

**THE RELATIONSHIP OF MOTIVATION FOR LEARNING CHINESE AND
PERCEPTION OF PARENTAL ENCOURAGEMENT FOR LEARNING
CHINESE WITH CHINESE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF
GRADE 3, GRADE 4, AND GRADE 5 STUDENTS AT
AIN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IN THAILAND**

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to determine the relationships between Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5 students' level of motivation for learning Chinese, perception of parental encouragement for learning Chinese with their Chinese academic achievement at an international school in Thailand. An adapted version of attitude/motivation test battery was used to collect data from 55 Grade 3 students, 52 Grade 4 students, and 48 Grade 5 students during the second semester of academic year 2016 – 2017. Descriptive statistics – means, standard deviations, and multiple correlation coefficients were used to analyze the data. The findings suggested that Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5 students at this school had high levels of motivation for learning Chinese and high levels of perception of parental encouragement for learning Chinese. Motivation for learning Chinese was found to correlate significantly with students' Chinese academic achievement, while parental encouragement for learning Chinese did not significantly correlate with students' Chinese academic achievement.

Keywords: Motivation, Perception of Parental Encouragement, Chinese Academic Achievement, Foreign/Second Language Acquisition, Socio-Educational Model, Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB)

Introduction

China's successful economic development in recent years has led to a huge increase in the numbers of non-Chinese heritage people learning Chinese around the world, a phenomenon known as global Mandarin fever (Gao, 2011). The trend of Mandarin fever is also evident in Thailand, as Mandarin is now considered the most popular foreign language among Thai students (The Nation, 2012).

A survey at 700 schools throughout Thailand carried out by the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) showed that majority of the Thai students' preference for foreign language are moving away from European languages to Asian languages, with Chinese Mandarin as their first choice (The Korea Times, 2012). As Chinese is becoming a more popular foreign language in Thailand, it is important to study the factors that influence Chinese language teaching and learning in the Thai context.

This study explored the relationship between motivation, which is a construct that has been consistently found to be a crucial factor in language learning, and perception of parental encouragement for learning the language, an important social factor in the language learning process, with students' language academic achievement at an international school in Thailand.

Research Objectives

The following are the specific research objectives addressed by this study:

1. To determine the levels of motivation for learning Chinese of Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5 students at an international school in Thailand.

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- 1.1 To determine the levels of attitudes toward learning Chinese of Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5 students at an international school in Thailand.
- 1.2 To determine the levels of desire to learn Chinese of Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5 students at an international school in Thailand.
- 1.3 To determine the levels of motivational intensity to learn Chinese of Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5 students at an international school in Thailand.
2. To determine the levels of perception of parental encouragement for learning Chinese of Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5 students at an international school in Thailand.
3. To determine if there are significant relationships between Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5 students' motivation for learning Chinese and perceptions of parental encouragement for learning Chinese with their Chinese academic achievement at an international school in Thailand.

Literature Review

Motivation

The term *motivation* is derived from the Latin word *movere*, which means to move. In the psychology field, it is defined as an internal state or condition that energizes and directs behavior. In the educational setting, motivation can be defined as whatever gets students moving, points them toward a direction, and keeps them going (Ormrod, 2008). It is an essential factor for student achievement and success. It determines whether a student will put effort and energy into a task, as well as the student's attitude toward a task (Ormrod, 2008). It can also enhance a student's cognitive processing, leading to a more complete understanding of materials taught in class and a deeper use of processing strategies (Ormrod, 2008; Wolters, Yu, & Pintrich, 1996). Without sufficient motivation, even the most talented and gifted students cannot achieve a quality curriculum. Nor can good instruction alone ensure student achievement (Dörnyei, 1998). The research has shown convincing, consistent and positive evidence that motivation is a critical component of learning, and increased student motivation can lead to better academic achievement (e.g., Broussard & Garrison, 2004; Ross, 2008). As with other academic subjects such as math and science, motivation has been found to be as important for second/foreign language (L2) learning (Dörnyei, 1998; Gardner, 1985b; Skehan, 1991).

