

Personal valuation of Chinese language for social functions among senior high school learners

Marites A. Montero

Western Mindanao State University, 7000 Zamboanga City, Philippines; monteromarites23@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT: In recent decades, the Chinese language experienced an increase in educational demand, which calls the academic institutions to integrate basic Chinese language subjects into their curriculum. The spike in Chinese language use resulted in the expansion of language studies focusing on Chinese as a second and foreign language. Given the broad scope of research in Chinese language learning, there was a need to expand the understanding of the personal valuation of the learners in learning the Chinese language. Hence, this study aimed to assess the extent of the subjective valuation of Filipino students in the Chinese language, particularly for social functions. An exploratory approach was carried out to extract narrative data from the study participants. Eight secondary students were interviewed on the personal valuation of the Chinese language within social functions. The findings demonstrated that the Chinese language was commonly used within social instances for specific sociocultural and psycholinguistic patterns. The participants valued the use of the Chinese language because of its instrumentality in their future careers; it enabled them to be culturally sensitive and engaged in sociocultural communication. Theoretical analysis also highlighted that language socialization became a major driving force in language learning. Language socialization encompassed learning beyond academic purposes while underscoring the need for social interaction and interpersonal orientation. Nevertheless, personal valuations reflected learners' beliefs towards the instrumentality of the Chinese language, especially in social functions.

KEYWORDS: Chinese language; instrumentality; language learning; language socialization; personal valuation

1. Introduction

Because of the Chinese government's support, Chinese as a foreign or second language (CFL/CSL) experienced a significant increase in teaching and learning integration in China and abroad (Zhao and Huang, 2010). This rise in Chinese language education has resulted in extensive research on critical issues regarding teaching Chinese to non-native speakers worldwide. Studies on CSL/CFL have been growing steadily since the late 1970s (Gong et al., 2018a; Gong et al., 2020b; Jiang and Cohen, 2012; Yang, 2019; Zhao and Huang, 2010; Zhao, 2011).

Recently, there has been remarkable growth in the study of CSL/CFL. This growth is evident in the increased number of publications, i.e., dissertations, book chapters, journal papers, and conference proceedings (Gong et al., 2020b). Additionally, perspectives and thematic areas within the CSL/CFL

research field have notably expanded. This study aimed to determine the personal valuation of curriculum-based Chinese language learners on using Chinese within social contexts.

As Ochs and Schieffelin (2011) point out, verbal resources must be thoroughly explored as an essential aspect of socialization processes in early anthropological studies of adolescence and childhood across cultures. Because of this, the sociocultural linkage of communicative development remained, for the most part, an unknown academic domain, and the academic fields that connect the pathways of different forms of information acquisition, such as psycholinguistic and sociocultural, remained separate (Ochs and Schieffelin, 2011). Hence, this current study wanted to explore the sociocultural aspects of Chinese language use in the context of social functions, e.g., conversations with friends, and online conferences. As described in this study, social functions are specific settings in which a language or dialect is used as a language of communication, usually having simple or informal structures.

With the increasing trend towards globalization and internationalization, a significant surge in international students studying and learning Chinese was observed (Gong et al., 2020a; Gong et al., 2020b; Nie et al., 2022). The Ministry of Education in China has reported that as of 2020, a staggering 200 million people are learning and using the Chinese language, with 45,000 institutions and schools offering Chinese language courses (Nie et al., 2022). This demonstrates Chinese as growing relevance as a worldwide language today.

While most South Asian parents decide for their children to learn Chinese, they often lack the cultural and linguistic capital essential to their success. South Asian linguistic practices of children reflect the necessity of teacher and school support for language acquisition, which is emphasized by the inadequacy of family participation (Chavez, 2022; Shum et al., 2011).

According to Liddicoat and Scarino (2013), researchers and educators now acknowledge that intercultural pedagogies can only be successful if there is a deliberate emphasis on reflection and intercultural comparison in classrooms. This approach is crucial for students to develop intercultural competence within an educational environment (Kennedy, 2020). Therefore, making time for such intentional intercultural activities in the classroom is essential. By doing so, students can enhance their ability to communicate effectively and appreciate diverse cultural perspectives, which are critical skills in today's globalized world.

Yashima et al. (2017) conducted research among 2631 incoming first-year students at universities in West Japan to determine the role that learners' attitudes and gender had in the motivational impact of their second language (L2) self. The researchers utilized questionnaires and TOEFL-ITP tests to collect data. The findings indicated that students who held strong ideals and perceptions of their L2 selves were more likely to put in the necessary effort to attain higher proficiency levels in the language.

