
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Evaluating Self-Study Practices and Needs for Chinese Idioms among Upper-Year Students at Ho Chi Minh City University of Education

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| ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the current status and requirements concerning self-studying Chinese idioms among third- and fourth-year students at Ho Chi Minh City University of Education. The research team conducted surveys among 50 third-year students (K47) and 50 fourth-year students (K46) to gather data. The survey questions were designed to explore students' self-assessment of their proficiency in using Chinese idioms, their retention and utilization levels of idioms, and their demand for an online self-study resource. The results indicate a prevailing lack of confidence among the majority of students in both cohorts regarding their ability to comprehend and apply Chinese idioms. Additionally, there is a noticeable desire for an online idiom database to facilitate their self-study endeavors. This study underscores the pressing need of students for effective resources and strategies to improve their Chinese idiom proficiency. The identification of these needs presents an opportunity for educational institutions and online learning platforms to develop tailored solutions that cater to students' requirements, thereby enhancing the efficacy of Chinese idiom learning. By shedding light on the current challenges and demands of students in self-studying Chinese idioms, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on language education and learning strategies. Furthermore, the study proposes practical solutions aimed at addressing these needs, thereby offering valuable insights for educators, curriculum developers, and educational technology providers.

| KEYWORDS

Chinese idioms, Self-study, Language proficiency, Higher education, Online learning resources, Ho Chi Minh City University of Education.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

In the current era of globalization and international integration, proficiency in foreign languages, particularly Chinese, holds increasing significance. Chinese, as the language of the world's most populous nation and one of the United Nations' official languages, serves as a vital tool in international communication, trade, and collaboration. This trend is notably evident in Vietnam, where the demand for Chinese language education has surged, particularly within university settings such as Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, renowned for its Chinese Language major.

Third and fourth-year students enrolled in the Chinese Language program at this institution represent a crucial stage of language acquisition, transitioning from foundational to advanced proficiency levels in preparation for future professional endeavors. Within this learning trajectory, Chinese idioms (成语, chéngyǔ) assume a pivotal role, offering insights into Chinese culture, thoughts, and expressions essential for comprehensive language mastery. However, many students encounter obstacles in self-learning and applying idioms due to ineffective methods, limited learning resources, or motivational challenges.

This study endeavors to delineate the current status and exigencies of self-learning Chinese idioms among third and fourth-year students pursuing the Chinese Language major at Ho Chi Minh City University of Education. Subsequently, it aims to proffer viable solutions to surmount these hurdles and develop pertinent support materials. By discerning students' needs and challenges, the research seeks to enhance training quality, address students' learning requisites, and equip them with a competitive edge in international environments or within organizations collaborating with Chinese counterparts.

Significance of the Study: This research holds paramount importance in enhancing language education quality, meeting students' learning needs, and fostering their professional advantages in international settings or amid collaborations with Chinese entities. By identifying and addressing challenges in self-learning Chinese idioms, the study facilitates holistic language acquisition and cultural understanding among students.

The structure of this paper includes 5 sections. The first section is about the introduction, which provides an overview of the significance of Chinese language education and the rationale for the study. Section 2 is the literature review; we examine existing literature on language learning, focusing on Chinese idioms and highlighting gaps necessitating further research. In section 3, we discuss the methodology and detail the research approach, including data collection methods and analysis techniques. The fourth section will be results and discussion, where we present the results of the study, elucidating the current status and needs of students in self-learning Chinese idioms. Analyze the findings, identify challenges, and propose solutions to address them. Finally, we come to a conclusion in section 5, we summarize the study's contributions, implications, and avenues for future research.

2. Literature Review

Concept of self-study: According to the research paper "On the self-study activities of pedagogical students" by author Hà Thị Đức (1992), "The essence of university students' self-study work is the process of conscious, active, and self-reliant cognition, without the direct guidance of the teacher, to achieve the purpose and task of teaching." Similarly, Knowles (1975) emphasizes that self-directed learning involves a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes. Therefore, it can be seen that self-study is a learning process without direct guidance from the teacher. It requires the learner to find out how to learn and use learning methods effectively to achieve their desired goals. This aligns with the views of Candy (1991), who suggests that self-directed learning promotes greater independence and self-discipline in learners, equipping them with skills necessary for lifelong learning.

Concept of idioms: According to Nguyễn Như Ý (1999) in the Vietnamese Explanatory Dictionary, "An idiom is a fixed set of words commonly used, with a defining meaning, usually not deducible from the meaning of its components, and passed down in the folk and literary tradition." According to Hoàng Phê (2003) in the Vietnamese Dictionary, "An idiom is a fixed set of words commonly used, the meaning of which usually cannot be simply explained by the meaning of the words that make it up." Based on a review of many definitions, the research group clarifies the characteristics of idioms as follows: idioms are fixed expressions with a tight structure, pre-existing and passed down from generation to generation. Each idiom has a specific meaning with a figurative and evocative nature.

