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AN EXPLORATION OF COLLEGE STUDENTS' SELF-EFFICACY AND CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN LEARNING CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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By

Cheng Chen

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, friends, and professors who encouraged and supported me during the whole doctoral journey.

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Abstract

By Cheng Chen

University of the Pacific
2021

China's growing economic power has led to over one hundred million people speaking Chinese world-wide (Chai & Wang, 2017). Although the Chinese language may not replace English as the most popular language worldwide, it is acknowledged that the Chinese language is an indispensable part of the future world (Zhao & Huang, 2010). However, there appears to be a paucity of research into the role self-efficacy and establishing good habits as a language learner play in non-native speaking students experiencing success while learning Chinese.

A phenomenological study was conducted to investigate college students who were early Chinese learners in a beginning level preparatory course of a non-academic long-term Chinese language program, their experiences of learning Chinese, and the association, if any, between students' self-efficacy as learners of Chinese and their demonstration of characteristics of Good Language Learners (GLLs). Data were collected from a survey, questionnaires, and one-on-one interviews.

Six research findings were generated from research data and based on early Chinese learners, referred to students in the findings. Research findings from this study are listed as followed.

Research Finding 1: Students' perceptions of their strengths in learning Chinese are the strengths related to language aspects and personality traits.

Research Finding 2: Students' perceptions of their challenges in learning Chinese are language-related challenges, challenges from the teachers, challenges from the curriculum setting, and challenges from the class members.

Research Finding 3: Students have at least five characteristics of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009) which are Characteristics 1, 2, 3, 6, and 7 and partial of Characteristics 8 and 10.

More specifically, early Chinese learners have a positive attitude toward Chinese and Chinese speakers (Characteristic 1). They have strong motivations to learn Chinese (Characteristic 2). They are confident in becoming successful learners (Characteristic 3). They actively organize Chinese practices (Characteristic 6). They have ways to express themselves correctly (Characteristic 7). They are willing to engage in Chinese-speaking situations (partial of Characteristic 8). They use strategies to learn Chinese (partial of Characteristic 10).

Research Finding 4: Students tend to have Characteristics 4 and 5 and partial of Characteristic 10.

To be more specific, early Chinese learners tend to have their minds prepared for making mistakes when using Chinese and to learn from the mistakes (Characteristics 4). They tend to like learning Chinese (Characteristics 5). And they tend to try out new strategies while learning Chinese (partial of Characteristic 10).

Research Finding 5: Students lack Characteristic 9 and partial of Characteristic 8.

To be more specific, early Chinese learners are not used to working directly in Chinese (Characteristic 9). They are neither ready to use Chinese as frequently as their native languages (partial of Characteristic 8).

Research Finding 6: There is no obvious association between students' efficacy and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009) while learning Chinese.

This study investigated college students who were early Chinese learners in a beginning level preparatory course of a non-academic long-term Chinese language program, their experiences of learning Chinese, and the association, if any, between students' self-efficacy as learners of Chinese and their demonstration of characteristics of Good Language Learners (GLLs). This study offered recommendations for teachers, administrators, and policy makers, in non-academic long-term Chinese language programs and in the field of teaching Chinese as a foreign language. Last but not least, recommendations for further research were provided for researchers in the field of teaching Chinese as a foreign language.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Table

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GLLs   Good Language Learners

TCFL   Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

There are many languages in China. As mentioned in *Chinese Language and Literature*, almost all ethnic groups, including the Han group (the largest ethnic group in China), have their own languages (Yao, 2006). The Han language is used by Han people and other ethnic groups as a common language in communication (Yao, 2006). Therefore, the Han language is commonly referred to as the "Chinese language" or "Mandarin" (Yao, 2006).

China's growing economic power has led to over one hundred million people speaking Chinese world-wide (Chai & Wang, 2017), which is considered as an avenue for China to showcase its power on the world stage. Although Chinese may not replace English as the most popular language worldwide, it is acknowledged that Chinese is an indispensable part of the future world (Zhao & Huang, 2010).

Current researchers in the field of teaching Chinese as a foreign language mainly focus on topics such as Chinese language programs (Hou, 2015; Liu & Li, 2018; Lu, 2016; Tian, 2019; Shi, 2015; Sun, 2015; N. Zhang, 2020), learning Chinese as a foreign language (will be abbreviated as learning Chinese) (Ding, 2016; Li & Wei, 2015; Qu & Zhong, 2020; Wang, 2016; Yang & Wang, 2017), issues and challenges in teaching Chinese as a foreign language (will be abbreviated as teaching Chinese) (Chen, 2015; Everson & Xiao, 2008; Gao, 2014; Hu, 2010; Liu & Lo Bianco, 2007; Orton, 2011; Singh & Han, 2014; Yue, 2017). There appears to be a paucity of research, however, into the role self-efficacy and establishing good habits as a language learner play in non-native speaking students experiencing success while learning Chinese.

The purpose of this study was to investigate college students enrolled in a non-academic long-term Chinese language program, their experiences of learning Chinese, and the association,

if any, between students' self-efficacy as learners of Chinese and their demonstration of characteristics of Good Language Learners (GLLs) (Edge & Garton, 2009). What follows is background on self-efficacy and characteristics of GLLs.

Students' Self-Efficacy and Language Learning

Self-efficacy is an important component of Social Cognitive Theory (Pajares, 1996). Social cognitive theorists reject the idea that human behaviors are formed and controlled by personal characteristics or external situations (Bandura, 1989). However, social cognitive theory promotes that "behavior, cognition and other personal factors, and environmental influences all operate as interacting determinants that influence each other bidirectionally" (Bandura, 1989, p. 2). Self-efficacy describes individual differences in people's perceptions of their abilities and competencies in handling given situations (Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Zimmerman, 2000).

According to Bandura, people may reach different levels of achievement when they have the same knowledge base and skills because of different levels of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993). In academic settings, students' self-efficacy makes their learning achievement different from that of one another even though they are at the same cognitive development level (Bandura, 1993). There is evidence that language learners' self-efficacy is a crucial factor in acquiring a new language (Shi, 2017) and may influence students' beliefs toward learning a new language (Genç et al., 2016).

Current research on the relationship between students' self-efficacy and language learning mainly focuses on English language learning, including the relationship between students' self-efficacy and English language achievement (Ahmadian & Pasand, 2017; Balcı, 2017; Carroll & Fox, 2017; Tavakoli & Koosha, 2016; Yang et al., 2016). Findings reveal that

students' self-efficacy can positively affect their English achievement (Yang et al., 2016) and English achievement in specific skills (Balcı, 2017; Li & Liu, 2013; Raoofi et al., 2017).

In addition, researchers have inquired into the relationships between student' self-efficacy and gender, anxiety, and attribution (Carroll & Fox, 2017; Dogan, 2016; Ersanli, 2015; Ho, 2016; Hsieh & Kang, 2010; Huerta et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2015; Kırmızı & Kırmızı, 2015; Li & Liu, 2013; Woodrow, 2011). It is hard to reach a consensus about the relationship between students' gender and self-efficacy. Researchers, such as Dogan (2016), Kim et al. (2015) and Kırmızı and Kırmızı (2015) believe that there is a significant correlation between students' gender and self-efficacy, while Ersanli (2015) and Carroll and Fox (2017) disagree. On the other hand, students' self-efficacy is found to have a negative correlation with anxiety (Dorgan, 2016; Li & Liu, 2013; Huerta et al., 2016; Ho, 2016). In addition, Hsieh and Kang (2010) indicate that students who are more self-efficacious perceive their learning outcomes more as products of internal and personal control.

Students' Self-Efficacy and Learning Chinese as a Foreign Language

Several research studies have been conducted to study students' self-efficacy in learning/teaching Chinese. Researchers have illustrated their findings in two ways. Researchers have investigated the factors that might influence Chinese language students' self-efficacy (L. Huang, 2018; Ren, 2012; Wang, 2012; Wang, 2018; Xu, 2016; Zhang, 2015; Zhang, 2014; Zhao & Wang, 2016). Researchers have indicated the relationship between Chinese language students' self-efficacy and Chinese learning achievement (Li, 2013; Wang, 2014; Wu, 2016; Zheng, 2015), motivations to learn Chinese (Ren, 2012; L. Huang, 2018; Wang, 2013), attribution style (Li, 2013; Z. Li, 2016) and anxiety in learning Chinese (Xu, 2016; Zhang, 2014).

First, researchers claim that geography/nationality (Ren, 2012; Wang, 2012; Zheng, 2015), gender (L. Huang, 2018; Zhao & Wang, 2016), age, (Zhang, 2014), and length of learning Chinese (Wang, 2018; Zhang, 2014; Zhao & Wang, 2016) are factors that influence students' self-efficacy in learning Chinese. However, opposing voices exist. Xu (2016) states that nationality/geography has no significant influence on students' Chinese self-efficacy. Zheng (2015), Wang (2018), Xu (2016), and Zhang (2014) all assert that there is no significant relationship between gender difference and Chinese language students' self-efficacy. Zheng (2015) and Zhao and Wang (2016) deem that age has no significant influence on students' Chinese self-efficacy.

Second, it is found that Chinese language students' self-efficacy has a positive correlation with their Chinese learning achievement (Wang, 2014; Zheng, 2015). In addition, there is a significant correlation between students' learning self-efficacy and their attribution of success and ability in high achievement groups (Z. Li, 2016). Furthermore, a significant relationship exists between self-efficacy and motivation of Chinese language students (Ren, 2012; L. Huang, 2018) and Chinese learning strategies (Wang, 2013). A negative correlation between self-efficacy in Chinese learning and anxiety is revealed (Xu, 2016; Xue, 2018; Zhang, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

Albert Bandura firstly labeled the term self-efficacy to describe individual differences in perceived abilities when dealing with a particular situation (Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Zimmerman, 2000). Wood and Bandura (1989) defined self-efficacy as "beliefs in one's capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to meet given situational demands" (p. 408). As mentioned earlier, in academic settings, even though students are at the same cognitive development level, students' self-efficacy makes their learning

achievement different from one another (Bandura, 1993). Language learners' self-efficacy is found to be a crucial factor in acquiring a new language (Shi, 2017) and may influence students' beliefs toward learning a new language (Genç et al., 2016). In this study, self-efficacy in learning Chinese of college students who were early-stage Chinese learners in a non-academic long-term Chinese program was investigated.

In this study, I have employed Edge and Garton's (2009) descriptions of the characteristics of GLLs as the theoretical framework. Studies on good language learners (GLLs) emerged in the mid-1970s (Norton & Toohey, 2001). This topic is within the field of learning styles and strategies (Wong & Nunan, 2011) and mainly investigates the characteristics that constitute GLLs.

Edge and Garton (2009) developed a concrete list of general characteristics of GLLs. They point out that individuals who are successful language learners do not necessarily have all the characteristics listed below, but GLLs as a group usually have these in common. The detailed descriptions of the characteristics of GLLs are as follows:

(1) Have a positive attitude to the language they want to learn and to speakers of that language,

(2) have a strong personal motivation to learn the language,

(3) are confident that they will be successful learners,

(4) are prepared to risk making mistakes and learn from them,

(5) like learning about the language,

(6) organize their own practice of the language,

(7) find ways to say things when they do not know how to express them correctly,

(8) willingly get into situations where the language is being used, and use it as often as they can,

(9) work directly in the language rather than translate from their first language (L1),

(10) think about their strategies for learning and remembering, and consciously try out new strategies (Edge & Garton, 2009, p. 5).

From the perspective of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009), a deep understanding of college students who were early Chinese learners, referred to in this study as students, in a non-academic long-term Chinese language program of their self-efficacy in learning Chinese and their learning experiences were generated. This theoretical framework assisted me in learning more about the characteristics of GLLs that students have, tend to have, or lack. I employed this theoretical framework to investigate the association, if any, between students' self-efficacy in Chinese learning and the characteristics of GLLs that they exhibit.

Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate college students enrolled in a beginning level preparatory course of a non-academic long-term Chinese language program, their experiences of learning Chinese, and the association, if any, between their self-efficacy as Chinese learners and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs.

A qualitative, phenomenological study was conducted with college students who were early Chinese learners in the non-academic long-term Chinese program at East Coast University in Shanghai, the pseudonym for the institution in this study, through the lenses of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993) and characteristics of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009). A brief introduction of the research site will be introduced later in detail.

Research Questions

The following three research questions and two sub-questions guided this study:

1. What is the nature of students' efficacy while learning Chinese?

1a. What are students' perceptions of their strengths in learning Chinese?

1b. What are students' perceptions of their challenges in learning Chinese?

2. What characteristics of GLLs, if any, do students exhibit while learning Chinese?

3. What is the association, if any, between students' efficacy and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs while learning Chinese?

Description of the Study

A qualitative phenomenological study was conducted to investigate college students who were early Chinese learners, their experiences of learning Chinese and the association, if any, between their self-efficacy as Chinese language learners and their demonstration of the characteristics of GLLs in a beginning level preparatory course of the non-academic long-term Chinese program at East Coast University in Shanghai, the pseudonym for the institution in this study. The phenomenon experienced by participants in this proposed study is defined as learning Chinese as a foreign language in a beginning level preparatory course of a non-academic long-term Chinese language program at East Coast University in Shanghai. The research site of this study, the beginning level preparatory course of the non-academic long-term Chinese program, will be mentioned in a shorter term, the beginning level preparatory course of the Chinese Program, throughout this study. What follows is a brief introduction of the research site.

The preparatory course in the Chinese Program aims at teaching students basic Chinese skills as well as about Chinese culture. The preparatory course separates students into two different level classes, which are beginning level and intermediate level classes. The ratio of the number of students in beginning level and intermediate level classes is ten to one. That is to say, most students in the preparatory course have no Chinese learning experience and are placed in the beginning level preparatory course.

The Chinese Program requires students to take the program-made placement test before entering the preparatory course. One of the tests is for students to translate a set of vocabulary

words in the first chapter of book two in the series *Chinese Tutorial*, which is a series of Chinese teaching textbooks used in the Chinese Program. Those who are able to recognize at least one-third of the vocabulary words are assigned into the intermediate level classes, and the rest are assigned into the beginning level classes.

The preparatory course provides students at both beginning and intermediate level classes with the required and the optional classes. For the beginning level classes, the required classes teach students basic Chinese skills. Those classes contain four Chinese language classes, including elementary Chinese, Chinese oral, Chinese listening comprehension, and Chinese characters writing classes. Students have six elementary Chinese classes, two Chinese oral classes, one Chinese listening comprehension class, and one Chinese character writing class per week. Students take classes from Monday to Friday in the morning and have no required classes in the afternoon. Students communicate with teachers and learn Chinese primarily in English, even though a majority of students are not proficient in English.

The optional classes, such as Chinese calligraphy and Tai Chi classes, provide students with additional opportunities to learn about Chinese culture. Students may choose different optional classes based on their interests or may choose not to attend any optional class. Students take optional classes in the afternoon based on their course schedules.

In summation, a majority of students in the beginning level preparatory course in the Chinese Program have little or no Chinese learning experience. More than half of the students are not proficient in English. All students take the required classes. They can choose to participate or not in the optional courses.

Significance of the Study

Researchers have made valuable contributions to research about self-efficacy (e.g., Ahmadian & Pasand, 2017; Carroll & Fox, 2017; Huerta et al., 2016; Li & Liu, 2013; Woodrow, 2011), Chinese learning and teaching, (e.g., L. Huang, 2018; Li, 2013; Q. Li, 2016; Xu, 2016; Wang, 2013; Zhang, 2014), and Chinese language programs in Chinese higher education (Hou, 2015; Liu & Li, 2018; Lu, 2016; Tian, 2019; Shi, 2015; Sun, 2015; N. Zhang, 2020).

However, relatively little attention is paid to Chinese language students' self-efficacy, and relatively fewer research studies investigate Chinese language students' self-efficacy through the lens of characteristics of GLLs.

Learning about students in non-academic long-term Chinese programs, their self-efficacy in learning Chinese, and their demonstration of the characteristics of GLLs is important. It may be beneficial for improving those students' learning outcomes and for addressing the challenges and difficulties students may encounter during the process of learning Chinese. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate students in non-academic long-term Chinese programs of their learning experiences, their self-efficacy as Chinese language learners, the extent to which they exhibit the characteristic of GLLs, and the association, if any, between their self-efficacy and the characteristics of GLLs they exhibit.

This investigation may provide Chinese language teachers and administrators with suggestions and implications for improving Chinese learning and teaching in non-academic long-term Chinese programs.

This study may ultimately help Chinese language teachers and administrators gain a deeper understanding of students in non-academic long-term Chinese programs of their perceptions of their efficacy in learning Chinese. Chinese language teachers and administrators

can know more about those students' perceptions of their strengths and challenges in learning Chinese. In this way, the study could provide recommendations for Chinese language teachers and administrators to improve Chinese teaching and non-academic long-term Chinese program policies to meet students' needs and to improve student performance in learning Chinese.

In addition, I employed the characteristics of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009) as a theoretical framework in this study to investigate what GLLs' characteristics students in the Chinese Program have, tend to have, and do not have. This may help Chinese language teachers and administrators better assist students utilize the characteristics of GLLs to improve student performance in learning Chinese. On the other hand, this may provide implications for Chinese language teachers and administrators about which GLLs' characteristics students tend to lack. Based on these implications, Chinese language teachers and administrators can find ways to help students build more GLLs' characteristics.

Furthermore, the study investigated the association, if any, between students in non-academic long-term Chinese programs of their self-efficacy and their demonstration of the characteristics of GLLs. If the association exists, this may imply that Chinese language teachers and administrators can utilize the association to raise students' self-efficacy and to cultivate students with more characteristics of GLLs.

In conclusion, this study has practical meanings for non-academic long-term Chinese language programs in China. It may be useful for the practice of teaching and learning Chinese as a foreign language.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the dissertation, including a brief introduction of the background and theoretical framework, a clear demonstration of the research purpose,

research gaps, research questions and potential significance of this study, and a short description of how the study was conducted.

A review of the literature about teaching Chinese as a foreign language, conceptions of self-efficacy, and recent research findings on self-efficacy in language learning and in Chinese learning are discussed in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, a more detailed illustration of the methodology of this study is presented. Chapter 4 demonstrates this study's findings in great detail. Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the similarities and differences between this study's findings and previous research findings and presents recommendations for Chinese teachers, and administrators and policy makers of non-academic long-term Chinese programs and in the field of teaching and learning Chinese as a foreign language, as well as recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

With the increasing use of the Chinese language throughout the world, teaching/learning Chinese as a foreign language, to be referred to in this study as teaching and learning Chinese, has become a much-discussed topic. As this chapter illustrates, researchers have investigated Chinese language programs in Chinese higher education, student learning of Chinese, and issues and challenges in Chinese teaching. In addition, researchers in the field of teaching/learning Chinese as a foreign language look for the correlation between self-efficacy and the learning of Chinese to provide more effective Chinese instruction and Chinese learning.

The purpose of this study was to investigate college students enrolled in a beginning level preparatory course of a non-academic long-term Chinese language program, their experiences of learning Chinese as a foreign language, and the association, if any, between their self-efficacy as Chinese learners and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs.

The first section of this literature review, Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, introduces research findings in the topics of Chinese language programs in Chinese higher education, student learning of Chinese, and issues and challenges in teaching Chinese. The second section explores conceptions of self-efficacy, including recent research findings on self-efficacy in language learning and self-efficacy in learning and teaching Chinese as a foreign language. In the third section, gaps in the research are presented to clarify the necessity of the present study. The final section illustrates in detail the theoretical framework, the characteristics of Good Language Learners (GLLs) (Edge & Garton, 2009).

Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language

After World War II, the People's Republic of China established diplomatic relations with socialist countries at the end of the year 1949, such as the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland, to deal with the isolation and hostility in the aspects of politics and military from the U.S. (Chen et al., 2015). In 1950, China accepted the Czechoslovakian and Polish governments' proposals to exchange students. China proposed to Romania, Hungary, and Bulgaria to exchange students (Chen et al., 2015).

In the same year, Tsinghua University in Beijing, China established a Chinese training class for those exchange students from Eastern Europe (Xu, 2006). Tsinghua University's predecessor, Tsinghua Xuetang, was established in 1911 and was renamed as Tsinghua University in 1928. Tsinghua University is one of the most influential universities in China. The launch of the Chinese language training program for Eastern European students was viewed as the beginning of teaching Chinese as a foreign language in the modern era (Lu, 2004; Xu, 2006).

In 2012 the Ministry of Education of China announced it would rename teaching Chinese as a foreign language as "international Chinese language education" and developed professional development efforts for teachers of the Chinese language (Zhang & Yang, 2016).

Studies have found that most graduate students holding bachelor's degrees in teaching Chinese as a foreign language either teach various levels of Chinese in Chinese educational institutions, teach overseas, or continue their graduate studies in the field (Fang, 2012; Wang, Hong, et al., 2007). Similarly, most of the master's students who complete the teaching Chinese as a foreign language major work as Chinese language instructors in K-12 and higher education, international schools, Chinese teaching institutions, and/or overseas (Hu & Feng, 2012).

Current researchers in the field of teaching Chinese as a foreign language have focused primarily on topics such as introducing Chinese language programs in Chinese higher education

(Hou, 2015; Liu & Li, 2018; Lu, 2016; Tian, 2019; Shi, 2015), investigating students' Chinese language learning (Ding, 2016; Li & Wei, 2015; Qu & Zhong, 2020; Wang, 2016; Yang & Wang, 2017), and learning about issues and challenges in teaching Chinese (Chen, 2015; Gao, 2014; Liu et al., 2019; Yue, 2017; Zhou & Li, 2015).

Chinese Language Programs in China

There are two types of Chinese language programs in higher education for foreign students to learn Chinese. The first one is mainly for the Chinese language students who study Chinese for academic education (Hou, 2015; Tian, 2019). Most students in the academic-education Chinese language programs, referred to in this study as academic programs, major in accounting, finance, international economics and trades, computer science, human resource, international Chinese language education, etc. (Liu & Li, 2018).

Academic programs usually require students to study the Chinese language in the first two years and take major courses in the junior and senior years (Hou, 2015). Academic program requirements vary depending upon the institution. For example, Tian (2019) investigated the academic program at Guilin University of Aerospace Technology and found that students in the program were required to take Chinese language classes in the freshman year and start major study from the sophomore year. Liu and Li (2018) took Hebei University of Economics and Business as an example, saying that students in the academic program usually spent anywhere from half a year to four years studying the Chinese language.

The Chinese language classes in academic programs typically require one comprehension Chinese class and four Chinese language skills classes. The four Chinese language skills classes include Chinese reading, listening, speaking, and writing classes (Hou, 2015; Tian, 2019; Shi, 2015).

Lu (2016) and Liu and Li (2018) researched academic programs in their universities and pointed out some issues. Lu (2016) challenged the curriculum of the academic program at Sichuan International Studies University. The academic program curriculum requires students to have the Chinese language courses first and major courses later. Lu points out having students study the Chinese language and major courses separately decreases the connection between the two courses. Therefore, students often feel it is challenging to learn major courses after taking Chinese language classes. Therefore, Lu suggests the academic program simultaneously offer Chinese language classes and basic level major courses to address this problem.

Liu and Li (2018) provide a similar suggestion for the academic program at Hebei University of Economics and Business. They claim that major courses should be included in the curriculum at the first stage as the Chinese language courses. Liu and Li further identify another issue in the academic program, that Chinese language classes in the academic program fail to well correlate with one another. They recommend that teachers in the academic program cooperate more to check the teaching contents and teaching progress to address this issue. Liu and Li indicate that teachers should use more diverse and appropriate teaching strategies in the Chinese language classes.

The other Chinese language program is for the students who learn Chinese for the non-academic purpose (Hou, 2015; Lu, 2016). Hou (2015) and Lu (2016) mention that students in non-academic programs are more than half of all Chinese language students. Non-academic Chinese language programs, referred to in this study as non-academic programs, can be further divided into two programs, such as short-term and long-term programs (Hou, 2015; Sun, 2015).

Hou (2015) provides an overview of the short-term programs, such as a focus on building up students' Chinese language knowledge and communication skills in a short period, usually

within one to ten weeks. Most students in short-term programs have no Chinese learning experience or are beginning level Chinese language students. Based on the program's target, in most cases, short-term programs only provide students with elementary comprehension Chinese class, sometimes with oral Chinese class.

N. Zhang (2020) points out issues in short-term programs, such as the lack of standards and plans from national educational administration and related institutions regarding short-term programs. This result in some common issues in short-term programs in different institutions. Zhang mentions that short-term programs fail to set up a systematic curriculum for students. Teaching materials used in short-term programs are not purposefully designed for the students in the program. For example, some institutions implement courses in the Chinese language major into the short-term programs. The mobility of teachers in short-term programs makes short-term programs unstable.

As compared with the short-term programs, long-term programs provide students with a more extended study period, usually from half a year to two (Hou, 2015). The purpose of long-term programs is focused on studying the Chinese language. Other students may enter long-term programs to learn Chinese to learn about arts, science, and medical majors later. However, as mentioned earlier, researchers claim that students in non-academic programs (including the long-term programs) are for a non-academic purpose (Hou, 2015; Lu, 2016). Neither Hou (2015) nor other researchers clearly explain the differences between students in academic programs and the students who study Chinese for future study in arts, science, and medical majors in long-term programs.

The purposes of long-term programs are to improve students' Chinese language skills and communication skills and to provide students with basic knowledge about Chinese history,

culture, and national conditions (Hou, 2015). Long-term programs usually separate students into beginning, intermediate, and advanced level classes based on students' Chinese language levels. For classes at each level, long-term programs offer students with required courses and optional courses (Hou, 2015).

The required courses are similar to the Chinese language classes in academic programs. Required courses contain a comprehension Chinese class and four Chinese language skills classes. In most cases, required courses correlate with one another. That is to say, the teaching content and teaching materials in each class relate to other classes to create repetitive training for students. However, Tian (2019) points out that the curriculum setting causes some issues in teaching and learning Chinese. More specifically, the repetitive teaching of content and teaching materials causes the homogenous Chinese classes to have insufficient class time for students to study Chinese.

Optional courses in the long-term programs include Chinese linguistic knowledge courses and Chinese cultural courses (Hou, 2015). To be more specific, the Chinese linguistic courses, such as Chinese pronunciation class and Chinese grammar class, provide students with supplementary knowledge of the Chinese language. The cultural courses include Tai Chi, Chinese calligraphy, Chinese history, Chinese politics, etc.

Learning Chinese

Researchers in teaching/learning Chinese as a second language have paid attention to learning about students' Chinese learning. Topics explored by researchers include students' motivations of learning Chinese, the strengths and challenges students encountered, and the impact of native language on students' Chinese learning.

Students' motivations to learn Chinese. Researchers have investigated students'

motivations for learning Chinese, which includes students interests in China (Ding, 2016), the

Chinese language (Ding, 2016; Guo, 2015), and Chinese culture (Ding, 2016; Guo, 2015; Li &

Wei, 2015; Yang & Wang, 2017) as the main reasons why students want to learn Chinese.

Pursuing academic or further education in China motivates students to study Chinese (Ding,

2016; Guo, 2015; Li & Wei, 2015).

Further, students are motivated to learn Chinese for future benefits (Ding 2016; Guo,

2015; Li & Wei, 2015; Yang & Wang, 2017). Such benefits include having more job

opportunities (Ding, 2016; Guo, 2015; Yang & Wang, 2017), building an international network

of personal relationships (Yang & Wang, 2017), and developing personally (Li & Wei, 2015). In

addition, Ding (2016) indicates that improving Chinese language abilities, being able to

communicate with friends and/or family members who speak or study Chinese motivate students

to learn Chinese. Furthermore, Yu (2020) investigated Chinese heritage language students and

pointed out that seeking cultural identity pushed them to study Chinese.

Strengths and challenges in learning Chinese. In recent years, researchers have

inquired into learning about students' learning outcomes in learning specific Chinese language

skills and learning Chinese as a general.

Strengths. Researchers mention that language-related strengths exist within certain

groups of Chinese language students whose native languages share some commons with the

Chinese language (Qu & Zhong, 2020; Wang, 2016; Wu & Jin, 2013).

To be more specific, Qu and Zhong (2020) investigated Chinese language students from

Japan regarding their learning of Chinese vocabularies. Both the Japanese and the Chinese

languages contain Chinese characters. Therefore, researchers claim that Japanese students have

typical strengths in learning Chinese characters. Likewise, Wang (2016), and Wu and Jin (2013) studied Korean students' Chinese learning experiences. The Korean and the Chinese languages share some Chinese characters. Hence, researchers indicate that Korean students have strengths in learning Chinese.

 Challenges. Several researchers have investigated the language-related challenges students may encounter in learning Chinese. The language-related difficulties that Chinese language students have include Chinese characters (Everson & Xiao, 2008; Hu, 2010; Huang, 2014; Li, 2014; Lu, 2015), pronunciations (Hu, 2010) and tones (Chen, 2017; Huang, 2015; Li, 2017; Lin, 2015; Lou, 2016; G. Song, 2015; Wen 2014), Chinese listening (Hu, 2010; Feng, 2016; Jiang, 2016; Liang, 2011; Qi, 2014), Chinese speaking (Hu, 2010; Lin, 2019; Ma, 2013; Qi, 2018), and Chinese grammar (Han, 2019; Hu, 2010; Li & Zhang, 2010; Liu, 2017; Liu, 2019; Ulpan, 2016; Ye & Wu, 1999; Zhao, 2015).

 Some researchers assert that Chinese characters are a big challenge for Chinese language students. For example, Everson and Xiao (2008) point out that it is usually difficult to write out Chinese characters merely according to the pronunciations, unlike alphabetic languages. Therefore, students from alphabetic language backgrounds often have a hard time learning Chinese characters (Everson & Xiao, 2008; Liu & Lo Bianco, 2007).

 Lu (2015) indicates that because the Chinese pronunciation system (pinyin) and Chinese characters seem unrelated, students usually have difficulties learning Chinese characters when used to the Chinese pinyin. In addition, Huang (2014) and Li (2014) specifically examined Chinese characters teaching and learning and found that students usually perceived Chinese characters' constructions and strokes to be complicated and challenging to learn. The challenge

of learning Chinese characters is one of the major causes of low learning motivation among Chinese language students (Everson & Xiao, 2008).

Researchers claim that the tones in the Chinese pronunciation system result in a challenge for Chinese language students (Chen, 2017; Huang, 2015; Li, 2017; Lin, 2015; Lou, 2016; G. Song, 2015; Wen, 2014). Researchers have investigated the Chinese learning of students from Korea (Lin, 2015; G. Song, 2015; Wen, 2014), Vietnam (Lou, 2016), Pakistan (Li, 2017), Netherlands (Huang, 2015), and mid-Asia (Chen, 2017). They conclude that because there are usually no tones in students' native languages, the tones in Chinese pronunciation to students are unfamiliar and hard to handle.

In addition, researchers indicate that Chinese listening is a challenge for Chinese language students. Feng (2016), Jiang (2016), Liang (2011), and Qi (2014) find that Chinese pronunciations are a factor that results in the difficulties of Chinese listening to students. Researchers claim that Chinese grammar (Liang, 2011; Jiang, 2016; Qi, 2014) and Chinese vocabularies (Qi, 2014) lead to students' challenge with listening to Chinese.

Furthermore, Lin (2019), Ma (2013), and Qi (2018) mention that Chinese language students face some challenges in speaking Chinese. To be more specific, Lin (2019) and Qi (2018) indicate that Chinese pronunciations make Chinese speaking difficult to students.

Moreover, researchers indicate that students tend to have difficulties learning Chinese grammar (Han, 2019; Li & Zhang, 2010; Liu, 2017; Liu, 2019; Ulpan, 2016; Ye & Wu, 1999; Zhao, 2015). Researchers learned about the difficulties related to Chinese grammar that students encountered in learning Chinese. They conclude that one primary reason contributing to students' grammar challenge is that the Chinese grammar is very different from the grammar in their native languages.

Previous research indicates that the lack of qualified Chinese language teachers has resulted in students' difficulties learning Chinese (Chen, 2015; Gao, 2014; Orton, 2011; Singh et al., 2014). This will be discussed more in the Issues and Challenges in Teaching Chinese section.

Besides investigating the strengths and challenges students encounter in learning Chinese, researchers have studied students' attitudes towards learning Chinese. Li (2018) and Y. Zhu (2015) mention that most students believe they would learn Chinese well. Fu (2016) conducted a study about Chinese language students from the U.S. and claimed that most of them had positive attitudes toward learning Chinese, Chinese culture, and Chinese speakers. Fu further indicated that although American students felt it was hard to learn Chinese, they deemed learning Chinese worthy.

On the other hand, Liu (2009) and Zuo (2016) find that the students who learned Chinese in a shorter period of time tend to have a more positive attitude towards learning Chinese. Zuo (2016) specifically points out that beginning level students held the most positive attitude towards learning Chinese. Qu, Su, Wang, and Hou's (2018) research finding might explain this issue. Their respondents indicated students experienced fear, boredom, and feeling tired when learning Chinese. The challenges students encounter in learning Chinese, as mentioned earlier, may explain why students have negative emotions toward learning Chinese.

Strategies. Researchers have investigated the learning strategies students used to learn Chinese in recent years. For example, some researchers (Cong, 2010; Hao, 2010; D. Li, 2016; Li, 2020; Li et al., 2017; Lin, 2017; Qu, 2018;) specifically studied Chinese language students' independent learning strategies. Research indicates that Chinese language students conduct independent learning (Cong, 2010; Hao, 2010; D. Li, 2016; Li, 2020), primarily because

studying Chinese in China provides them with a language environment where they prefer to conduct autonomous learning (Hao, 2010).

Cong's (2010) research specifically focused on students' autonomous learning strategies on Chinese listening. She points out that students often feel it is hard to handle Chinese listening and that class time is too limited for students to improve their Chinese listening skills. To address these problems, students, especially those in the beginning- and intermediate-level classes, spend time practicing Chinese listening after class, while students in advanced-level classes prefer to learn more Chinese characters after class (Cong, 2010). However, Li et al. (2017) assert that most of the Chinese language students from Thailand seldom conduct independent learning after class. The authors explain that students' passive learning and lack of openness to the Chinese language environment contribute to this issue.

In addition, researchers have provided some particular strategies that students use to learn Chinese. Previewing (Bao & Guo, 2012; Lin, 2017), note taking (Qu, 2018), repetition (Qu, 2018), watching Chinese TV shows and movies (Bao & Guo, 2012; Cong, 2010; Lai, 2018), utilizing real-life situations (Qu, 2018; Wu, 2017) and real Chinese communications (Cong, 2010; Lai, 2018; X. Zhu, 2015), using social media (Wu, 2017), and diary writing (Bao & Guo, 2012) are some frequently used strategies of students in the process of learning Chinese.

The section of the literature review discussed research studies about students' independent learning strategies and listed some specific strategies. However, other research that was reviewed regarding Chinese language students' strategies failed to introduce and discuss particular learning strategies that students used in learning Chinese and the effects of those strategies on students' Chinese learning.

The influence of students' native languages on Chinese learning. X. Zhang (2020) and Zhu (2012) find that language transfer happens in Chinese learning, especially at the beginning level (Zhu, 2012). Language transfer describes the phenomenon that students' native languages have an impact on their second language acquisition (X. Zhang, 2020). The language transfer influences students' Chinese language learning in both positive and negative ways, mostly in pronunciations, vocabularies, grammar, etc. (X. Zhang, 2020).

As mentioned earlier, researchers have explained that students' language-related strengths (Qu & Zhong, 2020; Wang, 2016; Wu & Jin, 2013) and some language-related challenges (Chen, 2017; Everson & Xiao, 2008; Huang, 2015; Li, 2017; Lin, 2015; Lou, 2016; G. Song, 2015; Wen 2014) are closely related to students' native languages.

For example, because of the use of characters in the Japanese and the Korean languages, students from Japan and Korea usually have strengths in learning Chinese characters (Qu & Zhong, 2020; Wang, 2016). However, because of the differences between grammar in the Chinese and students' native languages, these students face challenges in learning and understanding Chinese grammar (Han, 2019; Liu, 2017; Liu, 2019; Ulpan, 2016; Zhao, 2015).

In addition, Wang (2004) finds that students' comprehension of Chinese sentences is closely related to their native languages, indicating that teaching in students' native languages would be effective, especially for beginning-level Chinese language students.

Hence, researchers have recommend enhancing the positive effects and minimizing the negative impact of students' native language on Chinese language learning (Zhang & Lu, 2018; Zhu, 2012). For example, L. Zhang (2016) and Zhang and Lu (2018) emphasize the importance of cultivating students' abilities to think in Chinese. This will be discussed more in the Issues and Challenges in Teaching Chinese section.

Issues and Challenges in Teaching Chinese

Research indicates that critical issues and challenges for teachers in teaching Chinese include the lack of qualified Chinese language teachers (Chen, 2015; Gao, 2014; Orton, 2011; Singh & Han, 2014; Zhou & Li, 2015), lack of diverse and appropriate teaching methods (Liu et al., 2019; Yue, 2017), inappropriate expectations about student performance and teacher authority (Chen, 2015; Zhou & Li, 2015), and the combination of students (2007; Yang, 2006).

Researchers have identified common issues and challenges teachers face in teaching Chinese. One major challenge is the lack of qualified Chinese language teachers (Chen, 2015; Gao, 2014; Orton, 2011; Singh & Han, 2014; Zhou & Li, 2015). Zhou and Li (2015) investigated the Chinese teaching experiences of kindergarten, preschool, and primary school Chinese language teachers in the U.S. They find that a lack of pedagogical knowledge makes teachers' Chinese language instruction and classroom management difficult.

Similarly, Chen (2015), Gao (2014), Orton (2011), Singh and Han (2014) examined Chinese language teachers' challenges in their daily practice and called for preparing more qualified Chinese language teachers. Chen (2015) indicates that Chinese language teachers' lack of understanding of student learning processes leads to significant challenges in Australian public school Chinese language classes. Yue (2017) validates this finding that insufficient training, support, and preparation for Chinese language teachers make Chinese teaching difficult.

Singh et al. (2014) find that a program's unqualified Chinese language teachers is the main reason for the high dropout rate of Chinese language students. Similarly, Yu (2013) conducted a study on the demotivation of international students learning Chinese in China. Yu finds that Chinese language teachers are one of the five primary elements which demotivate

students' Chinese learning. In sum, inadequate teacher preparation results in challenges for Chinese language teachers (Zhou & Li, 2015; Singh et al., 2014; Yue, 2017).

In addition, the lack of teaching methods is a challenge that Chinese language teachers encountered (Liu et al., 2019; Yue, 2017). Fu's (2017) study specifically points out six must-have qualities of Chinese language teachers teaching beginning-level students, including having sufficient teaching abilities. Liu et al. (2019) emphasize that Chinese language teachers should improve teaching methods to provide students with high-quality Chinese language classes. Yue (2017) points out that Chinese language teachers are usually taught in a more lecture-oriented way, which mostly emphasizes grammar and practice. Sun et al. (2015) assert that Chinese language teachers should offer enough opportunities to speak and use Chinese in class for students to develop fluency.

Furthermore, researchers have found that Chinese language teachers, especially those raised in China, usually hold an inappropriately high expectation for student performance (Zhou & Li, 2015) and teachers' authority (Chen, 2015; Zhou & Li, 2015). Zhou and Li (2015) identify three aspects of Chinese language teachers' expectations for student performance, including respect (i.e., respect teachers' authority and respect peers), students' appropriate classroom behavior, and positive learning attitude. Unfortunately, Chinese language teachers' expectation of the undoubtable rights of controlling the classroom causes student behavior issues and challenges in classroom management (Chen, 2015; Zhou & Li, 2015).

A few researchers have pointed out that the combination of students leads to teachers' challenges in teaching Chinese (Liu & Lo Bianco, 2007; Yang, 2006). Yang (2006) indicates that various students from different countries and with varying goals of learning cause an imbalance in teaching and learning Chinese. In addition, Liu and Lo Bianco (2007) point out

that mixed-ability grouping is problematic in teaching and learning Chinese and state that mixed-ability grouping is commonly used in Australian universities' Chinese programs to provide more opportunities for students to support each other. However, Liu and Lo Bianco (2007) point out that mixed ability grouping makes advanced students bored while preliminary students are not confident about their performance. Yang (2006) indicates that students from different countries and with different learning goals cause an imbalance in teaching and learning Chinese.

Self-Efficacy

The term self-efficacy was first labeled by Albert Bandura to describe individual differences in perceptions of abilities and competencies in handling given situations (Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Zimmerman, 2000). Bandura (1993) states that "efficacy beliefs influence how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave" (p. 118).

To formally define self-efficacy, Wood and Bandura (1989) provided an explanation of self-efficacy that "refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to meet given situational demands" (p. 408). Thus, self-efficacy is an indicator of people's capabilities instead of qualities (Zimmerman, 2000). It should be noted that one's self-efficacy might be different in different dimensions, and Zimmerman (2000) described this feature as "multidimensional" (p. 83). For instance, one's self-efficacy may be low in learning Chinese but high in writing Chinese characters (Zheng, 2015).

In addition, self-efficacy is related to how one will perform instead of how one expects oneself to do, as described by "mastery criterion" (Zimmerman, 2000, p. 84). Gist and Mitchell (1992) discussed the accuracy of people's judgment on their self-efficacy and mentioned that accuracy here refers to the validity of people's predictions about their capabilities. Two major

factors that influence accuracy of self-efficacy judgment are personal experiences and stability of

personal characteristics and tasks (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). One's previous experiences support

one's prediction for future performance of the same activity. The stability of personal

characteristics and tasks is important to maintain the accuracy of self-efficacy, because when

personal characteristics change under certain circumstances and tasks, it might be hard for the

person to make effective predictions or judgments of his or her capabilities (Gist & Mitchell,

1992).

Self-Efficacy's Influence on Cognitive Development and Functioning

Self-efficacy influences one's cognitive development and functioning through "cognitive,

motivational, affective, and selection processes" (Bandura, 1993, p. 117). Bandura (1993)

explained with regard to cognitive processing, the ways in which people perceive ability, social

comparison and feedback, and controllability have different impacts on people's self-efficacy

and thus result in different outcomes. For instance, people who perceive ability as acquirable

rather than native tend to have more resilient self-efficacy, which enables people to improve

difficulties and challenges and to gain higher achievement. In addition, individuals who pay

more attention to self-progress instead of comparing with others, others are likely to build more

self-efficacy and to have higher achievement. People who believe that the classroom

environment is controllable are better in improving themselves and facing challenges, which is

conducive to being successful.

Self-efficacy affects motivation with regard to the following aspects: goal setting, effort,

persistence, and resilience. There is evidence that people who have reported higher self-efficacy

are apt to be more resilient and persistent when facing challenges, and hence, are able to be more

successful. In the affective process aspect, self-efficacy plays a role in influencing levels of

stress and depression when people are faced with challenges. Self-efficacy, in this case, relates to how people regulate their emotional status. Low self-efficacy may result in stress and depression. People who have higher self-efficacy when coping with difficulties and managing stressful thoughts are more likely to overcome negative emotional status.

In the selection process aspect, self-efficacy can influence people's selections, and accordingly, affect their life course. The tasks people choose for themselves are based on perceptions of their potential competencies and abilities. By accomplishing tasks, people then gain different abilities, interests and other elements that might impact their life courses.

Sources and Determinants of Self-Efficacy

There are four major self-efficacy sources, including performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and physiological states (Bandura, 1977; Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Zimmerman, 2000). Performance accomplishments are also called "enactive experiences" (Zimmerman, 2000, p. 88) and refer to people's mastery experiences. Experiences of success increase efficacy, while failure experiences decrease it (Bandura, 1977). When firm efficacy is built through repeated successful experiences, the negative influence of non-continuity failures decreases (Bandura, 1977).

In addition, people can develop expectations about their own performance abilities from observing others' performances in risky tasks. Others' successful experiences with long-lasting hard work may boost observers' understanding of their own competences (Bandura, 1977; Zimmerman, 2000). But Bandura (1977) and Zimmerman (2000) assert that people's mastery experiences are more reliable sources than vicarious experiences. Furthermore, verbal persuasion can increase people's outcome expectations, but verbal persuasion itself has a limited impact on improving people's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Zimmerman, 2000).

Verbal persuasion helps people recognize that they are equipped with competences and abilities to face challenges and difficulties and can receive assistance (Bandura, 1977). This enables people to generate more effort than people who receive no verbal persuasion (Bandura, 1977).

Moreover, emotional status can provide information about people's self-efficacy when faced with challenging situations (Bandura, 1977). Bandura (1977) explains that people are more likely to anticipate success when they are not emotionally aroused by a stressful environment, while negative emotional arousal aggravates fear of impending stressful situations. If one believes his personal competency could better deal with stressful situations than before, one's perceived efficacy of personal competency could influence one's emotional reactions to stressful situations in a positive way (Bandura, 1977).

