

Factors Affecting the Efficiency of Teaching the Vietnamese Idioms to Foreigners Based on the Principle of Combined Cognition and Culture



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ABSTRACT: Since Vietnam is integrating internationally in all aspects of social life, more and more foreigners are learning Vietnamese. However, there are still very few quantitative studies on teaching and learning Vietnamese idioms effectively. This study aims to fill the theoretical gap and provide more evidence on the factors affecting Vietnamese idiom learning effectiveness. This study was conducted through a cross-sectional survey using a targeted sampling technique (n=100). The multiple linear regression models is applied to prove the hypotheses. The R language is used to analyze research data. The research results show that the willingness to learn Vietnamese and the strategy to learn Vietnamese have a positive and significant impact on the effectiveness of learning Vietnamese idioms. The results of this study continue to confirm the role of cognitive techniques in learning idioms as the results of previous studies.

KEYWORDS: idioms, Vietnamese, cognition, culture , teaching, learning

INTRODUCTION

Along with Vietnam's trend of integration into the world economy, more and more people are learning Vietnamese as a second language (Luu Khuong, 2017). There are many forms of organization to teach Vietnamese to foreigners, as shown by research, such as small group organization, role play, etc (Nguyen, 2012). Studies on learners of Vietnamese as a second language have shown difficulties in understanding the meaning of words, grammatical structures, and phonetics due to the complexity of Vietnamese (First News, 2018).

Contemporary theoretical and experimental studies have found that second language learning is a way to understand cognitive processes in language acquisition. Language is a complex mental activity. Therefore, pre-linguistic conditions make an essential contribution to its acquisition (Chomsky, 1957; Ivanov, 2005). Language and culture are intertwined, each playing its part in any interaction. Language and culture both come first when learning a language. Therefore, language knowledge is essential. Cultural literacy is not only recognized as exciting and motivating but also necessary to avoid or manage misunderstandings in interactions (Sercu et al., 2005; Young & Sachdev, 2011).

The teaching of intercultural communicative languages has naturally extended the current focus on the communicative competence of language learners by incorporating significant cultural awareness (Canale & Swain, 1980). Culturally critical awareness includes knowledge of the values and beliefs shared by members of the culture and the skills and attitudes to explore the culture in keeping with the dynamic nature and cultural heterogeneity (Byram, 1997). In cognitive language learning, second language learners need to make conscious efforts. They have positive attitudes and systematic learning methods to learn about the culture through speaking channels, movies, and literary products to immerse themselves in the culture entirely (Milroy, 1994; Brumfit, 1994). Cognitive methods will provide a systematic approach to teaching mental expressions that facilitate learning and information processing for language learners (Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Danesi, 1994). The need to include cognitive expressions in language teaching and help learners know how a language encodes concepts based on cognitive reasoning (Charteris-Black, 2002). Language teachers should not ignore perception if it is possible to use the target language naturally (Fernando, 1996).

Learning occurs through information processing, providing learners with the opportunity to practice a variety of meanings in a second language (Carroll, 1964). Teaching a second language is a complex process. Therefore, the right approach or method in language teaching has always been a concern for learners and language teachers (Liu, 2003; Moon, 1998; Cooper, 1998; Simpson

Factors Affecting the Efficiency of Teaching the Vietnamese Idioms to Foreigners Based on the Principle of Combined Cognition and Culture

& Mendis, 2003). Many studies give different implications for second language teaching. For example, teaching cognitive expressions is essential in developing the desired proficiency level for language learners. Mental mastery is required to learn and use the language like a native (Fernando; 1996, Wray, 1999; Schmitt, 2000; Charteris-Black, 2002). More attention should be paid to teaching to understand and create cognitive methods in the second language because cognitive methods are recognized as the standard in other languages (Gairns & Redman, 1986; Lattey, 1986; Carter & McCarthy, 1988). In intercultural language teaching, language and culture are integrated at all stages of language learning. Moreover, a growing body of evidence supports a positive relationship between cross-cultural communication language instruction and target domain proficiency (Jackson, 2014; Sercu et al., 2005; Conway et al., 2010; Young & Sachdev, 2011). Second language teachers should systematically study the culture to apply to second language teaching. The so-called culture here refers not only to the concrete aspect, including history, geography, and social system, but also to the abstract aspect, such as lifestyle, values, ways of the world, beliefs, cultural heritage, philosophy, etc (Liu, 2003; Moon, 1998; Cooper, 1998; Simpson & Mendis, 2003).

