ACTIVE MOBILE CHINESE, A NEW APPROACH IN LEARNING CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract

Looking at the recent data of the Chinese economy growth and the amount of Chinese companies and tourism, we can see the big grow of Chinese and its influences. That is the reason why learning Mandarin Chinese is rapidly developing nowadays and it becomes one of the most popular languages in the world. Due to the expanding of Chinese and users' demand in over the world, teaching Chinese as foreign language is a very necessary mission in Chinese Language Studies. In the past few decades, there are a lot of traditional studies and researches how to teach Chinese as foreign language in around the world, especially speaking English areas. The aim of this paper is to critically analyse a few new methodologies of learning and teaching Chinese recently, to generate those researches' result to propose a new approach of teaching Chinese as foreign language. This approach, called "Active Mobile Chinese", is illustrated by using mobile learning method to create a new learning environment for Chinese learners. With this new idea, we can bring the Chinese language to learners anywhere and anytime. Due to the flexibility of mobile learning style, we would propose the content of this method is more on vocabulary: common words and expressions. This seems to be very active because the languages are very common and can be used in daily lives of the society. Our new approach focuses on using the sense of language that learners can easily absorb how to use Chinese with very common words, characters and even expressions. With this language sense, people can slowly grasp and understand Chinese grammar rules. We can do the adjustment for every culture based on this core approach.

Keywords: Active Mobile Chinese, Mobile Learning Style, Chinese for Foreigner, Learning Chinese, Teaching Chinese as a foreign language.

1   INTRODUCTION

According to statistics in the world, Chinese is the most popular language not only because one/fifth of the world population using Chinese as mother language, but also is one of the six United Nations officials working languages. China is known for its rapidly growing, expanding economy and the demand for using Chinese is all around the world. Currently, teaching and learning Chinese is very popular but it may not be effective if the approach of students and teachers is passive. So, the method of studying and teaching should be improved. The method proposed in this article is the Mobile Learning Style. It is education via the Internet or network by using personal mobile devices, such as tablets and smartphones to obtain learning materials through mobile apps, social interactions and online educational hubs. It is flexible, allowing student access to education anywhere, anytime. Learning methods are put into build on mobile phones, tablets or desktop computers. In this article the mobile learning method is built on mobile because it has the flexibility to be able to learn anytime, anywhere and not cumbersome.

The proposed content of this Mobile Learning method has more vocabulary: common words and expressions. Common words and expressions are common words that are used daily in society. For example: some common verbs like eat ("吃"), drink ("喝"), go ("去"), come ("来"), find ("找"),...; some common phrases or expressions like thank you ("谢谢"), hello ("你好"), goodbye ("再見"), sorry ("对不起"), … With this article "Active mobile Chinese, a new approach in learning Chinese as a foreign language", using Mobile Learning Style combine with Active Mobile Chinese can help users study / teach easier and more effective. The main aim of this proposal is that you can study anytime, anywhere with many common words, the usage of words, characters and even common idioms. It helps users easily absorb, remember besides that users can manage their time better in learning Chinese.

This paper is presented with 4 sections. Section 1 is introduction. In section 2, we introduce about Active Chinese, Mobile learning style and propose "Active mobile Chinese", a new approach in learning Chinese as a foreign language; the methodology of our approach. We also introduce our developing mobile application for learning Chinese. In section 3, we would present the evaluation result of the research, this evaluation is from the learner-users. Finally, in section 4, we give out the general conclusions of the research topic, and the further development of "Active mobile Chinese".

2   METHODOLOGY

To conduct the research of Active Mobile Chinese, this paper studies the needs and the current situation of Chinese learners in foreign languages centers, where they learn Chinese as secondary foreign language. We have collected the database by surveying around 180 Chinese learners from 3 selected foreign centers of famous universities in 2 months (from March to May of 2019). They are HCMUTE, TDTU and HCMUS. After understanding the needs and the status of Chinese learners in these centers, we would like to propose a mobile learning Chinese application which is based on the mobile learning style and mobile platform. This application is more about vocabulary and the active Chinese. The active Chinese here are the common words and expression, which the using rate in normal life is high. The more using of word, the more active Chinese. To evaluate the effectiveness and the results of the mobile learning Chinese application, we also do a survey for learners after using our proposed application. This evaluation survey had taken us 2 months (from June to August 2019) to carry and gave out a perspective result. The outcome is quite good signal for us and is a strong point for us to base on to develop a better approach by using mobile application in learning Chinese.

