The Impact of Learning Environment on Motivation to Learn Chinese as a Foreign Language: A Case Study at the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam

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Abstract:

Motivation plays an important role in learning a second language, particularly in elective courses where classroom experiences affect student engagement. This study explores the important factors that affect Vietnamese students' motivation to learn the Chinese language at the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam (DAV), utilizing Dörnyei's (1994) Learning Situation Level as the primary theoretical framework. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research combines survey data from 134 students, in-depth interviews with teachers and learners, and classroom observations to evaluate how course design, teacher engagement, and peer interactions impact motivation. Quantitative results reveal that the learning environment (Mean = 3.530, SD = 0.089), course structure (Mean = 3.522, SD = 0.099), and teacher influence (Mean = 3.388, SD = 0.110) are significant factors shaping student engagement. The qualitative results imply that students who use task-based learning, active conversations, and entertaining multimedia tools often feel more motivated in their lessons. Conventional lecture-based learning might lower involvement and energy. This paper highlights how important digital learning tools, peer cooperation, and teacher excitement are in preserving motivation. These results illustrate the significance of situational elements in elective language learning situations, therefore improving our knowledge of second language motivation.

Keywords: Motivation; Second Language; Chinese Language; Learning Situation Level; Higher Education.

1. Introduction

In a time when global involvement depends on mastery of several languages, learning foreign languages has attracted a lot of interest in both scholarly and business spheres. English is still the most often spoken foreign language in Vietnam, but rising demand for Chinese language competency results from more commercial and cultural interactions with China. Institutions such as the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam (DAV) have thus brought Chinese as a second or foreign language choice, giving students chances to increase their linguistic capacity outside English. But students' reasons for learning Chinese differ greatly, which finally affects their long-term dedication and learning results. Improving teaching approaches and second language learning tactics depends on an awareness of the main motivating elements in this context.

Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) is part of the multilingual education approach of the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam (DAV), so serving students from all linguistic origins and learning routes. Chinese is taught either as a first foreign language (for those who choose Chinese as their main language of study) or as a second foreign language (for those who learn Chinese after reaching English competency). English is still the most often used foreign language for most students because of its worldwide relevance. Whether students aim to utilize Chinese for diplomatic jobs, business prospects, or cross-cultural communication, this dual-track strategy helps them to combine CFL study into their academic and professional objectives. This paper investigates the whole CFL learning experience instead of restricting the scope to a particular track and recognizes the presence of these two CFL learner groups at DAV. Chinese as a Foreign Language is part of Dav's multilingual education approach, so helping students from many language backgrounds and learning routes. Chinese is given as a first foreign language for students who choose Chinese as their major language or as a second foreign language for those who learn Chinese after mastering English; English is still the main foreign language used by most students since of its worldwide relevance. Whether they intend to utilize Chinese for diplomatic careers, business prospects, or cross-cultural communication, this dual-track method helps students to include CFL study into their academic and professional aspirations. This study notes the presence of these two groups of CFL students at DAV and investigates the larger CFL learning experience instead than confining the focus to a particular track.Motivation has been extensively studied in second language acquisition (SLA), with one of the most widely used theoretical models being Dörnyei's (1994) three-level framework (Shin, 2020). This model provides a holistic perspective on motivation, highlighting three distinct levels: the Language Level, which encompasses integrative and instrumental motivations; the Learner Level, where personal traits like self-confidence and the drive for achievement play a role; and the Learning Situation Level, which beautifully captures the dynamics of the classroom, teacher influence, and specific course factors. While research has explored all three dimensions of this framework, much of the focus in the Vietnamese context has leaned toward broader motivational trends, leaving the direct impact of classroom environments on language learning outcomes underexplored. Since students' learning experiences are significantly influenced by their educational settings, paying more attention to how the learning situation can foster sustained motivation is vital.

A well-structured learning environment can be a powerful motivator, whereas an ineffective one may lead to disengagement and attrition. Dörnyei's Learning Situation Level consists of three essential elements: course-specific, teacher-specific, and group-specific motivational factors. Course-specific factors encompass the relevance of the course content, assessment methods, and curriculum structure. Teacher-specific factors include teaching methodologies, enthusiasm, feedback mechanisms, and classroom management techniques. Group-specific factors include peer interactions, group cohesion, and the overall classroom environment. These elements shape students' learning experiences and significantly affect their motivation to continue studying languages.