The study by Yashima et al. (2017) sparked interest in exploring personal valuation as a mechanism for attitude toward frequent language use. Additionally, female students were more inclined to place value on communication activities, contributing to their stronger ideal L2 self-concept (Yashima et al., 2017). These results suggest that promoting a positive L2 self-concept may be an effective way to motivate language learners and that gender differences can also play a role in this process (Umeanowai and Lei, 2022).

Instrumentality was a robust predictor of future academic success for heritage and non-heritage students. According to Lu and Li (2008), non-heritage Chinese students are more impacted by contextual factors, such as the impact of instruction and mixed-ability classrooms and less impacted by instrumental motivation. The term "instrumental orientation" describes the pursuit of an L2 because of its perceived

practical benefits and external incentives, such as a scholarship or a new job (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2021; Gardner, 1985, 2001). Instrumental orientation, specifically, is a concept that explains a person's perception of a specific language, which motivates him to frequently use the language (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2021).

From the perspective of socio-educational context, Khorsheed (2021) suggested the concept of instrumental and integrative motivation, the former being the use of a foreign language as a means to an end and the latter being the learner's genuine curiosity about and interest in the culture of the target language's speakers and their desire to engage in meaningful interaction with them (Gao et al., 2022; Gardner, 2021; Jiao et al., 2022a). This further explains the interest in learning a language because of its specific impact on sociocultural communication (Jiao et al., 2022a).

It is imperative to emphasize that this study focused on the personal valuation of Chinese as a foreign language in the Philippines. Personal valuation involves the perception of the person towards the instrumentality of the Chinese language to their life, i.e., social and academic contexts. Such analysis aimed to integrate the understanding of Chinese language use within education and social functions. Notably, personal valuation was a component of motivation (Gao et al., 2022; Gardner, 2021; Jiao et al., 2022a; Shum et al., 2011), which later in this study served as a fundamental mechanism for language socialization.

2. Literature review

With a significant increase in the number of learners of the Chinese language, several studies have explored vital aspects related to language testing (Ke, 2006; Li and Li, 2020), the cognitive and sociocultural dimensions of Chinese language education (Fan and Li, 2018; Liu, 2014; Qi and Lai, 2017; Umeanowai and Lei, 2022; Zhang and Roberts, 2019), teaching approaches and principles (Curdt-Christiansen, 2008; Kennedy, 2020; Shao, 2013; Shum et al., 2011; Zhao, 2016), teacher education and professional development (Gong et al., 2018b; Ke et al., 2015; Lai et al., 2019; Wang and Bale, 2019; Yang, 2019), and language policy planning and development (Chen, 2013; Loh et al., 2019; Lu, 2017). These studies provide valuable insights into these aspects and help improve the quality of Chinese language teaching and mechanisms for learning. Additionally, they aid in developing policies that support Chinese language learning and testing and enhance the professional development of teachers.

When discussing acquiring a second language, household power and how it influenced students' language learning is recognizable. In the study of Shum et al. (2011), South Asian students in the linguistic survey emphasized the importance of support from family in developing positive language motivation. Accordingly, 52% of the students reported that their motivation to learn the language stemmed from their parent's expectations.

Remarkably, this study focusing on the personal valuation of the Chinese language showed promising theoretical components for language learning. This study also observed a similar phenomenon in Gong et al. (2020b) review. In their review, the majority of the studies on Chinese language learning have four thematic perspectives—these are: (1) Chinese as heritage learner identity, (2) identity in cross/intercultural communication, (3) identity in the process of language socialization, and (4) identity in digital space (Gong et al., 2020b). These contexts were prominent in the personal valuation of the Chinese language among CFLs, especially in intercultural communication, language socialization, and learner identity.

Duff and Anderson (2015) argued that mentors, i.e., seasoned peers, teachers, or caregivers, could

not be competent or readily available to create a timely mentorship. In addition, mentors can learn something new from their mentees, while novices can receive additional mentorship from their peers. Hence, LS is a multifaceted process that depends on temporal and spatial aspects.

One evident pedagogical implication is that schools need to consider how mentors and professionals facilitate novices' entry into social and local linguistic cultures to promote students' language development. The literatures (e.g., Morita, 2004; Nam and Beckett, 2011; Octactepe, 2013; Zappa-Hollman, 2007) indicate that not all experts and mentors are good at socializing or easily approachable. "[Experts] who are most successful not only display, but also make explicit, the values and practices implicit in the culture and provide novices with the language, skills, support, and opportunities they need to participate with growing competence in the new culture and its core activities" (Duff, 2010). Hence, because of limitations in institution-based language learning, immersing in cultural communities also impacts students' learning.

Integrating language in classrooms increased the valuation of the Chinese language within academic settings. While teachers employ Chinese as the sole language, some also incorporate native dialects and English to construct conversational sentences. Consistent with the study of Munezane (2015), metacognitive strategies such as instructional intervention and goal-setting activities enhanced the willingness of students to communicate. Translanguaging mobilized students to acquire knowledge in a more friendly setting, facilitating classroom involvement (Nie et al., 2022; Rabbidge, 2019).