2.1   Theorical background

With the trend of Mobile technologies, Mobile learning has become a very popular method for people all over around the world to participate in learning, to upgrade ourselves. As Crompton, H. (2013) had declared that M-learning or mobile learning is "learning across multiple contexts, through social and content interactions, using personal electronic devices", a form of distance education, m-learners use mobile device educational technology at their time convenience. Along with the development of m-learning, many theories about mobile educations are raised by researchers, major aspects are listed. Mobile learning can be learning happens when technological tools mediates between the learner and knowledge. Mobile learning uses mobile technology. Or mobile learning can be understood as a continuation of e-learning. Mobile learning as learning about the learner-centered: where the learner is mobile and not necessarily technology.

To take advantages of mobile technologies, many studies have revealed and showed the good results of mobile learning. Pegrum M. (2014) has shown us how to teach languages with mobile devices. The author has shown us the change of teaching, especially in languages. To go on with the trends, a lot of English Moblie Learning Application appeared. In the year 2014, Jerry Chih-Yuan Sun and partners has conducted the study of English Mobile Learning. They got 64 Taiwanese tertiary students evaluated a learning system about plants in the English language. This location-based mobile learning system to facilitate English learning was based on mobile context-aware learning and related theories. The analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation model was used for the system development. They had concluded that the Mobile learning is the future developmental trend in the field of education, and it can be applied in English learning. Another study of English mobile learning, Monther M. Elaish and partners in 2015, studied about the Mobile learning for English Language Acquistion which represents the first attempt to provide a comprehensive analysis of the existing literature (2010-2015) to identify the taxonomy and distribution of research as well as to identify the advantages and challenges and provide some recommendations to facilitate the effective use of mobile English language learning and its applications. The results of this paper can assist users, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners in the education sector to allocate the necessary resources and make plans to mitigate the challenges and facilitate the effective use of mobile English language learning in educational practices. It is simile to English, learning Chinese can use Mobile Learning to develop and attract more people. Yiqun Li and partners in 2016 has proposed a Chinese Mobile Learning Application in the study "A platform for creating Smartphone apps to enhance Chinese learning using augmented reality". This paper is more about advanced technologies and about Chinese character recognition. This study provides that the mobile learning style is helping Chinese learners a lot, can support and encourage people to improve Chinese skills. In China, a lot of studies about Learning Chinese, a lot of best results come. But the study of mobile learning in

Learning Chinese is not much, and it become one of the most potential learning styles for us to study and develop. This is the good basis for us to conduct this study.

2.2 The needs and the situation of Chinese learners (Chinese as secondary foreign language)

To have a better look at the status of how people and learners learn Chinese in HCMC area, we would like to do a survey. This survey has been conducted to aim to understand the demand and the situation of Chinese learner as secondary foreign language. We have surveyed at 03 foreign languages center: there are 44 people (23.5%) learning in Foreign Language Center of HCMUS, 72 people (38.5%) in Foreign Language Center of HCMUTE, 71 people (38%) in Foreign Language Center of TDTU. About the occupation observation, 44 people (23.5%) are first year student, 5 people (2.7 %) are second year student, 2 people (1.1%) are third year student, 43 people (23%) are last year student, 40 people (21.4%) are graduated but unemployed, 25 people (13.4%) are graduated and employed and 28 people (15%) are employee. About learning Chinese Experience*, 54 people (29%) choose* Never (from 0 to 1 month), 80 people (43%) choose Just learned (from 1 ~ 3 months), 51 people (27%) choose For long but not good, and 2 people choose others.
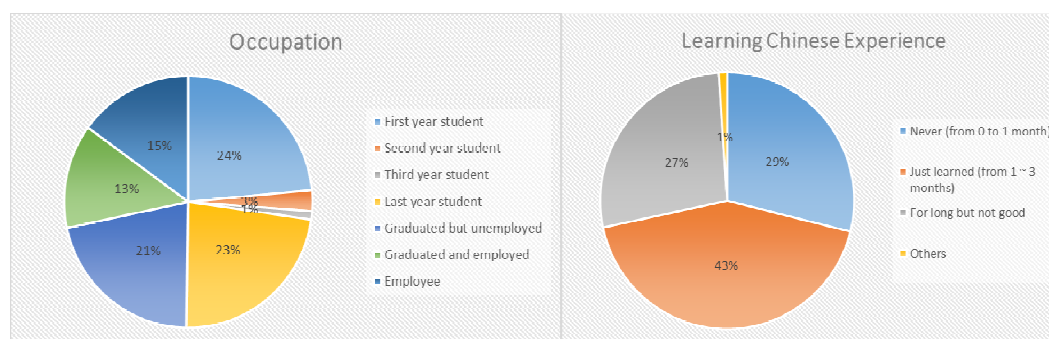

