

Factors Affecting Students' Decision to Study Chinese at Ouyang Language School, Khon Kaen Province

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Abstract

Background and Aims: Evaluation of factors affecting decision-making. Determining the level of decision-making in learning Chinese, Identification of important influencing factors, and creating guidelines for increasing the effectiveness of curricula and teaching methods. This research aimed to 1) study the level of factors affecting the decision to study Chinese, 2) study the level of decision to study Chinese, 3) factors affecting the decision to study Chinese, and 4) suggest guidelines for developing the curriculum and teaching methods of Chinese that are appropriate and meet the needs of students at Ouyang Khon Kaen Language School, Khon Kaen Province.

Materials and Methods: The sample consisted of 111 students who studied Chinese at Ouyang Khon Kaen Language School, Khon Kaen Province, calculated using Yamane's formula. A questionnaire was used to collect data. The statistics used for data analysis were frequency distribution, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and multiple regression analysis using the Enter method, which was statistically significant at the .05 level.

Results: 1) The level of factors affecting the decision to study Chinese among students at Ouyang Khon Kaen Language School, Khon Kaen Province, was at a high level overall. 2) The level of decision to study Chinese students at Ouyang Khon Kaen Language School, Khon Kaen Province, was at a high level overall. 3) Factors affecting the decision to study Chinese of students at Ouyang Khon Kaen Language School, Khon Kaen Province, found that the multiple correlation coefficient was .821 ($R = .821$). All independent variables could explain the variation of the dependent variable by 67.50 percent, with $R^2 = .675$ and $F = 73.986$, which showed that the independent variables were significantly related to the decision to study Chinese at Ouyang Khon Kaen Language School, Khon Kaen Province, at a statistical level of .05. 4) Suggestions for developing the curriculum and methods of teaching Chinese to be appropriate and respond to the needs of students at Ouyang Khon Kaen Language School, Khon Kaen Province include: The location or environment of the tutoring school should be arranged to be suitable for studying. It should focus on conversation lessons by simulating various events. It should emphasize more on writing Chinese. Teachers should have



techniques that will attract students to study Chinese. There should be a textbook that is appropriate for the curriculum.

Conclusion: The findings underscore the importance of various factors that contribute to students' decisions to study Chinese at the Ouyang Language School. The research highlights the necessity for continuous support, an engaging learning environment, and effective teaching strategies that resonate with students' personal interests and future aspirations. By addressing these factors, educational institutions can facilitate informed decision-making and enhance student learning.

Keywords: Factors; Decision; Chinese

Introduction

Learning Chinese has gained significant interest both nationally and internationally. Chinese is the most spoken language in the world, and the economic growth of China over the past several decades has made Chinese an important language on the global stage. The ability to communicate in Chinese not only opens up opportunities for work and study in China but also serves as a crucial factor in building trade and cultural relationships with other countries.

In Thailand, economic and cultural relations with China are becoming increasingly strong. Chinese investments in large-scale projects, such as infrastructure and tourism, have led to a significant rise in the demand for personnel with Chinese language skills. Students and parents in Thailand are beginning to recognize the importance of learning Chinese, as it serves as a vital tool for opening educational and career opportunities in the future.

Khon Kaen Province is one of the provinces experiencing economic growth and continuous educational development. Ouyang Language School in Khon Kaen is an institution that focuses primarily on teaching Chinese, aiming to develop students' Chinese language skills in the area. With a diverse curriculum and high-quality teaching, this school has become popular among students and parents seeking to enhance their Chinese language skills for educational and professional purposes. However, the decision of students to study Chinese at Ouyang Language School is still influenced by various factors, which may affect their learning success and satisfaction. Therefore, studying these factors is essential for the school to improve its teaching and effectively meet students' needs. Understanding the factors that influence students' decisions to study Chinese at this school will benefit both the institution and the students. For the school, these insights will help improve the curriculum and teaching methods to better meet the needs of students. From the students' perspective, this research will assist them in choosing courses that align with their needs and career goals. Additionally, the research findings can provide information for shaping educational policies and developing human resources at both the local and national levels regarding Chinese language learning.



Learning a foreign language is crucial for developing communication skills and creating job opportunities, especially Chinese, which is increasingly used in business, tourism, and education. Thus, the study of the Chinese language continues to attract interest from students and the general public. Ouyang Language School in Khon Kaen is one of the educational institutions that offers intensive and systematic Chinese language instruction, to develop students' Chinese language skills to enable them to use the language effectively in daily life and their careers. However, there are still questions regarding the factors that influence students' decisions to learn Chinese at this school.