Motivation has been widely recognized by researchers and language teachers as one of the major factors that determines the rate and success of second/foreign language (L2) learning. It is what that provides the initial impetus for a learner to initiate L2 learning, and the driving force that supports the learner through the difficult and tedious L2 learning process. Motivation is not only found to be crucial for language achievement, moreover, studies have shown that high level of motivation can compensate for deficiencies in one's language aptitude and language learning conditions (Dörnyei, 1998).

Perception of Parental Encouragement

Another crucial factor for L2 learning, especially for young learners in a monolingual country like Thailand, is parental encouragement (Gardner, 1985a). Parental encouragement in this context refers to the amount of support parents give to their children in their L2 study (Gardner, 1985a). It can either take place actively or passively. Parents can be there to actively encourage, support and monitor the language learning processes of their children, or they can be passively modeling and communicating the attitudes related to the learning of the L2 and the L2 community. A study has suggested that parental support mediates L2 proficiency through its influence on students' motivation toward learning the L2 (Gardner, Masgoret, & Trembley, 1999).

The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB)

The attitude/motivation test battery (AMTB) is a research instrument that was developed to measure the major affective variables involved in the socio-educational model in second language acquisition. It has been applied widely in the investigations of (a) the correlations of attitudinal and motivation variables with language achievement, (b) the relation of attitude and motivation to classroom language behavior, (c) the effects of language learning programs on attitude and motivation of language learners. It is a reliable and valid instrument with various attitudinal and motivational variables for a second language acquisition research (Gardner, 1985a).

Conceptual Framework

This study was a correlational study that aimed to examine the relationship between Chinese learning motivation, perception of parental encouragement for learning Chinese and Chinese academic achievement among Grade 3, Grade 4 and Grade 5 students at an international school in Thailand.

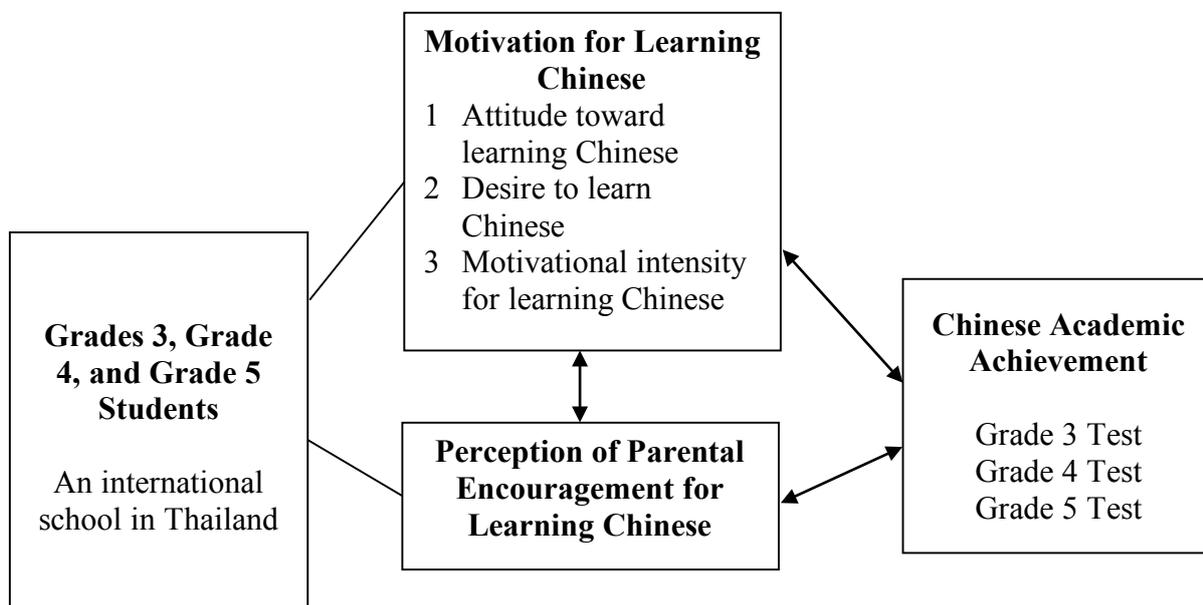


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study.