Studies on Chinese idioms (Chengyu) highlight unique challenges due to their cultural and historical roots. Chen and Lai (2013) pointed out the difficulties learners face with Chengyu because of their brevity and semantic opacity. Liu (2010) suggested integrating cultural and historical contexts into teaching to improve comprehension and retention.

In a study exploring the integration of Chinese idioms in language teaching by Son (2024), it was found that idioms enhance vocabulary learning and cultural understanding among Vietnamese students learning Chinese. The research suggests that idioms, rich in cultural and historical significance, should be taught contextually to improve accuracy and communication skills in modern educational settings.

The research article "外国留学生使用汉语成语的偏误分析" by 张永芳 (1999) analyzes common mistakes when foreign students use Chinese idioms. The author collects and classifies errors based on criteria of grammar, semantics, and cultural misunderstandings, thereby identifying the main causes, such as influences from culture and mother tongue, which are not clearly understood usage, semantics, and Chinese characters of idioms. At the same time, the author also proposes solutions such as strengthening cultural context teaching and diversifying learning methods to improve the effectiveness of learning Chinese idioms. The research article "成语分类问题研究" by author 徐续红 (2003) revolves around the issue of classifying idioms in Chinese, in which idioms are classified based on many different criteria. The author considers factors such as the historical origin, structure, semantics of the idiom, and its use in context, which makes Chinese language research and teaching more effective. Overall, this study has helped teachers and learners understand more about Chinese idioms.

Besides, in the research article "成语的分类与界标" by author 王笑琴 (2005), we classify idioms according to their origin, such as their origin from myths and fables, proverbs, slang and proverbs, historical events, famous sayings, poetry, and prose.

Research by Li and Hew (2017) demonstrated that multimedia storytelling significantly improves the learning of Chinese idioms. Their study showed that students using a multimedia storytelling approach performed better and had higher satisfaction compared to those using traditional methods. This highlights the potential of digital tools in enhancing idiom learning by making content more engaging and relatable.

The study "Cloud-based E-learning Assessment and Remedial Tutoring System: A Case Study of the idioms self-study in elementary school" by Liao, Liao, and Chien (2013) investigates the use of cloud-based E-learning systems for self-study of Chinese idioms. Involving 60 elementary students, the study found that using a cloud-based system significantly improved students' learning outcomes compared to traditional methods. This suggests that integrating cloud-based assessment and remedial tools can enhance idiom learning, offering valuable insights for developing online resources tailored to university students' needs in Chinese idiom proficiency.

The research article "Synonym Knowledge Enhanced Reader for Chinese Idiom Reading Comprehension" by Long et al. (2020) investigates improving Chinese idiom comprehension using synonym knowledge. By constructing synonym graphs for idioms, the study demonstrated enhanced reading comprehension in a large-scale dataset. This approach provides valuable insights into integrating advanced computational methods to support self-study and improve idiom comprehension, aligning with the need for effective online learning resources.

Wu et al. (2024) proposed a computational model to improve idiom comprehension using multi-semantic contrastive learning. Their approach addresses the non-literal and unstructured nature of idioms, achieving top performance on a large-scale idiom comprehension dataset. This underscores the importance of advanced computational methods in supporting idiom learning, suggesting potential applications for online learning resources.

Wang et al. (2015) explored the emotional aspects of Chinese idioms using a knowledge base. This study contributed to understanding how idioms convey emotions, which is crucial for deeper comprehension and application in language learning. Integrating emotional classification in idiom learning tools can enhance learners' ability to grasp and use idioms contextually.

3. Methodology

3.1. Objective:

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the status and needs of self-studying Chinese idioms among third- and fourth-year Chinese Language students at Ho Chi Minh City University of Education. Specifically, the study aims to assess students' self-assessment of proficiency, identify factors hindering self-study, evaluate levels of idiom retention and usage, and gauge the demand for an online self-study resource.

3.2. Study Framework:

Data Source: The study relies on primary data collected through a structured questionnaire administered to the target population.

Population: The target population includes third- and fourth-year students enrolled in the Chinese Language program at Ho Chi Minh City University of Education.

Sampling: A purposive sampling method was used to select 100 participants from the target population. All 100 selected students responded, resulting in a 100% response rate. This high response rate ensures that the findings are representative of the entire cohort of third- and fourth-year Chinese Language students at the university.

3.3. Tools Used:

The Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) system, specifically the Ho Chi Minh City University of Education Online Training Portal, was utilized to gather insights into the current status of online learning and to facilitate the distribution and collection of the questionnaire.

