students learning Mandarin Chinese. Based on comparative lexical, tone, grammar, and syntactic evidence, the influence of Chinese, though lexically significant, is best viewed as structurally superficial. This paper demonstrates that at each linguistic level, Chinese influence is primarily restricted to non-structural aspects of Vietnamese, and the various linguistic elements of Chinese have been fit onto a primarily Southeast Asian and Mon-Khmer linguistic template[2]. Over the past two millennia, Vietnamese has borrowed extensively from the Chinese lexicon, much more than neighboring languages in the modern mainland Southeast Asian region, such as Thai and Cambodian.

The positive transfer of mother tongue, the cultural background and Vietnamese language

structure were researched to support my Vietnamese students to get the significant improvement in learning Mandarin.

2. The influence of Vietnamese cultural heritage

Vietnamese students have considerable advantages in learning Chinese, which makes me surprise that many students can communicate simply in Mandarin just after 3 months of learning. Through in-depth exchanges with local people in Vietnam, I found a lot of subtle thoughts about the advantages and disadvantages of Vietnamese students in learning Mandarin, and how it influences the logical thinking of Vietnamese students.

There is no denying that China and Vietnam share a remarkable amount of cultural similarities which influence the language learning and logic of thinking significantly. Thanks to centuries of shared, intertwined history, Chinese cultural influence on Vietnam remains highly visible and continually growing, even until the present era[1].

2.1. Ancient Vietnamese culture using Chinese characters

The scripts used in Vietnam today has closely related to Chinese characters, which dates back to ancient Chinese characters. Even the "Confucianism" has also been active as the official script of Vietnam for a period of time. Not only Vietnam, but the characters of many Southeast Asian countries are also deeply influenced by Chinese culture. We call it the Chinese character cultural circle. It is generally believed that the Cultural Circle of Chinese Characters includes the following countries: China, North Korea, South Korea, Japan (including the ancient Ryukyu Kingdom), Mongolia, and Vietnam.

Classical Chinese language, a logographic script originating from ancient China, became an early regional lingua franca in the written

form and, as such, was a major facilitator of cultural exchange throughout the region. The oracle bone inscriptions (Jiǎ gǔ wén) are considered as the origins of the Chinese characters. They are the marks engraved on tortoise shells and animal bones in the late Shang Dynasty (~1300 BC). Originally, they were used for divination by the royal family of China.

The current Chinese characters originated around 250 BC, after Emperor Qin unified all variants of scripts. 100 years later, Chinese characters were exported to Vietnam, then exported to Korea and Japan. Chinese characters are respectively called Hànzì in China, and Chữ Hán Nho giáo in Vietnam. Languages and cultures are dynamic, after years' evolutions, Chinese characters were localized. The Cultural Circle of Chinese Characters-countries have developed their own characters and writing system.

With continuous efforts, in the 10th century, Vietnam had its own words, which they called it "Nanzi", which was also known to the world in the 15th century. However, "NanZi" still has many shadows of Chinese characters, which is why Vietnam has always been considered an important member of the Han cultural circle.

The inheritance of Chinese characters has driven the long-term cultural interactions. People inside the Cultural Circle of Chinese Characters countries can often have a quicker and deeper understanding of each other's cultural creations, such as movies, novels and television series, comparing with people outside of the Cultural Circle of Chinese Characters. The Cultural Circle of Chinese Characters seems to have acted as a kind of Babel Tower in bridging people and culture.

2.2. The ubiquitous Chinese cultural circle

In Vietnam, the Chinese characters can be seen everywhere. From the north to the south,

many temples, ancestral halls and village communities are likely to be decorated with Chinese poetry couplets. Moreover, many of Vietnam's ancient literature, poetry and other works are preserved in Chinese characters.

Nowadays, the Chinese calligraphy can often be seen in government offices, schools, companies, hotels and other markets. If you go into a Vietnamese home, you can see the ancestral couplets, or the elegiac couplets beside the memorial tablets in the family are all in Chinese characters. In weddings, you can see "囍" in pairs in a conspicuous place. On the New Year's calendar, the word "福" is common. On the red lantern, there are words "安", "顺", "泰". During the Spring Festival, people will hang in their rooms "万事如意", "福, 寿, 禄", "新年吉祥", "新春万福" and so on.

