

# Motivational Influences in Chinese Language Learning of Thai University Students

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## Abstract

As Chinese language education grows in importance in Thailand, understanding student motivation has become increasingly relevant. However, limited research has examined how family background and parental support shape university students' motivation to learn Chinese, particularly in distinguishing between Chinese-heritage and non-heritage learners. This study addresses this research gap by investigating the role of family-related factors in influencing learner motivation. The objectives of this study were to: (1) examine the overall level of motivation of Thai university students learning Chinese; and (2) identify differences in motivation between Chinese-heritage and non-heritage students, with a specific focus on parental support. A mixed-methods design was employed. Quantitative data were collected from 200 students using a 37-item questionnaire administered on a 5-point Likert scale, with participants selected through simple random sampling. Instrument validity was verified through expert evaluation, with all items achieving Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) scores of 0.67 or higher. Reliability analysis indicated strong internal consistency (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.978$ ). Qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with 10 purposively selected participants. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to present overall motivational levels, and content analysis was used to interpret the interview findings. The findings showed a high level of overall motivation among Thai university students learning Chinese ( $M = 3.71$ ,  $S.D. = 0.44$ ). Interview results further indicated that parental encouragement, cultural exposure, and emotional support played influential roles in sustaining

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students' motivation to learn Chinese. Thai-Chinese students demonstrated higher intrinsic motivation than non-Chinese Thai students. The study highlights the importance of family engagement and suggests that universities should collaborate with families to foster supportive learning environments that enhance students' motivation to learn Chinese.

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## Introduction

With the deepening of diplomatic and economic relations between China and Thailand, the importance of Chinese language in Thailand has significantly increased, leading to a so-called “Chinese fever” (Chen, 2017). The Thai government has designated Chinese as one of the main foreign languages, and an increasing number of schools and universities have introduced Chinese language programs. Consequently, learner motivation has emerged as a central focus in Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) research, as it is widely recognized as a critical determinant of successful second language acquisition (Gardner, 1985; Yang & Chanyoo, 2022). Among the influencing factors, family background and parental support have gained increasing scholarly attention, yet their specific roles in shaping student motivation within the Thai CFL context remain underexplored. Therefore, this study investigates the motivational patterns of Thai university students learning Chinese, with a particular focus on how family-related factors influence intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Motivation to learn a foreign language is shaped by multiple factors, including individual aspirations, learning environment, and sociocultural influences. Among the various factors influencing language learning motivation, family-related elements—including family background and parental support—are particularly prominent. Previous studies have shown that students' socioeconomic status, parental education level, ethnic identity, and parental support patterns significantly shape their motivational orientations (Liu & Chiang, 2019; Fan & Williams, 2010).

In Thailand, family influence is closely intertwined with sociocultural values that shape students' perceptions of education and learning responsibility (Junla & Yotanyamaneewong, 2024). These cultural values often lead students from Chinese-heritage families to internalize parental expectations as personal goals. For instance, ethnic Chinese families' students often show stronger intrinsic motivation due to cultural identity and familial expectations, while non-Chinese students tend to be more extrinsically motivated by career or academic goals (Wen, 2024). Emotional and cultural support from parents fosters intrinsic motivation by building confidence and interest, while practical benefits such as career opportunities drive extrinsic motivation (Shengyao et al., 2024; Eker & Yildizli, 2025).

However, most existing research on Thai students' Chinese learning motivation lacks in-depth analysis of how specific family background factors (Thai-Chinese families and non-Chinese Thai families) and parental support mechanisms interact to influence intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. This study addresses this research gap by exploring the types of motivation among Thai university students learning Chinese and examining the impact of family background and parental support on their motivation. By focusing on the familial dimension of language motivation within the Thai educational context, this study contributes meaningful insights for educators, policymakers, and parents to better support students' Chinese language learning.

### Research Objectives

1. To examine the types of motivation among Thai students learning Chinese at a Thai public university.
2. To explore the influence of Thai family backgrounds in motivating of Thai students in learning Chinese at a Thai public university.
3. To identify the types of parental support that influence motivation of Thai students learning Chinese at a Thai public university.

### Literature Review

The section covers:

#### 1. Theoretical Foundations of Language Learning Motivation

This part introduces Gardner's socio-educational model and Dörnyei's motivational theory. Gardner (1985) defined motivation as a combination of effort, desire to achieve a goal, and positive attitudes toward language learning. He distinguished between integrative motivation, which relates to cultural affinity and social integration, and instrumental motivation, which is tied to practical benefits such as employment. Dörnyei (2001), on the other hand, built a more dynamic model incorporating intrinsic motivation, based on enjoyment and interest, and extrinsic motivation, driven by rewards and obligations. He proposed that extrinsic motivation can become internalized over time and introduced the L2 Motivational Self System, consisting of the Ideal L2 Self and the Ought-to L2 Self. Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) further complements these frameworks by emphasizing the role of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering sustained motivation.