Yang (2017) examined the relationship between the four sources of self-efficacy and English language students' pronunciation achievement. The findings reveal that social persuasion sources for students, in this case, do not show a significant correlation with students' English pronunciation performance, and only mastery experience sources could predict English learners' pronunciation outcomes. Zuo and Wang (2014) conducted a study to investigate the sources that influence students' English self-efficacy. Their findings indicate that in addition to the four sources of self-efficacy, students' interests and the levels of difficulty of tasks are the additional two sources that may affect students' self-efficacy in English learning.

Gist and Mitchell (1992) analyzed previous research on self-efficacy and concluded two main determinants of self-efficacy, called "external cues" (p. 193) and "internal cues" (p. 195). External cues mainly include the nature of tasks, tasks' complicacy, tasks' environment, vicarious experiences, and verbal persuasion. Internal cues mainly include mastery and vicarious

experiences and emotional status (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Gist and Mitchell (1992), based on attribution theory, examined determinants of self-efficacy to provide more information about how to change self-efficacy, and pointed out that this information might help others understand more about improving people's motivation and attainments.

Self-Efficacy and Achievements

People may reach different levels of achievements when they have similar knowledge bases and skills due to different levels of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993). Stajkovic and Luthans (1998) confirm that self-efficacy correlates to people's performance in work-related tasks. People who have higher self-efficacy are more likely to attain success, while people with lower self-efficacy are closer to failure (Bandura, 1986).

In academic settings, self-efficacy can predicate students' motivation and mediate their learning outcomes (Zimmerman, 2000). Students' self-efficacy makes their learning achievement different from each other, even though they may be at the same cognitive development level (Bandura, 1993).

In order to best understand students' self-efficacy in learning Chinese as a second language, recent research studies investigated the relationship between self-efficacy and language learning, as well as self-efficacy and learning Chinese as a second language. These themes are discussed in the following sections of the review of the literature.

Recent Research on Students' Self-Efficacy and Language Learning

There is evidence that language learners' self-efficacy is a crucial factor in acquiring a new language (Shi, 2017) and may influence students' beliefs toward learning a new language (Genç et al., 2016). Having higher self-efficacy may enable students to utilize more learning strategies, to have healthy attributions of success and failure, to decrease anxiety in learning and

using target languages, and therefore, to be more successful in learning a new language (Shi, 2017). Roofi, Gharibi, and Gharibi (2017) indicate that students who have higher self-efficacy tended to have more positive attitudes toward English writing and more plans to improve English writing.

Numerous studies on students' self-efficacy and language learning have focused on English language students' self-efficacy in the field of learning/teaching English as a second/foreign language (Ahmadian & Pasand, 2017; Balcı, 2017; Carroll & Fox, 2017; Davoudi & Chavosh, 2016; Dogan, 2016; Ersanli, 2015; Genç et al., 2016; Huerta et al., 2016; Ho, 2016; Hsieh & Kang, 2010; Kırmızı, & Kırmızı, 2015; Li & Liu, 2013; McLean & Poulshock, 2018; Öztürk & Saydam, 2014; Raoofi et al., 2017; Ruegg, 2018; Shehzad et al., 2018; Tavakoli & Koosha, 2016; Woodrow, 2011; Yang, 2017; Yang et al., 2016;).

Students' self-efficacy and English achievement. In general, English language students report to be at a medium level of self-efficacy. To be more specific, students show higher self-efficacy in English reading and speaking, while lower self-efficacy in English listening and writing (Genç et al., 2016). As expected, research shows that students' self-efficacy can positively affect their overall English achievement (Yang et al., 2016) and English achievement in specific skills (Balcı, 2017; Li & Liu, 2013; Raoofi et al., 2017). Students reporting high self-efficacy have better performance in English learning than students having lower self-efficacy (Yang et al., 2016).

In English reading, Carroll and Fox (2017) claim that word reading has a significant relationship with students' writing self-efficacy, while reading comprehension does not. On the other hand, McLean and Poulshock (2018) indicate that word-targets benefit English language

students' reading motivation and self-efficacy. Having students complete weekly word-targets enables them to read more and gain higher self-efficacy (McLean & Poulshock, 2018).

In addition, researchers assert that there is a significant correlation between students' English reading self-efficacy and metacognitive reading strategies (Ahmadian & Pasand, 2017; Shehzad et al., 2018). Ahmandian and Pasand (2017) conducted a study on online reading achievement and found that students who had higher self-efficacy in reading online tended to facilitate more metacognitive reading skills. Likewise, Tavakoli and Koosha (2016) emphasize the importance of metacognitive strategy instruction in English reading and that applying metacognitive strategy instruction could contribute to better English reading performance and higher self-efficacy in English reading for English language learners.

In English writing, Öztürk and Saydam (2014) state that English language students' self-efficacy mainly relies on linguistic knowledge, writing abilities, and instructors. They find that instructors' feedback and instructions have a strong correlation with students' English writing self-efficacy (Öztürk & Saydam, 2014). To be more specific, Ruegg (2018) claims that teacher feedback has a more significant influence on English learners' writing self-efficacy than peer feedback. Öztürk and Saydam (2014) suggest teachers be mindful of their oral and written feedback to students and realize the important role they play in affecting students' English writing self-efficacy.

On the other hand, Raoofi et al. (2017) claim that the difficulty level of writing tasks and students' majors have a significant correlation with students' writing self-efficacy. For instance, students who major in medical science have higher self-efficacy than students majoring in education. In English listening, there is a significant relationship between self-efficacy of

English language students and most intelligence types except for kinesthetic intelligence and verbal and visual intelligence (Davoudi & Chavosh, 2016).

Students' self-efficacy and gender, anxiety, and attribution. In addition to specific English skills, researchers have investigated several factors that may affect students' self-efficacy in terms of gender, anxiety, and attribution style.

It is hard to find a consensus of conclusions about the relationship between gender and self-efficacy. Researchers, such as Dogan (2016), Kim et al. (2015) and Kırmızı and Kırmızı (2015) believe that there is a significant correlation between gender and self-efficacy, while Ersanli (2015) and Carroll and Fox (2017) disagree. Dorgan (2016) states that male students tend to have higher English self-efficacy than female students. Similarly, Kırmızı and Kırmızı (2015) claim that male students report higher self-efficacy in English writing than female students. But Kim et al. (2015) mention that females are found to have higher self-efficacy in English. However, other studies show that there is no significant difference between males and females in academic self-efficacy (Ersanli, 2015) and in English reading self-efficacy (Carroll & Fox, 2017).

Researchers investigated the relationship between English language students' self-efficacy and anxiety and found that self-efficacy negatively correlates with anxiety (Dorgan, 2016; Li & Liu, 2013; Huerta et al., 2016; Ho, 2016). Woodrow (2011) claims that English language students with more self-efficacy tend to have less stress from parents and persist longer in learning English. Similarly, English language students with higher self-efficacy usually have less English writing anxiety (Li & Liu, 2013; Huerta et al., 2016; Ho, 2016; Kırmızı & Kırmızı, 2015). Ho (2016) further states that English language students' experiences of writing for publication is a better predictor for their writing anxiety and writing self-efficacy. Hsieh and

Kang (2010) examined the interrelationship between English language learners' attribution of learning outcomes and their self-efficacy. They indicate that English language students who have more self-efficacy perceive their learning outcomes more as a product of internal and personal control. They further explain that, if face with failures, English language students who have higher self-efficacy tend to attribute failures to personal control more than lower self-efficacious students (Hsieh & Kang, 2010).

Students' Self-Efficacy and Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language

Compared with research on self-efficacy in learning/teaching English as a foreign language, fewer studies focused on self-efficacy in learning/teaching Chinese as a foreign language, but profound findings emerged and provided key information about self-efficacy in learning/teaching Chinese as a foreign language. Researchers illustrate their findings in these different aspects: (1) the factors that might influence Chinese language students' self-efficacy (L. Huang, 2018; Ren, 2012; Wang, 2012; Wang, 2018; Xu, 2016; Zhang, 2015; Zhang, 2014; Zhao & Wang, 2016), (2) the relationship between Chinese language students' self-efficacy and Chinese learning achievement (Li, 2013; Wang, 2014; Wu, 2016; Zheng, 2015), motivation (Ren, 2012; L. Huang, 2018; Wang, 2013), attribution style (Li, 2013; Z. Li, 2016) and anxiety (Xu, 2016; Zhang, 2014).

Chinese language students usually report having a relatively middle level of self-efficacy in learning Chinese (Zheng, 2015; L. Huang, 2018) or high level (L. Huang, 2018; Wang, 2018; Xu, 2016). Xu (2016) illustrates in detail that Chinese language students' general Chinese self-efficacy is better than their self-efficacy in specific Chinese skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing). Students report having their highest self-efficacy in Chinese reading and the lowest in Chinese speaking (Xu, 2016). Several factors may influence Chinese language

students' self-efficacy, including geography/nationality, gender, age, and the length of time spent learning Chinese (L. Huang, 2018; Ren, 2012; Wang, 2012; Wang, 2018; Xu, 2016; Zhang, 2014; Zhao & Wang, 2016).

Factors. One conclusion drawn from research on self-efficacy is that geography/nationality is one of the factors that influences Chinese language students' self-efficacy (Ren, 2012; Wang, 2012; Zhan, 2015; Zheng, 2015). Zhan (2015) reports that Chinese language students from different countries have different traditions and culture, which results in students' different perceptions of their Chinese efficacy. For example, Wang (2012) find that European and American students have the highest self-efficacy in general oral Chinese and explains that because of differences between Western (i.e., European and American) students and East Asian (i.e., Japanese and South Korean) students in history, culture and religion, students tend to have different performance in oral Chinese language learning. Western (i.e., European and American) students are more outgoing and pay more attention to individual performance, while East Asian (i.e., Japanese and South Korean) students are more introverted and place a lower emphasis on individual performance (Wang, 2012). To be more specific, because of Western (i.e., European and American) students are more outgoing when compared to East Asian (i.e., Japanese and South Korean) students, and are more willing to practice oral Chinese with less fear of making mistakes. Therefore, European and American students' self-efficacy in oral Chinese in language fluency and accuracy dimensions is much higher than Japanese and South Korean students'. In consideration of self-efficacy sources, Zheng (2015) illustrates that although verbal persuasion is usually a main source of students' Chinese self-efficacy, geography/nationality plays a role in students' self-efficacy sources. Besides verbal persuasion, Japanese and Korean students' self-efficacy sources are vicarious experiences;

southeast Asian students' are mastery experiences, and European and American students' are emotional states (Zheng, 2015). However, Xu (2016) states that the nationality/geographical factor has no significant influence on students' Chinese self-efficacy.

Researchers (Zheng, 2015; Ren, 2012; L. Huang, 2018; Wang, 2018; Wang, 2012; Xu, 2016; Zhang, 2014; Zhao & Wang, 2016) have discussed the role of gender in Chinese language students' self-efficacy. L. Huang (2018) and Zhao and Wang (2016) state that gender works as a factor to influence Chinese language students' self-efficacy. Similarly, Ren (2012) concludes that gender differences affect Chinese language students' learning behavior self-efficacy. Wang (2012) demonstrates that male Chinese language students usually have higher self-efficacy in general Chinese speaking than female students. However, Zheng (2015), Wang (2018), Xu (2016), and Zhang (2014) assert that there is no significant relation between gender difference and Chinese language students' self-efficacy.

Age is discussed in the research of Chinese language students' self-efficacy. Zhang (2014) claims that age differences between Chinese language students affect their Chinese self-efficacy. She explains that Chinese language students in the age range of 15 to 30 report to have the highest Chinese self-efficacy, while 40- to 50-year-old Chinese language students have the lowest (Zhang, 2014). To the contrary, Zheng (2015) and Zhao and Wang (2016) deem that age has no significant influence on students' Chinese self-efficacy.

Another factor, the length of time spent learning Chinese, has been investigated. Research suggests that the length of time spent learning Chinese of students has a significant impact on their Chinese self-efficacy (Wang, 2018; Zhang, 2014; Zhao & Wang, 2016). This conclusion is similar to Kim et al. (2015) findings in their investigation about English language students' self-efficacy. They find that the length of time spent learning English of English

language students positively affects students' self-efficacy. Zhang (2014) find that Chinese language students who studied Chinese for more than three years have the highest level of Chinese self-efficacy, while those who studied Chinese for less than six months have the lowest. Further, Wang (2012) indicates that there is an interaction between age and the length of time spent learning Chinese factors, and these have a significant impact on Chinese language students' oral Chinese self-efficacy.

Students' self-efficacy and learning achievement. Chinese language students' self-efficacy has been found to have a positive correlation with Chinese learning achievement (Wang, 2014; Zheng, 2015). Compared to Chinese language students who have low self-efficacy, those who have higher self-efficacy are usually more confident and stronger in persistence in learning and developing their potential (Li, 2013). Similarly, it is found that Chinese writing self-efficacy of Chinese language students significantly affects their writing outcomes (Wu, 2016). Wu (2016) reports that when face with writing tasks at different levels, students with high self-efficacy have stable writing ability. Students with medium self-efficacy are stable in writing scores and accuracy, but not in writing fluency and complexity, while low self-efficacy students are usually at a low level in writing scores, fluency, accuracy, and complexity (Wu, 2016). Wu (2016) suggests Chinese language educators pay more attention to improving students' writing efficacy as a way of helping students improve their writing skills. In addition, it is often the case that students' Chinese self-efficacy is positively correlated with their oral Chinese fluency, so improving students' Chinese self-efficacy would be beneficial for the development and acquirement of oral Chinese fluency (Wang, 2018).

Students' self-efficacy and attribution. Z. Li (2016) conducted a study on students' Chinese learning self-efficacy and their learning attribution and found that there was a significant

correlation between students' learning self-efficacy and their attribution of success ability in a high achievement group. On the other hand, Li (2013) examined Chinese language students' failure attribution and found that failure attribution between high self-efficacy and low self-efficacy Chinese language students were different. Chinese language students who have higher self-efficacy usually attribute failures to their own effort, while low self-efficacy students attribute failures to external environment and their abilities (Li, 2013).

Students' self-efficacy, motivation, and learning strategies. Self-efficacy is crucial in regulating motivation (Bandura, 1991). Recent research has showed that there is a significant relationship between self-efficacy and motivation of Chinese language students (Ren, 2012; L. Huang, 2018). Ren (2012) conducted a study to investigate the relation between self-efficacy, motivation and learning strategies. He claims that Chinese language students' academic self-efficacy could predicate the relationship between their Chinese learning motivation and different aspects of learning strategies (e.g., metacognitive, compensation, affective strategies, etc.) (Ren, 2012). Wang (2013) confirms that there is a positive correlation between students' Chinese self-efficacy and their Chinese learning strategies.

Previous research has mentioned that students' low self-efficacy in academic work may result in achievement anxiety (Bandura, 1993). The relationship between anxiety and student's self-efficacy has been investigated by researchers in the field of teaching Chinese as a second language. Similarly, research studies find that classroom anxiety has a negative correlation with students' Chinese self-efficacy (Xu, 2016; Zhang, 2014). In most cases, students who have higher classroom anxiety tend to have lower Chinese self-efficacy, and vice versa (Xu, 2016; Zhang, 2014). Xue (2018) mentions that learning anxiety in learning Chinese, on the other hand, negatively correlates with Chinese language students' self-efficacy.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, I employed Edge and Garton's (2009) descriptions of the characteristics of Good Language Learners (GLLS) as the theoretical framework. Studies on GLLs emerged in the mid-1970s (Norton & Toohey, 2001). This topic is within the field of learning styles and strategies (Wong & Nunan, 2011) and mainly investigates the characteristics that constitute GLLs. Naiman et al. (1978) imply that investigating GLLs may help teachers better assist student language learning. Rubin (1975) identified seven general features of GLLs through classroom observations. Rubin (1975) says GLLs (1) are good guessers, (2) are willing to communicate, (3) look for patterns of language, (4) use language, (5) emphasize meanings derived in language, (6) monitor utilization of language, and (7) are usually not restrained.

Similar features of GLLs regarding the importance of communication and utilization of language can be found in Naiman et al.'s (1978) study. They identified five features of adult GLLs, including (1) having a positive attitude toward language learning; (2) understanding and utilizing the nature of language; (3) using target language to communicate and interact with others; (4) handling difficulties in emotions while learning language; and (5) monitoring their own learning performance (cited from Norton & Toohey, 2001). Sykes (2015) conducted a case study, and the findings supported Naiman et al.'s (1978) conclusions.

Sykes (2015) highlighted the importance of attitude, communication, understanding language, practice, self-monitoring, etc. Stevick (1998) tended to generate an overall pattern of GLLs from previous studies through emphasizing forms of language, functional communication, understanding of learning process, flexible utilization of strategies, etc. (cited from Maftoon et al., 2011). It should be noticed that what made GLLs and poor language learners different is not the number of strategies language learners used. As mentioned by O'Malley and Chamot (1990),

both good and poor language learners use many strategies during their learning process. The essential difference between good and poor language learners is how they use strategies (Chamot, 2008). Norton and Toohey (2001) reviewed previous research on GLLs and concluded that changes have taken place in conceptions of GLLs. This is a change from a psycholinguistic perspective to a sociocultural perspective (Wong & Nunan, 2011). Norton and Toohey (2001) highlight that social practice and identity forming in the second language environment are essential in effective language learning.

By exploring English language teaching classrooms, Edge and Garton (2009) came up with a concrete list of general characteristics of GLLs which contains most of the key elements discussed above (e.g., attitude, language utilization, social practice, self-identity, self-monitoring, etc.) and additional features (e.g., motivation, expectation, abilities of handling difficulties, etc.). Edge and Garton (2009) point out that individuals who are successful language learners do not necessarily have all the characteristics listed below, but GLLs as a group usually have these in common. The detailed descriptions of characteristics of GLLs are as follows:

(1) Have a positive attitude to the language they want to learn and to speakers of that language,

(2) have a strong personal motivation to learn the language,

(3) are confident that they will be successful learners,

(4) are prepared to risk making mistakes and learn from them,

(5) like learning about the language,

(6) organize their own practice of the language,

(7) find ways to say things when they do not know how to express them correctly,

(8) willingly get into situations where the language is being used, and use it as often as they can,

(9) work directly in the language rather than translate from their first language (L1),

(10) think about their strategies for learning and remembering, and consciously try out new strategies (Edge & Garton, 2009, p. 5).

From the perspective of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009), a deep understanding of college students who were early Chinese learners in the Chinese Program, their self-efficacy in learning Chinese, and their learning experiences were generated. This theoretical framework assisted me in knowing more about the GLLs' characteristics students have, tend to have, or lack. I employed this theoretical framework to investigate the association, if any, between students' self-efficacy in Chinese learning and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs.

One thing to be noticed is that Edge and Garton (2009) concluded the characteristics of GLLs from English language teaching classrooms. That is to say, this study implemented a western theoretical framework in understanding early Chinese learners' Chinese learning experiences. Therefore, this study might provide limited implications for non-English language learners. In addition, this study might not reveal participants' other characteristics of GLLs, which might be invisible using the western theoretical framework. The limitations of this study regarding using characteristics of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009) are mentioned in the Limitations section in Chapter 3.

Gaps in the Research

As discussed above, researchers have made valuable contributions to investigate Chinese language programs in Chinese higher education, Chinese learning and teaching, and self-efficacy. However, relatively little attention has been paid to Chinese language students' self-efficacy. And relatively few research studies have investigated Chinese language students' self-efficacy in learning Chinese through the lenses of characteristics of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009).

This study investigated Chinese learning experience of college students who were early Chinese learners and enrolled in non-academic long-term Chinese programs, their self-efficacy in learning Chinese, and their demonstration of the characteristics of GLLs to help fill in the gaps of the research.

Chapter Summary

This literature review described and summarized existing research findings regarding current topics in the field of teaching/learning Chinese as a foreign language, conceptions of self-efficacy, the relationship between self-efficacy and language learning.

However, previous research findings offer limited contributions for investigating students' Chinese self-efficacy and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs, as well as the association between them. Research gaps found in previous research are provided in the literature review. Characteristics of GLLs are illustrated in detail in this chapter to provide the theoretical framework of this study.

The next chapter provides the methodology of this study in detail.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate college students enrolled in a beginning level preparatory course of a non-academic long-term Chinese language program, referred to in this study as the Chinese Program, their experiences of learning Chinese as a foreign language, and the association, if any, between their Chinese learning self-efficacy and their demonstration of characteristics of Good Language Learners (GLLs). A qualitative, phenomenological study was conducted with eleven college students who were early Chinese learners in a beginning level preparatory course of a non-academic long-term Chinese language program, referred to in this study as the Chinese Program, at East Coast University in Shanghai, the pseudonym for the institution in this study, through the lenses of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993) and characteristics of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009).

Three research questions were raised in order to gain specific understanding regarding (1) Chinese language students' self-efficacy in learning Chinese as a foreign language (will be abbreviated as learning Chinese), (2) the characteristics of GLLs Chinese students exhibited during the learning process, and (3) the association, if any, between students' Chinese learning self-efficacy and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs. Research questions are listed as follows:

1. What is the nature of students' efficacy while learning Chinese?

1a. What are students' perceptions of their strengths in learning Chinese?

1b. What are students' perceptions of their challenges in learning Chinese?

2. What characteristics of GLLs, if any, do students exhibit while learning Chinese?

3. What is the association, if any, between students' efficacy and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs while learning Chinese?

This chapter introduces the methodology of this study, including descriptions of the phenomenological study, participants, data collection, data analysis, and limitations.

Phenomenological Study

I conducted a qualitative phenomenological study to investigate college students who were early Chinese learners, referred to in this study as students, of their experiences of learning Chinese and the association, if any, between Chinese learning self-efficacy of Chinese language students and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs in the beginning level preparatory course of a non-academic long-term Chinese language program, referred to in this study as the beginning level preparatory course of the Chinese Program, at East Coast University in Shanghai.

Qualitative research is used to study real-world situations and provides researchers with a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of people, situations and the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2002). Patton (1985) defined qualitative research as:

> an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there…to understand the nature of that setting— what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting— and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting…The analysis strives for depth of understanding (as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 1).

This is in contrast to quantitative research, which focuses on measuring causal effects and distributions (Merriam, 2009), determining relations and generalizing general laws (Flick, 2009). Qualitative research helps investigators understand the underlying meaning of a phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). And one important feature of qualitative research is that a qualitative researcher embraces different perspectives. According to participants' diverse social backgrounds and personal experiences, they might have very different ideas and views on a particular phenomenon (Flick, 2009). Therefore, qualitative researchers seek to understand how

people perceive their experiences and what meaning they derive from these experiences. In this inquiry, the researcher used qualitative research to understand in depth students' perceptions of their experiences of learning Chinese.

Although one of the purposes of this study is to look at the association, if any, between students' self-efficacy in learning Chinese and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs, only qualitative methods and analysis were used. Data collection measures were used to show each participant's Chinese learning self-efficacy and were not used as quantitative data. In other words, only qualitative methods and analysis were used in this study to reveal students' experiences in learning Chinese and the association, if any, between students' self-efficacy in learning Chinese and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs.

The purposes of a phenomenological study are to obtain a "deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences" (van Manen, 1990, p. 9) and to describe "a grasp of the very nature of something" (van Manen, 1990, p. 177) through participants' experiences in a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Participants were early Chinese students ranging from 18 to 29 years of age in the beginning level preparatory course of the Chinese Program. Hence, the phenomenon experienced by participants in this study was defined as learning Chinese as a foreign language in the beginning level preparatory course of a non-academic long-term Chinese language program at East Coast University in Shanghai.

Through studying early Chinese language students' experiences in this setting, a phenomenological study was an appropriate methodology for investigating participants' personal experiences in learning Chinese. The use of phenomenology enabled me to gain deep knowledge about (1) early Chinese language students' self-efficacy in learning Chinese, (2) the characteristics of GLLs early Chinese students exhibit during the learning process, and (3) the

association, if any, between earl Chinese students' Chinese learning self-efficacy and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs.

Participants

Having five to twenty-five participants in a phenomenological study is appropriate for understanding a phenomenon experienced by a group of people and to make conclusions about the essence of their experiences (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) and Dukes (1984) recommend studying ten individuals in a phenomenological study. Therefore, for this phenomenological study I hoped to have a minimum of 10 participants, with two more participants to be recruited in case any participant wants to stop participating in the study or leave the program, or in case interview recordings get compromised. Finally, 11 participants completed this study.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), criterion sampling is useful to ensure that participants meet the researcher's criteria for selected participants. Criterion sampling strategy was used to recruit participants in order to better investigate (1) participants' experiences in learning Chinese in the beginning level preparatory course of the Chinese Program, (2) the association, if any, between participants' efficacy in learning Chinese and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the Chinese Program utilizes a self-made placement test to determine the class level for individual students. Most students are placed into beginning level classes because of having little or no Chinese learning experience. Students in the beginning level classes take beginning level Chinese language classes (i.e., preparatory course) as required classes. They can choose to participate or not in the optional classes based on their interest. Based on the conditions mentioned above, I recruited participants from the beginning level

preparatory course in the Chinese Program, in order to choose participants from a larger population based on participant selection criteria.

Participant Recruitment

Step 1. In order to find participants, I asked the administrator of the Chinese Program for permission to receive the email addresses of students who were 18 years of age or older in the beginning level preparatory course and to be on site. I emailed a consent form (Appendix B) to each student who was 18 years of age or older in the beginning level preparatory course to give students time to think about whether they would like to participate in this study.

Step 2. I brought and distributed paper-based consent forms (Appendix A) to each student who was 18 years of age or older in the beginning level preparatory course, and I collected forms as well. I was the only person who distributed and collected consent forms. No teachers or staff from the Chinese Program and/or East Coast University were on site during data collection, in order to protect students' data.

The consent forms were administered to all students who were 18 years of age or older in the beginning level preparatory course of the Chinese Program. The enrollment was estimated to be 300 to 350 students, but the final determination of enrollment number was around 50 students. Thirty-two students who signed the consent form were considered to be participants.

Step 3. The thirty-two participants who signed the consent form received a paper-based survey (Appendix C) attached with a paper-based Language Experience and Proficiency Questionnaire (LEAP-Q) (Appendix D).

The survey (Appendix C) allowed me to collect Chinese language students' demographic information, including age, the length of time spent learning Chinese, native language, etc. And the LEAP-Q assessed Chinese language students' English proficiency. Those students who

checked the box of having the ability to read, speak and listen in English in the survey were requested to fill out the LEAP-Q, regarding their English language proficiency level. This requirement was mentioned in the introduction part of the survey as well.

Students who attend the beginning level preparatory course of the Chinese Program are usually from different countries. Students' native languages may include Arabic, German, Ibibio, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Lao, Russian, Urdu, etc. As the researcher, I am bilingual only in Chinese and English. Therefore, in order to reduce the risks caused by translation and translators, I needed to select participants who were proficient in English to participate in this study. Questionnaires were in English and interviews were conducted in English. Therefore, participants were expected to be proficient in English reading, speaking, and listening.

Step 3 was administered in the fourth week of the beginning level preparatory course in the Chinese Program. In the meanwhile, most students were in their fourth week of learning Chinese in the Chinese Program.

I took actions to protect the confidentiality of participant responses and secure the data. First, as mentioned earlier, I asked the administrator of the Chinese Program for permission to be on site to distribute the surveys and the LEAP-Q to students in the beginning level preparatory course and to collect the surveys. Second, I was the only person who distributed and collected the survey and LEAP-Q. No teachers or staff from the Chinese Program or/and East Coast University was on site during data collection.

Step 4. After collecting the completed surveys and LEAP-Qs, I examined the responses to select participants based on four criteria. My final participants met the following requirements: (1) over 18 years of age, (2) enrolled in the beginning level preparatory course of

the Chinese Program, (3) had no Chinese learning experience, and (4) demonstrated adequate or higher English proficiency level in English reading, speaking, and listening.

The rationale of the four criteria was to ensure (1) participants were adults to reduce ethical risks; (2) shared the same phenomenon of learning Chinese, which is important in a phenomenological study; (3) had no prior Chinese learning experience; and (4) were able to express their experiences of learning Chinese in English.

Criteria for selecting participants are listed in Table 1. The process for participant recruitment is presented in Figure 1. Measures used in selecting participants will be discussed later in the data collection section in detail.

Table 1
Criteria for Participant Selection

	Age	Chinese program	Chinese learning experience	Language requirement
Criteria	Over 18	Beginning level preparatory course of the Chinese Program	No Chinese learning experience	Have five points or higher on each of following scales in the LEAP-Q self-report: 1. English reading 2. English speaking 3. English listening (understanding spoken language)
Rationale	To ensure participants are adults	To ensure that all participants experience the same phenomenon of learning Chinese	To ensure that all participants have no Chinese learning experience	To ensure that all participants can use English to express their experiences in learning Chinese
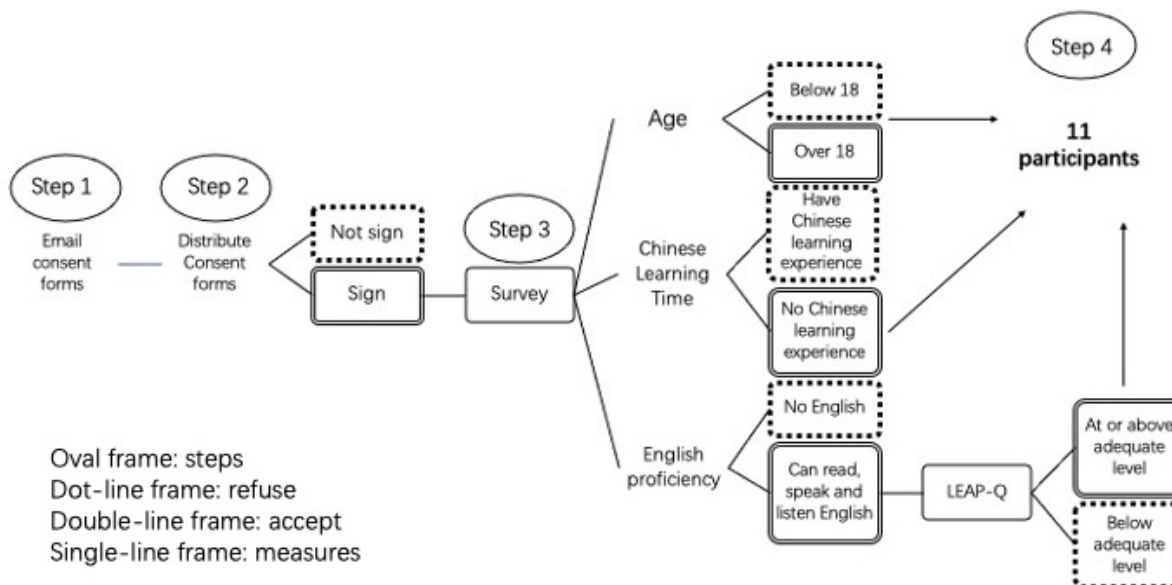
Figure 1. Procedure for recruiting participants.

Data Collection

Measures for Selecting Participants

This study implemented a paper-based survey and paper-based LEAP-Q as tools to gain detailed information from potential participants. The LEAP-Q was attached to the survey for participants who reported that they had the ability to read, speak, and listen in English, to show their English proficiency level. The survey and LEAP-Q were administered in the fourth week of the beginning level preparatory course.

Survey. The survey asked for participants' names, genders, ages, nationalities, languages, length of time spent learning Chinese, as well as English abilities. Information in the survey referring to two requirements of participant selection (i.e., being over 18 years old and having no Chinese learning experience) were checked.

LEAP-Q. The LEAP-Q was developed by Marian et al. (2007) for the purpose of gaining information about participants' language histories for "descriptive purpose" (p. 962). The LEAP-Q had a Cronbach's alpha at .73 (Sarwari & Abdul Wahad, 2018) suggesting that the LEAP-Q is a valid questionnaire for assessing participants' language status (Marian et al., 2007). Sarwari and Abdul Wahad (2018) conclude that five aspects of English proficiency are assessed in the LEAP-Q, including "acquisition history; contexts of acquisition; present language use; language preference and proficiency ratings; and accent ratings" (p. 424).

As mentioned above, those participants who checked the box of having the ability to read, speak, and listen in English were required to finish the LEAP-Q which was attached to the survey. The LEAP-Q demonstrated participants' language history (including native language and English) and showed their self-reported English proficiency level. This is important for this study because I, as the researcher, can only speak Chinese and English. Therefore, in order to reduce the risks caused by translation and translators, I must choose participants who are proficient in reading, speaking, and listening to English.

In most cases, the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) are the measures used in research to assess individuals' English proficiency level. Generally, TOEFL takes four hours (ETS, n.d.) and IELTS takes two hours and 45 minutes (IELTS, n.d.). However, considering time constraints, the LEAP-Q, which only needs about 10 minutes, is a better choice for the present study. But since the LEAP-Q shows self-reported English proficiency level of participants, this might contribute to less accurate results of participants' English proficiency level.

The LEAP-Q is primarily targeted at bilingual and multilingual participants (Marian et al., 2007), and in this study it was used for English only students to assess their English

proficiency level. For bilingual and multilingual participants, the second part of the LEAP-Q, Language X, focused only on English. This questionnaire was used with permission from the authors.

Although the scoring procedure is not available in the LEAP-Q, participants were required to rate their levels of English proficiency from zero to ten related to three skills: speaking, understanding of spoken language, and reading. Zero indicates that the participant is extremely poor in a specific skill. Five indicates that the participant is at an adequate level of a specific skill. Ten means that the participant is perfect in a specific skill.

In this study, participants who rated their English reading, speaking, and listening (understanding of spoken language) skills proficiency at five points or higher were viewed as having adequate or more than adequate English skills. Other data from the LEAP-Q were used as supplementary information to determine participants' language background. Participants who had at least an adequate level (five points or higher) in English reading, speaking, and listening (understanding spoken language) met the fourth requirement of the participant selection criteria--- being at adequate or higher English proficiency level in English reading, speaking, and listening.

Hence, according to the criteria, participants of this study were over 18 years old, enrolled in the beginning level preparatory course of the Chinese Program, had no Chinese learning experience, and had at least an adequate level (five points or higher) in English reading, speaking, and listening (understanding spoken language).

Based on these conditions, from the initial 32 participants, 18 participants reported having no Chinese learning experience, and 11 out of the 18 participants reported to be at an

adequate and/or higher English proficiency level in English reading, speaking, and listening. Therefore, 11 participants met all criteria and were finally recruited to complete this study.

All participants had taken the survey and the LEAP-Q in English to reduce the risks caused by translation and translators. The procedure for selecting participants is presented in Figure 1. I took actions to protect participants' data in the survey and LEAP-Q. The actions will be introduced later in detail.

Measures for Collecting Data

Creswell (2013) emphasizes that in phenomenological studies, researchers need to gain rich information to describe the phenomenon the participants experienced in detail. This study utilized the revised Questionnaire of English Self-efficacy (QESE) and one-on-one interviews to collect data about participants' experiences in the beginning level preparatory course of the Chinese Program. Figure 2 shows the procedure for collecting data.
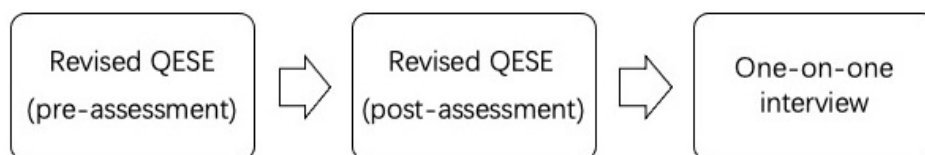
Figure 2. Data collection procedures.

Measure 1: Questionnaire of English Self-efficacy (QESE). I utilized the QESE (Appendix E) to assess participants' efficacy of learning Chinese in the beginning level preparatory course of the Chinese Program. Wang, Wang, and Li (2007) provide several sets of data to describe QESE as a valid and reliable questionnaire for assessing participants' language self-efficacy, including Cronbach's alpha, test-retest reliability and concurrent validity.

Respectively, data were .96, .82, and .55 (as cited in Wang, Hu, et al., 2012). This questionnaire was used with permission from the authors.

The QESE is primarily used to assess Chinese college students' English self-efficacy and is not mentioned to work only for students at or above a certain English level. This study applied it to gather data about Chinese self-efficacy of participants who were early Chinese learners. In Pajares (2006) (as cited in Tilfarlioglu & Cinkara, 2009) and Tilfarlioglu and Cinkara's (2009) studies researchers used a self-efficacy questionnaire to assess participants' Spanish self-efficacy and English self-efficacy, respectively, while the questionnaire originally assessed self-efficacy of students in an intermediate French course. In other words, Pajares (2006) used a French self-efficacy questionnaire to assess participants' Spanish self-efficacy (as cited in Tilfarlioglu & Cinkara, 2009), and Tilfarlioglu and Cinkara's (2009) study used Pajares's revised self-efficacy questionnaire to assess participants' English self-efficacy. Tilfarlioglu and Cinkara's (2009) study mentioned that except for translation, the only modification they made in Pajares's revised self-efficacy questionnaire was changing the target language from Spanish to English to assure the validity of the questionnaire.

Therefore, based on previous examples, in order to not change the validity of the questionnaire, the only modification of the QESE in this study was changing the target language from English to Chinese. A paper-based revised version of the QESE was implemented in this study and was attached in Appendix E.

The revised QESE tested four aspects of students' Chinese self-efficacy, including Chinese listening self-efficacy, Chinese speaking self-efficacy, Chinese reading self-efficacy, and Chinese writing self-efficacy. The revised QESE was used as the pre- and post-assessments to examine participants' perceived efficacy in learning Chinese for the purpose of triangulating

data. In other words, participants completed the revised QESE twice. The total research time of the present study was limited to a range of three months, and time must be saved for participants to prepare for their mid-term and final exam. Therefore, participants took the revised QESE as the pre-assessment and completed it again a month later as the post-assessment.

Employing the revised QESE. Participants completed the revised QESE in English to reduce the risk of translation and translator issues. Using paper-version questionnaires aimed to reduce the risk of participants' not having electronic devices.

The pre- and post-assessments were administered respectively in the fifth and the nineth week of the beginning level preparatory course. Participants completed the pre- and post-assessments in a meeting room offered by the Chinese Program to provide participants a quiet, secure and safe environment. Each participant finished each of his/her assessments. Participants and I were the only persons present in the meeting room during each assessment. After each assessment, I went home to input data of the assessment into my laptop in my own room, with no other person in present.

I took actions to protect participants' responses in the pre- and post-assessments. The actions will be introduced later in detail.

Data from the revised QESE and Research Question 1. Data from the pre- and post-assessments showed basic information about participants' perceptions of their efficacy in learning Chinese. Hence, this study did not analyze data from the pre- and post-assessments as quantitative data. Instead, the data were used only for documenting an individual participant's self-efficacy in Chinese learning. In other words, data from the revised QESE briefly answered Research Question 1.

Measure 2: One-on-one interviews. For the purpose of gaining more detailed information regarding participants' perceptions of their self-efficacy in Chinese learning and what characteristics of GLLs participants have, this study implemented one-on-one interviews to gain more in-depth information.

Interviewing often enables researchers to effectively understand interviewees' perspectives (Maxwell, 2013). Interviewing, according to Creswell (2013), includes different media, such as telephone interviews, focus group interviews, and one-on-one interviews. In a phenomenological study, "in-depth interviews" (p. 161) are a primary source that provide researchers with detailed information (Maxwell, 2013). Therefore, this study used a total of eleven one-on-one interviews to investigate each participant's experience of learning Chinese in the beginning level preparatory course of the Chinese Program.

Employing one-on-one interviews. Eleven one-on-one interviews were administered within three weeks according to participants' available time, starting from the tenth week to the twelfth week of the beginning level preparatory course. My participants completed one-on-one interviews with me in English to reduce risks caused by translation and translator issues. Each interview was held in a meeting room offered by the Chinese Program to build a safe, quiet and familiar environment for participants to freely share their opinions. Only the participant and I were present at each interview to protect the participant's privacy.

I asked for the participant's permission to audio record during each interview. Interviews were audio recorded by my code-protected phone (iPhone 7 plus). I made interview notes during each interview, but notes were shredded immediately after I transcribed each interview. I was the only person who transcribed the 11 interviews. Other actions I took to protect participants' data in interviews will be introduced later in detail.

This study invited each participant to review their individual interview transcripts for member checking. Member checking is one of the methods researchers implement to establish credibility of research (Creswell, 2013). Researchers usually solicit participants' intention to check if the data or results accurately expressed their experiences (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). Eight participants reviewed and confirmed their transcripts. The other three participants declined the invitation to check their interview transcriptions.

Interview protocol. Participants completed one-on-one interviews with me in English to reduce risks caused by translation and translator issues. I interviewed each participant about his/her experience in learning Chinese. In each interview, I asked questions to learn each participant's perceptions of his/her Chinese learning and strengths and weaknesses in learning Chinese.

For example, I asked the reasons why individual participants studied Chinese and the moments that stood out to them when thinking about their learning of Chinese. I asked questions to learn about each participant's strategies for learning and practicing Chinese. Then, I asked individual participants to talk about their plans for improving their Chinese learning. The detailed interview protocol is provided in Appendix F.

One-on-one interview data and Research Questions 1 and 2. One-on-one interviews, similar to the revised QESE, provided information about participants' perceptions of their efficacy in learning Chinese, but in a deeper way. To be more specific, the interview data elicited deeper information about participants' experiences in learning Chinese, including an individual participant's perception of his/her Chinese learning efficacy (corresponding to question 1) and how an individual participant utilized his/her abilities to learn Chinese and to

overcome challenges during the learning process (corresponding to research questions 1 and 2).

Table 2 presents details of the revised QESE and one-on-one interviews.

Table 2

Details of the Revised QESE and One-on-One Interviews

Data collection methods	The revised QESE (pre- and post-assessments)	One-on-one interviews
Data	Participants' perceived efficacy in learning Chinese	1. Participants' perceptions of their efficacy in Chinese learning. 2. How participants utilize their strengths and overcome challenges to improve their Chinese skills.
Corresponding research question(s)	Research Question 1	Research Questions 1 and 2
Administered week	Pre-assessment: the 5th week Post-assessment: the 9th week	The 10th, the 11th, and the 12th week

Data Analysis

The data analysis process of this study involved two stages. The first stage was analyzing the pre- and post-assessment data. The second stage focused on analyzing the one-on-one interview data.

Data from the Pre- and Post-Assessments

I examined participants' perceived efficacy in four Chinese language skills in the pre- and post-assessments using revised QESE. Therefore, both assessments presented individual participants' Chinese listening, speaking, reading, and writing self-efficacy.

Each assessment (revised QESE) contained 32 questions asking about individual participants' current command of four Chinese language skills. Each Chinese language skill corresponded to eight questions in each assessment. Participants self-assessed their current

command of Chinese on a scale from one (i.e., I cannot do it at all) to seven (i.e., I can do it well) to answer each question.

Therefore, after a participant completed one assessment, the assessment displayed eight scores representing his/her self-efficacy in each Chinese language skill. By calculating the average of eight scores, data was collected on each participant's self-efficacy in each Chinese language skill in each assessment.

In addition, I take the average of each participant's scores of self-efficacy in four Chinese language skills as his/her general Chinese self-efficacy. As mentioned above, the pre- and post-assessments measured participants' Chinese self-efficacy in four Chinese language skills. However, the assessments did not directly examine participants' self-efficacy in Chinese as a general. In order to better understand participants' strengths and challenges, which were not directly related to specific Chinese language skills, I deemed it necessary to conclude each participant's general Chinese self-efficacy result based on his/her self-efficacy in four Chinese language skills.

This study takes the results (i.e., individual participants' self-efficacy in general Chinese and each Chinese language skills) of the pre- and post-assessments separately. As mentioned earlier, the second assessment was administered a month later than the first. Therefore, comparing and contrasting the two assessment results would allow me to identify the similarities and differences of individual participants' self-efficacy results from the two assessments.

One thing to be noted is that, as mentioned earlier, although the pre- and post-assessment data are numerical in nature, this study used numerical data in qualitative methods. The numeral data were used and analyzed to show participants' self-efficacy in general Chinese and each Chinese language skill and reveal participants' Chinese learning experience.

Data from One-on-One Interviews

The data analysis strategy used for one-on-one interview data in the present study was the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method, which was modified by Creswell (2013). The first step was to bracket the researcher's bias (Creswell, 2013) by describing my own experience that relates to the phenomenon discussed in the study, namely learning Chinese as a foreign language.

Since I am from China, my only experience related to learning Chinese as a foreign language is teaching Chinese as a guest lecturer at a private university in the U.S. between 2016 and 2020. I taught primarily beginning and intermediate Chinese classes during those four years and taught a course in advanced Chinese once.

Most of my students were Americans. Among them, most were Asian-Americans. There were three main reasons why my students wanted to learn Chinese. First, many of them wanted to learn Chinese to use in their future work. For instance, my students in the medical field wanted to communicate with clients or patients who were Chinese speakers. Second, some of my students learned Chinese because they were interested in Chinese culture, such as the Chinese language, foods, history, drama, etc. Besides learning about the Chinese language, they expected to gain an understanding about Chinese culture in class. Third, a few students hoped to communicate with their parents and grandparents. Such students were from immigrant families with some family members who spoke Chinese only.