2.3. Similar underlying cultural structure

Vietnam and China share similar cultural backgrounds, including their traditional festivals, and which promote people to have similar thoughts and behavior, and also influence the logic of language speaking.

For example, the Tết, also known as the Vietnamese Lunar New Year, is arguably the most important Vietnamese holiday, which is also of vital holiday for China. Interestingly, the two countries celebrate in the same day[3]. The two countries both celebrate the Mid-Autumn day in lunar 15th August by going to family gatherings, having moon cakes. Besides, the Ghost Festival is a traditional Taoist and Buddhist festival held on the 15th night of the seventh month in both China and Vietnam. Other aspects of profound cultural similarities between China and Vietnam include entertainment, social interactions, basic family values and quite a few more, [3] which makes people in two countries have similar thinking logic.

3. Language structure

Vietnamese is a Mon-Khmer language, while Chinese is a Sino-Tibetan language. However, China played an important role in Vietnamese education, government, sciences, etc. This is reflected by a large number of Vietnamese words of Chinese (though not necessarily Mandarin) origin. This does not mean that Vietnamese lack a vocabulary on its own.

Various Chinese myths and legends, including even more recent traditional stories are highly popular in Vietnamese literature. Chinese poetry also has a solid footing in Vietnamese literary tradition, some of which are even taught in Vietnamese schools.

3.1. High-frequency of Sino-Vietnamese vocabulary

Languages generally evolve by adapting. One of the ways this is done is through the “borrowing” of words from other languages. Generally, a good way to detect cultural influence is to establish the total number of words borrowed from another language.

Today, it is estimated that Vietnamese language is made up of about 70% loan words from various Chinese languages, we called it Sino-Vietnamese vocabulary, which is a layer of some 3,000 monosyllabic morpheme of the Vietnamese language borrowed from Literary Chinese with consistent pronunciations based on “Annamese” Middle Chinese[4]. Compounds using these morphemes are used extensively in cultural and technical vocabulary. Some of the Sino-Vietnamese vocabulary are so old and established that even natives are oblivious to their foreign origin[3]. In the famous < Từ điển tiếng Việt >[5] dictionary by Vietnamese linguist <Hoàng Phê>[6], about 40% percent of vocabulary are of Chinese origin[7]. Finally, this brings a lot of convenience to Vietnamese native speakers learning Mandarin.

In wiktionary.org we found the introduction of Category: Sino-Vietnamese words which listed the following 200 pages are in this category, out of 8,353 in total[8].

Table 1. As a heritage Mandarin speaker I definitely noticed some similarities in vocab

sino- words	in Chinese	in Vietnamese
China	中国 (zhōng guó)	Trung Quốc
Korean	韩国 (hán guó)	Hàn Quốc
History	历史 (lì shǐ)	Lịch sử
Peace	和平 (hé píng)	Hòa bình
Education	教育 (jiào yù)	Giáo dục
Science	科学 (kē xué)	Khoa học
Politics	政治 (zhèng zhì)	Chính trị
Sports	运动 (yùn dòng)	Vận động
Present	礼物 (lǐ wù)	Lễ vật
Set out	出发 (chū fā)	Xuất phát
Bank	银行 (yín háng)	Ngân hàng
Visit	参观 (cān guān)	Tham quan

3.2. Reduce in tone makes Mandarin easier for Vietnamese students

Mandarin and Vietnamese language are all tonal languages. There are six tones in Vietnamese, while Mandarin has four tones[9]. Changing the pitch of a word will change its meaning[10].

Vietnamese phonology generally matches Southeast Asian areal typological traits. However, Vietnamese has been considered typologically closest to Chinese languages due to their shared traits, namely tonal systems and so-called monosyllabic word forms [11].