Nie et al. (2022) revealed that translanguaging could promote students' participation in the classroom. It mirrors previous findings that learners may establish a translanguaging environment for constructing an environment of Chinese learning (Song and Lin, 2021) and meaning-making (Wei, 2011) and gain knowledge through their connections and relationships with classmates (Lantolf et al., 2018).

Learners' backgrounds affected their desire to study Chinese as a second language (Sun, 2011; Tsung et al., 2017). Sun (2011), for instance, found that a person's upbringing and social circle significantly impacted their motivation level (Chavez, 2021, 2022). Students who were more socially integrated into Chinese communities and had greater exposure to the Chinese language and culture were more motivated to study Chinese (Gao et al., 2022). One participant in this study indicated that learning Chinese helped her communicate with her brother, which motivated her to learn the language.

The argument on personal beliefs was investigated by Abdolazhede and Nai (2014), who aimed to assess if there was a positive correlation between the language beliefs of a student to their proficiency level. The study examined 226 Iranian students aged 14 to 17. The data was collected using the Key English Test (KET) to assess the students' English proficiency. The data demonstrated a significant positive relationship between language competency and linguistic beliefs.

The study of Umeanowai and Lei (2022) yielded significant narratives on the influence of students' belief in language learning. Their study highlighted the concept of instrumental motivation viewing Chinese as an essential language to learn for a future career. This shows the personal valuation of the Chinese language in a larger setting.

"The Chinese language is a language of opportunity and employment." "If I learn to speak Chinese well, I will have a better chance of finding a good job." (Umeanowai and Lei, 2022).

Another survey conducted by Shum et al. (2011) showed that most of the students were motivated to learn the Chinese language, particularly for "career development" and "further education access". The main reasons for learning Chinese were "to get a job" (76.7%), "to pass an examination" (72.4%), and

“to study at university” (63.5%). These data reflected that instrumentality was the major factor explaining how the Chinese language became imperative in social functions.

Similarly, Xu and Maloney (2019) conducted a study in an Australian university setting. They found out that “future job prospects” is the main reason for Australian university students to learn the Chinese language for both heritage and non-heritage learners. However, it is noteworthy to say that heritage learners were also influenced by their family heritage (Xu and Maloney, 2019), parents’ views (Chavez, 2021), and cultural identity (Shum et al., 2011). In the case study of Xie (2018), students at universities in the United States perceive that a high level of fluency in speaking is related to the ideal L2 self since it can help students advance their careers in the future. Hence, integrative orientation was a primary motivation to increase their language skills.

In the study of Umeanowai and Lei (2022), metacognitive methods are utilized by Chinese students far more frequently than any other type of strategy. Language acquisition progresses more quickly once a student understands how to govern his or her learning by employing metacognitive strategies, and research suggests that metacognitive techniques play a more significant function than other pedagogical approaches in this process (Anderson, 2005).

3. Research objectives

This study aimed to shed light on the sociocultural and psycholinguistic aspects of personal valuation regarding the Chinese language in social functions. While early anthropological studies overlooked the significance of verbal resources in socialization processes across cultures, the present research seeks to bridge the gap between psycholinguistic and sociocultural perspectives.

Below are the research objectives sought to be answered in this study:

- 1) To describe how the Chinese language is being used in social functions.
- 2) To describe why the Chinese language become imperative to social functions.
- 3) To determine the components of Chinese language learning that are essential in social functions.

4. Theoretical framework

This study used the Language Socialization Model to provide the theoretical foundation of why students value using the Chinese language in social functions. Language socialization depends on embodied communication’s ability to involve learners in recognizing and comprehending new methods and familiar ideas of feeling, thinking, and interacting with others (Ochs and Schieffelin, 2011).

A central principle of the language socialization (LS) model is that language acquisition and acculturation processes are inextricably linked (Ochs and Schieffelin, 2011; Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986; Schneider and Jin, 2022). To put it more succinctly, the development of language skills depends on how an individual is socialized into a community. An individual’s level of socialization into the community of interest is proportional to the level to which they have developed their linguistic abilities (Schneider and Jin, 2022).

Garrett and Baquedano-Lopez (2002) described language socialization as “concerned with all of the knowledge and practices that one needs in order to function as—and, crucially, to be regarded by others as—a competent member of (or participant in) a particular community or communities”.

For this model, language learning involves social interaction to succeed. Children and adults learning a language do so by engaging in conversations, studying how language is used, and receiving feedback

from more adept speakers. Language learning is a collaborative process through interpersonal relationships (Ochs and Schieffelin, 2011).