An essential component of successful language learning is mastery of cognitive expressions, including percepts, phrases, and sentences (Wray, 2000). Cognition facilitates the learning of second language figurative expressions (Lazar, 1996; Deignan et al. 1997). Perception is a vehicle for culture and reflects how the world is perceived, so the importance of cultural teaching becomes greater. This study aims to fill the theoretical gap and provide more evidence on the factors affecting Vietnamese idiom learning effectiveness.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Teaching Vietnamese as a second language

Vietnamese is always considered a difficult language because of its diverse grammar system and complex tonal system (Park Ji Hoon, Chu Thị Phong Lan, & Tran Thi Huong, 2020). Studies on learners of Vietnamese as a second language have shown difficulties in understanding the meaning of words, grammatical structures, and phonetics due to the complexity of Vietnamese (Fist News, 2018; Le Thi Hiep, 2017; Park Ji Hoon, Chu Thị Phong Lan, & Tran Thi Huong, 2020). In terms of teaching methods, many studies have also found that teachers' use of Vietnamese idioms has a significant effect on increasing the effectiveness of Vietnamese learning for second language learners (Dinh Thi Thy Trang, 2009). Based on the assessment of the subject program, Vietnamese learners on Vietnamese television, the failure to apply appropriate teaching methods have made the lessons tedious, making it difficult for learners to understand the meaning of words and knowledge of Vietnamese culture (Vu Duc Nghieu, 2005). On the same topic, other studies have also shown the effect of repetition in lectures taking place in many areas: phonetics, vocabulary, and grammatical sentence structure, which have helped second language learners have the opportunity to learn and review what they have learned (Vu Duc Hoa, 2005).

Teaching methods must be innovated, and learners' activities must prevail in the lesson. The teacher's role is to select appropriate cultural materials and compare and contrast cultural differences by foreign language and mother tongue (Liu, 2003; Moon, 1998; Cooper, 1998; Simpson & Mendis, 2003). Traditional teachers who transmit static information available about culture do not develop learners' cross-cultural communication; instead, such approaches support culture-based generalizations or stereotypes (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

The principles of a cognitive and cultural combination approach in teaching a second language

Perception is not only a cross-language phenomenon but also a cross-cultural phenomenon. The simplest cognitive expressions have the same conceptual and linguistic formality in both the native and target languages (Charteris-Black, 2002). When there are differences between conceptual systems and cultural meanings in the native and target languages, difficulties in understanding cognitive expressions in the target language are inevitable (Charteris-Black, 2002; Cameron & Deignan, 2006). Perception and culture are merged into a single conceptual complex. Therefore, teachers and learners need to be familiar with the conceptual systems of the target language and its speakers. (Kovecses, 2003).

Most of the obstacles can be traced back to cultural clashes. Therefore, perception bears the cultural imprint of society and significantly impacts all aspects of human life. At the same time, traditions and customs greatly influence people's thinking; therefore, perception is placed with the label of particular customs and traditions (Milroy, 1994; Brumfit, 1994). Teaching language by persevering requires learners to reveal the cultural background and meanings of related vocabulary in which learners are instructed to study cognitive usage, especially polysemy, in the early stage. At a later stage, mental knowledge is vital, such as the relationship between perception and thought perception and culture, and perception and understanding (Milroy, 1994; Brumfit, 1994).

