

An Investigation of English-Majored Students' Perspectives on Improving the Learning of Chinese as A Second Foreign Language



Le Phuong Duy¹, Do Cam Tu²

^{1,2} School of Chinese Language, Tra Vinh University, 126 Nguyen Thien Thanh Street, Ward 5, Tra Vinh Province, Vietnam

ABSTRACT: This study focuses on surveying the opinions of specialized language students on improving the quality of second foreign language learning, Chinese. Based on the perspectives of 133 students through responses to questionnaires about their knowledge, skills, and attitudes, the results show that students have a clear understanding of their level and learning attitude, but are less confident in their Chinese ability due to the differences between their mother tongue and specialized languages. They also have difficulty learning two languages at the same time. However, students have a positive attitude and passion for learning Chinese, largely because they have been exposed to it from an early age through movies and music. At the same time, the study also explores the factors that affect learning Chinese, including external factors such as the phonology, grammar and characters of Chinese, training time, and teaching methods; along with internal factors such as students' ability to absorb new knowledge, level of concentration and motivation to learn. Finally, the students and the authors also suggest some ways to improve the quality of Chinese learning as a second foreign language for students. This is an important basis for improving and optimizing the current Chinese language teaching program.

KEYWORDS: Chinese as a second foreign language, English-majored students, factors affecting learning, learning methods

I. INTRODUCTION

In the context of today's globalization, possessing good foreign language skills is a tremendous advantage in all fields, from work to daily life. For language learners, acquiring one or more additional languages not only helps broaden their knowledge and enhance their personal value but also creates a competitive edge when entering the labor market. Nowadays, English and Chinese have become international languages and are widely used. Therefore, mastering these languages helps individuals have more job opportunities and find jobs with the desired salary.

Circular No. 19/2021/TT-BGDĐT on the promulgation of the General Education Program including the first foreign language (English, Russian, Japanese, French, Chinese) has taken effect from August 16, 2021. This shows that mastering multiple languages is a development trend of the times. Grasping the real needs of society as above, most universities and colleges training in foreign languages have issued regulations requiring students to take second foreign language courses in the undergraduate training program. At the higher education institution chosen for the study, all students majoring in English Studies are required to accumulate 10 credits of four courses of Foreign Language 2 in the training program. Students have to choose one of three languages: Chinese, French, or Korean. If students submit one of the international certificates equivalent to level B1 (or level 3 out of 6 of the Vietnamese Standardized Test of English Proficiency) or higher according to the Common European Reference Framework (CEFR), students may be exempted from taking the second foreign language. Students in other majors are also required to choose to study one of the non-specialized foreign languages including English, Chinese, or Korean. In general, foreign languages are now a compulsory output requirement not only for specialized language students but also for students in other majors to meet the actual work requirements after graduation.

Decision No. 4119/QĐ-BGDĐT of the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam on approving the list of textbooks for subjects, educational activities in grade 5, and textbooks for Chinese language in grades 3 and 4 used in general education institutions was approved on December 1, 2023. Chinese is not only taught in universities but has also been included in the general education curriculum. This shows Vietnam's interest in teaching Chinese today. Training human resources who know Chinese not only helps to promote the development of economic and cultural cooperation between the two countries of Vietnam and China but also promotes the exchange and cooperation relationship between Vietnam and countries that use Chinese.

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Learners of two or more foreign languages often face several difficulties and challenges when learning two new languages at the same time. The factors affecting the learning of multiple foreign languages can come from outside or from the learners themselves. Identifying the learning reality and the factors affecting the process of acquiring a new language as well as considering the effectiveness of specific learning methods can help students have the right direction to overcome the obstacles in their journey to learn a new foreign language. In addition, the learner's assessment of their real learning situation can help them increase their motivation to acquire language and be more proactive in applying appropriate learning methods.

