

A study on the learning attribution of Chinese language majors in a university in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Um estudo sobre a atribuição do aprendizado de habilitações em língua chinesa em universidade na cidade de Ho Chi Minh, Vietnã

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Abstract

Attribution in learning is the explanation of the causes of learning success or failure that learners perceive. The article used questionnaire survey, attribution survey in learning of 142 students majoring in Chinese Language at Ho Chi Minh City Open University. The results showed that the tendency of students to attribute learning to success and failure is the same as effort > ability > luck > context. There is no significant difference in attribution in learning between male and female students, between students from urban areas and students from rural areas. There was a significant difference between students across grade levels in the tendency to attribute effort to success. There exists a positive correlation between learning results and attributions of ability and effort to success. The article argues that teachers need to guide students to make accurate attributions to academic success or failure.

Keywords: attribution; Chinese Language major; Vietnamese students.

Resumo

A atribuição no aprendizado é a explicação das causas do sucesso ou fracasso do aprendizado que os alunos percebem. O artigo utilizou questionário, pesquisa de atribuição no aprendizado de 142 estudantes que se graduaram em Língua Chinesa na Universidade Aberta da Cidade de Ho Chi Minh. Os resultados mostraram que a tendência dos estudantes de atribuir o aprendizado ao sucesso e ao fracasso é a mesma que esforço > capacidade > sorte > contexto. Não há diferença significativa na atribuição de aprendizagem entre estudantes do sexo masculino e feminino, entre estudantes de áreas urbanas e estudantes de áreas rurais. Houve uma diferença significativa entre os estudantes de todos os níveis de ensino na tendência de atribuir o esforço ao sucesso. Existe uma correlação positiva entre os resultados da aprendizagem e as atribuições de capacidade e esforço para o sucesso. O artigo argumenta que os professores precisam orientar os alunos a fazer atribuições precisas ao sucesso ou fracasso acadêmico.

Palavras-chave: atribuição; maioria da língua chinesa; estudantes vietnamitas.

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Introduction

Attributions are explanations given to an individual's behaviors or states, i.e., what causes these behaviors or states. Attribution in learning is the explanation of the causes of learning success or failure that learners perceive. In foreign language learning, students always conduct self-reflection and evaluation on the effectiveness of foreign language learning consciously or unconsciously, attributing to high or low academic results in learning. The study of attribution in learning will help teachers understand the student's attribution tendency, thereby having effective solutions for teaching, avoiding biases in student attribution when studying.

Research on attribution in learning Chinese as a second language has only begun at the beginning of the twenty-first century. According to our survey on CNKI database, there are only 12 studies on this issue. Qiao (2014), Zhang & Ma (2016) discussed the applications of attribution theory in teaching Chinese as a second language. Yan (2003), Shi & Guo (2012) surveyed the attribution in learning Chinese of ethnic minority students in Xinjiang. Ding (2007) used the interview method, attributing research in the study of international students in China. Zhang (2008), Tang (2013), Z. Q. Li (2016), D. Li (2016) used questionnaires and attributive surveys to study abroad students in China. Fu (2019) studied attribution in Chinese language learning of learners in Hungary through survey questionnaires and interviews. Zhang (2016) and Yu (2017) respectively studied the attribution in learning Chinese reading comprehension skills of international students in China and of students in Thailand. Thereby, it can be seen that the research results on attribution in learning Chinese as a second language are still very modest and have not yet attracted attention and attention.

In Vietnam at present, the researches on Chinese learners are mainly interested in the content of learning motivation, learning strategies, learning anxiety, learning beliefs, learning style, autonomy in learning... only Luu's study (2021) mentions attribution in learning Chinese as a second foreign language of Vietnamese students, there is no research yet. refers to the attribution in learning of students majoring in Chinese Language.

In this article, we want to find answers to the following five questions: Firstly, how is the general situation of attribution in learning of Chinese Language students in Vietnam? Second, is the attribution in learning between male and female students the same? Third, is the attribution in learning between students from urban areas and students from rural areas the same? Fourth, is the attribution in learning between students of all grades the same? Fifth, how is the relationship between learning outcomes and attribution in learning of Vietnamese students?

Theoretical background

Heider was the first to postulate the attribution theory in 1958. He conceived that the factor that affects our behavior is our perception of the event, not the event itself. He pointed out that, when asked to explain the cause of an event or someone's behavior, we will give personal causes (i.e. internal causes) or contextual causes (i.e. external causes).