The cognitive technique compares two concepts in which one is understood in terms of the other (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). Perception is now often seen as characteristic of mere language, a matter of speech rather than thought or action (Lakoff

Factors Affecting the Efficiency of Teaching the Vietnamese Idioms to Foreigners Based on the Principle of Combined Cognition and Culture

& Johnson, 1980). We are examining how perception from the learner's point of view can provide valuable insights into language teaching. Cognitive understanding involves both mental and sociocultural factors. As a result, perception is essentially culture-specific. The correct version of cognition is determined in part by the expected cultural proficiency. Thus, social and cognitive factors influence our interpretation of any expression, especially percepts. It is said that a language is not a monolith but a complex network of continuous variations. (Milroy, 1994; Brumfit, 1994).

The reader interprets the same cognition in quite different ways, further confirming the assumption that translation is a risky business, requiring not only the exchange of ideas encapsulated in a language but also an effort of imagination and analogy about part of the context (Milroy, 1994; Brumfit, 1994). Provided that the medium, the cognitive construction in the source domain, has the same usage in the target domain, the literal translation is the best way to keep the image alive and the effect of the source perception. On the other hand, cultural conflicts lead to conflicts of languages. In the means and construction of the perception of the source domain, not all can find the same usage in the target domain; therefore, equivalent images or structures in the target domain should be found to replace the source domain. Otherwise, the perceived effect of the source domain will be reduced. Cognitive skills reflect their nation's customs, habits, living situations, and folk stories, so the translation needs to be compensated for helping understand the cognitive meanings of linguistic sources. Although the images of the source domain can be found in the destination domain, they do not carry the cognitive significance of the source domain. In that case, a combination of literal and figurative translation can help convey cognitive meanings (Milroy, 1994; Brumfit, 1994).

The factors affecting the results of second language learning

Four factors affect it: First—personal views of learners and teachers (Jordan, Carlite & Stack; 2008). Cognitive language teaching is based on the thought process behind the behavior, consciously in the learner's mind, focusing on how the learner thinks, understands, and knows (Asiaeuniversity, 2012). An individual's perception plays an essential and primary role in developing and maintaining emotional and behavioral responses to life situations (Penedes & Resko, 2019). Secondly—principles of cognition involves studying mental processes such as sensation, perception, attention, encoding, and memory (Jordan, Carlite & Stack, 2008). Thirdly. It is the meaning of the subject or the meaning of education. According to Suharto (2010), the cognitive perspective considers learners to become active information processors. Finally. Teaching a second language through a cognitive approach tries to motivate learners to figure out how to solve problems and undertake exploratory learning, cognitive strategies, and project-based learning. This means problem-based learning, discovery learning, and scenario learning. (O'Donnell, 1997; Ryan & Murray, 2009).

The effectiveness of teaching a second language depends on the learners' readiness and the classroom's organization. Classrooms must be structured, so learners continually build on what they have learned (Jonassen, 1991). Effective second language teaching manifests in what learners get after finishing the course. It includes revitalizing grammar in the classroom, helping learners to guide the rules of language, and removing language habit formation through behavior. Learning is not habit-forming but requires cognitive processing and mental effort because learners are thinking creatures. Develop error analysis skills and contextual grammar instructions (Corder, 1967). Second-language learners succeed when they move from focusing more on language to thinking more (Chomskian, 1965, 1976, 1980, 1981, 1982). Learners understand a grammar rule well before practicing it in meaningful contexts (Carroll, 1966).