Participants pointed out, “Although it’s normal to get frustrated when trying to master the complicated nature of the Chinese tones which state the meaning of any word used in the sentence. Four different tones make it more complicated, especially speaking or trying to express oneself. Most times, hearing the native Chinese saying that they do not understand my Chinese also makes me disappointed” (Umeanowai and Lei, 2022).

This narrative posed a new understanding of learning the Chinese language beyond the scope of communication and interaction. Other more significant components emerged when considering language use and social functions. Language socialization calls for further development of language competency beyond the scope of education (Kennedy, 2020; Schneider and Jin, 2022; Shum et al., 2011).

Consequently, students learning CFL and native language speakers have difficulties communicating effectively. Understanding that culture is a dynamic and complex framework essential to developing intercultural competency. Culture should not be viewed as an absolute concept fixed and based on constant characteristics (Kramersch, 1993; Kramersch, 2006; Kennedy, 2020). Cultivating intercultural competence through comparison as a stand-alone classroom activity is impossible because this requires the instructor to scaffold a more in-depth reflection process. Students need to be able to step back from their own linguistic and cultural perspectives to comprehend “other” worldviews, and this process must make that possible (Conway and Richards, 2018; Kennedy, 2020; Liddicoat and Scarino, 2013; Shum et al., 2011; Umeanowai and Lei, 2022).

This study sought to understand how Chinese language learners value the language using social function contexts. The concept of language socialization draws the influence that a variety of social circumstances have on the acquisition of language. The social roles and interactions of persons, the structure of power, social hierarchies, and the cultural relevance of various dialects and languages are all examples of these elements (Ochs and Schieffelin, 2011). This relationship between sociocultural information and language structures is indexical, which means that the employment of structures indicates and forms certain social settings as well as specific cultural frames for feeling and thinking (Hanks, 1999; Ochs, 1990).

One component of learning the Chinese language from a broad perspective was the context of cultural sensibility. This also was related to the next theme involving learning through interaction and language socialization. Learners, acting in the role of mediators, look for a “third space” or “meeting place”, i.e., online chats, where they may successfully handle the communication, connections, and worldviews of their respective culture and the culture they are trying to learn about (Kramersch, 1993; Liddicoat and Scarino, 2013).

Additionally, learners can cultivate attitudes of openness, inclusivity, and curiosity rather than cultural stereotypes while participating in activities in this particular intercultural third space (Byram, 2020; Lo Bianco et al., 1999; Kennedy, 2020). Positive and negative stereotypes can lead to unsuccessful interactions and can get in the way of fully understanding one another (Byram, 2020; Kennedy, 2020).

Hence, using the complex connections within the language socialization model, this study raised further questions on why students continue the use Chinese in social functions. In essence, social functions are non-academic settings where a person can interact with others, e.g., family gatherings or online video conferences. This study aimed to shed light on how students used the Chinese language outside academic settings. This study also wanted to determine the mechanisms that drive the frequent

use of the Chinese language within social functions.

5. Methods

This study explored the personal valuation of the Chinese language based on its social functions. Narrative data collected from the respondents reflected new theoretical foundations of language learning within the contexts of social functions and networks. These narrative data conceptualized how personal valuation can influence the likelihood of a person learning the Chinese language. Nevertheless, such a study emulated additional details of the previously established theories. The underlying themes of the study became a new angle for further language learning evaluation.

5.1. Research design

Using the narrative data as a primary source, this study was qualitative research exploring the themes of language learning. This study followed the three exploratory designs by Creswell (2011). Exploratory designs aim to establish the background of the field of study and define the scope of such study. Swedberg (2020) described exploratory as “an attempt to discover something new and interesting”. An extensive analysis of the personal valuation of Chinese language learning was carried out. The narrative data collected were analyzed through narrative analysis employing coding and thematic clustering. Themes were clustered based on their common ideas. Such a method of analyzing narrative data divides the responses into different subcategories, thereby linking components of underlying language learning theories.

5.2. Population and samples

Purposive sampling was used as a sampling method. Eight senior high students from four schools in Zamboanga City were interviewed in the study. The participants have had their basic Chinese language unit in senior high school as part of their established curriculum.

Purposive sampling was employed in this study because it ensures that the participants are more likely to be involved in the subject matter (Ceneciro et al., 2023; Hassan, 2022). The participants chosen were purposively chosen based on certain characteristics (Hassan, 2022), i.e., in this study, those who are enrolled in high schools in Zamboanga City that offer Chinese classes in their curriculum. Purposively sampling the participants allows the researchers to develop a reliable and first-hand data for the study.

Table 1. Research participants.