Method

This study was a quantitative correlational study. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5 students' levels of motivation for learning Chinese and perceptions of parental encouragement for learning Chinese, and their Chinese language achievement at an international school in Thailand. One questionnaire was used to measure students' levels of motivation for learning Chinese, perception of parental encouragement for learning Chinese and the orientations of students' motivation to learn Chinese. Students' Chinese academic achievements were based on the results from the Chinese end-year assessment they take at the end of the academic year. Descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviation were used to find the levels of the motivation and perception of parental encouragement for learning Chinese while multiple correlation coefficients were used to find the relationship between the variables.

Population and Sample

The population of this study was a total of 61 Grade 3 students, 66 Grade 4 students, and 48 Grade 5 students at an international school in Thailand during academic year of 2016-2017. The sample of the study was 55 Grade 3 students, 52 Grade 4 students, and 48 Grade 5 students. Due to unavailability (absence), one of the third grader did not participate in the study and five third graders' data were excluded due to incompleteness. Two of the fourth graders did not participate in the study due to unavailability (absence) and 13 fourth graders' data were excluded from analysis due to incompleteness.

Research Instrument

The research instrument of the study was the motivation and parental encouragement for learning Chinese questionnaire. It was an adapted version of the international attitude/motivation test battery (AMTB) for English as a foreign language (Gardner, 2004). It contained 39 items that assessed the students' level of motivation for learning Chinese and the students' level of perception of parental encouragement for learning Chinese. It utilized a 6 – point Likert scale to indicate students' level of agreement to the statements provided.

The interpretation key for motivation for learning Chinese scores, attitudes toward learning Chinese, desire to learn Chinese, motivational intensity, and parental encouragement subscales scores are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Score Interpretation for Motivation for Learning Chinese, Attitudes Toward Learning Chinese, Desire to Learn Chinese, Motivational Intensity, and Parental Encouragement Subscales

Interpretation Scales	Very low	Moderately low	Slightly low	Slightly high	Moderately high	Very high
Motivation for learning Chinese	30.00 – 60.00	60.01 – 90.00	90.01 – 120.00	120.01 – 150.00	150.01 – 180.00	180.01 – 210.00
Attitudes toward learning Chinese	10.00 – 20.00	20.01 – 30.00	30.01 – 40.00	40.01 – 50.00	50.01 – 60.00	60.01 – 70.00
Desire to learn Chinese	10.00 – 20.00	20.01 – 30.00	30.01 – 40.00	40.01 – 50.00	50.01 – 60.00	60.01 – 70.00
Motivational intensity	10.00 – 20.00	20.01 – 30.00	30.01 – 40.00	40.01 – 50.00	50.01 – 60.00	60.01 – 70.00
Parental encouragement	8.00 – 16.00	16.01 – 24.00	24.01 – 32.00	32.01 – 40.00	40.01 – 48.00	48.01 – 56.00
Subscale item mean score	1.00 – 2.00	2.01 – 3.00	3.01 – 4.00	4.01 – 5.00	5.01 – 6.00	6.01 – 7.00

Validity and Reliability

The construct validity of AMTB has been established through demonstration of convergent and discriminant validity of the scales in Gardner's research (1985b). Other research has also documented the predictive validity and constructs validity of the various scales in the AMTB (Clement, Gardner, & Smythe, 1977; Gardner, 1985a; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993).

The internal consistency reliability of the international AMTB was obtained through Gardner's study (1985b, 2010) of English learners across 8 countries around the world. Other previous researches in the field have also utilized AMTB in their studies (Murtagh, 2003). The Cronbach's Alpha values obtained from this study were considered to be substantial: attitudes toward learning Chinese (.94), desire to learn Chinese (.88), motivational intensity for learning Chinese (.77), perception of parental encouragement for learning Chinese (.72).

Chinese Academic Achievement

Students' Chinese end-year assessment test scores in the second semester of academic year 2016-2017 were used for the Chinese academic achievement variable in this study. The test papers were prepared by the homeroom Chinese teachers of each grade level.