Although prior research has investigated motivation in foreign language learning, there are notable gaps in the literature. First, few studies have focused exclusively on the Learning Situation Level in Vietnamese classrooms, despite its fundamental role in shaping student engagement. Most research has instead examined general motivational trends, often without in-depth exploration of how specific classroom factors influence students' persistence in language learning. Second, much of the existing literature heavily relies on self-reported surveys, which, while informative, may not capture the nuanced interactions between students, teachers, and the curriculum. A comprehensive approach that includes qualitative methods such as classroom observations and detailed interviews is essential for gaining deeper insight into the impact of the learning environment on motivation.

This study addresses gaps in understanding by investigating how classroom environments influence Vietnamese students' motivation to learn Chinese as a second foreign language at DAV. With a mixed-methods approach comprising surveys, classroom observations, and in-depth interviews, the study seeks to fully examine how course design, teaching practices, and peer relationships affect student motivation. The findings will strengthen theoretical understanding of second language motivation and offer pragmatic advice for teachers and legislators aiming at raising foreign language learning results in Vietnam.

2. Literature Review

Learning a second language (SLA) depends on motivation. It also greatly affects learners' involvement, tenacity, and general language competency. Using a three-level approach, Dörnyei's 1994 paradigm provides perceptive analysis of motivation in language acquisition: Levels of Language, Learners, and Learning Contextual Level.

The Language Level addresses learners' perceptions of the target language, encompassing integrative motivation—the desire to connect with the community of speakers—and instrumental motivation, which pertains to the practical benefits, such as career opportunities (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). The Learner Level examines individual characteristics, including self-confidence, anxiety, and personal goal-setting, all of which impact a learner's engagement (Dörnyei, 2009). Lastly, the Learning Situation Level is particularly relevant in structured educational environments, investigating how factors like

teacher influence, course design, and peer interactions affect motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021).

Research on motivation in SLA has primarily derived from Gardner and Lambert's (1972) socio-educational model, which distinguishes between integrative and instrumental motivation. While integrative motivation often receives more focus in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, studies indicate that instrumental motivation can be equally, if not more, significant in academic settings (Dörnyei, 2009). Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination Theory (SDT) differentiates intrinsic and extrinsic motivation by expanding upon these foundational theories. Learners who are intrinsically motivated typically exhibit greater engagement and better knowledge retention, whereas those driven by extrinsic factors tend to concentrate more on external rewards such as grades and job opportunities (Noels et al., 2000). In the case of Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL), students often demonstrate intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, with professional aspirations playing a vital role in sustaining their engagement (Papi & Khajavy, 2021).

Dörnyei's (2009) Second Language (L2) Motivational Self System (L2MSS) further expands on these ideas by identifying three elements: the Ideal L2 Self, which represents learners' aspirations for language proficiency; the Ought-to L2 Self, which reflects societal expectations; and the L2 Learning Experience itself, focusing on how teaching methods and classroom dynamics affect motivation. Since students at DAV are studying Chinese in an elective context, their motivation is likely influenced more by their classroom experiences than by external pressures, making the Learning Situation Level particularly relevant to understanding their motivation.

Learning Chinese as a second foreign language is a complicated combination formed by personal goals, social expectations, and many surrounding elements. Emphasizing the value of the ideal L2 self, theought-to L2 self, and the learning experience, the L2MSS offers a common framework for dissecting these motivations. Research indicates that how much effort kids invest in learning and extracurricular activities (Li & Tsung, 2024; Wen, 2022) highly predicts the ideal L2 self, which represents personal ambitions and dreams. Particularly among younger students, the ought-to L2 self is based on perceived social constraints and profoundly affects effort and outcomes (Wong et al., 2024). Crucially important are also contextual elements including the teaching approach and the learning environment. In a British CLIL program, for instance, students' motivation was much shaped by the topic matter, teaching strategies, and peer contacts (Zheng et al., 2023). In an online community initiative, similarly, variations in motivation were observed; the ideal and ought-to selves stayed the same (Cai, 2012).

