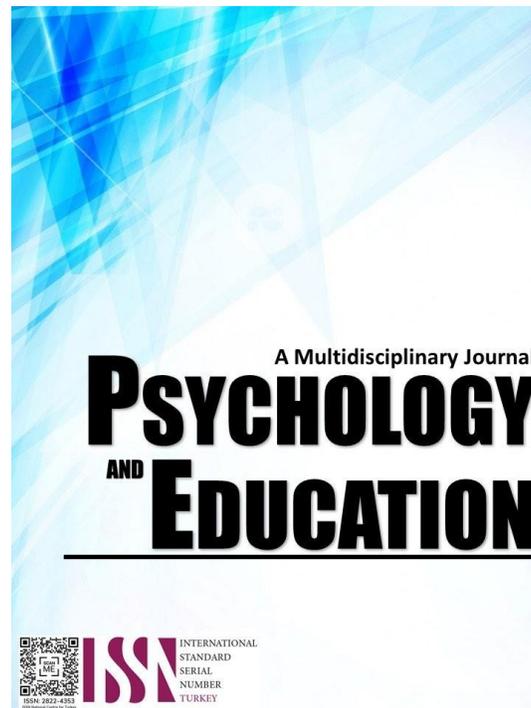


**LOVE ON STUDYING CHINESE LANGUAGE (热爱学习汉语):
STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SPECIAL PROGRAM IN
FOREIGN LANGUAGE CHINESE-MANDARIN AT
SAN JOSE COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL**



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Love on Studying Chinese Language (热爱学习汉语): Students' Perceptions of Special Program in Foreign Language Chinese-Mandarin at San Jose Community High School

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Abstract

Learning Chinese Mandarin is imperative, considering the number of speakers in China and its status as one of the powerhouses in the global market. However, researchers have shown difficulties in learning Chinese Mandarin because of its complexity. This study aims to analyze the students' perceptions towards learning Chinese Mandarin. Specifically, this research aims to determine the difficulty level of learning Chinese Mandarin in terms of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and viewing. In addition, this study also focuses on determining why students enroll in Special Program in Foreign Language (SPFL) Chinese-Mandarin and what challenges they face when learning the language. Based on the existing studies and reviewed literature, mixed-method explanatory sequential design and purposive sampling were employed to gather data among the 33 identified students under SPFL Chinese-Mandarin at San Jose Community High School. This research utilized two primary instruments, which are the Questionnaires and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). As for the research instruments, this study employs a weighted mean for the Questionnaires and thematic analysis for the FGD. The results show that students have varying degrees of perception, and they perceived writing as the most difficult to learn in Chinese-Mandarin. The results also show the different reasons SPFL students enrolled in SPFL Chinese-Mandarin and various motivations for learning the language. On these grounds, it is recommended that tailored learning materials should be made to address the difficulty of learning Chinese Mandarin among students. Further research is also suggested to delve deeper into the students' perceptions of learning Chinese Mandarin.

Keywords: *Chinese-Mandarin, Special Program in Foreign Language Chinese-Mandarin, students' perceptions, difficulty*

Introduction

Language serves as a foundational element of individual identity, shaping one's worldview and reflecting cultural heritage (Oluwaseun, 2023). Languages function as complex systems of symbols and sounds governed by rules that facilitate societal interaction. However, their significance extends beyond mere utility. Languages become mediums of expression, empowering individuals to share ideas, opinions, and emotions within their communities. Fluency allows individuals to connect with others, fostering social interaction, cultural preservation, and knowledge transmission. Existing in written, verbal, and signed forms, languages constantly evolve, giving rise to the concepts of bilingualism and multilingualism.

Bilingualism refers to an individual's ability to utilize two languages fluently in everyday life, typically their native language and a second, learned language. In today's increasingly interconnected and competitive global environment, the ability to speak multiple languages, particularly those with vast populations like Chinese, holds immense value. This need has spurred the development of multilingualism, which extends beyond bilingualism. Multilingualism encompasses the ability to converse in three or more languages. This proficiency can range from passive understanding to full fluency, equipping individuals to communicate and interact with a wider range of audience (Oluwaseun, 2023).

In today's progressive world and globalized society, the ability to communicate in multiple languages is becoming increasingly important. Multilingualism not only allows individuals to engage with people from different backgrounds and cultures, but it also opens up countless opportunities in various fields such as business, tourism, and diplomacy. It is also through this that demands for multilinguals arise. As such, one can see the imperative role of the fundamental aspect of language in communication within our community and its function in our community as it helps foster intercultural communication and competitiveness on the global stage. In the wake of this, individuals strive to expand their skill reserve by learning a third language and honing it as their asset. On this ground, learning a third language, such as Mandarin, has become particularly relevant, considering China's emergence and status as a superpower in the global market (Cordesman, 2023).

In one of the interviews with Pamintuan (Global Talk News Radio, 2022), he said, "Chinese is the future English language." Aside from the fact that it has the largest population in the world, China has set itself as a significant player on the global stage. To further solidify this, 1.5 billion people worldwide are English speakers, including native and non-native speakers. China is not far behind with 1.1 billion Chinese-Mandarin speakers, both native and non-native speakers (Statistica, 2023). In addition, the Chinese government is actively promoting the teaching of Chinese culture and language through initiatives such as the arrangement of the Confucius Institute. Regarding this, one can infer the possibility that the Chinese-Mandarin language can be on par with or even surpass English as the

most spoken language in the world.