Recognizing the importance of foreign languages in the current globalization era, the research group conducted a survey of students majoring in English Studies on improving the quality of second foreign language learning (Chinese) to make several positive proposals to improve the quality of second foreign language learning for students at universities.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Overview of research

In accordance with Circular No. 17/2021/TT-BGDĐT of the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam dated June 22, 2021, which stipulates the regulations on the standard of the training program; building and appraising and promulgating the training programs of the levels of higher education, the learning outcomes of the training program must have a clear statement about the learning outcomes to be achieved by the learner. The learning outcomes must be built based on the objectives of the training program, ensuring the synthesis of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, meeting the requirements of the output standard in the Vietnam National Qualifications Framework and the training program standard according to the specific group, and training industry. Therefore, the research questionnaire on the actual situation of learning Chinese as a second foreign language is also designed based on the criteria for evaluating the standard output of the subject for students in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

A study of English majors' motivation for learning Chinese as a second foreign language at a university discusses the motivation for learning Chinese as a second foreign language of English majors in higher education institutions based on the three-scope theory of foreign language learning motivation proposed by Dörnyei in 1994, including language scope, learner scope, and learning environment scope (Liu, 2017). The results of his study show that, on the language scope, most students choose to learn Chinese as a second foreign language because they like Chinese and believe that Chinese will help them find a good job in the future. In addition, it is also because it is a compulsory subject in the training program. Students choose to learn Chinese as a second foreign language not because there is relation to Chinese in their family, not because they want to study abroad in China, or because they are interested in the exchange and cooperation relationship between Vietnam and China. On the learner scope, most students believe that Chinese is not difficult and they can learn Chinese well. Besides, the expectation of parents is also an important factor to motivate them to try to study. On the learning environment scope, textbooks, teachers, quality of class hours, etc. have a direct impact on the interest of students in learning Chinese as a second foreign language.

In another study by the above researcher on the concept of learning Chinese as a second foreign language of English majors, he mentioned the common characteristics of the concept of learning, the influence of individual factors on the concept of learning, and the relationship between learning outcomes and the concept of learning (Luu, 2020). The results of the study show that the vast majority of students believe that there is such a thing as foreign language learning ability, but the vast majority of students believe that they do not have a special ability to learn foreign languages. In addition, most students also believe that Chinese is a relatively easy foreign language to learn. The reason for this opinion might be because Vietnamese and Chinese languages are similar, both of which are isolating types. However, students have difficulty with reading and writing skills because Han characters are an ideographic type of character. The research group refers to the results and questionnaires of the two studies above as the basis for their research.

In another study, the authors surveyed English majors at a university in Yunnan Province, China. The participating students chose a second foreign language (Japanese, Spanish, or French). The research paper was conducted to answer the two research questions which are the overview of the level of concentration of English majors in the process of learning a second foreign language and the factors affecting students' learning of a second foreign language. The results of the study show that the factors affecting the level of concentration on learning a second foreign language of English majors include the influence of the assessment of teachers and friends, and orientation of work after graduation (Zheng et al., 2023). Although the students above do not learn Chinese as a second foreign language, the student characteristics and influencing factors drawn from the research results are also closely related to the research we are conducting.

A study on the impact of the learning environment on English language learning discusses the impact of the learning environment on foreign language learning and concludes that the learning environment can support or hinder the learning process. Learning environment factors such as teaching quality, opportunities to practice using the language, and support from friends and family can all affect learning outcomes (Zhang, 2023)

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The study on reflections on the reform of second foreign language teaching focuses on discussing the current status and some suggestions for improvement in teaching a second foreign language for foreign language majors in higher education institutions. Although the study focuses on the object of English second foreign language classes, in general, the goals and requirements of English and Chinese second foreign language classes have many similarities. From there, the authors can refer to the teaching improvement directions for their research, such as how to design a scientific and appropriate lesson plan for the course duration, methods to stimulate students' interest in studying and engaging teaching methods (Wang, 2019).

A study on the current status and some suggestions to improve the effectiveness of self-study of English for non-majors at Hanoi Pedagogy University (Do, 2018) identified how students approach self-study. The study found that students often struggle to use their self-study time effectively and don't complete the required amount of knowledge according to the planned schedule. The author of the study proposed several suggestions to improve the effectiveness of self-study for these students. These recommendations included clearly defining the role that self-study plays in their overall learning, building a learning plan that is linked to both short-term and long-term learning goals, and creating a learning roadmap to guide their progress. Additionally, the author suggests that students choose self-study tactics that are best suited to their learning styles and utilize scientific thinking tools to help them exploit their full potential for self-directed learning.

