

Is Chinese Popular? Exploring the Learning Motivation of CSL Learners in a University in Malaysia

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Abstract

Chinese, as the official language of China, has the largest number of speakers worldwide, including those who learn it as a first, second, or foreign language. The launch of the first Confucius Institute in South Korea in 2004 signaled China's goal to promote global Chinese language education. Currently, around 30 million people are studying Chinese, and over 3,000 universities across 100 countries offer Chinese language courses, making it one of the most popular languages after English. Malaysia is a multicultural country, and the peculiarities of the country's character are considered a conducive place to learn languages. Because almost a quarter of the country's population is Chinese, this theoretically provides an open and inclusive environment for any learner who wants to study Chinese. Not only that, Malaysia has a very comprehensive Chinese education system, which covers from Chinese kindergartens to Chinese primary schools, independent Chinese secondary schools and higher education. The integrity of the Chinese education system is unparalleled in other countries around the world. Therefore, the uniqueness of Malaysian Chinese education lies in the completeness of its education system, the standardization of classroom teaching, and the breadth of learners (Wu & Teng, 2019). In addition, the establishment of the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area has promoted friendly political and economic exchanges between China and Malaysia. Meanwhile, China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative has promoted the development of Southeast Asian countries and has had a significant impact on Chinese education in Southeast Asian countries (Yan, 2022). A qualitative study on 21 learners at a Malaysian university's Mandarin club explored motivations for learning Chinese. Findings indicated that economic, social, and cultural factors were primary influences, with some learners also motivated by technological factors.

Keywords: Chinese as a Second Language (CSL), Motivation, Learner, Learning, Malaysia

Introduction

Language does not exist in isolation, but is a part of society and culture (Fong et al., 2018). Due to its economic prosperity, China has become one of the largest economies in the world, so learning Chinese has become a hot topic today. With the rapid expansion of bilateral political and economic exchanges between China and Malaysia, understanding the Chinese language and culture will help further promote cooperation between the two countries and contribute to their common development. Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country, where various ethnic groups maintain their own racial characteristics and language habits while also influencing and integrating with each other, forming Malaysia's unique multilingual environment and multicultural atmosphere. According to statistics, among Malaysia's 29.948 million population, Malays account for 67.4%, Chinese account for 24.6%, Indians account for 7.3%, and other races account for 0.7% (Xu & Xu, 2016). Malaysia is the only country outside "Greater China" that uses Mandarin Chinese as the language of instruction. The enthusiasm of local residents to learn Chinese has been increasing year by year, and many non-Chinese families have also sent their children to Chinese schools. Moreover, the teaching quality of Chinese and related courses is comparable to that of Chinese Mainland (Palanca, 2004). Apart from Singapore, Malaysia has the highest proportion of Chinese people in the world and maintains a relatively complete Chinese language education system. The government has also adopted a more open attitude towards Chinese education, among which the CSL curriculum is known as the BCSK classroom. BCSK is the abbreviation of Malay, meaning Baidu Cina Sekolah Kebangsaan (Chin et al., 2017), is a second language course designed for non-native speakers, with the goal of allowing students to master basic Chinese communication skills. This course aims to enable students to effectively communicate and interact with native speakers using the language skills learned in BCSK courses. In recent years, Chinese language learning has received widespread attention, so it is necessary to conduct further detailed exploration of the continued development of CSL education, in order to provide experience for Confucius Institutes to better promote Chinese language education in Malaysia.

Literature Review

Motivation for Developing Chinese Education

In the era of information globalization, the instrumental role of language is increasingly strengthened, and its resource value and other functions are becoming increasingly prominent. It has become a resource for economic development, an innovation in cultural inheritance, a driving force for promoting employment, and a factor for ensuring security. Meanwhile, language learning not only depends on the needs of the external environment, but is also deeply driven by personal motivation. By learning and mastering Chinese, learners can stimulate their creativity and curiosity, which is not only a driving force for personal growth, but also a contribution to the process of globalization and social progress, and promotes deeper cultural integration and economic cooperation.