#### 2. The Role of Family Background and Parental Support

This section emphasizes how family-related factors impact motivation. According to Liu and Chiang (2019), students' socioeconomic status, parental education, and ethnic background shape motivational patterns. Pinneo and Nolen (2024) found that higher parental education correlates with stronger academic motivation. Duan (2025) noted that cultural identity serves as a pivotal factor in cultivating intrinsic motivation among students of Chinese heritage. Qian & Jin et al. (2024) highlighted the importance of emotional parental support, while Davis-Kean (2005) and Deci & Ryan (2000) discussed that socioeconomic factors, specifically parental income,

have an indirect association with children's academic achievement. Grolnick and Pomerantz (2009) emphasized the value of autonomy-supportive parenting in encouraging self-driven learning. Ernawati et al. (2022) further confirmed that everyday parental encouragement promotes learning persistence, especially in second language acquisition contexts.

### 3. Thai-Chinese Sociocultural Context and Family Educational Values

Thailand is a multicultural society shaped by centuries of interaction between Thai and Chinese communities, with Chinese migration dating back to the Ayutthaya and early Rattanakosin periods. As a result, a large Thai-Chinese population has become an integral part of Thai society, contributing to the country's economic, linguistic, and cultural landscape (Santasombat, 2022). The Thai-Chinese community is characterized by significant linguistic diversity, including Teochew, Hokkien, Cantonese dialects, and Mandarin, which influences intergenerational language transmission patterns (Yang & Meyer, 2025). Many Chinese-heritage families in Thailand maintain traditional cultural practices and prioritize passing on Chinese language and values to younger generations, while also integrating into Thai society (Prasopsombat, 2025). In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on Mandarin education among Thai-Chinese families due to its practical value in economic and diplomatic exchanges between China and Thailand (Bi, 2021). These community characteristics shape the family background and parental support patterns for Chinese language learning, making them important contextual factors for this study.

Family plays a central role in shaping students' socialization and educational values in the Thai-Chinese context (Elsayed, 2024). Thai and Thai-Chinese families place strong emphasis on *bunghun*—a moral value reflecting gratitude, indebtedness, and reciprocal obligation toward one's parents—which serves as a significant motivational force for academic effort and achievement (Soonsinpai, 2009). Another key value is filial piety, rooted in Confucian tradition, which encourages children to honor family expectations, respect parental guidance, and uphold family reputation through academic success (Guo & Li et al., 2022). As a result, Thai-Chinese learners experience a unique motivational environment that integrates both instrumental and integrative orientations. Students are motivated to learn Chinese not only for career advancement but also to preserve cultural heritage and fulfill family expectations (Cao & Tananuraksakul, 2022). This pattern contrasts with Western learners, who generally place greater emphasis on autonomy and self-directed learning, reflecting a more individualistic educational orientation (Teuber & Tang, et al., 2021). Therefore, understanding the Thai-Chinese sociocultural and family-centered value system is essential for interpreting the distinctive motivational patterns among Chinese heritage students in Thailand and offers important contextual insight for this study.

### 4. Previous Studies on Thai Students' Motivation to Learn Chinese

Research on Thai learners of Chinese has consistently shown that they are motivated by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Ye (2016), Liu (2017), and Yang and Chanyoo (2022) reported that interest in Chinese culture, personal enjoyment of learning the language, and aspirations for academic or professional success commonly drive students' motivation. Recent studies further highlight that Thai learners' motivation is shaped by multiple interrelated dimensions.