Figure 1. Chinese learners' occupation and experience in Chinese

When asked about intend to learn Chinese at the center, 121 people (65%) choose Yes, 14 people (8%) choose No and 50 people (27%) choose Thinking about it. *How many hours do you spend on self-learning Chinses per week?* The answer is that 89 people (48%) choose 1 - 3 hours, 62 people (34%) choose 4 – 7 hours, 31 people (17%) choose 7 – 10 hours and 2 people (1%) choose 7 – 10 hours.
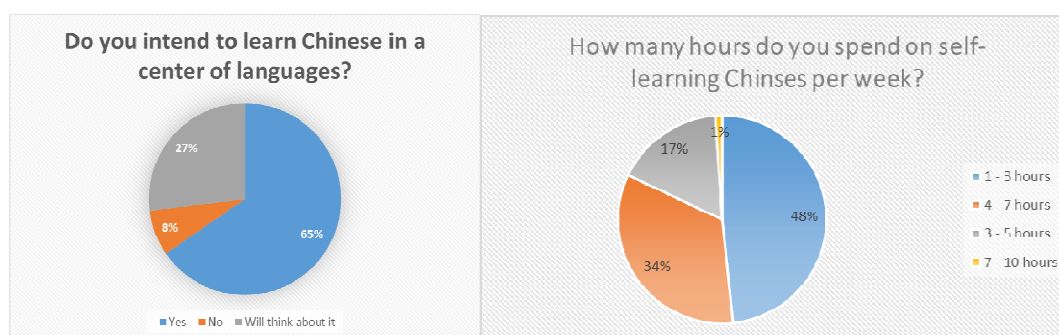

Figure 2. Learning Chinese characteristics of learners

Purpose of learning Chinese: 20 people (11%) choose The school requirement, 50 people (29%) choose For easier to find job, 46 people (25%) choose For communication in Chinese, 29 people (16%) choose To adapt the graduation condition, 34 people (18%) choose For hobbies and 2 people (1%) choose For the work requires. About learning Chinese status, 18 people (10%) don't learn Chinese, 52 people (52%) want to learn Chinese, 71 people (38%) are learning Chinese.
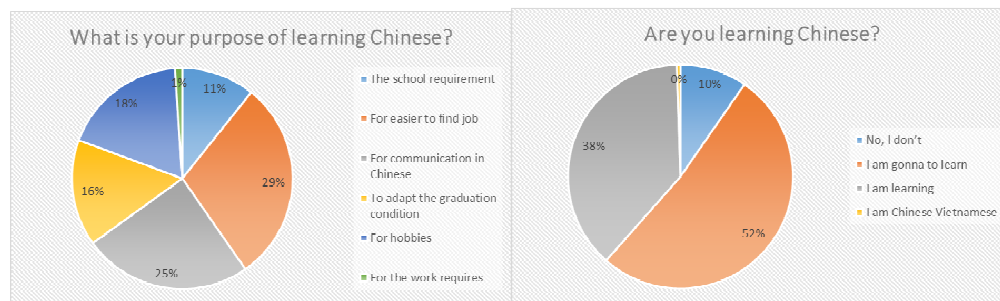
Figure 3. Purpose, status of Chinese learner

