

A Study on Student Motivation in Learning Chinese as a Foreign Language in Sri Lanka and Effective Teaching Strategies

Kaushalya Chathurani Hettiarachchi, H. K.¹

INTRODUCTION

The history of Chinese Language Teaching in Sri Lanka can be traced back to 1600 years ago, and the arrival of Chinese monk Fa Xian, has opened the doors for Chinese Language teaching in Sri Lanka. In the present context Chinese language has become an important tool for communication and trade relationship between Sri Lanka and China. While acknowledging the positive trends in teaching of Chinese language in Sri Lanka, research related to the learners of the language is pivotal. Among them, student motivation can be considered as an important factor that affects the process of foreign language acquisition. Thus, a thorough investigation of learner motivation is expected to have far-reaching significance.

PURPOSE

Learner motivation is one of the important emotional factors which has a great influence on the language learning process. Motivation itself is a complex dynamic psychological process which requires significant study. The main purpose of this study is to find salient features of learner motivation and reasons for selecting Chinese as a Foreign Language to lay a solid foundation for teaching of Chinese in Sri Lanka. The ultimate objective of research on learning motivation is in order to help the students to learn more effectively, to understand the objective of their learning Chinese and to consider these aspects to strengthen their internal learning factors.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on the theoretical support of studying motivation from subjects such as education, psychology, and second language acquisition. With reference to the study on the basis of relevant scholars of Chinese and English language teaching worldwide, the research aims at further study and analysis of the language learning motivation of Sri Lankans through questionnaires, interviews and classroom observation.

RESULTS

According to the findings of the questionnaire, other research methods and the analysis, the studying motivations of most of the Sri Lankan learners are quite clear. Their motivation differs from three different dimensions, which can be respectively mentioned as gender, age and the standard of Chinese language. When considering the intensity of learning motivation, it can be found that the overall motivation level is not high, and there are vast differences among the learners. Most of the learners have very low self efficacy and some of the Sri Lankan students are optimistic about their ability to learn Chinese. In the process of teaching Chinese to speakers of other languages (TCSOL), a teacher should concretely analyze specific issues according to different situations, and also stimulate student motivation regarding a language in order to achieve effective results.

Table 1. Student motivation

Student motivation to learn Chinese	
To secure employment	92%
Interest in Chinese language	60%
Interest in Chinese culture	6%
to communicate with Chinese friends	8%
to travel China	10%
Other	23%

According to the study conducted on the first year students in Chinese at the Department of Modern Languages of University of Kelaniya the learning motivation of students is given above in Table 1. The students could select more than one option. The data depicted in the table indicate that the learning motivation of Sri Lankan students is very consistent and it is mainly to find employment after studying Chinese at the university.

Recently the number of employment opportunities related to Chinese language has rapidly risen. Sri Lanka has become a much sought after tourist destination to the Chinese traveller. Consequently, most of the students who learn Chinese are able to secure substantial employment opportunities. According to the requirements of industry related to Chinese language skills, communicative ability is far more important than writing ability in Chinese.

CONCLUSION

The study brought to light that the learning motivation of every student is very consistent. It was also observed that the motivation of male students was higher than females. While the males preferred a variety of job opportunities, female students expressed more interest in the teaching profession in order to become a teacher in Chinese. Since there is a dearth of teachers in Chinese language in Sri Lanka it is imperative to introduce more practical content in the study programmes offered at the university to train students in Teaching of Chinese as a Foreign Language in Sri Lanka.

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KEYWORDS

motivation, Chinese learners in Sri Lanka, learning strategy

¹Chinese Studies, Department of Modern Languages, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. hakchettiarachchi@gmail.com