The tests included a variety of question types: multiple choice questions, cloze test, and short answer questions that assessed students' ability to write and read Chinese characters, hanyu pinyin skills, sentence composition skills, as well as sentence and paragraph reading comprehension skills. There were three sets of tests, one for each grade level. The total score of each test was 100 points.

Collection of Data

The questionnaires of the study were conducted during May and June of 2017, while the end-year assessment scores were collected in June 2017, the end of the school year. The return rate of the questionnaires for each grade levels were as follows: 90% for the third graders, 78% for the fourth graders, and 100% for the fifth graders.

Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed according to the research objectives by using a statistical software package. For Objectives 1, 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, and 2, descriptive statistics involving means and standard deviations were used to determine students' level of motivation for learning Chinese, attitudes toward

learning Chinese, level of desire to learn Chinese, and level of motivational intensity to learn Chinese, respectively.

For Objective 3, multiple correlation coefficients was used to examine the relationship between students' motivation for learning Chinese, perception of parental encouragement for learning Chinese with their Chinese language achievement.

Findings

The findings of the study are presented accordingly to the research objectives.

Table 2, 3, and 4 shows Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5 students' level of motivation for learning Chinese and motivation subscale variables: attitude toward learning Chinese, desire to learn Chinese, and motivational intensity for learning Chinese, respectively (Objective 1).

Table 2: Grade 3 Students' Mean Score and Standard Deviation for the Motivation Variable and Subscales

Motivation subscales	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Interpretation
Attitude toward learning Chinese	52.13	15.98	Moderately high
Desire to learn Chinese	49.89	13.34	Slightly high
Motivational intensity to learn Chinese	48.40	10.03	Slightly high
Motivation for learning Chinese	149.42	37.21	Slightly high

Note. *N* = 55.

Table 2 shows that Grade 3 students' total mean score of motivation for learning Chinese was 149.42, which interpreted as slightly high. Their mean score for the subscale attitude for learning Chinese, 52.13, was interpreted as moderately high. And lastly, their mean scores for the subscales desire to learn Chinese and motivational intensity to learn Chinese were 49.89 and 48.40, respectively. Both of the mean scores of these subscales were interpreted as slightly high.

Table 3: Grade 4 Students' Mean Score and Standard Deviation for the Motivation Variable and Subscales

Motivation subscales	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Interpretation
Attitude toward learning Chinese	53.46	13.02	Moderately high
Desire to learn Chinese	48.44	10.34	Slightly high
Motivational intensity to learn Chinese	49.27	7.79	Slightly high
Motivation for learning Chinese	151.17	27.45	Moderately high

Note. *N* = 52.

Table 3 shows that Grade 4 students' total mean score of motivation for learning Chinese was 151.17, which was interpreted as moderately high. Grade 4 students' attitude toward learning Chinese mean score was 53.46, being interpreted as moderately high. Their mean score for desire to learn Chinese and motivational intensity to learn Chinese subscales was 48.44 and 49.27, respectively, which were both interpreted as slightly high.

Table 4: Grade 5 Students' Mean Score and Standard Deviation for the Motivation Variable and Subscales

Motivation subscales	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Interpretation
Attitude toward learning Chinese	46.29	15.57	Slightly high
Desire to learn Chinese	43.75	15.31	Slightly high
Motivational intensity to learn Chinese	46.44	12.61	Slightly high
Motivation for learning Chinese	136.48	41.70	Slightly high

Note. *N* = 48.

Table 4 shows that Grade 5 students' total mean score of motivation for learning Chinese was 136.48, which was interpreted as slightly high. Their mean scores for attitude toward learning Chinese, desire to learn Chinese, and motivational intensity to learn Chinese were 46.29, 43.75, and 46.44 respectively, which were all interpreted as slightly high.

Table 5 shows Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5 students' level of perception of parental encouragement for learning Chinese (Objective 2).

Table 5: Means and Standard Deviations for Grade 3, Grade 4, Grade 5 Students' Level of Perception of Parental Encouragement for Learning Chinese Variable.