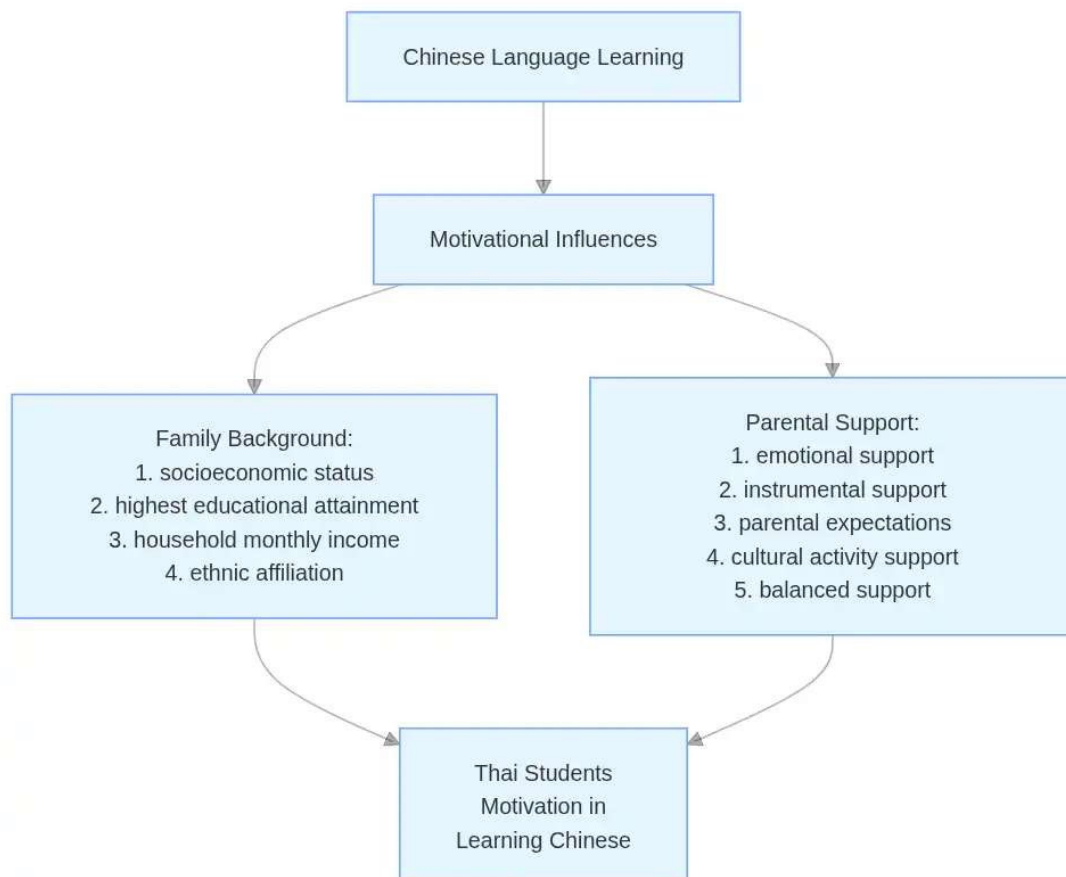
For instance, Cao and Tananuraksakul (2023) found that Thai undergraduates’ motivation to learn Chinese is strongly influenced by future career prospects, further education opportunities, and family expectations, indicating the interplay between ideal L2 selves and ought-to L2 selves. Tong and Chayanuvat (2022) emphasized that Chinese language learners in Thailand are also motivated by cultural identity and the desire to maintain connections with Chinese heritage. Similarly, Zhang and Chinokul (2023) noted that supportive learning environments and positive teacher–student interactions enhance students’ self-efficacy and sustained interest in Chinese language learning. Hou (2016) and Li and González (2021) also identified parental encouragement and self-efficacy as influential factors.

Despite these findings, most existing research has not sufficiently examined how specific family background variables (e.g., parents’ education, ethnicity, and economic status) and parental support mechanisms shape intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in the Thai context. As such, there remains a lack of systematic analysis explaining how familial influences interact with motivational orientations. This study addresses this research gap by focusing on the familial dimension of motivation among Thai university students learning Chinese.

## Research Framework

Figure 1

*Conceptual framework*



## Research Methodology

### 1. Research Design

A mixed methods of quantitative and qualitative research was used in this study. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The quantitative data provided basic information to study the motivation of public Thai university students to learn Chinese, and whether family background had affected students' motivation. Apart from the survey, selected participants had been recruited for semi-structured interviews. The study was conducted from January 2025 to March 2025 at a Thai public university.

### 2. Research Population and the sample Groups

#### 2.1 Questionnaire Respondents

This study was conducted with Chinese language students from a public university in Thailand. Out of approximately 400 students, a sample of 200 was selected using simple random sampling, following the Taro Yamane (1973) formula to ensure a 95% confidence level.

#### 2.2 Interviewees

After the questionnaire survey, 10 students were chosen for semi-structured interviews using purposive sampling. These students were selected based on their family backgrounds, with 5 students from Chinese-heritage families and 5 from non-Chinese families. This sampling design ensured diversity in perspectives related to family influence on language learning motivation.

### 3. Research Instruments

This study used two main research instruments: a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview.