How to learn Chinese: 122 people (30%) learn at home, 62 people (16%) learn at school, 126 people (31%) learn on Network, and 94 people (23%) learn at a center. *Have you ever used a mobile learning Chinese App?* The answer are that 8 people (5%) choose Never known/ heard, 72 people (41%) choose I have heard, but not tried before. 107 people (54%) choose I have heard and tried before.
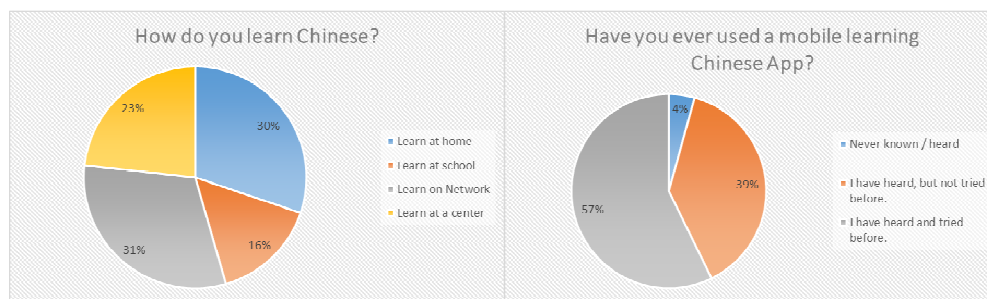

Figure 4. How to learn Chinese with mobile App

What functions are there in the app you are using? Have 140 people (28%) choose Dictionary, 97 people (19%) choose Textbox, 65 people (13%) choose Practice, 121 people (24%) choose Online Learning, 82 people (16%) choose Communication.
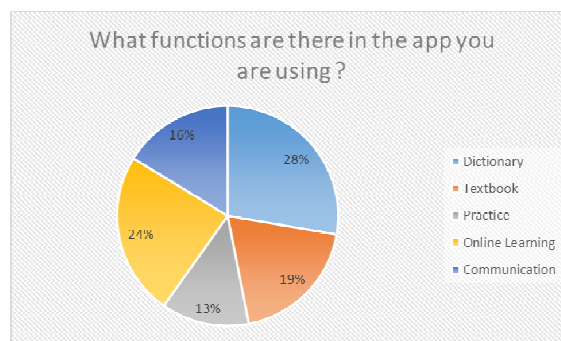
Figure 5. What functions are there in the app you are using?

With the survey above, in general the demand of learning Chinese is quite high with different purposes including learning reasons, hobbies and especially for later jobs. With many students, the time and cost are quite limited, so most of learners want to study at home or in the free time with the most economical cost. Since it shows that having a Chinese language learning app with many functions, the tuition fee is likely to be trusted and it would be used by many audiences. Thereby building an application to support learning and Chinese is necessary and potential.

2.3 Proposal of new approach, the active mobile Chinese

According to the Chinese language, we propose a platform that integrates Chinese Language and Mobile learning Styles. This platform can understand as a virtual platform, it includes a lot of Chinese Learning and Teaching problems, a lot of Mobile learning styles, and we combine them together to generate a proposed platform of Chinese Mobile Learning. With this purpose, we integrate 05

elements that we think necessary to build this platform: Chinese language, mobile technologies, Chinese Learners, Learning Materials and Chinese teachers.
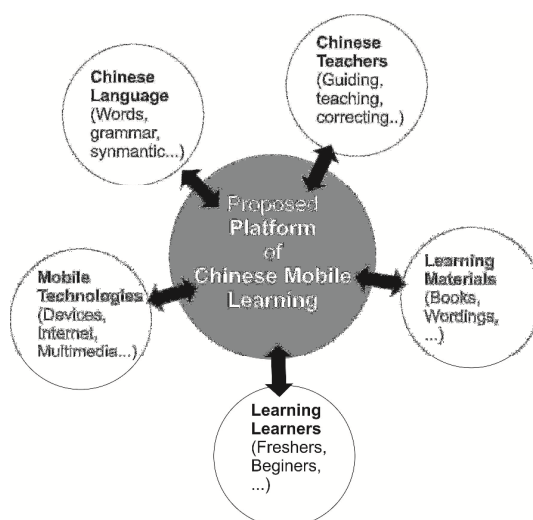