3.4. Data Collection:

Instrumentation: The primary data collection tool was a detailed questionnaire designed using "Google Forms". The questionnaire was structured into several sections to capture comprehensive information on:

- Students' self-assessment of their proficiency in using Chinese idioms.
- Factors hindering their self-study efforts.
- Levels of idiom retention and usage.
- The demand for an online self-study resource, including preferences for specific features such as explanations, usage examples, origin stories, practice exercises, and interactive tools like flashcards.

Questionnaire Design: The questionnaire included a mix of multiple-choice questions, Likert scale ratings, and open-ended questions to allow for both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The Likert scale ranged from 1 to 5, where 1 indicated strong disagreement/very easy, and 5 indicated strong agreement/very difficult.

Distribution: The questionnaire was disseminated through the university's messenger platform on October 15, 2023. Reminders were sent to ensure maximum participation. Responses were collected over a two-week period, concluding on October 29, 2023. This method of distribution ensured that the survey reached all intended participants efficiently and facilitated timely data collection.

Data Analysis: Once collected, the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine mean scores and standard deviations. The Likert scale responses were averaged and categorized according to predefined segments for easier interpretation. The qualitative responses were coded and thematically analyzed to identify common themes and insights regarding students' experiences and needs.

Ethical Considerations: The study adhered to ethical research practices, ensuring informed consent from all participants, confidentiality of responses, and the voluntary nature of participation. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw at any time without any repercussions.

By employing this detailed and structured methodology, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and needs of third- and fourth-year Chinese Language students at Ho Chi Minh City University of Education in their self-study of Chinese idioms. The findings are intended to inform the development of targeted educational resources and strategies to enhance students' learning experiences and outcomes.

3.5. Data Analysis:

Descriptive Statistics and Likert Scale Analysis: The study employed descriptive statistics, specifically mean statistics, to succinctly summarize the collected data. Descriptive statistics provided insights into the central tendency, dispersion, and overall patterns within the dataset, offering a foundational understanding of the students' self-assessment of their proficiency in using Chinese idioms.

Likert Scale Rating: To measure students' perceptions and attitudes, a five-point Likert scale was utilized, capturing the degree to which students agreed or disagreed with various statements related to their experience with Chinese idioms. This scale is a widely accepted tool for gauging subjective evaluations and was applied as follows:

- Scale Description: The Likert scale ranged from 1 to 5, where 1 indicated strong disagreement or an assessment of very easy, and 5 indicated strong agreement or an assessment of very difficult.
- Calculation of Mean Scores: The responses for each statement were averaged, and the resulting mean scores were subjected to mathematical rounding to the nearest whole number. This process ensured that the mean scores accurately reflected the central tendency of student responses.
- Interpretation of Mean Scores: The rounded mean scores were categorized into five distinct segments, each representing a different level of agreement or perceived difficulty:
 - 4.50-5.00: Rated as "absolutely agree" or "very difficult," indicating a strong consensus or a high level of perceived difficulty.
 - 3.50-4.49: Rated as "agree" or "difficult," reflecting general agreement or a moderate level of difficulty.
 - 2.50-3.49: Rated as "neutral" or "moderate," indicating neither strong agreement nor disagreement or a moderate level of difficulty.
 - 1.50-2.49: Rated as "disagree" or "easy," suggesting a tendency to disagree or a lower level of perceived difficulty.

- 1.00-1.49: Rated as "absolutely disagree" or "very easy," indicating strong disagreement or a very low level of perceived difficulty.

This method facilitated the straightforward interpretation of the data, aligning with common mathematical rounding principles. By segmenting the mean scores into these defined categories, the study provided a clear and easily understandable representation of students' perceptions and experiences.

In-Depth Analysis: The use of descriptive statistics and the Likert scale allowed for a comprehensive analysis of students' attitudes and experiences. The mean scores offered a snapshot of overall trends, while the categorization into value segments enabled a nuanced understanding of specific areas where students felt confident or struggled. This analytical approach revealed key insights into students' self-assessed proficiency, retention, and application of Chinese idioms, as well as their demand for online resources.

Furthermore, this method highlighted areas that require targeted interventions. For instance, high mean scores in difficulty categories pointed to specific idiomatic expressions or learning aspects that need additional support and resources. Conversely, lower scores indicated areas where students felt more comfortable, suggesting effective current teaching practices that could be further reinforced.

By employing this detailed analytical framework, the study not only identified the current status and needs of students but also laid the groundwork for developing tailored educational strategies and resources to enhance the self-learning of Chinese idioms. This, in turn, can contribute to improving overall language proficiency and cultural understanding among students, better preparing them for professional and international engagements.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results and Findings

A total of 100 students from the Chinese Language major participated in the survey, with 50% being K46 students and 50% being K47 students.