Tone and its characteristics are of utmost importance in learning Mandarin. These are important aspects of tone teaching that is often overlooked. We know that tone is primarily determined by changes in pitch, which is related to frequency. These changes in frequency are controlled by our vocal cords - when the vocal cords are tight, the pitch is high, and when they are relaxed, the pitch is low. Therefore, learning tone is essentially learning how to control the vocal cords. Firstly, Vietnamese students often struggle to distinguish between the two tone categories of the first tone and the fourth tone of Mandarin - because they have not yet established the perceptual categories for these tones. The tonal categories of tonal languages are categorical in nature, with each category having its own frequency range. The frequency range of the

first and fourth tones in Mandarin is quite different from that of Vietnamese, making it difficult for Vietnamese students to establish these perceptual categories.[12] Secondly, the unstable frequency range of individual speakers can also affect the perception of tone for Vietnamese students. As we know, the range of tones is relative and varies from person to person. It is impossible for an individual to use the same pitch range consistently, and even within the same tone category, the pitch range can vary when combined with different tone categories. This can also affect the perception of tone for Vietnamese students. Finally, the lack of knowledge about tone theory also hinders students' ability to understand and correct their own tone problems. Therefore, it is important to introduce a tone teaching model based on comparative analysis. Differences and characteristics are often highlighted through comparison. In Mandarin teaching practice, comparison can effectively save teaching resources and time. The proposed tone teaching model is based on this concept, but it still needs to be tested through practice to determine its scientific validity and effectiveness [13].

Obviously, when Vietnamese students learning Mandarin, the tone number of the languages is reduced and the pronunciation of the tones are quite similar to their mother languages, which makes learning Mandarin is much more easier.

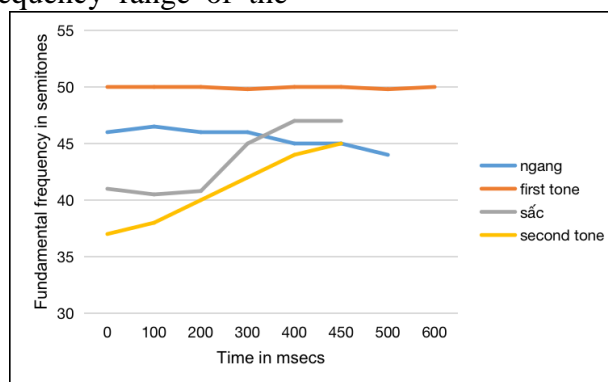


Figure.1. Comparison of "đầu Ngang" in Vietnamese vs first tone in Mandarin
Comparison of "đầu sắc " in Vietnamese vs the second tone in Mandarin