The factors influencing the decision to study Chinese are among the important considerations. Each student has different interests and motivations; some may be interested in Chinese culture, while others may need Chinese for their studies and careers. Proficiency and self-confidence in learning Chinese also play a role in the decision-making process. Additionally, support from family and family expectations significantly impact the choice to study Chinese.

Teaching quality is another factor influencing the decision to learn Chinese. The quality of the instructors is crucial for creating a good learning environment. Qualified teachers who can employ effective teaching techniques will enhance interest and confidence in learning Chinese. The use of diverse teaching materials and modern technology, such as learning apps, digital media, and skill-enhancing activities, will increase learning efficiency and generate greater interest among students in learning Chinese.

Access to language learning resources is another factor affecting Chinese language learning. Access to learning materials, such as textbooks, instructional videos, and online resources, is very important. Moreover, opportunities for practicing Chinese both in and outside the classroom are essential. Participating in activities related to the Chinese language, such as attending Chinese camps, conversing with native speakers, or using Chinese in daily life, will help create valuable learning experiences.

Assessment factors that measure knowledge and competency also allow students to track their learning progress. Fair and effective testing and evaluation will enable students to improve their learning. Furthermore, feedback from teachers and the use of assessment results to enhance learning are important for building students' confidence and motivation to learn.

For these reasons, studying the factors that influence the choice of students to learn Chinese at Ouyang Language School in Khon Kaen is very important. This research will help the school improve its teaching and support for student learning effectively to best meet the needs of students and society, including promoting informed decisions for those interested in learning Chinese.

Objectives

1. To study the level of factors influencing the decision to study Chinese among students at Ouyang Language School, Khon Kaen Province.
2. To study the level of decision-making regarding the choice to learn Chinese among students at Ouyang Language School, Khon Kaen Province.
3. To identify the factors influencing the decision to learn Chinese among students at Ouyang Language School, Khon Kaen Province.
4. To propose guidelines for developing Chinese language curricula and teaching methods that are suitable and responsive to the needs of students at Ouyang Language School, Khon Kaen Province.

Hypothesis

1. The level of factors influencing the decision to learn Chinese among students at Ouyang Language School, Khon Kaen Province, is generally at a high level.
2. The level of decision-making regarding the choice to learn Chinese among students at Ouyang Language School, Khon Kaen Province, is generally at a high level.

Literature Review

Gardner and Lambert (1972) found that motivation plays a crucial role in learning foreign languages, categorizing it into intrinsic motivation, such as personal interest, and extrinsic motivation, such as career aspirations.

Mahapichai (2016) indicates that students' decisions regarding their studies are influenced by various factors, including family, education, and personal circumstances. The findings can be utilized to develop policies and counseling strategies for students to make more effective decisions that align with their needs.

Suksubai (2019) found that several factors affect high school students' choice to study Chinese in Thailand, encompassing personal, family, educational, and social dimensions. Understanding these factors can help schools and relevant agencies develop strategies to promote Chinese language learning more effectively.

Fan and Chen (2001) confirmed that parental involvement in education is significant and positively impacts students' academic performance. Encouraging parental participation in their children's education should be prioritized in educational policies.

Coleman, J.S. (1988) demonstrated that social capital is essential for building human capital. Family and community involvement in supporting education and child development positively affects educational progress and children's potential. Strengthening social capital at the family and community levels should be promoted in educational policies.

Scope of Study

Content Scope: The study investigates theoretical concepts related to factors influencing decision-making by reviewing relevant documents, research, and literature. It incorporates the factors of needs and satisfaction from Janthasri (2017) and decision-making in course selection from Manasiri (2016: 6-7).

Population and Sample

1. Population: The population consists of students learning Chinese at the Ouyang Language School in Khon Kaen, totaling 152 students (Ouyang Language School, 2024).

2. Sample: The sample includes several students studying Chinese at the Ouyang Language School in Khon Kaen, totaling 111 students. This number was calculated using Yamane's formula (Yamane, 1973: 727).

Area Scope: The study will be conducted at the Ouyang Language School in Khon Kaen, Thailand.

Scope of Study Time: The data collection will take place from July to August 2024.

Methodology

The key informants or the reviewers consisted of 8 persons from 4 funeral parlors in Anhui Province, China, and performed the different duties as follows.