Promoting National Unity

The motivation for learning Chinese in Malaysia is not only the popularity of the Chinese language, but also its importance as a cultural symbol of national identity (Palanca, 2004). In the early days of Malaysia, the purpose of learning Chinese for non-Chinese people (mainly Malay college students) was not to provide services in China or do business with Chinese

people. They mainly wanted to communicate better with local Malaysian Chinese (Terng et al., 2015). Therefore, for students who have little or no prior exposure to this language, they tend to teach commonly used phrases or expressions in daily communication. This is conducive to ethnic integration and great national unity, and contributes to the prosperity and harmony of Malaysia.

Helping Employment

Promoting employment is the main purpose of Malaysian public universities offering Mandarin courses (Terng et al., 2015), to provide graduates with soft skills. College students need to master multiple languages so that they can compete in the workplace. The international trade between China and Malaysia is closely related to the Chinese language, and one of the advantages of local trade development is language communication, which makes speaking Chinese even more advantageous in trade (Wu & Teng, 2019). Similarly, developing Chinese language education can enhance the competitiveness of Malaysian students and seek better education and employment opportunities in China. This learning motivation not only enhances learners' competitiveness in the international market, but also makes important contributions to the economic and cultural exchanges between the two countries.

Cultural Inheritance

Chinese culture is extensive and profound, with a history and civilization of thousands of years. One potential cultural factor for the development of Chinese education in Malaysia is Confucianism, which emphasizes hard work and respect for teachers (Veloo et al., 2019). This is conducive to the inheritance and promotion of China's excellent moral culture. In addition, many mandarin learners are interested in Chinese culture, such as calligraphy, lion dance, paper-cutting, tea art, Tai Chi, etc., and even Chinese martial arts movies or ancient literature (Ling & Huszka, 2018). These intrinsic interests promote their continuous exploration of Chinese education. From the perspective of language resources, preserving the Chinese language in Malaysia is not only beneficial to the Chinese community, but also an important national support for the entire nation (Wu & Teng, 2019). This learning motivation not only reflects the pursuit of cultural identity, but also makes important contributions to the inheritance of multiculturalism and social harmony.

Development Process

The evolution of Malaysian Chinese education policy can be divided into four periods: the period of British colonial rule, the early period of independence, the period of new development policy Yan (2022), and the period of national ambitious policy.

British Colonial Period

The first formal Chinese school in Malaysia was established in the late 19th or early 20th century. In 1904, the first official Chinese language school (Chinese Confucian School) was established in Penang (Palanca, 2004). After World War I, nationalism emerged in various parts of Southeast Asia, and Chinese education was not popular in most countries, especially in Thailand and Indonesia where Chinese education was banned. Since the large-scale immigration of Chinese people to Malaysia, the development of Chinese education in Malaysia has gone through a long process. In 1946, there were 1,004 Chinese primary schools and 15 Chinese secondary schools in Malaysia (Palanca, 2004). Especially since the early

1950s, Chinese educators have played an important role in ensuring the development of Chinese education in Malaysia (Raman & Tan, 2015). A Malayan educator insisted in November 1952 that Chinese Malaysians should be allowed to protect their culture and traditions through Chinese language education. In April 1953, this educator established the Central Committee for Malaysian Chinese Education (MCACECC) (Yan, 2022). MCA is a vibrant language community that uses Mandarin and dialects. Overall, before Malaysia's independence, Chinese education was mainly a form of education for overseas Chinese, which was an overseas extension of Chinese national education (Wu & Teng, 2019).

Early Stages of Independence

For the first 10 years after Malaysia's independence from Britain, English and Malay were the medium of instruction, especially in the education sector. The earliest record of teaching Chinese as a second language in Malaysia can be traced back to 1963. That year, the Institute of Chinese Studies at the University of Malaya began a project to teach Mandarin to non-Chinese students (Terng et al., 2015).

The Period of New Development Policy

The use of Chinese as a second language (now known as a third language) in the Malaysian Chinese education system began in the 1990s. It was initiated based on the suggestion of Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, the former Minister of Education of Malaysia, who announced in the Parliamentary Education Bill on December 18, 1995: The teaching and learning of Chinese language will be implemented in national schools with multi-ethnic students (Yin & Abdullah, 2014). In 1992, a minority rights organization's report on the Chinese in Southeast Asia stated that "Malaysia has the most comprehensive Chinese education system in Southeast Asia" (Raman & Tan, 2015). What's more, in 1996, the government adopted an education liberalization policy that allowed the establishment of many private colleges and universities. Malay Chinese paid attention to this new policy and established UTAR in June 2002. This university accepts students who have government or ICSS certification exams (Palanca, 2004). It is worth mentioning that there are currently seven Confucius Institutes and one Confucius Classroom in Malaysia, and UTAR is the only university in Southeast Asia that teaches used in mandarin. Although teaching Chinese as a second language in Malaysia has a long history, there are relatively few related records. In fact, it was difficult for us to find any relevant records before 2000 (Terng et al., 2015).