Learning a language like Chinese can be motivated generally in two ways: utilitarian purposes, such as looking for employment, and non-utopian objectives, which could center on improving personal experiences or forging friendships (Lu et al., 2022). When we study the interaction between personal characteristics and contextual circumstances, the intricacy of motivation is clearly shown. Motivation can be much sustained by elements including self-regulation and positive learning opportunities (Wen, 2022).

Regarding learning a foreign language, both attitude and motivation are very important; therefore, encouraging a learner's interest usually depends on helping them to experience pleasant emotions (Zhao, 2015). Key reasons for learning Chinese among Japanese students are a mix of integration with the language, practical benefits, an interest in Chinese culture, peer recommendations, and the parallels between Chinese and Japanese personalities (Zhao, 2024). Research by Gao (2019) and Chien et al. (2021) indicates that when learning Chinese, integrative and instrumental elements inspire Thai students and Malaysian undergraduates. Fascinatingly, Malaysian pupils often show a leaning toward attitudinal motivation. Considering both personal aspirations and the larger learning environment, teachers can design customized plans that help increase motivation for students of Chinese as a second language by knowing these few motivating elements.

Learning Chinese at Vietnamese colleges is driven by several factors, including instructional strategies, personal development, and career prospects. Especially in line with global economic trends and the competitive employment market, many Vietnamese students regard learning Chinese as a road to acquire an ideal neoliberal identity (Luu, 2017; Nguyen, 2021). At first causing challenges in the language-learning process are external factors such academic expectations and work requirements. However based in self-determination theory, strategies that transform students from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation can significantly increase their involvement and success in learning a language (Muñoz-Restrepo et al., 2020). Among Vietnamese students, unique teaching approaches incorporating online assessments using Learning Management Systems (LMS) have shown amazing capacity to increase interest and academic performance. This suggests the likely benefits of adding comparable strategies into Chinese language teaching (Nguyen, 2023). When students study languages other than English, such Chinese, their motivations are significantly shaped by personal fulfillment, career objectives, and social surroundings. These components will help students to widen their horizons and inspire personal development (Lai, 2023). Enhancing the learning process for Vietnamese students studying Chinese at the university level requires on an awareness of and resolution of several motivating factors and teaching strategies. Still, encouragement of students to learn Chinese as a second foreign language presents challenges. Encouragement of natural drive and personal development—qualities necessary for success in language acquisition but sometimes disregarded in traditional classrooms—is one of the key difficulties. For example, even although a genuine love of the language and a motivation for personal growth would greatly assist in language acquisition, too much focus on immediate achievement may have detrimental consequences. This underlines the need of encouraging long-term participation rather than focusing just on fleeting success (Jiao et al., 2022).

For many students, learning new language might be difficult; thus, it is crucial to realize how motivation shapes this process. Students' attitude to language learning influences their self-awareness and capacity for self-management of their academics. We are aware of how much emotional components—such as the pleasure of learning against bored feelings—have influence. Students who find their education enjoyable may feel more confident and more competent in the language. Conversely, boredom can make it difficult to keep interested and driven. Important are also the classroom setting and the teaching strategies; they can inspire

drive or complicate successful achievement. For example, overseas students enrolled in China could find it difficult to adjust to various academic systems, which would affect their drive and general performance. Motivation is obviously multifarious and differs greatly among students depending on their backgrounds and educational experiences. Along with elements like anxiety and the need for social engagement, several motivations—personal connection or pragmatic ones—come into action.Furthermore, disengaging classroom activities, the challenges of language learning, and the demands of life can dampen the enthusiasm of motivated learners, reminding us that motivation does not always equal active participation. Additionally, as students grow older, motivation might wane, highlighting the importance of fostering a supportive atmosphere that enhances their expectations and offers them more control in their learning. By focusing on these areas, we can create more effective strategies that motivate students and support their journey in learning Chinese as a second foreign language. This might mean incorporating culturally relevant materials, fostering a nurturing learning environment, and leveraging technology to offer engaging, personalized learning experiences that resonate with students' interests and goals.