Grade level	N	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Interpretation
Grade 3	55	44.95	7.74	Moderately high
Grade 4	52	45.31	7.67	Moderately high
Grade 5	48	45.83	7.58	Moderately high

As seen in Table 5, the mean scores of Grade 3, Grade 4, Grade 5 students' level of parental encouragement for learning Chinese was 44.95, 45.31, and 45.83 respectively. They were all interpreted as moderately high. Table 6, 7 and 8 shows the relationship between motivation, perception for parental encouragement and Chinese academic achievement of Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5 students, respectively (Objective 3). Table 6 presents the bivariate correlations among the three variables, Grade 3 students' level of motivation for learning Chinese, perception of parental encouragement for learning Chinese and their Chinese academic achievement.

Table 6: Bivariate Correlations Among Grade 3 Students' Level of Motivation for Learning Chinese, Perception of Parental Encouragement for Learning Chinese and Chinese Academic Achievement Variables

Variables	1	2	3
1. Motivation for learning Chinese	-		
2. Perception of parental encouragement for learning Chinese	.46*	-	
3. Chinese academic achievement	.47*	.17	-

Note. An * means correlation is significant at .05 level (2-tailed). *N* = 55.

An examination of the bivariate correlations among the three variables, Grade 3 students' level of motivation for learning Chinese, perception of parental encouragement for learning Chinese and their Chinese academic achievement, shows that Grade 3 students' level of motivation for learning Chinese correlated significantly with their perception of parental encouragement for learning Chinese ($r = .46$) and Chinese academic achievement ($r = .47$) at a significance level of .05. The coefficient of determination (R^2) of .22 indicated that 22% of the variance in Grade 3 students' Chinese academic achievement could be accounted for by the motivation for learning Chinese variable. These relationships are considered to be moderate and positive. However, Grade 3 students' perception of parental encouragement for learning Chinese did not have a significant relationship with their Chinese academic achievement. Since one of the independent variables did not correlate significantly with the dependent variable, further regression analysis was not needed. The results of bivariate correlation among Grade 4 students' motivation for learning Chinese, perception of parental encouragement for learning Chinese and their Chinese academic achievement variables are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Bivariate Correlations Among Grade 4 Students' Level of Motivation for Learning Chinese, Perception of Parental Encouragement for Learning Chinese and Chinese Academic Achievement Variables

Variables	1	2	3
1. Motivation for learning Chinese	-		
2. Perception of Parental Encouragement for Learning Chinese	-.11	-	
3. Chinese Academic Achievement	.17	-.06	-

Note. *N* = 52.

The results showed that no statistically significant relationship existed among the variables. Table 8 presents the bivariate correlations between grade 5 students' level of motivation for learning Chinese and perception of parental encouragement for learning Chinese with their Chinese academic achievement.

Table 8: Bivariate Correlations Among Grade 5 Students' Level of Motivation for Learning Chinese, Perception of Parental Encouragement for Learning Chinese and Chinese Academic Achievement Variables

Variables	1	2	3
1. Motivation for learning Chinese	-		
2. Perception of parental encouragement for learning Chinese	.22	-	
3. Chinese academic achievement	.43*	-.15	-

Note. An * means correlation is significant at .05 level (2-tailed). $N = 48$.

The bivariate correlation results of Grade 5 students' data revealed that there was a positive, moderate, significant relationship between Grade 5 students' motivation for learning Chinese and their Chinese academic achievement ($r = .43$) at the significance level of .05. The coefficient of determination (R^2) of .18 indicated that 18% of the variance in Grade 5 students' Chinese academic achievement could be accounted for by the motivation for learning Chinese variable. There was no any statistically significant relationship between the other variables. Since one of the independent variables did not correlate significantly with the dependent variable, further regression analysis was not needed.

Discussion

Motivation and Chinese Academic Achievement

The findings of this study suggested that there was a significant positive relationship between Grade 3 and Grade 5 students' motivation for learning Chinese with their Chinese academic achievement at an international school in Thailand. This finding was in line with many previous studies that have shown the importance of motivation in learning Chinese language (Hou & Lynch, 2016; Li & Lynch, 2016; Lin & Lynch, 2016). In fact, motivation is generally found to be a crucial factor in L2 learning (Cortes, 2002; Garcia, 1996; Lysynchuk, 1992; Marangelli, 2002). Motivation has been recognized to be one of the major factors that determine the success of L2 learning. Motivated language learners are more willing to put more effort into learning the language and they exhibit determination and consistently work hard to complete assignments and seek out opportunities to learn more. They have a strong desire to learn the language and will try their best to achieve success (Gardner, 2010). These motivating characteristics are all reasons why highly motivated language learners tend to have better language achievement than the less motivated language learners.