Looking back at that time, although my Asian-American students, in general, learned relatively faster and had better scores on quizzes and exams, I witnessed a few Asian-American students who struggled with learning Chinese. Although their Chinese capacity was relatively lower, they showed interest in insisting on learning Chinese. There were some students who stopped learning Chinese after a semester or a year.

Based on my Chinese teaching experience, I became curious about learners' experiences of learning Chinese as a foreign language. In order to decrease the influence from my own experience, rather than focusing on Chinese language learners in the U.S, I decided to conduct the study outside of the U.S. and focus on Chinese language learners from worldwide. Therefore, I conducted this inquiry in China with Chinese language learners from different places. In sharing my experience of teaching Chinese as a foreign language I aim to set aside my own experience to focus primarily on my participants' experiences in learning Chinese when analyzing data.

In the second step of analyzing the data, I looked for "significant statements" (Creswell, 2013, p. 193) that would describe participants' experiences in learning Chinese in the beginning level preparatory course of the Chinese Program.

To be more specific, as I read through each interview transcription, I highlighted significant statements and made notes on the margin about significant statements, from which I generated a list. The list of significant statements was designed to elicit my participants' Chinese learning experiences.

For the third step, I color coded significant statements which described participants' Chinese learning experience and grouped them into different categories. The significant statements that illustrated similar opinions, thoughts, comments, and experiences were grouped into the same category, including my participants' reasons for learning Chinese, their strengths and challenges in learning Chinese, the strategies they used to learn and practice Chinese, and their Chinese learning plan were the four categories that demonstrated participants' Chinese learning experience. Based on the four categories and significant statements, themes were generated to illustrate participants' Chinese learning experience.

For the fourth step, I generated the "textural description" (Creswell, 2013, p. 193) and the "structural description" (p. 194) of participants' experiences in learning Chinese in the beginning level preparatory course in the Chinese Program based on themes. Textural description describes what participants experienced in the phenomenon. Structural description describes how participants' experiences happened. Then, a "composite description" (p. 194) of participants' experiences developed according to textural description and structural description. The composite description tells the essence of participants' Chinese experiences.

In this inquiry, the essence of participants' Chinese learning experiences was firstly investigated according to the data from pre- and post-assessments and one-on-one interviews. Based on participants' Chinese learning experiences, Edge and Garton's (2009) list of characteristics of Good Language Learners (GLLs) was used as a theoretical framework to gain more understanding about participants' demonstration of characteristics of GLLs.

To be more specific, the pre- and post-assessments and one-on-one interviews were combined to tell stories of participants' Chinese learning experience. Data from the pre- and post-assessments were analyzed to reveal how my participants perceived their efficacy in learning Chinese to answer Research Question 1.

One-on-one interviews presented richer details about participants' perceptions of their efficacy in Chinese learning. These interviews reviewed the strengths and challenges participants perceived to have during the process of learning Chinese, how participants thought those strengths and challenges came about, and how they utilized their strengths and overcame challenges to improve their Chinese skills. Responses to my interview questions added details to answer Research Question 1. In addition, by comparing and contrasting characteristics of GLLs

(Edge & Garton, 2009) with my participants' Chinese learning experience, data from the interviews answered Research Question 2.

The pre- and post-assessments and one-on-one interviews were analyzed in relation to Research Question 3, which asks about the association, if any, between participants' efficacy in learning Chinese and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009). In other words, the relationship, if any, between participants' efficacy in Chinese learning and how participants learned, utilized strengths, and overcame challenges in the process of learning Chinese were presented.

The pre- and post-assessments and one-on-one interviews provided information for structural description and textual description. A composite description of Chinese language students' experiences in learning Chinese as a foreign language in the beginning level preparatory course of the Chinese Program could be generated.

Collecting data from the pre- and post-assessments and one-on-one interviews used the "triangulation" strategy (Creswell, 2013, p.102) to reduce the risk of coming to biased conclusions due to a single data collection method, in order to have a more reliable understanding (Creswell, 2013) of participants' learning experiences in the beginning level preparatory course of the Chinese Program.

To ensure the security of data, all paper-version data (e.g., consent forms, survey, LEAP-Q, and revised QESE) were locked in my home office drawer with a key. I was the only person who had access to the key. I will shred all original paper-version data (i.e., survey, LEAP-Q, and revised QESE) three years after the completion of this study. In addition, all electronic data (e.g., revised QESE, interview recordings, interview transcriptions) were protected with my code-protected personal MacBook Air laptop (with a 12-digit password), two code-protected

phones (each phone is iPhone 7 plus) which have no other apps and can only be unlocked with my fingerprint, and a password encrypted USB flash drive. I will erase all electronic data three years after the completion of this study.

Limitations

There are several limitations in the present research for different reasons. This section discusses limitations in detail and provides ways to address these limitations.

Researcher's Bias

It might be difficult to fully set aside my relevant experience during the process of data analysis. To address this limitation, I provided my biases about my experience of teaching Chinese as a foreign language at the beginning of the section on data analysis to clarify my analyzing on participants' experiences of learning Chinese.

Theoretical Framework Limitations

In this study, I employed Edge and Garton's (2009) descriptions of the characteristics of Good Language Learners (GLLS) as a theoretical framework. Edge and Garton (2009) concluded the ten characteristics of GLLs from English language teaching classrooms. That is to say, this study included the use of a western theoretical framework in understanding early Chinese learners' Chinese learning experiences.

Therefore, this study might provide limited implications for non-English language learners and might not reveal participants' other characteristics of GLLs, which might be invisible using the western theoretical framework.

To address this limitation, I provide recommendations for researchers in the field of teaching Chinese as a foreign language to understand Chinese language students', especially

early Chinese learners', Chinese learning experiences via characteristics of GLLs from perspectives other than western theoretical framework.

Language Limitations

Because I can only employ Chinese and English, participants in this research study are required to have strong English ability (native or non-native) to reduce risks caused by language, translation and translator. But globally there is a large population of Chinese language students, there could be many students who have low English proficiency. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Chinese language students in the research site study Chinese and communicate with teachers in English, despite the fact that English might not be their native language. Students who do not speak English or have low English proficiency might encounter more difficulties than participants in this study because of learning Chinese through English. Therefore, findings in this English-only study might be restricted to tell Chinese learning experience of English proficient students.

To address this limitation, I provide recommendations in Chapter 5 for other researchers in this field who can speak other languages to conduct similar studies to learn about non-English speaking and low English proficient students' Chinese learning experiences and their Chinese self-efficacy.

Instrument Limitations

English proficiency tests such as the TOEFL and IELTS are usually used to assess participants' actual English proficiency level. But both of these tests require more than two hours to finish. Because of the time limitation, I decided that tests such as the TOEFL and IELTS would not be appropriate for this inquiry. Considering time, the LEAP-Q, which takes about ten minutes to complete, would be a better choice for the study. But since the LEAP-Q

shows self-reported English proficiency level of participants, this might contribute to less accurate results of participants' English proficiency levels.

To address this limitation, among participants who met the other three requirements (i.e., be over 18 years old, studied Chinese at the beginning level preparatory course of the Chinese Program and had no Chinese learning experience), those who had the highest self-reported English proficiency in reading, speaking, and listening (understanding spoken language) were selected as participants.

Time Limitations

Because of the time restriction, there were only three months for me as a researcher to finish this study. Based on participants' class schedule and their available time, most participants engaged in this study for six or seven weeks, and two participants enrolled in this study for eight weeks. By the time this study was completed, participants had enrolled in the Chinese Program and learned Chinese for ten to twelve weeks. The limited research time allowed participants to share their ten- to twelve-week Chinese learning experience. Therefore, the findings of this research might be less generalizable.

To address this limitation, I provide recommendations for researchers to conduct similar studies with longer research period to better understand Chinese language students' learning experiences and their Chinese self-efficacy.

Research Site and Participants Limitations

This inquiry took place in a beginning level preparatory course of a non-academic long-term Chinese program in East Coast University, the pseudonym for the institution in this study, in Shanghai, China. Participants in this study were early Chinese language learners in the

research site. This research might be limited in generalizing the research findings to a larger

population of Chinese language students.

However, some research findings might provide applicable implications for teachers,

administrators, policy makers, and researchers in different Chinese programs and in the field of

teaching Chinese as a foreign language.

To address this limitation, I provide recommendations for researchers in the field of

teaching Chinese as a foreign language to investigate more advanced Chinese learners about

their Chinese self-efficacy and their experiences of learning Chinese.

Chapter Summary

This chapter described the methodology of the present study in detail. A

phenomenological study was conducted to investigate my participants who were early Chinese

learners of their Chinese learning experiences and the association, if any, between their

perceived efficacy in Chinese and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs. The survey

(Appendix C) and LEAP-Q (Appendix D) were the measures for selecting participants. The

revised QESE (Appendix E) and one-on-one interviews (Appendix F) provided the substance of

my findings about participants' experiences of learning Chinese, their Chinese self-efficacy, the

characteristics of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009) they exhibit, and the association, if any, between

their self-efficacy and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs.

The next chapter discusses my participants' Chinese learning experiences and describes

the research findings in detail.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to investigate college students, referred to in this study as students, enrolled in a non-academic long-term Chinese language program, their experiences of learning Chinese as a foreign language, referred to in this study as learning Chinese, and the association, if any, between the Chinese learning self-efficacy of Chinese language students and their demonstration of characteristics of Good Language Learners (GLLs). A qualitative, phenomenological study was conducted with college students who were early Chinese learners in a beginning level preparatory course of the non-academic long-term Chinese language program, referred to in this study as the beginning level preparatory course of the Chinese Program, at East Coast University in Shanghai, the pseudonym for the institution in this study, through the lens of characteristics of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009) and of self-efficacy. Eleven participants in this study were recruited through criteria sampling.

Three research questions guided the study to gain an understanding of (1) students' self-efficacy in learning Chinese, (2) the characteristics of GLLs Chinese students exhibit during the learning process, and (3) the association, if any, between students' Chinese learning self-efficacy and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs. Research questions are listed as follows:

1. What is the nature of students' efficacy while learning Chinese?

1a. What are students' perceptions of their strengths in learning Chinese?

1b. What are students' perceptions of their challenges in learning Chinese?

2. What characteristics of GLLs, if any, do students exhibit while learning Chinese?

3. What is the association, if any, between students' efficacy and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs while learning Chinese?

This chapter introduces participants' profile, participants' Chinese learning experiences, and the research findings. A general description of participants' information was mentioned in Chapter 3, Methodology. Participants' information was collected and analyzed from a survey (Appendix C), LEAP-Q (Appendix D), and one-on-one interviews. Participants' Chinese learning experiences generated from one-on-one interviews and the pre- and post-assessments (Appendix E) are reported in this chapter. This chapter then illustrates research findings by answering the three research questions of this study. The "Textural description" (Creswell, 2013, p. 193), "structural description" (p. 194), and "composite description" (p. 194) of this phenomenological study are included in this chapter.

Participants

Eleven participants were recruited through criterion sampling (mentioned in Chapter 3) to ensure that participants (1) were adults, (2) shared the same phenomenon of learning Chinese, (3) had no prior Chinese learning experience, (4) were able to express their experiences of learning Chinese in English. Table 3 presents a brief introduction of participants' information. To provide more information about participants, a detailed description of each participant followed.

Table 3

Participants' Information

Participant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Age	19	21	22	23	24	25	25	26	28	28	29
Gender	F	F	M	M	F	F	M	M	F	F	M
Native Language	Italian	English	Indonesian	German	Ibibio	English	German	Urdu	Arabic	Lao	Indonesian
Other language(s) (Except Chinese)	English Spanish	Cantonese	Malay English Turkish Thai	English French	English	N/A	English Spanish Polish	English	English	English Thai Korean	English
Self-perceived English proficiency	S: Good U: Very good R: Very good	S: Excellent U: Excellent R: Excellent	S: Very good U: Very good R: Very good	S: Very good U: Perfect R: Excellent	S: Very good U: Very good R: Very good	S: Perfect U: Excellent R: Perfect	S: Very good U: Very good R: Very good	S: Very good U: Very good R: Very good	S: Very good U: Excellent R: Perfect	S: Very good U: Very good R: Very good	S: Slightly more than adequate U: Very good R: Excellent
Length of learning Chinese when recruited as a participant (weeks)	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3

85

(Table 3 Continued)

Length of learning Chinese when pre- and post-assessments administered (weeks)	Pre: 5 Post: 9	Pre: 5 Post: 9	Pre: 5 Post: 9	Pre: 5 Post: 9	Pre: 5 Post: 9	Pre: 5 Post: 9	Pre: 5 Post: 9	Pre: 5 Post: 9	Pre: 5 Post: 9	Pre: 4 Post: 8
Length of learning Chinese when one-on-one interview administered (weeks)	11	10	11	10	10	11	12	10	10	11
Total number of weeks in the Chinese Program during the study	7	6	7	6	6	7	8	6	6	8
HSK Level IV test	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

Notes. M and F in the gender row respectively stand for male and female. S, U, and R in the self-perceived English proficiency row respectively stand for speaking, understanding spoken language, and reading. Pre and Post in the Length of learning Chinese when pre- and post-assessments administered row respectively stand for the pre-assessment and the post-assessment. Yes in the HSK Level IV test row means that the participant needed to pass the HSK Level IV test, while, No means the participant did not need to pass the HSK Level IV test.

Participant Profiles

This section reports a detailed description of eleven participants. Including age, gender, native language, other languages participants mastered, self-perceived English level, the length of Chinese learning, if needed to pass the HSK Level IV test (to be introduced in detail later), and/or unique personal experiences related to China.

Participant 1. Participant 1 was a 19-year-old Italian female. She had received 13 years of formal education and graduated from high school when she participated in this study. Other than Italian, which is Participant 1's native language, she can speak English and a bit of Spanish. When Participant 1 was six, she began acquiring English and became fluent in English around 15 years old. She began reading in English around ten years old and became fluent in reading English around 13 years old. This respondent's perceived English proficiency in speaking, understanding spoken language, and reading on a scale from zero (i.e., none) to ten (i.e., perfect), respectively, were seven (i.e., good), eight (i.e., very good), and eight. Participant 1 took part in this study for seven weeks. This respondent had been enrolled in the Chinese Program for four weeks when she was recruited as one of the participants to complete this study. In the fifth and nineth week of her learning in the Chinese program, participant 1 respectively took the pre- and post-assessments. The one-on-one interview between participant 1 and I administered in the 11th week of her learning in this program.

In the one-on-one interview, Participant 1 shared that in her hometown, there were a lot of Chinese people. Her father had commercial intercourse with Chinese companies. Therefore, Participant 1 was, to some extent, familiar with Chinese people. This participant went on several trips to some places in the midwestern part of China to visit her father before studying in China. When thinking about her travels there, Participant 1 said they were nice, but she was not used to

the days there. During the first few weeks in Shanghai, learning Chinese, this participant felt unaccustomed. But, after a few weeks, she found some similarities between Shanghai and European cities. Then, she started to like her days in Shanghai.

Participant 2. Participant 2 was a 21-year-old Chinese American lady from the U.S. This participant was a university student when she participated in the study. Her native language is English, and she can speak Cantonese. Participant 2 began acquiring English at three and started fluently in English at ten. She began reading in English at five and became fluent in English reading at ten. This respondent's self-perceived English proficiency in speaking, understanding spoken language, and reading on a scale from zero (i.e., none) to ten (i.e., perfect) are all nine (i.e., excellent). Participant 2 took part in this study for seven weeks. This respondent had learned Chinese in the Chinese Program for four weeks when I recruited her as a participant to complete this study. This participant took the pre- and post-assessments in the fifth and nineth week and was interviewed in the 11th week of her learning in this program.

Participant 2's family originally came from the southern part of China, where people mostly spoke Cantonese. Therefore, she grew up speaking English and Cantonese, but no Chinese (Mandarin). Participant 2 shared that she had family members in China. As a result, she had visited China several times before entering into the Chinese Program. Her relatives in China, such as her cousins, accompanied her to different places as tour guides and translators. Being of Chinese ethnicity, Participant 2 sometimes felt it was hard to have a cultural identity because of not speaking Chinese. She decided to take a semester off to study abroad in China to pick up the Chinese language.

Participant 3. Participant 3 was a 22-year-old male from Indonesia. Except for his native language, Indonesian, this participant reported mastering other eight languages, while on

the survey, he listed four, including Malay, English, Turkish, and Thai. Participant 3 had

received 15 years of formal education and graduated from college. At age five, he began

acquiring English and reading in English. At age 15, he became fluent in English, and at age 16,

he began fluent in reading in English. He reported his self-perceived English proficiency in

speaking, understanding spoken language, and reading at level eight (i.e., very good) on a scale

from zero (i.e., none) to ten (i.e., perfect). This respondent participated in this study for six

weeks. When Participant 3 was recruited as one of the participants to complete this study, he

had learned Chinese in the Chinese Program for four weeks. In the fifth and nineth week of his

learning in the Chinese program, participant 3 respectively took the pre- and post-assessments.

The one-on-one interview between this respondent and I was administered in the tenth week of

his learning in this program.

Participant 3 came to China for his further education. He stated that his masters' major

would be in Chinese. Therefore, as required by universities in China, Participant 3 had to learn

Chinese first. He had to pass the HSK Level IV test (will be introduced later) to show his

abilities in learning in Chinese.

Participant 4. Participant 4 was a 23-year-old man from Germany. Other than German,

which is his native language, he speaks English and French. Participant 4 graduated from a

university in Germany and had 16 years of formal education. English is this participant's second

language. When he was 11 years old, he began acquiring English and began fluently in English

at 14. He began reading in English at 12 and became fluent in reading in English at 15. He

perceived his English proficiency in speaking, understanding spoken language, and reading,

respectively, at eight (i.e., very good), ten (i.e., perfect), and nine (i.e., excellent) on a scale from

zero (i.e., zero) to ten. This respondent participated in this study for seven weeks. Participant 4

was in his fourth week of learning Chinese in the Chinese Program when I recruited him as a participant to complete this study. Participant 4 took the pre- and post-assessments in the fifth and nineth week. The one-on-one interview between participant 4 and I was administrated in the 11th week of his learning in this program.

Similar to Participant 3, Participant 4 came to China for his master's degree study. As a result, he needs to take Chinese courses and to pass the HSK Level IV test.

Participant 5. Participant 5 was a 24-year-old female from Nigeria. Her native language is Ibibio, and she can speak English. Participant 5 began acquiring English when she was two and became fluent in English at seven. She began reading in English at three and became fluent in reading in English at six. Her self-perceived English proficiency in speaking, understanding spoken language, and reading were all at level eight (i.e., very good) on a scale from zero (i.e., none) to ten (i.e., perfect). Participant 5 took part in this study for six weeks. By the time this respondent was recruited as a participant to complete this study, she had learned Chinese in the Chinese Program for four weeks. Participant 5 took the pre- and post-assessments respectively in the fifth and nineth week and was interviewed in the tenth week of her learning in this program.

Participant 5 wanted to enter into a master's program in China. Therefore, learning Chinese and passing the HSK Level IV test were the requirements before officially starting her master's study.

Participant 6. Participant 6 was a 25-year-old female from Nigeria. Her native language is English which is the only language she speaks. Participant 6 received 19 years of formal education and was going to study for her master's degree. English is this respondent's native language. She began acquiring English when she was two and began fluently in English at ten.

She began reading in English when she was four and began fluent in reading in English at seven. Her self-perceived English proficiency level, on a scale from zero (i.e., none) to ten (i.e., perfect), in speaking, understanding spoken language, and reading were respectively at level ten, nine (i.e., excellent), and ten. Participant 6 engaged in this study for six weeks. When I recruited this respondent as a participant to complete this study, she had learned Chinese in the Chinese Program for four weeks. Participant 6 took the pre- and post-assessments respectively in the fifth and nineth week and was interviewed in the tenth week of her learning in this program.

Participant 6 would enter the same master's program as Participant 5. Hence, the same as Participant 5, Participant 6 needed to learn Chinese and pass the HSK Level IV test.

Participant 7. Participant 7 was a 25-year-old male from Germany. German is his native language, and he can speak English, Spanish, and Polish. Participant 7 received 18 years of formal education and was going to apply for a master's program. English is his second language. He began acquiring English around age ten and began reading in English when he was 14. He became fluent in English and fluent in reading in English around age 17. His self-perceived English proficiency in speaking, understanding spoken language, and reading on a scale from zero (i.e., none) to ten (i.e., perfect) was all at level eight (i.e., very good). Participant 7 took part in this study for seven weeks. By the time this respondent participated in this study, he was in his fourth week of learning Chinese in the Chinese Program. Participant 7 took the pre- and post-assessments in the fifth and nineth week. The one-on-one interview between this participant and I was administered in the 11th week of his learning in this program.

Participant 7 had enrolled in a master's program in China, while his master's program was uniquely in English. Therefore, he was not required to learn Chinese or to pass the HSK

Level IV test. But because of living in Shanghai, this respondent wanted to prepare himself with necessary Chinese skills. Even though he did not have to learn Chinese, he voluntarily applied for the beginning level preparatory course of the Chinese Program to learn Chinese.

Participant 8. Participant 8 was a 26-year-old man from Pakistan. His native language is Urdu, and he can speak English. Participant 8 received 16 years of formal education and graduated from college. English is his second language. He began acquiring English at age four and began reading in English at age six. And he became fluent in English and became fluent in reading in English at age eight. He perceived his English proficiency in speaking, understanding spoken language, and reading on a scale from zero (i.e., non) to ten (i.e., perfect), all at level eight (i.e., very good). Participant 8 engaged in this study for eight weeks. I recruited this respondent as one of the participants to complete this study when he was in his fourth week of learning Chinese in the Chinese Program. Participant 8 took the pre- and post-assessments in the fifth and nineth week and was interviewed in the 12th week of his learning in this program.

Similar to Participant 1, Participant 8 visited China before he entered into the Chinese Program. He visited China with his father on business trips. When he was in China, he lived with one of his father's friends who married a Chinese woman. In the one-on-one interview, Participant 8 mentioned that there were many Chinese companies in his home country looking for people who could speak Chinese. Participant 8 decided to learn Chinese and to pursue a master's degree in China. Therefore, the same as some other participants, he was required to take the Chinese language classes and pass the HSK Level IV test.

Participant 9. Participant 9 was a 28-year-old female from Sudan. She can speak Sudanese and English. Participant 9 received 18 years of formal education and graduated from college. English is her second language. She began acquiring English around age 11 and started

reading in English around 20. She became fluent in English and fluent in reading English around 25. Her self-perceived English proficiency in speaking, understanding spoken language, and reading on a scale from zero (i.e., none) to ten (i.e., perfect), respectively, at level eight (i.e., very good), nine (i.e., excellent) and ten. This respondent participated in this study for six weeks. By the time I recruited Participant 9 as one of the participants to complete this study, she had learned Chinese in the Chinese Program for four weeks. Participant 9 took the pre- and post-assessments in the fifth and nineth week. The one-on-one interview between this respondent and I was administered in the tenth week of her learning in this program.

Participant 9 shared that people with Chinese abilities could have a larger job market in her home countries. She came to China for a master's program and to learn Chinese. Taking Chinese language classes and passing the HSK Level IV test was the must-do for this participant before officially starting the master's study.

Participant 10. Participant 10 was a 28-year-old woman from Lao. Except for her native language, the Lao language, she can speak English, Thai, and Korean. This participant received 20 years of formal education and had her master's degree. English is her second language. Participant 10 began acquiring English when she was six and became fluent in English at age eight. When she was nine, she began reading in English. She became fluent in reading in English at age ten. She perceived her English proficiency in speaking, understanding spoken language, and reading on a scale from zero (i.e., none) to ten (i.e., perfect), all at level eight (very good). This respondent participated in this study for six weeks. Participant 10 was in her fourth week of learning Chinese in the Chinese Program when I recruited her as one of the participants to complete this study. She took the pre- and post-assessments in the fifth and nineth week. The

one-on-one interview between participant 10 and I was administered in the tenth week of her learning in this program.

Participant 11. Participant 11 was a 29-year-old male from Indonesia. He can speak Indonesian, which is his native language, and English. This respondent received 17 years of formal education and graduated from college. English is his second language. Participant 11 began acquiring English at age seven and became fluent in English at age 22. He began reading in English when he was 12 and became fluent in reading in English at 17. His self-perceived English proficiency in speaking, understanding spoken language, and reading on a scale from zero to ten, respectively, was at level six (i.e., slightly more than adequate), eight (i.e., very good), and nine (i.e., excellent). Participant 11 engaged in this study for six weeks. By the time this respondent participated in this study, this respondent was in his third week of learning Chinese in the Chinese Program. Participant 11 enrolled in the Chinese Program one week later than other students. This respondent took the pre- and post-assessments in the fifth and nineth week. The one-on-one interview between participant 11 and I was administered in the 11th week of his learning in this program.

Similar to some other participants, Participant 11 hoped to pursue a master's degree in China. Therefore, he was required to take part in Chinese language classes and pass the HSK Level IV test.

Participants' Chinese Learning Experiences

This part presents participants' Chinese learning experiences in the beginning level preparatory course of the Chinese Program based on the pre- and post-assessments and one-on-one interviews. Participants' Chinese learning experiences are demonstrated in four aspects, including (1) the reasons why participants learned Chinese, (2) participants' self-perceived

strengths and challenges while learning Chinese, (3) the strategies that participants used to learn and practice Chinese, and (4) the plans of learning Chinese over the next year (see Figure 3).
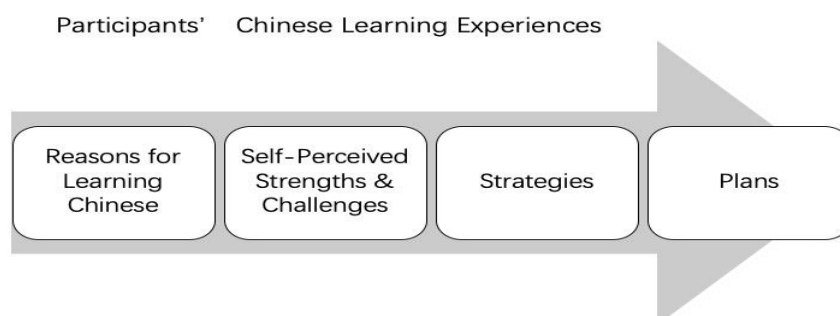
Figure 3. Four aspects of participants' Chinese learning experiences.

The pre- and post-assessments' results are demonstrated in this section as well as the themes from one-on-one interviews. The illustration of participants' Chinese learning experience contains three types of description of the phenomenological study (i.e., textural description, structural description, and composite description) (Creswell, 2013).

Themes

This study learned participants' Chinese learning experiences through four aspects, including participants' reasons for learning Chinese, their self-perceived strengths and challenges, the strategies they used to learn and practice Chinese, and their plans to learn Chinese over the next year. Eleven themes emerged from the four aspects of participants' experiences and provided an overview of participants' experiences in learning Chinese in the beginning level preparatory course of the Chinese Program. The eleven themes are listed below. In addition, the following sections discuss each part of participants' experiences in order in detail.

Reasons for learning Chinese. Participants learned Chinese for three primary reasons. First, to meet their interests, second, as a requirement for their master's enrollment, and finally, to be ready for future opportunities (Theme 1).

Self-perceived strengths. The language related strengths of participants in learning Chinese were related with their native languages (Theme 2). Participants perceived some of their personality traits as strengths in learning Chinese (Theme 3).

Self-perceived challenges. Participants' self-perceived language-related challenges were Chinese characters, tones, listening, speaking, and grammar (Theme 4). Many participants were dissatisfied with the professional dispositions of certain teachers and perceived these teachers to have caused challenges for students (Theme 5). The curriculum setting and the class members resulted in certain challenges perceived by the participants (Theme 6).

Strategies. Participants presented their strategies in learning and practicing Chinese, mainly focusing on Chinese characters, Chinese speaking, and Chinese listening (Theme 7). Participants valued both applying what they had learned to their daily life and learning from real-life experiences (Theme 8). While there were difficulties in communicating with Chinese native speakers, most participants positively took the challenges (Theme 9).

Plans over the next year. Participants reported three main plans for learning Chinese over the next year. This includes preparing for the HSK Level IV test, learning Chinese for their majors, and further learning and practicing Chinese (Theme 10). Some participants came up with strategies to effectively carry out their plans, in addition to their currently used strategies in learning Chinese (Theme 11).

Reasons for Learning Chinese

In one-on-one interviews, participants illustrated their reasons for learning Chinese in China (Figure 4). Seven participants reported having interests in China, Chinese culture, and the Chinese language. Seven participants mentioned that learning the Chinese language was one of the requirements for their further education in China. Six participants declared that learning the Chinese language would bring benefits for their future. One participant learned Chinese for cultural identity. The following paragraphs discuss the reasons in detail.
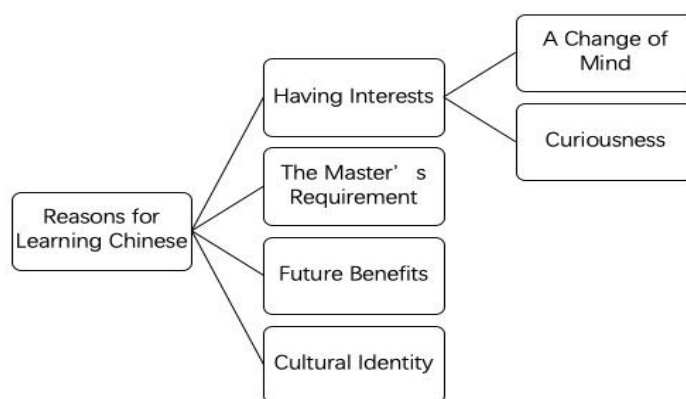
Figure 4. Reasons for learning Chinese.

Having interests in China, Chinese culture and/or the Chinese language. Researchers find that having interests in China, Chinese culture, and the Chinese language is one reason students learned Chinese (Ding, 2016; Guo, 2015; Li & Wei, 2015; Yang & Wang, 2017). Similarly, in this study, seven participants reported that their reasons for learning Chinese included having interests in China, Chinese culture, and/or the Chinese language.

Four of them mentioned a change of mind during the period of learning Chinese---from having no or little interest to being interested in learning Chinese. The other three participants had interests in China, Chinese culture, and/or the Chinese language because of curiosity.

A change of mind. Four participants (1, 3, 4, 9) experienced a change of mind during

learning Chinese. After learning Chinese and living in Shanghai, they gradually had interest in

knowing more about China, Chinese culture, and the Chinese language.

Participant 4's mind went from learning Chinese to pass the lowest requirement for the

master's enrollment to enjoying the learning process, Chinese culture, and his life in Shanghai.

He stated that having the necessity of passing the HSK Level IV test (to be discussed later)

pushed him to learn Chinese to prepare for his master's enrollment in China. He admitted that

there was no other motivation when he started to learn Chinese. However, he gradually realized

that it would be a waste of time if he learned Chinese just for passing the test. Because he would

live in China for a couple of years before he finished his master's program, he hoped to prepare

himself with the ability to live in China. His recognition that learning Chinese for his following

life in China would be more valuable than learning just for his master's enrollment resulted in a

shift in thinking. "I generally developed an interest in China, Chinese culture, not just the

language, but the language is a part of it," said Participant 4.

Participant 9 reported a similar experience. Participant 9 indicated that she first learned

the Chinese language just for her master's requirement. However, she started to like the Chinese

language after seeing herself making progress day by day. "When I came to school, I was crying

all the days," said Participant 9, "but now I can figure out some words and try to make sense by

myself. I started to like Chinese".

Participant 3 went through a change of mind. At first, he was not interested in the

Chinese language but was curious about China. He came to China because he was surprised by

China's economic growth and wanted to know more. Afterward, when he started to learn

Chinese characters in class, he was curious why Chinese characters were different from alphabet

letters in other languages. After knowing that there were meanings behind different Chinese characters, he started enjoying learning Chinese and Chinese culture. "I just learned that every character that involves water is with three dots. And some relates to the soil are with the 土. So that makes me feel that Chinese is actually an interesting language," said by Participant 3.

Participant 1 was unaccustomed to her life in China, but this changed after living in Shanghai. During the first week, Participant 1 was not used to her life in China and wanted to head back to Europe. But after a month, she found some similarities between her life in Europe and Shanghai and decided to stay longer. She stated that now she was sure and happy about her decision to study Chinese, even though she was aware of the challenges of learning Chinese. "I know it could be quite hard, but now I love it," said Participant 1.

Curiousness. Three participants (5, 6, 7) expressed that their curiosity about China motivated them to study in Shanghai. Participant 7 read about China in 2016 and wanted to experience life in China in person. When applying for his master's, he looked for universities in China. Participant 7 was not required to learn Chinese because his master's program was in English. However, to involve himself in Shanghai, he voluntarily took the Chinese language classes in the beginning level preparatory course of the Chinese Program.

Similarly, Participant 5 stated that China was one of the places she always wanted to visit but never had a chance to go on her own. Therefore, when she learned about the opportunity for a master's in China, she applied for it. In addition, Participant 6 heard from her friends who had studied in China saying that China was now developed. As a result, she became curious and encouraged to come and study in China. "I thought it wouldn't be bad to study there," said Participant 6.

The master's requirement. The Ministration of Education of the People's Republic of China issued *the Higher Education Quality Standards for Foreign Students (Trial)* in 2018. The standards specifically mentioned the minimal requirement for international students who seek academic education in Chinese higher education is to pass the HSK Level IV test.

According to the Center for Language Education and Cooperation (n.d.), the HSK is known as the Chinese Proficiency Test for non-native Chinese learners. The HSK series has six levels of tests, including HSK Level I, HSK Level II, HSK Level III, HSK Level IV, HSK Level V and HSK Level VI. HSK Level IV mentioned above requires test takers to "converse in Chinese on a wide range of topics and can communicate fluently with native Chinese speakers" (Chinese Testing International Co., Ltd., n.d.).

Recent years, researchers have found that students are motivated to learn Chinese because they wanted to pass their exams (Li & Wei, 2015), especially the HSK Level tests (Guo, 2015). In this study, this was one of the reasons why some participants learned Chinese.

Seven participants stated that learning Chinese was the requirement for their master's enrollment in China since their majors would be taught in Chinese. For instance, Participant 5 indicated, "I came for the master's and learning Chinese is one of the requirements in the master's program." Similarly, Participants 6, 9, and 11 all mentioned that they would have a master's program in China and were required to pass the HSK Level IV test. Therefore, before officially enrolled in their master's, they needed to learn Chinese to pass the HSK Level IV test.

Future benefits. Six participants indicated that learning Chinese would be beneficial to their future. Among them, five participants stressed that knowing Chinese would be useful for their future jobs. Researchers have found that students learn Chinese for more and better job opportunities in the future (Ding, 2016; Guo, 2015; Li & Wei, 2015; Yang & Wang, 2017). As

illustrated below, participants in this study indicated they learned Chinese to increase job opportunities.

Participant 2 expressed, "China's economy is advanced so quickly. And many other countries are adopting this language. So, I want to catch on [to] that for my future". Having more job opportunities and getting higher pay were the practical reasons she was eager to learn Chinese.

Similarly, Participant 8 and 9 believed that they would have more job opportunities in their home countries after learning Chinese. Participant 8 specifically pointed out that there were a number of Chinese companies in his country looking for professionals who can speak Chinese. He applied for those jobs once but was rejected for not speaking Chinese. As a result, he hoped to become proficient in Chinese to be capable of those jobs which looked for Chinese speakers.

Likewise, Participants 4 and 10 presented their intentions to use Chinese in workplaces. Rather than simple greetings and short conversations, they would prefer to use Chinese to construct meaningful conversations, especially in the working place.

In addition, Participant 1 stressed that learning Chinese would be useful for her life in general. She explained that she noticed many Chinese immigrants in Europe, especially in her country, could not speak English or the local language well. Therefore, it would be advantageous to learn Chinese because she could use Chinese both in China and Europe.

Cultural identity. There was only one participant, Participant 2, who mentioned that one of her motivations for learning Chinese was to be able to better identify as Chinese. Yu (2020) says that Chinese heritage students sometimes feel confused because they are not able to speak Chinese, but people think they can speak Chinese. Participant 2 in this study faced this conflict. She is of Chinese ethnicity but only speaks Cantonese. She often had a hard time trying to

communicate with mainland Chinese people when she visited China. "People always think I'm Chinese," said Participant 2, "because I'm Chinese, so it seems like I should know Mandarin (Chinese), right?". She felt upset about her being Chinese ethnicity but speaking no Chinese. Therefore, in order to have a better cultural identity as being Chinese and better communicate with Chinese people pushed her to learn Chinese.

Conclusion. There are four reasons why participants decided to learn Chinese. The reasons include, learning Chinese for interest, the master's enrollment, future benefits, and cultural identity.

By researching participants' reasons for learning Chinese through one-on-one interviews, one theme emerged. Participants learned Chinese for three primary reasons. First, to meet their interests, second, as a requirement for their master's enrollment, and finally, to be ready for future opportunities (Theme 1).

After learning about participants' reasons for learning Chinese, they shared their experiences by talking about the strengths and challenges they encountered during learning Chinese. The next section discusses participants' self-perceived strengths and challenges in detail based on the pre- and post-assessments and one-on-one interviews.

Self-Perceived Strengths and Challenges

The pre- and post-assessments and one-on-one interviews were methods to gather data and understand participants' self-perceived strengths and challenges in learning Chinese. This study used the pre- and post-assessments and one-on-one interviews to triangulate data.

Before one-on-one interviews, eleven participants reported their self-efficacy in learning Chinese in four language skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing) via the pre- and post-assessments.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, this study takes the average score of each participants' scores of self-efficacy in four Chinese skills as his/her general Chinese self-efficacy based on the pre- and post-assessments. This action was for better understanding some participants' strengths and challenges, which were not directly related to specific Chinese language skills.

Xu (2016) investigated Chinese language skills self-efficacy of students in academic programs. Xu asserts that students' highest self-efficacy in specific Chinese skills is the Chinese reading self-efficacy, while the lowest is the Chinese speaking self-efficacy. However, this study had different results.

In this study, the pre- and post-assessments results indicated that participants' lowest self-efficacy was in Chinese listening, and the highest was in Chinese speaking and Chinese writing.

The results from the pre- and post-assessments are presented in Table 4, Table 5, Table 6, and Table 7. This organization illustrates the two assessments' results for further analyzing participants' self-perceived strengths and challenges in learning Chinese together with one-on-one interviews.

Table 4

Participants' Lowest and Highest Self-Efficacy Scores in Chinese Language Skills

Participants	The Lowest SE		The Highest SE		The Least SE Increasement	The Most SE Increasement
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post		
1	L	L	W	W	L	S
2	L R	R	S	W	R	W
3	L	L	W	W	R	S W
4	L	L	S	W	R	W
5	W	L	S	S	L	S
6	L	L	S	S	L R	W
7	W	L	S	S	R	W
8	R	L	S	R	L	R
9	S	L R	L	W	L R	W
10	L	L	S R	S	R	W
11	L	L	S	S	R	W
Conclusion (number of participant)	L (7) R (2) W (2) S (1)	L (10) R (2)	S (8) W (2) R (1)	S (5) W (5) R (1)	R (8) L (5)	W (8) S (3) R (1)

Note. L stands for listening; S stands for speaking; R stands for reading; W stands for writing; SE stands for self-efficacy.

Table 5

Participants' Self-Efficacy in Chinese Skills Arranged from the Lowest to the Highest

Participant	Pre-Assessment				Post-Assessment			
	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV
1	L	R	S	W	L	R	S	W
2	L R	NA	W	S	R	L	S	W
3	L	S	R	W	L	R	S	W
4	L	R	W	S	L	R	S	W
5	W	L	R	S	L	W	R	S
6	L	R W		S	L	R	W	S
7	W	L	R	S	L	R	W	S
8	R	L	W	S	L	W	S	R
9	S	W	L R	NA	L R	NA	S	W
10	L	W	S R	NA	L	R	W	S
11	L	W	R	S	L	R	W	S

Note. I, II, III, and IV stands for the range from the lowest self-efficacy to the highest self-efficacy; L stands for listening; S stands for speaking; R stands for reading; W stands for writing.

Table 6

Each Participant's Average Self-Efficacy Scores in Chinese Language Learning

Particip ant	Listening		Speaking		Reading		Writing		General Chinese	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
1	2.875	3	3.625	4.625	3.375	4	4.5	4.875	3.594	4.121
2	2.25	3.25	3.625	4.625	2.25	3	3	4.75	2.781	3.906
3	4.25	4.375	4.625	5.5	5.125	5.125	5.75	6.625	4.938	5.406
4	2.25	3.125	3.875	5.25	2.625	3.25	3.25	5.75	3	4.344
5	2.75	2.625	3.625	5	3.286	4	2.625	3.75	3.072	3.844
6	4.875	4.75	5.875	6.125	5.5	5.375	5.5	6	5.438	5.563
7	2	3.25	2.75	4.25	2.25	3.375	1.875	3.875	2.219	3.688
8	3.125	3.714	3.625	4.375	3	4.75	3.5	4.125	3.313	4.241
9	3.571	3.833	2.875	4.125	3.571	3.833	3.286	5	3.311	4.198
10	3.75	4.625	4.875	6.625	4.875	4.75	3.875	5.875	4.344	5.469
11	3.25	4	4	5.125	3.429	4.125	3.286	4.5	3.491	4.438
Total Average	3.177	3.686	3.943	5.057	3.571	4.144	3.677	5.011	3.591	4.474

Note. Pre and post respectively stand for the pre-assessment and the post-assessment.

Table 7

Participants' General Chinese Self-Efficacy Ranking

SE in General Chinese	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10	#11
Pre	6	3	10	1	11	8	9	5	4	2	7
Post	6	10	3	11	4	8	9	1	2	5	7

Note. SE stands for self-efficacy. #1, #2, #3, etc., stand for the first place, the second place, the third place, etc. Pre and post stand for the pre- and post-assessments.

Table 4 shows an overview of the participants' lowest and highest self-efficacy in Chinese language skills. Table 5 presents the range of each participant's self-efficacy in Chinese language skills from the lowest to the highest in pre- and post-assessments. Table 6 presents each participant's average scores of his/her self-efficacy in each Chinese language skill and Chinese language learning in general. Table 7 shows the ranking of participants' general Chinese self-efficacy, respectively, in the pre- and post-assessments. The following paragraphs illustrate the pre- and post-assessments' results in detail.

Firstly, according to the two assessments' results, participants' lowest self-efficacy was in Chinese listening. To be more specific, in the pre-assessment, data showed that participants'

lowest self-efficacy mostly fell in Chinese listening (see Table 4). Among eleven participants, seven of them reported to have lower self-efficacy in Chinese listening.

Similarly, in the post-assessment, participants' lowest self-efficacy was mostly gathered in Chinese listening (see Table 4). Ten out of eleven participants presented that their lowest self-efficacy in Chinese language skills were in Chinese listening.

Secondly, the two assessments' results showed that participants' highest self-efficacy were in Chinese speaking and Chinese writing. More specifically, in the pre-assessment, participants' highest self-efficacy was mainly clustered in Chinese speaking (see Table 4). Eight of eleven participants had higher self-efficacy in Chinese speaking.

In the post-assessment, participants' highest self-efficacy was in Chinese speaking and writing. Five participants viewed their self-efficacy in Chinese speaking to be the highest among the four Chinese language skills (see Table 4). There were five participants reported to have higher self-efficacy in Chinese writing than other Chinese language skills (see Table 4).

One thing to be noticed is that the results presented in pre- and post-assessments were consistent but showed slight differences. There was a month between when pre- and post-assessments took place. Therefore, participants' experience in learning Chinese this month could be one reason why the pre- and post-assessments' results had slight differences.

Thirdly, the two assessments' results indicated that participants' self-efficacy improved the most in Chinese writing, while the least in Chinese reading (see Table 4). Compared to the pre-assessment, in the post-assessment, three more participants ranked their self-efficacy in Chinese writing at the top among four Chinese language skills (see Table 4, Table 5). In contrast, three participants ranked their self-efficacy in Chinese speaking lower in the post-assessment than in the pre-assessment (see Table 4, Table 5).

Therefore, this study compared individual participants' average scores of their self-efficacy in four Chinese skills in both assessments. The result illustrated that participants' Chinese writing self-efficacy improved the most, while Chinese reading self-efficacy improved the least.

Fourthly, the two assessments' results showed that participants' self-efficacy in Chinese language skills and general Chinese were at around a medium level. To be more specific, on a self-efficacy scale range from one to seven, the average scores of each participant's scores in Chinese language skills and general Chinese fell between 3.177 and 5.057 (see Table 6). That is to say, participants' average scores of their self-efficacy in each Chinese language skill and general Chinese were at around a medium level. This result was similar to previous research findings that Chinese language students usually have a relatively middle-level Chinese self-efficacy (Zheng, 2015; L. Huang, 2018).