Figure 6. Structure of proposed platform

To retrieve the advantages of the proposed platform, we integrate this platform with Active Chinese, the common words and common expressions, to build the new version of Chinese Mobile Learning. The reason why we select active Chinese to develop this platform is about the mobility. This platform is for Chinese learners which users can learn Chinese anytime and anywhere, the active Chinese can fit this requirement and seems to get better learning-outcomes for learners. The proposed active mobile Chinese includes vocabulary (active Chinese), Classroom (interaction between students and teachers…), practices and translation.
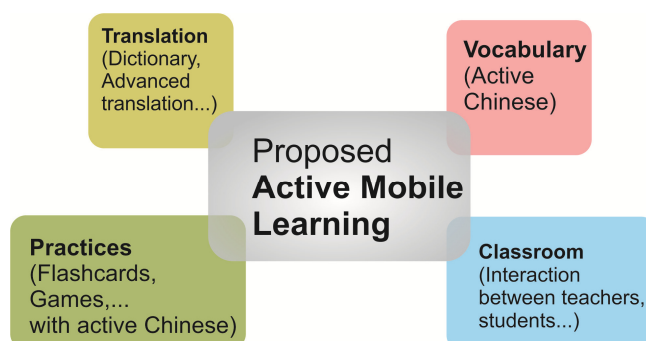

Figure 7. Function of of proposed Active Mobile Chinese

2.4   The proposed application of active mobile Chinese, Hi-Lingo

To demonstrate the new approach, we are building and developing a new mobile application which named *Hi-Lingo*. This application is an application in learning Chinese on the Active Chinese. The demand of learning Chinese is nonstop increasing and so do the development of technology. Beside the knowledge you have learnt in class, self-study is a very important part in learning Chinese. There are many applications in studying foreign language, especially Chinese has appeared and used. *Hi-Lingo* – an application to support Chinese self-study was launched. Hi-Lingo supports teaching and learning Chinese in Active Chinese knowledge system. The objective of this is all Chinese learners and teachers. To learner, this application provides dictionaries and correct source of knowledge base on Active Chinese to study and improve knowledge more easily, effectively, scientifically. Besides, Hi-Lingo is the first application to integrated and synchronized many essential features that support in teaching and learning Chinese in Vietnam.

This application has these main functions: user management, dictionary function, classroom function, practice function. Firstly, in Hi-Lingo, everyone can easily create new account and login to use. User need to create a new account. There are two way to create new account, the first way is to provide

some necessary information to fill in the form; the second way is to use Facebook account that linked to get information. Besides, if you forget your password, you can login to your mail and this application will send you the new password.
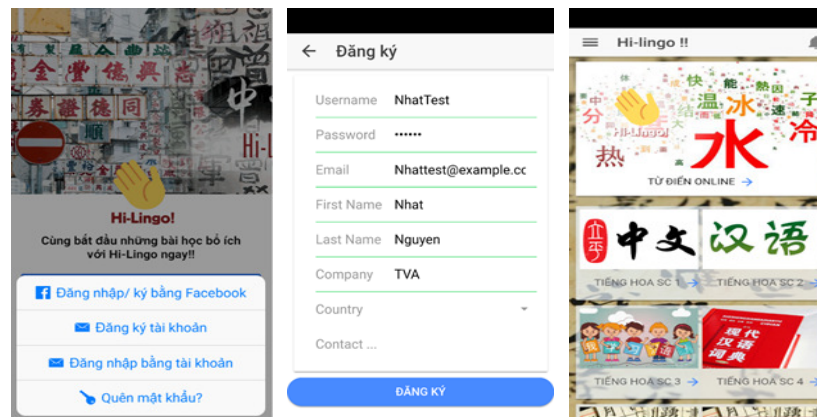