There is much research on teaching and learning a second language early (Rubin, 1975; Gan et al., 2004; Gillette, 1987; Halbach, 2000; Naiman et al., 1978; Norton & Toohey, 2001; Rubin, 1981; Stern, 1975). Previous studies of good language learners have identified five key aspects of successful language learning: (1) concern with language form, (2) concern with communication (functional practice), (3) a task-active approach, (4) awareness of the learning process, and (5) the ability to use strategies flexibly in accordance with task requirements (Ellis; 2008). Seven strategies related to good language learning are as follows (Rubin, 1975): 1. A good language learner is ready and guesses correctly; 2. Good language learners are motivated to communicate or learn from a community; 3. Good learners of foreign languages are usually not inhibited; 4. In addition to focusing on communication, be well prepared, looking for patterns in the language; 5. Good learners focus on practice; 6. Good language learners monitor their own and others' speech; 7. Good language learners pay attention to meaning. Many studies have also shown that successful students demonstrate greater use of learning strategies or apply more appropriate strategies to learning tasks (Halbach, 2000; Gan et al., 2004). Because successful language learning depends on variables such as aptitude, motivation, and appropriateness (Rubin, 1975).

Factors Affecting the Efficiency of Teaching the Vietnamese Idioms to Foreigners Based on the Principle of Combined Cognition and Culture

Table 1. Summary of factors affecting the effectiveness of second language learning

<p>READINESS</p>	<p>Pay attention to the form of language; Interest in communication (functional practice) and active duty approach; Awareness of the learning process; Ability to use strategies flexibly by mission requirements.</p>	<p>Halbach, 2000; Gan et al., 2004</p>
<p>STRATEGY</p>	<p>Successful language learners are willing and able to guess correctly; Successful language learners are strongly motivated to communicate, or learn from, a community; Successful learners of foreign languages are usually not inhibited; In addition to focusing on communication, be well prepared, looking for patterns in the language; Successful learners focus on practice; Successful language learners monitor their own and others' speech; Successful language learners pay attention to meaning.</p>	<p>Ellis; 2008</p>
<p>EFFECTIVE LEARNING</p>	<p>Revival of grammar in the classroom; Understanding how to learn the guided discovery of the rules of language; Eliminate the formation of language habits through behavior; Mental effort because learners are thinking creatures; Develop fault analysis skills; Apply contextual grammar; Understand a grammar rule well before practicing it in meaningful contexts.</p>	<p>Rubin, 1975</p>

Source: Researcher's compilation

Hypotheses

Based on the research model, the following hypotheses were formed:

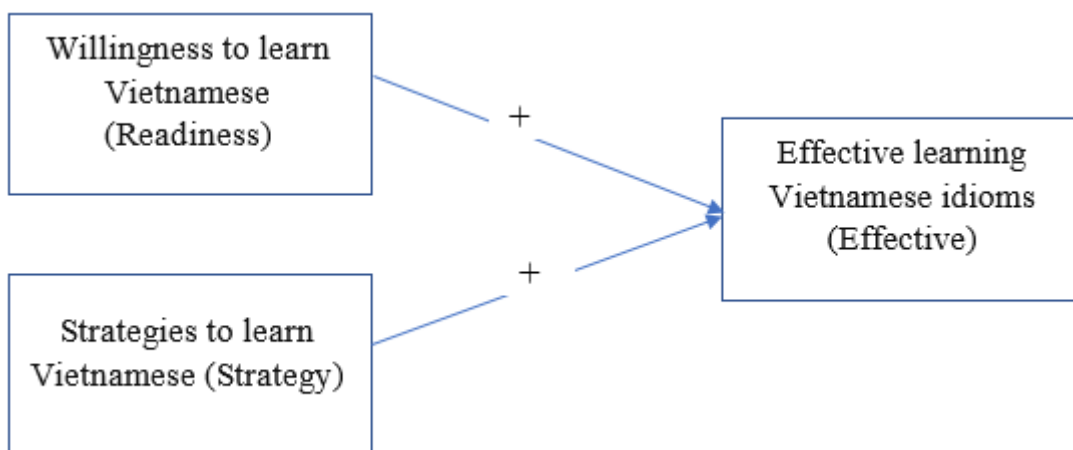
H1. Willingness to learn Vietnamese positively and significantly impacts Vietnamese idioms learning effectiveness.

H2. Vietnamese language learning strategies have a positive and meaningful impact on the effectiveness of Vietnamese idioms learning.

From these research hypotheses, the following research model is built (Figure 1).