In this regard, action takes place in the Philippines to compete globally and be on par with other countries regarding the global standard. This action includes implementing the Special Program in Foreign Language in the Philippines education system, piloted in selected secondary schools. The goal of such an initiative is to let students acquire skills and knowledge to have a competitive edge in job opportunities in the global market. The Special Program in Foreign Language offers students a range of languages widely used globally, including German, French, Spanish, Japanese, and Chinese.

Following the agreement of the Confucius Institute and the Angeles University Foundation in Pampanga in 2011, the Chinese Mandarin language was included in the Special Program in Foreign Language. According to the Department of Education, 310 Filipino educators were trained and introduced to Chinese-Mandarin Language until they were deemed qualified to teach it. Through this, roughly 11,000 students from 93 public schools have already learned Chinese Mandarin (Mateo, 2019). The findings above speak a lot about the Chinese influence on other countries and the Philippines. However, this also raises some questions about whether the teachers for the Chinese-Mandarin language program are enough to cater to this number of students.

House Minority Leader Marcelino Libanan (2023) posits that Filipinos already have an advantage in the global labor market as our people can speak English fluently. Learning the Chinese-Mandarin language as early as possible will only increase that advantage. On these grounds, implementing a Special Program in Foreign Language in Chinese-Mandarin in the Philippines education system could benefit the country considerably. With China being a significant player in the world economy, proficiency in Chinese Mandarin could give Filipino students a competitive edge in the global job market. It could also enhance cultural understanding and facilitate stronger diplomatic and economic ties between the Philippines and China. Additionally, as China continues to grow as a global economic powerhouse, the demand for Mandarin-speaking is likely to increase.

Implementing the Special Program in Foreign Language in Chinese is beneficial, but challenges may also arise. One must consider all the possible difficulties that the teachers and students must face in the wake of implementing the Special Program in Foreign Language. San Jose Community High School is one of the selected secondary schools that have been specified to have the Special Program in Foreign Language, specifically Chinese-Mandarin, considering one of the major stakeholders of this school is of Chinese ethnicity. The piloting of this program encapsulates the Grade 7 students at San Jose Community High School. On the other hand, this program is still at a premature stage, and it may face challenges. These challenges may include the cost of maintaining this program, inadequate learning materials, and, most importantly, students' commitment to learning the Chinese-Mandarin Language.

According to the study of (Nkrumah et al., 2022), many students find it difficult to identify the characters, shapes, and sounds they produce and the meaning behind them. The perception of Chinese characters being difficult to comprehend largely depends on the learners' point of view on the language. Multiple studies have shown that the challenge in learning the Chinese-Mandarin language lies in the relationship of characters' shape, sound, and meaning. Another contributing factor is the sheer volume of characters that the language learners have to learn (Yang et al., 2022). However, on the study of (Kuo et al., 2015), posits that regardless of students' perception, the Chinese characters with radicals and less visuals are easier to acquire than Chinese characters without radicals and great visuals. This raised a gap in the numerous studies shown above as it failed to illustrate the students' perception of the Chinese characters and their viewpoint towards learning the Chinese language. This research wants to explore the feelings and experiences of the students towards learning the Chinese-Mandarin language

This research investigates the San Jose Community High School's Special Program in Foreign Language (SPFL) program in Chinese-Mandarin. The designation "SPFL 7" signifies the program's target grade level (7th grade) and language of instruction (Chinese). The researchers aim to explore the perceptions of students enrolled in this program. This includes understanding their motivations for pursuing Chinese language study, the challenges they encounter in their journey towards learning Chinese Mandarin, and the rewards they gained from this experience. By examining these student experiences, the researchers hope to gain valuable insights into the program's effectiveness in fostering a love for learning the Chinese language and enabling program improvements.

Research Questions

This research entitled "Love on Studying Chinese Language (热爱学习汉语): Students' Perceptions of Special Program in Foreign Language Chinese-Mandarin at San Jose Community High School" aims to illustrate the students' perceptions towards learning Mandarin Language with this primary question: What are the students' perceptions towards learning the Mandarin Language? Specifically, this research aims to provide answers to the following specific questions:

1. How do students perceive the difficulty level of learning Chinese-Mandarin Language in terms of:
 - 1.1. listening;
 - 1.2. speaking;
 - 1.3. reading;
 - 1.4. writing; and
 - 1.5. viewing?
2. What are the reasons why students enroll in Special Program in Foreign Language?
3. What are the challenges that students face when learning Mandarin Language?

Methodology

Research Design

The researchers will use mixed-method in this study to collect data. Specifically, the researchers will employ explanatory-sequential design under mixed-method. According to (Subedi et. al, 2016) An explanatory sequential design consists of first employing quantitative approach followed by qualitative approach and compare the qualitative data with the results gathered in quantitative approach. The reason why the researchers utilized this type of approach is to elaborate the problems encountered by the students in this study. The quantitative approach will use questionnaire to provide information regarding the students' problems then followed by qualitative approach to gain an in-depth knowledge about the students' challenges and encounters. The results gathered will be analyzed and interpreted in a way for the general audience to know the specific problems encountered by the students.

