A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DESIRE FOR AND ANXIETY IN LEARNING CHINESE AMONG GRADES 3-5 STUDENTS AT AN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IN BANGKOK, THAILAND

Shuaiqi He
Chayada Thanavisuth
Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand

This study was conducted to determine whether there were significant differences in desire for and anxiety in learning Chinese among students in Grades 3-5 at an international school in Bangkok, Thailand. A sample of 74 students enrolled in the target international school participated in this study. After performing descriptive statistics on the collected data, it was determined that the overall level of desire to learn Chinese was slightly high for Grade 3 students, high for Grade 4 students, and slightly high for Grade 5 students at the target school. The overall level of anxiety in Chinese classes was interpreted as slightly high for Grade 3 students, slightly low for Grade 4 students, and slightly high for Grade 5 students at the target school. Through quantitative comparative analysis, a statistically significant difference in desire for learning Chinese was found between Grade 4 and Grade 5 students at the target international school. Additionally, there was a statistically significant difference in anxiety in learning Chinese between Grade 4 and Grade 5 students at the international school in Bangkok. Based on the research findings, recommendations are provided for students, teachers, school administrators, and future researchers.

Keywords: learning Chinese; desire for learning; anxiety in learning; Chinese language education; international school
Introduction

The global promotion of the Chinese language has increased in response to demand from around the world (Sun, 2020). With the development of global internationalization, the demand for bilingual or multilingual talent has surged.

The Chinese language has gradually been included in textbooks or language courses as a foreign or second language in many countries and regions.

Thailand, with a large Chinese population and a well-developed Chinese language program, is one such country (Draper & Selway, 2019). To meet the growing demand for Chinese-speaking personnel, Thailand and China have developed multifaceted cooperation and exchanges, with the Thai side committed to promoting Chinese language education for national development and construction.

Motivation is important for the development and process of human activity and understanding why people want to do something. Although there are many definitions of motivation, in a study addressing the field of second language learning, Gardner (2010) proposed that motivation consists of three dimensions: motivational intensity, desire to learn the language, and attitude toward learning the language. The desire to learn is often associated with the concept of "motivation", and researchers choose the desire to learn a language as the main measurement factor. It refers to the strong feeling of wanting to acquire something or make something happen, which can be summarized as the strong desire to learn Chinese and become proficient in using it.

According to Jorge Cela (2009), the secret to learning is the desire to learn. Teaching stimulates students' interest and curiosity, enabling them to concentrate on learning, better perceive thinking and imagination, acquire stronger knowledge and skills, and view learning as an enjoyable process rather than a burden. This leads to increased motivation to learn the language.

Research objectives

To determine the levels of desire in learning Chinese among Grades 3-5 students at an international school in Bangkok, Thailand.

To determine the levels of anxiety in learning Chinese among Grades 3-5 students at an international school in Bangkok, Thailand.

To determine whether there is a significant difference in desire for learning Chinese among Grades 3-5 students at an international school in Bangkok, Thailand.

To determine whether there is a significant difference in anxiety in learning Chinese among Grades 3-5 students at an international school in Bangkok, Thailand.

Conceptual framework

The aims of the study were to determine whether there was a significant difference between the desire and anxiety of students learning Chinese in Grades 3-5 at an international school in Bangkok, Thailand. Fig. 1 depicts the conceptual framework of this study.
Gardner's socio-educational model of second language acquisition

The Socio-educational model of second language acquisition has been one of the most influential theories and has been adopted by many researchers in their research (Zheng & Lynch, 2021; Pradhan & Thanavisuth, 2022; Pumhiran & Thanavisuth, 2022). The socio-educational model, which focuses on language learning motivation, has played an important role in advancing research in the field of second language acquisition (SLA), and it is also the primary theory of this study. The model proposes that language learners' attitudes in the learning process are shaped and manipulated by cultural beliefs about the community associated with the target language (Kelly, 2014).