The Period of National Ambitious Policy

The prevalence of studying CSL in Malaysia is relatively high among local international schools, especially since the government relaxed the enrollment policy for Malaysian students in 2006 (Leow et al., 2014). In 2007, the Malaysian Ministry of Education implemented a Chinese as a second language teaching program in thousands of national primary schools across the country (binti Khalidar, 2019). In 2009, about 350 primary schools across the country began to offer Chinese as a second language courses. Ampang MJ Language Center is a private entity that pioneered the establishment of the Malaysian Mandarin Teaching Association in 2009. In 2010, the Society successfully held the first Malaysian Chinese Language Teaching Seminar. Although this was a successful workshop, there was no effort to continue organizing it (Hoe & Lim, 2013). Subsequently, in 2011, Chinese as a second language was included in the official curriculum of national primary schools (binti Khalidar, 2019). According to statistics from 2011, a total of 21693 students from 20 public universities in Malaysia signed up for MFL

courses within one semester (Fong et al., 2018). It is worth mentioning that in 2013, international luxury brands (such as PRADA and Bvlgari) also offered specialized Chinese marketing training courses for sales personnel in their stores in Malaysia based on market conditions, which greatly promoted the dissemination and promotion of the Chinese language (Xu & Xu, 2016). Furthermore, DSKP was established based on Malaysia's "Education Blueprint 2013-2025". Starting from 2017, Chinese DSKP (grades 1-3) has been included in the national curriculum for teaching mandarin in junior high schools in Malaysia (Lim & Ng, 2023). According to the latest data from the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Malaysia, there are currently 1290 Chinese primary schools, 60 independent Chinese secondary schools, and 3 Chinese language colleges in Malaysia. Over 5000 Malaysian students are studying in independent Chinese high schools, and approximately 70000 non-Chinese students are studying in national schools (Xu & Xu, 2016). The landmark events in the four periods of the development of Chinese language in Malaysia are shown in Figure 1;

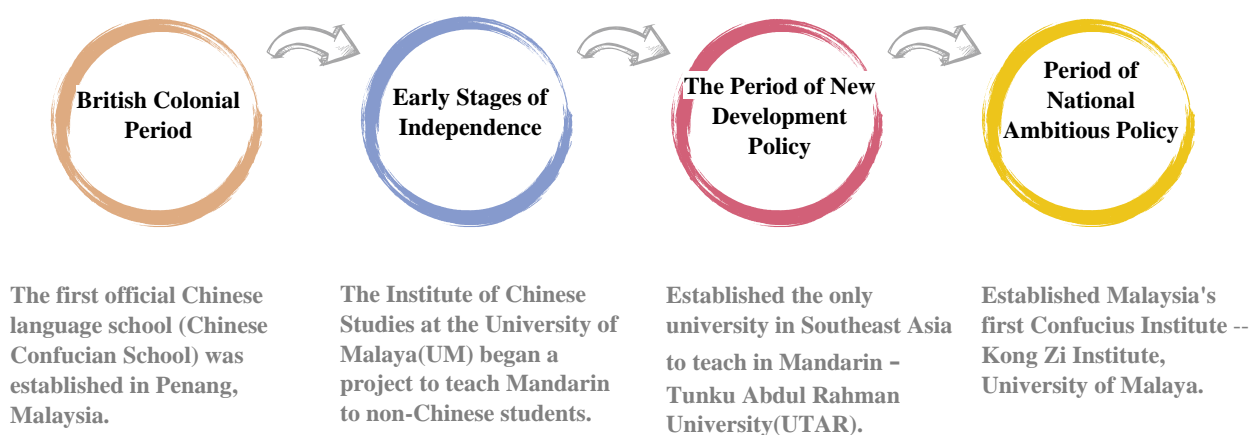


Figure 1. Landmark Events of the Four Periods

Current Development Status of Chinese Language Teaching in Malaysia

The success of Chinese language education is due to the strong support and economic contribution of the Chinese community (Yan, 2022). Moreover, The continuous improvement in the quality of education and the diversification of teaching methods also contribute to the success of mandarin education in Malaysia. In recent years, the Malaysian government has legally accepted mandarin education, and has also promoted the teaching of Chinese as a second language in the national education system where Malay is the language of instruction (Wu & Teng, 2019). With the development of mandarin education, more and more problems are beginning to surface. This includes the difficulty of learning mandarin itself, insufficient teaching staff, professional issues with teachers, and a lack of language policy support. The challenges faced are shown in Figure 2,