Participants

The research will utilize a purposive sampling technique, a non-probability sampling ideal for this study. This research will have a sample comprising 33 Grade 7 students enrolled in the Special Program in Foreign Language in Chinese-Mandarin at San Jose Community High School. Since the research focuses on understanding experiences and outcomes within this specific program, purposive sampling allows the researchers to target participants who possess the relevant background and experiences in learning Chinese-Mandarin. This targeted selection ensures the data collected is directly connected to the program and avoids the limitations of random sampling in capturing this specific population. By focusing on this group, the study can gain deeper insights into the program's effectiveness and student experiences within the Chinese-Mandarin language learning environment.

Purposive sampling is a non-probability method use to select participants in this that the requirements or standard relevant to the focus of the study. It is often used when the population of interest or participants are too rare, hard to reach or has specific characteristics that are significant to the study (Hassan, 2024). In this study, the researchers employed purposive sampling because the sample possess specific characteristics that are great significance to the study. This sample are the identified 33 Grade 7 students enrolled in the Special Program in Foreign Language in Chinese-Mandarin at San Jose Community High School or as identified in this study as SPFL 7.

Instrument

This study will utilize two primary research instruments to gather data on the perceptions of Grade 7 students enrolled in the Special Program in Foreign Language (SPFL) for Chinese Mandarin at San Jose Community High School: questionnaires and focus group discussions.

A researcher-made questionnaire will be designed to assess the students' perceived difficulty of learning Chinese Mandarin across various language skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. It will distribute to the participants of the study, specifically the 33 Grade 7 students under the Special Program in Foreign Language in Chinese-Mandarin. The questionnaire will allow the students to provide their insights anonymously. Following the questionnaire distribution, focus group discussions will be conducted to delve deeper into the students' motivations and challenges related to the SPFL program. The focus group discussion will enable a more open and interactive environment. A guide will be used to guide the discussion, prompting students to share their reasons for enrolling in the SPFL program and explore the specific challenges they encounter in learning Chinese Mandarin. The interview guide will address questions like "What are the reasons why you decided to enroll in the SPFL program for Chinese Mandarin?" and "What are the specific difficulties you face while learning Chinese Mandarin?" The discussions will be audio-recorded with the students' consent, allowing for later transcription and in-depth analysis of their perceptions.

By combining data gathered through questionnaire and focus group discussions, this study will obtain a comprehensive understanding of the students' lived experiences towards learning Chinese-Mandarin language. The data gathered will be consolidated to provide conclusive answers.

Procedure

To achieve data needed for this study, the researchers employed the following data-gathering procedures:

The researchers formulated questions for questionnaire related to this study and prepare materials for the focus group discussion that will be conducted in order to collect data for this study.

The researchers seek the approval of their teacher and validators to validate the research tools needed for this study.

The researchers used purposive sampling technique in identifying the participants related to this study, specifically the identified 33 Grade 7 students under the Special Program in Foreign Language at San Jose Community High School.

The researchers waited for the validation their research tools from their teacher and the validators before proceeding into data gathering.

The researchers will ask for the permission of the Chinese language teacher of the students before handing out the questionnaire and conduct the focus group discussion.

The researchers will start their data gathering at the timeline, April 1 to April 5, 2024, approved by their research adviser.

The researchers set out to conduct their data-gathering on two separate days, April 3 and April 4, 2024.

The researchers gained the permission of the Chinese language teacher of the Grade 7 students under the Special Program in Foreign Language in Chinese-Mandarin.

The researchers obtained the consent of the students before distributing questionnaires and administering the focus group discussion.

In total, the researchers completed their data gathering through questionnaire and focus group discussions in two separate days.

Data Analysis

In this study, which explores students' "Love on Studying Chinese Language" within the SPFL program, data analysis plays a crucial role in extracting meaningful insights from the collected information. The researchers will utilize both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques as this study employed mixed-methods such as questionnaire and focus group discussion in data-gathering. Here's the data analysis procedure:

Each answer choice within the questionnaire will be assigned a numerical code for consistency. This facilitates efficient data entry and analysis.

The researchers will tally the responses for each question and answer choice. This provides a basic understanding of how frequently students selected each option.

Since the questionnaire utilizes a Likert scale, a weighted mean will be calculated for each question. This involves multiplying each response choice by its frequency and dividing the sum by the total number of participants (33). The weighted mean offers a more nuanced understanding of the central tendency of the data, taking into account the varying weight of different response options on the scale.

The weighted mean for each question will be interpreted based on the scale's midpoint. Scores above the midpoint indicate a generally positive perception towards the specific aspect of studying Chinese being measured, while scores below suggest a negative perception. This analysis allows researchers to gauge students' overall sentiment on various aspects of the program.

The verbatim transcripts from the discussions will be meticulously reviewed and transcribed, ensuring an accurate record of the conversation.

Researchers will identify recurring themes and ideas within the transcripts that relate to the research questions. These themes might highlight challenges faced in learning Chinese, factors influencing motivation, or specific aspects of the program students appreciate.

A frequency distribution table will be created to categorize and count the occurrences of these themes across the focus group discussions. This allows researchers to quantify the prevalence of each theme mentioned by the students.