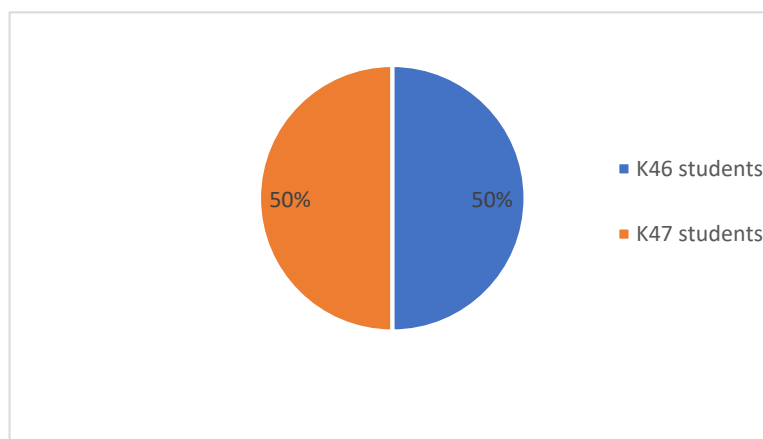


Figure 1. Survey Participants

Self-assessment of Proficiency in Understanding and Using Chinese Idioms: This part of the survey aimed to evaluate the understanding and usage of Chinese idioms. However, these results reflect only the subjective perspectives of the participants. From the chart below, it can be seen that the majority of responses from both groups fall within the range of 3-4 and 6-7. This indicates that most participants from both groups lack confidence in their ability to understand and apply Chinese idioms.

Self-Assessment of Proficiency

Key Points:

- Equal Representation: Ensures balanced insights from both K46 and K47 cohorts.
- Confidence Levels: Most students rated their proficiency between 3-4 and 6-7, indicating moderate to low confidence in idiom usage.
- Subjectivity: These self-assessments might not accurately reflect actual proficiency due to individual biases and confidence levels.

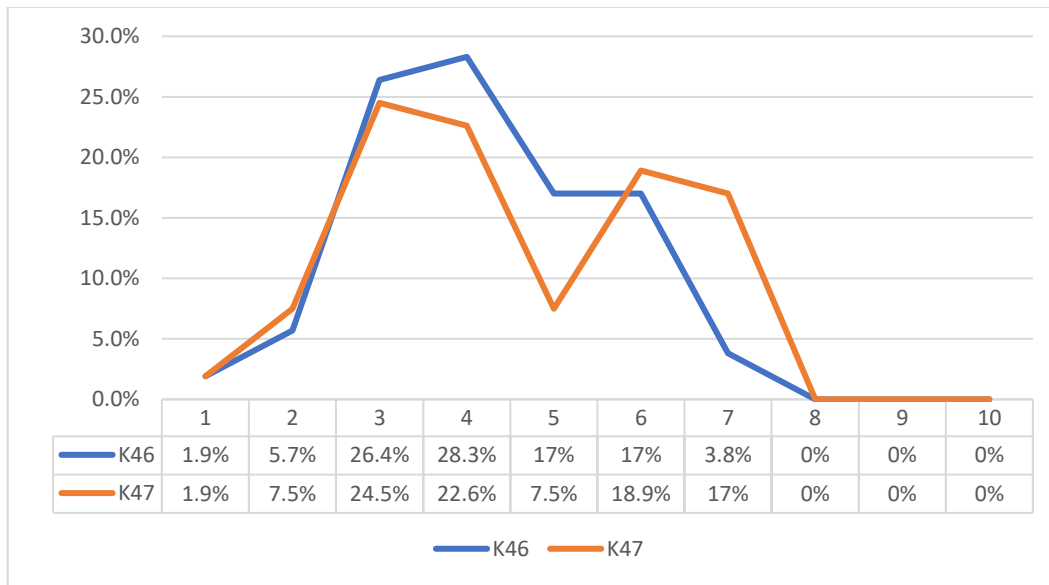


Figure 2. Frequency Statistics of Self-assessment of Proficiency in Understanding and Using Chinese Idioms

Assessment of Knowledge Related to Memorization and Usage of Chinese Idioms: This includes memorizing the pronunciation of learned idioms, remembering the characters in the idioms, understanding the implied meaning of the idioms, and distinguishing similar idioms. Based on the results from 140 participants, the research team completed a self-study idiom database that meets the practical needs of Chinese Language students at Ho Chi Minh City University of Education.

Detailed Analysis of Figure 2

Figure 2 presents the frequency distribution of self-assessment scores for proficiency in understanding and using Chinese idioms among K46 and K47 students.