This study conducted one-on-one interviews to bring more information to the pre- and post-assessments' results to help understand participants' self-efficacy in learning Chinese. The following paragraphs discuss participants' strengths and challenges in learning Chinese generated from one-on-one interviews. The correlation between the pre- and post-assessments' results and one-on-one interview results is illustrated in detail. Furthermore, at the end of this section provides a summary of participants' self-perceived strengths and challenges.

Strengths. One-on-one interviews aim to learn about participants' experiences in learning Chinese. In one-on-one interviews, participants shared their self-perceived strengths and challenges in learning Chinese. This section discusses participants' self-perceived strengths in learning Chinese concluded from one-on-one interviews. The next section discusses participants' self-perceived challenges.

Participants perceived to have language-related strengths (i.e., listening, pronunciations, and grammar) in learning Chinese. In addition, they reported that certain personality traits played a role in their Chinese learning process. Figure 5 illustrates participants' self-perceived strengths. The following paragraphs illustrate participants' self-perceived strengths in learning Chinese in detail.
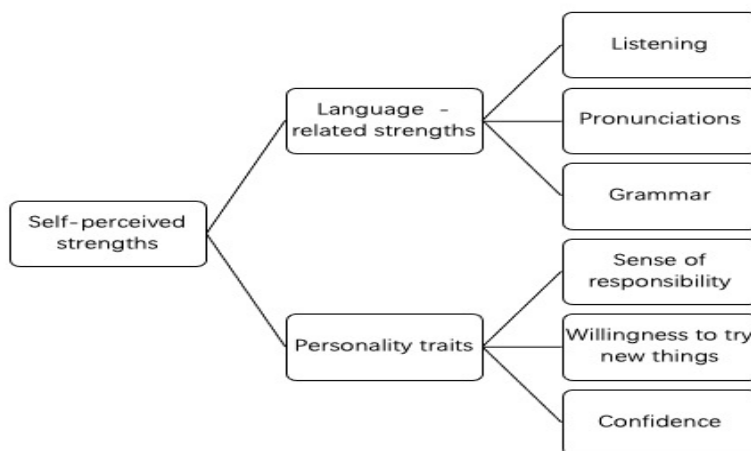
Figure 5. Participants' self-perceived strengths.

Language-related strengths. Researchers have found that some Chinese language students have language strengths in learning Chinese because their native languages share something common with Chinese (Qu & Zhong, 2020; Wang, 2016; Wu & Jin, 2013). Similarly, in this study, eight out of eleven participants mentioned having language-related strengths (i.e., listening, pronunciations, and grammar) in learning Chinese. Most of them felt they have language-related strengths because there were some similarities between Chinese and their native languages and/or the languages they were able to master.

Listening. Two participants had little problem with listening in Chinese. "For me, listening is okay. I don't have a problem with it," indicated Participant 10. Participant 8

mentioned that his homestay experience in China helped improve his Chinese listening capability. As Participant 8 shared, before learning Chinese, he came to China several times because his father had some business trips to China. In the past two years, he spent around nine months in China, coming back and forth. Participant 8 mentioned that when he was in China, he lived with one of his fathers' friends, married a Chinese woman. Participant 8 stated that he listened to Chinese when he was with his father's friend. Therefore, he was okay with Chinese listening.

According to the pre- and post-assessments' results, Participant 10's lowest self-efficacy in Chinese language skills was in listening in the pre- and post-assessments (see Table 4). Similarly, Participant 8, in the post-assessment, reported that his lowest self-efficacy in Chinese language skills was Chinese listening self-efficacy (see Table 4).

In other words, both of the two participants mentioned listening as their strengths in learning Chinese. However, their Chinese listening self-efficacy scores were relatively lower than their other Chinese language self-efficacy scores. The potential reasons might be that Participants 8 and 10 met some challenges regarding Chinese listening in learning Chinese. For example, participant 8 pointed out that tones were a challenge in learning Chinese, and Participant 10 mentioned some difficulties caused by the Chinese listening teacher. Those challenges are discussed further in the Challenges section.

Pronunciations. Known as Chinese pinyin, the Chinese phonetic system has 21 initials, 38 finals, and four tones. One Chinese phonetic syllable comprises one initial, one final, and one tone (Liu, 2015). Two participants stated that there were some similarities between the pronunciations in Chinese and the other languages they were able to master. Participant 2, who speaks Cantonese, stated that Cantonese had some tones similar to Chinese.

Participant 1 mentioned that Chinese and Italian had similarities in syllable pronunciations. For example, she stated that the pronunciation of "an" in Chinese was the same as Italian. She pointed out that Italian might be the only language that had some similarities with Chinese among the European languages. Therefore, the similarities between Chinese and Italian brought her advantage in learning Chinese, at least initially. "It's cool. Because I remembered at the beginning, among Europeans here, I was the best, maybe because of pronunciations," claimed Participant 1. The other two participants from Europe, Participants 4 and 7, shared an alternative perspective. Participant 4 speaks German, English, and French. Participant 7 speaks German, English, Spanish, and Polish. Both of them indicated that speaking European languages had little help in learning Chinese. For instance, Participant 4 stated, "if you try to pronounce German words in the English way, often it's right. There are some similarities in European languages. But you can't do this in Chinese".

Pronunciations could affect one's oral expressions and listening abilities (Wei, 2014). According to the pre- and post-assessments' results (see Table 4 and Table 5), Participants 1 and 2 had relatively lower self-efficacy in listening compared to other Chinese language skills. Additionally, the Chinese speaking self-efficacy of Participants 1 and 2 were higher than their Chinese listening self-efficacy in both assessments. Participants' perceptions of having pronunciation strengths in learning Chinese provided evidence to the pre- and post-assessments. Mastery experiences are a determinant of self-efficacy (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Hence, participants' strength in pronouncing Chinese resulted in their relatively higher self-efficacy in Chinese speaking.

On the other hand, Participants 1 and 2 had confidence in Chinese pronunciations and had lower self-efficacy in Chinese listening might because of some of their challenges related to

learning Chinese regarding Chinese listening. For example, Participant 1 named listening as one

of her challenges in learning Chinese. And Participant 2 expressed her dissatisfaction with the

Chinese listening teacher. These challenges are discussed later in detail.

Grammar. Two participants (2, 11) indicated that Chinese grammar was similar to their

languages. Participant 2 speaks Cantonese, and she pointed out that Chinese grammar was pretty

much the same as Cantonese. Participant 11 found the similarities between the grammar in his

native Indonesian language and Chinese. He stated that the easiest part of learning Chinese was

the grammar because Chinese grammar was quite similar to the Indonesian.

Grammar is the foundation of speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills (Sun, 2017;

Widodo, 2006). Although Participants 2 and 11 expressed that they were familiar with Chinese

grammar, their self-efficacy scores in general Chinese were different.

To be more specific, Participant 2 had relatively lower self-efficacy in Chinese as a

general (Table 6). Her average scores of general Chinese self-efficacy among eleven participants

was the second lowest in the pre-assessment and the third-lowest in the post-assessment. In

summation, Participant 2's self-efficacy in general Chinese was at a low level out of all

participants.

Compared to Participant 2, Participant 11had relatively higher self-efficacy in general

Chinese. The average score of his general Chinese self-efficacy among eleven participants

ranked at the fifth and the fourth, respectively, in the pre- and post-assessments out of all

participants (see Table 7). In other words, Participant 11's self-efficacy in general Chinese was

at a medium and higher level out of all eleven participants (see Table 7).

Therefore, other factors need to be considered to explain why Participant 2 had low self-

efficacy in general Chinese, while Participant 11 had higher self-efficacy. For example,

Participant 2 mentioned several challenges caused by teachers and curriculum settings that negatively impacted her Chinese language learning. Participant 11 only mentioned that Chinese characters and pronunciations, specifical tones, as the two challenges he encountered in learning Chinese. Perceiving fewer challenges might be one reason why Participant 11 tended to have higher self-efficacy in general Chinese than Participant 2. The challenges perceived by participants will be discussed later in the Challenges section in detail.

Other than language-related strengths, during one-on-one interviews, participants mentioned certain personality traits as their strengths in learning Chinese. The following paragraphs list the personality traits which participants relied on in learning Chinese.

Personality traits. Researchers have asserted that personality traits play a role in language acquisition (Gardner & Clément, 1990; Liu, 2012; Marpaung & Widyanotoro, 2020; Zafar & Meenakshi, 2012). Similarly, in this study, several participants specifically commented that certain of their personality traits were good for their Chinese learning, including a sense of responsibility, willingness to try new things, and confidence in learning Chinese.

Sense of responsibility. Several participants stated that being more responsible for themselves in comparison to other students was their strength. Participant 1 pointed out that although many students were forced to learn Chinese because they would study for their Master's degree in Chinese, they were not motivated to study Chinese.

Participant 4 supported Participant 1's words saying that some students could not take their learning seriously. He believed that everyone in the class came to learn Chinese for a reason, and therefore everyone should take care of his/her learning. However, he was surprised to see that many students relied on the teachers and even classmates to learn. Participant 4 shared an example, stating that many students expressed their willingness to take the HSK Level

IV test knowing little about the test. "Some students just said yes (to pass HSK Level IV test) without thinking about it. They have no idea about what HSK IV actually is about," said Participant 4. Only until Participant 4 told them that the HSK Level IV test required testers to acquire 1200 Chinese characters did they finally know how intense and difficult the test was.

Ten participants perceived being responsible for their study as being important in learning Chinese. Participant 8 had a clear understanding of the HSK test from level I to level VI and compared beginning-level textbooks used in different language institutions and universities. He believed it was his duty to know what he needed to work on, in order to prepare for the HSK Level IV test.

In addition, Participant 5 shared her and her classmates' different thoughts on the dictation task. While her classmates complained about having dictations in class, she held a different perspective on this issue. Although preparing for a dictation task was time-consuming and the dictation task itself was challenging, she tried to see the positive side. "Although it was a challenge, I want to do it because I really want to learn Chinese well," said Participant 5.

Participant 3 shared an example. He made a principle that if he bought a book, he had to finish it no matter how long it took and how hard it was. Participant 3 saw this as a reflection of being responsible for his actions. Therefore, he wanted to be accountable for his Chinese learning. Even though learning Chinese could be difficult, once he decided to learn Chinese, he put all of his effort into it.

Participant 1 described her preference for being responsible for her Chinese learning by sharing her opinions on assignments. She shared that she never wanted to be forced to do homework. She would only do assignments when she saw the value of doing them. Her rationale was because she believed that it was she who decided to learn Chinese. Therefore, she

needed to be responsible for herself and to learn Chinese spontaneously. Fortunately, she

mentioned that the teachers never left them with too many assignments, and the assignments

were usually helpful.

Participant 2 expressed her dissatisfaction toward some Chinese classes (to be explored in

greater detail later on). To compensate for the time wasted in classes, she actively cherished

every opportunity to learn and use Chinese outside of the classroom. Among other things, she

tried to make friends with Chinese people, go to different places, talk with Chinese people, and

to avoid staying with people who could speak English. In addition, five participants (4, 6, 7, 10,

11) all mentioned that they preferred to be active learners in learning Chinese. Therefore, before

each class, they usually previewed and prepared for the lesson by themselves. "Instead of just

receiving information from the teacher, I prefer to learn ahead of time," stated Participant 11.

Willingness to try new things. Two participants (3, 7) mentioned in one-on-one interviews

that their preference for trying new things supported their Chinese learning. Participant 3 stated

that he would always like to try something new and be comfortable in an uncomfortable zone.

He mentioned his experience of changing his mobile phone system into the Chinese. "It could

be irritative sometimes," said Participant 3, because he sometimes had no idea how to use his

mobile phone under a Chinese language system. However, he insisted on using the mobile

phone under the Chinese language system. Participant 3 believed that he would learn something

from it, saying "I would be thankful for forcing myself to do so."

Participant 7 noted that he always wanted to try something new. For example, he was

never afraid of going to different cafés and restaurants in Shanghai to try new dishes. Although

sometimes the dish he ordered did not match his expectation, he took this as a chance to explore

the world. He attributed one of the reasons he came to China to learn Chinese to try new things.
He stated that although learning Chinese could be challenging, he would like to give it a try.

Confidence. Two participants (4, 9) considered having confidence in learning Chinese to
be important. Participant 4 discussed his experience in organizing peers to study together in the
afternoon. His intention originally was to gather classmates together to discuss some questions
and do homework together. But after a few weeks, Participant 4 found out that classmates
somehow expected him to take the teacher's role to lead their learning. He was surprised by their
expectations of him. He shared that his classmates seemed to see his Chinese much better than
he would know by himself. "I would never see myself improving that, but actually others tell
you that," said Participant 4. He accepted his classmates' expectations and took the expectations
as "honest compliments and encouragements." He gained much confidence from his classmates'
encouragement and then started to work even harder to help improve the learning process for
himself and his classmates. For example, he began to preview lessons before class to prepare
himself and his classmates better for classes (to be discussed later).

Participant 9 received encouragement from her family. When she expressed to her family
that she had difficulties learning Chinese and living in Shanghai, her mom and sister comforted
her to downplay her worries. They told Participant 9 that she was strong and smart and would
receive help from others. "After that, day by day, I say to myself that I'm strong," said
Participant 9. She experienced a change from being shy and afraid of speaking Chinese to the
feeling of "I can do it." She mentioned that it was essential to believe in herself and to tell
herself that she could speak Chinese loudly in any situation. Participant 9 shared that having
confidence enabled her to talk with Chinese people and to solve problems by herself.
"Yesterday, in my dorm, I [had] a problem. I asked Shifu (a repairer) to come to help by myself.

I didn't really speak very fluently, and I ha[d] to translate many words in my head. But I did it!" shared Participant 9.

In summation, all eleven participants illustrated that certain personality traits were their strengths in learning Chinese. They viewed being responsible for their study, being willing to try new things, and being confident as essential in their Chinese learning experience. Participants perceived that the strengths related to their personality traits provided them positive attitudes to face difficulties and challenges and insisted on learning Chinese.

Summary. Participants demonstrated their self-perceived strengths in one-on-one interviews. Chinese listening, pronunciations, grammar, sense of responsibility, willingness to try new things, and confidence were listed as participants' strengths in learning Chinese.

Although participants mentioned their strengths in learning Chinese, the average scores of participants' self-efficacy in each Chinese language skill and general Chinese were at around a medium level (mentioned earlier). To better understand participants' self-efficacy in Chinese, except for participants' self-perceived strengths, their self-perceived challenges must be considered.

Challenges. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the pre- and post-assessments illustrated that participants' lowest Chinese self-efficacy in Chinese language skills were primarily in Chinese listening. As illustrated in Figure 6, participants provided more information about their self-perceived challenges in learning Chinese.
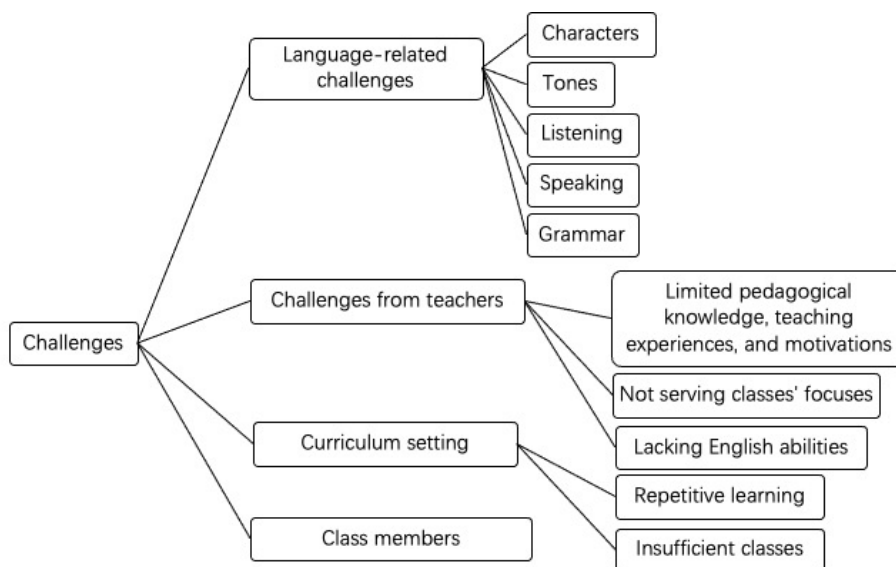
Figure 6. Participants' self-perceived challenges.

Participants' four major challenges in learning Chinese were language-related challenges, challenges from teachers, challenges from the curriculum setting, and challenges from the class members. The following paragraphs illustrate each challenge in detail.

Language-related challenges. According to Hu (2010), the UK college and university level Chinese students face six major challenges. The six major challenges include Chinese grammar, vocabulary, listening, speaking, pronunciations, and recall. In addition, Qu et al. (2018) claim that Chinese language students face tones, listening, and Chinese characters writing challenges. Similarly, participants in this study demonstrated Chinese characters, tones, listening, speaking, and grammar to be the challenges they encountered in learning Chinese.

Chinese characters. Researchers have found that Chinese language students perceive Chinese characters to be a challenge in learning Chinese (Everson & Xiao 2008; Huang, 2014; Li, 2014; Li, 2015; Liu & Lo Bianco, 2007; Lu, 2015; Wang, 2015; Wang & Tan, 2019; Xie, 2019; Yue, 2017). Nine participants in this study named recognizing, memorizing, and writing Chinese characters as challenges they had in learning Chinese. Participants 3 and 5 deemed

Chinese characters to be complicated. "When I first came here, and I saw these (Chinese) characters, I wanted to go back home," said Participant 5. There are two main reasons why participants had troubles with Chinese characters. One was that Chinese characters and their pronunciations seemed unconnected; the other was that Chinese characters were hard to memorize.

Lu (2015) indicates that Chinese characters are different from Chinese pinyin. As a result, the Chinese learners who used to pinyin usually have a hard time reading and writing Chinese characters. In this study, some participants' statements supported this conclusion.

Four participants (4, 6, 7, 11) mentioned that the disconnection between Chinese pinyin and Chinese characters brought them difficulties in writing Chinese characters. They stated that in certain other languages, for example, people could write out the word according to its pronunciation, such as in English and Spanish. However, it seemed impossible to do so in Chinese. "In Chinese, you read words by pinyin, but you have to write in Chinese characters. It is so difficult for me," stated Participant 6. Participant 7 further noted that learning Chinese was like learning two different languages. According to his previous language learning experiences, he was sure that he could spell the word out when he memorized the pronunciation of a word. The only thing left for him was to remember the word's meaning. However, he shared that he could never do this in Chinese because everything seemed to be independent. He had to memorize the pronunciation of the Chinese characters and learn how to write them. Last but not least, he needed to memorize the meaning of the Chinese characters.

Participants' experiences were similar to the research findings of Yue (2017) as well as Everson and Xiao (2008). Those researchers have found that Chinese language students from an

alphabetic language background tend to feel it is hard to learn Chinese characters because of unique orthographic rules in Chinese.

In addition, four participants (1, 4, 9, 10) indicated that they had difficulties in memorizing Chinese characters. Huang (2014) and Li (2014) state that Chinese characters' complexity contributes to students' problems in Chinese learning. Participants 1 and 10 explained that all Chinese characters looked like one another, although different characters had different meanings. This required them to put more effort into memorizing Chinese characters. Participant 1 shared that she sometimes saw some Chinese characters that seemed familiar but had no idea what they were.

Participants 4 and 9 explained that another reason Chinese character memorizing was difficult was because it was complicated to memorize ways to write Chinese characters. For example, Participant 9 had to spend time writing Chinese characters to get familiar with them. Participant 4 concurred and indicated that he had to work hard to write characters to keep them in mind, especially that students had dictation almost every day.

Participant 4 concluded the discussion of the difficulties participants met in recognizing, memorizing, and writing Chinese characters by describing the dictation task. Students had the dictation task every day in the Elementary Chinese class, and sometimes in other classes. The dictation task involved students in memorizing Chinese characters and phrases in one lesson one day and being tested on those Chinese characters on the next day. In the dictation task, the teacher usually gave students the meaning of a Chinese phrase or a Chinese character and asked students to write out the Chinese characters and their pinyin. In other words, students needed to be familiar with the meanings of Chinese characters and phrases, the Chinese characters' pinyin, and how to write out those Chinese characters. As a result, Participant 4, who had not been

never trained in memorizing phrases in German in a short period of time, deemed dictation beyond his ability.

Chinese characters are closely connected with Chinese reading and writing (Kupfer, 2003; Zhu, 2015). According to the pre-assessment results (see Table 5), six of the nine participants reported that their Chinese reading self-efficacy were rated as the second highest among their self-efficacy in Chinese language skills. The remaining three participants' self-efficacy in Chinese reading were rated as the second lowest.

In other words, compared to their self-efficacy in other Chinese language skills, the Chinese reading self-efficacy of the nine participants who faced challenges from Chinese characters were rated at a medium level in the pre-assessment.

On the other hand, the nine participants' self-efficacy in Chinese writing varied from each other in the pre-assessment. Still, they mostly were at a medium and lower level compared to their self-efficacy in other Chinese language skills (see Table 5). To be more specific, Participants 1 and 3 ranked their self-efficacy in Chinese writing as the highest among their self-efficacy in Chinese language skills. In contrast, Participants 5 and 7 ranked theirs as the lowest. Five participants (4, 6, 9, 10, 11) reported their Chinese writing self-efficacy at around a medium rank among their self-efficacy in Chinese language skills.

Compared to the results in the pre-assessment (see Table 5), nine participants' Chinese reading self-efficacy' ranks were lower in the post-assessment, among all Chinese language skills. More specifically, Participant 9's lowest self-efficacy in Chinese language skills was in Chinese reading. Participant 5 ranked her self-efficacy in Chinese reading as the second highest among four Chinese language skills. The remaining six participants ranked their self-efficacy in Chinese reading as the second lowest among their efficacies in Chinese language skills.

On the other hand, nine participants ranked their Chinese writing self-efficacy higher among their self-efficacy in Chinese language skills in the post-assessment than in the pre-assessment (see Table 5). Only Participant 5 rated her Chinese writing self-efficacy as the second lowest. The other eight participants' Chinese writing self-efficacy was at medium and higher ranks among their Chinese language skills' self-efficacy. For example, Participants 6, 7, 10, and 11 ranked their Chinese writing self-efficacy at the second place. Participants 1, 3, 4, and 9 reported their Chinese writing self-efficacy was the highest among their other Chinese language skills self-efficacy.

Participants' concerns about recognizing, memorizing, and writing Chinese characters might explain why their Chinese reading self-efficacy in both assessments and Chinese writing self-efficacy in the pre-assessment were around the medium rank, compared to their other Chinese language skills self-efficacy. One thing to be noticed is that, as mentioned earlier, participants reported having the least improvement in Chinese reading self-efficacy and the most improvement in Chinese writing self-efficacy (see Table 4 and Table 6). Seven out of nine participants (3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11) who perceived Chinese characters as one of their weaknesses in learning Chinese reported their least improvement in Chinese reading self-efficacy and the greatest improvement in Chinese writing self-efficacy. Participants' perceptions of Chinese characters might be one reason why their Chinese reading self-efficacy improved the least. However, participants' concerns about Chinese characters seemed to be inconsistent with their Chinese writing self-efficacy results in the pre- and post-assessments. Other factors needed to be taken into account to explain why participants' Chinese writing self-efficacy improved the most in the post-assessment, even though participants had challenges in learning Chinese characters.

Tones. Several researchers have indicated that tones in Chinese pronunciations cause difficulties for Chinese language students (Chen, 2017; Huang, 2015; Li, 2015; Lin, 2015; Lou, 2016; G. Song, 2015; Wen, 2014). In this study, five participants stated that Chinese pinyin tones were a challenge for them. The reason why tones are difficult for Chinese language students is that there are usually no tones in native languages of these Chinese language students (Chen, 2017; Huang, 2015; Li, 2015; Lin, 2015; Lou, 2016; G. Song, 2015; Wen, 2014). The five participants in this study discussed this reason and shared their personal experiences related to the tones' challenges.

Participant 10 was surprised to know that there were different tones in Chinese pronunciations because there was no tone in her mother tongue of the Lao language. Because of this difference, she felt it was difficult to correctly learn, pronounce, and distinguish Chinese tones.

Similarly, Participant 8, who was from Pakistan, indicated he never "got the tones" because he did not speak any languages using tones. He mentioned that in Chinese listening and speaking classes, the tones were brought up by teachers. However, he usually had no idea what to do with the tones. Even if he could tell differences between the tones after learning them, it was hard for him to pronounce each tone in the right way.

Likewise, Participant 4 stated that he was not able to distinguish different tones that the teachers' response was to practice more. However, he became frustrated because he did not progress after taking the teachers' advice to practice distinguishing the tones more. He stated that he needed more suggestions about differentiating the tones, especially because the tones could affect both Chinese listening and speaking skills.

In addition, Participants 7 and 11 expressed their willingness to spend more time and effort to practice the tones because the tones were one of their weaknesses in learning Chinese.

Wei (2014) states in her research that pronunciations and tones are related to one's speaking and listening skills. Therefore, participants' understanding of their Chinese listening and speaking abilities might represent their worries about the tones. As shown in Table 4, three participants (4, 10, 11) reported that their lowest self-efficacy among Chinese language skills was in Chinese listening. Similarly, two participants (7, 8) ranked their Chinese listening self-efficacy as the second lowest and the lowest, respectively, in the pre- and post-assessment, among their self-efficacy in each Chinese language skill (see Table 5). Participants' concerns about the tones might explain why their Chinese listening self-efficacy were relatively lower than other Chinese language skills self-efficacy.

On the other hand, three participants' (7, 10, 11) highest self-efficacy in Chinese language skills were in Chinese speaking (see Table 4). Two participants (4, 8) named their self-efficacy in Chinese speaking as the highest in the pre-assessment and the second highest in the post-assessment (see Table 5).

That is to say, although the five participants viewed the tones as one of their challenges in learning Chinese, their self-efficacy in Chinese speaking were relatively higher than in other Chinese language skills. There seemed to exist an inconsistency between participants' concerns on the tones and their Chinese speaking self-efficacy results in the pre- and post-assessments. This left a question to be discussed later.

Listening. Feng (2016), Ge (2012), Jiang (2016), Liang (2011), Liu (2013), Qi (2014), and X. Zhang (2016) have pointed out that Chinese listening is a challenge for Chinese language students. Chinese pronunciations (Feng, 2016; Jiang, 2016; Liang, 2011; Qi, 2014), Chinese

grammar (Liang, 2011; Jiang, 2016; Qi, 2014), vocabularies (Qi, 2014), etc. are the elements contributing to the difficulties of Chinese listening.

In this study, four participants mentioned that Chinese listening was challenging. However, some did not explicitly explain the Chinese language aspects that resulted in Chinese listening difficulties.

"For most of the time, I [couldn't] understand what I heard," said Participant 1. Participant 1 believed that the first thing when one learned a new language was to listen. However, this did not work for her in learning Chinese. She stated that she never imagined Chinese listening could be that hard.

Similarly, Participant 5 expressed that listening was the most challenging part for her. She was frustrated when her classmates seemed to be able to hear and understand a bit of Chinese in class after learning for a month, while she still had trouble listening. "I couldn't hear anything," claimed Participant 5.

Participant 4, who discussed having trouble in differentiating tones, pointed out that Chinese listening was difficult. Difficulties in distinguishing tones could be one of the reasons why he perceived listening to be a challenge. Participant 4 further stated that the Chinese listening comprehension class did not provide students with sufficient opportunities to practice listening (will be discussed in detail in the Challenges from Teachers section). Therefore, he had many concerns about his Chinese listening skill.

In addition, Participant 7 shared an incidence to illustrate that listening was not only a challenge for the beginning level Chinese learners but also the higher-level learners. He described his experience of watching a Chinese event on television in Chinese with Chinese subtitles with his friends from higher-level Chinese classes. After two hours of watching and

listening, Participant 7 could only recognize seven characters. It was acceptable to him because he was a beginning level student. However, he felt depressed and discouraged to know that his friends from higher-level Chinese classes had a hard time following. "It was a negative moment," concluded Participant 7.

To sum up, although two participants listed listening as one of their strengths in learning Chinese, four participants (1, 4, 5, 7) brought it up as one of the language-related challenges.

According to the pre- and post-assessments (see Table 4), Participants 1 and 4 reported the listening self-efficacy as their lowest Chinese language skill self-efficacy. Similarly, Participants 5 and 7 presented their Chinese listening self-efficacy as the second lowest in the pre-assessment and the lowest in the post-assessment among self-efficacy in each Chinese language skill (see Table 5). Participants' perceptions of listening as one of the challenges for them in learning Chinese supported the pre- and post-assessments' results.

Speaking. Lin (2019), Ma (2013), and Qi (2018) have stated that speaking is a challenge for Chinese language students. In this study, three participants indicated that speaking another struggle they had with learning Chinese. Lin (2019) specifically points out that pronunciations are an important element that leads to Chinese language students' difficulties in Chinese speaking. Similar to this finding, three participants (7, 8, 10) stated that they had troubles with the tones in Chinese pronunciations, as mentioned earlier.

Besides having challenges with tones, these three participants explained that the differences between Chinese conversations in the textbooks and real-life situations and that a lack of opportunities to practice Chinese speaking resulted in the Chinese speaking challenge.

Participant 8, in the Strengths section, mentioned that he listened to Chinese all the time when he stayed with a Chinese-speaking family, pointing out that he listened to Chinese a lot but

did not practice speaking. Therefore, although he could understand when someone was talking, he had a problem speaking in Chinese. After he studied Chinese for a month, he still felt it was challenging to speak in Chinese. He stated that the way Chinese people spoke Chinese was "different from the textbook." Therefore, even though he practiced Chinese speaking with classmates in class and after class, he felt useless. He stated that neither he nor his classmates were Chinese or were good at Chinese. As a result, they could only use the words and sentences taught in class but with nothing new. Therefore, he could not see the value of speaking Chinese with classmates. He concluded that "we didn't really learn how to communicate in Chinese."

Participant 8 was not the only one who brought up the idea that the way Chinese people spoke Chinese was different from what he learned in class. Participant 10 indicated that native Chinese speakers seemed to make their sentences short but with precise meanings. The differences between what was taught in Chinese language classes and their perceptions of how native Chinese speakers spoke Chinese might add to the difficulties for Participants 8 and 10 to communicate in Chinese.

In addition, Participant 7 mentioned that the Chinese oral class failed to help him with Chinese speaking. He deemed that although the Chinese oral class should specifically help students improve Chinese speaking skills, the Chinese oral class provided him neither enough opportunities to speak Chinese nor sufficient instructions on improving Chinese speaking. He concluded that this was a reason why he felt lost in Chinese speaking. Participant 7's thoughts on the Chinese oral class were mentioned by other participants and will be discussed in the Challenges from Teachers section.

As mentioned, three participants (7, 8, 10) faced tones and speaking challenges. However, all of them reported Chinese speaking self-efficacy as their highest self-efficacy in

Chinese language skills. As mentioned above, Participants 7' and 10's highest self-efficacy rating of Chinese language skills on the pre- and post-assessments was Chinese speaking self-efficacy (see Table 4). Participant 8 reported that his self-efficacy in Chinese speaking was the highest and the second highest among four Chinese language skills in the pre- and post-assessments respectively (see Table 5).

Hence, the three participants' Chinese speaking self-efficacy results seemed to be inconsistent with their perceptions of having Chinese speaking challenges in learning Chinese. This left a question to be discussed later.

Grammar. Researchers have found that Chinese grammar is challenging for Chinese language learners (Han, 2019; Li & Zhang, 2010; Liu, 2017; Liu, 2019; Ulpan, 2016; Ye & Wu, 1999; Zhao, 2015). Similarly, in this study, three participants (4, 7, 8) deemed Chinese grammar difficult to learn.

Participant 4 explained that there seemed to be no similarity between Chinese grammar and any other languages students in the class knew, resulting in the grammar challenges they faced in learning Chinese. This explanation supported the reason why Chinese language students faced the Chinese grammar challenge, as mentioned by Liu (2019), Ulpan (2016), and Zhao (2015).

To be more specific, Participants 4 and 7, who could speak some European languages, indicated that European languages had similar grammars. "It's like copy and paste," said Participant 4. However, both of them felt Chinese was a different language because it did not work when they tried to "copy and paste" the European grammar into Chinese. Therefore, Chinese grammar sometimes caused difficulties for them to learn and understand Chinese.

Grammar is the foundation of speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills (Sun, 2017; Widodo, 2006). In the pre-assessment, on a range from zero to seven, the average self-efficacy scores in general Chinese of the three participants (4, 7, 8) were less than four points (see Table 6). This could be interpreted as the three participants' self-efficacy in general Chinese being lower than a medium level.

In the post-assessment, the average scores of Participants 4 and 8 regarding self-efficacy in general Chinese increased to reach a medium level. In contrast, Participant 7's average scores remained below the medium level (see Table 6).

Participants' self-efficacy in Chinese grammar was not directly tested in the pre- and post-assessments, but the grammar challenge perceived by the three participants (4, 7, 8) could be one reason why the average scores of their self-efficacy in general Chinese were at and below a medium level.

This section illustrated participants' self-perceived language-related challenges. Chinese characters, the Chinese tones, listening, speaking, and grammar were the five language-related challenges mentioned by participants. Participants' self-perceived language-related challenges provided evidence for their pre- and post-assessments' results on their Chinese self-efficacy. Additional interview data will be discussed later to explain the inconsistencies between the pre- and post-assessment results and participants' opinions shared in interviews.

Besides language-related challenges, participants brought up some challenges that were not directly related to the Chinese language per se, including challenges from teachers, curriculum setting, and the class members. The following section represents those challenges in turn in detail.

Challenges from teachers. Fu (2017) claims that Chinese language teachers are one of the key elements that results in Chinese language students' demotivation in learning Chinese. Singh et al. (2014) and Zhou and Li (2015) name the unqualified Chinese language teachers a problem. In this study, participants reported that they faced some challenges from teachers in learning Chinese. Several participants expressed that the oral and the listening teachers should be more professional in their classes.

Descriptions of teachers' limits in certain professional proficiencies include (1) having limited pedagogical knowledge, teaching experiences, and motivations, (2) not serving the courses' focuses, (3) lacking English abilities. The following paragraphs discuss each issue in detail. The relation between challenges from teachers and participants' self-efficacy in Chinese language skills and general Chinese is discussed in the Summary part of this section.

Limited pedagogical knowledge and teaching experience, and motivations. Fu (2017) states that Chinese language teachers ought to have the knowledge and abilities to teach. However, several students pointed out that oral and listening teachers lack pedagogical knowledge and teaching experiences.

Seven participants mentioned that the oral teacher needed to grow up as a teacher. They noted that the oral teacher had limited teaching experiences and pedagogical knowledge.

Four of them stated that they sometimes got confused in the oral class. Participants 1 and 7 shared examples of the oral teacher's instruction on the tones. At the very beginning, when students learned Chinese pronunciations, the oral teacher tried to correct students' pronunciations, especially the tones. However, after a month, the oral teacher stopped giving feedback on students' pronunciation. Participant 1 felt discouraged by this change and felt discouraged. She said, "maybe she (the oral teacher) thinks that we would never understand the

correct tones or will never be able to pronounce them correctly." Participant 7 claimed to be confused about the lack of feedback on the tones from the oral teacher. When he knew he mispronounced and hoped to get feedback from the oral teacher but did not, he became confused. He would ask himself, "did I just [say] it correctly by accident or what's going on?" Participant 1 concluded that although it was understandable because the oral teacher was young, she had to learn to be a professional teacher and to have a passion for teaching.

In addition, Participants 2 and 3 shared examples of the oral teacher's lack of the ability to master her class pace. Both of them mentioned that the oral class usually moved fast without providing sufficient instructions. Therefore, they and other students could not keep pace with the class. Participant 3 stated that the oral teacher usually showed one slide of the PowerPoint to the class, read words or sentences on it, and then suddenly changed into another slide. However, students had no time to figure out what the slide was about and what content the oral teacher talked about. "I just don't remember things from her class. I have to study by myself," claimed Participant 3. Participant 2 further indicated that the oral teacher tried to regulate her class speed based on students' reactions in class but did not work well. The oral teacher sometimes asked students if they understood the last part and were ready to move on to the next. But most of the time, many students didn't reply to her questions. Participant 2 noticed the oral teacher seemed to be unsure about whether she should continue or not. "But most of the time, she moved on. I see other students struggled with that," said Participant 2.

Two participants from western culture backgrounds mentioned the oral teacher seemed to be insecure when she taught. Participant 1 who was from Italy stated that if a teacher was insecure about teaching, the class would be a disaster, and to students, the class would be a waste of time. Participant 2 who came from the U.S. shared her opinion towards the oral teacher being

insecure in teaching. Participant 2 noticed that when students asked the oral teacher questions, the oral teacher usually answered in English by saying, *I think*. Students and teachers of the Chinese Program communicated mostly in English. Therefore, when students asked questions, teachers usually answered and/or explained in English. Participant 2 perceived the *I think* as a sign of the oral teacher being unconfident and unsure about her answers. "I feel bad when she is always unsure," said Participant 2. According to the participants, the reasons why the oral teacher was unsure in teaching were not only because of her lack of teaching experiences and not knowing how to teach, but because of the oral teacher's relatively low English proficiency (to be discussed later). One thing to be noticed is that Participants 1 and 2 were from western background. There might be a cultural difference between western- and eastern-background students' perceptions of the oral teacher being insecure in teaching.

According to the participants, the oral teacher relied on the oral textbook to teach but had little knowledge of utilizing the textbook to meet students' needs. For example, she often asked students to finish the oral exercises in the textbook. The oral exercises required students to replace words and/or phrases in the example sentences with words and/or phrases given. However, those words and/or phrases shown in the oral exercises were usually some additional vocabulary terms that were not taught in the lesson, previous lessons, or other Chinese classes (i.e., elementary Chinese class, Chinese listening comprehension class, Chinese character writing class). Participants complained that they seldom used those additional vocabulary terms again because there was no assignment, or any review task related to those vocabulary terms either in class or after class. "Of course, they are useful words, but they're gone if you only use them once or twice," said Participant 4.

Three participants (1, 4, 9) negotiated with the oral teacher on this issue. For instance, Participant 4 explained to the oral teacher that they were fine with understanding the example sentences and the sentence structures they were supposed to practice. They stressed that the only thing they struggled with was reading out those additional vocabulary terms. They hoped the oral teacher could spend less time teaching additional vocabulary terms but found more appropriate ways for them to practice Chinese speaking. "We should make dialogues by ourselves, and then she can ask us to perform it," said Participant 8. But they were disappointed by the oral teachers' reaction. The oral teacher sent the class some vocabulary lists and asked students to look up new words in the lists when they had problems pronouncing them. Participant 4 expressed that it was tough and time-consuming to look up every new word, especially when they did not know its pronunciation.

Five participants shared their concerns with the listening teacher. Among them, three participants (2, 6, 9) pointed out that the listening teacher occupied half of the class time talking about her personal life, which had nothing to do with listening to Chinese in every lesson. This will be discussed in detail in the next part.

In addition, three participants (2, 4, 10) pointed out that the listening teacher was not motivated to teach. Participant 2 brought up that after the listening teacher talked about her personal life, the second section of the listening class was always doing listening exercises. The listening teacher required students to finish listening exercises in the listening textbook according to the audio. However, Participants 2 and 10 stated that students had the audio files and the listening textbook. Therefore, they could finish the listening exercises by themselves as assignments. Participant 2 further stated that the listening teacher was not responsible for her words and her students. The listening teacher sometimes assigned the listening exercises on the

textbook as assignments if there was not enough time for students to finish in class. However, the oral teacher seldom returned to these exercises afterward even though she announced in class that she would check students' work.

Based on what was mentioned above, Participants 2 and 10 stated that they saw no value in doing the listening exercises on the listening textbook in class. "It was boring. I lost my patience in her class," stated Participant 2. Participant 10 claimed that the listening teacher should utilize class time in a better and more interesting way for students to practice Chinese listening.

As mentioned in the Language-Related Challenges section, Participant 4 stated that he had problems distinguishing tones. Therefore, he expected to get help from the listening teacher to better figure out tones. What surprised Participant 4 was the listening teacher's attitude towards his concerns. The listening teacher responded to his thoughts that the tones were not too important and that he could figure them out later. In other words, the listening teacher failed to provide sufficient and practical suggestions to Participant 4. However, Participant 4 indicated that tones were important because they were related to listening and could affect speaking. "If you don't practice, then you have no chance to have a conversation because you do not get what others say," said Participant 4.

Not serving the classes' focuses. The second challenge caused by the oral teacher and the listening teacher was that teachers' instructions did not serve the courses' purposes. And this led to the issue that participants had few opportunities to practice Chinese listening and speaking in class. Sun et al. (2015) claim that failure to provide Chinese language students with enough chances to speak and use Chinese in the classroom is a big problem for Chinese language teachers.

As mentioned above in the Language-Related Challenges section, Participant 7 indicated that the oral class failed to provide him enough opportunities to speak Chinese. And he was not the only participant who pointed out that teachers' instructions did not serve the courses' focuses.

Speaking of the oral class, as mentioned in the last section, the oral teacher tended to spend more time teaching new vocabularies that appeared in oral exercises. However, five participants (1, 2, 4, 8, 9) expressed that they should have more chances in class to practice Chinese speaking and pronunciations, including tones. X. Zhu (2015) finds that Chinese language students tend to prefer to learn Chinese conversations and to have Chinese speaking tasks based on real-life situations. Two participants (7, 9) indicated that they prefer to learn how to communicate in real-life situations using Chinese, such as asking for prices or calling a taxi. "We would never learn a language well just by following the book," declared Participant 9. As mentioned earlier, three participants (1, 4, 9) negotiated with the oral teacher, while the oral teacher did few changes to provide students more chances to speak Chinese in class.

Six participants stated that the Chinese listening class was not on target. Four of them (2, 6, 7, 9) mentioned that rather than applying class time to help students practice listening, the Chinese listening teacher spent much class time sharing her personal life. "I didn't see people (classmates) enjoy this," commented Participant 7.

Participant 4 specifically pointed out that he and other students didn't get much help from the listening teacher on the tones, which, as mentioned above, were a big challenge for them in learning Chinese.

In addition, as mentioned in the last section, Participants 2 and 10 pointed out that it was worthless to do the listening exercises on the listening textbook in class. They hoped the

listening teacher could better utilize her class in a more meaningful and interesting way to help students improve their Chinese listening skills.

Lacking English abilities. Five participants expressed their dissatisfaction toward some teachers' English abilities, but most of them pointed to the Chinese oral teacher.

As mentioned above in the previous parts, participants negotiated with the oral teacher on the issue of wasting too much time on teaching vocabularies. Participants 1 and 4 claimed that the oral teacher's limited English proficiency stopped her from fully understanding their suggestions, and as a result, she failed to adjust her class better.

Participant 3 expressed that it was hard to communicate with the oral teacher. He felt confused whenever he asked the oral teacher questions. The oral teacher had trouble understanding his problems, no matter he asked in English or Chinese.

In addition, four participants (1, 3, 5, 9) stated that because of limited English abilities, the oral teacher failed to clearly and effectively teach her class.

Participant 1 shared that the oral teacher had difficulties to express herself in English. "It's very annoying," said Participant 1. Participant 9 specifically pointed out that when the oral teacher explained new words in the text to the class, she explained by merely repeating the sentences in the text, but with no other explanations.

Participant 1 shared one thing she felt it was hard to accept. The oral teacher often depended on students to help her explain something to the class because she had trouble expressing herself in English. Therefore, this was what often happened in class, according to Participant 1. When one or two students understood the oral teacher's words, they needed to take the responsibility to explain to the rest of the class. "We have no choice. We have to accept that. And maybe we have to learn by ourselves," commented Participant 1.

The oral teacher lacking English capabilities to express her words might be one reason she taught with insecurity, as mentioned earlier. Similarly, this might be one reason why the oral teacher highly depended on the oral textbook to teach, as mentioned in the previous parts. Participants believed there ought to be some requirements for Chinese language teachers' English abilities. "If you teach international students, you should be able to communicate at their level and be able to pass a message," claimed Participant 5. Fu's (2017) suggestion supports Participant 5's opinion and stresses that the Chinese language teachers who teach beginning-level Chinese learners ought to have enough foreign language proficiency. Therefore, participants were surprised to see that the teachers, specifically the oral teacher, had trouble expressing herself and teaching the class in English.

Conclusion. Among elven participants, eight participants (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9) expressed their concerns to the oral teacher, and six participants (2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10) illustrated their thoughts toward the listening teacher. Participants pointed out that both the oral and the listening teachers were not professional in teaching and failed to serve the courses' purposes, and that the oral teacher lacked English abilities.

Teachers' limited pedagogical knowledge, teaching experiences, and motivations in teaching led to participants' negative feelings, such as confusion, disappointment, and impatience, toward the listening and the oral classes and the listening and oral teachers. It resulted in students' concerns on their Chinese learning, as mentioned above, including the tones, listening, and speaking.

In addition, teachers' instructions not serving the purposes of the courses decreased students' opportunities to learn and improve hearing and pronouncing tones and Chinese listening and speaking skills.