In a separate study focused on how to apply information technology in teaching and learning foreign languages in the 4.0 era, the author proposed several suggestions for both lecturers and students (Nguyen, 2022). For lecturers, the study suggests a focus on mastering the objectives and content of the teaching knowledge they are delivering. It also emphasizes the importance of effectively utilizing available modern teaching aids such as projectors and personal computers. In addition, the study encourages lecturers to explore new teaching software to create a more engaging learning experience for students and make lessons more vivid and easy to understand. For students, the study on information technology in language learning emphasizes the importance of taking initiative in their learning and exploring learning methods that work best for them. The study also suggests that students can supplement their learning by downloading several support applications specifically designed to aid in foreign language acquisition.

B. Research objectives

The study focuses on exploiting the opinions of English majors on their second foreign language learning (Chinese) situation, the factors affecting their learning, and some methods that students propose to improve their Chinese learning as a second foreign language. The researchers would collect students' opinions on their Chinese learning based on three main aspects: knowledge, skills, and attitudes. This objective aims to determine the level of awareness and learning habits of English majors when they learn Chinese as a second foreign language. In addition, the study also investigates the external and internal factors that can affect students' foreign language learning process. The information collected will help lecturers understand better the current situation of students' Chinese learning, thereby making the most accurate and objective discussion. Besides, the study also aims to collect opinions and suggestions from English majors themselves on useful and appropriate learning methods to help students learn Chinese better.

In general, previous studies on the same topic have not focused much on investigating the current status of Chinese learning among English majors, specifically studies on the students' own perceptions of their Chinese proficiency. Therefore, the authors of this study conducted this research to provide practical bases for curriculum designers to consider supplementing, editing, and perfecting the Chinese language curriculum for English majors to better meet students' needs. Based on the research results, lecturers can change some teaching methods in the classroom and how to assign homework to students so that students have more opportunities to improve their Chinese language proficiency.

C. Research scope and research methods

This study surveys the opinions of 133 students who are currently studying Chinese as a second foreign language on how to improve the quality of their Chinese language learning. The research subjects are English majors at a university in southern Vietnam. Students have taken at least one of the four second foreign language courses at the university. Based on the opinions and suggestions of the students, the researchers will draw out recommendations to improve the quality of Chinese teaching and learning for students.

The researchers used an online questionnaire to collect opinions from students. The questionnaire was constructed and adjusted based on the standard learning outcomes assessment criteria for students in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The authors also referred to the questionnaire of the author Luu in his two studies on the motivation of English majors to learn Chinese in 2017 and another study in 2020 on the concept of learning Chinese as a second foreign language. The questionnaire consists of three parts, a total of 35 questions in the form of a 5-point Likert scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" and 3 open-ended questions in the form of short answers.

The first part of the questionnaire (consisting of 12 questions on a 5-point Likert scale and 1 open-ended question) is designed to find out about students' opinions on the current status of their basic knowledge (grammar, vocabulary, and ability to read Chinese characters), language skills including listening, speaking, reading, writing and their current attitude towards learning Chinese. The second part (consisting of 11 questions on a 5-point Likert scale and 1 open-ended question) explores the factors affecting students' Chinese learning process, including external factors such as the phonological system, grammar and characters of Chinese, training

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time and teaching methods, as well as internal factors such as the ability to acquire new knowledge, the ability to imitate, the level of concentration in class, and motivation to learn. The final part (consisting of 12 questions on a 5-point Likert scale and 1 open-ended question) assesses students' opinions on some learning methods to improve their knowledge acquisition, practice Chinese learning skills, and students' attitudes when learning this second foreign language course.

The data analysis method is quantitative analysis, using the statistical software SPSS version 20 to analyze the descriptive data collected from the questionnaire. The research team sent the online questionnaire to 133 students through Google form and received 133 valid responses, in which 100% of the participants completed all the questions in the questionnaire.