Figure 8. Welcoming and entering screenshots of Hi-Lingo

2.2.1 Dictionary function in Hi-Lingo

In Hi-Lingo, we have 2 choices: Vietnamese-Chinese and Chinese-Vietnamese dictionary. We can choose type of dictionary, and type word you need to investigate. Investigation: system gives a detailed information of that word include word, meaning, pronunciation, parts of speech, examples and how to write Chinese character (Hanzi "汉字" only Chinese has this characteristic). This application uses vocabulary in *Active Chinese* standard including 6 levels. At the first two levels, you can use for free. to others, users must purchase by package to keep on using. The cost for packages absolutely is reasonable for students. You also can check the history of searched words.
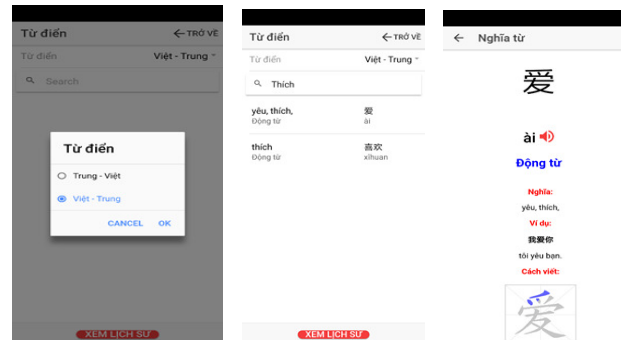

Figure 9. Dictionary function screenshots of Hi-Lingo.

2.2.2 Classroom function in Hi-Lingo

With our approach, we want the teachers and the learners can easily share the knowledge each other, anytime and anywhere. That is why this function can adapt. To use this classroom function, the process description is like this: firstly, you can find a suitable class, this class has been created and verified by the system integrating with Chinese teachers. Most of the teachers are professional and famous in teaching Chinese around HCMC area. Then, secondly you can join the class you want. In every class, you can see the information of the teacher, class list; and you can discuss or post any questions or ideas to improve your Chinese. You can also view the lecture and everything teacher posts. The classrooms are sorted as level, so you can choose the level that is suitable with the demand.
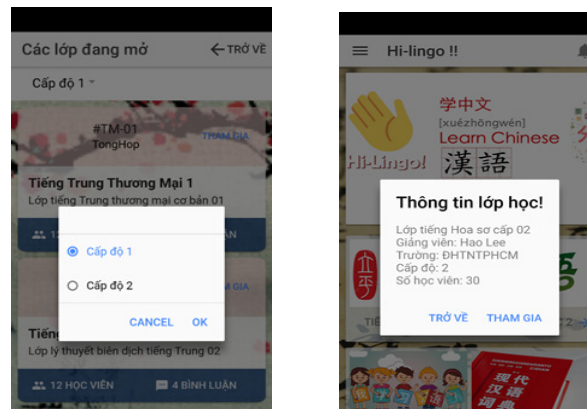
Figure 10. Classroom function screenshots of Hi-Lingo

2.2.3 Practice function in Hi-Lingo

With this function, we aim to help learners can practice easily but most efficiently. Chinese learners can do the practice anytime, even just a few seconds. The practice part will compose the studied knowledge for users by giving them vocabulary Flashcards and many different tests that help learners check the knowledge accumulated during the recent study period. There are various types of tests, such as reading comprehension and multiple-choice exams with many questions to reinforce knowledge in class and assess user acquisition ability after class.
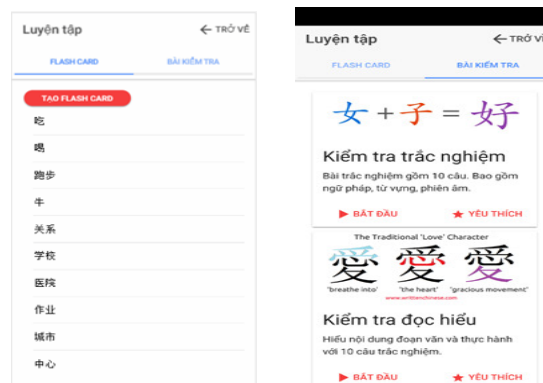
Figure 11. Practice function screenshots of Hi-Lingo

2.2.4 Personal profile management function in Hi-Lingo

As many other applications, Hi-Lingo also has the user management function. This includes personal profile function which allows user to view and update information. Besides, there is a feedback function to give the feedback back to the production department if there is any problem or question.
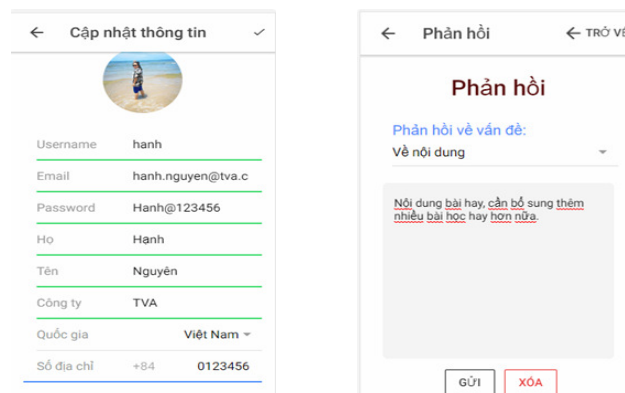