#### 3.1 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was adapted from Dörnyei's (2001) motivation framework and designed to measure intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. It also included items related to family background and parental support. The questionnaire consisted of 37 items divided into three parts. The first part collected demographic information (Items 1-8), the second part focused on family background and types of parental support (Items 9-17), and the third part assessed students' motivation to learn Chinese based on intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions (Items 18-37). Items in the second and third parts were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire was developed based on Dörnyei's (2001) motivational theory.

All questionnaire items were adapted from existing motivation scales grounded in Dörnyei's (2001) theory and were administered in their original English form. The adaptation process focused on selecting and refining items to ensure relevance and clarity for Thai university students learning Chinese as a foreign language, while preserving the original theoretical constructs. Through this process, Dörnyei's abstract motivational constructs were systematically translated into concrete, context-sensitive questionnaire items suitable for quantitative analysis.

Drawing on Dörnyei's emphasis on the social context of motivation, the questionnaire

further incorporated a set of items examining family-related motivational influences, including parental encouragement, emotional support, material support, and value transmission regarding Chinese language learning. These items were designed to capture how external social factors interact with learners' internal motivational orientations.

To ensure content validity, three experts reviewed the questionnaire using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC), and all items scored 0.67 or above, which is considered acceptable (Rovinelli & Hambleton, 1976). Reliability was confirmed with a pilot test involving 30 students, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.978, indicating high internal consistency.

### 3.2 Semi-structured Interview

The semi-structured interview included 5 open-ended questions designed to explore students' perceptions of their motivation and their family's influence on their language learning. The questions addressed themes such as parental involvement, emotional support, expectations, and cultural identity. The Semi-structured interview questions were: 1) Why do you want to learn Chinese? 2) Were you influenced to learn Chinese by your parents or did they suggest you learn Chinese? 3) Have your parents always cared or supported you in learning Chinese? 4) Do your parents care more about your Chinese achievement than your interest in learning Chinese? 5) What kind of support would you like your parents to provide in your Chinese learning or what suggestions do you have for them?

The interview protocol was also reviewed by three academic experts using the IOC method, with all items achieving an IOC score above 0.67, ensuring strong content validity. These interviews provided qualitative depth to complement the quantitative findings and allowed a more nuanced understanding of individual experiences.

## 4. Data collection and analysis

### 4.1 Data collection

Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Rangsit University (COA.No.RSUERB2025-039). Participants were informed of the study's purpose, voluntary participation, and right to withdraw at any time, and written informed consent was obtained.

The data collection process began with the distribution of questionnaires to 200 Chinese language students from a public university in Thailand. The sample size was calculated using the Taro Yamane formula to ensure statistical reliability at the 95 percent confidence level (Yamane, 1973)

After collecting the questionnaire data, 10 students were selected through purposive sampling for semi-structured interviews. The sampling criteria encompassed four aspects: (1) clear self-identification as having a Chinese heritage or non-Chinese background; (2) willingness to openly discuss family dynamics; (3) representation of diverse parental education levels, ranging from high school to postgraduate; (4) geographic diversity in terms of family origins (urban vs. rural). This group included 5 students from Chinese-heritage families and 5 from



non-Chinese families, and their questionnaire responses showing distinct patterns in family background and parental support. This sampling design ensured diversity in perspectives related to family influence on language learning motivation. Each interview lasted 20-30 minutes, was conducted in Thai, and was audio-recorded with the participants' consent.

Data were collected over a three-month period, from January to March 2025. The questionnaire survey was administered online to undergraduate students enrolled in Chinese language courses at public universities in Thailand. Participation was voluntary, and respondents completed the questionnaire within approximately 10–15 minutes. During the same period, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants to complement the quantitative data. The interviews were carried out online and audio-recorded with participants' informed consent. All data collection procedures were completed within a single academic semester.

#### 4.2 Data analysis

For the quantitative data, analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 26. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, mean, and standard deviation were used to examine overall motivation levels and family background factors. Cross-tabulation was applied to explore relationships between demographic variables and motivational patterns, while Pearson correlation was used to analyze associations between types of parental support and motivational outcomes (George & Mallery, 2003)

The qualitative data from interviews were analyzed through thematic content analysis. The process followed Lichtman's (2013) "Three Cs" model, which includes coding, categorizing, and conceptualizing. Transcripts were reviewed to identify key patterns and themes related to parental support, cultural identity, and motivational development. These themes were then interpreted in relation to the overall research objectives to provide a comprehensive understanding of how familial factors shape students' motivation to learn Chinese in the Thai university context (Mackey & Gass, 2016; Lichtman, 2013)

The researcher will maintain strict confidentiality of all participant data and response to be used solely for the purpose of this thesis. Ultimately, the participants' information and opinions will be presented as complete research data rather than individual response.