Participating school	n
School A	2
School B	2
School C	2
School D	2
Total	8

5.3. Research instrument

In collecting the narrative data from the participants, this study carried out one-on-one interviews. The instrument of this study was validated by three language experts and educational managers to capture a deeper analysis of the personal valuation of the Chinese language for social function using the exploratory design of the study through an interview. The instrument is based on the objectives of the research and expanded to the scope of the study by constructing them into specific questions to capture relevant information (Chavez et al., 2023; Chavez JV and Prado, 2023). The instrument is best demonstrated in the **Table 2**.

The participants were asked questions based on the interview guide below.

Table 2. Interview questions.

Research objectives	Interview questions
1. To describe how the Chinese language is being used in social functions.	a. What kinds of social functions do you mostly use Chinese as your language?
2. To describe why the Chinese language become imperative to social functions.	a. Why do you think using Chinese helps you connect with people? b. What aspects of conversing with Chinese speakers are interesting to you? c. In what way does the Chinese language connect people with different heritage?
3. To determine the components of Chinese language learning that are essential in social functions.	a. Why do you think learning Chinese is important to you? b. Which aspects of learning the Chinese language you widely used when conversing with people? c. How often do you use what you have learned in conversing with others?

5.4. Data gathering procedure

A permission letter was sent to the respective institutions of the participants. An approval letter was administered to the school president to conduct the study. Upon approval, a copy of the signed document was furnished to the participants, also attached, the purpose of the study, ethical considerations, and the voluntary clause for participation. The participants voluntarily affix their signatures after agreeing to the terms of the study. Data gathering was carried out from January 2023 to March 2023.

In conducting the interview, the participants were interviewed through phone calls. The researcher handed them a copy of the interview guide and the overview of the research paper through the online messaging app. The participants were asked to speak any of the local languages they felt comfortable using. The researcher interviewed the participants individually. Their response was recorded for further analysis after the data collection procedure.

5.5. Data analysis

The primary data used in this study was the narrative from high school students collected through one-on-one interviews. This study used unstructured interviews to collect data on the subject. As Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) described, “unstructured interviews [serve] as a natural extension of participant observation, because they so often occur as part of ongoing participant observation ...”. The data from the interview was coded, and thematic analysis was employed to analyze the responses through generating themes. Thematic analysis mobilizes the researcher to create code, translate the data, and interpret the narratives from interviews (Nowell et al., 2017). Thematic analysis is an effective process for qualitative studies because it allows the researcher to analyze the data through inductive and deductive approaches. Specifically, this study reflected the process described by Lochmiller (2021), where the narrative response was broken into smaller and simpler ideas. For analysis, the study “fracture” (or break down) the narrative into smaller pieces of useful information (Riessman, 2011).

6. Results

Question 1. To describe how the Chinese language is being used in social functions.

Three of the participants were taught Chinese language. Chinese was part of their curriculum in high school. One major use of the Chinese language in social function was its application in classroom settings. Because most of their teachers require them to speak in Chinese, most of the students learned basic statements. One participant highlighted that it helped them connect with other people, even using the basic statements. This indicated that the fundamental use of the Chinese language in the

Philippine setting is for communication, especially within the academic field. This theme emphasizes the role that language plays in social identity and community formation.

“When I was learning the Chinese language, our teachers taught us simple words like saying ‘Hi’. We can use what we have learned in greeting someone. We also use Chinese. We have gatherings like organizations. So, if we have a background in Chinese, this can help us connect to people, even like basic statements.”

“For our class, our teacher is requiring us to speak in Chinese. Sometimes, I also use Chinese when greeting students and teachers in our school. For me, it is a form of respect to speak Chinese. Our teachers taught us to speak Chinese, write in Chinese, so using the language shows that we students are interested in their class. I also used Chinese. Like in chats, we have friends from a school that also teach Chinese. The Chinese language can help me communicate with other people.”

“Once you meet someone, let’s say a teacher, you say ‘Ni Hao’, this is what our teacher taught us.”

In contrast, one participant made an analysis of the likelihood of the use of the Chinese language in a social context. He viewed that Chinese language was not widely used in the Philippines. However, he added that one use of the Chinese language in a social context was early childhood learning and communication. Some parents, especially of those children enrolled in private schools, encouraged their children to learn the language. As it turns out, parents also want to practice this language among the closest peers of their children, i.e., friends, family members, and elders. There was high use of the Chinese language within the first- and second-degree relationships of a parent or a child.

“In the Philippines, we really don’t use Chinese that much. For some parents, they like their children to communicate with people who can speak Chinese. Some parents would like their children to experience speaking Chinese. For instance, asking a friend to come to their house and practice speaking Mandarin to the kids. It’s a way of practicing. As we go outside to speak Chinese, you meet Chinese, but this is not very evident at all. They just want to practice with their kids.”