K46 Students:

- The highest concentration of responses is in the 3-4 range, with 26.4% and 28.3%, respectively.
- Significant proportions also fall in the 5-6 range, each with 17%.
- This suggests that while some students feel moderately confident, a substantial number still struggle with idioms.

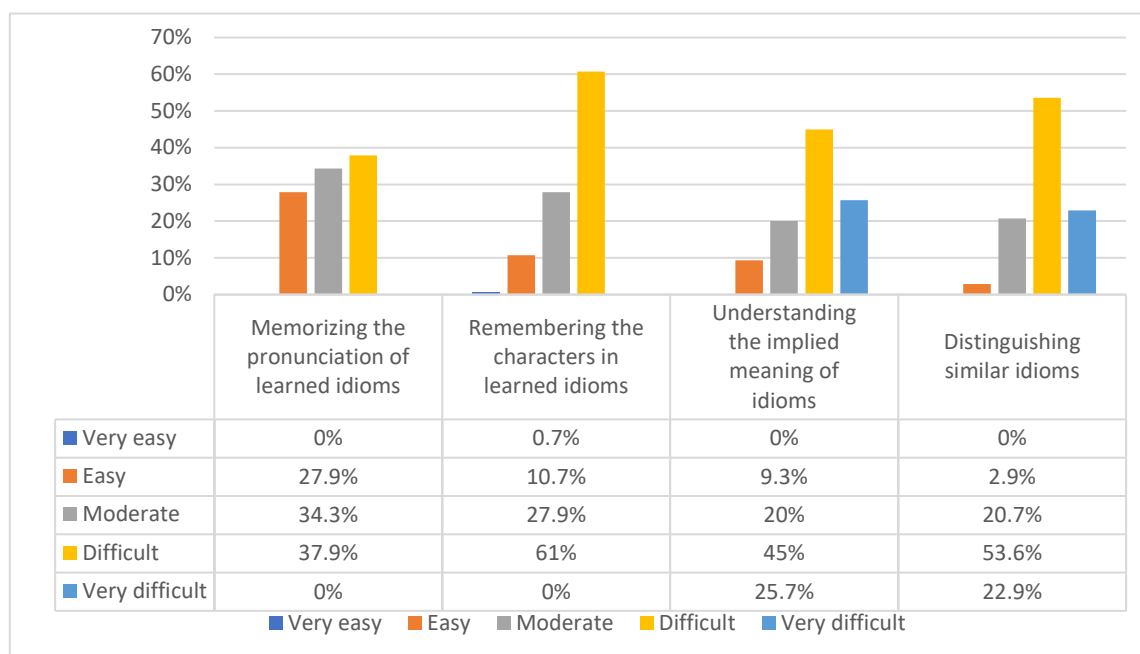
K47 Students:

- Similar to K46, the majority of responses are in the 3-4 range, with 24.5% and 22.6%, respectively.
- There is also a notable presence in the 6-7 range, with 18.9% and 17%.
- This pattern indicates a slightly higher but still moderate level of confidence in idiom proficiency.

Key Points:

- **Equal Representation:** Ensures balanced insights from both K46 and K47 cohorts.
- **Confidence Levels:** Most students rated their proficiency between 3-4 and 6-7, indicating moderate to low confidence in idiom usage.
- **Subjectivity:** These self-assessments might not accurately reflect actual proficiency due to individual biases and confidence levels.

Figure 3. Frequency Statistics of Assessment of Knowledge Related to Memorization and Usage of Chinese Idioms



According to Table 1, based on the Mean value of "Memorizing the pronunciation of learned idioms" and "Remembering the characters in learned idioms," with means of 3.10 and 3.49, respectively, these factors are classified as having an average level of memorization. However, the factors "Understanding the implied meaning of idioms" and "Distinguishing similar idioms" have mean values of 3.87 and 3.96, respectively, and are classified as difficult.

- Pronunciation and Characters: While memorizing pronunciation is relatively easier, remembering characters is significantly more challenging, with 61% finding it difficult.
- Implied Meaning and Similar Idioms: Understanding idiomatic meanings and distinguishing similar idioms are the most challenging tasks, with high difficulty ratings (45% and 53.6%, respectively) and notable percentages finding them very difficult (25.7% and 22.9%).

Students struggle most with character memorization, understanding implied meanings, and distinguishing similar idioms. Enhanced teaching strategies and interactive tools are necessary to address these challenges and improve idiom proficiency.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Assessment of Knowledge Related to Memorization and Usage of Chinese Idioms

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Memorizing the pronunciation of learned idioms	100	3.10	2.00	4.00	0.81
Remembering the characters in learned idioms	100	3.49	1.00	4.00	0.71
Understanding the implied meaning of idioms	100	3.87	2.00	5.00	0.90
Distinguishing similar idioms	100	3.96	2.00	5.00	0.74
Valid N (listwise)	100				

Results of Assessing the Need for an Online Idiom Self-study Database: This section of the survey aimed to assess the need for an online idiom self-study database among the participants. The collected data will provide insight into the student's learning needs and the need for an online idiom self-study database.