The researchers will develop a narrative that integrates the identified themes and their frequency. This narrative goes beyond just presenting numbers. It paints a qualitative picture of students' perceptions by weaving together their expressed thoughts and experiences.

The narrative analysis will be interpreted to understand the deeper meaning behind students' verbal expressions during the focus group discussions. Researchers will delve into the "why" behind the themes, exploring the underlying motivations, challenges, or experiences students shared.

Through this comprehensive data analysis approach, the researchers can effectively combine quantitative and qualitative insights to gain a rich and nuanced understanding of students'

"Love on Studying Chinese Language." They can not only identify general trends but also delve into the underlying reasons behind those trends, providing valuable feedback to improve the SPFL program.

Weighted Mean

This study employs a weighted mean analysis for the questionnaire data due to the utilization of a Likert scale. Likert scales present answer choices with varying degrees of agreement or disagreement. A simple mean wouldn't capture this inherent difference in weight between, say, "Strongly Agree" and "Slightly Agree." By assigning a numerical code to each response choice that reflects its position on the scale (e.g., 5 for "Strongly Agree" and 1 for "Strongly Disagree"), the weighted mean considers the intensity of agreement within each response. This allows for a more accurate representation of students' central tendency towards various aspects of the SPFL program by reflecting the weightage students themselves placed on their responses.

Thematic Analysis

In this study, thematic analysis technique in explanatory-sequential design under mixed-method, will be utilized. Thematic analysis

will delve into the phenomenological aspects of their experiences. By systematically identifying and analyzing recurring themes within the focus group transcripts – particularly those related to students' experiences and challenges in learning Chinese – the researchers can unveil the underlying factors that shape student perceptions. This mixed-method analysis will provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under study, students' "Love on Studying Chinese Language" within the SPFL program, enriching the insights gleaned from the quantitative data and fostering a deeper comprehension of the program's impact.

Results and Discussion

This research, titled "Love on Studying Chinese Language (热爱学习汉语): Students' Perceptions of Special Program in Foreign Language Chinese-Mandarin at San Jose Community High School," investigates the attitudes and experiences of Grade 7 students enrolled in the Special Program in Foreign Language (SPFL) focusing on Chinese-Mandarin. By employing a combination of questionnaires and focus group discussions, the research aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions towards the program. The analysis of questionnaire data will utilize weighted means to assess their overall motivation, challenges, and perceived benefits of learning Chinese. Meanwhile, focus group discussions will be analyzed thematically to identify recurring topics and insights into students' experiences within the program. This multifaceted approach will provide valuable data to illuminate students' perspectives on the SPFL program, ultimately contributing to its potential improvement and fostering a love for learning the Chinese language. Furthermore, this section is divided into three parts for a comprehensive presentation of the answers to the questions raised in the Statement of the Problem.

Part 1. Sop 1: How do students perceive the difficulty level of learning Chinese-Mandarin language? In terms of: Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, Viewing

Table 1. Illustrates the difficulty level of learning Chinese-Mandarin language in terms of listening

How do students perceive the difficulty level of learning Chinese-Mandarin language? In terms of:	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
A.) Listening		
1. Understanding basic greetings and common phrases	4.64	Very Easy
2. Following conversations on everyday communication	4.03	Easy
3. Understanding the lyrics of Chinese music	3.55	Easy
4. Distinguishing different Chinese regional accents	3.30	Normal
5. Distinguishing accents of native or non-native Chinese speaker	3.45	Easy
Total	3.79	Easy

These results indicate that all of the items in table 1 are simple and manageable for the SPFL 7 Chinese-Mandarin students. As shown, item 1 "understanding basic greetings and common phrases" got the highest mean of 4.64 and the verbal interpretation is very easy which indicates that basic greetings and common phrases in Chinese-Mandarin are very simple and easy to understand. Moreover, item 4 "distinguishing different Chinese regional accents" obtained the lowest mean of 3.30 with that verbal interpretation of normal. It shows that distinguishing various Chinese regional accents are neither easy nor hard but manageable for the SPFL 7 students.

In an article from Dash Chinese (2015), it stated some suggestions where people can easily learn Chinese-Mandarin such as listening to Chinese music and those people who can speak in Chinese. It implies that listening to Chinese people and Chinese music is an effective way or learning Chinese-Mandarin language. In addition, by listening to Chinese languages consistently, people will be able to adopt the language itself and they will be able to familiarized some Chinese words.

Table 2. Illustrates the difficulty level of learning Chinese-Mandarin language in terms of speaking

How do students perceive the difficulty level of learning Chinese-Mandarin language? In terms of:	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
B.) Speaking		
1. Pronouncing tones and sounds accurately	4.00	Easy
2. Carrying on simple conversations on everyday topics	4.12	Easy
3. Expressing ideas and opinions fluently in Chinese	3.30	Normal
4. Participating in discussions on unfamiliar topics using Chinese-Mandarin	3.45	Easy
5. Delivering presentations or speeches in Chinese.	3.36	Normal
Total	3.65	Easy

As shown in the table, all of the items in table 2 are quite simple for the SPFL 7 students. Item 2 "carrying on simple conversations on everyday topics" obtained the highest mean of 4.12 and its verbal interpretation is easy. It signifies that SPFL 7 students are able to carry simple conversations in Chinese-Mandarin and they can do it easily every day. Furthermore, item 3 "Expressing ideas and opinions fluently in Chinese" obtained the lowest mean of 3.30 with the verbal interpretation or normal. It implies that expressing ideas and opinions in Chinese-Mandarin is neither easy nor hard but moderate for the SPFL 7 students.