Factors Affecting the Efficiency of Teaching the Vietnamese Idioms to Foreigners Based on the Principle of Combined Cognition and Culture

Figure 1: The Research Model



RESEARCH METHOD

This study was conducted at universities in Hanoi in April 2022. This city has 100 universities, the most in Vietnam. Universities that offer high-quality Vietnamese language courses for non-Vietnamese speakers, such as Hanoi University, Hanoi National University of Education, and University of Foreign Languages - Hanoi National University. In addition to Vietnamese language courses at the university, many centers offer Vietnamese courses that teach the Vietnamese language and culture to foreigners in Hanoi. To carry out this study, the research team used a qualitative method through in-depth interviews with educational researchers and linguistics to build a research scale and improve the questionnaire accordingly. The questionnaire was built based on the results of the research overview and experts' opinions, including two parts. Part 1 is used to collect demographic information of study participants, such as age, gender, and country. Part 2 collects information about study participants, including Vietnamese learning effectiveness, willingness to learn Vietnamese, and Vietnamese learning strategies (Table 1). This section inherits the research results of Rubin (1975), Halbach (2000), Gan et al. (2004), and Ellis (2008).

The English questionnaire was translated into Vietnamese by two professional interpreters. The translation process is carried out according to the rules to adapt between Vietnamese cultures. After the translators' and principal investigator's discussion and final consensus, a single Vietnamese version was created. A professional bilingual expert in education contributed to this version to create a final version. This final version was pre-tested on 10 participants selected to be demographically representative of age, sex, and country. These people have lived in Vietnam for at least two years and have completed the Vietnamese language program. The lecturers of these people applied cognitive techniques to analyze Vietnamese idioms (source, target, and meaning). During the assessment, participants were asked to complete this final version. Minor edits followed this to improve the question structure for better understanding, and the final Vietnamese version was completed using the official survey. Finally, the purposeful sampling method sent the questionnaire directly to the respondents. Respondents have lived in Vietnam for at least one year and have completed a basic Vietnamese program. As a result, achieving a response rate of 100%. Demographic information of study participants (Table 2).

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of survey participants

		age							
		20 years old		21 years old		22 years old		over 22 years old	
		N	Row N %	N	Row N %	N	Row N %	N	Row N %
Gender	Female	9	15.0%	11	18.3%	30	50.0%	10	16.7%
	Male	4	10.0%	8	20.0%	21	52.5%	7	17.5%
Country	Australia	2	22.2%	2	22.2%	4	44.4%	1	11.1%
	Cambodia	1	5.3%	5	26.3%	9	47.4%	4	21.1%
	China	5	16.1%	3	9.7%	18	58.1%	5	16.1%
	Laos	3	25.0%	2	16.7%	4	33.3%	3	25.0%

Factors Affecting the Efficiency of Teaching the Vietnamese Idioms to Foreigners Based on the Principle of Combined Cognition and Culture

	Russia	0	0.0%	2	16.7%	8	66.7%	2	16.7%
	South Korea	2	11.8%	5	29.4%	8	47.1%	2	11.8%
Duration	1 to 2 years	2	10.5%	2	10.5%	11	57.9%	4	21.1%
	2 to 3 years	7	16.3%	7	16.3%	19	44.2%	10	23.3%
	Less than 1 year	2	11.8%	5	29.4%	9	52.9%	1	5.9%
	more than 3 years	2	9.5%	5	23.8%	12	57.1%	2	9.5%

RESEARCH RESULTS

R Programming language is used to analyze the scale's reliability, exploratory factor analysis, correlation analysis, and regression analysis.

Analyzing the Reliability of the Scales:

The purpose of testing the scales through Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient is to identify and eliminate junk variables to avoid creating misleading factors when analyzing exploratory factor analysis. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient has a variable value in the interval [0,1]. If a measurement variable has a total correlation coefficient of Corrected Item - Total Correlation ≥ 0.3 , then that variable meets the requirements (Cronbach, 1951; Taber, 2018). The verification criterion is that Cronbach's Alpha coefficient must be greater than 0.6, and the correlation coefficient of the sum variable in each scale must be greater than 0.3 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). Table 3 shows that the scales of the factors are all valid. Therefore, all the scales of the factors are reliable and used for subsequent factor analysis.