This model has been revised for many years, but the main concept of the model has not changed (Gardner, 2010). Among other things, cultural perceptions influence the development of individual differences in learners, as the second language cultural environment differs from that of their own native language, leading to learners' contextual anxiety.

Fig. 2 shows Gardner's socio-educational model of second language acquisition (Gardner, 2010).
According to Gardner (2010), he developed a series to assess these aspects, which was the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), a collection of 11 scales with proven reliability and validity, showing the connection between the constructs and the measures. Figure 2 shows the SEM with the indicators, the student’s motivation is comprised of three subscales, which are motivational intensity, desire to learn English, and attitudes toward learning English.

Language anxiety is composed of two subscales, which are language class anxiety and language use anxiety. Meanwhile, the researcher mainly used the desire to learn the language and language classroom anxiety as the main scales of this study to measure the students' rating of learning Chinese and language classroom anxiety.

It should be noted here that in order to make the research results clearer and more direct, the researcher selected subscales of the 3 subscales to measure motivation and selected items of the 2 subscales to measure language anxiety, which are Desire to learn the language, and Language use anxiety. For the convenience of research, the researchers changed the original scale in AMTB from English to Chinese as well.

**Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope’s Theory of Foreign Language Anxiety**

Horwitz et al. (2001) in their research define foreign language anxiety as “a distinct complex construct of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of language learning process”.

It is intuitive that anxiety would inhibit the learning and/or production of a second language (Horwitz, 2001).
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People associated foreign language anxiety with performance anxiety, fearing doing badly or failing in the eyes of others. Therefore, they tend to employ avoidance strategies such as keeping quiet and becoming less involved in group activities.

Methodology/Procedure

In this section, details on the study’s population, sample, and research instruments are provided.

Population and sample

All current students in Grades 3-5 at the international school were the study’s target population. There are 77 students in total. The precise numbers are 27 students in grade 3, 25 students in grade 4, and 25 students in grade 5 which are currently enrolled in Chinese classes. However, 1 student from Grade 3, and 2 students from Grade 4 were absent on the day of data collecting. So that the sample size has changed from Grade 3 – 27 to 26 students, Grade 4 – 25 to 23 students, which is a total of 74 students.

Research Instrument

To conduct a survey on the student's desire to learn Chinese and anxiety in Chinese class, the Desire and Anxiety for Learning Chinese Questionnaire (DALCQ) was adapted from the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) developed by Gardner in 2004. DALCQ was used to collect data from sample students in Grade 3-5 at target school. This questionnaire contains 20 items in total, there are 10 items related to desire to learn Chinese, and the other 10 items relate to anxiety in Chinese class.

The questionnaire contains 10 items with positively worded items (1, 3, 6, 7, 9, 12, 13, 15, 18, 20) and 10 items with negatively worded items (2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 14, 16, 17, 19) to determine students’ level of desire and anxiety in learning Chinese. This Desire and Anxiety of Learning Chinese Questionnaire (DALCQ) is a 6-point Likert scale with six different facial expressions to differentiate the ratings for the students, and it can facilitate them to understand different ratings, rating from (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = moderately disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = slightly agree, 5 = moderately agree, 6 = strongly agree).

Table 1 - Reliability date from AMTB, desire and anxiety of learning Chinese questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Subscales per subscale</th>
<th>Cronbach’s alpha value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gardner (2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Romania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to learn the language</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language class anxiety</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Research findings

In this chapter, the researcher reports the findings obtained from Grade 3-5 students’ desire and their language anxiety in Chinese classes at an international school in Bangkok, Thailand.

Findings from research Objective 1

Research Objective 1 was to determine the levels of desire to learn Chinese among Grades 3-5 students at an international school in Bangkok, Thailand. Data was collected from 74 Grade 3-5 students by using Desire and Anxiety of Learning Chinese Questionnaire.