Furthermore, the oral teacher's lack of English abilities caused students' dissatisfaction with the oral teacher, the oral class, and the communication between the oral teacher and students. And this reduced students' chances to learn and practice Chinese speaking.

To sum up, all the challenges mentioned in the Challenges from Teachers part led to students' concerns regarding their hearing and pronouncing the tones, Chinese listening skills, and Chinese speaking skills. The challenges students met from their teachers added evidence to some of the students' language-related challenges. Those language-related challenges, as mentioned previously, contained the tones challenge, the speaking challenge, and the listening challenge.

As mentioned earlier, Wei (2014) claims that the tones are essential to both Chinese listening and speaking skills. Hence, the next few paragraphs discuss how participants' Chinese self-efficacy presented participants' challenges from teachers in two parts, Chinese speaking and listening.

Speaking of Chinese speaking, among eight participants, only Participants 3 and 9 reported relatively lower self-efficacy in Chinese speaking than in other Chinese language skills in the pre-assessment. In comparison, the other six participants' Chinese speaking self-efficacy were higher (see Table 5).

In the post-assessments (see Table 5), eight participants reported their Chinese speaking self-efficacy as their best or the second-high self-efficacy in Chinese language skills. To be more specific (see Table 5), Participants 3 and 9 ranked their Chinese speaking self-efficacy higher among other self-efficacy in Chinese language skills in the post-assessment than in the pre-assessment. Participants 2 and 4 ranked their Chinese speaking self-efficacy lower among their self-efficacy in Chinese language skills in the post-assessment than in the pre-assessment.

However, according to Table 6, the average scores of Chinese speaking self-efficacy of Participants 2 and 4 were still higher in the post-assessment than in the pre-assessment. In other words, although Participants 2's and 4's Chinese speaking self-efficacy were ranked as the second highest rather than the highest, their average Chinese speaking self-efficacy scores increased.

Participants' thoughts on the oral teacher might be one reason why Participants 3 and 9 ranked their Chinese speaking self-efficacy lower than other Chinese language skills self-efficacy in the pre-assessment. However, although participants were, to some extent, unsatisfied with the oral teacher, they tended to have higher average scores on Chinese speaking self-efficacy in the post-assessment. Here seemed to be an inconsistency between participants' dissatisfaction with their oral teacher and their Chinese speaking self-efficacy results. Other reasons needed to be considered to explain why participants' Chinese speaking self-efficacy improved even though they were unsatisfied with the oral teacher.

Speaking of Chinese listening, most of the six participants who expressed their thoughts on the listening teacher ranked their Chinese listening self-efficacy lower than in other Chinese language skills (see Table 5).

To be more specific, three participants (4, 6, 10) reported their self-efficacy in Chinese listening as their lowest self-efficacy in Chinese language skills in both pre- and post-assessments.

Participant 2's lowest self-efficacy in Chinese language skills was in Chinese listening in the pre-assessment. In the post-assessment, her self-efficacy in Chinese listening was higher.

The ranks of Chinese listening self-efficacy of Participants 7 and 9 were, respectively, at the second lowest and the second highest, among their self-efficacy in Chinese language skills in

the pre-assessment. In the post-assessment, the Chinese listening self-efficacy of the two participants were the lowest in Chinese language skills.

Although the ranks of the six participants' Chinese listening self-efficacy were different among their Chinese language skills self-efficacy in the pre- and post-assessments (see Table 5), most of the average scores of their Chinese listening self-efficacy improved a little (see Table 6). However, only Participants 6 and 10 reported their Chinese listening self-efficacy around at a medium level, respectively, in pre- and post-assessments and the post-assessment (see Table 6).

Participants' opinions, as mentioned, on their listening teacher might be an explanation to why they had lower self-efficacy in Chinese listening than in other Chinese language skills.

Challenges from the curriculum setting. Except for the language-related challenges and the challenges from teachers, some participants mentioned that the curriculum setting brought troubles to their Chinese learning.

The beginning level preparatory course in the Chinese Program used a similar curriculum setting as mentioned by Hou (2015), Shi (2015), and Tian (2019). As mentioned in Chapter 3, the beginning-level preparatory course in the Chinese Program offered students with the required classes and the optional classes. The required classes are Chinese language classes, which contains comprehension Chinese class (i.e., elementary Chinese class), Chinese oral class, Chinese listening comprehension class, and Chinese characters writing class. Students in the beginning-level preparatory course in the Chinese Program had a textbook from each required class. Textbooks from different classes were correlated with each other. In other words, the content in the elementary Chinese textbook, such as vocabularies, sentences, and grammar, were mostly covered in the other textbooks, vice versa. Students had six elementary Chinese classes, two Chinese oral classes, one Chinese listening comprehension class, and one Chinese character

writing class per week. Students took required classes from Monday to Friday in the morning and had optional classes, if so, in the afternoon.

In this study, four participants named the curriculum setting to be problematic. The curriculum setting caused relearning and insufficient listening and Chinese character writing classes.

To be more specific, three participants (2, 5, 8) mentioned repetitive learning caused by the curriculum setting. They were confused about relearning the vocabularies they had already learned. This was what always happened: they learned and were tested on some vocabularies. However, in a few weeks, those vocabularies were taught as new words again in the other class. And most of the time, it was the Chinese character writing class in which students needed to relearn the vocabularies they had already learned. Participants 2 and 8 thought this made the Chinese character class meaningless.

Participant 8 further indicated that teachers ought to regulate their classes based on this situation. Participant 8 raised an example. As for the Chinese character writing teacher, it would be better to teach students more about the Chinese characters' compositions and stories behind Chinese characters. Therefore, rather than relearning how to write the characters, it would be more attractive and valuable for students to learn Chinese characters from a different aspect.

However, on the other side, six participants, including Participant 5, saw the positive side of relearning the content they had already learned. Participants 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, and 11 mentioned that they saw repetitive learning as a way to review previous knowledge. They stated that their memorization of the characters they learned in other classes was enhanced because of relearning.

Participant 6 mentioned that students needed more Chinese listening comprehension and Chinese character writing classes. She explained that many of the students in class planned to

pass the HSK Level IV test in which listening and Chinese characters were two crucial parts.

One Chinese listening comprehension class and one Chinese writing class per week could not

meet students' needs and could make students lose the chance to practice Chinese listening and

character writing.

To sum up, participants' concerns on repetitive learning pointed to their dissatisfaction

with the Chinese character writing class. And insufficient Chinese listening comprehension

resulted in participants' inadequate practice of Chinese listening. As mentioned earlier,

participants' concerns added evidence to their language-related challenges, such as the Chinese

character and the listening challenges. However, several participants expressed their acceptance

of repetitive learning and confirmed the effectiveness of it.

Researchers have stated that Chinese characters are closely connected with Chinese

reading and writing (Kupfer, 2003; Zhu, 2015). Therefore, the next few paragraphs discuss how

participants' Chinese self-efficacy presented their comments on repetitive learning in Chinese

character class in two parts--- Chinese reading and Chinese writing.

In the pre-assessment (see Table 5), the Chinese reading self-efficacy of Participants 2

and 8 was their lowest self-efficacy in Chinese language skills. And Participant 2's Chinese

reading self-efficacy in the post-assessment remained to be her lowest self-efficacy. The

dissatisfaction of repetitive learning in Chinese character writing class might be one reason why

participants 2 and 8 had lower self-efficacy in Chinese reading.

In the post-assessment (see Table 4), Participant 8's highest self-efficacy was in Chinese

reading, while Participant 2's lowest self-efficacy was in Chinese reading. However, the average

scores of the Chinese reading self-efficacy of Participants 2 and 8 increased (see Table 6).

Although Participants 2 and 8 deemed repetitive learning meaningless, they perceived their

Chinese reading abilities increased. In other words, Participants 2 and 8 got the chance to get familiar with the Chinese characters that they had already learned in other classes, even if they were unsatisfied with the repetitive learning in Chinese character writing class. This might be one reason why Participants 2 and 8 had higher self-efficacy in Chinese reading in the post-assessment than in the pre-assessment.

On the other hand, those participants (3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11) who saw the value of repetitive learning in Chinese characters writing class rated their self-efficacy in Chinese reading in the middle among their Chinese language skills self-efficacy (see Table 5). They ranked their Chinese reading self-efficacy among self-efficacy in four Chinese skills slightly lower in the post-assessment. But the average scores of their Chinese reading self-efficacy increased or remained to be at the same level. Participants' acceptance and positive attitudes toward repetitive learning could be one reason why the average scores of their Chinese reading self-efficacy remained or increased a little.

Speaking of Chinese writing (see Table 5), although three participants (2, 5, 8) criticized the repetitive learning in Chinese character writing class, only Participant 5's self-efficacy in Chinese writing was ranked at a low place in the pre- and post-assessments.

Participants 2 and 8 reported their self-efficacy in Chinese writing as the second-high self-efficacy in Chinese language skills in the pre-assessment (see Table 5). Participant 2's Chinese writing self-efficacy became her best self-efficacy in Chinese language skills in the post-assessment (see Table 4 and Table 5). Although Participant 8 ranked his Chinese writing self-efficacy a place lower among his Chinese language skills self-efficacy in the post-assessment than in the pre-assessment (see Table 5), his average score of Chinese writing self-efficacy increased in the post-assessment (see Table 6).

On the other hand, those participants (3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11) who saw the value of repetitive learning in Chinese character writing class ranked their Chinese writing self-efficacy as the lowest and the second lowest among their Chinese language skills self-efficacy in the pre-assessment, except for Participant 3 (see Table 5). Participant 3's Chinese writing self-efficacy was his best self-efficacy in Chinese language skills in the pre-assessment (see Table 4 and Table 5).

In the post-assessment, four participants (7, 9, 10, 11) reported the Chinese writing self-efficacy as their highest or second highest self-efficacy in Chinese language skills (see Table 5). Participant 5 ranked her Chinese writing self-efficacy as the second lowest among her self-efficacy in Chinese language skills. But she had a higher average score in Chinese writing self-efficacy in the post-assessment.

Participants' affirmation of the value of repetitive learning in Chinese characters class might be one reason why they ranked Chinese writing self-efficacy higher among Chinese language skills self-efficacy in the post-assessment.

In addition, as mentioned above and could be found in Table 6, Participants 2, 5, and 8 had higher average scores of Chinese writing self-efficacy even though they deemed Chinese character writing class useless. As mentioned earlier, although the three participants felt repetitive learning meaningless, they got the chance to learn, practice, and get more familiar with the Chinese characters they had already learned in the Chinese character writing class. This might be one reason why the average scores of Chinese writing self-efficacy of Participants 2, 5, and 8 increased.

Speaking of Chinese listening, as mentioned earlier, Participant 6 reported his self-efficacy in Chinese listening to be her lowest self-efficacy in Chinese language skills in the pre-

and post-assessments (see Table 4). Her opinion on having insufficient Chinese listening classes might provide evidence for her ranking the Chinese listening self-efficacy as the lowest.

Challenges from the class members. The beginning level preparatory course of the Chinese Program mixed students with different needs in the same class. The students include those who needed to pass the HSK Level IV test to pursue further education in China and those who came to learn Chinese based on their interests.

Participants in this study were formed by those two groups of students. Among eleven participants, seven participants (3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11) needed to pass the HSK Level IV test to be qualified for their master's enrollment. The remaining four participants learned Chinese based on their interests.

Yang (2006) indicates that students from different countries with different goals cause an imbalance in teaching and learning Chinese. In this study, three participants (4, 6, 10) described their concerns regarding grouping students with different needs in the same class from different perspectives.

Participants 4 and 6 stood in those students' shoes who needed to pass the HSK Level IV test. They stated that it was unfair for them to be mixed with the other group of students in one class. They mentioned that the teachers often occupied the class time on the activities designed for those who learned Chinese for interest. Participant 6 mentioned, "I feel a waste of time when they spend time on the interesting things." There was only a year for those who needed to pass the HSK Level IV test, therefore, she hoped the teachers could put more effort into exam related content.

In addition, Participant 4 mentioned that because students had different reasons for learning Chinese, not every student in class was motivated to learn. And this was frustrating to him.

On the other hand, Participants 6 and 10 talked about the issue of grouping students with different needs in the same class from the perspective of those students who learned Chinese based on their interests. They mentioned that although teachers tried to make classes enjoyable, the classes were mainly exam driven.

Participant 10, who learned Chinese based on interests, declared that she expected the classes to have more activities and to teach her more Chinese communication skills in real-life situations. Similarly, Participant 6, who needed to pass the HSK Level IV test, expressed that "the classes are sometimes too boring and not useful for their daily communication."

According to Participant 6, the beginning Chinese classes failed to meet students' needs on either side. However, she showed her understanding of the teachers on this issue. She explained that having students with different needs in the same class made the teachers face dilemmas. The teachers needed to assist a group of students in passing the HSK Level IV test. In the meantime, they needed to make the classes attractive and to focus more on real-life communication for another group.

Participant 10 stated one good thing she experienced in classes. She felt that everything taught in class was not too hard nor useless, even to those students who had no need to pass the HSK Level IV test. Therefore, although Participant 10 was confused about having students with different needs in the same class, she perceived that the classes were "not too bad."

In a word, three participants demonstrated their concerns toward grouping students with different needs in the same class. Their main idea was that the beginning level classes served

well for neither the students who needed to pass the HSK Level IV test nor the students who

learned Chinese based on their interests. Hence, assigning students with different needs into the

same class in the beginning level preparatory course of the Chinese Program brought challenges

to some participants' Chinese learning, although they did not point out any challenge related to

specific slanguage aspects.

Although the average scores on general Chinese self-efficacy of the three participants

varied from each other (see Table 6), they remained in a range from 3 to 5.563 in the pre- and

post-assessments. The three participants' average scores on general Chinese self-efficacy were

at a medium and lower level on a scale range from one to seven. Their concerns about the class

members might be one reason why their general Chinese self-efficacy scores were at a medium

and lower level.

Summary. Participants' self-perceived strengths and challenges in learning Chinese were

discussed in the previous paragraphs. In addition, the correlation between participants' Chinese

language self-efficacy and the detailed strengths and challenges participants met in learning

Chinese were discussed. Furthermore, in the previous paragraphs, a few questions emerged and

were left to be addressed.

The following paragraphs provide a summary of the Self-Perceived Strengths and

Challenges section. The summary includes strengths and challenges, the correlation between

participants' Chinese self-efficacy and the detailed strengths and challenges participants met, the

questions to be discussed, and the themes on participants' self-perceived strengths and

challenges.

Strengths and challenges. According to the pre- and post-assessments, participants'

lowest self-efficacy was in Chinese listening, and highest self-efficacy was in Chinese speaking

and Chinese writing. More detailed strengths and challenges of participants' perceptions emerged from one-on-one interviews.

Participants' self-perceived strengths (see Figure 5) included language-related strengths and certain personality traits. To be more specific, language-related strengths were Chinese listening, Chinese pronunciations, and Chinese grammar. Personality traits included a sense of responsibility, willingness to try new things, and confidence.

Participants' self-perceived challenges (see Figure 6) included language-related challenges, challenges from the teachers, challenges from the curriculum settings, and challenges from the class members.

Language-related challenges contained Chinese characters, tones, listening, speaking, and grammar. Challenges from the teachers included the teachers having limited pedagogical knowledge, teaching experiences, and motivations, not serving the courses' focuses, and having insufficient English proficiency. Challenges from the curriculum setting pointed to repetitive learning and inadequate classes. Challenges from the class members referred to combining students with different needs in the same class.

The next section discusses the correlation between participants' self-efficacy results and their self-perceived strengths and challenges.

Correlation. One-on-one interviews brought more detailed information about participants' self-perceived strengths and challenges to understand participants' self-efficacy in learning Chinese.

As discussed in the previous sections, participants' self-perceived language-related strengths and challenges provide explanations to their self-efficacy in specific Chinese language skills and general Chinese. Although some of the participants' self-perceived strengths and

challenges did not directly point to language aspects, they were one of the factors leading to

strengths and challenges of participants in language aspects and as a result, provided evidence to

participants' self-efficacy results.

As previously mentioned, the participants' strengths related to certain personality traits

were beneficial to their Chinese learning as a general. Participants' challenges from their

teachers were a factor of the challenges they faced in Chinese listening, speaking, and tones.

Participants' challenges from the curriculum setting added to their Chinese characters and

listening challenges. Participants' challenges from the class members brought difficulties to

their Chinese learning in general. Figure 7 and Figure 8, respectively, are overviews of the

correlation between non-language and language-related strengths and challenges.
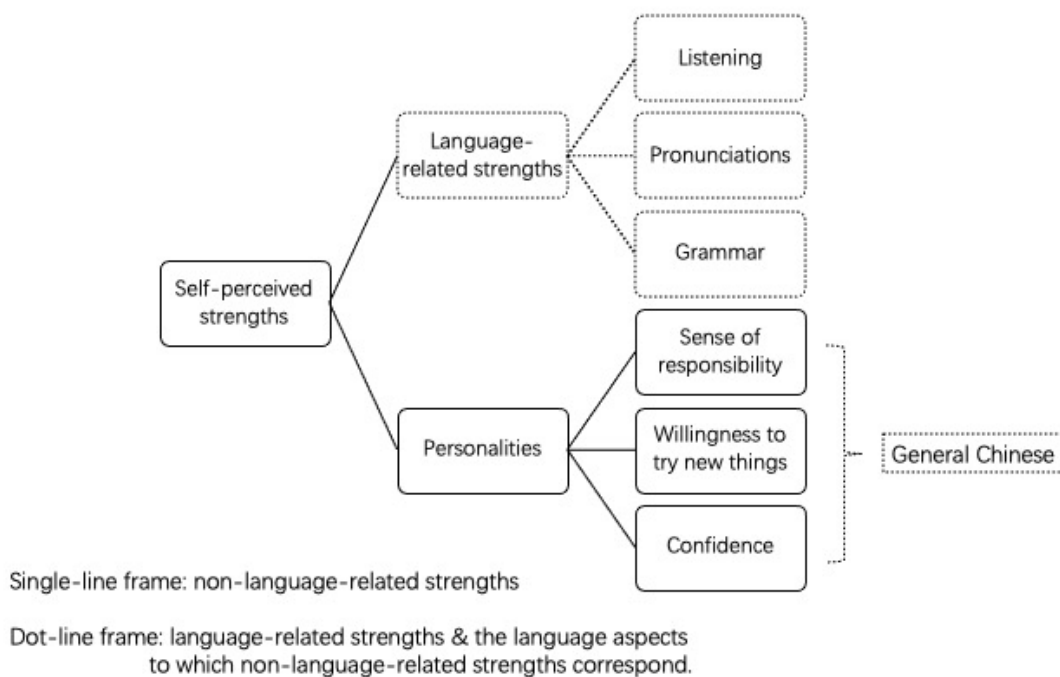
Figure 7. Correlation between non-language-related strengths and language-related strengths.

- Single-line frame: non-language-related challenges
- Dot-line frame: the language-related challenges & the language aspects
  to which non-language-related challenges corresponded
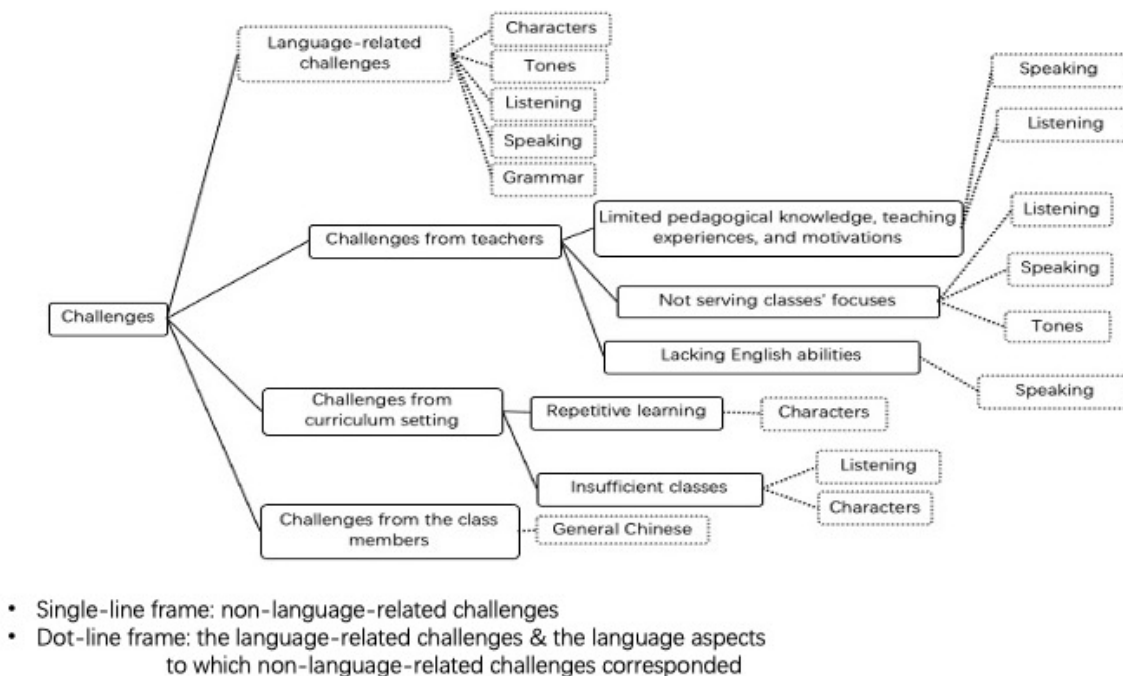
Figure 8. Correlation between non-language-related challenges and language-related challenges.

Hence, participants' self-perceived strengths and challenges in learning Chinese resulted

in participants' understanding of their Chinese listening, speaking, Chinese characters,

pronunciations (including tones), grammar learning, as well as Chinese learning in general.

Participants' self-perceived strengths and challenges related to Chinese listening and

speaking explained participants' self-efficacy results in Chinese listening and speaking. In

addition, as mentioned earlier, researchers have claimed the connection between Chinese

characters and Chinese reading and writing skills (Kupfer, 2003; Zhu, 2015), pronunciation and

Chinese listening and speaking skills (Wei, 2014), and grammar with four skills in language

learning (i.e., speaking, listening, reading, and writing) (Sun, 2017; Widodo, 2006). Therefore,

participants' self-perceived strengths and challenges provided explanations to participants' self-

efficacy in Chinese language skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, writing) and general

Chinese (Figure 9).
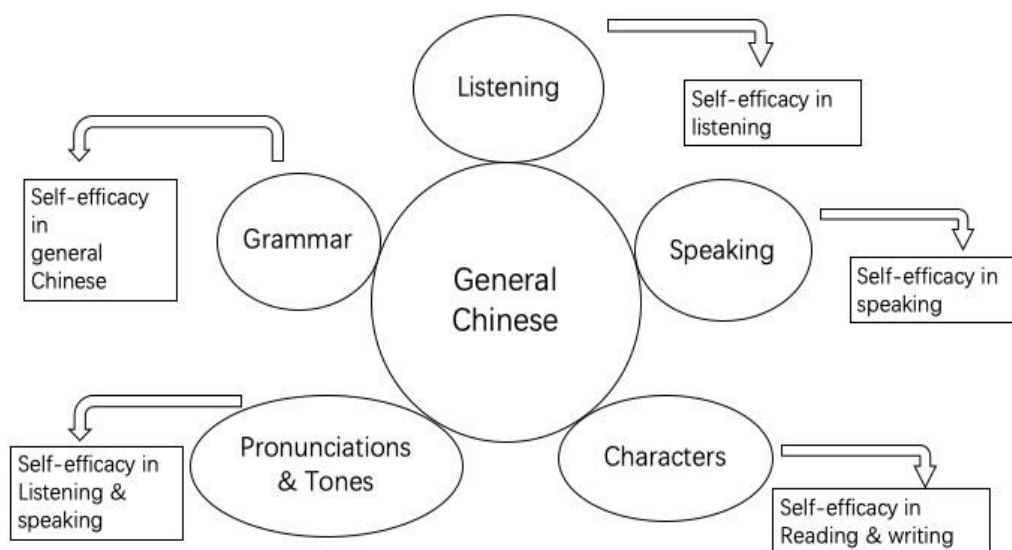
Figure 9. Relationship between Chinese language aspects and participants' efficacies in Chinese.

Questions to be discussed. As mentioned in the previous sections, there appeared to be some inconsistencies between participants' self-perceived challenges and their self-efficacy results in learning Chinese. Among the four inconsistencies, one regarded participants' Chinese writing skills and the remaining three were about participants' Chinese speaking skills. Those questions are explicitly listed in this section for further discussion.

Firstly, participants' concerns on Chinese characters were not consistent with their Chinese writing self-efficacy results in the pre- and post-assessments. Nine participants took Chinese characters as one of their challenges in learning Chinese while their Chinese writing self-efficacy improved the most in the post-assessment.

Secondly, there was an inconsistency between participants' concerns on the tones and their Chinese speaking self-efficacy. Although five participants mentioned that one of their challenges in learning Chinese was the tone challenge, their self-efficacy in Chinese speaking were relatively higher than other Chinese language skills.

Thirdly, participants' declaration of facing the speaking challenge in learning Chinese was inconsistent with their Chinese speaking self-efficacy results. Although three participants deemed Chinese speaking difficult, their self-efficacy in Chinese speaking remained to be their highest or the second highest self-efficacy in Chinese language skills.

Fourthly, an inconsistency existed between participants' dissatisfaction with their oral teacher and their Chinese speaking self-efficacy results. Although eight participants complained against the oral teacher, they reported higher Chinese speaking self-efficacy scores in the post-assessment.

To summarize, there remained four questions to be discussed later in this study regarding participants' Chinese writing and speaking skills. Besides considering participants' perceived strengths and challenges in learning Chinese, more aspects are needed to explain why participants' Chinese writing self-efficacy improved the most and why participants had relatively higher self-efficacy in Chinese speaking than in other Chinese language skills.

Themes. Several themes regarding the self-perceived strengths and challenges participants met emerged through understanding participants' experience in learning Chinese. The themes were detailly discussed in the previous sections by presenting results from one-on-one interviews and the pre- and post-assessments. An exact list of themes on participants' self-perceived strengths and challenges is listed as followed, starting with Theme 2. (Theme 1 was mentioned in the Reasons for Learning Chinese section.)

Theme 2: The language related strengths of participants in learning Chinese were related with their native languages.

Theme 3: Participants perceived some of their personality traits as strengths in learning Chinese.

Theme 4: Participants' self-perceived language-related challenges were Chinese characters, tones, listening, speaking, and grammar.

Theme 5: Many participants were dissatisfied with the professional dispositions of certain teachers and perceived these teachers to have caused challenges for students.

Theme 6: The curriculum setting and the class members resulted in certain challenges perceived by the participants.

The next section discusses the strategies participants used in learning Chinese. Participants' strategies revealed the ways participants learned and practiced Chinese during the process of learning Chinese.

Strategies

Participants' strategies for learning Chinese are arranged in chronological order in this section, in terms of before class, during class, and after class (see Figure 10).
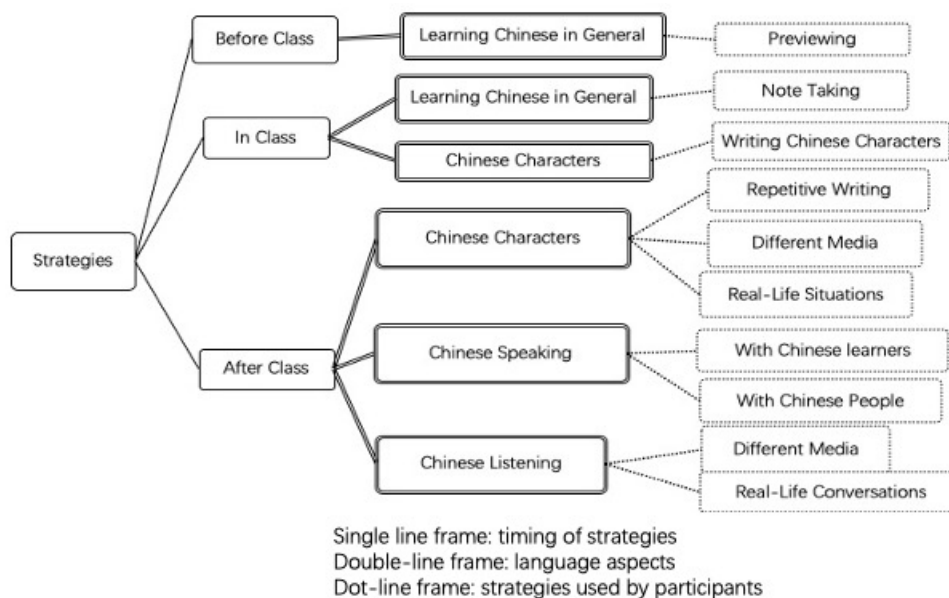
Figure 10. Strategies implemented by participants.

Participants usually previewed lessons before classes. Except for following teachers'

instructions and activities, participants usually took notes for themselves and practiced Chinese

characters writing. After class, participants organized their practice on Chinese characters,

Chinese listening, and Chinese speaking. Each strategy for learning Chinese mentioned by

participants is clearly illustrated in the following paragraphs. A summary of the Strategies

section is presented at the end of this section, including the themes that emerged.

Before class. Researchers have found that a small number of Chinese language students

preview before class (Bao & Guo, 2012), although previewing before class is useful in Chinese

language learning (Lin, 2017). In this study, five participants (4, 6, 7, 10, 11) usually previewed

lessons before classes. Among them, three participants (4, 10, 11) stated their reasons for

previewing.

Participant 4 wanted to prepare more for his study group in which he and some of his

classmates got together twice a week to help each other. The group members expected

Participant 4 to take the teacher's role to lead their afternoon study. Therefore, to better support

his group members, he started to preview each lesson ahead of time.

Participant 10 preferred to do a preview before class because previewing enabled her to

understand the texts' dialogues better. As a result, she could perform well in the role-play

activity in class. In addition, Participant 11's reason for previewing was because he saw more

value in learning by himself beforehand and to have his understanding than merely receiving

information from teachers.

Learning new vocabularies, reading texts, and finishing exercises in each lesson were the

main tasks that five participants usually did in previewing. Three participants (6, 7, 10)

specifically stated they put more effort into learning new vocabularies when they preview

lessons.

To be more specific, Participant 7 stated that he usually jotted down Chinese

pronunciations on the margin of the texts beside the new vocabularies. As a result, he could be

more familiar with the new vocabulary every time he read the texts.

In addition, Participants 6 and 10 stated that they often wrote out new vocabularies and

tried to memorize the meanings of them when they learned new lessons before classes.

Participant 10 explained that knowing each word's meaning allowed her to understand a

sentence. She stressed that knowing every word was fundamental in understanding a new text.

Besides preparing for new vocabularies, texts, and exercises, Participant 4 organized his

learning into learning materials, such as PowerPoints, during previewing. He usually shared his

learning materials with his study group members to help them better prepare for a new lesson.

Lin (2017) states that previewing would encourage Chinese language students to think

and learn the textbook content actively and gain more information in class. Participants claimed

that the effect of previewing was profound.

Participant 10 felt she learned better by preparing a new lesson before class. She was

able to keep pace with the classes better and follow the teachers' instructions. Similarly,

Participant 6 stated that she gained more information through the teacher's instruction in class,

thanks to previewing, and her understanding of a new lesson was enhanced. In addition,

Participants 4 and 11 further stated that previewing enabled them to be aware of the content they

were unsure or confused about in a new lesson to ask specific questions to the teacher in class.

Moreover, Participant 4 mentioned that helping his study group members preview new lessons

worked well. "Last Friday, the oral class for us was much better because we did these in the

Thursday afternoon to prepare for the lesson," Participant 4 described, "we had a better feeling toward the class."

Participant 9 specifically pointed out her opinion on previewing, which was contrary to the other five participants. She stated that in case she might misunderstand some information during previewing, she preferred to receive "first-hand information" from the teacher in class. "It could be tough for me to take in another understanding if I already had one. So, I'd like to know the right thing at the very beginning," claimed Participant 9.

To sum up, preparing for a new lesson before class was one of the participants' strategies in learning Chinese. Five participants stated their opinions on previewing and confirmed the positive influence of it on their Chinese learning.

During class. Except for following teachers' instructions, some participants shared the strategies they used in class to help themselves learn and practice Chinese. Taking notes and practicing Chinese characters writing were the two strategies participants applied in class.

Taking notes. Taking notes is one of the most frequently used Chinese learning strategies (Qu, 2018). In this study, three participants (1, 7, 9) usually took notes during class time.

Participants 7 and 9 illustrated their reasons for taking notes in class. Participant 7 mentioned that students did not often receive teaching materials, such as PowerPoints, from the teachers. Therefore, he needed to jot down some information in class.

In addition, Participant 9's reason was related to her reasons for learning Chinese. As mentioned earlier, Participant 9 went through a mind change process from learning Chinese for passing the master's requirement to having an interest in the Chinese language. In the beginning, Participant 9 just read the textbook's content and followed the teachers' instructions in class. Afterward, because of having an interest in Chinese, she started to write down the things she felt

interested in during class. "It is not only for the school, for the exam, but also my life," said Participant 9.

Participant 7 usually wrote down some Chinese characters shown on the board or the PowerPoint slides on his notes. He mentioned that sometimes he was able to recognize a Chinese character, while forgetting its meaning, so he would write the Chinese character on his notes and look up its meaning later. Similarly, Participant 9 mentioned that she wrote down some Chinese characters when she was unfamiliar with them or forgot their meanings. She would look them up or ask teachers afterward.

Likewise, Participant 1 stated that she often jotted down something she did not get in class, but mostly in pinyin rather than Chinese characters. Some classes moved fast, so she had little time to write out Chinese characters on her notes when writing in pinyin would save her time. After class, she updated her notes written in Chinese characters onto another notebook, which she called "the good notes."

In addition, Participant 9 pointed out that when she heard some interesting and useful phrases and sentences in a class, she would write them down on her notes. She saw her notes as her savings that she could often check what she had learned.

On the contrary, Participant 4 expressed his different opinions on taking notes in class. He claimed that taking notes, to him, was a waste of class time. He mentioned that he took notes in the first few weeks because, as Participant 7 mentioned, students seldom got PowerPoint slides from teachers. But after teachers shared their teaching materials with students, he preferred to spend more time listening during the class. He explained that he saw many students who took notes in class missed some vital information mentioned by the teacher. However, he

kept listening carefully in class. Therefore, he always had a clear understanding of what the teacher taught.

Chinese characters writing. Another strategy that participants applied in class was practicing writing Chinese characters. Two participants (1, 8) mentioned that they usually practiced Chinese characters writing by themselves in class.

The two participants explained that having challenges in learning Chinese characters was one of the reasons why they practiced Chinese character writing in class. In addition, Participant 1 specifically pointed out that writing Chinese characters in class was her way of compensating for wasted class time. As mentioned in previous sections, Participant 1 deemed listening to some classes, such as the oral class, a waste of time. Therefore, she decided to do something meaningful in class, such as writing Chinese characters.

To sum up, taking notes and practicing Chinese character writing were some participants' strategies for learning Chinese during class time. Taking notes enabled participants to keep some information in their notebooks for later review. Practicing Chinese characters writing was how participants tried to overcome the Chinese character challenge and compensation for wasted class time.

After class. Bao and Guo (2012) mention that Chinese language students in their study usually are less active and positive in after-class Chinese learning and practicing. However, participants in this study tended to implement more after-class strategies to learn and practice Chinese.

The main categories of the after-class strategies which participants used were for practicing (1) Chinese characters, (2) Chinese listening, and (3) Chinese speaking. As mentioned in the Challenges section, Chinese characters, Chinese listening, and Chinese speaking were

three challenges participants faced in learning Chinese. In one-on-one interviews, participants

shared their strategies, which helped them overcome the three challenges. This section discusses

the strategies participants used after class in each category in detail, with a short conclusion to

follow.

Chinese characters. All participants mentioned their strategies for practicing Chinese

characters after class. There were three primary reasons why they saw practicing Chinese

characters as necessary for learning Chinese.

Firstly, as mentioned earlier, participants deem Chinese characters challenging to

memorize. Secondly, participants felt their vocabularies were limited. For instance, Participant

5 mentioned that when she tried to ask a question in Chinese, she was able to say "I" or "you"

and the verb "ask" in Chinese, while she had no clue of how to express the rest of the question in

Chinese. Thirdly, participants had a passion for knowing Chinese characters. Three participants

(1, 3, 11) mentioned their expectation to recognize more Chinese characters.

To practice Chinese characters, participants came up with their strategies. The strategies

include (1) repetitive practice with writing Chinese characters for better memorization, (2)

becoming familiar with Chinese characters via different media, (3) learning Chinese characters

in real-life situations. The next few paragraphs discuss the four strategies in order.

Repetitive writing. One of the most frequently used Chinese learning strategies is

repetition (Qu, 2018). Similarly, eight participants claimed that repetitive practices on writing

Chinese characters helped enhance their memorization of Chinese characters.

Among them, five participants (1, 6, 9, 10, 11) mentioned that they spent at least one or

two hours on writing characters after class. Participant 2 claimed that if she practiced writing

Chinese characters enough times, they finally stuck in her mind. Participants 4 and 9 specifically

mentioned that they wrote Chinese characters in every lesson down on their notebooks after class. Usually, they wrote at least two lines for one character, and sometimes, even more. Participant 9 wrote every text down onto his notebook after class to practice writing Chinese characters.

Participants declared that their memorizations of Chinese characters were enhanced through times of writing. Participants 6 and 7 shared impressive moments they experienced. Participant 6 expressed her excitement about being able to read in Chinese by recognizing each Chinese character. Participant 7 felt grateful to see he received 20 more points in the mid-term exam because of practicing Chinese characters writing day by day.

Different media. The research indicates that Chinese language students prefer to learn Chinese through Chinese movies, TV shows, and dictionaries, while fewer read Chinese books (Bao & Guo, 2012). Similarly, in this study, six participants (1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 11) preferred to broaden their Chinese vocabularies through different media, such as movies, social media, and translation apps. Participant 3 attempted to read Chinese books.

Participant 5 stated that she sometimes watched Chinese movies. Although it seemed impossible to understand Chinese films, she had the chance to view Chinese characters in the subtitles. Likewise, Participant 11 sometimes watched soccer matches with Chinese subtitles. He tried to read the subtitles even though he might not understand the meaning. But with English commentary and Chinese subtitles, he had the opportunity to guess the meanings of some Chinese characters and become familiar with different Chinese characters.

Similarly, Participant 3 tried to read Chinese books. His goal of reading a Chinese book, similar to Participants 5 and 11, was to prepare himself with some impressions of different Chinese characters instead of understanding the book's content. He translated chapters word by

word, even though he was not able to remember all of them. "I don't care if I understand it or not, and I may forget it. But that's how we learn a language," he said. Participant 3 experienced some a-ha moments in class when he saw those Chinese characters he read in books and some other situations. He felt that reading Chinese books helped him in learning Chinese characters.

Three participants (5, 7, 8) mentioned that social media was useful for learning Chinese characters. Participants 5 and 8 stated that when they chatted with their friends on social media, they tried to type in Chinese. They believed that this was a good way to use the Chinese characters they had learned in their conversations and get access to the Chinese characters they had not yet learned in class. In addition, Participant 7 subscribed to some social media accounts which introduced the latest events in Shanghai. The accounts usually had some posts written in Chinese. He took the chance to learn different Chinese characters.

Furthermore, four participants (1, 3, 5, 11) mentioned that they frequently used translation apps to look up words in Chinese in their daily life. The translation apps helped, especially when they were talking with others in Chinese. As mentioned earlier, participants had limited vocabularies. Therefore, they utilized the translation apps for communicating with others when they had trouble expressing themselves in Chinese. Participant 3 stated that it was sometimes awkward to pause the conversation and look up words on the translation apps, but he felt it was worth it.

The dependence on translation apps of participants is mentioned by Piao (2015). Piao says that when Chinese language students have trouble expressing themselves in Chinese, they mostly rely on translation apps.

To sum up, participants had their ways to get access to Chinese characters through different media. Being exposed to more Chinese characters on various media helped participants

become more familiar with Chinese characters. As Participant 5 declared, the more ways she

had to see Chinese characters, the more Chinese characters she tended to recognize.

Real-life situations. Using real-life situations to learn and practice Chinese is a frequently

used Chinese learning strategy (Qu, 2018). In this study, three participants (1, 3, 5) stressed that

the best way to learn Chinese characters was to learn in real-life situations.

Participant 1 confirmed that repetitive writing enhanced memorization. However, she

pointed out that a more effective way for her to understand and memorize Chinese characters

was associating Chinese characters with her daily life, stating "I preferred to memorize

characters by creating conversations. I can associate characters with real stuff or examples." For

example, the three participants paid attention to Chinese characters everywhere in their daily life,

such as in subways, supermarkets, restaurants, etc. "It's easy to connect the words with real life

and to make sentences and to be able to remember them," claimed Participant 5.

In addition, Participant 3 changed his mobile phone system into Chinese to better learn

Chinese characters in real-life situations. As mentioned in the Strengths section, he found

difficulties using the Chinese version mobile phone system and was sometimes embarrassed

because of not knowing how to use it. However, he perceived this as a way to learn Chinese

characters. Whenever he had problems understanding Chinese characters on his mobile phone

with a Chinese-based system, he used translation apps to figure them out. He explained that

although it was difficult for him to use the mobile phone with a Chinese system, he pushed

himself to learn new Chinese characters.

Furthermore, Bao and Guo (2012) find that a small number of Chinese language students

write diaries in Chinese. In this study, only Participant 3 used a Chinese diary to learn and

practice Chinese characters. In his diary, he usually jotted down some information and moments

he would like to remember in a day using the vocabulary and sentences he had learned.

Participant 3 perceived writing diaries as active learning. He was not passively learning Chinese

characters from his teachers or daily life. However, he was spontaneously applying Chinese

characters to his everyday life. "It [took] five hours sometimes, but I learned a lot," claimed

Participant 3.

Associating learning Chinese characters with daily life was one of the participants'

strategies to assist their Chinese character learning. Real-life situations enabled participants to

understand better and memorize Chinese characters. Participant 3 stated that when the teacher

taught a new Chinese character which he once saw in a supermarket, he would easily recall the

scenario of him going grocery shopping in the supermarket, vice versa. And this enabled him to

memorize Chinese characters faster and better.

To sum up, repetitive practice on writing Chinese characters, getting familiar with

Chinese characters via different media, and combining Chinese characters with real-life

situations were the three Chinese characters learning and practicing strategies used by

participants after class. Each strategy had its benefit for participants to learn, memorize, and

understand Chinese characters. Participants perceived that their strategies of learning and

practicing Chinese characters had positive impacts on their Chinese character learning.

Chinese speaking. Although participants tended to have higher self-efficacy in Chinese

speaking than in other Chinese language skills, Chinese speaking was identified as one of the

participants' challenges in learning Chinese. Except for overcoming the Chinese speaking

challenge, participants stated some other reasons why they practiced Chinese speaking after

class.

Two participants (3, 8) perceived that one key element in being fluent in a foreign language was to speak it often. Participant 8 shared that he knew people who had learned Chinese for several years but without the ability to communicate in Chinese. However, some of his friends became fluent in Chinese due to plentiful oral practices, even though they learned Chinese for only a few years.

In addition, Participant 9 stressed the importance of the Chinese speaking environment. She mentioned that she would lose the Chinese speaking environment and have limited room to improve her Chinese speaking once she graduated and went back to her motherland. Therefore, she cherished the opportunity to communicate with people in Chinese when she was still in China.

Furthermore, Participants 5 and 11 claimed that a fundamental reason they put effort into practicing Chinese speaking was that better Chinese skills would make their lives in China easier. They found that although young people in Shanghai could speak English, English was not a common language used everywhere in Shanghai. As they were living in Shanghai and would stay for several more years, they preferred to prepare themselves with at least the necessary skills to communicate in Chinese. In the Chinese Program, many students were from non-English speaking countries. Therefore, it was even more convenient for them to communicate in Chinese with other students.

There were two types of strategies participants utilized to practice Chinese speaking after class, including speaking in Chinese in real-life situations with Chinese language students and Chinese people.

With Chinese language learners. Seven participants (2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11) mentioned that they often spoke Chinese with their friends who were learning Chinese, such as their classmates

and other Chinese language students. Among them, four participants (3, 5, 8, 9) mentioned that although they could communicate with their friends in English, they tried to apply the Chinese vocabularies and sentences they learned in class to their daily communications.

Participant 5 shared an example. When she and her friends went to the canteen for lunch, they usually ordered using the sentences they learned in class. Similarly, Participant 9 mentioned that there were always some simple Chinese conversations that happened in her dorm. Although the talks were basic, they got the chance to practice what they had learned and apply it to their daily life.

Four participants (2, 8, 9, 10) had some friends from higher-level Chinese classes. They often asked those friends to speak Chinese to them when they hang out together so that they had the opportunity to learn and practice speaking Chinese. Participants 2 and 10 mentioned that with the help of their friends, they were able to express themselves better, especially when they had no idea how to say something in Chinese.