Inheriting Heider's attribution theory, Weiner (1972) systematically studies attributions to human behavior. He derived from the attribution process of the individual,

looking at the attribution relationship of the individual to success or failure with learning outcomes. He said that each person tries to explain their own behavior, analyze the causes leading to their behavior. He gave four major attributions to success or failure: luck, ability, effort, and the difficulty of the task.

According to Lefcourt, von Baeyer, Ware, & Cox (1979), the four main attributions of learners to success or failure are: ability, effort, context, and luck. In which, the context includes the content attributed to the difficulty of the task and the lecturer.

This study is based on Weiner’s attribution theory and attribution classification of Lefcourt, von Baeyer, Ware, & Cox. In which, ability and effort are internal attributions, context and luck are external attributions.

Methodology

Participants

Participating in the survey were 142 students majoring in Chinese Language from the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Ho Chi Minh City Open University. The specific situation of the study subjects is as follows (see Table 1):

Table 1 – An overview of participants

Gender		Family living area		Grade			The average age
Male	Female	Urban	Rural	First grade	Second grade	Third grade	
14	128	68	74	58	39	45	20.24
9.9%	90.1%	47.9%	62.1%	40.8%	27.5%	31.7%	

Data collection tool

In this study, we use quantitative method, collect data through survey by questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed on the basis of The multidimensional-multiattributonal causality scale designed by Lefcourt, von Baeyer, Ware, & Cox (1979). The questionnaire consists of 24 questions, around four types of attribution: ability, effort, context, and luck. Each type of attribution consists of 6 questions with 3 attribution questions for success and 3 attribution questions for failure.

The questionnaire uses Likert's five-point scale with “1 - strongly disagree”, “2 - disagree”, “3 - normal”, “4 - agree” and “5 - strongly agree”.

The questionnaire has Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.888, the questions of the scale all have Corrected Item-Total Correlation greater than 0.3. Thus, the questionnaire achieved reliability.

The questionnaire has a KMO coefficient of 0.813, a Chi-Square value of 1841.554, Sig. is 0.000. Thus, the questionnaire achieves valid validity.

Data analysis tool

We use SPSS 25.0 as a statistical tool to analyze the collected data. In this study, we mainly use descriptive statistics (Descriptive Statistics), T-test, Oneway ANOVA and Pearson correlation analysis to statistic the general situation, analyze differences in terms of gender, family living area, grade level and the relationship between academic performance and attribution in Chinese Language students.

Research results and discussion

General situation

The results of the survey attributing to the learning of Chinese Language students are as follows (see Table 2):

Table 2 – Attribution in learning of students majoring in Chinese Language

Items	Attribution				
	Ability	Effort	Context	Luck	
Success	Mean	3.8568	4.1502	3.0657	3.2559
	SD	0.65160	0.57746	0.99188	0.90587
Failure	Mean	3.4319	3.9601	2.4812	2.7113
	SD	0.87859	0.84540	0.96799	0.94717

Table 2 shows that attributed learning to Chinese language students' success is as follows: effort > ability > luck > context; attributed in learning when the failure of students majoring in Chinese is as follows: effort > ability > luck > context. It can be seen that, when it comes to success as well as failure, students of Chinese Language have the same tendency to attribute it to effort > ability > luck > context. Thereby, the vast majority of students believe

that success and failure in learning Chinese is first due to effort, second to ability, a small part of students think that it is by luck and context.

This result is completely similar to the research results of Fu (2019) on the case of Chinese learners in Hungary and Luu (2021) on the case of Vietnamese students learning Chinese as a second foreign language. This result is similar to the research results of Z. Q. Li (2016) on the case of overseas students in China. This result is basically similar to the study of D. Li (2016) on the case of American international students in China. This shows that the common characteristic of Chinese learners is that their own efforts and abilities determine success and failure in learning Chinese.

Differences in terms of gender

Participating in the survey were 14 male students (9.9%) and 128 female students (90.1%). The results of the survey attributing to Chinese Language learning of male and female students are as follows (see Table 3):

Table 3 – Attribution in learning by gender

Items	Male		Female		t	p	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Success	Ability	3.9524	0.85592	3.8464	0.62871	0.450	0.659
	Effort	4.0714	0.68161	4.1589	0.56736	-0.536	0.592
	Context	3.2143	1.07502	3.0495	0.98554	0.589	0.557
	Luck	3.1190	1.13685	3.2708	0.88117	-0.594	0.554
Failure	Ability	3.6429	1.06590	3.4089	0.85749	0.946	0.346
	Effort	3.7381	0.97120	3.9844	0.83121	-1.035	0.302
	Context	2.9048	1.22250	2.4349	0.93025	1.737	0.085
	Luck	3.0714	1.11844	2.6719	0.92310	1.505	0.135

Table 3 shows that the attribution in learning Chinese Language when the success of male students is effort > ability > context > luck, while the attribution of female students' learning to success is effort > ability > luck > context; attributed in learning Chinese Language

when the failure of male and female students is exactly the same, both are effort > ability > luck > context. Table 3 also shows that, when success attributed the ability and context of male students on average higher than female students, attributing effort and luck of female students had higher average values than male students; when the attributions of ability, context and luck failed, male students had higher average values than female students, and female students' effort attributions had higher average values than male students. However, the results of the T-test show that there is no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) between male and female students on attribution to success as well as to failure in learning.