Perception of Parental Encouragement and Chinese Academic Achievement

The finding of this study suggested that there was not any significant correlation between Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5 students' perception of parental encouragement for learning Chinese and their Chinese academic achievement. This result was surprising, as it contradicted with what most literature (Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2005; Topor et al., 2010) said about the relationship between parental encouragement and students' achievement. However, the results of this study were in line with Gardner and Smyth's study (1981) that investigated the relationship between students' perceptions of parental encouragement and grades in French. The result indicated no relationship between perceived parental encouragement and grades in French.

Similarly, in Gardner's study (2005) where he surveyed students learning English as foreign language in Europe, parental encouragement was not found to have significant correlation with their language grades. Gardner (1985b) stated that even though parents do play a very important role in the development of their child's attitude and belief toward the L2 language and they do affect their child's language learning, parental support is not directly related to L2 achievement but related to the willingness to persist at language study. The actual effect of parental encouragement on achievement was mediated through motivation.

Motivation and Perception of Parental Encouragement for Learning Chinese

Among the Grade 3 students, it was found that students' motivation for learning Chinese significantly correlated with their perception of parental encouragement for learning Chinese. However, for the Grade 4 and Grade 5 students, students' motivation for learning Chinese did not significantly correlate with their perception of parental encouragement for learning Chinese.

Grade 3 students' finding was in line with Hou and Lynch's research (2016) and Zhang and Lynch's study (in press) which also found a significant relationship between elementary students' motivation for learning Chinese with their perception of parental encouragement for learning Chinese. Hou and Lynch (2016) stated that parents play a very important role in their child's development. They are there to support and encourage their child whether it is through communicating with the child or actively involving in the learning process. Gardner (1985b) suggested that parents can play either an active or passive role in their children's language learning process. Parents can take an active role by supporting, encouraging and monitoring the curricular activities of their children. They can also take a passive role by communicating and modeling the attitudes related to the learning of second language and the second language group. Similarly, Colletta, Clement and Edwards (1983) also indicated the importance of parents' encouragement/involvement in their children's motivation for second language learning. Colletta et al. (1983) ran a causal modeling analysis and found that parental encouragement and support mediates second language proficiency through its influence on students' motivational characteristics. Gardner, Masgoret, and Tremblay (1999) stated that parents' attitudes and beliefs about acquisition of the second language are influential on their child's cultural attitudes, motivation to learn the language, as well their self-perceptions of language proficiency.

For the fourth and fifth graders, there was no significant relationship found between the students' motivation to learn Chinese and their perception of parental encouragement for learning Chinese. As most of the research in the field has shown the importance of parental encouragement for students' L2 learning motivation, this result was unexpected. However, this result aligned with Gardner's research (2005) on students learning English as foreign language in Spain. The result suggested that as students get older, the effects of parental encouragement on students' motivation decreased. Wesley's research (2009) indicated that as students enter early adolescence, they experience a shift to prioritizing peer interactions over interactions with adults, therefore at this stage, many other factors can also influence their motivation.

Recommendations

The findings of this study have pointed out the importance of students' motivation in their Chinese language learning. Therefore, it is highly recommended that the stakeholders are aware of the concepts of learning motivation and its relation to success in studying Chinese.

For the teachers, it is important that they incorporate motivational strategies into their lessons to stimulate students' initiative, creativity and enthusiasm in learning Chinese language.

For the parents, it is crucial that they are aware of the important role they play in their child's Chinese language education. They should provide on-going active encouragement and support throughout the learning process. It is recommended that parents not only show their expectations but also their interest and willingness to get involved in the learning process.

For the future researchers, larger sample size, longitudinal study design, and mixed research design are recommended for more insightful analysis of the factors that influence students' motivation for learning Chinese.

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