Particularly in elective language courses where students' dedication can profit from the quality of instruction and the classroom environment, teachers are really vital in maintaining the motivation of language learners (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). Studies have revealed that when teachers adopt dynamic, student-oriented approaches and provide customized feedback, students feel more involved (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). Dörnyei (2001) offers a four-phase model of motivating teaching strategies, which emphasizes: (i) Creating a warm and encouraging learning environment; (ii) Sparking initial motivation by connecting course material to students' passions and career aspirations; (iii) Keeping that motivation strong through engaging, goal-oriented activities; (iv) Supporting self-directed learning to nurture growth autonomy.This study seeks to address the following research questions based on the theoretical framework and the findings discussed in the literature reviewed above:

(1) What are the main motivational factors influencing students' engagement in learning Chinese as a foreign language at DAV?
(2) How do classroom environment, teaching methods, and peer interactions contribute to students' motivation and persistence in CFL courses?
(3) What challenges do students face in maintaining motivation, and how can instructional strategies be optimized to enhance engagement in CFL learning?

3. Methodology

This study uses a mixed-methods approach to examine Students' motivation to learn Chinese as a second foreign language at the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam: implications of the classroom dynamics, teaching strategies, and learning environment Combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, the study presents a whole picture of the several elements influencing student participation and perseverance. Combining survey data, in-depth interviews, and classroom observations guarantees a comprehensive knowledge of students's learning experiences by means of a multifarious analysis.

The study sample comprises 134 undergraduate students enrolled in Chinese language courses at DAV. All students are pursuing majors closely related to international communication, international relations, Asia-Pacific studies, international economics, international trade, international law, international trade law, or English language studies. A purposive sampling method was used to achieve a diverse representation of students with varying levels of motivation and engagement. Alongside the survey, 10 students and five teachers participated in semi-structured interviews, providing qualitative insights into their experiences with teaching strategies, classroom interactions, and motivation-related factors. Observations were conducted in three different Chinese language classes to further understand the role of classroom dynamics, allowing for direct assessment of teacher-student interactions, instructional methodologies, and peer collaboration.

Survey data was collected using a structured questionnaire to assess students' motivation levels and perceptions of the learning environment. The survey featured Likert-scale questions (from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) alongside open-ended questions, effectively capturing quantitative trends and qualitative insights. The questionnaire focused on three key dimensions based on Dörnyei's Learning Situation Level: the course structure and content, the role of instructors, and the impact of peer interactions on motivation. The survey data were analyzed using STATA, employing descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) and inferential statistical analyses (correlation and regression models) to examine the relationships between these motivational factors.

The questionnaire designed for this study is "*Currently, what determines your interest in learning Chinese is largely determined by what?*" (现在，你对学习汉语的兴趣主要由什么来决定？). The choices are:

A1.   Determined by my academic achievement in Chinese.
       (由我的汉语成绩决定)

A2.   Determined by my Chinese language teacher.
       (由我的汉语老师决定)

A3.   Determined by the quality of the Chinese language subject.
       (由中文课的上课质量决定)

A4.   Determined by the current use of Chinese textbooks.
       (由在使用的汉语教程决定)

A5.   Determined by my Chinese class.
       (由我的中文班环境决定)

To complement the poll results, semi-structured interviews were done with professors and students. Students' goals, difficulties learning Chinese, and experiences with teaching strategies and classroom settings were among the topics the interviews investigated. Instructors were asked to reflect on their teaching strategies and levels of student engagement, while

differences in motivation across proficiency levels were observed. Each interview lasted approximately 15 minutes, was note-taken, and then transcribed for thematic analysis. This qualitative data provided more profound insights into student-instructor interactions, uncovering themes not fully captured in the survey.

Classroom observations were conducted over six weeks during the first semester of the 2024-2025 school year to examine how teaching styles, student participation, and group dynamics influence motivation in real time. A structured observation framework was used to assess the effectiveness of interactive teaching strategies, levels of student engagement, and the role of collaborative learning. Observations revealed notable differences in student participation levels between classrooms that employed discussion-based learning, peer collaboration, and real-world language applications versus those that followed traditional lecture-based instruction. Later processed and categorized depending on developing themes, field notes methodically captured elements on student-teacher interactions, classroom environment, and degree of involvement.

Results from the survey, interviews, and classroom observations were synthesized using a mixed-methods analytical approach, therefore guaranteeing a strong and triangulated study of student motivation. STATA was used for quantitative analysis of survey data so enabling statistical comparisons of motivating factors. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) methodology, which helped to identify recurring themes linked to course structure, teaching efficacy, and peer influences, interview data were examined using thematic analysis. Reiterating important themes from the survey and interview results, classroom observation data were methodically examined to determine patterns of student involvement and instructional success.