The Difficulty of Learning Chinese is High

The mother tongue of most Malaysian students is usually Malay or English. However, as a logical language, Mandarin is completely different from Malay or English language systems due to the complexity and diversity of Chinese character structures. The unique characteristics of the Chinese language, such as the complex structure and shape of Chinese

characters, special intonations and multiple meanings of words, and different grammatical patterns, make learning very difficult for non-Chinese-speaking learners. As a result, the skill of distinguishing Chinese characters with similar shapes is considered an advanced level and may be challenging even for native Mandarin speakers, let alone these beginning learners. For Malaysians of non-Chinese background, the main difficulty in learning Chinese is: the correct pronunciation of the four distinguishing words for tones (Malay or Tamil are not tonal languages). Because their inappropriate use can lead to serious misunderstandings (Hui Ling & Huszka, 2018).

Insufficient Teachers

Teacher education is an important part of cultivating qualified teachers, and another key issue facing CSL education in Malaysia is the severe shortage of well-trained teachers (Raman & Tan, 2015). Although the number of Confucius Institutes and Chinese language classrooms established internationally has been increasing year by year, class capacity and teacher resources are still quite limited. In recent years, the demand for CSL teachers at various stages in Malaysia has increased. However, based on information from the decade 2006-2015, the shortage of mandarin teachers has not been resolved (binti Khalidar, 2019). What's more, as they grow older, most local Chinese CSL teachers prefer to stay in their home country for employment, leaving Confucius Institutes lacking a sustainable development mechanism to ensure teaching staff. In the future, the problem of insufficient international Chinese language teachers will become increasingly prominent.

Professional Issues of Teachers

The lack of qualified teachers in Malaysia has been a long-standing problem (Palanca, 2004). Basically, the training level of Chinese language teachers is relatively low, and most teachers have not received appropriate training in teaching Chinese as a second language. In addition, they do not need to obtain any government certification before starting teaching, which to some extent affects the quality and ability of these teachers (Hoe & Lim, 2013). Furthermore, mandarin teaching in Malaysia places more emphasis on communication and interaction, and therefore does not overly emphasize any specific skills. This seems different from mandarin teaching in China, as Chinese language teaching focuses on four language skills, such as speaking, writing, listening, and reading. Last but not least, most textbooks of public higher education institutions do not include much cultural information. Some textbooks only provide information about Chinese and local festivals (Fong et al., 2018), and many CSL teachers often lack cross-cultural background and language knowledge.

Lack of Language Policy Support

Although Malaysia has a general policy on second language acquisition, government commitment and support are very scarce, and as a result, the development of Chinese as a second language teaching in Malaysia has been rather slow and haphazard (Hoe & Lim, 2013). Chinese language schools heavily rely on charitable donations from the Malay Chinese Community (Raman & Tan, 2015). Due to a lack of government support, the lack of standardized teaching syllabi and courses has become the norm, and there are no professional institutions to provide any form of support, as well as a lack of official platforms for communication. Despite the flourishing development of mandarin teaching in Malaysia today, most universities are focused on their own agendas, so they rarely come together to formulate a common language policy (Hoe & Lim, 2013).