According to the study by (Abd Manaf, et. al, 2019), learning Chinese-Mandarin is not limited to the classrooms, but outside it as well. It indicates that in order to learn more about Chinese-Mandarin language, people should learn and start using it their everyday life. As shown in the table, item 2 got the highest mean of 4.12 which indicates that by just carrying simple conversations in Chinese can improve the Chinese speaking skills of SPFL 7 students. Moreover, in the study of Sukjairungwattana (2023), posits that speaking is one of the essential skill when it comes to Chinese language acquisition. It implies that students should focus on incorporating speaking practice into their daily routines.

Table 3. Illustrates the difficulty level of learning Chinese-Mandarin language in terms of reading

<i>How do students perceive the difficulty level of learning Chinese-Mandarin language? In terms of:</i>	<i>Weighted Mean</i>	<i>Verbal Interpretation</i>
B.) Reading		
1. Recognizing basic characters and their pronunciation	3.85	Easy
2. Reading short texts with pinyin support	4.55	Very Easy
3. Understanding the meaning of common Chinese words	4.36	Very Easy
4. Reading articles or news reports without a dictionary	2.67	Normal
5. Reading classical Chinese literature	2.88	Normal
Total	3.66	Easy

The table shows that the SPFL 7 students are not having so much difficulty when it comes to reading in Chinese. As shown, item 2 “reading short texts with pinyin support” obtained the highest mean of 4.55 and the verbal interpretation is very easy. It indicates that the SPFL 7 students can read Chinese texts more easily with the guidance of pinyin. Additionally, item 4 “reading articles or news reports without a dictionary” obtained the lowest mean of 2.67 with the verbal interpretation of normal. It implies that the SPFL 7 students can’t read articles or news reports easily but still manageable and possible.

The findings of data on the table support the observations made in the study regarding the challenges faced by Filipino students learning Mandarin. The study by Constantino (2021) highlights the significant difference between the alphabetic systems of English and Filipino and the tonal, character-based system of Mandarin. This difference creates a hurdle for students, especially in developing macro skills like reading. The data collected aligns with this concept. While students achieved a relatively high mean score for "reading short texts with pinyin support", scores dropped significantly for "reading articles or news reports without a dictionary." This suggests that without support, Filipino students find reading Mandarin more challenging. This aligns with the Constantino's point that mastering tones and pronunciation that is crucial for independent reading takes time and practice, even with resources like textbooks.

Table 4. Illustrates the difficulty level of learning Chinese-Mandarin language in terms of writing

<i>How do students perceive the difficulty level of learning Chinese-Mandarin language? In terms of:</i>	<i>Weighted Mean</i>	<i>Verbal Interpretation</i>
B.) Writing		
1. Writing basic characters and pinyin correctly	3.82	Easy
2. Composing simple sentences and paragraphs	4.10	Easy
3. Able to write paragraphs on familiar topics	3.79	Easy
4. Writing an essays or reports on unfamiliar topics	2.55	Difficult
5. Writing poems and stories on Chinese-Mandarin	2.36	Difficult
Total	3.32	Normal

These results indicate that the SPFL 7 students can write in Chinese-Mandarin easily, but there are still some forms of writing that they are having some difficulty. As shown in the table, item 2 “composing simple sentences and paragraphs” obtained the highest mean of 4.10 and its verbal interpretation is easy. It signifies that writing simple sentences and paragraphs in Chinese-Mandarin are unchallenging for SPFL 7 students as they can do it easily. On the other hand, item 5 “writing poems and stories on Chinese-Mandarin” obtained the lowest mean of 2.36 and its verbal interpretation is difficult. It implies that composing stories and poems in Chinese-Mandarin are challenging for the SPFL 7 students.

In a study by Constantino (2021) states that, the English and Filipino language uses the alphabetic system, while Chinese-Mandarin has its own characters in writing. Which proves that learning to write Chinese characters is difficult because of the unfamiliar characters of the letters. but it also states that among 28 participants that got asked what is the most accessible macro-skill to learn Chinese-Mandarin, 46.4% of them answered "writing", which tells that even though Chinese characters are complex it can be still be viable by the use of textbooks.

The table 5 indicates that the SPFL 7 students can learn Chinese-Mandarin easily with the help of visuals. However, there still some form of visuals that the SPFL 7 students are having difficulty with. As shown, item 2 “learning Chinese characters with the use of visual materials like infographics, images, videos.” obtained the highest mean of 4.24 and the verbal interpretation is easy. It signifies that the SPFL 7 students can easily learn Chinese characters with the use of visuals such as infographics, images, and videos.

Additionally, it implies that using visuals are effective to SPFL 7 students when it comes on learning Chinese characters. Moreover, item 4 “understanding Chinese movies or TV shows without subtitles” obtained the lowest mean of 2.48 and its verbal interpretation is difficult. It shows that watching Chinese movies or TV shows without subtitles are difficult for SPFL 7 students to understand.