## Findings

### 1. Analysis of Questionnaire

#### 1.1 Analysis of General Information

The general information of the 200 participants (from Items 1-8) was analyzed using descriptive statistics to understand their demographic characteristics. The results showed that the majority of participants were female, accounting for 77.5 percent, while males made up 22.5 percent. Most students were in their third or fourth year of study, indicating that they had significant exposure to Chinese language learning. Regarding ethnicity, 63.5 percent of respondents came from non-Chinese families, whereas 36.5 percent were from Chinese-heritage families.



In terms of parental education, most parents had completed high school or a bachelor's degree, and the largest portion of family monthly income ranged between 10,001 and 20,000 Baht. These findings suggest a diverse student background and provide important context for interpreting motivation levels and the influence of family-related factors.

### 1.2 Analysis of Students Chinese Motivation

The analysis of questionnaire responses revealed that Thai university students demonstrated a moderately high overall motivation to learn Chinese, with a mean score of 3.71 and a standard deviation of 0.44. Among the two types of motivation measured in this study, intrinsic motivation (Q28-Q37) achieved an average score of 3.77, while extrinsic motivation (Q17-Q28) had an average score of 3.71, with intrinsic motivation slightly higher than extrinsic motivation. Specifically, under the intrinsic motivation dimension, items such as "I like Chinese TV series, movies, and music." and "I am interested in Chinese culture" reached a mean score of 3.77, indicating that learners exhibit strong intrinsic interest and subjective pleasure in Chinese learning. In the extrinsic motivation dimension, items related to external goals—such as "I study Chinese to find a good job" and "I study Chinese to pass exams"—also maintained a high level with a mean score of 3.71.(see Table 1)

**Table 1**

*Descriptive statistics for students' motivation to learn Chinese*

Item	Question Content	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Q18	I want to study in China.	3.83	0.38	High
Q19	I want to work in China after completing my studies.	3.32	0.54	High
Q20	I want to travel to China for culture experience.	3.81	0.41	High
Q21	I want to find a good job.	3.95	0.21	High
Q22	I want to pass Chinese exams in school.	3.97	0.16	High
Q23	I want to immigrate to China in the future.	3.07	0.59	Medium
Q24	I want to get diploma in Chinese language.	3.96	0.20	High
Q25	I want to master one more language.	3.86	0.35	High
Q26	I believe learning Chinese will contribute to my country's economic development.	3.69	0.46	High

Table 1 (Continue)

Item	Question Content	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Q27	Learning Chinese will hopefully lead to better future diplomatic relations between China and my own country.	3.66	0.47	High
Q28	Learning Chinese allows other countries to understand my own country more.	3.67	0.47	High
Q29	I like Chinese entertainment (e.g., actors, singers).	3.76	0.43	High
Q30	I feel happy when learning it.	3.67	0.47	High
Q31	I like Chinese TV series, movies, and music.	3.90	0.30	High
Q32	I like Chinese people and want to communicate with them better.	3.69	0.46	High
Q33	I like Chinese history.	3.66	0.54	High
Q34	I like Chinese culture, customs and art.	3.82	0.41	High
Q35	I like my Chinese teachers and enjoy learning from them.	3.86	0.35	High
Q36	My friends also learn Chinese which motivates me.	3.91	0.28	High
Q37	Speaking Chinese is seen as a mark of good education and culture awareness.	3.74	0.44	High
	Total	3.71	0.44	

### 1.3 Analysis of Students' Motivation for Learning Chinese

As shown in Table 2, all items achieved high mean scores (4.12–4.48, S.D. =1.31–1.69). The top three influential items were Q10 (family rewards for Chinese learning, M=4.48), Q16 (encouragement for Chinese-related activities, M=4.45), and Q11 (support linked to family's Chinese business connections, M=4.39). In contrast, practical support items—Q15 (overcoming learning difficulties, M=4.12), Q13 (future importance of Chinese, M=4.16), and Q14 (provision of learning resources, M=4.16)—though still highly rated, were less prominent. (see Table 2)

**Table 2**

*Mean and standard deviation of students' family influence on Chinese learning motivation*

Item	Question	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
Q9	My family often encourage me to learn Chinese.	4.25	1.58	Very high
Q10	My family reward me for learning Chinese (e.g., material rewards or praise).	4.48	1.31	Very high
Q11	My family have business connections with Chinese partners and encourage me to continue in this direction.	4.39	1.69	Very high
Q12	I need to communicate with my family.	4.34	1.63	Very high
Q13	My family believe that learning Chinese is very important for my future (e.g., finding a good job).	4.16	1.39	Very high
Q14	My family provide me with resources for learning Chinese (e.g., books, courses, etc.).	4.16	1.37	Very high
Q15	My family help me overcome difficulties in learning Chinese.	4.12	1.37	Very high
Q16	My family encourage me to participate in Chinese-related activities (e.g., competitions, cultural events).	4.45	1.42	Very high
Q17	My family feel proud of me for learning Chinese.	4.34	1.51	Very high
	Total	4.30	1.47	Very high