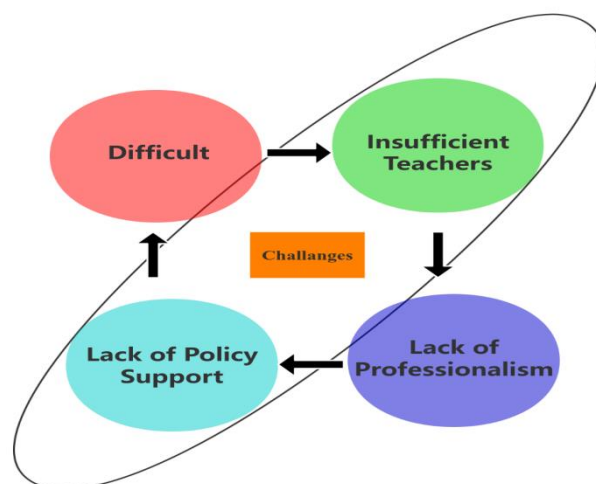


Figure 2. Challenges faced by Chinese Learning in Malaysia

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research method to explore the motivation of Mandarin learners in Malaysian universities to learn Chinese as a second language. Qualitative research is a scientific research method that focuses on in-depth understanding and description of phenomena, situations, and subjective experiences. Explore the meaning and patterns behind non-numerical data collection and analysis, rather than just numerical correlations. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research typically uses smaller samples, but emphasizes the richness and representativeness of sample information in order to gain a deeper understanding of individual experiences and perspectives. In this research, the use of qualitative research methods in the form of interviews can enable researchers to understand the meaning behind this phenomenon. This study discusses the development of Chinese as a second language teaching in Malaysia from the perspective of students to understand the motivations of international students for learning mandarin. It is also conducive to helping mandarin teachers reflect on themselves and adjust the way of teaching Chinese as a foreign language in the future. Based on the objective situation of teaching Chinese as a second language in Malaysia, this study explored the following research questions:

- (1) How popular is Mandarin as a second language teaching in Malaysian universities?
- (2) What are the motivations for students in Malaysian universities to learn Mandarin?

Setting and Participants

This study used snowball sampling method, starting from a small number of initial contacts who met the research criteria. 25 students from a Mandarin club at a public university in Malaysia were selected to participate in this study, and interviews with 21 participants were retained until the interview data was saturated. However, due to personal issues, 4 participants were removed. All interviewees were undergraduates or masters who participated in the Mandarin Club, including 11 female participants, accounting for 52%, and 10 male participants, accounting for 48%. And most of the students are under 25 years old, and only 3 students are over 25 years old. In an effort to ensure that students have a profound reflection on their learning experience of Mandarin, we have selected students who have

studied Mandarin for more than two months as the interview group. Most of the respondents have a long history of learning Mandarin, with over half of the students having more than one year of training time. Furthermore, in order to ensure the comprehensiveness and diversity of the data results, we not only selected local Malaysian learners, but also interviewed international students from other countries who came to study in Malaysia as a reference. Among them, there are 12 native Malaysian interviewees, 7 Malays, and 3 Indians. Among the remaining individuals, there are two from Indonesian and one Mandarin learner each from Egyptian, Lebanese, Russian, Sri Lankan, Pakistani, Australian and Yemen. All of the participants' names in this paper are pseudonyms; their information is shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Participant Information

| Name | Gender | Nationality | Race | Age | learning time |
|------|--------|-------------|-----------------|-----|---------------|
| S1 | Female | Malaysian | Malay | 23 | 2 months |
| S2 | Male | Malaysian | Indian | 20 | 1 years |
| S3 | Female | Malaysian | Malay | 21 | 6 months |
| S4 | Male | Egyptian | Muslim | 21 | 2 years |
| S5 | Male | Lebanese | Arab | 21 | 6 months |
| S6 | Female | Russian | Kristian | 27 | 2 years |
| S7 | Male | Indonesian | Indonesian | 24 | 2 months |
| S8 | Female | Malaysian | Kristian | 22 | 1 years |
| S9 | Male | Malaysian | Malay | 23 | 2 years |
| S10 | Female | Sri Lankan | Sri lankan Moor | 23 | 5 months |
| S11 | Female | Malaysian | Indian | 20 | 6 months |
| S12 | Male | Pakistan | Indo-Aryan | 33 | 2 months |
| S13 | Male | Malaysian | Indian | 25 | 3 years |
| S14 | Female | Malaysian | Malay | 20 | 5 months |
| S15 | Female | Malaysian | Malay | 21 | 6 years |
| S16 | Male | Malaysian | Malay | 21 | 3 years |
| S17 | Female | Malaysian | Malay | 21 | 2 months |
| S18 | Female | Indonesian | Indonesian | 28 | 2 years |
| S19 | Male | Australian | Australian | 22 | 2 years |
| S20 | Female | Malaysian | Kristian | 23 | 2 years |
| S21 | Male | Yemen | Arab | 23 | 6 months |