Participant 2 shared an example. She and her friends went on a trip to Qinghai. Their driver was a warm person who only spoke Chinese. During the journey, the driver often talked with them. Because of the limited Chinese level, Participant 2 often felt it hard to understand the driver's words and express herself. But her friends helped translate for her and assisted her to express herself in Chinese.

Participant 2 stated avoiding being around people who spoke her language, which was a principle she followed. She claimed that learning Chinese in class while speaking in her mother tongue after class would not help Chinese learning. Participant 11 remained neutral on this issue. He preferred to "do both." He explained that having friends from the same country or

who spoke the same language brought him a sense of belonging. But he stated that it was necessary to step out of the comfort zone to speak Chinese in his daily life.

With Chinese people. Eight participants (2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11) pointed out that communicating with Chinese people in Chinese was their strategy to improve Chinese speaking skills. For example, they tried to chat, order food, and ask for help in Chinese. This was similar to Y. Zhu's (2015) findings that Chinese language students like to practice Chinese speaking in real Chinese communications.

Participant 2 stated that communicating with Chinese people was important. She shared an example of going to a Halal market with one of her classmates. Participant 2 encouraged her classmate to practice bargaining with peddlers in the market since they had a lesson about bargaining. What surprised her was that her classmate used precisely the same sentences in the text to bargain with peddlers. "It sounded to me like she was just memorizing the text exactly," commented Participant 2. As mentioned earlier by Participant 10, Participant 2 found some differences between how the Chinese dialogues were constructed in textbooks and how native speakers spoke Chinese. Therefore, she preferred to have real conversations with native speakers to learn how native speakers talk, rather than merely reciting the dialogues from the textbooks.

Participants shared that there were some embarrassing moments when they tried to speak Chinese with Chinese people. Because of participants' current Chinese level, most of the time, they had trouble effectively communicating with Chinese native speakers. However, some participants positively took embarrassing moments.

Six participants (2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9) mentioned that when they communicated with Chinese people, they easily made mistakes, had difficulties expressing themselves, and might not

understand others speaking in Chinese. But they insisted on speaking Chinese with Chinese people. They believed that they would learn from the experiences. "I don't care if the grammar is wrong. I just try my best to speak Chinese," said Participant 3. Participant 3 further stated that although he often experienced embarrassing moments because of intentionally putting himself into an uncomfortable zone, he believed that he would finally be as good at speaking in Chinese just as he was in other languages.

Four participants shared some impressive moments of communicating with native speakers in Chinese. Participant 2 mentioned that she could go to markets or grocery shops alone without any problem. She was able to ask for help and to bargain with Chinese people in Chinese. She felt it delightful to see her improvements in communicating in Chinese.

Participant 9 described an impressive moment. Her roommates were chatting in English when a worker came to their dorm to do repairs. The repairer joked in Chinese, saying that the girls needed to speak Chinese as they were currently living in Shanghai. Participant 9 laughed. The repairer seemed to be surprised. He asked if Participant 9 understood his words and was excited to know that she did. "At that moment, I fe[lt] so happy and encouraged," said Participant 9.

Participant 4 claimed that whenever he handled something by speaking Chinese successfully, he felt pleased and grateful. He stated that he was not that excited when he completed a conversation in Chinese in class, because in class, no matter how hard the conversation was, he could receive help from the teachers and could finish the conversation anyway. However, the situations were different outside of the classroom. He needed to face the difficulties of communicating in Chinese by himself.

Participant 6 was the only one who specifically pointed out that she preferred not to communicate with either Chinese learners or native speakers in Chinese. "If I was pushed to speak with others, I could speak, but I didn't want to," she stated. Although Participant 6 did not share the reasons why she refused to speak Chinese with others, some concerns of Participants 4, 7, 8, and 9 might, to some extent, explain her opinion.

Participant 8, as previously mentioned, deemed speaking Chinese with classmates meaningless. He explained that merely repeating the words and sentences learned in class would not improve Chinese speaking skills. In addition, Participants 4 and 9 sometimes felt awkward when communicating with Chinese people in Chinese. "It's easier to talk with someone who learns Chinese. Because [of] the current level, the things we will be talking about would be so stupid," stated Participant 4. Participants 4 and 9 mentioned that they would prefer to communicate more with Chinese people in Chinese when they learned Chinese for a longer time. Furthermore, Participant 7 pointed out that a lack of instructions and suggestions from the teachers about how to effectively improve Chinese speaking was a problem. He struggled with Chinese speaking, while the teachers did not provide him with useful suggestions.

To sum up, participants stressed that communicating in Chinese was essential for improving Chinese speaking skills. Communicating with Chinese students and/or with Chinese people were participants' strategies to practice Chinese speaking after class. There were certain difficulties participants had to face while communicating with others in Chinese, but most of the participants positively took the challenges.

Chinese listening. As mentioned earlier in the Challenges section, Chinese listening was one of the challenges participants faced in learning Chinese. Five participants introduced their

strategies of learning and practicing Chinese listening skills. Their strategies can be divided into two parts: learning and practicing Chinese through different media and real-life conversations.

Different media. Similar to participants' strategies in learning and practicing Chinese characters, various media provided participants with ways to learn and practice their Chinese listening skills. The multiple media included textbook materials, Chinese broadcast shows, baby songs, and Chinese vlogs. Similarly, Cong (2010) states that Chinese language students often use Chinese broadcast shows, Chinese movies, and textbook materials to practice Chinese listening.

Participant 6 employed the textbook materials to assist her Chinese listening learning and practicing. She always used the listening textbook's audio files as her listening materials and worked on the textbook's listening exercises.

Participant 10 often listened to children's songs, which were helpful for her to practice distinguishing tones. Participant 5 listened to Chinese broadcast shows to provide herself a Chinese language environment. "I play them all the time and try to see if I can pick anything I hear," stated Participant 5.

Participant 7 preferred to watch Chinese vlogs to practice his Chinese listening skills. Similar to Participant 5, Participant 7 watched vlogs, again and again, to immerse himself in a Chinese language environment. Vloggers usually natively spoke Chinese. Therefore, despite the fact that most of the time, Participant 7 could not follow the vlogs well, he got the chance to listen to Chinese and learn some authentic expressions that could be used in his daily life.

Real-life conversations. Cong (2010) mentions another after-class listening strategy frequently used by Chinese language students---listening in real-life situations. In this study, two participants (2, 10) pointed out that a meaningful way to practice Chinese listening was to hear

real-life conversations. Participant 2 viewed this as compensation to the Chinese listening class because, as mentioned above, she felt that the Chinese listening class was a waste of time.

Participants 2 and 10 were beginning-level Chinese students who were not capable of communicating with Chinese people fluently. But they cherished the opportunity to listen to the conversations between their friends from higher-level Chinese classes and local people. For example, when Participant 10 went to dinner with her friends from higher-level classes, she listened to the conversations between waiters and her friends. She gradually knew how to order Chinese foods and some dining vocabulary in Chinese, such as ice and chopsticks.

Participant 2 stated that she often paid attention to how her friends and Chinese people communicated when she hung out with her friends. She admitted that she could not understand most of their conversations. However, she believed that she would be better in Chinese listening because listening to real-life conversations could help her build and improve her Chinese listening skills.

In a word, participants came up with their strategies to learn and practice Chinese listening skills after class. Their Chinese listening strategies were categorized into learning and practicing Chinese through different media and real-life conversations. Participants confirmed that their strategies helped them with their Chinese listening skills.

Conclusion. After class, participants usually spend time learning and practicing Chinese characters, Chinese speaking, and Chinese listening. For better learning and memorizing Chinese characters, every participant came up with their ways.

Participants' strategies on Chinese characters were categorized into three types, including (1) repetitive practices on writing Chinese characters, (2) taking advantage of different media, (3) learning Chinese characters in real-life situations.

In addition, eight participants stated their strategies of practicing Chinese speaking after class. Participants tried to communicate with Chinese learners and with native speakers in Chinese.

Furthermore, five participants shared their strategies in learning and practicing Chinese listening, including using different media and listening to real-life conversations.

According to participants' words, each strategy worked for them and facilitated their Chinese characters' capabilities, Chinese speaking, and Chinese listening.

Summary. The Strategies section introduces the strategies participants often used to learn and practice Chinese and overcome their challenges in learning Chinese. Some participants preferred to do previewing before class. Previewing enabled them to keep pace with the class, enhance their understanding of the lessons, and come up with specific questions.

In class, several participants took notes and practiced Chinese character writing. They aimed to take down the essential and useful information for later review and take advantage of the class time to enhance their memorization of Chinese characters.

Participants learned and practiced Chinese characters, Chinese speaking, and Chinese listening in different ways after class. Participants' three strategies on Chinese characters served the purpose of enhancing their Chinese characters memorization and learning and getting familiar with different Chinese characters. Participants' two strategies on Chinese speaking enabled them to utilize what they had learned in class, create conversations in real-life situations, and learn how native speakers spoke Chinese. Two Chinese listening strategies helped participants improve distinctive tones, create a Chinese environment for themselves, and learn authentic Chinese vocabularies and expressions.

In other words, participants presented their ways to learn and improve their Chinese learning, especially in Chinese characters, Chinese speaking, and Chinese listening. All participants put effort to make progress in their Chinese character learning. More than half of the participants stressed practicing Chinese speaking. Less than half of the participants took action to improve their Chinese listening. In addition, from participants' strategies, it could be concluded that participants valued applying what they had learned to their daily life and learning and practicing from real-life experiences.

Participants' strategies in learning and practicing Chinese might help answer the questions left in the Self-Perceived Strengths and Challenges section.

Firstly, every participant having ways to practice Chinese characters presented their emphasis on learning Chinese characters. Secondly, more than half of the participants came up with their strategies to improve their Chinese speaking skills. Participants learned and practiced Chinese characters and Chinese speaking skills by implementing different strategies. They gained confidence and encouragement.

Therefore, participants were more prepared to face the Chinese character challenge with both experience and positive emotional states. The internal cues, including mastery experiences and emotional status, are one of the determinants of self-efficacy (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Hence, participants' practice on Chinese characters might be one reason why participants tended to have higher self-efficacy in Chinese writing in the post-assessment than in the pre-assessment (see Table 6).

Participants' practicing on Chinese speaking might explain why participants had relatively higher self-efficacy in Chinese speaking than other Chinese language skills in the pre- and post-assessments. It might explain why participants had higher average scores of Chinese

speaking self-efficacy in the post-assessment, even though participants faced some challenges related to Chinese speaking.

Themes. Several themes regarding the strategies participants used to learn and practice Chinese emerged. Themes were detailly discussed in the previous sections. An exact list of themes on participants' strategies in learning and practicing Chinese is listed as followed, starting with Theme 7. (Theme 1 to Theme 6 were mentioned earlier in the Reasons of Learning Chinese section and the Self-Perceived Strengths and Challenges section.)

Theme 7: Participants presented their strategies of learning and practicing Chinese primarily focusing on Chinese characters, Chinese speaking, and Chinese listening.

Theme 8: Participants valued both applying what they had learned to their daily life and learning from real-life experiences.

Theme 9: While there were difficulties in communicating with Chinese native speakers, most participants positively took the challenges.

In one-on-one interviews, participants shared their current Chinese learning experiences and looked forward to their future Chinese learning. Participants made plans for Chinese learning over the next year and generated strategies to implement their plans. The following section discusses participants' plans for Chinese learning over the next year and their strategies for implementing the plans.

Plans Over the Next Year

Speaking of Chinese learning plans over the next year, participants expressed the willingness to continue learning and practicing Chinese, no matter inside or outside of the classroom. In addition, for those participants who had to pass the HSK Level IV test, although

preparing for the test was still their main task over the next year, some of them stated the intention to gear up for their master's program taught in Chinese.

Participants had three main types of plans on their Chinese learning over the next year. The tree types of plans were preparing for the HSK Level IV test, learning Chinese for their majors, and further learning and practicing Chinese (see Figure 11). The following paragraphs discuss each type of plan in detail and introduce the strategies participants intended to use to carry out their plans. This section ends with a conclusion and themes.

Figure 11. Participants' plans over the next year.

Preparing for the HSK Level IV test. Seven participants specifically pointed out that they would put effort into preparing for the HSK Level IV test. As mentioned earlier, one of the reasons why participants learned Chinese was because they had to pass the HSK Level IV test to be qualified to enroll in their master's programs in China. Thus, studying for passing the HSK Level IV test would remain some participants' (4, 5, 6, 8, 11) main objective in learning Chinese over the next year.

In addition, three participants (4, 5, 6) pointed out that their Chinese classes and the textbooks their classes based on were insufficient to prepare them for the HSK Level IV test. "The HSK IV is more intense than what we have been taught in class," said Participant 5. Therefore, they decided to spend more energy and time preparing for the HSK Level IV test after class by themselves.

Four participants (4, 6, 8, 11) thought about some specific ways to prepare for the HSK Level IV test by themselves over the next year. They would buy some books and learning materials focusing on the HSK Level IV test preparation. They would study those books and materials by themselves after class and would turn to teachers for help when they had questions.

On the other hand, Participant 5 was clear about what she needed to improve for passing the HSK Level IV test. However, except for the strategies that she used currently, she needed time to figure out other strategies that might help her prepare for the HSK Level IV test better. "I think I will come up with more strategies. I had to add more strategies to learn new words and learn sentence structures. But I haven't found them yet" claimed Participant 5.

Two participants (1, 7) who learned Chinese based on interests, stated their expectations of taking the HSK Level IV test. Neither of them planned to take the HSK Level IV test when they started to learn Chinese. However, they had the thoughts of taking the test as well. They would take the HSK Level IV test results as an assessment checking their Chinese level. Thus, they would not regard the test results as necessary. This might be why they mentioned studying harder to reach HSK Level IV but not yet had straightforward ways to improve their Chinese abilities.

Learning Chinese for majors. Three participants (4, 9, 11) felt it was urgent to learn Chinese for majors. They would start to learn Chinese for their majors by themselves over the next year.

Participant 4 got a book from his friends who were in the same major as him. While Participant 4 was preparing for the HSK Level IV test, he planned, in the meantime, to study Chinese for his major. Likewise, Participants 9 and 11 had started to look for the learning materials necessary to their majors, such as Chinese for mathematics.

As mentioned earlier, some participants learned Chinese because they would like to pursue further education in China. According to participants' words, their master's majors would be in Chinese. As a result, it would be necessary for participants to gain Chinese for their majors beforehand. Except that, there were two main reasons why the three participants were anxious to learn Chinese for their majors.

Firstly, the Chinese Program did not provide students with any Chinese courses related to their master's majors, such as Chinese for mathematics and Chinese for science. Hence, although participants might have confidence in meeting the master's programs' enrollment requirements, they were worried about learning their majors in Chinese soon.

Some other participants mentioned that the Chinese language courses could not meet the students' needs for learning their majors in Chinese. Participant 10 shared her friends' experiences. Her friends had passed the HSK Level IV test, and some even reached HSK Level V. However, they experienced a hard time taking master's classes taught in Chinese due to never learning anything related to their majors in Chinese. Similarly, Participant 1 mentioned that even her friends who passed the HSK Level VI test felt it hard to follow their master's classes in Chinese. Likewise, participant 8 heard of similar situations from his friends. As a

result, Participant 8 decided to negotiate with his advisor to develop alternatives to learning his major entirely in Chinese.

Secondly, participants had little time to prepare for the Chinese for their majors. The three participants mentioned that there was less than a year before they officially started their master's programs. During this limited period, the three participants had to prepare for the HSK Level IV test and Chinese for their majors simultaneously. Despite the fact that they would put effort into both of the two tasks, they had to get the HSK Level IV test done first. Therefore, they were uncertain about if they would have enough time to prepare themselves for the master's programs.

Further learning and practicing Chinese. Except for getting ready for the HSK Level IV test and Chinese for majors, participants claimed their intentions to continue learning and practicing Chinese in China or their home counties over the next year. This type of plan was closely related to the reasons why participants learned Chinese. As previously mentioned, having interests in China, Chinese culture, and the Chinese language and having future benefits were two reasons mentioned by participants why learning Chinese in China. Therefore, participants had expectations to further study and practice Chinese as their additional plans over the next year. "I don't want to stop by the HSK IV. It is actually nothing," said Participant 4.

Three participants planned to continue studying Chinese by taking classes or self-study. Participants 9 and 10 would like to take more Chinese language classes over the next year. They would like to move from the beginning-level classes to higher-level classes. Participant 9 preferred to take some Chinese culture courses. Furthermore, Participant 2 expressed her willingness to study Chinese by herself over the next year. Participant 2 had to go back to her home country to continue her undergraduate study soon. As a result, she decided to continue

Chinese learning by herself. She bought some textbooks for higher-level classes and would start her self-study from the textbooks.

In addition, nine participants (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10) declared to communicate more with people in Chinese, especially Chinese native speakers, over the next year. As mentioned earlier, there were some difficulties participants met when they spoke with people in Chinese. For example, as mentioned earlier, participants sometimes had awkward conversations with others due to their current limited Chinese abilities. However, most of them were confident about having better Chinese skills over the next year so that they would be able to talk more in Chinese. Some participants further stated their reasons for why they planned to practice Chinese communication more.

Participant 9 stated that her main strategies of learning Chinese, such as writing Chinese characters, worked well currently but would not last long. Therefore, she decided to use Chinese more in her daily life, as much as her native language, to better live in China in the next couple of years and work in her home country in Chinese in the future.

Similarly, Participant 8 stated, "I don't want to just memorize all the words but know nothing about how to use these words in my life." Without having the ability to communicate in Chinese, it would be meaningless to Participant 8, even if he passed the high-level HSK tests. Therefore, after he passed the HSK Level IV test, he preferred to spend more time improving and enhancing his Chinese listening and speaking skills. He believed that he would be fluent in Chinese when he had enough time to practice after passing the HSK Level IV test.

Likewise, five participants (1, 2, 3, 5, 7) expressed their expectations in improving their listening and speaking skills through communicating more with others in Chinese, no matter with Chinese native speakers or other foreigners.

Some participants shared the strategies they planned to use to communicate more with others. Although Bao and Guo (2012) stated that few Chinese language students actively make friends with Chinese people, several participants expressed the willingness to make friends with Chinese people. Five participants (1, 3, 7, 8, 9) expected to make more friends with Chinese native speakers over the next year. They mentioned that other than shopkeepers and waiters, they would like to communicate with more Chinese people in different scenarios.

Lu (2019) mentions that Chinese language students usually lack the opportunity to know and make friends with Chinese people. Three participants (1, 8, 9) had this feeling. They mentioned that it was not easy for them to make friends with Chinese people. One main reason was that their Chinese level restricted them. Another reason was mentioned by Participant 9 that some Chinese people, especially boys, seemed unwilling to talk with foreigners.

Participant 2 expressed a similar opinion. She thought one main reason why she made Chinese friends easier was that she is Chinese American. But, if not, she would meet with the difficulties to make friends with Chinese people. However, the other three participants (3, 4, 11) stated that making friends with Chinese people was not that hard. They got different chances to meet and know Chinese people, and that Chinese people were friendly to them.

In addition, Participants 3 and 7 came up with some ways to immerse themselves in a Chinese-speaking environment. Participant 3 hoped to join in some clubs in the university based on his interests. For example, he planned to participate in the Beijing opera club, the dragon boat club, the readers' association, and the piano club. Not only could he listen and speak Chinese more, but he would make more friends and get the chance to know more about Chinese culture and to develop his interests in different fields further. Furthermore, Participant 3 planned to look for a job opportunity to work in the embassy. He hoped to practice Chinese by helping with

translations and making visas for Chinese people who wanted to visit his home country.

Likewise, Participant 7 expected to have an internship opportunity, either in China or in

Singapore. In this case, he could legally stay in a Chinese speaking environment for more years

to improve his Chinese communication. Furthermore, Participants 7 and 9 mentioned traveling

around China as one of their strategies. They wanted to travel more because they could learn

more about China and would have more chances to communicate with others in Chinese.

Participant 2's case was unique to some extent. She would go back to the U.S. over the

next year. Thinking of the likely situation that she might lose the opportunity to talk with native

Chinese speakers, she planned to practice Chinese communication with her mother and other

Chinese ethnicities who could speak Chinese.

On the other hand, Participant 10 preferred to continue using the strategies that she

implemented to carry out her plans over the next year.

To sum up, participants planned to continue learning and practicing Chinese over the next

year to reach a higher Chinese level and improve their Chinese communication abilities.

Conclusions. The three types of participants' plan on learning Chinese over the next year

were closely connected with their reasons for learning Chinese. Some participants would like to

study more for the HSK Level IV test to enroll in their master's programs in China successfully.

To prepare themselves better for their master's study, some participants planned to learn Chinese

for their majors independently. Moreover, participants had wished to continue learning Chinese

to reach a higher Chinese level and improve their Chinese communication. Some participants

came up with strategies to effectively carry out their plans, in addition to their currently used

strategies in learning Chinese.

Themes. Two themes regarding participants' plans on learning Chinese over the next year

emerged. Both of the themes were detailly discussed in the previous paragraphs by presenting

results from one-on-one interviews. A clear list of themes on participants' plans on learning

Chinese over the next year is listed as follows, starting with Theme 10. (Themes 1 to 9 were

mentioned earlier in the Reasons of Learning Chinese section, the Self-Perceived Strengths and

Challenges section, and the Strategies section.)

Theme 10: Participants reported three main plans for learning Chinese over the next year.

This includes preparing for the HSK Level IV test, learning Chinese for their majors, and further

learning and practicing Chinese.

Theme 11: Some participants came up with strategies to effectively carry out their plans,

additional to their currently used strategies in learning Chinese.

Summary of Participants' Chinese Learning Experiences

This section illustrates participants' Chinese learning experiences in four aspects by

demonstrating the results from one-on-one interviews and the pre- and post-assessments.

The four aspects are (1) the reasons why participants learned Chinese, (2) participants' self-

perceived strengths and challenges in learning Chinese, (3) the strategies that participants used to

learn and practice Chinese, and (4) participants' plans on Chinese learning over the next year.

Eleven themes briefly describe participants' Chinese learning experiences, as listed at the

beginning of this section.

Research Findings

The previous sections discuss participants' Chinese learning experiences via results from

one-on-one interviews and the pre- and post-assessments. The following sections present six

research findings that answer the three research questions of this study, basing upon the Chinese

learning experiences of my participants, who were early Chinese learners, referred to in the findings as students. A summary that listed six research findings is provided at the end of this section. The three research questions were:

1. What is the nature of students' efficacy while learning?

1a. What are students' perceptions of their strengths in learning Chinese?

1b. What are students' perceptions of their challenges in learning Chinese?

2. What characteristics of GLLs, if any, do students exhibit while learning Chinese?

3. What is the association, if any, between students' efficacy and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs while learning Chinese?

Research Question 1: Nature of Students' Efficacy

Research Question 1 targeted on understanding the nature of students' efficacy through their Chinese learning experiences. The two sub-questions ask about the strengths and challenges students perceived to have while learning Chinese. This study concludes two research findings answering Research Question 1.

Research Finding 1: This research finds that language-related strengths and certain personality traits are the two types of strengths students perceive to have in learning Chinese.

Research Finding 2: This research finds that students' self-perceived challenges are mainly from the Chinese language per se, the teachers, the curriculum settings, and the class members.

The first research finding corresponded to Themes 2 and 3. The second research finding corresponded to Themes 4, 5, and 6.

The following paragraphs illustrate the two research findings in detail by providing the results from the pre- and post-assessments and one-on-one interviews mentioned in the Self-Perceived Strengths and Challenges section.

In the pre- and post-assessments, the participant reported having the lowest self-efficacy in Chinese listening and the highest in Chinese speaking and Chinese writing. In One-on-one interviews, participants shared more detailed information about their self-perceived strengths and challenges in learning Chinese.

Participants' self-perceived strengths (see Figure 5) included language-related strengths and certain personality traits (see Themes 2 and 3). To be more specific, language-related strengths included Chinese listening, Chinese pronunciations, and Chinese grammar. As mentioned in Theme 2, participants perceived the language-related strengths to have shared some commons with their native languages. Personality traits included a sense of responsibility, willingness to try new things, and confidence. In addition, every participant in this study perceived to certain personality trait(s), which assist them learning Chinese. It seemed that participants tended to attribute their strengths in learning Chinese to themselves.

Participants' self-perceived challenges (see Figure 6) included language-related challenges, challenges from the teachers, challenges from the curriculum settings, and challenges from the class members. Language-related challenges contained Chinese characters, tones, listening, speaking, and grammar (see Theme 4). Challenges from the teachers included the teachers' limits in certain professional proficiencies, including having limited pedagogical knowledge, teaching experience, and motivations to teach, not serving the courses' focuses, and having insufficient English proficiency. As mentioned in Theme 5, participants expressed dissatisfaction with the teachers' limits in certain professional proficiencies. Challenges from the curriculum setting pointed to repetitive learning and insufficient classes (see Theme 6). Challenges from class members referred to having students with different needs in the same class (see Theme 6). In addition, compared to participants' self-perceived strengths, participants

mentioned having self-perceived challenges because of outside factors, such as Chinese language teachers, the curriculum setting, and class members. It seemed that participants tended to attribute their challenges in learning Chinese to outside factors.

Research Question 2: Characteristics of GLLs Students Exhibit

Research Question 2 inquiries about the characteristics of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009) that students exhibit, if any, in learning Chinese. Three research findings answering Research Question 2 were generated by looking into the relationship between participants' Chinese learning experiences and characteristics of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009). The three research findings are listed as followed, starting from Research Finding 3.

Research Finding 3: This research finds that students have several characteristics of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009), which are Characteristics 1, 2, 3, 6, and 7 and a part of Characteristics 8 and 10.

Research Finding 4: This research finds that students tend to have Characteristics 4 and 5 and a part of Characteristic 10.

Research Finding 5: This research finds that students lack Characteristic 9 and the second part of Characteristic 8.

The following paragraphs illustrate the research findings in detail. Firstly, the ten characteristics of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009) are listed. Secondly, paragraphs discuss participants' demonstration of the characteristics of GLLs. Thirdly, a summary provides explicit research findings answering Research Question 2.

The characteristics of GLLs. Edge and Garton (2009) came up with a concrete list of general characteristics of GLLs. They point out that individuals who are successful language

learners do not necessarily have all the characteristics listed below, but GLLs as a group usually have these in common. The detailed descriptions of the characteristics of GLLs are as follows:

(1) Have a positive attitude to the language they want to learn and to speakers of that language,

(2) have a strong personal motivation to learn the language,

(3) are confident that they will be successful learners,

(4) are prepared to risk making mistakes and learn from them,

(5) like learning about the language,

(6) organize their own practice of the language,

(7) find ways to say things when they do not know how to express them correctly,

(8) willingly get into situations where the language is being used, and use it as often as they can,

(9) work directly in the language rather than translate from their first language (L1),

(10) think about their strategies for learning and remembering, and consciously try out new strategies (Edge & Garton, 2009, p. 5).

Characteristic 1: Positive attitude towards the Chinese language and Chinese speakers.

Towards the Chinese language. Researchers have indicated that Chinese language students have positive attitudes toward Chinese language (Fu, 2016; Liu, 2009; Zuo, 2016). However, Qu et al. (2018) state that students tend to feel boredom and be afraid of difficulties when learning Chinese.

In this study, participants presented their positive attitudes toward the Chinese language in four aspects of their Chinese learning experiences. As mentioned earlier, the four aspects of participants' Chinese learning experiences included reasons for learning Chinese, the self-perceived strengths and challenges, the strategies, and plans.

Firstly, in the Reasons for Learning Chinese section, four participants (1, 3, 4, 9) gradually generated interests in China, Chinese culture, and the Chinese language in addition to their other reasons for learning Chinese. Their interests provided them positive attitudes to like and enjoy learning Chinese. "I know it could be quite hard (to learn Chinese), but now I love it," stated Participant 1.

Several participants mentioned that their curiousness about China motivated them to study in Shanghai. Among them, Participant 7 specifically pointed out that his learning Chinese was better for himself in Shanghai. With the thought in mind, he voluntarily took the Chinese language class in the Chinese Program.

In addition, having future benefits was one of the reasons why some participants learned Chinese, as mentioned earlier. Six participants (1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 10) looked forward to more jobs and/or life opportunities by using Chinese in the future. Therefore, they hoped to equip themselves with Chinese abilities.

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, being of Chinese ethnicity but speaking only Cantonese, Participant 2 sometimes felt it hard to identify herself as Chinese. Hence, she spontaneously learned Chinese due to the desire to be more like a Chinese person and better communicating in Chinese.

Secondly, as mentioned in the Self-Perceived Strengths and Challenges section, every participant mentioned at least one personality trait that helped him/her overcome difficulties in learning Chinese (see Theme 3). Being responsible for Chinese learning, having the willingness to try new things, and being confident in learning Chinese, on one hand, presented participants' strengths related to certain personality traits in learning Chinese, on the other hand, reflected their positive attitudes toward Chinese learning.

In addition, although several participants perceived to face challenges caused by the curriculum setting and the class members (see Theme 6), some of them were able to see these issues from a positive perspective.

To be more specific, the curriculum setting contributed to the repetitive learning, which was named a challenge in learning Chinese by several participants. However, six participants (3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11) were able to take repetitive learning positively. They confirmed the effectiveness of repetitive learning. They were able to memorize better the Chinese characters they had already learned through repetitive learning.

Some participants were confused about having students with different needs in the same class. They raised it as one of the challenges they faced in learning Chinese. But among them, Participant 10 tried to see this challenge positively. As mentioned, she described the Chinese classes as "not too bad." She stated that what she learned in class was useful and appropriate for beginning-level students.

Thirdly, as mentioned in the Strategies section, all participants presented the strategies they applied in learning and practicing Chinese (Theme 7). Several participants previewed lessons beforehand. Some participants took notes and/or practiced Chinese characters writing in class. Every participant had his/her ways to learn and practice Chinese characters, Chinese listening, and Chinese speaking after class. Many participants stressed the importance of getting into real-life situations to learn and practice Chinese skills (Theme 8). Some of them were able to positively face the difficulties in communicating with Chinese people (see Theme 9).

In a word, participants employed the strategies that specifically fit their needs and worked to learn and practice Chinese skills. Instead of passively learning Chinese, participants actively

came up with their ways to learn and practice Chinese. This represented participants' positive attitudes toward the Chinese language.

Fourthly, all participants had their plans for learning Chinese over the next year. Participants mainly planned to prepare for the HSK Level IV test, learn Chinese for majors, and learn further and practice Chinese (Theme 10). To carry out their plans, some participants shared several new strategies that they would implement (Theme 11). Detailed plans and strategies could be found in the Plans section. In a word, every participant demonstrated a positive attitude by crafting a clear plan(s) for improving Chinese over the next year.

To sum up, every participant presented his/her positive attitudes, more or less, toward the Chinese language.

Toward Chinese speakers. Fu (2016) indicates that Chinese language learners had a positive attitude toward Chinese people. Similarly, in this study, participants mentioned their positive attitudes toward Chinese speakers. Participants' positive attitudes toward Chinese speakers were mainly embodied in the Strategies and the Plans sections.

Participant 2 expressed her willingness to gain a cultural identity and better communicate in Chinese. She implemented several strategies to reach her goals. She made friends with Chinese speakers, listened to the conversations between her friends and Chinese native speakers, communicated with Chinese speakers in different situations, and learned from communicating with Chinese speakers. She hoped to have more chances to speak with Chinese speakers over the next year, even though she needed to go back to the U.S.

Likewise, other seven participants (3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11) took the opportunity to talk with Chinese people in Chinese in different real-life situations (see Theme 8), such as ordering foods and asking for help and chatting. Although six participants (2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9) met difficulties in

communicating with Chinese people, they were not stopped by the difficulties and continued taking the chances to speak Chinese with Chinese people (see Theme 9). Moreover, nine participants (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10) planned to communicate with Chinese people more and make friends with Chinese people over the next year mentioned in the Plans section.

One thing to be noticed is that Participant 6, who tended to avoid active communication with Chinese speakers, did not clearly show her attitude towards Chinese speakers. However, she neither shared a negative attitude towards Chinese speakers.

In a word, all participants, except for Participant 6, expressed their positive attitudes toward Chinese speakers that they were willing to communicate and make friends with Chinese speakers.

Characteristic 2: Strong personal motivations. Researchers investigated students' reasons and motivations in learning Chinese. Ding (2016) and Guo (2015) claim that students learn Chinese for their interests, further education, and job opportunities. Li and Wei (2015) and Yang and Wang (2017) find that experiencing Chinese society and culture is one of the motivations why students learn Chinese. Similarly, as mentioned in the Reasons for Learning Chinese section and Theme 1, every participant in this study clearly explained the reason(s) for learning Chinese. Most of their reasons support previous research findings.

Seven participants (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9) learned Chinese because of their interests in China, Chinese culture, and the Chinese language. In addition, seven participants (3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11) learned Chinese to meet the requirement for their further education in China. Six participants (1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 10) explained that learning Chinese would benefit their future. Participant 2, in addition, learned Chinese to identify herself as Chinese better.

Participants came all the way from their home countries to China to learn Chinese based on their reasons. According to their words, learning Chinese was essential for their further education in China, their interests in China, Chinese culture and the Chinese language, and their future job and life opportunities. Hence, the reasons why participants learned Chinese could be considered as their strong motivations in learning Chinese.

Characteristic 3: Having confidence in becoming successful learners. Edge and Garton (2009) mention that the success could be measured on different dimensions, such as sounding like native speakers, the extent to which learners could communicate and understand in the target language, and how well learners could perform specific tasks in the target language. But Edge and Garton (2009) believe there is no particular definition of successful learners.

Based on this premise, in the analysis of the Characteristic 3 part, the study did not restrict the dimensions in which "successful learners" could be measured. The content of participants' Chinese learning experiences, which presented their beliefs of themselves making improvements and/or being good in Chinese, were taken as their confidence in becoming successful learners.

Li (2018) and Y. Zhu (2015) claim that most Chinese language learners have the confidence to be good at Chinese in the future. In this study, several participants showed their confidence in being successful learners. The following are some examples.

As mentioned in the Self-Perceived Strengths and Challenges section, Participants 4 and 9 had confidence in learning Chinese as the strength related to personality traits.

Participant 4 perceived himself to face several challenges in learning Chinese. Therefore, he was surprised to hear his classmates' praises for his Chinese skills. However, he accepted and

took the praises as "honest compliments and encouragements." He took the role of a teacher, as expected by his group members, to assist their Chinese learning in the afternoon study group.

For instance, as mentioned in the Strategies section, he devoted time to previewing lessons beforehand to prepare himself and his group members for new lessons. He took the oral class as an example. He and his group members had a better feeling towards the oral class with previewing the new lesson in advance.

Participant 4's study-group experience represented his confidence in being a successful learner. He was confident about having sufficient Chinese abilities to help his group members. He had the confidence that the group members, including him per se, would improve their Chinese skills.

Participant 9 shared her change from being a shy learner who was afraid of using Chinese to holding the belief that "I can do it." She perceived having confidence as an essential element in learning Chinese. So, she kept telling herself that she was able to talk loudly in Chinese in any situation. Participant 9 shared some impressive moments that she successfully communicated with others and solved problems in Chinese. Detailed examples could be found in the previous sections.

In addition, as mentioned in the Strategies section, six participants (2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9) shared that they sometimes met embarrassing moments when communicating with Chinese people in Chinese. Because of limited Chinese abilities, they had difficulties in correctly expressing themselves and understanding others in Chinese. However, they did not give up talking with Chinese people in Chinese (Theme 9). Even though the experiences were sometimes embarrassing, the five participants believed that their Chinese skills would be improved, and they would communicate in Chinese better.

Participant 2 mentioned her confidence when sharing her Chinese listening strategy. As mentioned, she often listened to the conversations between her friends and Chinese people, although she could not follow well. She held the belief that she could build and improve her Chinese listening skills by listening to real-life conversations.

Participant 3 shared more about his confidence in being a successful learner. As mentioned in the Strategies section, some of Participant 3's strategies in learning and practicing Chinese, such as changing his mobile phone system into Chinese and communicating with Chinese people, brought him some awkward moments. But he did not regret pushing himself into an uncomfortable zone. Instead, he had the feeling that he would eventually be good at Chinese, just as how well he did in the other languages.

Furthermore, several participants presented their confidence when discussing their plans for learning and practicing Chinese over the next year. Except for Participants 6 and 11, the remaining participants planned to have more Chinese conversations than now. It was because they believed that they would have better Chinese abilities over the next year. Participant 8 specifically stated that although he was not used to speaking Chinese now, he would be fluent in Chinese in the near future.

In a word, except for Participants 6 and 11, other participants were confident in being good and/or making improvements in Chinese. And, in this study, this was counted as them being confident in becoming successful learners.

Characteristic 4: Preparing for making mistakes and learning from them. Six participants expressed that they had their minds prepared for making mistakes in using Chinese. This is different from Jiang's (2000) idea that students usually fail to prepare for making mistakes in learning Chinese.

Participants 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, and 9 shared some difficulties in communicating with Chinese people, as mentioned in the Strategies section. For example, they easily made mistakes in speaking Chinese, felt it hard to express themselves in Chinese, and had trouble understanding Chinese.

However, as mentioned in Theme 9, they were able to see the bright side. Although difficulties existed in speaking Chinese with Chinese people, they persisted in communicating with Chinese people and believed that they could learn from the experience.

In a word, six participants pointed out that they prepared to risk making mistakes in speaking Chinese and learning from the mistakes.

Characteristic 5: Liking learning about the language. As discussed in the Characteristic 1 and Characteristic 2 parts, every participant had a positive attitude towards Chinese and had a strong personal motivation to learn Chinese. However, a few participants specifically pointed out that they liked learning about Chinese. Four participants (1, 3, 4, 9) expressed that they enjoyed learning about the Chinese language.

As mentioned in the Reasons for Learning Chinese, several participants stated to like the Chinese language after learning Chinese. The four participants indicated that they experienced a mind change and gradually had interests in the Chinese language, although they first came to learn Chinese for some other reasons.

For example, Participant 1 was happy with her decision to learn Chinese and said, "I know it could be quite hard, but now I love it." Participant 3 expressed, "Chinese is actually an interesting language," when he found out that there were meanings behind Chinese characters. In addition, Participant 4 had interests in the Chinese language when he realized that it would be more meaningful to learn Chinese for the sake of his later life in China than for passing the HSK

Level IV test. Moreover, Participant 9 started to enjoy learning Chinese after she saw herself

making progress and enjoyed learning different aspects of the Chinese language. After she

developed her interest in learning Chinese, she kept a notebook in class to jot down not only the

information for the HSK Level IV test but also the information she felt useful for her life in

Shanghai.

Hence, among all participants, four participants specifically mentioned that they enjoyed

learning the Chinese language.

Characteristic 6: Organizing own practice of Chinese. Researchers have indicated that

many Chinese language students voluntarily organize their Chinese practice when learning

Chinese (Hao, 2010; Lai, 2017; D. Li, 2016; Li, 2020; Wu, 2017). In this study, participants

took actions to organize their own Chinese practice. Participants' practice on Chinese were

mentioned in Themes 7, 8, 10, and 11.

Firstly, as mentioned in the Strategies section, some participants previewed lessons

before classes. Some participants took notes and practiced Chinese characters writing in class.

And every participant had his/her way(s) to practice Chinese characters, Chinese listening,

and/or Chinese speaking after class.

To be more specific, participants practiced Chinese characters through repetitive writing,

different media, and real-life situations. In addition, some participants practiced Chinese

speaking through communicating with Chinese learners and/or Chinese people. Furthermore,

several participants practiced Chinese listening via different media and real-life conversations.

More details could be found in the Strategies section.

Secondly, participants shared their plans for learning and practicing Chinese over the

next year. Some of them planned to study more to pass the HSK Level IV test. They would

work on the books and materials specifically focused on the test and turn to the teachers when needed. Some participants made a self-study plan to learn Chinese for majors to prepare themselves for Chinese-based master's study better. Many participants had clear plans for continuing learning Chinese. They would like to gain better Chinese skills and to better communicate with others in Chinese. For example, taking Chinese classes, self-study, and having more Chinese communications were some practices that participants would implement to carry out the plans.

To sum up, every participant had his/her practice of Chinese. They had practice for current Chinese learning and had plans for their Chinese practice over the next year.

Characteristic 7: Finding ways to express oneself correctly. Piao (2015) states that when Chinese language students have troubles expressing themselves in Chinese, they have methods to deal with the situation. Likewise, in this study, eight participants mentioned the methods they used under the situation that they could not express themselves in Chinese correctly.

As mentioned in the Strategies section, four participants (1, 3, 5, 11) often used translation apps to communicate with others in Chinese. Because of limited vocabularies, the four participants relied on translation apps to look up the words that they got trouble expressing in Chinese by themselves.

In addition, the other four participants (2, 8, 9, 10) usually depended on their friends to translate what they wanted to express. Their friends were Chinese learners but from higher-level Chinese classes. In other words, the four would express themselves in English or their native languages and wait for their friends to translate into Chinese.

In a word, eight participants mentioned having their ways to deliver something they could not say correctly in Chinese.

Characteristic 8: Willingness to get into the Chinese-using situations and to use Chinese as often as possible. All participants mentioned their willingness to get into Chinese-using situations. This supports Cong's (2010), Qu's (2018), and X. Zhu's (2015) opinions that Chinese language students emphasize learning Chinese in real-life situations. Participants presented their willingness in four aspects of participants' Chinese learning experiences (i.e., reasons for learning Chinese, the self-perceived strengths and challenges, the strategies, and plans).

Firstly, as mentioned in the Reasons for Learning Chinese section, Participants 4 and 7 stated the intention to learn Chinese to prepare themselves for living in Shanghai. Because Participant 4 would stay in Shanghai for several more years due to the master's program, he hoped to learn Chinese to pass the HSK Level IV test and equip himself with Chinese abilities to live in Shanghai. Participant 7 voluntarily learned Chinese to involve himself in Shanghai.

In addition, Participant 2 shared that she hoped to have a cultural identity as being of Chinese ethnicity. She felt pity for not speaking Chinese and having a hard time communicating in Chinese. Hence, she took a semester off to study Chinese and live in China to build her Chinese skills.

Secondly, in the Self-Perceived Strengths and Challenges section, many participants expressed their willingness to have more Chinese listening and speaking practice in class. For example, six participants (1, 2, 4, 8, 7, 9) expected the oral teacher could help them improve their Chinese speaking skills. Specifically, Participants 7 and 9 wanted to learn how to communicate in Chinese in real-life situations. In addition, Participants 2 and 10 shared that they would prefer

the listening teacher to have more practical activities to improve their listening skills. In other words, seven participants (1, 2, 4, 8, 7, 9, 10) had intentions to prepare themselves with Chinese listening and speaking abilities better. Their intentions, to some extent, represented their willingness to get into Chinese-language situations.

Thirdly, participants expressed more of their willingness to get involved in Chinese-language situations while sharing their strategies in learning and practicing Chinese. As mentioned in Theme 8, participants valued applying what they had learned to their daily life and learning from real-life experiences. To be more specific, participants had their strategies to learn and practice their skills in Chinese characters, Chinese listening, and Chinese speaking. To reach out their goals, they created different chances for themselves to get into a Chinese-language environment. Here are some examples.

Six participants (1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 11) tried to get familiar with Chinese characters through different media, such as books, movies, social media, etc. Despite the fact that they were not able to fully understand books, films, and information on social media, they provided themselves a Chinese environment to get access to more Chinese characters. Three among them (1, 3, 5) used materials in their daily life, such as in subways, supermarkets, and restaurants, to learn Chinese characters.

In addition, eight participants (2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11) communicated with Chinese learners and/or Chinese people to practice and improve their Chinese speaking skills. Although talking with Chinese people brought difficulties to some participants because of their limited Chinese abilities, they were still willing to communicate with Chinese people in Chinese.

Moreover, to practice and improve Chinese listening skills, five participants (2, 5, 6, 7, 10) spontaneously immersed themselves in the Chinese language environment. For example,

four of them (5, 6, 7, 10) listened to Chinese on different media, such as textbook audio files, children's songs, Chinese broadcast shows, and Chinese vlogs. Participants 2 and 10 listened to real-life Chinese conversations between their friends from higher-level Chinese classes and Chinese people.

Fourthly, nine participants (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10) expressed their willingness to get into the Chinese language situation when sharing their plans to practice Chinese speaking skills over the next year. For example, five of them (1, 3, 5, 7, 8) would like to communicate more with Chinese native speakers and the foreigners who were able to speak Chinese over the next year. Participants 3 and 7 wanted to immerse themselves in a Chinese speaking environment, such as joining clubs and staying longer in a Chinese speaking country.

One thing to be noticed is that only Participant 9 specifically mentioned her ideal frequency of using Chinese. As mentioned in the Plans section, she hoped to use Chinese as much as her native language over the next year.