## 2. Analysis of Semi-structured Interview

The data of the interviews were analyzed based on Lichtman (2013) by using a coding system qualitative data analysis techniques consisting of reaching the data into categories, which later was grouped into concepts. The analysis was shown in Table 3 below:

Table 3

*Thematic analysis of the interviews*

Interview Data	Categorizing	Concepts
- Grew up listening to grandparents speaking Chinese - Parents suggest learning for heritage reasons	Family cultural influence	Family Background Influence
- Parents planned Chinese learning early, aiming for business advantage	Family expectation for career	
- Parents naturally expose child to Chinese language and culture at home	Family environment	
- Parents strictly require attending Chinese classes every weekend	Family imposed education	
- Parents encourage based on child's love for Chinese media	Family acceptance of hobby-driven learning	Parental Support Influence
- Parents emotionally encourage learning, buy books, attend events together	Emotional support and involvement	
- Parents mainly care about academic achievements (grades, scholarships)	Achievement-oriented support	
- Parents give freedom to explore Chinese interests without grade pressure	Interest-driven encouragement	
- Parents support financial-ly (tuition, teachers, materials)	Financial support	Personal Interest
- Parents prioritize child's happiness over academic results	Emotional priority support	
- Fascination with Chinese history, poems, ancient culture	Love for Chinese traditional culture	
- Love for Chinese songs, TV shows, and desire to understand lyrics	Media-driven personal interest	
- Curiosity about Chinese characters and the beauty of writing system	Curiosity and exploration	Personal Interest
- Interest in Chinese traditional arts (painting, tea ceremony)	Artistic-cultural passion	

**Table 3** (Continue)

Interview Data	Categorizing	Concepts
- Learning Chinese to study abroad with scholarship	Academic and career future planning	Future Goals
- Learning Chinese for future business career opportunities	Career investment motivation	
- Learning Chinese to gain competitive edge in global job market	Global competitiveness	
- Learning Chinese as a personal challenge to grow and improve	Personal growth and resilience	

Following the initial coding and categorization of the interview data as presented in Table 3, seven key themes were identified. To determine the relative prominence of each theme across the ten interview participants, a frequency analysis was conducted. This additional step was essential to evaluate which themes were commonly shared among participants and therefore represented significant family-related motivational patterns. Table 4 illustrates the frequency of each theme, highlighting the most dominant factors influencing students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to learn Chinese.

**Table 4**

*Theme frequency of family-related factors shaping intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (n = 10)*

Theme (Aligned with L2 Motivational Self System)	Description	No. of Responses (n=10)
1. Family Cultural Capital and Intrinsic Motivation Development (Ideal L2 Self)	Family cultural values shaping learners' internal interest, identity, and intrinsic desire to learn Chinese	8
2. Heritage Identity and Intrinsic Motivation Aspirations (Ideal L2 Self)	Intrinsic motivation driven by heritage identity, ancestry, and desire to reconnect with cultural roots	7
3. Parental Expectation and Extrinsic Motivation Regulation (Ought-to L2 Self)	Extrinsic motivation driven by fulfilling parental expectations, obligation, family honor, and filial norms	9
4. Affective Family Support Enhancing Intrinsic Motivation (L2 Learning Experience)	Emotional encouragement, praise, and supportive learning environment fostering intrinsic interest	8

Table 4 (Continue)

Theme (Aligned with L2 Motivational Self System)	Description	No. of Responses (n=10)
5. Resource and Opportunity -Based Family Support (L2 Learning Experience)	Providing financial support, materials, tutoring, and language exposure that reinforce motivation	6
6. Extrinsic Future-Oriented Motivation (Career and Education)	Extrinsic motivation driven by career prospects, scholarships, and academic advancement	10
7. Intergenerational Cultural Transmission (Family Background Factor)	Influence of grandparents or extended family in maintaining Chinese language and traditions	7

Table 4 presents the distribution of thematic categories identified from the interview data, aligned with the L2 Motivational Self System framework. Seven themes were identified, with varying frequencies across the ten interview participants.

The most frequently reported theme was Extrinsic Future-Oriented Motivation (Career and Education), which was mentioned by all participants (n = 10). This was followed by Parental Expectation and Extrinsic Motivation Regulation (Ought-to L2 Self), reported by nine participants (n = 9).