Figure 12. Profile function screenshots of Hi-Lingo

3 RESULTS

After launching the beta version of Hi-Lingo, which applied our proposed Active Mobile Chinese, we have surveyed 79 Chinese learners from 03 selected foreign centres, to evaluate our proposal to match the learner demand.

3.1 The information of observed data

Table 1. Learners' foreign centre.

|	Foreign Language Centre of HCMUS	Foreign Language Centre of HCMUTE	Foreign Language Centre of TDTU
Number of surveyed learners	19	25	35
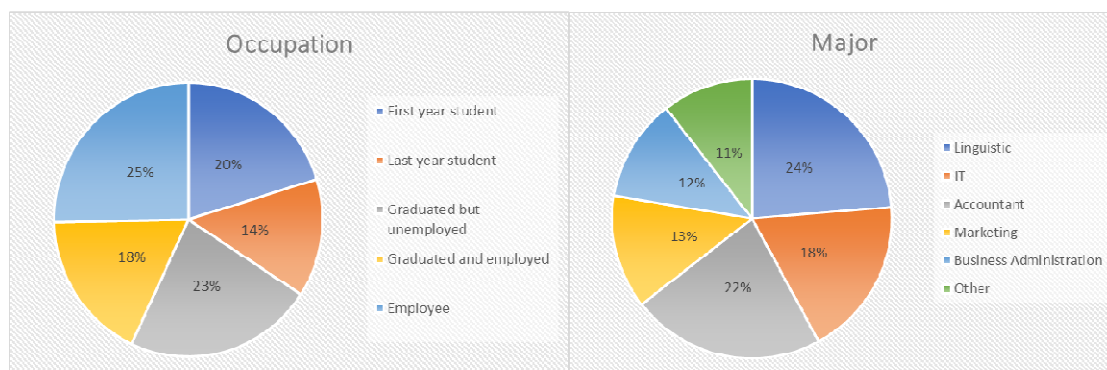
Figure 13. Learners' information

3.2 Evaluation result

To evaluate the result, we measure the agreement of learners when they read these statements. *Agree1a* - The application is easy to install. *Agree1b* - Friendly application interface, easy to use. *Agree1c* - Can use the application anytime, anywhere. *Agree1d* - Learning Chinese on mobile saves a lot of time. *Agree1e* - Learning Chinese on mobile saves money on tuition. *Agree1f* - Combining self-study Chinese on mobile brings high efficiency. *Agree1g* - Dictionaries with diverse and understandable vocabulary close to the content of study. *Agree1h* - There are many classroom options. *Agree1i* - Review exercises help you remember more. *Agree1k* - You see the Chinese language learning mobile app is really necessary. *Agree1m* - If the application is more quality, it is reasonable to pay for mobile learning. Most of the outcomes are agree and above. There is no disagreement.
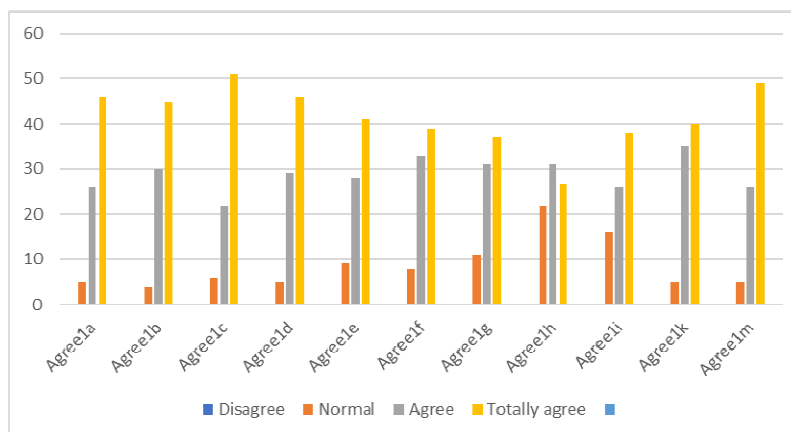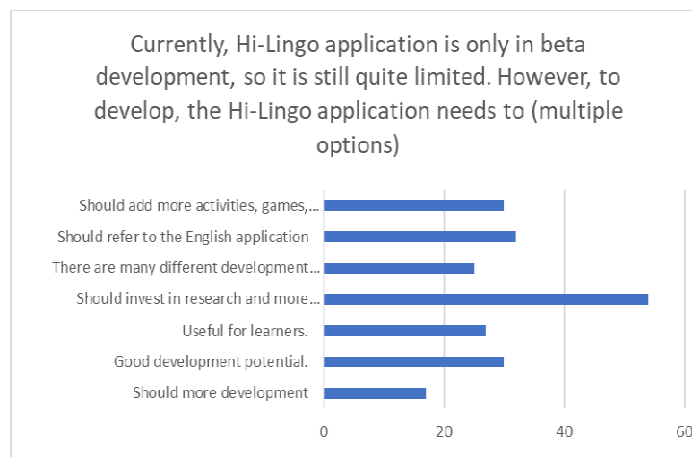
Figure 14. Agreement of Statement from learners.