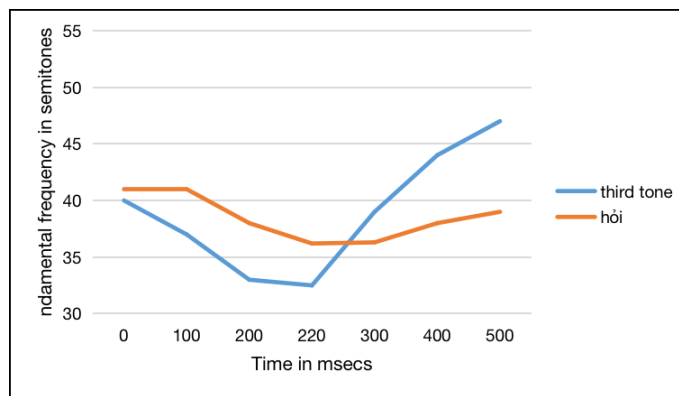


Figure.2. Comparison of "đầu hỏi" in Vietnamese vs the third tone in Mandarin

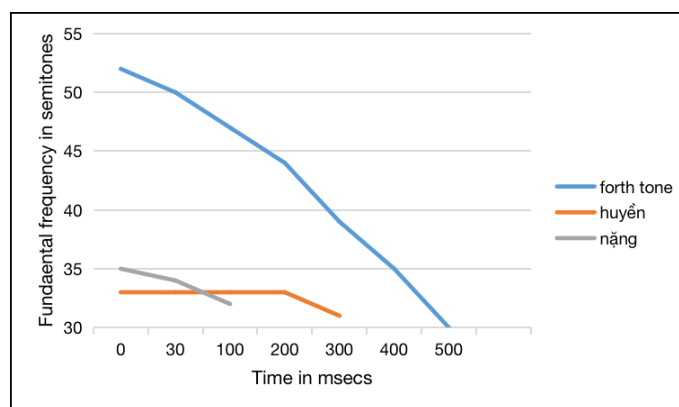


Figure.3. Comparison of "đầu huyền" and "đầu Nặng" in Vietnamese vs the forth tone in Mandarin

3.3. Similarity in grammatical structure

There is no difference in a language point between Mandarin and Vietnamese, particularly no difference in the SVO (Subject + Verb + Object) word order and preposition structure.

The sentence structures are different in these languages when the time, location, and time duration jump in. The structure of Mandarin and Vietnamese sentence are shown below:




Mentioned Situation	Language	Order of grammar
Time	Vietnamese	Subject + Verb + Object + Time Time + Subject + Verb + Object
	Chinese	Subject + Time + Verb + Object
Location	Vietnamese	Subject + Verb + Object + Location
	Chinese	Subject + Location + Verb + Object
Time duration	Vietnamese	Subject + Verb + Object + Time duration
	Chinese	Subject + Verb + Object + Verb + Time duration

4. Key of improving Chinese level

After the actual teaching process, I realized that Vietnamese students mainly encounter pronunciation issues with the first and fourth tones. To address these problems, timely correction can be provided based on the specific mistakes made by the students, particularly for beginners. These two tone-related problems are primarily influenced by negative transfer from their mother tongue. When pronouncing the first tone, it is important to keep it as flat as possible and make it longer

than the Vietnamese "đầu ngang." On the other hand, for the fourth tone, it should be pronounced with sufficient weight, allowing ample air flow from the abdomen and ensuring that the air is sustained and heavy enough.

In the pronunciation process of Chinese language, there is more use of the tip of the tongue, while Vietnamese tongue has more root sounds, so a common phenomenon is that Vietnamese students encounter a lot of difficulties when pronouncing z, c, s.

pinyin	pronunciation skills	aspirate	picture
z	Start with your lips slightly open and the tip of your tongue flat against the back of your teeth to block the air flow, then relax a little and let the air rub into a sound. Note the need for friction between the tongue and the back of the teeth.	No	
c	The tip of the tongue needs to be stretched flat against the back of the teeth, and the air flow is extruded from the seam. The air flow is more urgent and stronger. Pay attention to the friction between the tongue and the back of the teeth, the control of the timing of air delivery. A c sound needs to be rubbed with force.	Yes	
s	The tip of the tongue extends flat against the back of the teeth, and the air flow is extruded from the gap between the teeth. The air flow is light, slow and long. It should be noted that the airflow required by s sound is relatively slow and long, as if the feeling of leaking air from a balloon.	No	

5. Conclusion

When we are learning a second language, it is difficult for us to think logically from the second language side, which is the main factor preventing second language speakers from being as fluent as mother tongue speakers. However, the way and habit of thinking logically depends heavily on the culture of the native country. In this paper, through understanding the folk customs, traditional

festivals, sacrificial rituals of the two countries and their influence on language, I was surprised to find that the integration of these cultures played a very positive role for Vietnamese students to learn Chinese.

With the similar cultural background, grammatical structure, word habits, and large Sino-Vietnamese words, Vietnamese students have shown a very strong ability to learn and accept in listening and speaking conveniently.

But after all, the differences between the two languages cannot be ignored. In the process of Mandarin pronunciation, the pronunciation of the first tone and the fourth tone is not in place, which is worth mentioning, because it often leads to misunderstanding or unclear expression.

Through the author's teaching observation, thinking and comparison of the tones of the two languages, the author gives the methods and techniques to improve the pronunciation of Vietnamese students, which will help improve the pronunciation problems of Vietnamese students.

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