Themes related to intrinsic motivation and learning experience were also commonly reported. Family Cultural Capital and Intrinsic Motivation Development (Ideal L2 Self) and Affective Family Support Enhancing Intrinsic Motivation (L2 Learning Experience) were each mentioned by eight participants (n = 8). Heritage Identity and Intrinsic Motivation Aspirations (Ideal L2 Self) and Intergenerational Cultural Transmission (Family Background Factor) were reported by seven participants each (n = 7).

## Discussion

A key innovation of this study is the identification of four distinct types of parental support—emotional support, cultural support, achievement-oriented support, and resource-based support—and evidence of their differential effects on learning motivation. Emotional support (e.g., encouragement, praise, empathy) and cultural support (e.g., family traditions, exposure to Chinese cultural media, heritage practices) were found to foster enjoyment, self-confidence, and long-term intrinsic motivation. In contrast, achievement-oriented support (e.g., pressure to obtain high grades, scholarships, or academic recognition) enhanced extrinsic motivation but risked creating stress, fear of failure, and dependency on external validation. Resource-based

support (e.g., paying for tutors, learning materials, or exchange opportunities) benefited both motivational types but was most effective when combined with emotional encouragement. These distinctions move the field beyond the binary assumption that “parental support = positive influence,” showing that certain forms of support can unintentionally hinder intrinsic motivation if they become controlling rather than autonomy-enhancing.

Another significant contribution lies in revealing an internationalization-driven motivational internalization mechanism in Thai higher education. As Thailand strengthens its economic, academic, and cultural engagement with China, students increasingly view Chinese as a pathway to global mobility, regional competitiveness, and international career prospects. This study shows that while internationalization initially fosters extrinsic motivation, it can eventually transform into internalized motivation when learners develop a sense of cultural appreciation, belonging, or personal purpose through family influence or positive learning experiences. This mechanism enhances current motivational theory by illustrating how globalization and cultural identity interact to shape motivation in non-Western, family-oriented societies—an angle underexplored in previous studies dominated by Western perspectives.

Building on these theoretical insights, the following section discusses the practical implications of the findings for key stakeholders involved in Chinese language education in Thailand: Chinese language educators, curriculum designers, and parents.

#### 1. Implications for Chinese language educators

Grounded in Dörnyei’s (2001) L2 Motivational Self System, the findings suggest that Chinese language educators in Thailand should attend not only to students’ performance outcomes but also to the motivational processes shaped by family influence. Given that emotional and cultural forms of parental support were found to foster intrinsic motivation and the Ideal L2 Self, teachers can play a compensatory and reinforcing role by creating autonomy-supportive classroom environments that validate students’ identities and personal goals. Pedagogical strategies such as culturally meaningful tasks, reflective activities linking language learning to students’ life aspirations, and positive feedback emphasizing effort and self-development can help internalize initially extrinsic motives. Conversely, for students exposed primarily to achievement-oriented parental pressure, teachers should be cautious about overemphasizing examinations and grades, as excessive performance focus may reinforce the Ought-to L2 Self at the expense of sustained engagement. These practices align with prior research indicating that autonomy-supportive instruction enhances intrinsic motivation and long-term persistence in second language learning.

#### 2. Implications for curriculum designers

At the curriculum level, the results underscore the importance of balancing instrumental and integrative orientations within Chinese language programs. While the growing internationalization of Thai higher education naturally promotes instrumental motives—such as employ ability, scholarships, and academic mobility—curriculum designers should ensure that these goals are complemented by opportunities for identity construction and meaningful



cultural engagement. Drawing on Dörnyei's framework, curricula that integrate cultural content, project-based learning, intercultural communication, and experiential activities can strengthen learners' Ideal L2 Self and facilitate the internalization of extrinsic goals. The findings further suggest that curricula overly centered on standardized testing or short-term outcomes may risk narrowing students' motivational profiles. Therefore, a spiral curriculum that progressively links practical language use with cultural understanding and personal relevance may be more effective in sustaining motivation over time.

### 3. Implications for parents

The differentiated effects of parental support identified in this study carry important implications for parents of Chinese language learners. Emotional and cultural support—such as encouragement, shared cultural experiences, and positive attitudes toward Chinese learning—appears to be particularly conducive to intrinsic motivation and long-term engagement. In contrast, achievement-oriented support, while effective in enhancing extrinsic motivation, may become counterproductive if perceived as controlling or excessively demanding. Consistent with self-determination theory and Dörnyei's emphasis on autonomy, parents are encouraged to adopt support strategies that emphasize choice, personal growth, and enjoyment rather than obligation alone. Resource-based support, including tutoring or learning materials, is most beneficial when accompanied by emotional encouragement and realistic expectations. These findings suggest that parental involvement should be conceptualized not in terms of intensity, but in terms of quality and motivational orientation.