1. Investigate theories and previous studies related to factors influencing students' decisions to study Chinese at the Ouyang Language School in Khon Kaen.
2. Formulate research questions that comprehensively cover the conceptual framework, objectives, content, and details concerning the factors influencing students' choices in learning Chinese at the Ouyang Language School in Khon Kaen.
3. Create a structured questionnaire designed to gather relevant data on the factors affecting students' decisions.
4. Submit the draft questionnaire to the research advisor for review and feedback.
5. Modify the questionnaire based on the advisor's suggestions and recommendations to improve its clarity and effectiveness.

Table 1 Population and sample

Classroom Number	Classroom Name	Students (Total)	Sample Size
1	Classroom 1	59	43
2	Classroom 2	57	42
3	Classroom 3	36	26
Total		152	111

Research model

The study has presented the analysis of data processed using educational software in the following sections.

Section 1: General Information of Respondents This section includes data on: Gender, Age Year of study.

Section 2: Level of Factors Affecting the Decision to Study Chinese. This section assesses the various factors that influence students' decisions to learn Chinese at the Ouyang Language School in Khon Kaen, Thailand.

Section 3: Level of Decision-Making in Choosing to Study Chinese. This part evaluates the overall level of decision-making regarding studying Chinese among students at the Ouyang Language School in Khon Kaen.

Section 4: Factors Affecting the Decision to Study Chinese. This section provides a detailed analysis of specific factors that influence students' decisions to study Chinese at the Ouyang Language School in Khon Kaen.

Section 5: Recommendations for Developing Curriculum and Teaching Methods
This final section offers suggestions for improving the Chinese language curriculum and teaching methods to better meet the needs of students at the Ouyang Language School in Khon Kaen.

Conclusion and discussion of research results

1. Level of Factors Affecting the Decision to Study Chinese. The overall level of factors influencing students' decisions to study Chinese at the Ouyang Language School in Khon Kaen is rated as high. When considering specific aspects, all were found to be at a high level, ranked by average score from highest to lowest as follows

2. Level of Decision-Making in Choosing to Study Chinese. The overall level of decision-making regarding studying Chinese among students is also rated as high. The aspects evaluated are all at a high level, ranked by an average score from highest to lowest as follows: Environment, Curriculum, Affordability, Image and Reputation, Information Technology, Service, Teaching Methods, Quality, and Standards.

3. Correlation of Factors Affecting Decision-Making. The study found that the multiple correlation coefficient (R) is .821, indicating a strong relationship. The independent variables explain 67.50% of the variance in the dependent variable ($R^2 = .675$). The F-value of 73.986 suggests that the independent variables are significantly related to the decision-making process regarding studying Chinese at the Ouyang Language School in Khon Kaen, at a statistically significant level of .05.

4. Recommendations for Curriculum and Teaching Method Development. To better meet the needs of students learning Chinese at the Ouyang Language School, the following recommendations are proposed:

Improvement of Learning Environment: Create a suitable environment for learning within the tutoring center.

Focus on Conversational Skills: Emphasize conversation by simulating various scenarios.

Enhancement of Writing Skills: Increase focus on writing in Chinese.

Engaging Teaching Techniques: Teachers should employ techniques to engage students in learning Chinese actively.

Appropriate Learning Materials: Ensure that textbooks and learning materials are aligned with the curriculum requirements.

Results

The level of factors influencing students' decision to study Chinese at Owyang Language School, Khon Kaen Province. Overall, the influencing factors were at a high level. When considering each aspect, all were at a high level, ranked by average score from highest to lowest as follows: curriculum development, followed by student satisfaction, and student demand.

The level of decision-making to study Chinese at Owyang Language School, Khon Kaen Province. Overall, the decision-making level was high. When considering each aspect, all were at a high level, ranked by average score from highest to lowest as follows: environment, curriculum, appropriateness of expenses, image and reputation, information technology, services, teaching methods, and quality and standards.

Factors influencing students' decision to study Chinese at Owyang Language School, Khon Kaen Province. It was found that the multiple correlation coefficient was .821 ($R = .821$). All independent variables could explain 67.50% of the variance in the dependent variable ($R^2 = .675$), with an F-value of 73.986. This indicates that the independent variables were significantly correlated with the decision-making to study Chinese at Owyang Language School, Khon Kaen Province, at a statistical significance level of .05.

Suggestions for curriculum and teaching method development to better meet the needs of students at Owyang Language School, Khon Kaen Province. Recommendations include providing a suitable learning environment, emphasizing conversational learning through simulated scenarios, enhancing Chinese writing skills, encouraging teachers to use techniques that engage students, and offering textbooks that align with the curriculum.