In addition, compared to other participants, Participant 6 raised just one example, which presented her willingness to get into Chinese-language situations. Participant 6 mentioned her desire to share her strategy in practicing Chinese listening---listening to textbook audio files and doing listening exercises on the listening textbook. In other words, Participant 6, compared to other participants, did not mention any example of her engaging in real-life Chinese language situations, neither in current Chinese learning nor in her plans over the next year. As mentioned in the Strategies section, Participant 6 was the only one who specifically pointed out the unwillingness to communicate with others in Chinese actively. Participant 6, that is to say, tended to engage in Chinese-language situations which were not under the real-life background.

To sum up, every participant expressed his/her willingness to get into Chinese-language situations. But Participant 6 was apt to get into the Chinese language environment, which was not in real-life situations. In addition, only Participant 9 particularly thought about the frequency of using Chinese.

Characteristic 9: Working directly in Chinese. Two participants (5, 7) mentioned working directly in Chinese. As mentioned in the Strategies section, Participants 5 and 7 tried to immerse themselves in a self-created Chinese language environment. Participant 5 watched Chinese movies with Chinese subtitles and listened to Chinese broadcast shows. Participant 7 watched vlogs in Chinese made by Chinese vloggers. Even though it could be hard for them to follow a Chinese movie, a Chinese broadcast show, or a vlog in Chinese, they tried to capture something they knew and learn something useful during the process.

Without help from other people, translation apps, and subtitles in the languages they were able to master, Participants 5 and 7 worked directly in Chinese in a Chinese language environment created by themselves.

One thing to be noticed is that, although Participants 5 and 7 stated their ways in which they directly worked in Chinese, they mentioned a language transfer or translation was going on in their minds while using Chinese. Researchers have found that language transfer takes place in students' Chinese learning (X. Zhang, 2020; Zhu, 2012). To be more specific, students comprehending a Chinese sentence closely relates to students' native languages (Wang, 2004).

As mentioned in the Strategies section and the Characteristic 7 part, Participant 5 often used translation apps, especially to help her communicate. For example, when she could not express herself in Chinese, she needed to get help from translation apps.

As mentioned in the Self-Perceived Strengths and Challenges section, Participant 7 stated why Chinese grammar was one of the challenges he met in learning Chinese. The differences between Chinese grammar and the grammar in European languages disabled him to transplant European grammar into Chinese. And this led to the difficulty for him to understand Chinese. In other words, Participant 7 was used to European grammar and tended to understand Chinese using European grammar.

To sum up, two participants (5, 7) worked directly in Chinese when they immersed themselves in a self-created Chinese language environment. On the other hand, they had the habit of transferring or translating from their native languages and/or the language they could master to Chinese.

Characteristic 10: Thinking about strategies and trying out new strategies.
Researchers have learned about the strategies Chinese language students used in the learning process. Those strategies include previewing (Bao & Guo, 2012; Lin, 2017), taking notes (Qu, 2018), repetition (Qu, 2018), watching Chinese TV shows and movies (Bao & Guo, 2012; Cong, 2010; Lai, 2018), utilizing real-life situations (Qu, 2018; Wu, 2017) and real Chinese communications (Cong, 2010; Lai, 2018; X. Zhu, 2015), using social media (Wu, 2017), and writing dairy (Bao & Guo, 2012), etc.

Likewise, in this study, every participant came up with his/her strategies for learning and practicing Chinese (as mentioned in the Strategies section and Theme 7). Most of the strategies focused on learning, memorizing, practicing, and improving Chinese characters, Chinese listening, and Chinese speaking. Participants commented on their strategies, saying that their strategies worked for them to improve their abilities in Chinese characters, Chinese listening, and Chinese speaking.

Three participants (1, 4, 9) specifically pointed out that they reflected on some strategies they used and came up with additional strategies or alternatives.

Participant 1 stated that a more useful way was to memorize Chinese characters in real-life scenarios. She said, "I preferred to memorize characters by creating conversations. I can associate characters with real stuff or examples," as mentioned in the Strategies section.

Participant 4 demonstrated that his preference for not taking notes during class. Participant 4 took notes in class before the teachers shared teaching materials with students. However, afterward, he stopped taking notes and focused more on listening to the teachers' instructions. He felt that taking notes in class was a waste of time. He saw many of his classmates wasting time on jotting notes while losing important information mentioned by the teachers.

Participant 9 mentioned that her developing interests in Chinese contributed to a change in her in-class strategy. Before Participant 9 was interested in learning Chinese, she just read the textbook and followed the teachers' instructions in class. However, afterward, she started writing down the things she perceived useful for her Chinese learning and her life in Shanghai.

In addition, as mentioned in the Plans section and Theme 11, all participants made plans for their Chinese learning over the next year. Some participants raised plans and specific strategies that they would use to carry out their plans (Theme 12). Here are some examples. More detailed examples are demonstrated in the Plans section.

To better prepare for the HSK Level IV test, four participants (4, 6, 8, 11) would have self-study based on the books and materials made particularly for the test and would turn to teachers for help when needed.

To better communicate in Chinese, five participants (1, 3, 7, 8, 9) would try to make friends with Chinese people. They currently communicated in Chinese more with Chinese learners and some particular Chinese people such as shopkeepers. However, over the next year, they would like to have more Chinese friends to have opportunities to use Chinese and have more Chinese conversations in different scenarios.

One thing to be noticed is that Participants 5 and 10 did not have a clear idea of any new strategy to use to implement their plans, although they shared their plans in learning Chinese over the next year. Participant 5 specifically pointed out that she would like to try some new strategies, but she needed more time to figure it out. Participant 10, on the other hand, stated that she would continue using the strategies that she currently used to carry out her plans.

In a word, every participant thought about the strategies which worked effectively for them in learning Chinese. Three participants (1, 4, 9) intentionally tried out new strategies. Except for Participants 5 and 10, the remaining participants came up with some new strategies they would like to apply over the next year. That is to say, although most participants had not yet tried out new strategies, they had thought about and would use new strategies to implement their plans over the next year.

Summary. Participants exhibited the characteristics of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009) in learning Chinese. Although individual participants had different characteristics of GLLs, they shared some in common. Table 8 presents an overview of the characteristics of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009) that each participant exhibited.

Table 8

Overview of the Characteristics of GLLs Each Participant Exhibited

Participant	C1		C2	C3	C4		C5	C6	C7	C8		C9	C10		Numbers of Characteristics Exhibited
	a	b			a	b				a	b		a	b	
1	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X			X	X	10
2	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X			X	*	10.5
3	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	*	11.5
4	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	12
5	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X		11
6	X		X					X		X			X	*	5.5
7	X	X	X					X		X		X	X	*	7.5
8	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X			X	*	10.5
9	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	12
10	X	X	X	X				X	X	X			X		8
11	X	X	X					X	X	X			X	*	7.5
Total	11	10	11	8	6	6	4	11	8	11	1	2	11	6	

Note. The C1, C2, C3, etc., stands for characteristic 1, characteristic 2, characteristic 3, etc. And a and b stand for the first part and the second part of a specific characteristic. X presents that the box is checked. The asterisk mark explains that the participant tended to show the characteristic. To easily count the number of characteristics of GLLs individual participants exhibited, X is counted as one point, and the asterisk mark is calculated as .5 point.

Firstly, participants mostly exerted five characteristics of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009), which were characteristic 1, 2, 3, 6, and 7, and a part of characteristic 8 and 10. They were listed as follows.

All participants had positive attitudes toward the Chinese language, and ten of them had positive attitudes toward Chinese speakers, corresponding to characteristic 1.

All participants had strong motivations for learning Chinese, corresponding to characteristic 2.

Eight participants were confident in becoming successful learners, corresponding to characteristic 3.

All participants had their practice of Chinese, corresponding to characteristic 6.

Eight participants had their methods to say something when they had trouble expressing themselves correctly in Chinese, corresponding to characteristic 7.

All participants showed a willingness to involve in Chinese-using situations, corresponding to the first part of characteristic 8.

All participants had their strategies of learning and practicing Chinese, corresponding to the first part of characteristic 10.

Secondly, around half of the participants presented characteristic 4 and 5 and a part of characteristic 10.

Six participants were prepared to make mistakes when using Chinese and were willing to learn from the errors, corresponding to characteristic 4.

Four participants expressed their likes in learning Chinese, corresponding to characteristic 5.

Nine participants demonstrated some new strategies they yet not used but would implement over the next year, corresponding to the second part of characteristic 10.

Thirdly, few participants exhibited characteristic 9 and the second part of characteristic 8.

One participant mentioned using Chinese as much as her native language, corresponding to the second part of characteristic 8.

Two participants mentioned working directly in Chinese, although mainly in the self-created Chinese environment, corresponding to characteristic 9.

To sum up, this research finds that early Chinese students enrolled in the beginning level preparatory class of the Chinese Program in this study have positive attitudes toward the Chinese language and Chinese speakers. They learn Chinese with strong motivations. They are confident about being successful learners. They develop their own ways of practicing Chinese. Students have methods to express themselves when they have trouble saying something in

Chinese. They are willing to be involved in the situations of using Chinese. They have different strategies to learn and practice Chinese.

In addition, these students prepare themselves to make mistakes in using Chinese and learn from the mistakes. They tend to like learning Chinese. They tend to try out new strategies for learning and practicing Chinese. However, students are not ready to use Chinese as frequently as their native languages. Further, they prefer to transfer or translate from their native languages and/or the languages that they can use to Chinese, rather than directly working in Chinese.

Research Question 3: Association, if Any, Between Students' Efficacy and Their Demonstration of Characteristics of GLLs

Research Question 3 aimed to determine if there is an association between students' efficacy and their demonstration of Characteristics of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009) while learning Chinese.

One research finding answering the Research Question 3 was concluded according to the pre- and post-assessments' results (i.e., participants' Chinese language self-efficacy) and the Research Findings 3, 4, and 5 (i.e., the characteristics of GLLs that participants exhibited).

One thing to be noticed is that the characteristics of GLLs focus on students' language learning in general rather than pointing to some specific skills. Therefore, among participants' self-efficacy in Chinese skills and general Chinese, only participants' general Chinese self-efficacy is taken to answer Research Question 3 pointedly. The Research Finding 6 responding to the Research Question 3 is listed as followed.

Research Finding 6: This research finds that there is no apparent association between students' efficacy and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009) while learning Chinese.

To clearly illustrate the Research Finding 6, a diagram (Figure 12) presenting the relationship between participants' general Chinese self-efficacy and the number of characteristics of GLLs they exhibited is provided.
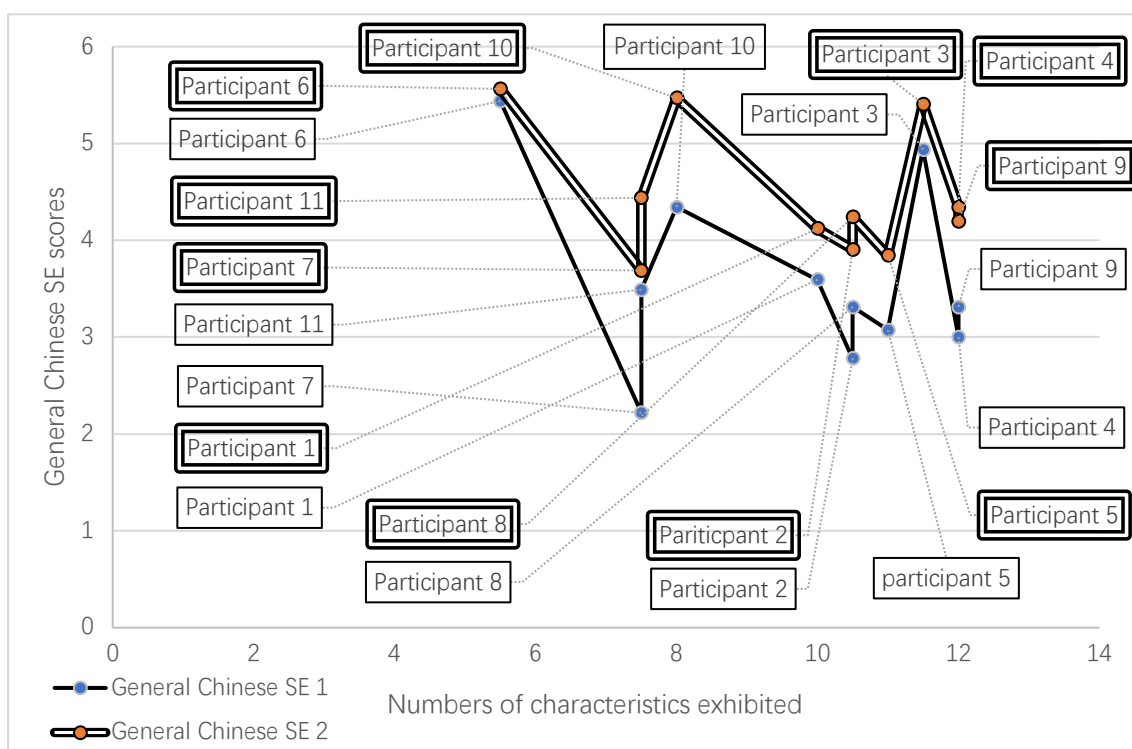
Figure 12. Relationship between general Chinese self-efficacy scores and numbers of characteristics of GLLs exhibited.

Figure 12 was based on each participant's general Chinese self-efficacy scores in the pre- and post-assessments (Table 6) and the number of characteristics of GLLs he/she exhibited (Table 8). Thereinto, the vertical axis stands for participants' general Chinese self-efficacy

scores in the pre- and post-assessments. The horizontal axis stands for the number of characteristics of GLLs participants exhibited.

According to Figure 12, no obvious tendency could explain the relationship between participants' general Chinese self-efficacy and the number of characteristics of GLLs they exhibited.

To be more specific, participants who had higher general Chinese self-efficacy scores might exhibit the least characteristics of GLLs, such as Participant 6. They could have relatively more characteristics of GLLs, such as Participant 3. They might stand in the middle, such as Participant 10.

Participants who had lower general Chinese self-efficacy scores had different numbers of characteristics of GLLs exhibited. For example, in the pre-assessment, four participants (2, 4, 5, 7) had relatively lower general Chinese self-efficacy scores. Their numbers of characteristics of GLLs exhibited were distributed across different places.

The same situation appeared to those whose general Chinese self-efficacy scores in the middle. For example, in the pre-assessment, four participants (1, 8, 9, 11) had middle scores in general Chinese self-efficacy. The four participants had different numbers of characteristics of GLLs exhibited as well. Participant 9 showed the most characteristics of GLLs, while Participant 11 exhibited relatively fewer, and Participants 1 and 8 had close numbers of characteristics of GLLs revealed and were in the middle.

Therefore, this research finds no apparent association between early Chinese language students' Chinese self-efficacy and their demonstrations of characteristics of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009) while learning Chinese.

Summary of Research Findings

The following paragraphs summarize the six research findings of this research based on early Chinese learners, referred to in the findings as students, and list as followed:

Research Finding 1: Students' perceptions of their strengths in learning Chinese are the strengths related to language aspects and personality traits.

Research Finding 2: Students' perceptions of their challenges in learning Chinese are language-related challenges, challenges from the teachers, challenges from the curriculum setting, and challenges from the class members.

Research Finding 3: Students have several characteristics of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009), which are Characteristics 1, 2, 3, 6, and 7 and a part of Characteristics 8 and 10.

Research Finding 4: Students tend to have Characteristics 4 and 5 and a part of Characteristic 10.

Research Finding 5: Students lack Characteristic 9 and the second part of Characteristic 8.

Research Finding 6: There is no apparent association between students' efficacy and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009) while learning Chinese.

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced participants' information, participants' Chinese learning experiences, and research findings.

The participants' profiles provided an overview of participants' demographic information and their experiences, if any, related to China.

Participants' Chinese learning experiences were generated primarily from one-on-one interviews, supplemented by information from the pre- and post-assessments. Eleven themes

emerged from one-on-one interviews provide an overview of participants' Chinese learning experiences.

The six research findings answered the three research questions of this research. The first two research findings illustrate the nature of early Chinese students' efficacy in learning Chinese by examining participants' Chinese self-efficacy and their Chinese learning experiences. By inquiring into participants' Chinese learning experiences using the lens of the characteristics of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009), three research findings identified the characteristics of GLLs that early Chinese students exhibit while learning Chinese. By examining participants' demonstration of the characteristics of GLLs and their self-efficacy in general Chinese, the sixth research finding reveals there is no association between early Chinese students' efficacy in general Chinese and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs.

The next chapter discusses my research findings in relation to the existing literature. Chapter 5 provides recommendations for Chinese language teachers and administrators of non-academic long-term Chinese programs and the field of teaching Chinese as a foreign language. Further, the next chapter provides recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a brief summary of the entire study, including the purpose of the study, research questions, methodology, and research findings. This chapter describes the relation between my research findings and previous research, along with recommendations for further research. The conclusion to the chapter states the implications and recommendations for non-academic long-term Chinese language programs and the field of teaching Chinese as a foreign language.

Overview of the Study

Teaching Chinese as a foreign language began in mid-twentieth Century (Lu, 2004, Xu, 2006). Recent years researchers had put effort into this field for the purpose of improving Chinese language teaching and learning and Chinese language programs.

However, speaking of self-efficacy research in language teaching/learning, most researchers focused on teaching/learning English as a foreign language, while fewer of them discussed self-efficacy in teaching/learning Chinese. There was even less research using the theoretical lenses of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993) and characteristics of good language learners (GLLs) (Edge & Garton, 2009) in relation to non-native speaking students' Chinese learning experiences.

Therefore, this study aimed to understand college students enrolled in non-academic long-term Chinese language programs and their experiences of learning Chinese and to investigate the association, if any, between Chinese learning self-efficacy of Chinese language students and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs.

A qualitative, phenomenological study was conducted with college students who were early Chinese learners in a beginning level preparatory course of non-academic long-term Chinese language program, referred to in this study as the beginning level preparatory course of the Chinese Program, at East Coast University in Shanghai, the pseudonym of the institution in this study, through the lens of characteristics of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009) and self-efficacy.

This study recruited eleven participants through criteria sampling. The one-on-one interviews and revised QESE questionnaire used in the pre- and post-assessments were used to gather data. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed to understand participants' Chinese learning experiences, including the reasons for learning Chinese, their self-perceived strengths and challenges in learning Chinese, the strategies they used to learn and practice Chinese, and their plans of learning Chinese over the next year. QESE questionnaire data were collected and organized into tables to present participants' self-efficacy in Chinese language skills and in general Chinese. Interview data and questionnaire data were collected for the purpose of answering the three research questions in this study.

Three research questions are raised in order to gain specific understanding regarding (1) Chinese language students' self-efficacy in learning Chinese, (2) the characteristics of GLLs Chinese students exhibit during the learning process, and (3) the association, if any, between students' Chinese learning self-efficacy and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs. Research questions are listed as follows:

1. What is the nature of students' efficacy while learning Chinese?

1a. What are students' perceptions of their strengths in learning Chinese?

1b. What are students' perceptions of their challenges in learning Chinese?

2. What characteristics of GLLs, if any, do students exhibit while learning Chinese?

3. What is the association, if any, between students' efficacy and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs while learning Chinese?

This research concludes six major findings basing upon early Chinese learners, referred in the findings as students. They are listed as followed:

Research Finding 1: Students' perceptions of their strengths in learning Chinese are the strengths related to language aspects and personality traits.

Research Finding 2: Students' perceptions of their challenges in learning Chinese are language-related challenges, challenges from the teachers, challenges from the curriculum setting, and challenges from the class members.

Research Finding 3: Students have at least five characteristics of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009) which are Characteristics 1, 2, 3, 6, and 7 and partial of Characteristics 8 and 10.

More specifically, early Chinese learners have a positive attitude toward Chinese and Chinese speakers (Characteristic 1). They have strong motivations to learn Chinese (Characteristic 2). They are confident in becoming successful learners (Characteristic 3). They actively organize Chinese practices (Characteristic 6). They have ways to express themselves correctly (Characteristic 7). They are willing to engage in Chinese-speaking situations (partial of Characteristic 8). They use strategies to learn Chinese (partial of Characteristic 10).

Research Finding 4: Students tend to have Characteristics 4 and 5 and partial of Characteristic 10.

To be more specific, early Chinese learners tend to have their minds prepared for making mistakes when using Chinese and to learn from the mistakes (Characteristics 4). They tend to like learning Chinese (Characteristics 5). And they tend to try out new strategies while learning Chinese (partial of Characteristic 10).

Research Finding 5: Students lack Characteristic 9 and partial of Characteristic 8.

To be more specific, early Chinese learners are not used to working directly in Chinese (Characteristic 9). They are neither ready to use Chinese as frequently as their native languages (partial of Characteristic 8).

Research Finding 6: There is no obvious association between students' efficacy and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009) while learning Chinese.

The next section discusses the relation between the six research findings and previous research.

Discussion of the Research Findings and Previous Research

This section discusses the relation between the six research findings and previous research in order.

Research Finding 1: Students' Strengths in Learning Chinese

This research finds that early Chinese learners' strengths in learning Chinese mainly relate to certain language aspects and personality traits.

Firstly, Qu and Zhong (2020), Wang (2016), and Wu and Jin (2013) mention that there exist language-related strengths within certain groups of Chinese language students whose native languages share some commons with the Chinese language. Qu and Zhang (2020) investigated Chinese language students from Japan on their learning of Chinese vocabularies. They claim that because both Japanese and Chinese languages have Chinese characters, therefore, Japanese students have typical strengths in learning Chinese vocabularies. Wang (2016) and Wu and Jin (2013) conducted research on Korean students' Chinese learning. They mention that because Korean and Chinese share some Chinese characters, Korean students have strengths in learning Chinese.

Likewise, in this study, many participants pointed out that the similarities between Chinese and their languages led to the strengths in learning Chinese. For example, Participants 1 and 2 stated that Chinese pronunciations were similar to Italian and Cantonese. They were able to handle Chinese pronunciations well. Participants 2 and 11 claimed to have strengths in learning Chinese grammar. The reason was because the grammar in their languages was similar to Chinese grammar.

Secondly, Gardner and Clément (1990), Marpaung and Widyanotoro (2020), and Zafar and Meenakshi (2012) assert that personality traits are an important element in language learning. As early as in 1990, Gardner and Clément claimed that one's personality traits could play a role in learning a new language. Zafar and Meenakshi (2012) reviewed several previous research studies on the relationship between second language acquisition and personality traits. They conclude that personality traits are closely related with second language learning. Although few researchers in the field of teaching Chinese as a foreign language have discussed the relationship between personality traits and Chinese language acquisition, Liu (2012) states that personality traits are a factor to influence students' Chinese learning. She investigated a group of Kazakhstan students' Chinese learning experiences. She finds that being outgoing and willing to talk with different people are some personality traits that positively impact Kazakhstan students' Chinese learning.

Similarly, in this study, participants named some of their personality traits as their strengths in learning Chinese. Ten participants believed that being responsible for their own learning had a good influence on their Chinese learning. For example, Participant 8, because of having a sense of responsibility on his Chinese learning, had a clear understanding of the HSK Level IV test and knew what he needed to work on to achieve his goals of learning Chinese.

Participant 5 was able to adjust her attitude towards the dictation task and to think in a positive perspective, even though the task was time consuming and difficult.

In addition, two participants considered their willingness to try new things as one of their strengths in learning Chinese. Participants 3 and 7, as mentioned in Chapter 4, indicated that their preference for trying new things supported their Chinese learning. They had the capabilities to be exposed in an uncomfortable zone and to face difficulties. Furthermore, two participants pointed out that having confidence was another strength they had in learning Chinese. Participants 4 and 9 shared some incidences of being encouraged and building confidence, as mentioned in Chapter 4. They mentioned that confidence positively impacted on their Chinese learning.

In the pre- and post-assessments, participants tended to have higher self-efficacy in Chinese speaking and Chinese writing skills. Participants' strengths related to language aspects and certain personality traits provided them with mastery experiences and positive emotions. The mastery experiences and emotional status were called internal cues and were one of the determinants in self-efficacy (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Therefore, participants' strengths provided evidence for their self-efficacy in Chinese speaking and writing.

Research Finding 2: Students' Challenges in Learning Chinese

This research finds that early Chinese learners' perceptions of their challenges in learning Chinese are language-related challenges, challenges from the teachers, challenges from the curriculum setting, and challenges from the class members.

Firstly, several researchers have investigated the language related difficulties Chinese language students have in learning Chinese (Chen, 2017; Everson & Xiao, 2008; Huang, 2014;

Huang, 2015; Li, 2014; Li, 2015; Li, 2017; Lin, 2015; Liu & Lo Bianco, 2007; Lou, 2016; Lu, 2015; G. Song, 2015; Wang, 2015; Wang & Tan, 2019; Wen, 2014; Xie, 2019; Yue, 2017).

Some researchers assert that Chinese characters are a big challenge for Chinese language students. For example, Because Chinese pinyin and Chinese characters seem unrelated, Chinese language learners usually have difficulties in learning Chinese characters when they get used to the Chinese pinyin (Lu, 2015). And, unlike alphabetic languages, it is usually difficult to write out Chinese characters merely according to the pronunciations. Therefore, Chinese language students who are from an alphabetic language background often have a hard time to learn Chinese characters (Everson & Xiao, 2008). In addition, Huang (2014) and Li (2014) examined on Chinese characters teaching and found that students usually perceived that the constructions and strokes in Chinese characters were complicated.

In this study, participants' experiences in learning Chinese characters supported previous research findings. Nine participants pointed out that Chinese characters were difficult to learn and to memorize. As discussed in Chapter 4, participants stated that the disconnection between Chinese pronunciations and Chinese characters and the complexity of Chinese characters resulted in the Chinese characters challenge in learning Chinese.

Researchers have claimed that Chinese language students face the challenge caused by the tones in Chinese pronunciations (Chen, 2017; Huang, 2015; Li, 2017; Lin, 2015; Lou, 2016; G. Song, 2015; Wen 2014). Researchers have investigated the Chinese learning of students from Korea (Lin, 2015; Wen, 2014; G. Song, 2015), Vietnam (Lou, 2016), Pakistan (Li, 2017), Netherlands (Huang, 2015) and mid-Asia (Chen, 2017). They conclude that because there are usually no tones in students' native languages, therefore, the tones in Chinese pronunciations to students are unfamiliar and hard to handle.

In this study, five participants had the tones challenge. Their explanations supported previous research findings. Five participants shared some examples in learning tones and stated that having no tones in their languages caused the difficulties in learning the tones. They usually had a hard time to distinguish different tones and to pronounce each tone in the right way.

In addition, previous research has named Chinese listening as a challenge to Chinese language learners. For example, Feng (2016), Jiang (2016), Liang (2011) and Qi (2014) investigated on Chinese listening teaching and learning and found that Chinese pronunciations were a factor which resulted in the difficulties of Chinese listening to students. Researchers have found that Chinese grammar (Liang, 2011; Jiang, 2016; Qi, 2014) and Chinese vocabularies (Qi, 2014) are some elements that lead to students' Chinese listening challenge.

In this study, four participants perceived themselves to face Chinese listening challenges, although most of them did not specifically mention what explicit problem they met in Chinese listening.

Furthermore, Lin (2019), Ma (2013), and Qi (2018) mention that Chinese language students face some problems in Chinese speaking. To be more specific, Lin (2019) and Qi (2018) indicate that Chinese pronunciations make Chinese speaking difficult to students.

In this study, three participants stated that they met with the Chinese speaking challenge in learning Chinese. Similar to Lin's (2019) and Qi's (2018)'s ideas, these three participants stated that the Chinese pronunciations brought difficulties to their Chinese speaking skills.

Another reason why participants perceived Chinese speaking to be difficult were seldom mentioned in previous research in teaching/learning Chinese. Two participants pointed out that there existed differences between how native speakers spoke Chinese and what was taught in class. For example, Participant 10 shared that native Chinese speakers usually make sentences

short and clear, while the sentences that she learned in class were always formal. This difference

made it difficult for her to communicate in Chinese.

Moreover, researchers have indicated that Chinese language students always have

difficulties in Chinese grammar (Han, 2019; Li & Zhang, 2010; Liu, 2017; Liu, 2019; Ulpan,

2016; Ye & Wu, 1999; Zhao, 2015). Researchers learned about the grammar issues that students

had in learning Chinese. They conclude that one major reason contributing to students' grammar

challenge is that the Chinese grammar is very different from the grammar in their native

languages.

In this study, three participants considered Chinese grammar as a challenge in learning

Chinese. Their words supported previous research findings mentioned above. For example,

Participants 4 and 7 who spoke several European languages found Chinese grammar to be

unfamiliar. They found it was useless to copy and paste the grammar in different European

languages into Chinese, although it worked in European languages. Therefore, the differences

between Chinese grammar and the grammar in European languages resulted in their troubles in

learning and understanding Chinese.

Secondly, previous research has indicated that the lack of qualified Chinese language

teachers is a problem in Chinese language teaching and learning (Chen, 2015; Gao, 2014; Orton,

2011; Singh et al., 2014). Researchers have investigated on Chinese language teachers teaching

in different countries and concluded that it is necessary to prepare more qualified Chinese

language teachers. Yu (2013) conducted a study on the demotivation of foreign students

learning Chinese in China. Yu finds that Chinese language teachers are one of the five major

elements which demotivate students' Chinese learning.

In this study, participants pointed out that the teachers' limits in certain professional proficiencies led to the difficulties of learning Chinese. Seven participants stated that the oral teacher had little knowledge and experiences in teaching. Five participants reported that the listening teacher was not professional in teaching. In addition, five participants and six participants, respectively, illustrated the oral teacher and the listening teacher failed to serve the purpose of the class. Neither the oral teacher, nor the listening teacher provided participants sufficient opportunities in class to practice Chinese speaking and listening skills. Five participants thought the oral teachers English was not good enough to teach beginning level Chinese language students.

Some researchers have stressed the issues brought up by participants about the oral and the listening teachers. Sun et al. (2015) claim that Chinese language teachers ought to offer enough opportunities for students to speak and use Chinese in class. Liu et al. (2019) emphasize on cultivating qualified Chinese language teachers and improving teaching methods. Fu's (2017) study specifically pointed out six must-have qualities of Chinese language teachers teaching beginning-level students, including having sufficient teaching abilities and being able to teach in a foreign language.

Thirdly, the curriculum setting in the beginning level preparatory course of the Chinese Program mainly followed the curriculum structure mentioned by Hou (2015), Shi (2015), and Tian (2019), which includes one main course (i.e., elementary Chinese class) and some specific language skill courses (e.g., listening, oral, Chinese characters classes). Researchers believe this curriculum structure is helpful for beginning-level Chinese language students to build up basic language skills. But Tian (2019) points out that the curriculum setting indeed has some issues such as insufficient class time and homogenous Chinese classes.

In this study, participants indicated the curriculum setting was not reasonable because it caused repetitive learning and insufficient listening and Chinese character writing classes. Thereinto, three of them felt a waste of time to repetitively learn what they had learned. One of these three participants pointed out that the Chinese character teacher ought to think more about her teaching. Instead of reteaching students how to write a Chinese character, it would be more meaningful to teach some stories or background knowledge of it. This again pointed to previous research on Chinese language teachers, such as Liu et al.'s (2019) study which emphasized the importance of improving teaching methods. On the other hand, one participant was worried that insufficient listening and Chinese character classes were not helpful for those students who needed to pass the HSK Level IV test.

However, speaking of homogenous Chinese classes mentioned by Tian (2019) or the repetitive learning mentioned by the three participants, more participants thought it was acceptable to relearn what they had learned. Eight participants stated that repetitive learning enhanced their memorization on Chinese characters. In other words, participants confirmed the effect of the curriculum setting in the beginning level preparatory course of the Chinese Program. It served the aim of building up beginning level students' Chinese language skills, such as Chinese vocabularies as mentioned by Hou (2015).

Fourthly, three participants in this study indicated that combining students with different needs in a class was a challenge for them while learning Chinese. Yang (2006) indicates that various students from different countries and with different learning goals cause imbalance in teaching and learning Chinese.

In this study, as mentioned in Chapter 4, a group of students in the beginning level of the preparatory course of the Chinese Program came for further education and were required to pass

the HSK Level IV test. They were combined with the students who learned Chinese based on their interests. Therefore, although all of them were at the same Chinese level, students had different focuses in learning Chinese. Participant 6 mentioned the Chinese classes failed to meet the needs of neither those who needed to pass the HSK Level IV test, nor the students learned Chinese for fun. She stated that this caused the difficulties for the teachers as well. It was hard for teachers to balance their instructions to meet the needs of both groups of students. In other words, participants' experience supported Yang's (2006) opinion.

Gist and Mitchell (1992) state that external cues and internal cues determinate one's self-efficacy. Thereinto, external cues include the nature, the complicacy, and the environment of tasks, vicarious experiences, and verbal persuasion. Internal cues include mastery and vicarious experiences and emotional status. Participants' perceived challenges from the Chinese language per se, the teachers, the curriculum setting, and the class members provided evidence to their self-efficacy in each Chinese skill and in general Chinese, as discussed in Chapter 4.

Research Finding 3: Students' Good Language Learners (GLLs) Characteristics in Learning Chinese

This study finds that early Chinese learners have several characteristics of GLLs as described by Edge and Garton, (2009):

Characteristic 1: Having a positive attitude toward Chinese and Chinese speakers,

Characteristic 2: having strong motivations to learn Chinese,

Characteristic 3: being confident in becoming successful learners,

Characteristic 6: actively organizing Chinese practice,

Characteristic 7: having ways to express themselves correctly,

Characteristic 8 (partially): willing to engage in Chinese-speaking situations, and

Characteristic 10 (partially): using strategies to learn Chinese.

To be more specific, early Chinese learners have positive attitudes toward learning Chinese language and Chinese speakers. They learn Chinese with strong motivations. They are confident about being successful learners. They had their own ways of practicing Chinese. They have methods to express themselves when they have trouble saying something in Chinese. They were willing to be involved in the situations of using Chinese. They have different strategies to learn and practice Chinese.

Characteristic 1: Positive attitudes. Previous researchers have investigated Chinese language students' attitude towards Chinese language (Fu, 2016; Liu, 2009; Qu et al., 2018; Zuo, 2016) and Chinese speakers (Fu, 2016). Fu (2016) investigated the attitude towards Chinese language and Chinese people of students from the U.S. Fu finds that students have positive attitudes to both the Chinese language and Chinese people. Liu (2009) and Zuo (2016) specifically point out that beginning level Chinese language students tend to have a more positive attitude towards the Chinese language. However, Qu et al. (2018) indicate that Chinese language students tend to have some negative feelings toward learning Chinese, such as boredom and being afraid of difficulties.

Similarly, in this study, participants expressed their positive attitudes toward the Chinese language and Chinese speakers. As mentioned in Chapter 4, participants' positive attitudes were embodied in four aspects (i.e., reasons for learning Chinese, self-perceived strengths and challenges, strategies, and plans). For example, participants' reasons for learning Chinese, to some extent, represented their attitudes toward Chinese learning. Many participants expressed the willingness to communicate with Chinese people in Chinese. Participants' strategies and

practice of Chinese represented their positive attitudes toward the Chinese language and Chinese speakers.

Characteristic 2: Personal motivation. Previous research has studied about students' motivation in learning Chinese. As asserted by Ding (2016) and Guo (2015), students who learn Chinese have the motivation to engage themselves into China. The reason is usually because students have interests in the Chinese language, want to pursue further education in China, and might have better job opportunities in the future. Li and Wei (2015) and Yang and Wang (2017) indicate that students are motivated to experience Chinese society and culture in person.

In this study, participants showed strong motivations in learning Chinese. As mentioned in Chapter 4, every participant had his/her personal reason(s) of learning Chinese in China. For example, they learned Chinese for their interests, for further education, for future benefits, and/or for cultural identification. In addition, participants made plans for their Chinese learning in the near future. Their plans were closely related to their reasons for learning Chinese. Therefore, participants' personal motivations were represented in their reasons for learning Chinese and their plans of learning Chinese over the next year. This finding, early Chinese learners have strong personal motivations in learning Chinese, supported previous research results.

Characteristic 3: Self-confidence. Li (2018) and Y. Zhu (2015) mention that a majority of Chinese language students are confident about themselves being good at Chinese in the future.

In this study, similarly, eight participants expressed their confidence and beliefs in doing well and/or making improvements in Chinese. For example, some participants believed that even though they experienced some embarrassing moments talking with Chinese people in Chinese, they would learn from the moments and improve their Chinese skills. Participant 4 specifically pointed out the awareness of herself making progress in Chinese brought her

confidence. She believed that she could talk in Chinese with confidence in any situation. More examples could be found in Chapter 4. Therefore, participants' confidence in learning Chinese supported Li's (2018) and Y. Zhu's (2015) opinions.

Characteristic 6: Organization. Previous research finds that many Chinese language students are able to voluntarily organize their practice of Chinese (Hao, 2010; Lai, 2017; D. Li, 2016; Li, 2020; Wu, 2017). Hao (2010) explains that studying Chinese in China provides students the language environment and opportunity to organize their own Chinese practice. But Bao and Guo (2012) and Li et al. (2017) point out that some students are less active in the after-class practice.

In this study, participants' experiences of having their own practice of Chinese using different strategies supported previous findings of Hao (2010), Lai (2018), Li (2020), and Wu (2017). As mentioned in chapter 4, participants employed different strategies to learn and practice Chinese characters, Chinese speaking and Chinese listening, especially after class. For example, eight participants spent one to two hours per day on writing Chinese characters after class to enhance memorization. Participants 5 and 7 used different media, such as Chinese broadcast shows and vlogs to immerse themselves in the self-created language environment to practice listening skills. In addition, eight participants took the opportunity to talk with Chinese people in order to practice their Chinese speaking.

Characteristic 7: Finding ways of self-expression. Piao (2015) points out that Chinese language students have their methods of expressing themselves correctly when they meet troubles in saying something in Chinese. Piao indicates that Chinese language students often rely on translation apps, rather than using their native languages or turning to others for help, when they meet issues in expressing themselves in Chinese.

In this study, eight participants expressed that they had ways to express themselves when they were not able to speak in Chinese. In this kind of situation, four participants tended to use translation apps, while the other four turned to their friends for help in speaking native languages or English. Therefore, this finding, although not completely supporting Piao's (2015) perspective, revealed that early Chinese learners could find their ways to express themselves even when they had troubles speaking in Chinese.

Characteristic 8 (partial): Engaging in Chinese-using situations. Cong (2010), Qu (2018), and X. Zhu (2015) mention that Chinese language students pay attention to learn Chinese in real-life situations. For example, Cong (2010) states that having real Chinese conversations with Chinese people is one of the strategies students often use to practice Chinese listening. Similarly, X. Zhu (2015) stresses that students prefer to have real Chinese communications. Qu (2018) indicates that using real-life situations is one of the most commonly used strategies of Chinese language students. In addition, Bao and Guo (2012) and Cong (2010) mention that students often watch Chinese movies and TV shows to practice Chinese skills.

In this study, participants' strategies mentioned in Chapter 4 supported researchers' opinions that the different media and the real-life situations in which Chinese was used were important for Chinese language students. In addition, participants expressed their willingness to be involved in the Chinese-language environment in other aspects. For example, Participant 7 shared that one of his reasons for learning Chinese was to involve himself in Shanghai. And, when talking about the challenges from teachers, some participants expressed their preference for having more chances to practice Chinese in class. Participants hoped to communicate more with Chinese people over the next year.

Characteristic 10 (partial): Different strategies. Researchers have conducted studies on the strategies that Chinese language students used while learning Chinese, for example, previewing (Bao & Guo, 2012; Lin, 2017), note taking (Qu, 2018), repetition (Qu, 2018), watching Chinese TV shows and motives (Bao & Guo, 2012; Cong, 2010; Lai, 2018), utilizing real-life situations (Qu, 2018; Wu, 2017) and real Chinese communications (Cong, 2010; Lai, 2018; X. Zhu, 2015), using social media (Wu, 2017), dairy writing (Bao & Guo, 2012), etc.

In this study, participants shared different types of strategies that they employed in practice of Chinese before class, in class, and after class. The strategies that participants used were similar with previous research findings mentioned above. For example, five participants usually previewed before class. Three participants took notes, and two participants practiced Chinese characters writing in class. Participants used repetitive writing, different media, real-life situations and communications, etc. to practice Chinese characters, speaking, and listening.

Research Finding 4: Characteristics of GLLs Students Tend to Have

This study finds that early Chinese learners tend to have Characteristics 4 and 5 and a part of Characteristic 10.

To be more specific, early Chinese learners tend to have their minds prepared for making mistakes when using Chinese and to learn from the mistakes. They tend to like learning Chinese. And they tend to try out new strategies while learning Chinese.

Firstly, although numbers of researchers have investigated the challenges and difficulties that students have (e.g., Chen, 2017; Feng, 2016; Ge, 2012; etc.) and the strategies that students use while learning Chinese (e.g., Cong, 2010; Piao, 2015; Qu, 2018; etc.), few of them specifically have indicated if students are ready for risk making mistakes in using Chinese. Jiang

(2000) mentions that students usually lack affective strategies which include being prepared for making mistakes in learning Chinese.

This study found something different with Jiang's (2000) opinion. In this study, nearly half of the participants specifically mentioned that they were not afraid of making mistakes in communicating with Chinese people in Chinese. Despite the fact that they were aware of the difficulties in communicating with Chinese people, they still wanted to talk with Chinese people in Chinese and to learn from making mistakes. Therefore, this study finds that students tend to be prepared for making mistakes and to learn from mistakes in learning Chinese.

Secondly, although previous research has pointed out that students have positive attitudes toward the Chinese language (Fu, 2016; Liu, 2009; Qu et al., 2018; Zuo, 2016), few researchers particularly have discussed if students like learning Chinese. Y. Song (2015) specifically mentions that students like learning Chinese.

Similarly, although participants expressed positive attitudes towards the Chinese language and personal motivations of learning Chinese, four of them specifically pointed out their likes on learning Chinese. As mentioned in Chapter 4, four participants experienced a mind change during learning Chinese, for example, moving from learning Chinese for the sake of passing the HSK Level IV text to enjoying learning Chinese. Therefore, the finding did not fully support Y. Song's (2015) opinion that Chinese language students liked learning Chinese. This study concludes that early Chinese learners tend to enjoy learning Chinese.

Thirdly, as mentioned earlier, researchers have devoted to investigating different learning strategies that students used while learning Chinese (e.g., Cong, 2010; Piao, 2015; Qu, 2018; etc.). However, researchers seldom discuss if students consciously use new strategies to learn and to practice Chinese.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, three participants specifically mentioned changing strategies while learning Chinese. Three participants (1, 4, 9) stated that they consciously added or changed strategy to meet their needs in learning Chinese. For example, Participant 1 felt although repetitive writing was useful, she would learn Chinese characters better in real-life situations. Therefore, except for repetitive writing, she took the opportunity in the subways, shop, and restaurants to learn Chinese characters. In addition, although the remaining participants did not try out new strategies when the research was conducted, most of them expressed the thought of implementing some new strategies over the next year. For instance, four participants planned to self-study for passing the HSK Level test; five participants hoped to make friends with Chinese people to have more communications in Chinese; two participants would immerse themselves in Chinese speaking environment by joining clubs or working as an intern, etc. Hence, although it was seldom mentioned by previous research, this study finds that early Chinese learners tend to try out new strategies while learning Chinese.

Research Finding 5: Characteristics of GLLs Students Lack

This study finds that early Chinese learners lack characteristic 9 and the second part of characteristic 8. To be more specific, early Chinese learners are not used to working directly in Chinese. They are neither ready to use Chinese as frequently as their native languages.

To begin with, researchers have found that language transfer happens in Chinese learning (X. Zhang, 2020; Zhu, 2012), especially at the beginning level (Zhu, 2012). The language transfer of students influences their Chinese language learning in both positive and negative ways, mostly in pronunciations, vocabularies, grammar, etc. (X. Zhang, 2020). For example, because of having characters in Korean, students from Korea usually have strengths in learning Chinese characters (Wang, 2016). However, because of the differences between grammar in

Chinese and in students' native languages, students often face challenges in learning and understanding Chinese grammar (Han, 2019; Liu, 2017; Liu, 2019; Ulpan, 2016; Zhao, 2015). Wang (2004) specifically mentions that students' comprehension of Chinese sentences is closely related with their native language. X. Zhang (2020) and Zhu (2012) conclude that students' native languages play a role in their Chinese learning.

Similarly, this study finds that early Chinese learners are used to working in their native languages. As mentioned earlier, participants named their language related strengths and language related challenges based on if their native languages were similar with Chinese in certain aspects. This supported Zhang's (2020) research findings.

And as mentioned earlier, the most commonly used ways by participants when they met troubles to express themselves in Chinese were using translation apps or turning to their friends for help by speaking in their native languages or in English.

In addition, two participants mentioned listening Chinese by immersing themselves in a self-created Chinese language environment. They listened to Chinese broadcast shows or vlogs even though they could hardly understand the content. They tried to catch something they knew and to be used to Chinese. However, as discussed in Chapter Four, the two participants mentioned that translation and language transfer occurred in their Chinese learning process. For example, Participant 7 stated that Chinese grammar was difficult for him because he was not able to transfer European grammar into Chinese. Participant 5 relied on translation apps when she needed help in communicating with others in Chinese.