This result is similar to the survey results of D. Li (2016) on the case of American international students in China and Fu (2019) on the case of Chinese language learners in Hungary. This result is similar to the research result of Luu (2021) on the case of Vietnamese students learning Chinese as a second foreign language. This is understandable, Vietnam, like America, Hungary and the vast majority of other countries in the world, men and women have certain equality in society, so the perception among students There was no significant difference between male and female students before academic success and failure.

However, this result is different from the survey results of Tang (2013) on the case of Central Asian students in China, there is a gender difference in attributing luck, female students attributed their good exam results to luck, while male students did not attribute their success or failure in exams to luck. This may be due to the difference in the concept of gender equality between Vietnam and Central Asian countries. Islam is a religion with an important position in the society of Central Asian countries, the status of women is greatly influenced by this religion, they are not determined by their own efforts (Nguyen, 2005). Therefore, when there is academic success, female students in Central Asian countries often attribute it to luck itself.

Differences in terms of the family living area

Participating in the survey were 68 students from urban areas (accounting for 47.9%) and 74 students from rural areas (accounting for 62.1%). The results of the survey attributing to Chinese Language learning of students from urban areas and students from rural areas are as follows (see Table 4):

Table 4 – Attribution in learning by the family living area

Items	Urban		Rural		t	p	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Success	Ability	3.9461	0.67066	3.7748	0.62692	-1.573	0.118
	Effort	4.1618	0.55686	4.1396	0.59936	-0.227	0.821
	Context	3.0931	0.99891	3.0405	0.99152	-0.315	0.753
	Luck	3.2549	0.95002	3.2568	0.86983	0.012	0.990
Failure	Ability	3.3676	0.93422	3.4910	0.82618	0.835	0.405
	Effort	4.0098	0.86955	3.9144	0.82588	-0.670	0.504
	Context	2.4853	0.92583	2.4775	1.01147	-0.048	0.962
	Luck	2.7696	0.92909	2.6577	0.96668	-0.702	0.484

Table 4 shows that attributing Chinese language learning to the success and failure of students from urban areas and students from rural areas alike, are efforts > ability > luck > context. Table 4 also shows that, when successful, students from urban areas have higher average attributions of ability, effort and context than students from rural areas, have the same average attribution of luck as students from rural areas; while failure, students from urban areas have lower mean attributions of competence than students from rural areas, with higher mean attributions of effort, context, and luck than students from rural areas. However, the results of the T-test show that there is no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) in attributing success as well as failure between students from urban areas and students from rural areas.

This result is similar to the research results of Pan & Chen (2009) on the case of students majoring in English in China and Luu (2021) on the case of students learning Chinese as a second foreign language. There were significant differences between students from rural and urban areas in success as well as failure. This is not too difficult to understand, although urban and rural areas have great differences in terms of study conditions, in order to be able to enter lecture halls of famous universities in Vietnam as well as in China, students coming from urban areas as well as rural areas must strive continuously, and at the same time must have real capacity. Therefore, there is no significant difference between students from urban areas and rural areas in terms of attribution for success as well as for failure in learning.

Differences in terms of grade level

Participating in the survey were 58 first grade students (accounting for 40.8%), 39 second grade students (accounting for 27.5%) and 45 third grade students (accounting for 31.7%). The results of the survey attributing to Chinese Language learning of students at all grade levels are as follows (see Table 5):

Table 5 – Attribution in learning by grade level

Items	First grade		Second grade		Third grade		F	p	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
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Success	Ability	3.9770	0.67498	3.7265	0.54543	3.8148	0.69105	1.884	0.156
	Effort	4.2931	0.57930	4.1197	0.52140	3.9926	0.58814	3.638	0.029
	Context	3.0230	1.00653	3.0085	1.01592	3.1704	0.96563	0.366	0.694
	Luck	3.1552	0.92447	3.2564	1.03297	3.3852	0.75530	0.815	0.445
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Failure	Ability	3.4483	0.86642	3.4530	0.98672	3.3926	0.81119	0.065	0.937
	Effort	4.0632	0.84109	3.9487	0.97194	3.8370	0.72691	0.911	0.405
	Context	2.4080	0.95726	2.5128	0.97886	2.5481	0.98769	0.291	0.748
	Luck	2.5862	0.98983	2.6667	0.97932	2.9111	0.84507	1.563	0.213