With the above objectives, the research team raised the following three research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of English majors of the current status of their learning of Chinese as a second foreign language?
2. What factors affect English-majored students' learning of Chinese as a second foreign language?
3. What are the opinions of English-majored students on some learning methods to improve the quality of learning Chinese as a second foreign language?

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The author used SPSS to test the reliability of the Cronbach's Alpha scale for all data collected from the questionnaire completed by 133 participants. The frequency and reliability coefficient of Cronbach's Alpha scale = 0.905, indicating that the measurement scale has very good reliability. This shows that the internal consistency of the variables in the scale is very high.

I. Reliability Statistics of the Questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.905	35

In this section, the authors analyze the descriptive statistical results of the evaluations by English majors on their current status of learning Chinese as a second foreign language, some factors affecting the learning situation of students, and students' suggestions to improve the quality of learning this second foreign language.

A. The current status of English-majored students' learning of Chinese as a second foreign language

II. The Current Status of Acquiring Knowledge of Chinese as a Second Foreign Language of English-Majored Students

Item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1: The content of the second foreign language course provides enough knowledge about Chinese.	133	1	5	3.53	1.390
2: I have a good understanding of Chinese grammatical structures.	133	1	5	2.55	1.131
3: I have a rich knowledge of Chinese vocabulary.	133	1	5	2.37	1.190
4: I know how to read Chinese characters.	133	1	5	2.89	1.358
Valid N (listwise)	133				

The survey results in Table 3.2 show that students rated the content of Chinese knowledge provided in the curriculum as sufficient ($M=3.53$, $SD=1.390$). Thus, students can fully utilize the full and reliable source of knowledge to develop their Chinese language proficiency. However, the majority of students do not highly rate their current Chinese proficiency, specifically their ability to read Chinese characters, grammar structures, and vocabulary, with an average value below 3.00. It can be seen that the fact that students have to learn two foreign languages at the same time and there are only 10 credits of the second foreign language courses makes most students not feel confident about the amount of knowledge they have about Chinese characters, grammar, and vocabulary.

III. The current Chinese Learning Skills of English-majored Students

Item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
5: I have good Chinese listening skills	133	1	5	2.43	1.150
6: I have good Chinese reading skills	133	1	5	2.39	1.230
7: I can write Chinese accurately.	133	1	5	2.30	1.087

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8: I can speak Chinese confidently and fluently.	133	1	5	2.27	1.142
9: I regularly use Chinese to communicate with classmates and people who know Chinese.	133	1	5	2.92	1.472
Valid N (listwise)	133				

Regarding their second foreign language (Chinese) learning skills, the majority of students do not highly rate their listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities. The survey data is quite consistent, with an average value difference of only 0.16. In particular, students rated their Chinese speaking skills as not yet fluent. This survey result reflects the unsatisfactory reality of students' second foreign language Chinese learning. Therefore, lecturers need to investigate the specific causes and factors affecting this situation among students, to provide timely solutions.

IV. English-majored Students' Attitudes towards Learning Chinese as a Second Foreign Language

Item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
10: I am interested in learning Chinese	133	1	5	3.66	1.387
11: I believe I can learn Chinese well.	133	1	5	3.35	1.349
12: I am discouraged from communicating in Chinese with other people.	133	1	5	3.43	1.344
Valid N (listwise)	133				

Survey data shows that students generally have an interest in learning Chinese and are confident in their ability to learn, with average values of 3.66 and 3.35, respectively. However, students still have a fear of communicating in Chinese in real-life situations (M=3.43, SD=1.344).

In addition, from the responses to the open-ended questions in the survey, students also had some common thoughts about their current situation with learning Chinese. The majority of students have difficulty memorizing Chinese characters. The reason for this situation may be because some Chinese words have the same spelling and have many strokes. The Han character system is an ideographic writing system while the Vietnamese system is expressed in Latin script (Luu, 2020).