Throughout the research procedure, ethical issues were closely taken under account. Before answering the survey, interviewing, or observing classrooms, each participant had informed permission. Confidentiality and anonymity were rigorously preserved; all identifying information was deleted from study notes and transcripts.

This study integrates quantitative survey data, qualitative interviews, and direct classroom observations to provide a comprehensive and multidimensional analysis of how the learning environment influences student motivation in Chinese language acquisition. The results have important ramifications for curriculum development and pedagogical enhancements in second foreign language education since they provide insightful analysis of successful teaching strategies, classroom participation approaches, and the function of peer interactions.

4. Results

This study's findings reveal the multifaceted role of the learning environment, teaching practices, and classroom dynamics in shaping students' motivation to learn Chinese as a second foreign language at the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam. Drawing upon data from survey

responses (N=134), in-depth interviews (with students and instructors), and classroom observations, the results highlight how the interplay of these factors contributes to student engagement and persistence in language learning.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Factors Determining Interest in Learning Chinese

Category	Mean	Std. Err.	95% Conf. Interval (Lower)	95% Conf. Interval (Upper)	Number of Obs
A2 (Teacher)	3.388	0.11	3.171	3.605	134
A3 (Subject)	3.522	0.099	3.326	3.719	134
A4 (Textbook)	3.291	0.098	3.097	3.485	134
A5 (Class)	3.53	0.089	3.354	3.706	134

Table 1 presents the mean estimates, standard errors, and confidence intervals for four categories: Teacher, Subject, Textbook, and Class, corresponding to the responses from A2 to A5 in the survey. The total number of observations is 134.

The quantitative analysis underscores the learning class environment as the most influential factor, with a mean score of 3.53 (SD = 0.089), followed closely by the Subject content quality (Mean = 3.522, SD = 0.099) and Teacher influence (Mean = 3.388, SD = 0.110). These findings align with qualitative insights from interviews, where instructors and students emphasized that an engaging and interactive classroom atmosphere is pivotal in fostering motivation. Observational data further validate this, indicating that classrooms incorporating collaborative learning activities, real-world applications, and student-centered approaches exhibited higher engagement and participation levels than those following traditional lecture-based methods.

Two most important factors influencing drive are course structure and material relevancy. Although the curriculum is usually seen as well-organized, teachers pointed out that students find difficulties with the intensity of courses, especially at intermediate and advanced levels. One major obstacle found to be incorporating specialist vocabulary and sophisticated grammatical structures was found to be asking pupils to engage in intensive self-study. Students, who mostly updated internet resources reflecting modern language use and cultural trends, reflected this attitude by expressing the need of extra learning tools outside textbooks. Notwithstanding these difficulties, students usually found the course interesting because of interactive components including peer projects, role-playing games, and debates.

Student involvement is much shaped by the classroom environment as well. Observations found clear variations in student involvement between highly interactive classrooms and those with a mostly teacher-centered orientation. Students in classrooms where teachers included

group discussions, debates, and language application exercises showed more drive, more readiness to contribute, and more peer connection. On the other hand, in environments where education was mostly lecture-driven and there were less cases of free participation and active inquiry, student involvement was obviously lower. Survey results support these conclusions as, with a mean score of 3.53, students judged the classroom atmosphere as a major factor influencing motivation.

A common topic in teacher and student interviews was the availability of extra learning materials. Although textbooks offer set direction, students stressed the need of digital resources, real language exposure (videos, podcasts), and hands-on exercises to improve their language acquisition process. Teachers noted this disparity and suggested that more immersive learning experiences should come from increased digital integration—that is, from applications for language learning and online practice platforms.

With teacher impact getting a mean score of 3.388 (SD = 0.110), another important factor became the part teachers play in sustaining motivation. Key motivators highlighted repeatedly as practical teaching strategies, classroom management, and building close ties between teachers and students. Students said that teachers who used gamification, multimedia integration, and real-world application exercises—among other teaching techniques—very much enhanced their excitement and dedication to language acquisition.

Qualitative evidence emphasizes the influence of student-centered, active learning approaches. Students respond well to dynamic instructional strategies, according to replies to both surveys and interviews, especially those including interactive components such games, peer assessments, and role-playing simulations. Observations further support the fact that teachers who promoted interaction and group problem-solving in highly engaged students were those ones. More conventional, lecture-based approaches, on the other hand, lowered student involvement and produced passive learning habits.