Table 3. Summary of Reliability and Relative Minimum Variables of Scales

Scales	Number of variables observed	Reliability coefficients (Cronbach Alpha)	The correlation coefficient of the smallest total variable
Readiness	4	0.603	0.460
Strategy	7	0.883	0.624
Effective	7	0.856	0.588

After testing Cronbach's Alpha, the author uses the Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) method to preliminary evaluate the scales' unidirectional, convergent and discriminant values. EFA was used by extracting the Principal Components Analysis Factor and Varimax rotation to group the factors. With a sample size of 100, the factor loading of the observed variables must be greater than 0.5; variables converge on the same factor and are distinguished from other factors. In addition, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) coefficient, which is used to consider the adequacy of factor analysis, must be in the range of $0.5 \leq KMO \leq 1$ (Cerny & Kaiser, 1977; Kaiser, 1974; Snedecor, George, Cochran & William, 1989).

The analysis results in Table 4 show that all factor loading coefficients of the observed variables are greater than 0.5; Bartlett test with Sig meaning = 0.000 with KMO coefficient = 0.911. There are four items eliminated due to factor loading < 0.50 . All 15 items using EFA are extracted into three factors with Eigenvalues > 1 and Cumulative variance percent = 61 %. Thus, the research model consisting of 2 independent and one dependent variable is used for linear regression analysis and subsequent hypothesis testing.

Table 4. Exploratory factor analysis

Rotated Component Matrix ^a			
	Component		
	1	2	3
strategy6	.743		
strategy7	.731		
strategy1	.726		
strategy4	.708		

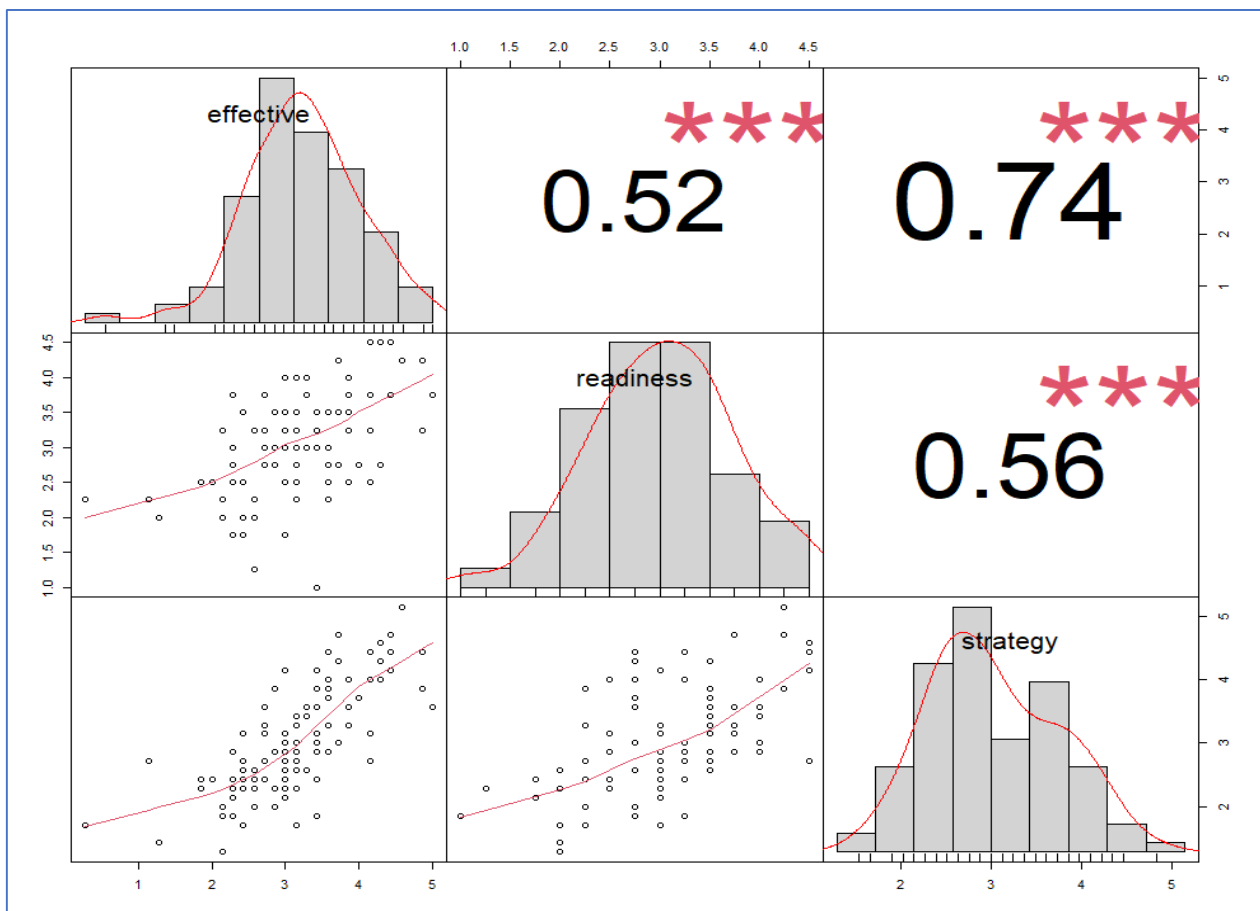
Factors Affecting the Efficiency of Teaching the Vietnamese Idioms to Foreigners Based on the Principle of Combined Cognition and Culture