Table 5. Illustrates the difficulty level of learning Chinese-Mandarin language in terms of viewing

<i>How do students perceive the difficulty level of learning Chinese-Mandarin language? In terms of:</i>	<i>Weighted Mean</i>	<i>Verbal Interpretation</i>
B.) Viewing		
1. Understanding the overall message conveyed in images with written Chinese characters without translation	3.21	Easy
2. Learning Chinese characters with the use of visual materials like infographics, images, videos	4.24	Easy
3. Understanding the message of images with written Chinese characters using support of Pinyin	4.15	Easy
4. Understanding Chinese movies or TV shows without subtitles	2.48	Difficult
5. Able to understand meaning of different body languages among Chinese people	2.88	Normal
Total	3.39	Normal

The table indicates that the SPFL 7 students can learn Chinese-Mandarin easily with the help of visuals. However, there still some form of visuals that the SPFL 7 students are having difficulty with. As shown, item 2 “learning Chinese characters with the use of visual materials like infographics, images, videos.” obtained the highest mean of 4.24 and the verbal interpretation is easy. It signifies that the SPFL 7 students can easily learn Chinese characters with the use of visuals such as infographics, images, and videos. Additionally, it implies that using visuals are effective to SPFL 7 students when it comes on learning Chinese characters. Moreover, item 4 “understanding Chinese movies or TV shows without subtitles” obtained the lowest mean of 2.48 and its verbal interpretation is difficult. It shows that watching Chinese movies or TV shows without subtitles are difficult for SPFL 7 students to understand.

In a literature written by Zhou Shou (2021), where it introduces the Global Chinese Learning Platform, a mobile app designed to facilitate and enhance Chinese language learning across age groups and regions, which is connected to the item 2 that shows how images or videos can help students learn, with the use of a mobile app which can be considered as a multimedia application, Students can have more easy time learning Chinese language by the use of this app.

Part 2: Sop 2: What are the reasons why students enroll in Special Program in Foreign Language? What motivates you in learning Chinese-Mandarin? What were your main reasons for enrolling in the SPFL program specifically? What were your specific goals in mind when you started the program? Did your motivations for learning Mandarin change at all since joining the program? If so, how?

What motivates you in learning Chinese-Mandarin?

The focus group discussion reveals the motivation in learning Chinese-Mandarin among SPFL students. The most appealing theme that appears as their motivation in learning Chinese-Mandarin is “future opportunities” with 25 responses. Participant A stated “Learning Chinese-Mandarin can be beneficial for future work opportunities and more.” This suggests that most students recognized the benefits of learning Chinese-Mandarin. On the other hand, the least appearing theme identified is “social connection” with 2 responses. Participant C stated, “My companions in the journey of learning Chinese-Mandarin” is their motivation. This suggests that few students think that learning Chinese-Mandarin can be used to form social bonds.

The focus group discussion provides valuable insight into why students choose to learn Mandarin, offering an interesting counterpoint to the recent push by lawmakers like Marcelino Libanan. The most prevalent motivation identified in the discussion, “future opportunities” with 25 responses, aligns directly with Libanan's argument in the Inquirer article “Lawmaker wants

Mandarin taught in schools.” Libanan emphasizes the economic benefits of Mandarin fluency, claiming it grants access to “lucrative labor markets” abroad. Participant A's statement, “Learning Chinese-Mandarin can be beneficial for future work opportunities,” perfectly exemplifies this idea.

What were your main reasons for enrolling in the SPFL program specifically?

The focus group discussion transcript reveals the reasons for enrollment of students in Special Program in Foreign Language in Chinese-Mandarin. The most appearing theme identified as their reasons for enrolling in SPFL is “opportunities” with 16 responses. Participant C stated, “To be honest, I didn't initially want to take Chinese-Mandarin. I preferred Japanese and Korean because I dream of visiting Japan and Korea someday. However, since it's being offered by our school for the first time, I want to seize this opportunity. I believe that to be successful, you shouldn't miss any opportunity, especially if it can help you in the future. Lastly, I think Chinese-Mandarin will also be an interesting subject.” This suggests that most students seized SPFL for opportunities. However, the least appearing theme shown is “personal interest” with 7 responses. Participant B expressed “I enrolled in SPFL because it aligns with my personal interest

in learning". This suggests that few students enrolled in SPFL because it aligns with their personal interest.

The focus group discussion aligns with the news article by Quismorio (2023) titled "Libanan Says Pinoy Students Should Learn to Speak Mandarin" in highlighting the value of learning Mandarin for Filipino students. The focus group discussion leans more towards students seizing "opportunities" with 16 responses presented by the SPFL program which reflects Libanan's emphasis on Mandarin's role in improving Filipino competitiveness in the global market. Libanan also promotes Chinese-Mandarin as a strategic economic tool, which aligns with Participant C's perspective of taking advantage of an opportunity. Libanan's recommendation to establish Mandarin clubs further strengthens the connection between opportunity and interest. These clubs could foster a more engaging environment and encourage a genuine interest in Chinese culture and language, going beyond just economic benefits.

What were your specific goals in mind when you started the program?