Besides that, we have gotten some other information about our Hi-Lingo, the results come so good to us, most of learners feel good and want to use the app. If the app is more function and more contents, so they will use it event it is not free.
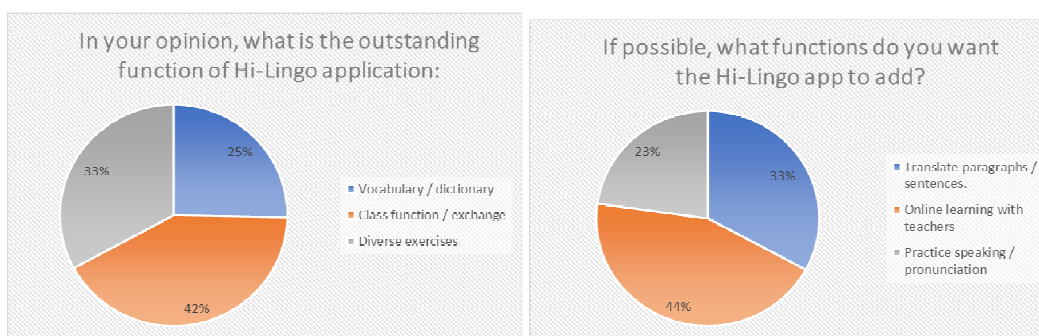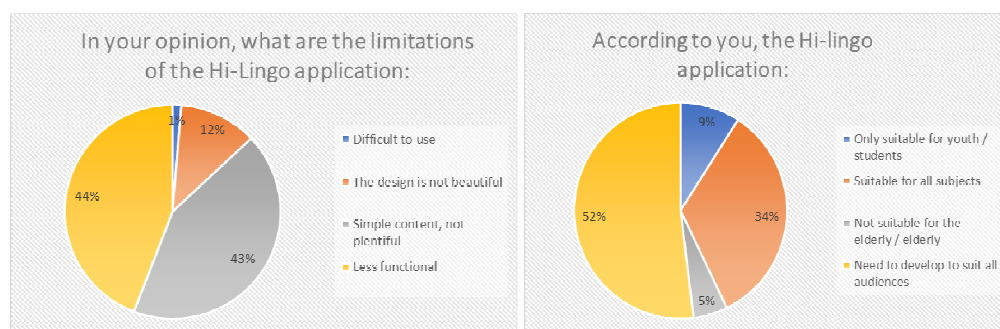

Figure 15. Some evaluation results from users

Figure 16. Some idea about Hi-Lingo

4 CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we propose a method that is a new approach in learning Chinese. It is an application called "Hi-Lingo". The experimental result shows that this proposal uses mobile learning style combine with Active Chinese, can help users study easier and more effective especially you can study anytime, anywhere. Besides, we have also found that this application has some disadvantages as it is not suitable for everyone, the number of vocabularies is not diverse enough. In the future, we continue to study about machine learning that can be combined with this proposal. Moreover, we also have an idea that can build a social network for one who are learning and using Chinese.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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