One main motivating element turned out to be the student-teacher interaction. Students reported in interviews that they were more involved and driven in classrooms where teachers gave individualized comments, pushed active involvement, and exuberant subject matter excitement. On the other hand, pupils were less likely to actively seek explanation or participate in cases when teachers adopted a formal or aloof attitude. This emphasizes how important a positive learning environment and helpful criticism are for sustaining long-term drive.

The results underline even more how classroom dynamics—especially peer cooperation and rivalry—help to shape student motivation. Students strongly prefer group-based projects and peer-supported learning activities, according to survey findings, and appreciate cooperative learning environments. Observational studies confirm this: students do better in groups and are more involved.

Group projects, peer reviews, and group discussions improved confidence and learning results. Students said that working with peers enabled them to better apply language skills and

consolidate knowledge. This is especially pertinent in second language acquisition since social engagement is essential for building communicative competency and reinforcement of learning.

One interesting feature of classroom dynamics is the motivating power of healthy rivalry. Student interviews reveal that rivalry among peers motivates them to grow, so encouraging them to study more and polish their language abilities. Unlike negative rivalry, in which students feel demoralized, most participants saw competition as a healthy challenge. Still, this view changed depending on degree of skill. Although most intermediate and advanced students responded well to competitive settings, beginning level pupils occasionally felt threatened by it. Lower-level classes might gain from a more regimented, encouraging learning style suggested here.

Overall, the findings highlight how intricately environmental, educational, and interpersonal elements interact to influence student desire to learn Chinese as a second foreign language. The results show that student perseverance in language acquisition results from a well-organized course, an interesting and encouraging classroom environment, dynamic teaching approaches, and strong peer relationships taken together. According to the research, adding more modern digital tools, boosting interactive components in the classroom, and supporting a balanced classroom dynamic help to improve motivation and learning results even more.

5. Discussion

This study explored the motivational elements that affect student engagement in learning Chinese as a foreign language at the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam, emphasizing the Learning Situation Level from Dörnyei's motivation framework. The results indicate that teacher support and classroom environment significantly impact CFL motivation, corroborating Dörnyei's (1994) Learning Situation Level and highlighting the essential role of immediate educational contexts in influencing language learning engagement. This relevance is especially pronounced in non-immersive CFL environments, where chances for real-world application are scarce. Additionally, the study's results align with Luu (2017), who pointed out the significance of the learning environment on academic engagement among students at a university in Ho Chi Minh City. Like Luu's studies, this one stresses the need of creating an interesting and encouraging classroom environment to keep student motivation in CFL learning. This implies that, apart from personal preferences, institutional and pedagogical elements are quite important in determining students' inclination to participate in the acquisition of their second foreign language.

Echoing earlier research that classroom setting, instructional design, and the availability of interesting learning resources greatly influence students' propensity to persist in language study, the results confirm the vital significance of the learning environment in sustaining motivation. Higher motivation levels among students who thought the classroom was interactive and helpful imply that a student-centered teaching approach is effective in CFL environments. The results line up with studies on foreign language classroom anxiety, which

propose that low-anxiety, communicative learning settings encourage more participation. Observational statistics also show that classroom pupils stressing cooperative learning, role-playing exercises, and discussion-based activities showed more participation than those in environments dominated by lectures. These results support demands for pedagogical changes in elective CFL courses toward task-based language acquisition and communicative language instruction.

These encouraging results however show that little exposure to real language use still presents a great difficulty. CFL students sometimes lack chances for real-world application outside the classroom, unlike students learning English as a foreign language, which has been noted as a demotivating element. To improve exposure to natural language use, teachers should thus include digital immersion strategies including virtual interactions, online conversational practice, and multimedia tools.