The focus group discussion transcript reveals the specific goals that students have when they joined the program. The most appearing theme identified is "language skill development" with 16 responses. Participant C expressed that their specific goals upon joining the program is "To expand my language skills." This suggests the specific goals in mind of most students when joining the program is to expand their skill repertoire. On the other hand, the least appearing theme shown is "knowledge acquisition" with 6 responses. Participant B stated, "My goal was to learn and share with others." This suggest that the specific goals in mind of few students was to acquire knowledge and share it with others interested in learning.

The focus group discussion aligns with the global trend of increasing interest in learning Mandarin Chinese as highlighted in the article by Zhou Shou (2021). While the article emphasizes the widespread adoption of Mandarin programs and the creation of online learning platforms, the focus group provides a deeper look at the motivations behind this trend. The finding that most students prioritize "language skill development" aligns with the surge in interest for practical applications. This suggests students are likely motivated by career prospects or the desire to connect with Chinese culture on a deeper level.

Did your motivations for learning Mandarin change at all since joining the program? If so, how?

The focus group discussion reveals the changes in motivation among students when joining SPFL. The most appealing theme that emerged from their answers is "strong motivation" with 17 responses. Participant A stated, "My motivation hasn't changed, I'm still eager to learn Chinese-Mandarin." This suggests that since joining the program, that most students had no changes in their motivation and are still driven to learn about Chinese-Mandarin. However, the least appearing theme that emerged from their answers is they has "stronger motivation" with 16 responses. Participant B stated, "When I enrolled in Chinese-Mandarin, it was purely out of personal interest and curiosity. But I discovered that it can be beneficial for college courses and future opportunities." This suggests that the motivation of few students has changed but in a positive and nuanced way. Their motivations are strengthened because of their realizations of the benefits that learning Chinese-Mandarin can bring to them.

The focus group discussion aligns with the global trend of increasing interest in Mandarin Chinese learning reported by Zhou Shou (2021). While 17 students expressed consistent strong motivation, highlighting a pre-existing interest in the language, 16 students revealed a "stronger motivation" narrative. This resonates with Shou's article, which mentions millions actively learning Chinese worldwide. Participant B exemplifies this by transitioning from pure curiosity to recognizing the language's practical benefits for college and future careers. This finding suggests the program may not necessarily ignite a new passion for Mandarin, but rather strengthen existing interest by fostering connections to real-world applications.

SOP 3: What are the challenges that students face when learning Mandarin Language? What aspects of learning Chinese-Mandarin do you find most challenging? What are the specific difficulties you encounter with the language itself? What are the challenges you face outside the classroom environment? How do you overcome these challenges?

What aspects of learning Chinese-Mandarin do you find most challenging?

The focus group discussion transcript reveals the challenging aspects of learning Chinese-Mandarin that the students have encountered in SPFL. The most appealing themes that emerged from their answers is "writing system and vocabulary acquisition" with 17 responses.

Participant A stated, "I find writing strokes and memorizing meanings challenging." This suggests that most students find that writing the strokes of the Chinese characters and memorizing its meanings are challenging. On the other hand, the least common theme that emerged from their answers is "writing system and memorization" with 16 responses. Participant B stated that "learning Chinese characters and memorizing tones," is challenging which all few students shared the same sentiments. This suggests that in the perspective of some students, learning Chinese characters and memorizing how to pronounce was challenging for them.

The focus group discussion aligns with the findings presented in the Xinhuanet article "Learning Chinese, a Challenging and Rewarding Experience" (2021). The article acknowledges the inherent challenges of learning Mandarin, particularly the character-based writing system. This corresponds directly to the most common theme identified in the discussion, where students struggle with memorizing character strokes and meanings. The focus group also highlights a challenge mentioned in the article which is memorizing tones. While the article suggests Mandarin grammar is simpler than European languages, it emphasizes the complexities of tones. Participant B's statement regarding characters and tones reflects this challenge, aligning with the article's point that mastering tones is crucial for

accurate pronunciation.

What are the specific difficulties you encounter with the language itself?

The focus group discussion reveals the specific difficulties that the students have encountered in the language itself of Chinese-Mandarin. The most common theme that emerged from their answers is “pronunciation and tones” with 17 responses. Participant A stated, “Pronunciation is challenging because a slight change can alter the meaning, leading to misunderstandings.” This suggests that the specific difficulties in language itself that most students have encountered was pronouncing the words because a slight deviation from its original tone might alter the meaning of the words or sentences which may cause misunderstanding. On the other hand, the least common theme that emerged from their answers is “memorizing tones” with 16 responses. Participant B stated, “When memorizing the tones of the characters because I forgot them easily. Different tones have different meanings as well.” This suggests that the specific difficulties in language itself that few students have encountered is memorizing the tones of the characters because different tones have their own corresponding meaning.

The focus group discussion aligns with the findings in Sukjairungwattana's (2023) study on the development of listening and speaking skills for Mandarin learners in Thailand. Both highlight the challenges learners face with pronunciation and tones. As the focus group revealed, 17 out of the participants identified pronunciation and tones as the most common difficulty. Participant A echoed this, explaining how slight variations can alter meaning. This aligns with Sukjairungwattana's (2023) point that Chinese characters lack clear pronunciation cues compared to alphabetic languages.

What are the challenges you face outside the classroom environment?