Data Collection

This researcher combined pre-interview preparation and prepared a semi-structured interview outline, inviting participants to recall their experience of learning Chinese language at the Mandarin Club. This interview lasted for two months from March to May 2024. Data collection was completed in a one-to-one, semi-structured format, with each interview lasting approximately 1-1.2 hours. When discussing the motivation of students to learn Mandarin, economic factors are the most discussed topic, followed by cultural and social factors, with only one respondent mentioning technological factors. Due to the fact that this study was conducted during the Eid al Fitr holiday in Malaysia, all respondents were not on campus, and some international students even spent their holidays in their own countries. As a

consequence, this interview was conducted in a synchronized one-on-one manner through the online What's app, and the interaction and reactions between the host and interviewees were real-time. The interview format of the online What's app makes interviews more flexible, and investigators can also obtain detailed information. However, some international students in online interviews face time zone differences in their home country, requiring investigators and interviewees to coordinate the time in advance, which means that the interview process may not be smooth at times.

Data Analysis

We analyzed the interview data using thematic analysis, a method that allows researchers to untangle complex and large amounts of information, flexibly analyze interview data, and search for underlying meaning in participants' experiences. ATLAS.ti is a professional qualitative research software for managing interview content. It can consolidate large amounts of documents while tracking all notes, code, and memos in all fields of your data. It not only supports the import and analysis of multiple text and multimedia formats, but also provides functions such as tagging, encoding, querying, comparison and visualization. In addition, We followed a five step data analysis process: (1) creating a project; (2) Import data; (3) Encoding; (4) Analysis; (5) Visualization.

Findings

This study aims to understand the learning motivation of Mandarin learners in Malaysian universities through interviews. Related themes emerged from the experiences told by learners, and the results of this study can be divided into four themes related to learning motivation: (1) cultural factors, (2) economic factors, (3) social factors, and (4) technological factors.

Economic Factors

Due to the enhancement of China's comprehensive strength, many countries around the world have Chinese enterprises. Similarly, there are many factories established by Chinese and Malay Chinese in Malaysia, which have increased local employment opportunities. In this interview, the researcher found that economic factors were the main and most frequently mentioned consideration factor for respondents learning Chinese as a second language.

First of all, some respondents are influenced by the global economic situation and choose to learn Mandarin.

I was motivated to learn Chinese primarily because of its growing importance in the global landscape, both economically and culturally. Plus, when I have come to Malaysia, I'm sure that I need to learn more languages.

S4

What's more, since some influential Chinese enterprises, such as Huawei and Tiktok, have set up branches in other countries in the world, learning Chinese is conducive to obtaining good business opportunities.

It is always a good thing to have extra language beside the ones you know, but the reason I picked Chinese is firstly because of the business opportunities you could get if you learn the

language. And unlike a lot of other languages, Chinese is a language that will benefit you even if you work in a country that doesn't speak it because of the expansion of Chinese companies worldwide.

S5

I learned that Chinese is one of the key factors for success in recruitment in many industries since it is widely used in commerce and communication in general.

S14

Thirdly, some students express that learning Chinese as a second language has great advantages in facilitating employment and enhancing employment prospects. Moreover, being able to speak Chinese can provide graduates with an additional guarantee when searching for a job.

In this era of globalization, I believe that it is crucial to master several languages other than our mother language. Considering the massive demand of Mandarin speakers in the current job climate, I feel that it is important to me to be able to speak and understand Mandarin so that I can have a wider selection of jobs and have an advantage compared to my colleague. That is the main motivation for me to learn Chinese as a second language.

S7

The main factor that motivated me to learn Mandarin is because of the powerful of Mandarin language that can give me advantage in many things especially in boosting my career prospects.

S9

My decision to learn Chinese was fueled by several factors, chief among them being the cultural richness and global significance of the language. As China's influence continues to expand economically and culturally, proficiency in Mandarin opens doors to a wealth of opportunities, both personally and professionally.

S16

Next, I want to learn Chinese is because it will be easier for me to get a job in future in any organization as language is very important factors in organization.

S17

Cultural Attraction

Through the narration of students from a Mandarin club in a Malaysian university, this topic documents the Chinese cultural factors in their motivation for Chinese language acquisition. Most of the interviewed students mentioned that they are deeply influenced by Chinese culture.