Therefore, this study agrees with previous research that language transfer happened in Chinese language learning and that early Chinese learners' native languages played a role in their

Chinese learning. And this study concluded that early Chinese learners lack the ability to work directly in Chinese. However, they were used to working in their native languages.

Secondly, previous research presented that Chinese language students had different strategies to practice Chinese. For example, research has presented that students stress using Chinese in real-life situations (Qu, 2018; Wu, 2017) and conducting real Chinese communications (Cong, 2010; Lai, 2018; X. Zhu, 2015). However, few researchers have investigated the frequency of students using Chinese and/or compared the frequency of students using Chinese and using their native languages.

Similarly, as discussed in Chapter Four, every participant in this study mentioned about organizing their own practice of Chinese. They emphasized the importance of real-life conversations and situations. They expressed the willingness to use more Chinese over the next year. However, only one participant particularly pointed out her ideal frequency of using Chinese in her daily life. Participant 9, not now, but planned to use Chinese as frequently as her native language over the next year.

Hence, this study concludes that although early Chinese learners practiced Chinese using different strategies, they were not ready for using Chinese as frequently as their native languages.

Research Finding 6: No Obvious Association Between Students' Chinese Self-Efficacy and the Characteristics of GLLs They Exhibit

As mentioned in Chapter 2, numbers of research on self-efficacy and Chinese language teaching/learning have focused on the factors which impact self-efficacy (L. Huang, 2018; Ren, 2012; Wang, 2012; Wang, 2018; Xu, 2016; Zhang 2015; Zhang, 2014; Zhao & Wang, 2016), the relationship between self-efficacy and Chinese achievement (Li, 2013; Wang, 2014; Wu, 2016; Zheng, 2015), motivation and learning strategies (Ren, 2012; Wang, 2013), attribution style (Li,

2013; Z. Li, 2016), etc. However, few researchers have learned about Chinese language students' perceptions of their efficacy through the lens of characteristics of GLLs.

As presented in Chapter Four, there was no clear tendency to explain the relationship between participants' general Chinese self-efficacy and the number of characteristics of GLLs they exhibited (see Figure 12). Participants who had higher self-efficacy in general Chinese exhibited different numbers of characteristics of GLLs. It was the same to those participants whose general Chinese self-efficacy were at middle or at lower levels.

On the other hand, those participants who exhibited more characteristics of GLLs had general Chinese self-efficacy at different levels. And it was the same to those participants whose number of characteristics of GLLs exhibited were at middle or lower.

Hence, this study finds that early Chinese learners' efficacy in Chinese is not necessarily related with their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009). That is to say, early Chinese learners who have low Chinese self-efficacy are not necessarily with less characteristics of GLLs, and early Chinese learners who show less characteristics of GLLs are not necessarily with low Chinese self-efficacy.

Recommendations for the Field of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language

In alignment with the six research findings from this inquiry, this section presents recommendations for teachers, administrators, and policy makers of non-academic long-term Chinese language programs and in the field of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (TCFL), also known as international Chinese language education. As mentioned earlier, participants in this study tended to attribute their self-perceived strengths to themselves (i.e., personality traits) and their self-perceived challenges to outside factors (i.e., Chinese teachers, curriculum setting, and class members). Therefore, this study provides recommendations only for improving

Chinese language teaching, curriculum, and programs. Recommendations for further research are provided in the next section.

Recommendation 1: Improve Teacher Preparation in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (TCFL) Programs in Chinese Universities

Several studies have found a lack in the availability of qualified teachers for positions in TCFL (Chen, 2015; Gao, 2014; Orton, 2011; Singh et al., 2014). This study found, more specifically, that early Chinese learners in the Chinese Program reported their perceptions that Chinese language teachers' limits in certain professional proficiencies caused the students to have difficulties in learning Chinese. For example, one teacher who lacked pedagogical knowledge and had few years teaching experience did not fully serve the purpose of the class and had problems teaching and communicating with early Chinese learners in English. The other teacher was not motivated in being a teacher and was not able to provide early Chinese learners enough opportunities to practice Chinese.

Therefore, cultivating qualified Chinese language teachers depends not only on preparing future teachers with solid knowledge in Chinese language, but also means that future teachers need to have pedagogical knowledge, teaching experiences, a positive attitude toward being a teacher, and sufficient foreign language abilities, such as being fluent in English when teachers and students communicate in English, especially early Chinese learners.

Huang (2018) suggests that educational practice should be emphasized in TCFL programs in Chinese universities. Similarly, this study recommends TCFL programs in Chinese universities to pay more attention to building future teachers' pedagogical knowledge and providing them more opportunities to practice teaching.

For example, future Chinese language teachers need to be familiar with different teaching methods and be aware of why, how, for what purpose, and in which situations they might implement different teaching methods. That is to say, the opportunities for future Chinese language teachers to utilize their pedagogical knowledge in real teaching settings are essential. Future Chinese language teachers could be provided with educational practice courses and assignments in TCFL programs, such as fieldwork, to gain more practical experiences in teaching.

In addition, administrators of TCFL programs in Chinese universities could place an emphasis on improving future teachers' foreign language abilities, such as English. The latest International Chinese Teacher Standard stressed that teachers should be capable of teaching and communicating in foreign languages or in English (Shao & Shao, 2013). Researchers have recommended that universities set up English courses to enhance future teachers' English abilities (J. Huang, 2018; Lu, 2018).

However, few documents and research have provided a standard by which to measure future Chinese language teachers' English abilities, in terms of being capable of teaching and communicating in English. In other words, requirements regarding Chinese language teachers' English/foreign language abilities are ambiguous. Therefore, even if future teachers take and complete English courses, it is hard to assume they would be capable of teaching and communicating in English. Chinese language teacher educators and policy makers in the field of TCFL should clearly state the level for Chinese language teacher's English/foreign language abilities.

Recommendation 2: Provide Chinese Language Teachers with Professional Development

Researchers have indicated that the lack of qualified Chinese language teachers is an issue in TCFL (Chen, 2015; Gao, 2014; Orton, 2011; Singh et al., 2014). Based on the findings from this study, certain elements for the professional development of teachers, especially those who teach early Chinese learners, in the non-academic long-term Chinese programs are advised.

For example, administrators of such programs could provide support for teachers' professional development, such as meetings and seminars for teachers to share teaching experiences, discuss issues and challenges they meet in teaching, and learn from each other's experiences.

Administrators could encourage teachers to conduct more research to investigate the issues and challenges they encounter in teaching Chinese.

In addition, teachers of such programs could be proactive in their own professional learning, such as gaining teaching experience prior to teaching in a TCFL program, developing more specialized knowledge in the Chinese language and pedagogy, and improving abilities to communicate and teach in English. Further, it is recommended that teachers be familiar with, if not fluent in, the foreign languages spoken by their students.

Although this study focused on early Chinese learners in non-academic Chinese programs, this recommendation might be applicable for Chinese language teachers and administrators of other Chinese programs in China, as well as language teachers and administrators of language programs in other countries for early language students.

Recommendation 3: Support Chinese Language Students in Improving Their Self-Efficacy and Use of Good Language Learners (GLLs) Traits

This study indicates that there is no obvious relation between early Chinese learners' Chinese self-efficacy and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs. That is to say, early

Chinese students with higher Chinese self-efficacy are not necessarily equipped with more or fewer characteristics of GLLs, and vice versa. Similarly, early Chinese students who possess more characteristics of GLLs do not necessarily have lower or higher Chinese self-efficacy, and vice versa. Chinese language teachers who teach early Chinese students could avoid making assumptions about the relationship between students' self-efficacy in Chinese and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs.

As a result, teachers could consciously help early Chinese learners improve their self-efficacy in Chinese, regardless of whether they exhibit many characteristics of GLLs. Language students' self-efficacy has been found to be positively related with their language achievement (Wang, 2014; Yang, et al., 2016, Zheng, 2015). Teachers should pay attention to the Chinese self-efficacy development of early Chinese learners and avoid determining whether early learners are likely to be successful learners merely based on their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs.

Similarly, teachers could consciously cultivate early Chinese learners' characteristics of GLLs, no matter what level of Chinese self-efficacy early Chinese learners are at. Naiman et al. (1978) stress that investigating GLLs would help teachers better assist student language learning. Researchers have conducted many studies on GLLs to look for what characteristics they usually have (Chamot, 2008; Rubin, 1975; Sykes, 2015). Edge and Garton (2009) established a list including the characteristics that GLLs as a group shared. They state that a group of successful language learners usually share the list of characteristics, even though each individual does not necessarily have all those characteristics. It could be helpful if teachers assist early Chinese learners to cultivate characteristics of GLLs in the process of learning Chinese. Teachers could make emphasis on cultivating early Chinese learners' characteristics of GLLs and avoid

assuming whether early learners would succeed in learning Chinese simply according to their Chinese self-efficacy.

Recommendation 4: Discuss with Chinese Language Students the Impact of Their Native Languages on Learning Chinese

Findings from this study indicate that certain strengths and challenges that early Chinese learners have in learning Chinese are closely related to their native languages. Since participants in this study stated they were used to working in their native languages while learning Chinese, teachers need to be aware of the influences of early Chinese learners' native languages on their Chinese learning.

To be more specific, teachers should know and understand the similarities and differences between early Chinese learners' native languages and Chinese, the impacts of early learners' native languages have on their Chinese learning, and the ways teachers increase and/or decrease the influences of early learners' native languages on Chinese to assist early learners' learning, etc.

Students who study Chinese in China come from different countries. It is impractical to expect every Chinese language teacher to know several different languages. A more practicable way could be that teachers take time to communicate with their students about the differences and similarities between students' native languages and Chinese. Based on teachers' understanding of differences and similarities between students' native languages and Chinese, teachers could better assist students' Chinese learning.

Although this study focused on early Chinese learners in non-academic Chinese programs, this recommendation might be applicable for Chinese language teachers of other

Chinese programs in China, as well as language teachers of language programs in other countries for early language students.

Recommendation 5: Provide Varied Opportunities for Chinese Language Students to Engage in Learning Chinese

The findings of this study indicate that early Chinese learners are positive, motivated, and confident in learning Chinese and can organize Chinese practice actively. On the other hand, participants in this study stated that they needed more Chinese practice opportunities. Administrators and teachers of the Chinese Programs could provide various opportunities for early Chinese learners to engage in learning Chinese.

For example, administrators could hold meetings and events which are open to both Chinese language students and native Chinese students. In this way, Chinese language students, including early Chinese learners, may have more opportunities to participate Chinese, to engage in Chinese speaking environment, and to make friends with Chinese students.

Teachers could organize more in-class practice for early Chinese learners to practice Chinese skills, encourage early learners to practice Chinese after class in real-life situations, provide suggestions on after-class practice, and give early learners the opportunity to reflect on their practice, etc.

For example, when talking about foods, teachers might organize group activities to have early Chinese learners mimic ordering food in a restaurant in class. Teachers could encourage early Chinese learners to go to canteens and/or restaurants to order food after class using what they have learned in class, such as vocabulary terms and sentence structures, and to listen to the ways Chinese speakers order food in Chinese. Teachers might remind early Chinese learners to note down the thoughts and questions they have in ordering food in Chinese. Nevertheless,

teachers could organize a discussion on the next day in class for early Chinese learners to share and reflect on their experiences of ordering foods in and after class. In this way, early Chinese learners could have the opportunity to share their thoughts, feelings, confusions, and questions of their Chinese practice and to learn from each other.

In addition, since participants in this study reported to have their own strategies to learn Chinese, and some of them tended to implement new strategies, teachers in such programs could provide students the opportunity to share the strategies they use in the process of learning Chinese.

For example, teachers could organize early Chinese students to share different learning strategies in learning Chinese. Early Chinese learners might talk about the strategies they use, the reasons for using such strategies, the effects of the strategies on learning Chinese, etc. By learning from each other, early Chinese learners are able to get access to more strategies and to try different strategies while learning Chinese.

Recommendation 6: Consider Recommendations for Administrators and Policy Makers of Chinese Programs

The *Teaching Syllabus of Chinese for Foreign Students of Higher Educational Institutions—for Long-Term Training Programs* (2002) (will be abbreviated as Teaching Syllabus) mentions that students in non-academic long-term programs usually have different learning objectives, are at different Chinese levels, and receive different period of training (from half year to three years), etc. The Teaching Syllabus introduces that currently students in long-term programs are separated into different classes based on their Chinese language levels, including beginning-level, intermediate-level, and advanced-level classes. However, those

students' motivations, objectives, and needs of learning Chinese seemed to be ignored by policy makers and administrators.

The findings from this study indicate early Chinese learners in the Chinese Programs experience challenges in learning Chinese when working with classmates having different reasons, purposes and needs of learning Chinese, although early Chinese learners in the same class were approximately at the same Chinese level. Sun (2015) mentions that among those students who are in the Chinese Programs, many of them are going to pursue further education in different majors in China. Therefore, compared with those students who learn Chinese based on interests and have no burden of further education, those who study Chinese for further education in the Chinese Programs may need more instructions and training to pass the Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (HSK) level test and to cultivate the ability of learning majors in Chinese.

Therefore, it would be appropriate for administrators and policymakers in the Chinese Programs to take students' reasons, aims, and needs to learn Chinese into account when assigning international students into different classes.

In addition, as mentioned in Chapter 3, teaching Chinese as a foreign language for international students in Chinese higher education currently includes academic Chinese language programs and non-academic Chinese language programs (Hou, 2015). The academic programs enroll international students who study Chinese for academic purposes. The non-academic programs include long-term programs and short-term programs. The non-academic programs are open to international students who primarily learn Chinese without academic purposes and who learn Chinese for further study in arts, science, medicine majors in China. However, few researchers have investigated the differences between the students who attend academic

programs for academic purposes and the students who attend non-academic programs but with the objects to study in arts, science, and medicine majors.

Therefore, it would be helpful if policy makers and administrators of Chinese programs set up different programs for the students with academic purposes and the students without academic purposes to avoid combining students with different reasons, purposes, and needs of learning Chinese in the same class.

<div align="center">

Recommendations for Further Research

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Based on the findings from this study, this section provides researchers in the field of Teaching Chinese as a foreign language with three recommendations for future research, including recommendations for qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies.

Recommendations for Qualitative Studies

Replicate this study. This study investigated eleven college level early Chinese learners' experience of learning Chinese in the beginning-level preparatory course of the Chinese Program at East Coast University in Shanghai, China, and the association, if any, between their Chinese self-efficacy and their demonstration of characteristics of Good Language Learners (GLLs). Research findings from this study may serve as the foundation for further research. This inquiry was conducted using qualitative methods and was conducted in Shanghai, China. Researchers might replicate this qualitative inquiry in different provinces and/or cities in China.

In addition, because of the time restriction, this study was completed within three months. According to participants' class schedule and their available time, most participants engaged in this study for six or seven weeks, and two participants enrolled in this study for eight weeks. By the time this study was completed, participants had learned Chinese for ten to twelve weeks.

Findings from this study were based on participant's' ten- to twelve-week Chinese learning experience. Therefore, the findings of this research might be less generalizable.

Researchers are encouraged to conduct similar inquires in a longer research period to better conclude early Chinese learners Chinese learning experiences and their Chinese self-efficacy.

Consider selecting a non-western theoretical framework. As mentioned in the Limitations section in Chapter 3, because of using the characteristics of GLLs described by Edge and Garton (2009), this study might provide limited implications for non-English language learners and not reveal participants' other characteristics of GLLs, which might be invisible using this western theoretical framework, such as Confucianism and Daoism as mentioned in Xu (2019).

Researchers are encouraged to conduct similar inquiries to understand Chinese language students', including early Chinese learners, Chinese learning experiences through characteristics of GLLs from perspectives other than a western theoretical framework.

Recruit students at different points and/or levels of a Chinese Program. Participants in this study were early Chinese learners in the beginning level preparatory course of the Chinese Program. Findings from this study provide information about early Chinese learners' Chinese self-efficacy and Chinese learning experiences. However, the findings of this study might not reveal Chinese learning experiences and Chinese self-efficacy of beginning level students at different points in Chinese programs and more advanced Chinese students.

Researchers might conduct qualitative inquires with students at different points in Chinese programs to gain more information about beginning-level students' Chinese self-efficacy and Chinese learning experiences. And researchers are encouraged to conduct

qualitative inquiries with more advanced Chinese learners to learn more about their Chinese learning experiences and Chinese self-efficacy.

Recruit non-English-speaking students. As mentioned in the Limitations section in Chapter 3, I as the researcher speak only Chinese and English, creating a limitation in the generalizability of this study. In addition, in the research site of this study, Chinese language students communicated with teachers and learned Chinese primarily through English. Participants in this study were proficient in English. This study might not reveal non-English speaking students' and low-English-proficiency students' Chinese self-efficacy and Chinese learning experience in the Chinese Programs, especially that those students learn Chinese through English. Researchers who can speak other languages might conduct similar studies to learn about Chinese learning experiences and Chinese self-efficacy of non-English speaking and/or low English proficient students who learn Chinese through another foreign language, such as English.

Inquire deeply into the relationships between students' native languages and Chinese learning. Researchers have studied the impact of students' native languages on Chinese learning (X. Zhang, 2020) and suggested that teachers ought to strengthen the positive influences and decrease the negative influences of students' native languages on Chinese learning (Zhu, 2012).

However, few researchers specifically investigated the ways teachers strengthen and decrease the positive and negative influences of students' native languages on Chinese learning. For example, the ways teachers strengthen the positive influences, the ways teachers minimize the negative influences, new problems, if any, occur, etc. Therefore, previous research findings might be insufficient for teachers to understand how, when, and to what extent they could do to

utilize the influences of students' native languages on students' Chinese learning to assist student learning of Chinese.

Researchers are encouraged to conduct studies in different Chinese programs and levels of classes to investigate the ways teachers strengthen and decrease the influences of students' native languages on Chinese learning to provide more information for teachers.

Research students' attitudes toward making mistakes in learning Chinese. Findings from this study indicate that early Chinese learners tend to be prepared for making mistakes while learning Chinese and learn from the mistakes. But few researchers investigated this topic. Therefore, researchers are encouraged to conduct studies to understand students' perceptions on making mistakes in learning Chinese.

For example, inquiries could be conducted in different Chinese programs and levels of classes to understand the reasons students would like to prepare/not prepare for making mistakes, the ways students treat making mistakes and the mistakes per se while learning Chinese, students' thoughts and feelings after making mistakes, and the influence of making mistakes on student Chinese learning, etc. Those studies might provide teachers with more information to understand students' perceptions of making mistakes in learning Chinese and to better cultivate students with the characteristic of good language learners---having a mind prepared for making mistakes.

Learning strategies. Many researchers have investigated learning strategies in Chinese language learning, for example the studies of Chen and Li (2017), Wu (2018), Zhang and Wang (2012), Zhang and Wan (2019), etc. However, few researchers have investigated the specific and practical learning strategies, the ways students implement specific learning strategies into Chinese learning, and the reasons specific learning strategies work/do not work for student

Chinese learning. Researchers are encouraged to investigate specific learning strategies that students use in learning Chinese in different Chinese programs and levels of classes to provide more practical information for both Chinese language students and teachers.

Recommendations for Quantitative Studies

Investigate the association between Chinese learners' Chinese self-efficacy and GLLs. Findings from this qualitative study indicated that there is no obvious relationship between early Chinese learners' Chinese self-efficacy and their demonstration of characteristics of Good Language Learners (GLLs). This study was a qualitative research conducted with early Chinese learners in a beginning level class of preparatory course of a non-academic long-term Chinese program in Shanghai, China. Researchers are encouraged to conduct quantitative inquiries in different Chinese programs and levels of classes in Shanghai and/or other cities and provinces in China to investigate if an association exists between students' Chinese self-efficacy and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs.

Findings of these quantitative inquires could be better generalized and could provide Chinese language teachers implications for understanding student's Chinese self-efficacy and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs.

Use quantitative research methods to identify ways to improve early Chinese learners' Chinese self-efficacy. Participants in this study who were early Chinese learners reported a medium-level self-efficacy in Chinese language skills and general Chinese. Research has implicated that Chinese language students' self-efficacy is positively related to their Chinese language achievement (Wang, 2014; Zheng, 2015). It could be practical if researchers provide recommendations for early Chinese learners and their teachers on improving early learners' Chinese self-efficacy to gain better Chinese learning outcomes. Researchers might conduct

quantitative inquires to investigate the ways for improving early Chinese learners' self-efficacy in Chinese.

Recommendations for Mixed-Methods Studies

Participants in this study reported certain of their personality traits were one of their strengths in learning Chinese, such as being responsible for their study, willing to try new things, and being confident. It could be helpful if teachers notice students' personality traits which might be good for their Chinese learning. In this way, teachers could help students understand their strengths related to certain personality traits and strengthen the positive influences of the strengths on their Chinese learning. This recommendation requires teachers to be familiar with the personality traits that are good for students' Chinese learning.

Researchers recently have discussed the role personalities (e.g., extroverted and introverted personalities) play in student Chinese language learning (Guo, 2019; Hao, 2015; Xu, 2016), and most of the research are quantitative research. However, few researchers have paid attention to understand the specific personality traits Chinese language students usually have, the impact of specific personality traits on student Chinese learning, and the specific personality traits which are beneficial for learning Chinese. Thus, previous research findings might be insufficient for teachers to find students' personality traits which are good for their Chinese learning. Researchers are encouraged to conduct mixed-methods studies in different Chinese programs and levels of classes to investigate the personality traits which are good for Chinese learning to provide more information for teachers to better assist student Chinese learning.

Chapter Summary

In the process of conducting this study, eleven college students who were early Chinese learners in a beginning level preparatory course of a non-academic long-term Chinese program

shared with me about their Chinese language learning experiences. My findings revealed the nature of early Chinese learners' self-efficacy in learning Chinese, in terms of their self-perceived strengths and challenges while learning Chinese. Some participants perceived their strengths were related to the Chinese language per se and to their personality traits. Participants discussed certain challenges they encountered with learning the Chinese language, such as language-related challenges, the teachers' preparation and proficiency in teaching, the curriculum setting, and the combination of students with different needs in class.

In addition, I investigated the characteristics of Good Language Learners (GLLs) learning Chinese, as described by Edge & Garton (2009). Participants in my study had positive attitudes toward the Chinese language and Chinese speakers and were motivated in learning Chinese. Eight of my participants had confidence to be successful learners. My participants were able to practice Chinese actively. Eight respondents were capable of finding ways to correctly express themselves when having troubles speaking in Chinese. My respondents were willing to engage in Chinese using situations. My participants had different strategies to learn and practice Chinese. My participants tended to implement new strategies while learning Chinese. Six of my respondents prepared for making mistakes while learning Chinese and willing to learn from the mistakes. Four of my participants expressed that they enjoyed learning Chinese. Moreover, my participants, mostly, were used to working in their native languages and/or other foreign languages they had mastered, rather than in Chinese. Ten of my respondents were not ready to use Chinese as frequently as their native languages.

Furthermore, I investigated the association, if any, between self-efficacy in Chinese and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs. According to my participants' Chinese learning experiences, no obvious association existed. That is to say, those participants who had higher

Chinese self-efficacy did not necessarily exhibit more characteristics of GLLs, or fewer. Similarly, those participants who possessed more characteristics of GLLs were not necessarily with higher Chinese self-efficacy, or lower.

Based on the research findings of this study, recommendations are provided for Chinese language teachers, administrators and policy makers of non-academic long-term programs and in the field of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (TCFL). Recommendations for qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies are provided.

Teaching Chinese as a foreign language in Chinese higher education started in 1950 (Xu, 2006) and has continued over a span of nearly 70 years. Compared with many other fields in education, TCFL is still young. Findings from my study are intended to fill the gaps in research inquiring into Chinese language students' self-efficacy through the lens of characteristics of GLLs (Edge & Garton, 2009).

My study provides implications for teachers and administrators of non-academic long-term Chinese programs and in the field of TCFL, explicitly in investigating early Chinese learners' Chinese self-efficacy and their characteristics of Good Language Learners. Further, this study was designed to identify and discuss the challenges students perceive they have encountered while learning Chinese and describe their strategies for learning and practicing Chinese in speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

For teachers and administrators of Chinese programs, recommendations from this study provide guidance in program improvement and ways to better support students', especially early Chinese learners', experiences and proficiencies in learning Chinese. Recommendations for Chinese language teacher preparation in TCFL programs in Chinese universities and in-service

professional development are included. Recommendations for researchers in the field of TCFL

are provided for further qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies.

I genuinely hope to take advantage of what I have learned to make contributions to

teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (TCFL). This study was my first step in transforming

from a graduate student to a researcher, as well as my initial step of learning more about the

Chinese learning experiences of college students who are early Chinese learners. This study

supports previous research findings, raises differences, and provides recommendations for

further investigation. I hope this study may give insights to educators and researchers who are

interested in the Chinese learning experiences of college students who are early Chinese learners

and serve as a foundation for researchers to conduct more relative studies in the field of TCFL.

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APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM

GLADYS L. BENERD SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
RESEARCH SUBJECT'S CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

AN EXPLORATION OF STUDENTS' SELF-EFFICACY AND CHARACTERISTICS OF GLLS IN LEARNING CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Name of Lead Researcher: Cheng Chen,
Name of Faculty Advisor: Dr. Heidi Stevenson

Your consent is being sought to participate in a research study, and your participation is entirely voluntary.

  A. **Purpose of Research**. The purpose of this research is to investigate students' experiences of learning Chinese as a foreign language and the association, if any, between students' self-efficacy (belief of their ability to complete a task) as learners of Chinese and their demonstration of characteristics of Good Language Learners (GLLs). Data of three topics will be collected, including (1) what is the nature of students' efficacy while learning Chinese as a Foreign language; (2) what characteristics of GLLs, if any, do students exhibit while learning Chinese as a Foreign language; (3) what is the association, if any, between students' efficacy and their demonstration of characteristics of GLLs while learning Chinese as a foreign language?

  B. **Duration of Participation**. Each participant will approximately spend a total of 115 to 135 minutes in this study. But because there are several steps in this research process, participants' expected duration of participation in the study will be three months (from September 9th to November 29th, 2019).

  C. **Research Procedures**.

   (1) If you decide to participate, you will be asked to take a survey and an English proficiency questionnaire [Language Experience and Proficiency Questionnaire (LEAP-Q)] between September 16th and September 20th, 2019.

   (2) I will inform you via email if you are invited to be a participant in this study between September 21st and September 22nd, 2019.

   (3) You will take a Chinese self-efficacy questionnaire [revised Questionnaire of English Self-Efficacy (revised QESE)] as a pre-assessment together with other participants between September 23rd and September 27th, 2019.

   (4) Between November 4th and November 8th, 2019, you will take the revised QESE again as a post-assessment together with other participants.

(5) Between November 11th and November 29th, 2019, you will have one interview with me (the researcher).

        D.   **<u>Foreseeable Risks</u>**. This study may contain minimal psychological and sociological risks. You may feel somewhat distressed, anxious, embarrassed or shame to speak about personal Chinese language learning experiences. And, there may be a possibility that my laptop, phones or USB flash drive will be stolen or lost.

        E.   **<u>Benefits</u>**. There are no direct benefits, however, you will have the opportunity to participate in a qualitative research study and little Chinese gifts (e.g., bookmarks, thank you cards).

        F.   **<u>Alternative Procedures</u>**. There are no alternative research procedures for this study, so your alternative is not to participate.

I. CONFIDENTIALITY

We will take reasonable steps to keep confidential any information that is obtained in connection with this research study and that can be identified with you.

Measures to protect your confidentiality are:
1. I will be the person who can have access to the gathered data. My dissertation advisor, Dr. Heidi Stevenson will also have access to the gathered data, in case I need any assistance.

2. During the study:
   (1) I will have you complete the survey and the LEAP-Q. I will be the only person who distribute and collect the survey and the LEAP-Q. No teachers or staff from Tongji University will be on site.
   (2) I will have you complete the Chinese self-efficacy questionnaire (revised QESE) (both pre- and post- assessments) together in a meeting room offered by the Chinese training program at Tongji University to provide you a quiet, secure and safe environment. You are only responsible for your own questionnaire. No teachers or staff from Tongji University will be on site.
   (3) I will have one interview with you. The interview will be conducted in English. Interview will be held in the meeting room offered by the Chinese training program at Tongji University to build a safe, quiet and familiar environment for you to freely share their opinions. Only you and I will be present at the interview to protect your privacy. I will ask for your permission to audio record during each interview.
   (4) Your participation is voluntary, and you can terminate answering questionnaire or/and interview or discontinue participating in the study at any time you want.
   (5) I will remind you at each step of data collection point that your participation is voluntary, and you can elect to discontinue participating in the study at any time.

3. After the study:
    (1) Interview notes will be immediately shredded after I have transcribed each interview. Interview recording files will be protected with my code-protected personal MacBook Air laptop (with a 12-digit password), two code-protected phones (each phone is iPhone 7 plus) which have no other apps and can only be unlocked with my fingerprint, and a password encrypted USB flash drive.
    (2) All paper-version data (e.g., consent forms, survey, LEAP-Q, and revised QESE) will be locked in my home office drawer with a key. I will be the only person who has, holds and has the access to the key.
    (3) I will be the only person who input paper-based revised QESE data into my code-protected personal MacBook Air laptop (with a 12-digit password).
    (4) All electronic data (e.g., revised QESE, interview recording files and interview transcriptions) will be protected with my code-protected personal MacBook Air laptop (with a 12-digit password), two code protected phones (each phone is iPhone 7 plus) which have no other apps and can only be unlocked with my fingerprint, and a password encrypted USB flash drive.
    (5) All data will be destroyed three years after the research is completed.

4. During the reporting: pseudonyms will be used for you and the research site. I will only focus on reporting information of you related to the study.

Upon conclusion of the research study, the data obtained will be maintained in a safe, locked or otherwise secured location and will be destroyed after a period of three years after the research is completed.

II. PARTICIPATION

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because:
> You (1) are over 18 years of age, (2) are enrolled in the beginning level preparatory course of the Chinese training program at Tongji University in Shanghai, (3) have no Chinese learning experience, (4) are at adequate or higher English proficiency level in English reading, speaking and listening

We expect to have 12 participants take part in this study. Please feel free to ask any questions you may have.

Your decision whether or not to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

III. COLLECTION OF INFORMATION

Your information collected as part of the research, even if identifiers are removed, will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

IV. UNIVERSITY CONTACT INFORMATION

I am the lead researcher in this study, and I am a doctor candidate at the University of the Pacific, Gladys L. Benerd School of Education. This research study is part of my dissertation for my Doctor in Education.

If you have any questions about the research at any time, please contact me at 18116468835 or by email at cassiechen0226@126.com, or the dissertation advisor, Dr. Heidi Stevenson, by email at hstevenson@pacific.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research project or wish to speak with an independent contact, please contact the Office of Research & Sponsored Programs, University of the Pacific at (209) 946-3903 or by email at IRB@pacific.edu.

V.NO COMPENSATION & NO COMMERCIAL PROFIT

No compensation is being offered for participation in this study

VI. ADDITIONAL COSTS TO SUBJECT

There is no cost to you for participating in this study.

VII. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND SIGNATURE

I hereby consent: (Indicate *Yes* or *No*)

- To be audio recorded during this study.
  ___Yes   ___No

- For such audio records resulting from this study to be used for understanding my experience in learning Chinese as a foreign language.
  ___Yes   ___No

- For my identity to be disclosed in written materials and oral presentations resulting from this study:
  ___Yes   ___No

You will receive a copy of this form to keep.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you have been afforded the opportunity to ask, and have answered, any questions that you may have, that your participation is completely voluntary, that you understand that you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.

Signed: _____   Date:_____

Research Study Participant (Print Name): _____

Researcher Who Obtained Consent (Print Name): _____

APPENDIX B: EMAIL TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear Participant,

I'm Cheng Chen from University of the Pacific, Gladys L. Benerd School of Education. I'm writing this email to invite you to participant in my study. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in my study. You should be aware that you are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with this department or the University.

The purpose of this study is to understand your experience in learning Chinese as a foreign language in this program.

You will be asked to take part in a survey and an English proficiency questionnaire first if you intend to participant in the study. If you are invited to be a participant in this study, you will receive a Chinese self-efficacy questionnaire and will have one interview with the researcher. All your information and assessment results will be protected. No one else has access or right to your data except me and the dissertation advisor Dr. Heidi Stevenson.

This study may contain minimal psychological and sociological risks. You may feel somewhat distressed, anxious, embarrassed or shame to speak about personal Chinese language learning experiences. And, there may be a risk that my laptop, phones or USB flash drive may be stolen or lost.

There are no direct benefits associated with your participation, however, you will have the opportunity to participate in a qualitative research study and some little Chinese gifts.
Do not hesitate to ask any questions about the study either before participating or during the time that you are participating. I would be happy to share the findings with you after the research is completed. However, your name will not be associated with the research findings in any way.

You will have a few days to make your decision. I will come to classes to distribute and collect formal consent forms and to answer your questions.
Thank you for taking time reading this email.

Sincerely,
Cheng Chen

APPENDIX C: SURVEY

Directions:

a) Please fill out the survey according to your actual situation.

b) **If you can read, listen and speak English, please also fill out the Language Experience and Proficiency Questionnaire attached.**

c) You can terminate answering the survey or/and the Language Experience and Proficiency Questionnaire at any time you want.

1. Name: _____

2. Gender: _____

3. Age: _____

4. Nationality: _____

5. Native language: _____

6. How long have you been learning Chinese? _____

7. Can you read, speak and listen in English? Yes or No (please circle one).

8. If you can use English, please turn to next page and complete the Language Experience and Proficiency Questionnaire (LEAP-Q).

9. Can you speak any other language(s)? If so, please clarify what languages you speak

APPENDIX D: LANGUAGE EXPERIENCES AND PROFICIENCY QUESTIONNAIRE

Northwestern Bilingualism & Psycholinguistics Research Laboratory
Marian, Blumenfeld, & Kaushanskaya (2007). The Language Experience and
Proficiency Questionnaire (LEAP-Q):
Assessing language profiles in bilinguals and multilinguals.
Journal of Speech Language and Hearing Research, 50 (4), 940-967.
Adapted to pencil-and-paper version by Marilyn Logan

Language Experience and Proficiency Questionnaire (LEAP-Q)

This questionnaire is permitted by authors to be used in this study.

Last name		First name		Today's Date	
Age		Date of Birth		Male	Female

(1) Please list all the languages you know in order of dominance:

1	2	3	4	5

(2) Please list all the languages you know in order of acquisition (your native language first):

1	2	3	4	5

(3) Please list what percentage of the time you are *currently* and *on average* exposed to each language. (*Your percentages should add up to 100%*):

List language here:					
List percentage here:					

(4) When choosing to read a text available in all your languages, in what percentage of cases would you choose to read it in each of your languages? Assume that the original was written in another language, which is unknown to you.
(Your percentages should add up to 100%):

List language here:					
List percentage here:					

(5) When choosing a language to speak with a person who is equally fluent in all your languages, what percentage of time would you choose to speak each language? Please report percent of total time.
(Your percentages should add up to 100%):

List language here					
List percentage here:					

(6)   Please name the cultures with which you identify. On a scale from zero to ten, please rate the extent to which you identify with each culture. (Examples of possible cultures include US-American, Chinese, Jewish-Orthodox, etc.):

Culture: _____

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

0: No identification; 1: very low identification; 5: Moderate identification; 10: Complete identification

Culture: _____

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

0: No identification; 1: very low identification; 5: Moderate identification; 10: Complete identification

Culture: _____

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

0: No identification; 1: very low identification; 5: Moderate identification; 10: Complete identification

Culture: _____

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

0: No identification; 1: very low identification; 5: Moderate identification; 10: Complete identification

(7)   How many years of formal education do you have?

_____

Please check your highest education level (or the approximate US equivalent to a degree obtained in another country):

☐ Less than High School   ☐ Some College   ☐ Masters
☐ High School   ☐ College   ☐ Ph.D./M.D./J.D.
☐ Professional Training   ☐ Some Graduate School   ☐ Other:

(8)   Date of immigration to the USA, if applicable

_____

If you have ever immigrated to another country, please provide name of country and date of immigration here.

(9)   Have you ever had a vision problem___, hearing impairment___, language disability___, or learning disability___? (Check all applicable).

If yes, please explain (including any corrections):

_____

Language: English

This is my (native   second   third   fourth   fifth   ) language.

(1) Age when you…

began acquiring this language:	*became fluent in this language*:	*began reading in this language*:	*became fluent reading in this language*:

(2) Please list the number of years and months you spent in each language environment:

	Years	Months
A country where this language is spoken		
A family where this language is spoken		
A school and/or working environment where this language is spoken		

(3) Please circle your *level of __proficiency__* in speaking, understanding, and reading in this language:

Speaking

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

0: None; 1: Very low; 2. Low; 3: Fair; 4: Slightly less Adequate than adequate; 5: Adequate; 6: Slightly more than adequate; 7: Good; 8: Very good; 9: Excellent; 10: Perfect

Understanding spoken language

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

0: None; 1: Very low; 2. Low; 3: Fair; 4: Slightly less Adequate than adequate; 5: Adequate; 6: Slightly more than adequate; 7: Good; 8: Very good; 9: Excellent; 10: Perfect

Reading

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

0: None; 1: Very low; 2. Low; 3: Fair; 4: Slightly less Adequate than adequate; 5: Adequate; 6: Slightly more than adequate; 7: Good; 8: Very good; 9: Excellent; 10: Perfect

(4) Please circle how much the following factors contributed to you learning this language:

Interacting with friend

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

0: Not a contributor; 1: Minimal contributor; 5: Moderate contributor; 10: Most important contributor

Interacting with family

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

0: Not a contributor; 1: Minimal contributor; 5: Moderate contributor; 10: Most important contributor

Reading

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

0: Not a contributor; 1: Minimal contributor; 5: Moderate contributor; 10: Most important contributor

Language tapes/self-instruction

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

0: Not a contributor; 1: Minimal contributor; 5: Moderate contributor; 10: Most important contributor

Watching TV

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

0: Not a contributor; 1: Minimal contributor; 5: Moderate contributor; 10: Most important contributor

Listening to the radio

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

0: Not a contributor; 1: Minimal contributor; 5: Moderate contributor; 10: Most important contributor

(5) Please circle to what extent you are currently exposed to this language in the following contexts:

Interacting with friend

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

0: Never; 1: Almost never; 5: Half of the time; 10: Always Interacting with family

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

0: Never; 1: Almost never; 5: Half of the time; 10: Always

Watching TV

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

0: Never; 1: Almost never; 5: Half of the time; 10: Always

Listening to the radio/music

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

0: Never; 1: Almost never; 5: Half of the time; 10: Always

Reading

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

0: Never; 1: Almost never; 5: Half of the time; 10: Always

Language lab/self-instruction

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

0: Never; 1: Almost never; 5: Half of the time; 10: Always

(6) In your perception, how much of a foreign accent do you have in this language?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

0: None; 1: Almost none; 2: Very light; 3: Light; 4: Some; 5: Moderate; 6: Considerable; 7: Heavy; 8: Very heavy: 9: Extremely heavy; 10: Pervasive

(7). Please circle how frequently others identify you as a non-native speaker based on your accent in this language:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

0: Never; 1: Almost never; 5: Half of the time; 10: Always

APPENDIX E: REVISED QUESTIONNAIRE OF ENGLISH SELF-EFFICACY

This questionnaire is permitted by the author to be used in this study.

Notes: Please read the following questions carefully and make an accurate evaluation of your current command of Chinese. These questions are designed to measure your judgment of your capabilities, so there are no right or wrong answers. You can terminate answering the questionnaire at any time you want.

Please use the following scales to answer these questions accordingly. Please choose the number accurately representing your capabilities.						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I cannot do it at all	I cannot do it.	Maybe I cannot do it.	Maybe I can do it.	I basically can do it.	I can do it.	I can do it well.

1. Can you understand stories told in Chinese?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Can you finish your homework of Chinese reading independently?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Can you understand Chinese TV programs?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Can you introduce your school in Chinese?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Can you compose messages in Chinese on the internet (face book, twitter, blogs, etc.)?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Can you give directions from your classroom to your home in Chinese?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Can you write Chinese compositions assigned by your teachers?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Can you tell a story in Chinese?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Can you understand radio programs in Chinese speaking countries?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Can you understand Chinese TV programs made in China?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Can you leave a message to your classmates in Chinese?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. When you read Chinese articles, can you guess the meaning of unknown words?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Can you make new sentences with the words just learned?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Can you write email messages in Chinese?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. If your teacher gives you a tape-recorded Chinese dialogue about school life, can you understand it?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Can you understand the Chinese news on the Internet?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

17. Can you ask questions to your teachers in Chinese?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Can you make sentences with Chinese phrases?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. Can you introduce your Chinese language teacher in Chinese?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. Can you discuss in Chinese with your classmates some topics in which all of you are interested?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. Can you read Chinese short novels?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. Can you understand Chinese movies without English subtitles?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. Can you answer your teachers' questions in Chinese?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. Can you understand Chinese songs?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. Can you read Chinese newspapers?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. Can you find the meaning of new words by using Chinese-Chinese dictionaries?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. Can you understand numbers spoken in Chinese?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. Can you write diaries in Chinese?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. Can you understand Chinese articles about Chinese culture?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. Can you introduce yourself in Chinese?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. Can you write an article about your Chinese teacher in Chinese?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32. Can you understand new lessons in your Chinese book?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The Questionnaire of English Self-Efficacy (QESE) is copyright of Professor Chuang Wang, Educational Research, University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Welcome and Start the Conversation

1. Thank you for coming today. I am going to ask some questions to get to know more about your experiences of learning Chinese as a foreign language and how you're feeling about it. Please let me know if at any point you would like to stop.

2. If you have it with you, please take a moment to turn off your cell phone. Thanks so much.

3. Please tell me a little bit about why you are interested in learning Chinese.

2. Perceptions of Chinese Learning Experience and Strengths and Weaknesses

Section A

1. Thinking back over your time learning Chinese so far, what is a time that stands out to you?
2. How did you feel about that?
3. What about this time do you think made you feel that way?
4. What role, if any, do you feel this example played in your learning of Chinese?
5. Is there anything else I should know about this? Repeat the question at least three times for more ideas.
6. If I have gathered at least three ideas, but there are no more ideas, move on to Section B.
7. If participant cannot think of at least two incidences, I will thank them and end the interview. (The research is intended to investigate students' experiences of learning Chinese as a foreign language and the association, if any, between students' self-efficacy as learners of Chinese and their demonstration of characteristics of Good Language Learners. If participants cannot recall more than one incident, then it is determined that they are unable to provide data for this study. Therefore, there is no need to continue the interview.)

Section B

1. Is there anything else that you would like me to know about your feelings about learning Chinese before we move on?
2. If no more ideas, move on to Step 3.

3. Strategies of Learning and Practicing Chinese

Section A

1. I'm curious about how you usually practice Chinese. Can you give me an example?
2. How do you feel about that way of practicing?
3. What about practicing like that do you think makes you feel that way?
4. What role, if any, do you feel this played in your learning of Chinese?

Section B

1. Repeat Section A, a minimum of two times and ideally three for more ideas, starting with: Can you tell me another example?
2. If no more ideas, move on to Step 4.

4. Plans to Improve Chinese Learning

Section A

1. What are your plans, if any, for improving your Chinese language skills over the next year?
2. Why do you think these strategies will work?
3. How are you going to implement your plans?
4. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your plans to improve your language skills in Chinese?

Section B
1. IF there are additional ideas repeat Section A.
2. If no more ideas, move on to Step 5.

5. Wrap Up
1. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about learning Chinese as a foreign language?
2. If no more ideas, move on to Step 6.

6. Thank the Participant for Completing the Interview

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me today. If you think of anything else you'd like me to know, please email me. Here is my email. My email is cassiechen0226@126.com.

* I will give each participant a piece of paper with my email address printed on it.

APPENDIX G: VERBAL RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Hello everyone, I'm Cheng Chen from University of the Pacific. I'm currently conducting a study at Tongji University. The purpose of this study is to understand your experience in learning Chinese as a foreign language in this program.

I hope that everyone who is 18-year-old or older has received my email on September 9th. Today, I'm here to distribute the formal consent form to you.

This consent form tells you about the purpose of my study, duration of your participation, research procedures, risks and benefits, confidentiality, and contact information, etc. It also asks about your intention to participant in this study. It will take you about ten minutes to finish.

I would like to remind you that you are very welcomed to participate in this study, and you are also free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time. It will not affect your relationship with this department or the University.

Now, please raise your hand when you hear me call your name. (*I will get names and email addresses of students who are 18 years of age or older from the administer*). I will give the formal consent form to you.

…… (distribute consent forms) ……

Now, if you are 18-year-old or older, but you didn't hear me call your name, please raise your hand. I will give the form to you.

…… (distribute consent forms) ……

Please carefully read the consent form. If you decide to participate in this study, please sign the form. If you decide not to participate in this study, please leave the signature part blank. Please hand in your consent form to me when you finish, no matter you sign the form or not. If you have any question, please feel free to ask.