Question 2. To describe how the Chinese language is being used in social functions.

Perceptions of the participants on the use of the Chinese language differed, i.e., communication, career, and academics. There was also an in-depth assessment of these instances, which further extended the valuation of the Chinese language within the Philippine setting. Theoretically, the narratives highlighted the multifaceted role that language plays in creating a sense of belonging, expressing affirmation and support, and connecting individuals within social and academic settings.

Three of the participants use Chinese as their language of communication. However, the degree of usage mattered depending on their perception of its application. One participant reflected on her experience of using the Chinese language to communicate with her older brother. Chinese language, like English, also aided the language barrier by providing a form of language applicable to two interacting individuals.

“For me, the importance of Chinese language is that it helped me communicate. For some, they find it difficult to learn Chinese. But luckily for me, I have an older brother in Malaysia who knows how to speak Chinese. Learning Chinese helped me understand my older brother. On the other hand, when you are in other countries, learning Chinese is very important because it shows respect to their language.”

“I’m taking up nursing, and I’m considering working overseas. Chinese is also taught in other countries, so if a person travels, knowing how to speak Chinese can also help them communicate to those that can only speak in Chinese. In everyday use, Chinese can help people to ask directions, greetings, and inquiring for prices of

products.”

Interaction falls beyond just communication. One participant highlighted that the use of Chinese language in their classroom setting was promising for mainstream learning. Their teachers use the Chinese language as a channel for encouragement and motivation. This was also another major component of language learning because of the role that language plays in creating a sense of belonging and comfort in academic settings. He highlights the importance of language in expressing positive reinforcement and affirmations, which can have a significant impact on an individual’s motivation and sense of achievement.

“There are instances of speaking Chinese in classrooms. Teachers can share their words of encouragement in Chinese. When you use the language, it makes you feel at home. When someone did very well, you may say, “You did a good job” in Chinese. I often use these. Sometimes, we use Chinese language when interacting with our friends.”

Question 3: To determine the components of Chinese language learning that are essential in social functions.

One participant recognized the role of Chinese language in classroom interaction. The theme that emerged was the impact of language barriers on academic performance and social interactions. The participant noted that she felt left behind when the teacher interacted with them in Chinese, indicating the importance of language proficiency for effective communication and engagement in the academic setting. Theoretically, this emphasizes the importance of language proficiency in academic and social settings and highlights the transformative power of language skills in personal and professional growth. It also highlights the potential barriers that language proficiency can create in academic settings and the importance of language education to support equitable access to educational opportunities.

“When I was still not fluent in Chinese, I felt left behind, especially when our teacher knew and interacted with us using the Chinese language. I don’t know how to respond to them when they have questions or said something to me. Now, what changed after I learned to speak basic Chinese? I realized I can use this in the future.”

Another prominent angle for personal valuation was the application of the Chinese language in a larger setting. One participant valued the use of the Chinese language because of its power to bridge cultural and linguistic differences and fostering positive social interactions. Hence, one participant also noted the importance of knowing Chinese as a tool for effective communication and building rapport with Chinese people. This theme highlights the practical benefits of language proficiency in professional and social contexts.

“People can also connect emotionally. If I am a Filipino, but I know how to speak Chinese, the Chinese people will be happy, like making an effort to learn their language. I learned in my Chinese classes are 早上好 (good morning) and 你好 (hello). For me, it helped me boost my confidence. It’s not only English and Tagalog that I know, but also Chinese.”

“Learning Chinese is an advantage because the Chinese people think that it’s difficult to interact with foreigners. Even if you’re speaking with them using Chinese, they still think you are speaking with them in English. They have that impression. Oftentimes, Chinese don’t understand you even if you are speaking with them in Chinese. So, if that’s that hard, what more if you don’t know how to speak Chinese?”

Furthermore, another theme that emerged was the role of language proficiency in creating comfort in social interactions. The speaker notes that knowing Chinese can help make conversations more

comfortable and connect individuals with Chinese culture. This theme highlights the importance of language proficiency in creating social connections and the role of language in cultural identity.

The value of Chinese language proficiency in creating emotional connections, practical advantages, and social comfort while also emphasizing the need for cultural awareness in language use. It highlights the importance of language proficiency in bridging cultural and linguistic differences and the potential barriers that language proficiency can create in social and professional contexts. It also emphasizes the role of language in cultural identity and the importance of cultural sensitivity and awareness in language use.

“Chinese language can also be a tool for opening up, like, ‘you know, I can speak Chinese, don’t be intimidated.’ It helps in making a comfortable conversation. I think the most important aspect of speaking the Chinese language is you know how to make people comfortable to speak with you. Also, knowing to speak Chinese connects you with the Chinese culture.”