The results obtained from the study of the research subjects' learning situation in Chinese are similar to the study of the author Luu as mentioned in the research overview above. Specifically, students have a love for Chinese and also have a positive attitude towards learning Chinese. The difficulties students face when learning Chinese as a second foreign language are also similar to the above results.

B. Factors Affecting the Learning of Chinese by English-Majored Students

V. External factors Affecting English-majored Students' learning of Chinese

Item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1: The Chinese phonology, characters, and grammar are similar to Vietnamese, so it is easier for me to relate to when learning.	133	1	5	3.92	1.187
2: The amount of Chinese training at school is enough for me to learn this course well.	133	1	5	3.59	1.142
3: Positive teaching methods give students opportunities to practice speaking Chinese.	133	1	5	4.03	1.007
4: Opportunities to practice speaking with native speakers are not very helpful for learning Chinese.	133	1	5	2.24	1.292
5: The school's facilities and equipment meet the needs of learning.	133	1	5	4.03	.992
Valid N (listwise)	133				

Scientific evidence presented in the research overview section indicates that second language learning is influenced by a multitude of external factors, including motivation, learning environment, and personal factors. Positive teaching methods, which the majority of students agreed with, provide students with opportunities to practice speaking, thereby helping them become familiar with and

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develop communication skills (Mean=4.03, SD=1.007). Simultaneously, students also agree that the quality of school facilities and equipment meets their learning needs (Mean=4.03, SD=0.992). With an average value of 3.92 and SD=1.187, students also believe that the similarities between Chinese and Vietnamese phonology, characters, and grammar make it easier for them to learn Chinese. Many students also agree that the amount of Chinese training at school is sufficient for them to learn about this language (Mean=3.59, SD=1.142). It is undeniable that the opportunity to interact with native speakers can significantly impact students' foreign language learning. Despite having experience learning a foreign language, the majority of students do not agree with the statement that they can practice speaking without interacting with native speakers (Mean=2.24, SD=1.292).

As mentioned in the research overview section, the findings from the study of Zheng et al. also mentioned teacher evaluation as an external factor influencing the level of second language learning focus among students. Meanwhile, Zhang's study also suggests that the learning environment impacts students' language learning process. The results of the study presented in the table above also share similarities with Luu's study regarding students' opinions that the language types of Vietnamese and Chinese are similar, making it easier for students to learn.

VI. Internal factors Affecting English-majored Students' learning of Chinese

Item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
6: The ability to absorb new knowledge helps me learn Chinese quickly and effectively.	133	1	5	3.31	1.244
7: Good imitation skills are an advantage when learning Chinese.	133	1	5	3.13	1.202
8: A high level of concentration and not doing other work during class helps me learn Chinese well.	133	1	5	3.48	1.125
9: Completing assignments and studying Chinese independently after class helps me learn Chinese well.	133	1	5	3.53	1.241
10: I am motivated to learn Chinese because it is a language I love.	133	1	5	4.02	1.000
11: Innate talent may enhance foreign language learning abilities.	133	1	5	3.36	1.448
Valid N (listwise)	133				

In addition to external factors, the results from the questionnaire also show that foreign language learners are influenced by factors arising from the learners themselves. The internal factor that most significantly affects students' Chinese learning is the motivation to learn their favorite language (M=4.02, SD=1.000). This result is quite similar to Luu's study, which found that SFL students learn Chinese mainly out of linguistic interest, in addition to the need to realize their self-worth, as well as the need for communication and the demands of others. The second factor that has a high impact on students' learning is self-study and practice through regularly completing Chinese homework after class (M=3.53, SD=1.241). The majority of students also believe that people with innate talent will learn foreign languages better (M=3.36, SD=1.448). This suggests that specialized language students themselves believe that innate talent is a factor that influences their ability to learn foreign languages. In comparison, according to Luu's survey on students' foreign language learning ability, the majority of respondents believe that everyone has different foreign language learning abilities, and some people have a special ability to learn foreign languages. In addition to the above results, students also self-assessed the factors that influence their Chinese learning, among which a high level of concentration and not doing their work during class received the most agreement (Mean=3.48, SD=1.125), followed by the ability to absorb new knowledge (Mean=3.31, SD=1.244), and the ability to imitate (Mean=3.13, SD=1.202).