The findings underline even more how important teachers are in determining student motivation since they support already published studies showing how much instructional strategies, teacher excitement, and feedback quality affect learner involvement. When teachers used interactive tools including gamification, real-world simulations, and culturally appropriate materials, students reported more drive. This strengthens the case that, especially in optional language classes, pedagogy is absolutely essential for preserving motivation. These results fit Dörnyei's motivating teaching approach, which stresses establishing a positive learning environment by means of encouragement and enthusiasm, so stimulating initial motivation by means of course content linked to students' interests, so sustaining motivation by means of engaging, goal-oriented learning activities, and so promoting self-regulated learning to foster autonomy. By proving that these ideas are especially pertinent in non-mandatory second foreign language learning environments, where external demands such employment needs are less motivating than in main foreign language study, this study adds to the body of knowledge. The results imply that motivating strategy education should be included into teacher preparation courses, therefore arming teachers with tools to maintain participation in optional CFL courses.

The findings show that peer interaction is a strong motivator and support studies on cooperative learning in SLA. Students in more individualized learning environments reported lower confidence, willingness to interact, and motivation; those that participated in planned group activities, peer reviews, and cooperative projects indicated more These results emphasize the part social interaction plays in cognitive and affective engagement and match socio-cultural theories of language learning. While peer rivalry was proven to be a motivating factor for intermediate and advanced students, it had mixed results for beginning level students, with some claiming that too intense competition caused anxiety and decreased desire to engage. This emphasizes the requirement of balanced peer learning strategies including organized and cooperative competitive components to fit different learning profiles. This result suggests that, especially in non-mandatory language courses, curriculum designers should give collaborative learning frameworks top priority in CFL programs using peer-assisted learning models to keep involvement.

Despite the positive effects of engaging classroom environments, teacher enthusiasm, and peer collaboration, the study also identified significant motivational challenges in CFL learning. The most prominent issue is the perceived difficulty of the Chinese language, particularly character memorization and tonal pronunciation, which aligns with prior research indicating that the cognitive demands of Chinese discourage long-term commitment. The second major challenge is the lack of immediate instrumental benefits compared to other foreign languages. Unlike English, widely recognized as a global lingua franca, students often struggle to see the immediate career advantages of learning Chinese, leading to fluctuating motivation. To improve students' perceived return on investment, curriculum developers should thus include more significant career-oriented components such corporate partnerships, certification programs, and internship possibilities. Academic load and conflicting priorities also became clear as major obstacles to ongoing motivation since students claimed that their main coursework took precedence over Chinese language studies. These findings support previous studies on demotivation in elective language learning, reinforcing the need for flexible, modular learning pathways that accommodate students' broader academic commitments.

The findings contribute to SLA motivation theory by reinforcing the Learning Situation Level as a critical determinant of engagement in elective second foreign language courses. They also expand on Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System by demonstrating that classroom-related factors, including teacher influence, peer collaboration, and curriculum design, play a more decisive role than external motivational pressures in non-mandatory learning contexts. The study provides several practical recommendations from a pedagogical perspective, including enhancing interactive learning environments by incorporating task-based learning, digital tools, and real-world applications to increase engagement. Teacher professional development should focus on motivational strategies, digital pedagogy, and learner-centered teaching techniques. Aligning CFL courses with job opportunities and practical applications helps to strengthen career-oriented learning paths and hence support instrumental motivation. By including organized cooperative and competitive activities into peer learning models, one can maximize involvement and reduce stress.

6. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

One important drawback is the simultaneous cross-sectional character of the motivation of the research. A dynamic concept, motivation changes depending on students' experiences, development, and outside factors. Deeper understanding of how students' involvement changes and how instructional tactics support ongoing motivation would come from a longitudinal research design tracking motivating changes at several phases of CFL acquisition.

Although this paper concentrates on the Learning Situation Level of Dörnyei's motivation theory, next studies could investigate the interaction between integrative motivation and cultural identification in CFL learning. Chinese is a language and a means of cultural transmission, hence it would be interesting to investigate how students' views about Chinese culture affect their drive and readiness to keep on CFL study. Comparative studies spanning

many linguistic and cultural backgrounds could offer further understanding of how sociocultural elements affect drive.

The development of technology in foreign language instruction presents a fascinating study direction. The benefits of interactive digital technologies and multimedia learning are shown in this work. More study is required, though, to find how gamified mobile apps, VR simulations, and AI-driven adaptive learning affect CFL engagement and retention. By using artificial intelligence in language education, one might create customized paths that satisfy different objectives, hence reducing dropout rates in CFL courses. Future study can help to provide a more complex and comprehensive knowledge of motivation in CFL learning by addressing these constraints and investigating these approaches, therefore guiding both theoretical models and teaching strategies in second foreign language acquisition.