“In terms of cultural context, it’s really good to value Chinese language as means of social communication. If you know the language, you may avoid offensive words. In Filipino, we have ‘po’ and ‘opo’ used as polite words. But in Chinese, they don’t have that. Chinese, instead use 请 (please), so you need to say this word all the time, so it’ll sound polite.”

7. Discussion

Question 1. To describe how the Chinese language is being used in social functions.

The use of the Chinese language in social functions revolved mainly on academics and interaction. The basic form of Chinese language use in the Philippines was in language teaching and integrating Chinese-only policy in the classrooms. Additionally, Chinese was also widely used among families and close relatives who share knowledge of the Chinese language.

In classrooms, the Chinese language was widely used as a language for communication. In the ecology of second language education, teachers typically play a significant role in making learning the language interesting (Wang et al., 2021). Under several motivational theories, intrinsic interest is recognized as the primary factor in students’ success in the classroom. Students are more likely to retain information when they find the learning process enjoyable (Jiao et al., 2022b; Wang et al., 2021).

Utilizing the language socialization model supported the personal valuation of CFLs in the Chinese language. Personal valuation involves the belief and perception of CFLs in the Chinese language. Analyzing personal valuation from the perspective of motivation and expectancy-value breaks down the language socialization argument into themes.

In the survey carried out by Gao (2014), most Australian school and college students’ motivation for studying L2 Chinese is driven by intrinsic motivation, which may be interpreted as an engagement in the Chinese language and culture. Additionally, strong motivation to learn a language, i.e., English, could influence the language achievement of a student. Weak motivation to learn the language can be linked to poor language performance (Guo and Bai, 2022). A recent study found that while learning situation motivation negatively impacted English proficiency, intrinsic interest motivation had a positive effect (Jiao et al., 2022b).

It was clear in this study that high school students value the Chinese language as it allows them to communicate with other students within their school. The students were motivated to learn the Chinese language because they saw its application within school premises. Their school encouraged them to use

the language in communicating with other students to essentially localize their competency to the language. Motivation for language use was a driving factor that influenced how the students perceived the use of language within social function contexts.

Recently, educators and researchers have come to recognize the need to provide students with time in the classroom to engage in intercultural comparison and reflection in order to foster the development of intercultural competence (Kennedy, 2020; Liddicoat and Scarino, 2013). As the principal experts and mentors within academic institutions, professors are crucial players in such a socialization process, regardless of whether they perceive themselves to be in such a capacity and regardless of whether their curriculum is expressly geared at the development of language abilities (Schneider and Jin, 2022).

“Some students have tried to become better speakers by diversifying their group of friends ... or their environment ... If they don’t have any American friends ... or if they don’t have to talk a lot during class, then they don’t make the progress that they could make ... in terms of their language skills” Schneider and Jin (2022).

Notably, the students thought that conversing with other students using the Chinese language allowed them to be accustomed to the language. It helps them to be familiar with the structure and lexicons used in the Chinese language. In fact, one student revealed that she used Chinese language even in conversing with her friends from other schools that offer Chinese language lessons. She believed that using the language itself does not only connect her with her friends but also allows her to develop her proficiency in the language.

The findings of the study indicated that for them to learn the Chinese language, their teacher encouraged them to use the language in the classrooms or even outside. Personal valuation shed light on the use of Chinese language as a mode of communication within the school community and among peers, including outside academic institutions. Essentially, the Chinese language allowed the students to socialize and interact with other people who share similar language use structures with them—an important component of how language socialization takes place.

Question 2. To describe how the Chinese language is being used in social functions.

Beginners typically lacked fundamental linguistic understanding and sentence-generating ability for communication. As a result, Zhao (2011) and Gong et al. (2020b) indicated that spoken Chinese classes should assist such students with imitating and practicing Chinese tones and intonation, as well as memorizing short words for regular communication. Intermediate learners are required to strengthen their normative language use, and advanced Chinese learners usually lack interactive communication methods.

For instance, one major use of Chinese language was practicing the use of it in classrooms along with native dialects in Zamboanga City. Translanguaging strategies can transform how teachers teach students, assist learners in practicing, and boost their academic potential (García, 2005; Nie et al., 2022). Translanguaging appeared to be a successful strategy for allowing students to express themselves and develop knowledge, hence stimulating students’ classroom engagement in language learning (Van den Branden, 2000; Zheng, 2021). This is what makes the learners of the Chinese language value the use of Chinese because it aids their academic engagement.

Translanguaging was used by the teachers in teaching their students how to speak using the Chinese language. For instance, teachers translate the Chinese words to local dialects so that their students learn them effectively and more quickly. The students saw value in this as translanguaging enabled them to

translate the Chinese language into a more comprehensible language. In essence, they realized that the Chinese language is a “handy” social language allowing them to easily translate words that have counterparts in Philippine languages. Translanguaging enabled the students to learn the language quickly and apply the language within social function contexts.