Table 5 shows that the attribution tendency in Chinese Language learning when success as well as failure of students at the same grade level, is effort > ability > luck > context. Table 5 also shows that, when successful, first grade students have a higher average attribution of ability and effort than second grade students and third grade students, third grade students have higher attribution of context mean values than first grade students and second grade students, and third grade students have a higher average attributing luck than first grade students and second grade students; when it failed, first grade students had higher average attribution of ability and effort than second grade students and third grade students, third grade students have higher averages of attribution of context and attribution of luck than first grade students and second grade students. The results of Oneway ANOVA showed that there was a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between students of all grades in terms of the tendency to attribute effort

to success; there was no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) between students at all grade levels in terms of other attributive tendencies to success as well as to failure.

This result is different from the survey results of Fu (2019) on the case of Chinese learners in Hungary and Luu (2021) on the case of Vietnamese students learning Chinese as a second foreign language. This may be because Chinese is the major of students in this study, the number of hours of Chinese study is very large, the vast majority of students are only exposed to Chinese when entering the university lecture hall, so there is a significant difference in attributing the efforts of third grade students and first grade students.

The relationship between attribution in learning and learning outcomes

The results of Pearson correlation analysis between learning outcomes and attribution in learning Chinese Language are as follows (see Table 6):

Table 6 – Correlation between learning outcomes and attribution in learning

		Success				Failure			
		Ability	Effort	Context	Luck	Ability	Effort	Context	Luck
Learning outcomes	Pearson	0.270	0.220	-0.088	0.057	-0.143	-0.041	-0.096	-
	Correlation								0.024
	p	0.001	0.008	0.296	0.498	0.089	0.632	0.257	0.772

Table 6 shows that learning results and attribution of ability, attribution of effort to success have a positive correlation with each other. This means that students with higher learning outcomes are more likely to attribution of ability and attribution of effort to academic success in Chinese Language.

This result is somewhat similar to the survey results of D. Li (2016) on the case of American international students in China and Luu (2021) on the case of Vietnamese students learning Chinese as a second foreign language, high learning outcomes are related to self-effort and ability. This result is also somewhat similar to the research results of Z. Q. Li (2016) on the case of overseas students in China, students with high learning outcomes often think that it is due to their own efforts, students with low learning outcomes often think that their own ability is not good.

Thereby, it is shown that the common feature of Chinese Language learners with high learning outcomes is that when they succeed, they tend to attribute effort and ability. This is also very understandable, because luck does not always come, context do not always help students with high learning outcomes, only by relying on their own efforts and abilities can students get the desired learning outcomes.

Conclusion

Attribution in learning is the explanation of the causes of learning success or failure that learners perceive. The results of a questionnaire survey with 142 students majoring in Chinese Language from Ho Chi Minh City Open University showed that, when successful as well as failure, the tendency to attribute learning to Chinese Language majors the same, all are effort > ability > luck > context. There was no significant difference in attribution in learning across gender, family living area and grade level. There exists a positive correlation between learning outcomes and attributions to ability and attribution of effort to success.

In order to increase the confidence, initiative and positivity in learning of Chinese Language students, lecturers need to guide students to recognize and make accurate attributions of academic success and failure.

Attributing ability to success will bring students joy and pride. In contrast, attributing ability to failure has negative effects on students' self-esteem. Therefore, for students with low ability, lecturers should only arrange tasks of low difficulty, in order to strengthen self-confidence for these students.

Attributing efforts to success will be a great source of encouragement for students, helping students to keep trying to achieve the next successes. When failing, attributing effort will help students increase their responsibility in learning, think that they have not made enough effort or effort, and believe that after trying, they can achieve success. Therefore, for students with good ability, lecturers should assign tasks of certain difficulty, and at the same time give assessment of advantages and disadvantages for students to improve; for students with low ability, teachers should give encouraging feedback to students, helping students see their own efforts as meaningful, thereby continuing to try harder.

Attributing luck and attributing context to success will not benefit students, not bring pride to students, and reduce students' sense of self-assertion. When failing, these two attributions are useful to students, helping students to comfort themselves, without negatively affecting their own expectations of success. But if they overemphasize these two attributions when they fail, students will lose interest in learning, no longer have confidence in their own abilities and efforts, resulting in poor learning outcomes. would like.

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