strategy2	.630		
strategy5	.626		
strategy3	.597		
effective5	.501		
effective3		.760	
effective6		.715	
effective4		.661	
effective1		.606	
readiness2			.822
readiness3			.732
readiness1			.722
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.			
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.			
a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.			

Pearson correlation analysis

The author uses Pearson correlation analysis to analyze the correlation between quantitative variables. Figure 2 shows that, at the 5% significance level, the correlation coefficient shows that the relationship between the dependent and independent variables is statistically significant (Sig. < 0.05). The magnitude of the correlation coefficients ensures that multicollinearity does not occur. Therefore, the next step, the multivariate linear regression analysis procedure, is valid.

Figure 2. Pearson correlation analysis results



Factors Affecting the Efficiency of Teaching the Vietnamese Idioms to Foreigners Based on the Principle of Combined Cognition and Culture

Moderation regression analysis

Multivariable linear regression analysis on the relationship between two independent variables named readiness, strategy and one dependent variable named effective (Table 4). $R^2 = 0.563$ shows that the built linear regression model fits the data set = 0.563 %. Thus, the two independent variables have a statistically significant impact on the dependent variable..

Table 4. The results of multiple linear regression analysis

Dependent variable:	
effective	
readiness	0.179* (0.092)
strategy	0.638*** (0.079)
Constant	0.645** (0.253)
Observations	100
R2	0.563
Adjusted R2	0.554
Residual Std. Error	0.546 (df = 97)
F Statistic	62.584*** (df = 2; 97)