7. Conclusion

Focusing on the studying Situation Level of Dörnyei's motivational framework, this study examined the main motivating elements impacting students' participation in studying Chinese as a foreign language at the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam. Using a mixed-methods approach comprising surveys, in-depth interviews, and classroom observations, this study offers empirical understanding of how the classroom environment, teaching strategies, and peer relationships affect students's motivation. The results support the larger conversation on second language acquisition motivation by providing theoretical and pedagogical ramifications for CFL education in non-Chinese-speaking environments.

The results show that student motivation is more strongly influenced by classroom-specific factors such teacher support, course structure, and interactive learning opportunities than by personal learner characteristics or outside incentives. Strong links between students' motivation and the perceived relevance of course material, the incorporation of interesting instructional strategies, and teacher excitement show themselves from survey data. These findings coincide with earlier research stressing that immediate classroom experiences in elective foreign language courses significantly influence motivation more than long-term aspirational goals.

Further investigation emphasizes how effectively communicative, task-based, and technologically advanced learning strategies support involvement. Classroom observations show that while concurrently lowering foreign language fear, interactive teaching strategies include role-playing, group discussions, and project-based learning help to increase motivation levels. Teacher effect became clear as students responded better to teachers that use several instructional tactics, offer helpful comments, and foster a friendly classroom environment. Furthermore important is peer cooperation since structured peer interactions and cooperative learning approaches have been linked to higher confidence and more eagerness to express ideas. The study does, however, also discover mixed results from competitive classroom dynamics. Although some students gain from the inspirational boost of peer rivalry, others suffer more anxiety, implying the requirement of a well-balanced instructional approach.

Even with these encouraging elements, some difficulties remain in keeping student involvement in CFL learning. The seeming difficulty of Chinese, especially in character memorizing and tonal pronunciation, which undermines student confidence and endurance, presents one major obstacle. Furthermore, although students recognize the possible employment advantages of studying Chinese, many find it difficult to relate their courses to practical uses because of little exposure to actual language use. Academic load significantly hinders motivation since students in elective CFL courses sometimes give their main topic of study top priority over language learning. Dealing with these difficulties calls for a curriculum that combines career-oriented learning paths, increases language immersion possibilities, and offers flexible course structures fit for students's larger academic obligations.

The results of this study imply many ramifications for instructional practice and CFL curriculum design. First, models of student-centered learning should be given top priority stressing interactive, task-based, technologically advanced teaching strategies to maintain motivation. To improve student involvement, teacher preparation courses should include digital pedagogy, classroom management practices, and motivating teaching approaches. Further development of peer-assisted learning models and techniques to lower foreign language fear might help to maximize classroom motivation. Second, instructional designs should include scaffolded learning methodologies, gamification aspects, and more exposure to real language use to improve long-term memory considering the difficulties presented by the complexity of Chinese. Adding more career-oriented and practical application elements to the curriculum can help to raise students' perceived value of Chinese competency, hence encouraging more exceptional long-term dedication.

Maintaining motivation in CFL learning calls for a multifarious strategy combining accurate career-oriented applications, interactive classroom instruction, and helpful teacher-student contacts. By tackling important motivating issues and refining instructional tactics, educators and legislators may create more dynamic and successful CFL learning environments that support long-term language acquisition and student persistence. The results of this study add to the increasing corpus of knowledge on SLA motivation and provide pragmatic ideas for improving CFL instruction in non-Chinese-speaking environments.

Appendix

The following four descriptive statistical tables correspond to four distinct variables, labeled A2 to A5, each representing a specific survey question. The data from these tables have been integrated into Table 1 in the paper's Results section.

Mean estimation		Number of obs = 134				
	Mean	Std.	err.	[95%	conf.	interva]
A2	3.388	0.110	3.171		3.605	

Mean estimation		Number of obs = 134				
	Mean	Std.	err.	[95%	conf.	interval]
A3	3.522	0.099	3.326		3.719	

Mean estimation		Number of obs = 134				
	Mean	Std.	err.	[95%	conf.	interval]
A4	3.291	0.098	3.097		3.485	

Mean estimation		Number of obs = 134				
	Mean	Std.	err.	[95%	conf.	interval]
A5	3.530	0.089	3.354		3.706	

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