The results obtained from the open-ended questions also show that the factors affecting students' Chinese learning are mainly related to personal interests such as passion for Chinese movies, music, and culture, psychological factors such as fear of communication and anxiety about not doing well because they do not have a previous Chinese foundation, lack of perseverance and discipline in learning because of lack of motivation and effort to learn. In addition, students believe that they do not have enough time to invest in a second language because the curriculum includes many subjects. Students also reported that they lack opportunities to practice speaking because their surroundings do not have many people who use Chinese. Poor health was also mentioned in students' responses.

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Students' responses show that they are aware of the current situation of foreign language learning and recognize the external and internal factors that affect their knowledge acquisition, skill development, and attitude formation so that they can propose some methods to improve their learning.

C. Student Suggestions for Improving the Learning of Chinese as a Second Foreign Language

VII. Student Suggestions for Improving Knowledge of Chinese

Item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1: Students should utilize Chinese language learning tools to enhance their knowledge.	133	1	5	4.34	.815
2: Students should engage in learning through online videos/lectures to grasp Chinese knowledge more effectively.	133	1	5	4.02	.896
3: Students should read books, listen to music, and watch Chinese movies to broaden their understanding of Chinese language and culture.	133	1	5	4.26	.928
4. Students should regularly review lesson content to improve their Chinese knowledge acquisition.	133	1	5	4.08	.913
5. Students should employ a variety of learning methods to increase their learning interests.	133	1	5	4.09	.981
Valid N (listwise)	133				

The most frequently suggested method by students to improve their learning quality is to utilize learning support tools (Mean=4.34, SD=0.815). Currently, numerous free applications support Chinese language learning, such as Duolingo, Super Chinese, electronic dictionaries, or voice conversion websites for students to reference. Additionally, students also agree with improving their learning through reading books, listening to music, and watching Chinese movies (Mean=4.26, SD=0.928), practicing listening and speaking Chinese through online lectures (Mean=4.02, SD=0.896), and reviewing lesson content (Mean=4.08, SD=0.913). Furthermore, responses to the open-ended questions indicate that students also believe that learners should self-study outside of class hours, learn vocabulary using flashcards, learn through games, and clearly define their learning goals and roadmap to enhance their knowledge.

VIII. Student Suggestions for Improving Skills in Learning Chinese

Item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
6. Students should practice listening and speaking Chinese through online lectures to help improve their language skills.	133	1	5	4.08	.950
7. Students should write journals or essays in Chinese to improve their writing skills.	133	1	5	4.12	.938
8: Students should participate in extracurricular activities to practice the language and improve their communication skills.	133	1	5	3.85	1.070
Valid N (listwise)	133				

A majority of students believe that writing journals or essays in Chinese helps improve their writing skills (Mean=4.12, SD=0.938). Additionally, practicing listening and speaking Chinese through online lectures enhances their language skills (Mean=4.08, SD=0.950). Students also agree that practicing the language through extracurricular activities improves their communication skills (Mean=3.85, SD=1.070). Furthermore, students propose various other learning methods, such as actively seeking out and using social media to communicate with native speakers, participating in extracurricular activities organized by schools in Vietnam and China, practicing listening to and repeating Chinese knowledge through video lectures, and practicing writing extensively to memorize characters.

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IX. Student Suggestions for Improving Attitudes in Learning Chinese

Item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
9. Students should practice communicating with native speakers and participate in group activities to increase their interest in learning Chinese.	133	1	5	4.05	1.054
10. Students should be willing to change their learning methods to improve their Chinese proficiency.	133	1	5	4.32	.822
11. Students should listen to the suggestions of their teachers and friends to improve their Chinese proficiency.	133	1	5	4.30	.826
12. Students should take the initiative to read more books, and newspapers, and watch news from the media to find motivation and learning goals.	133	1	5	3.80	1.196
Valid N (listwise)	133				

To improve their attitude towards learning Chinese as a foreign language, the majority of students believe that learners should be willing to change their learning methods (Mean=4.32, SD=0.822) and listen to the suggestions of teachers and friends (Mean=4.30, SD=0.826) to increase their learning interest and have a more positive learning attitude. Participating in group activities and taking the initiative to read more books, and newspapers, and watch news from the media are also effective measures to improve learning motivation and to some extent reduce the fear of communicating in Chinese.