To begin with, China's vast, profound, and long-standing traditional culture has continuously attracted people from other countries internationally to explore.

The allure of learning Chinese as a second language was sparked by a myriad of factors that continue to motivate me. The language's increasing global significance in culture, the profound history and traditions of China and the personal challenge of mastering a complex and captivating language all played a role in fueling my passion for learning Chinese.

S6

My motivation to learn Chinese stems from various factors. Firstly, I have a keen interest in Chinese culture, history, and literature, which has fueled my desire to learn the language.
S20

In addition, some students also express interest in Chinese drama and literature, hoping to understand the underlying lines and "Chinese style" humor in character dialogues through learning Mandarin.

I was motivated to learn Chinese due to its cultural richness, and the appeal of Chinese dramas, which sparked my interest in the language and culture. Its also help me to talk and understanding while communicate with my Chinese friends in university.
S8

Also, I like to watch c-dramas, it'd be nice to be able to watch the drama without subtitles.
S15

The factors that motivated me to learn Chinese as a second language include cultural interest in Chinese literature and traditions.
S19

Last but not least, China's local customs and natural scenic spots also continuously attract tourists from all over the world to visit.

China is very close to my country. When I was very young, I often heard stories about China from my family and friends, which sparked a great interest in me. When I grow up, I choose to learn Chinese. I also want to travel to China in the future.
S3

By learning Mandarin language, I also can enhance my experience when travelling to China.
S9

Social Factors

The most important function of language is communication, and language can build a bridge between people. As the second largest ethnic group in Malaysia, Chinese language is the second most commonly used language in Malaysia. Learning Mandarin is very beneficial for global ethnic unity and friendly coexistence. This topic mainly documents the social factors in students' motivation for Chinese language acquisition.

Firstly, local Malaysian interviewees believe that learning Mandarin can enhance friendship with other ethnic groups in the country and facilitate communication with people from the same country.

I was motivated to learn Chinese by my friendships with Chinese people.
S12

The opportunities that is available to a Chinese-speaking person in Malaysia and even abroad is quite attractive, plus the ability to understand the language that roughly 1/3rd of Malaysians speaks makes it easier to converse with random people.

S15

Factors that motivated me to learn Chinese as a second language, firstly is because I want to communicate with Chinese friends as I have quite a lot of Chinese friends. So that when I want to go out with them I don't feel left out as I able to understand the conversation and communicate with them.

S17

Furthermore, some interviewees expressed that learning Chinese well is beneficial for interacting with people with similar hobbies and goals.

Joining the Mandarin Club has further solidified my motivation, as it provides a supportive environment and fosters connections with peers who share similar interests and goals.

S16

Moreover, joining the UTM Mandarin Club has allowed me to connect with like-minded individuals and form friendships within the Chinese-speaking community.

S20

Some respondents of Malaysian international students stated that Chinese is the most widely used language internationally and is becoming increasingly popular worldwide. They believe that learning Mandarin can facilitate intimate communication with Chinese friends.

It is also I have a lot of Chinese friends from the university which always want talk Chinese with me that motivate me to learn Chinese.

S6

Other reason is to get connect with more people and increase communication capability because Mandarin is known as one of the most widely used languages in the world, following English.

S9

Mandarin becoming more of a global language and the need to communicate to some close people that I had met in my time in Malaysia.

S10

Because it gives you access to communicate with over a billion individuals all over the world, and because of the demographic (Malaysia).

S21

And learning Chinese also has an important impact on international diplomacy.

Additionally, I recognize the growing importance of Mandarin in today's global landscape, both economically and diplomatically.

S20

Another important subjective reason is that some local Malaysian students have been exposed to Mandarin at a very early age, and their experience of learning Chinese language has left them with profound and beautiful memories. Therefore, learning Mandarin in clubs can continue their meaningful experiences.

I joined Chinese pre-school when I was young and during that time, I used to learn Chinese language on both how to speak and write but later on, when my Chinese tutor was not able to teach me as she had to move on, I didn't get to continue studying Chinese language and due to not practicing much I forgot the basics. Moreover, I have so many of my other race friends who can speak Chinese and I've always adored seeing them speaking Chinese. So, these are the reasons why I wanted to learn Chinese language

S11

Technological Factors

In its early days, China implemented the policy of becoming a scientific and technological power, and its scientific and technological strength improved significantly. The reason for technology is that it is easy for researchers to overlook the motivation of students to learn Chinese language. This topic focuses on a student's learning experience and incorporates technical factors into the starting point of CSL for learners.