### 4. Integrative implications

Taken together, these implications highlight the need for coordinated efforts among teachers, curriculum designers, and parents to foster balanced motivational development. By aligning instructional practices, curricular structures, and family support with learners' Ideal L2 Self and intrinsic motivational needs, stakeholders can mitigate the risks of narrowly instrumental motivation and promote more sustainable engagement with Chinese language learning in the Thai context.

In summary, integrating both theoretical interpretation and practical implications, this research argues that family influence should be reconceptualized not as a uniformly positive force, but as a multifaceted system that can both foster and restrict motivational development, depending on the form and intensity of support. This perspective not only challenges prior assumptions but also opens new directions for enhancing motivation in Chinese language learning in Thailand. A more balanced, autonomy-supportive, and culturally enriched approach—embraced by teachers, parents, and institutions—will be essential to sustaining students' long-term engagement and meaningful connection with the Chinese language.

## Conclusion and Implication

### 1. Conclusion

This study examined how family background and parental support shape the motivation of Thai university students learning Chinese. The findings revealed a moderately high level of

motivation ( $M = 3.71$ ,  $S.D. = 0.44$ ), with intrinsic motivation slightly higher than extrinsic motivation. Students from Chinese-heritage families demonstrated stronger intrinsic motivation, largely influenced by cultural identity, intergenerational values and the desire to maintain heritage, while non-heritage students were more extrinsically motivated by academic achievement, scholarships, and future employment prospects.

Parental support was found to be a decisive factor in strengthening motivation. Students who received emotional and cultural parental support reported significantly higher motivation ( $M = 3.94$ ,  $S.D. = 0.38$ ) compared to those with limited support ( $M = 3.51$ ,  $S.D. = 0.52$ ). Emotional encouragement fostered confidence and interest, whereas cultural engagement deepened intrinsic motivation by reinforcing meaningful connections to the language. These patterns align with Fan and Williams (2010) and Grolnick and Pomerantz (2009), who emphasized that parental involvement enhances student motivation and learning engagement.

Interview findings further confirmed that students were more persistent and confident when their parents showed interest in their learning, participated in cultural activities with them, and supported their emotional needs. Overall, the study shows that both personal aspirations and family-driven influences work together to shape students' learning motivation. Recognizing this dynamic can help educators and policymakers strengthen language learning outcomes through purposeful collaboration with families.

## 2. Implication

This study offers several important implications for Chinese language education in Thailand. First, it highlights that emotional and cultural parental support is essential for fostering long-term intrinsic motivation, while overly achievement-driven parenting may lead to pressure-based motivation. Therefore, family involvement should focus on encouragement, cultural exposure, and autonomy support rather than strict performance demands.

Second, universities and Chinese language programs should actively build home-school partnerships rather than treating learning as the responsibility of the classroom alone. Establishing communication channels with parents can help families better understand effective ways to support their children's learning at home. Such collaboration is particularly important because family influence plays a different role for Chinese-heritage and non-heritage students, meaning one-size-fits-all approaches are ineffective.

Finally, the findings contribute to filling a gap in the literature by demonstrating that family influence in the Thai context is not uniform, but varies significantly depending on cultural background, support style, and parental beliefs. This highlights the need for culturally responsive strategies that integrate family participation alongside classroom instruction to sustain students' long-term motivation to learn Chinese.

## Research Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Although this study offers meaningful insights, several limitations should be acknowledged. The data were collected from one public university, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to other institutions and regions in Thailand. In addition, the qualitative sample was

relatively small, and the study relied solely on students' self-reported perceptions of parental support, which may not fully reflect parents' actual intentions and practices. Future research should therefore involve a larger and more diverse sample across multiple universities, and include parents' and teachers' perspectives to gain a more holistic understanding of family influence. Longitudinal or comparative studies are also recommended to explore how motivational patterns evolve over time and whether the mechanisms identified in this study apply across different cultural or educational contexts.

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## Ethical Approval

Ethics is concerned with the philosophical principle about what is right and wrong. To a massive extent, the validity and reliability of a take a look at upon the ethics of the investigator (Merriam and Tisdell , 2016).

In order to ensure the ethical standards of the study, the researcher had obtained approval from the Ethics Committee of Rangsit University. The approval certificate number was COA. No.RSUERB2025-039.

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