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

Table 4 shows that, at the 95% significance level, the hypotheses proposed by the research team are accepted. Specifically, the willingness to learn Vietnamese has a positive and significant impact on the effectiveness of Vietnamese language learning with a regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.179$) and a 95% significance level ($p.value = 0.05$). That is, at the 95% significance level, when other conditions are unchanged, the factor of willingness to learn Vietnamese increases by 1 unit, and the efficiency of Vietnamese learning increases by 0.179 units. Similarly, when other conditions are constant, the strategic factor of learning Vietnamese increases by 1 unit, and the influential factor of learning Vietnamese increases to 0.638 units.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Firstly. Research results (Table 4) show that there is a close relationship between the factor of willingness to learn Vietnamese and the effectiveness of learning Vietnamese idioms. This is shown in the correlation coefficient (Figure 2) between the readiness variable and the effective variable ($r = 0.52$) and the 95% significance level ($p.value = 0.000$); regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.179$) and 95% significance level ($p.value = 0.05$). The results of this study demonstrate that learners are interested in language forms, are interested in active communication practices, are aware of the learning process, and can use learning strategies flexibly to their needs. Consistent with the task requirements positively impact the effectiveness of learning Vietnamese idioms. This result is similar to previous findings in other countries (Halbach, 2000; Gan et al., 2004).

Secondly. Research results (Table 4) show that compared with the readiness variable, the strategy variable has a stronger and more significant positive impact on the effect variable. This result is expressed at the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.74$) and the 95% significance level ($p.value = 0.000$), the regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.638$) and the 95 % significance level ($p.value = 0.000$).). The results of this study prove that good foreign language learners are those who are willing and guess correctly, have strong motivation to communicate, or learn from a community, are not inhibited, focus on communication, have good preparation, focus on practice, monitor one's own and others' words and paying attention to the meaning; all these factors have a positive impact on the effectiveness of learning Vietnamese idioms. This result is similar to the previous finding of Ellis (2008)..

Factors Affecting the Efficiency of Teaching the Vietnamese Idioms to Foreigners Based on the Principle of Combined Cognition and Culture

Thirdly. This study shows that both the willingness to learn Vietnamese and the Vietnamese language learning strategy positively and significantly impact the effectiveness of learning Vietnamese idioms. Furthermore, this result proves that teaching Vietnamese idioms to people who do not use Vietnamese as a second language on the principle of a combined cognitive and cultural approach is applied to those who do not use Vietnamese as a second language is very successful. The previous studies have also implied that the cognitive approach combined with culture will provide a systematic approach to teaching cognitive expressions that facilitate learning and processing. Information for language learners (Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Danesi, 1994).

Finally. The results of this study imply that teachers who teach Vietnamese idioms to people who do not use Vietnamese as their mother tongue need to focus on learners' learning strategies. Learning strategies have a significant impact on learning effectiveness. If learners have appropriate learning strategies, they will have high learning results. Teachers need to guide learners to be ready and correctly guess language situations by cognitive techniques in the Vietnamese cultural context; Learners need strong motivation to communicate to avoid being inhibited. In addition to focusing on communication, good preparation, and constantly searching for patterns in the language, good learners focus on practicing, effectively monitoring their own and others' words, and paying attention to the meaning of the message.

LIMITATIONS

As with other empirical studies, there are limitations to this study that should be considered when discussing the results. First, our survey method reflects the subjective perception of the respondents toward the questions being investigated. Subjective data has inherent weaknesses that are hard to avoid in surveys (Thanh, Thuy, Hoa, & Thien, 2022). Our data is collected over the same period. Cross-sectional data do not allow for a dynamic assessment of students' changes in intentions and related behaviors regarding their foreign language learning intentions, which may affect their applicability (Tung, Thanh, Thao, Thu, Nguyet, & Tu, 2021). Future research should combine cross-sectional and longitudinal studies. The purposeful sampling method has certain limitations and does not fully reflect population characteristics (Thanh, Tung, Thu, Kien, & Nguyet, 2021; Strong et al., 2018). Our survey was conducted in Hanoi. Therefore more general statements are needed that could be made by applying the research development model and research conclusions to other areas in the region. Vietnam and other cultures (Sun et al., 2012).

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Conflict of interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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Factors Affecting the Efficiency of Teaching the Vietnamese Idioms to Foreigners Based on the Principle of Combined Cognition and Culture

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Factors Affecting the Efficiency of Teaching the Vietnamese Idioms to Foreigners Based on the Principle of Combined Cognition and Culture

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