Only one student considers that learning Chinese can help them better learn China's advanced technology and have an auxiliary effect on their professional learning.

The first and most important reason was when I was researching electric tractors for some reason. During my research, I found out that the West are still in a young stage regarding sustainable energy for agricultural tools, and then I stumbled upon this documentary about how China manages to feed its whole population. After watching the video, I was astonished at the technology they're using. At that very moment, I realized that the only way to catch up with China is to, first, learn their very difficult language.

S21

Discussion

This study mainly explores the popularity of learning Chinese as a second language in Malaysia and the motivation of learners to learn Mandarin in Malaysian universities. The researcher conducted a qualitative study by interviewing 21 learners of Chinese as a second language in a Mandarin club at a public university in Malaysia. Data analysis through ATLAS.ti software shows that Chinese as a second language teaching is not only extremely popular in Malaysia, but also international students from other countries have a strong interest in learning Mandarin. The survey also found that learners' motivation to learn Mandarin is mainly influenced by economic factors, followed by cultural and social factors, with only one respondent reporting being influenced by technological factors.

To begin with, from an economic perspective, influenced by contemporary global economic forms and as the world situation moves towards democracy and openness, the practical value of the Chinese language will generally increase in business. The rapid growth of trade and investment between China and Malaysia over the past decade and the establishment of the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area illustrate the continuous development of economic relations between the two countries. And given these developments, the region's emphasis on learning Chinese has significantly increased. Secondly, considering that some powerful Chinese companies have established branches in Malaysia, learning Chinese language is beneficial for obtaining good business opportunities. Moreover, it is obvious that learning Mandarin has great advantages in facilitating employment and improving employment prospects. Being

able to speak Chinese can provide graduates with an additional guarantee when searching for jobs.

In addition, from a cultural perspective, Chinese culture is vast and profound, with thousands of years of historical civilization. The inheritance of traditional Chinese culture has existed for thousands of years for its reasons and value. In order to unravel the mystery of traditional culture, this has attracted students from Malaysia and even the world to explore. What's more, with the development and popularity of the Internet and mobile technology, Chinese literature, drama, movies and even short videos enable people all over the world to subscribe or watch them without leaving their homes. Learning Mandarin can help people not only gradually get rid of subtitles while watching, but also understand the "Chinese style" humor contained in videos.

Thirdly, from a societal perspective, Malaysia is a country with multiple races, languages, and religions. As a multilingual country, Malaysia has the prerequisite for language, and learning Mandarin can build a bridge of friendship between different races, facilitating communication between different ethnic groups in the same country. Friends will have similar goals even if they are of different races, and learning Chinese language well is conducive to interacting with people with similar hobbies and goals. Furthermore, the world is gradually evolving into a "global village" where the distance between people and countries is constantly narrowing. Learning Mandarin well also has a positive impact on friendly diplomacy between countries, thus achieving win-win outcomes. Last but not least, it is worth mentioning that technological factors are easily overlooked when students learn Chinese as a second language. Learning Mandarin has a auxiliary effect on learning from China's high-tech products.

Conclusion

As the world situation moves towards democracy and openness, the practical value of Chinese language will become increasingly prominent in business and economy. Malaysia accepts and recognizes the importance of Chinese education, which is in line with the national conditions of a pluralistic society, is conducive to national unity, and helps both countries develop in a diversified direction in terms of culture and ethnic education (Yan, 2022). This study explores the popularity of Mandarin in Malaysia and the motivations of non-native Chinese-speaking learners in Malaysian universities to learn Mandarin from the perspective of a Chinese as a second language education researcher. The results show that learning Chinese as a second language in Malaysia is an emerging and popular major. Language researchers in both countries should fully understand that Chinese language education is an important value of Malaysia's national resources, and have better strive to integrate into the "Belt and Road" construction, adapt to the new situation of the international spread of Chinese language, and take advantage of this opportunity to promote mutual understanding and social harmony (Wu & Teng, 2019). Future researchers can attempt to conduct relevant research within a wider range of learning Chinese as a second language and a longer experimental period, in order to deepen this research and make greater contributions to future research.

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