For Grade 3, the finding shows the level of students’ desire to learn Chinese had a mean score of $M = 4.27$ (SD = .97), which was interpreted as a slightly high level of desire to learn Chinese.

For Grade 4, the finding shows the level of students’ desire to learn Chinese had a mean score of $M = 4.71$ (SD = .94), which was interpreted as a high level of desire to learn Chinese.

For Grade 5, the finding shows the level of students’ desire to learn Chinese had a mean score of $M = 4.01$ (SD = .85), which was interpreted as a slightly high level of desire to learn Chinese.

Findings from research Objective 2

Research Objective 2 was to determine the levels of anxiety in learning Chinese Among Grades 3-5 students at an international school in Bangkok, Thailand.

Data was collected from 74 Grade 3-5 students by using Desire and Anxiety of Learning Chinese Questionnaire.

For Grade 3, the finding shows the level of students had Chinese class anxiety with a mean score of $M = 3.57$ (SD = .89), which was interpreted as a slightly high level of anxiety in Chinese class.

For Grade 4, the finding shows the level of students had Chinese class anxiety with a mean score of $M = 3.07$ (SD = 1.01 ), which was interpreted as a slightly low level of anxiety in Chinese class.

For Grade 5, the finding shows the level of students had Chinese class anxiety with a mean score of $M = 4.15$ (SD = 1.04), which was interpreted as a slightly high level of anxiety in Chinese class.

Findings from research Objective 3

Research objective 3 was to determine whether there was a significant difference in desire to learn Chinese among Grades 3-5 students at an international school in Bangkok, Thailand.

Data was analyzed by a one-way analysis of variance ANOVA to identify the significant difference in Grade 3-5 students.

In order to test whether there was a significant difference in desire to learn Chinese among the Grade 3-5 students, a one-way ANOVA test was conducted, which revealed that there was statistically significant difference, $F(2, 71) = 3.51$, $p = .035$. 
The results from Scheffe's post hoc multiple comparison tests revealed that, regarding participants' desire to learn Chinese, the desire to learn Chinese of students in grade 4 were significantly different from Grade 5 (p = .037).

In addition, the post hoc analysis failed to reveal a significant difference in desire to learn Chinese between Grade 3 and Grade 4 students (p = .246) and between Grade 3 and Grade 5 students (p = .622).

**Findings from research Objective 4**

Research Objective 4 was to determine whether there is a significant difference in anxiety in Chinese classes among Grades 3-5 students at an international school in Bangkok, Thailand. Data was analyzed by a one-way analysis of variance ANOVA to identify the significant difference in Grade 3-5 students.

There was a significant difference in Chinese class anxiety among the Grade 3-5 students, a one-way ANOVA test was conducted, which revealed that there was a statistically significant difference, F(2, 71) = 7.31, p = .001.

The results from Scheffe's post hoc multiple comparison tests revealed that, regarding participants' anxiety in Chinese classes, the anxiety in Chinese classes of students in grade 4 were significantly different from Grade 5 (p = .001).

In addition, the post hoc analysis failed to reveal a significant difference in anxiety in Chinese classes between Grade 3 and Grade 4 students (p = .203) and between Grade 3 and Grade 5 students (p = .120).

**Conclusions**

**Research Objective 1**

For Grade 3 students, Research Objective 1 indicated that they have a slightly high level of desire in learning Chinese at an international school in Bangkok, Thailand.

From this finding, students have a slightly high level of desire and enthusiasm to learn Chinese. For Grade 4 students, Research Objective 1 indicated that they have a high level of desire in learning Chinese at an international school in Bangkok, Thailand. From this finding, students have a high level of desire and enthusiasm to learn Chinese.

For Grade 5 students, Research Objective 1 indicated that they have a slightly high level of desire in learning Chinese at an international school in Bangkok, Thailand. From this finding, students have a slightly high level of desire and enthusiasm to learn Chinese.