Analysis from Table 1 shows that students encounter different levels of difficulty when learning Chinese idioms. Remembering pronunciation scored an average of 3.10, indicating a moderate level of difficulty. "Remembering characters in idioms" has an average score of 3.49, slightly higher. Understanding implied meaning scored an average of 3.87, and distinguishing similar idioms scored 3.96, which was the most difficult aspect.

These results have many important implications for teaching. Suggest using interactive tools and audio aids to help students remember pronunciation and characters. Teaching idioms in context and using examples can improve understanding of implied meaning. Comparison charts and interactive flash cards can be used to distinguish similar idioms.

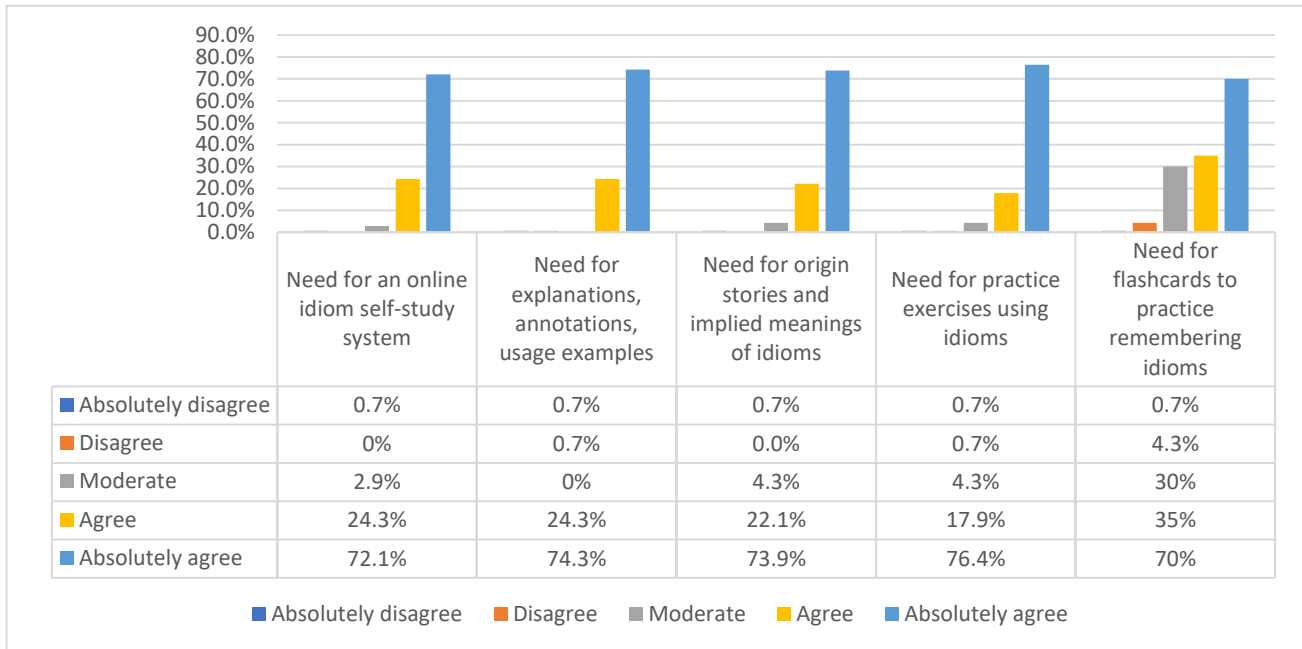


Figure 4. The Need for an online Chinese idiom self-study system

The chart above shows that the majority of respondents, both K46 and K47 students, expressed a strong need for an online Chinese idiom self-study system to support their self-learning efforts. This is evident from the frequency distribution of responses, indicating a high demand for an online idiom self-study database.

From the chart, it can be seen that demand for an online Chinese idiom self-study system is very high, with an emphasis on features such as detailed explanations, origin stories, and practice exercises. Flashcards are also appreciated but are not the most important factor.

This result reflects students' autonomous learning tendencies and the need for diverse and rich learning support tools. Developing such a system will meet the needs of students and effectively support their learning process.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics on the Need for an Online Chinese Idiom Self-Study System

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Need for an online idiom self-study system	100	4.75	4.00	5.00	0.43
Need for explanations, annotations, usage examples	100	4.73	2.00	5.00	0.49
Need for origin stories and implied meanings of idioms	100	4.78	4.00	5.00	0.42
Need for practice exercises using idioms	100	4.79	2.00	5.00	0.46
Need for flashcards to practice remembering idioms	100	4.64	1.00	5.00	0.56
Need for an online Chinese idiom self-study system	100	4.75	4.00	5.00	0.43
Valid N (listwise)	100				

The need for an online idiom self-study system has an average value of 4.75 and a low standard deviation (0.43), showing a strong consensus among students about the necessity of this system.