The focus group discussion transcript reveals the challenges that the SPFL students faced outside the classroom setting of the program. The most common theme that emerged from their answers is “forgetting the learned materials” with 17 responses. Participant B stated, “Forgetting lessons quickly is a challenge for me.” This suggests that they have difficulty of retaining information when they left the classroom environment. However, the least common theme that emerged from their answers is “time management and reduced socialization” with 16 responses. Participant B stated, “Time management outside of class. With the addition of Chinese-Mandarin, our school hours have increased, reducing our time for socialization.” This suggests that the addition of Chinese-Mandarin lessons reduced their times they can spend on their socialization.

The focus group discussion aligns with the contrasting trends observed in the “Chinese Progresses as a World Language” article (George, 2021). While the article highlights a surge in Mandarin learners globally, it also mentions declining enrollments in university-level programs in Western countries. The focus group discussion sheds light on a potential reason for this decline. Participant B's statement exemplifies the challenges students face in retaining information learned in a program with increased workload. This suggests that traditional language programs, without additional motivational factors, might struggle to retain students who experience time constraints and information overload.

How do you overcome these challenges?

The focus group discussion reveals the ways of how students overcome the challenges they encountered in SPFL. The most common theme that emerged from their answers are “seeking help and online resources” with 17 responses. Participant B stated, “I seek help from others to better understand, and I also study online through YouTube or Google.” This suggests that most students have mixed ways to overcome the challenges they faced such as seeking help from their peers and looking for online materials that will help them understand better the difficulties they encountered. On the other hand, the least appearing theme that emerged from their answers is “real-life application of skills” with 1 response. Participant C stated “I also focus on memorization but in a different way—translating objects in Chinese.” This suggests that they applied their acquired knowledge in their daily lives.

The focus group discussion aligns with the findings in the literature review by Chua et al. (2020) in two key ways. The focus group discussion reveals students find seeking help and online resources most helpful, which corresponds with Chua et al.'s finding that 93.8% of participants believe technology-aided learning methods are beneficial. This suggests a shared emphasis on technology as a valuable tool to overcome learning difficulties. On the other hand, Chua et al. (2020) reports that only 28% of participants considered “practice” the most helpful method which resonates with Participant C in the focus group discussion who found real-life application, such as translating objects, valuable for learning.

Part 3:

In this study, the subsequent findings collected implies great relevance and connection to this research theoretical framework. Stephen Krashen's Theory on Second Language Acquisition (1982), states that learners acquired language into two different ways, acquisition and learning which is highlighted in Acquisition-Learning hypothesis of Stephen Krashen on Second Language Acquisition. The findings in SOP 1 under the fifth question item 2 “learning Chinese characters with the use of visual materials like infographics, images, videos” cements Krashen's notion of acquisition in which he posits learners picked up language subconsciously. In this study, learners thought that it is easy to acquire language through visuals in which they learn subconsciously as there are no direct rules or instructions were given to them.

Furthermore, in the findings of this study, the materials encountered by the students plays a great importance in which they learn language. This corresponds with the Input hypothesis under Stephen Krashen's theory on Second Language Acquisition. Krashen states that students learn language through the structure of materials that is completely beyond our level of competence (1982). This corresponds with the results of this study as all the participants in this study are beginners in learning Chinese-Mandarin. This suggests that the materials that the students come across with are beyond their capacity. However, despite the materials not being within the scope of their ability, the results in this research study implies that most students find learning Chinese-Mandarin easy and manageable. This solidify Krashen's statement regarding the importance of comprehensive input for students in their language learning journey.

Lastly, the results of this study reveals that the students have varying motivations, goals, interests and challenges in learning Chinese-Mandarin. Krashen (1982) posits that an affective filter is the experience of internal feelings or emotions, such as motivation, that may impede learning. This aligns with the findings of this study regarding the changes in the students' motivation towards learning. The study reveals that most students have strong motivation towards learning Chinese-Mandarin and their learning experience is not impeded but rather strengthened. This corresponds with Krashen's argument that the degree of motivation posed great influence on the students' language learning journey.

Conclusions

A range of responses were procured for each questions. According to these findings, students' perceptions towards learning Chinese-Mandarin varies in listening, speaking, reading, writing and viewing. The participants have varying degree of motivations when they joined the Special Program in Foreign Language in Chinese-Mandarin. The students who partake in the program also faced diversified challenges upon enrolling in SPFL. Several articles and studies have supported this study's conclusion.

The participants of this study had a high level of awareness towards learning Chinese-Mandarin in Special Program in Foreign Language. All participants are still motivated and interested towards learning Chinese-Mandarin. This study has proven that the students have a high level of awareness towards learning Chinese-Mandarin and most participants still held the same perceptions regarding it.

To the future students of Special Program in Foreign Language in Chinese-Mandarin, the researchers suggest that they have a strong motivation towards learning Chinese-Mandarin before joining the program.

To the teachers of Special Program in Foreign Language in Chinese-Mandarin, the researchers hoped they will be employed a multi-faceted approach in learning to accommodate the different types of learning method among the SPFL students. This type of approach in acquiring knowledge will foster a more effective, comprehensive and engaging learning process and environment.

To the school faculty, the researchers hoped that they will promote the language learning programs in the school to foster a cultural understanding and provide more paths for the students to take in the future.

To the future researchers, the researchers hoped they will use this study to enhance their understanding towards students' perceptions towards learning Chinese-Mandarin language and disseminate it.

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