**Research Objective 2**

For Grade 3 students, Research Objective 2 indicated that they have a slightly high level of anxiety in Chinese classes in learning Chinese at an international school in Bangkok, Thailand. From this finding, the main cause of their anxiety was that they were afraid to speak Chinese in front of any other students or teachers, so they would not take the initiative to answer questions.

For Grade 4 students, Research Objective 2 indicated that they have a slightly low level of anxiety in Chinese classes in learning Chinese at an international school in Bangkok, Thailand.
From this finding, the students do not feel as anxious in the classroom as Grade 3 do; on the contrary, according to the results of the study and the researcher's observations, they speak positively and are confident in the classroom.

To Grade 5 students, Research Objective 2 indicated that they have a slightly high level of anxiety in Chinese classes in learning Chinese at an international school in Bangkok, Thailand.

**Research Objective 3**

The findings of research objective 3 is to determine whether there is a significant difference in the desire to learning Chinese among Grades 3-5 students at an international school in Bangkok, Thailand. According to findings, there was statistically difference in the desire to learn Chinese between Grade 4 and Grade 5 students at an international school in Bangkok, Thailand.

**Research Objective 4**

The findings of research objective 4 is to determine whether there is a significant difference in anxiety in learning Chinese among Grades 3-5 students at an international school in Bangkok, Thailand.

According to findings, there was statistically difference in anxiety in learning Chinese between Grade 4 and Grade 5 students at an international school in Bangkok, Thailand.

**Recommendations**

The researcher provides some recommendations to students, teachers, school administrators, and the future researchers.

According to the findings of this research, students need to improve their desire to learn Chinese at a high level. As shown by findings, compared with Grade 4 and Grade 5 students, Grade 3 students have the highest mean scores of desire to learn Chinese and Chinese classroom anxiety, which means they have a higher learning desire and higher classroom anxiety.

Students in Grade 4 and Grade 5 have lower levels of learning desire and anxiety. Therefore, Grade 3 students can share their anxiety with the teacher, and the teacher can make solutions based on this. Students in Grade 4 and Grade 5 need to face their own needs for learning Chinese and set learning goals, which will help increase their desire to learn Chinese.

Teachers should be aware of students ‘level of desire to learn Chinese and Chinese class anxiety. Teachers should delve deeper into the level and causes of anxiety among Grade 3 students, as well as the reasons why Grade 4 and Grade 5 students do not have a high desire to learn Chinese and make solutions based on this, teachers should not make students feel that learning a language is just a task, but rather let them discover the joy of learning a language and become addicted to it.

The nature of the learning situation will influence a student’s motivation. An interesting and skilled teacher with a good command of the language, an exciting curriculum, carefully constructed lesson plans, and meaningful evaluation procedures will promote higher levels of motivation than a teacher lacking in some of these attributes (Lovato & Junior, 2011).
Accurate teaching respects individual differences more and emphasizes individualized teaching, which is a guarantee for teachers and students to have a sense of achievement and happiness.

The school administrator should pay more attention to students' desire and anxiety for learning, regularly ask students for feedback on classroom and teacher teaching issues, and continuously modify and improve teachers' teaching plan requirements based on this, as well as update the school's teaching materials. Students' attitudes towards the language situation involve attitudes towards the school environment, reactions to the textbooks, and evaluation of the language teacher and the language course (Gardner, 2006).

And we can provide more professional teacher training programs to continuously improve and optimize teachers' teaching. Study the growth patterns of students, achieve profound development of professional literacy, conduct thorough research on educational objects, and operate teaching management meticulously.

Future researchers could expand the scope of the study to four or five grades, believing that more definitive and significant differences could be obtained, and that the entire scope could be chosen (e.g., not just the desire to learn the language, but the entire motivation).

This study was designed to determine whether there is a significant difference in desire and anxiety in learning Chinese among Grades 3-5 students at target school in Bangkok, Thailand. So, it cannot be generalized to all students. These research findings can assist future researchers attempting to conduct research in these fields.

References:


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