Explanations, notes, and examples using idioms have a mean of 4.73 and a standard deviation of 0.49. Although there are some divided opinions, the majority of students still appreciate the need for these detailed support tools.

The need for origin stories and implied meanings of idioms was highly appreciated by students, with a mean value of 4.78 and a low standard deviation (0.42), showing great attention to the cultural context and history of idioms.

Practice exercises using idioms have an average value of 4.79 and a standard deviation of 0.46, showing that students want to have many opportunities to practice and apply knowledge in practice.

Flashcards for idiom memorization have a lower mean (4.64) and a higher standard deviation (0.56), indicating a greater dispersion of opinions. Some students rated it very low, but the majority still agreed with the usefulness of this tool.

Table 2 shows strong student consensus on the need for an online idiom self-study system, with features such as detailed explanations, origin stories, and practice exercises. Although flashcards are also considered useful, this need has a greater degree of dispersion of opinion. These figures highlight the importance of developing a comprehensive and detailed learning support system to meet the diverse needs of students.

The survey results clearly show that K46 and K47 students have a very high demand for an online Chinese idiom self-study system. They are especially interested in having detailed support tools such as explanations, annotations, usage examples, origin stories, and implied meanings of idioms. In addition, students also really want to have practical exercises to consolidate and apply the knowledge they have learned into practice. Although flashcards are also highly regarded, they are not considered a top priority compared to other learning methods. In general, developing a comprehensive self-study system with diverse support features will well meet the learning needs of students and help them improve their learning efficiency.

4.2 Discussions

The findings from our research reveal several key insights into the current status and needs of self-studying Chinese idioms among third- and fourth-year students at Ho Chi Minh City University of Education.

Firstly, a significant number of students lack confidence in their ability to understand and apply Chinese idioms. This is reflected in their self-assessment scores, where the majority of responses fell between 3-4 and 6-7 on the proficiency scale. This suggests that while some students feel moderately confident, a substantial number still struggle with idioms. This lack of confidence can hinder their overall language proficiency and cultural understanding, as idioms are integral to mastering any language, providing deeper insights into the nuances and cultural context of the language.

Secondly, the results indicate a pronounced demand for an online idiom database. The mean values for the necessity of such a resource were consistently high, with students expressing strong agreement on the importance of having a comprehensive online tool to aid their self-study. The mean scores for various components of the proposed system, such as explanations of idioms, usage examples, origin stories, and practice exercises, all hovered around 4.7 to 4.8. This underscores the students' unanimous agreement on the utility of these features. The students also highlighted the need for interactive learning tools, such as flashcards, with a mean demand score of 4.64, indicating their perceived value in aiding the retention and recall of idioms.

Educational Policy Implications: These findings have significant implications for educational policies and teaching strategies. Integrating an online idiom database into the curriculum could address the identified gaps in students' self-learning capabilities. Educational institutions should consider investing in digital resources that offer comprehensive explanations, contextual usage, and interactive practice exercises. Additionally, incorporating technology-enhanced learning tools like flashcards can cater to diverse learning preferences, thereby improving overall engagement and retention.

Teaching Strategies: To enhance the effectiveness of idiom instruction, educators should adopt a multifaceted approach that includes both traditional and digital methodologies. Teaching strategies should emphasize contextual learning, where idioms are taught within the framework of their cultural and historical background. This approach not only aids in comprehension but also enriches students' cultural understanding and appreciation. Interactive classroom activities, such as group discussions and role-playing exercises using idioms, can also facilitate practical application and deeper learning.

Cultural and Multicultural Considerations: The study of idioms is inherently tied to cultural nuances and expressions, making it a crucial aspect of language learning. In the context of Vietnam, where there is a growing emphasis on international integration, understanding Chinese idioms can significantly enhance cross-cultural communication and collaboration. Idioms often carry historical and cultural connotations that provide insights into societal values and norms. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of idioms can equip students with the cultural literacy needed to navigate multicultural environments effectively.

Relevance to the Vietnamese Context: Given Vietnam's increasing economic and educational ties with China, proficiency in Chinese idioms can offer students a competitive edge in the job market, particularly in roles that involve international trade, diplomacy, and cultural exchange. The development of an online idiom database tailored to the Vietnamese context can address specific learning needs and cultural considerations, making it a valuable resource for students and professionals alike.