Additionally, personal valuation involves the perception of students on the instrumentality of the Chinese language. White (2008) argued that “in terms of language learning, the domains of beliefs which are acknowledged as relevant are the beliefs learners hold about themselves, about the language and language learning and about the context in which they participate as language learners and language users.” Perceived use of any target language can affect how the learners think about learning the language.

For students, the Chinese language is valuable in social functions because it provides an avenue for linking the language to local languages. Although some students thought that learning the Chinese language was complicated and hard, this study also showed that some used this language to communicate with their family members outside the country. The Chinese language became imperative in social functions because it connects people through one accessible language that is easily translated.

Certainly, this study provided the mechanisms of the Chinese language as an imperative tool for social functions. The study indicated that the Chinese language is a dynamic, flexible, and fluid language that can be translanguaged into other dialects for accessibility to the students.

Question 3: To determine the components of Chinese language learning that are essential in social functions.

Linguists realized that language learning is a more complicated process than simply acquiring linguistic patterns and that language acquisition and usage are influenced by social and cultural factors (Hall, 1995; Kennedy, 2020; Losey, 1995; McKay and Wong, 1996; Shum et al., 2011). These approaches to learning a language place a strong emphasis on all of the encompassing sociocultural processes, such as ethnic or racial sensitivity, which naturally occur throughout daily life (Kennedy, 2020; Shum et al., 2011; Thomas and Collier, 1997).

One participant in the study argued that learning the Chinese language was important because it helped in communicating with native Chinese speakers. He highlighted that native Chinese speakers still find it challenging to converse with them, even using the Chinese language. This was consistent with the study of Umeanowai and Lei (2022), who reported in their qualitative analysis that some learners of the Chinese language feel frustrated when they know Chinese people still cannot understand them even if they are speaking using Chinese. Students thought that learning the language enabled them to effectively communicate with Chinese people, which they believed to introduce cultural sensitivity.

Valuation of the Chinese language in social functions also involved metacognitive strategies. In this study, the role of metacognitive strategies was imperative in learning the Chinese language. Participants revealed that learning the Chinese language through interaction with other speakers of it helped them enhance their learning.

“The more you participate in social activities, by speaking Chinese every day, by putting all my devices in Chinese so that I can learn the language well and quickly.” Others also emphasized “interacting with Chinese friends and native speakers” (Umeanowai and Lei, 2022).

Additionally, this current study also showed socio-affective strategies becoming essential in the use of the Chinese language in social functions. Socio-affective strategies are described as “either interaction with another person or ideational control over effect” (O’Malley and Chamot, 1990). This indicates that

socio-affective methods involve communication, interpersonal interaction, and participation in different social activities, and exchanges with various groups of people (Umeanowai and Lei, 2022). When it comes to learning new languages, the most important socio-affective methods that language learners participate in are self-talk, cooperative learning, and inquiry for clarification.

Because the students were exposed to a school curriculum that encouraged the use of the Chinese language, they felt left behind when they were not able to communicate using the language. It showed that one of the components of Chinese language was its social application and influence on self-efficacy. In addition, socio-affective strategies were observed in this study, where students were communicating with Chinese people and speaking with them using the Chinese language.

Personal valuation in the Chinese language reflects the emotions and psychological components of the language. The students revealed that the ability to use the Chinese language, especially when conversing with Chinese people, introduced cultural sensitivity. Communicating with native speakers of Chinese not only influences learning but also encouraged social connection among people with different cultural backgrounds. Thematic analysis showed that learning the Chinese language relates to language socialization.

8. Conclusion

Language socialization looks beyond the context of learning within the corners of academic institutions. While personal valuation is a personal belief in the instrumentality of the language, there were underlying connections between these paradigms. The personal valuation was the perception of the learners on the instrumentality of the Chinese language in small components of their life, i.e., academic, social, and cultural. Personal valuation influences the likelihood of a learner interacting with a community that shares a common language with them. This was the mechanism for language socialization because it brings the learners into the reality of complex interpersonal interactions and language connections.

Using the multifaceted dimensions of instrumental orientation, sociocultural mechanisms, and psycholinguistic influence, the researcher was able to connect personal valuation to social functions. It was known that these two prominent concepts do not share connections between linguistics and language learning. However, this current study was able to identify that personal valuation enables the learners to integrate Chinese language into social functions. This hereby strengthens the language socialization model. From a pedagogical perspective, there was a need for a “third space” in harnessing sociocultural communication and cultural sensibility. Nevertheless, this study brought up the missing links between motivation and personal valuation and how these can influence communication and language use.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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