The above suggestions also have many similarities with the mentioned study by Wang and Do, which suggests that teachers' teaching methods can help students become more interested in learning, and the process of self-study and the design of a reasonable learning path also play an important role in improving the learning efficiency of students. In addition, the application of information technology in learning is also agreed by the author Nguyen as a suggestion to supplement the learning of foreign languages for students.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the era of global integration, proficiency in multiple foreign languages can bring many benefits to learners, serving as an essential tool in communication while opening up numerous job opportunities after graduation. At most universities in Vietnam, in addition to their primary foreign language major, students in all specialized language programs are required to complete credits in a second foreign language. China is a country with a quite similar culture to Vietnam and has one of the most widely spoken languages in the world, second only to English. Therefore, most English language majors at the chosen university tend to choose Chinese as their second foreign language.

This research study focuses on understanding the perceptions of English language majors at a Vietnamese university regarding their current status of learning Chinese as a second foreign language. The research findings indicate that students have a clear understanding of their level of knowledge acquisition, listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, as well as their current learning attitude. The majority of students do not highly evaluate their Chinese learning situation, especially lacking confidence in their language skills. Part of the reason is that English and Chinese do not belong to the same language family, so most students find it difficult to balance learning two languages at the same time. However, students still have a quite positive attitude when asked about their motivation and interest in learning a second foreign language. Many responses show that students have a passion and love for learning Chinese.

In addition, when surveyed about the internal and external factors affecting their Chinese learning, most students were able to identify which factors were impacting their learning situation. Students acknowledged that teaching methods, school facilities, the similarity between the two languages, the program's training duration, and practice opportunities all have a bearing on their current Chinese learning quality. Additionally, factors related to the learners themselves, such as motivation, self-study awareness, innate talent, concentration level, ability to acquire new knowledge, and psychological factors were also identified by students as having an impact on their learning. To excel in both foreign languages, especially when the two languages do not share many similarities in grammar and vocabulary, students believe that learners need to flexibly apply a variety of learning methods and allocate appropriate time for both in-class and out-of-class learning.

Based on the research findings on the current status of Chinese learning among English language majors, here are some recommendations for teachers, students, and researchers to improve the quality of foreign language learning at universities in

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Vietnam. For teachers, teaching methods should be diversified, and information technology should be applied to teaching materials, such as using language learning software and applying online tools to create conditions for students to have more practical learning experiences and enhance their listening and speaking skills. In addition, teachers should encourage classroom interaction through group activities, discussions, and presentations to create opportunities for students to practice Chinese in real-world situations and provide timely and positive feedback on students' efforts to encourage progress and maintain motivation to learn.

For students, with a foundation of love for languages, students should develop a self-directed learning attitude, set clear learning goals and paths for themselves, and strive to achieve those goals. They had better take advantage of diverse learning resources such as textbooks, foreign language learning apps, videos, podcasts, etc., to improve four basic skills and participate in study groups or foreign language clubs to practice and improve Chinese skills in an interactive environment.

Other researchers with the same topic can further research effective learning methods for foreign language learning, especially Chinese, to provide specific recommendations for students and teachers. Another aspect that researchers may be interested in is researching the impact of culture on Chinese learning, for example, the impact of Chinese cultural factors on students' Chinese learning process, and thus proposing appropriate teaching and learning methods. In addition, researchers can propose the development of rich and up-to-date learning resources, including both online and offline resources, to support students in their learning process.

Finally, close coordination between teachers, students, and researchers is essential to achieve the goal of improving the quality of second foreign language (Chinese) learning. With these recommendations, it is hoped that English-majored students can be able to improve their Chinese proficiency, thereby opening up career opportunities and personal development in the future.

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