Significance of the Study: This research highlights the critical need for targeted resources and strategies to support the self-study of Chinese idioms among Vietnamese students. By identifying the gaps and proposing practical solutions, the study contributes to the broader discourse on language education and the integration of digital tools in learning. Furthermore, it underscores the importance of cultural literacy in language acquisition, offering insights that can inform future curriculum development and teaching practices.

In brief, addressing the identified needs through strategic educational policies and innovative teaching methodologies can significantly enhance the learning experience for students studying Chinese idioms. This, in turn, will not only improve their language proficiency but also prepare them for effective communication and collaboration in a multicultural and globalized environment.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, our study highlights the critical need for enhanced resources to support the self-study of Chinese idioms among third- and fourth-year students at Ho Chi Minh City University of Education. The lack of confidence in idiom usage and the strong demand for an online learning platform underscores the necessity for educational tools that are both comprehensive and accessible.

Implementing an online Chinese idiom self-study system that includes explanations, usage examples, origin stories, and interactive exercises could greatly assist students in mastering idioms. Furthermore, incorporating flashcards and other mnemonic devices into the learning process would likely improve retention and recall, facilitating a deeper understanding and more effective use of idioms.

By addressing these needs, educators can better support students in their language learning journey, ultimately helping them to achieve greater fluency and cultural literacy in Chinese. This will not only enhance their academic performance but also equip them with valuable skills for their future careers in an increasingly globalized world.

Despite achieving a 100% response rate from 100 third- and fourth-year Chinese Language students at Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, the study's sample size is relatively small and may not represent all students in the program or other institutions, thus affecting the generalizability of the findings. The use of purposive sampling introduces potential bias, as selected students might share characteristics that are not reflective of the broader student population, potentially skewing the results. Relying on self-reported data can lead to biases such as social desirability bias, where participants may overestimate their proficiency or underreport difficulties, impacting the accuracy of data on students' self-assessment of proficiency, retention, and usage of Chinese idioms. Additionally, the comprehensive questionnaire might have missed some factors influencing self-study, and the use of predetermined response options could limit the depth of insights. The timing and context of data collection over a two-week period in October 2023 could also have influenced responses due to external factors like academic workload or personal issues, leading to results that may not fully capture typical experiences. Furthermore, technological barriers, such as difficulties accessing the online portal or Google Forms, might have affected participation and response quality. Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable insights into the self-study needs and challenges of these students, and acknowledging these constraints helps contextualize the findings and highlights areas for future research. Future studies could benefit from larger, more diverse samples, randomized sampling methods, and alternative data collection approaches to enhance the robustness of the findings.

Based on the findings of this study, several areas for future research and practical applications can be identified to further enhance the self-study of Chinese idioms among students. Future research should consider conducting studies with larger sample sizes and include students from multiple universities and regions to improve the generalizability of the findings. This approach can help identify whether the challenges and needs observed are consistent across different cohorts and geographical locations. Additionally, utilizing randomized sampling methods in future studies can minimize selection bias and obtain a more representative sample of the student population, providing a clearer picture of the overall proficiency and challenges faced by students in learning Chinese idioms. Longitudinal studies tracking changes in students' proficiency and confidence in using Chinese idioms over time would be valuable in determining the long-term effectiveness of different teaching methods and self-study tools. Including objective measures of proficiency, such as standardized tests or performance-based assessments, alongside self-reported data can provide a more accurate evaluation of students' abilities.

Furthermore, exploring the impact of various technological tools, such as mobile apps, gamification, and AI-driven personalized learning systems, on the self-study of Chinese idioms could reveal which features are most effective in improving retention and application. Conducting qualitative studies, such as focus groups or in-depth interviews, would provide deeper insights into students' experiences and challenges with idiom learning, uncovering factors not captured by quantitative surveys. Investigating the role of cultural and contextual factors in learning Chinese idioms is also crucial, as understanding how cultural background and prior knowledge influence idiom comprehension and usage can inform more effective teaching strategies. Studying the effectiveness of interactive and collaborative learning methods, such as peer learning, discussion forums, and group projects, can enhance idiom proficiency by fostering a more engaging and supportive learning environment.

Exploring the benefits of personalized learning pathways tailored to individual student needs and preferences and researching how customization of content and learning pace impacts student outcomes could lead to the development of adaptive learning technologies that provide personalized feedback and recommendations. These technologies would ensure students receive the support they need based on their unique learning profiles. By addressing these areas, future research can build upon the current study's findings, offering more comprehensive and effective solutions for the self-study of Chinese idioms. These efforts can ultimately enhance students' language proficiency, cultural understanding, and academic success.

Overall, the study provides valuable insights and practical recommendations for improving the self-study of Chinese idioms, contributing to the ongoing efforts to enhance language education at the university.

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