Discussion

Based on the research regarding the factors that influence students' decisions to study Chinese at the Ouyang Language School in Khon Kaen, it was found that overall, students have a high level of satisfaction with their choice to study Chinese. The evaluation scores indicate that students feel positively about their decision. Below are some key points for discussion:

Hypothesis 1: Factors Influencing the Decision to Study Chinese. The study confirmed that the level of factors influencing the decision to study Chinese at the Ouyang Language School is high. This aligns with the hypothesis, as students expressed a desire to enhance their Chinese language skills for future communication and further education opportunities, both in Thailand and abroad. Students reported high satisfaction regarding teaching methods and the suitability of the learning environment, including facilities conducive to effective learning. The Ouyang Language School emphasizes the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, demonstrating flexibility and adaptation to the needs of learners.

This finding is consistent with the research conducted by Mahayasanan (2018), which explored factors affecting Thai students' choices in their studies. Mahayasanan's study highlighted personal interests and motivations for self-improvement as significant determinants in the decision-making process. It noted that students who are interested in specific fields are more likely to pursue studies in those areas. Moreover, the learning environment plays a crucial role; students who feel supported and experience a positive learning atmosphere are more inclined to choose challenging subjects that align with their interests.

Family support and encouragement from teachers were identified as significant factors that enhance students' confidence and preparedness in their studies. Mahayasanan's findings further emphasized the correlation between personal interests and academic performance, suggesting that students who choose fields aligned with their interests tend to achieve better results due to their commitment and motivation.

Hypothesis 2: Level of Decision-Making in Choosing Chinese Studies. The research revealed that the overall level of decision-making regarding studying Chinese is also rated as high. This supports the hypothesis, as students recognized the positive image and reputation of the Ouyang Language School, which greatly influenced their decision to study Chinese. They received positive information about the school from various sources and noted that the school employs qualified teachers with expertise and teaching experience.

The students found the number of study hours appropriate and appreciated the classroom management and facilities available. The curriculum offers a diverse range of content covering all necessary skills for learning Chinese, with regular updates to keep the material relevant and applicable in real-life situations. The use of varied teaching media, group activities, and collaborative work among students was highlighted as beneficial practices.

Additionally, the costs associated with studying Chinese were deemed reasonable given the quality of instruction. The school provides discounts and special promotions for students enrolling in multiple courses, as well as flexible payment options that accommodate students' financial situations. This aligns with the findings of Tulanont (1997), who noted that teachers must create incentives to motivate students consistently, especially in learning a challenging language like Chinese, which requires both phonetic and written skills. Teachers should engage students' interests through their personal attributes and teaching style to enhance the learning experience.

Conclusion

The findings underscore the importance of various factors that contribute to students' decisions to study Chinese at the Ouyang Language School. The research highlights the necessity for continuous support, an engaging learning environment, and effective teaching strategies that resonate with students' personal interests and future aspirations. By addressing these factors, educational institutions can facilitate informed decision-making and enhance student learning.

Recommendation

Recommendations for Implementation and Future Research

Recommendations for Implementation

1. Objective 1: Enhancing Curriculum Development

1.1 It is recommended to promote flexible curriculum development that adapts to the needs of learners. Emphasis should be placed on balancing the four key skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing.

1.2 Efforts should be made to improve student satisfaction regarding the learning environment, including classrooms, seating, tools, and various learning resources.

Objective

2. Improving Learning Environment

2.1 Enhancements to the learning environment are suggested, such as arranging desks and chairs in a way that facilitates group activities and learning. Decorations should include images and materials that inspire and motivate learning.

2.2 The curriculum should be consistently updated and refined to ensure relevance to students, competitive examinations, and modern trends.

Objective

3. Supporting Student Needs and Satisfaction

3.1 It is essential to support students' needs and satisfaction by aligning the curriculum with labor market demands. Efforts should focus on ensuring students' contentment with their learning experience and utilizing modern teaching methodologies.

Objective

4. Creating an Effective Learning Space

4.1 The learning environment of the tutoring school should be conducive to education. This includes using conversational methods that simulate real-life situations, emphasizing writing in Chinese, and sharing effective techniques to engage students.

Recommendations for Future Research

Environmental and Facility Development Research

1. Future studies should focus on researching the development of the learning environment and facilities at the Ouyang Language School in Khon Kaen. This could include assessing how the physical space impacts learning outcomes.

Curriculum Development Research for Chinese Language Education

2. There should be research aimed at developing the Chinese language curriculum specifically tailored for Thai students in Khon Kaen. This could explore culturally relevant content and methodologies that resonate with local students, ensuring that the curriculum meets their specific needs and aspirations.

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