



Students' Perceptions Toward Business Mandarin (Study Program of Mandarin for Business and Professional Communication)

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Abstract

Mandarin is the most widely spoken language in the world. Besides that, learning Mandarin in the business field also opens up wider business opportunities, improves communication effectiveness, increases self-confidence, improves negotiation skills, and improves social interaction. The purpose of this study is to identify student perceptions of the importance of Mandarin in the business world. The population in this study were all first, second, and third year undergraduate students of applied Mandarin for Business and Professional Communication at Bosowa University, totaling 15 people. Researchers used the theory of perception and data collection techniques using in-depth interviews. Researchers used a descriptive method with a qualitative approach as a method in this study. After analyzing the data, the researcher found many students' positive perceptions about learning Mandarin in the business sector, where they acknowledged the relatively rapid expansion of Chinese companies, especially in the industrial and franchising fields. This shows that Mandarin can be well received by students. But there are also some students who still don't understand what business examples will be applied in the future. In conclusion, this study emphasizes the importance of learning Mandarin especially in the business sector. In addition, this research is also a reference for writers in improving Mandarin, especially in the business world to meet the needs and expectations of students in the Mandarin Study Program for Business and Professional Communication, Bosowa University.

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INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly globalized era, business is no longer limited by geography or culture. Cross-border trade has become more common, and companies around the world are recognizing the importance of foreign language proficiency—especially in Mandarin. Mandarin Chinese has gained a prominent position as one of the most influential languages in international business. The ability to speak and understand this language offers a significant competitive advantage in navigating today's interconnected global market.

Currently, China ranks as the third-largest investor in Indonesia (Pratama, 2019). Many Chinese entrepreneurs have also expanded their businesses into developing countries, including Indonesia. This is further supported by the statement of Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Facebook, who acknowledged that one of the reasons he learned Mandarin was because the ability helped him connect with the Chinese market (Widiartanto, 2015). CNBC has also reported that major losses in business have occurred due to the lack of Mandarin language proficiency—a situation experienced by Indian entrepreneur Navin Thantry (Deil, 2013). These examples highlight the importance of learning Mandarin, particularly in the business sector.

In the context of business, Mandarin is more than just a communication tool—it serves as a gateway to the Chinese market, which boasts the world's largest population and tremendous economic potential. China has experienced remarkable economic growth over the past few decades and has become a key player in the global supply chain. Therefore, understanding the Mandarin language and culture not only facilitates easier access to the Chinese market but also strengthens relationships with business partners in the country.

When dealing with Mandarin-speaking business partners, being able to communicate in their language sends a message of respect and effort in building genuine partnerships. This helps foster trust and better collaboration. Furthermore, mastering Mandarin also opens doors to understanding cultural nuances and business values that may differ from other markets. Such knowledge is crucial to avoiding cultural misunderstandings that could impact business relationships.

In this context, perception refers to how students comprehend, interpret, and assign meaning to various information, situations, or experiences within their educational and learning environments. It includes how students view the world around them, how they respond to stimuli, and how their perspectives and attitudes are shaped by experiences, knowledge, and personal beliefs.

Perception is a complex cognitive process involving several factors such as past experiences, cultural values, prior knowledge, emotions, and self-concept. It can significantly influence how students feel, think, and act in certain situations. Student perception plays a major role in how they engage in learning, develop skills, understand material, and even choose their future career paths.

This article further explores how Mandarin plays a key role in various aspects of both national and global business. The research was conducted to examine how students perceive the importance of Mandarin in the business world and how the language influences their perceptions of potential opportunities and challenges associated with learning Mandarin for business purposes.

METHOD

This study aims to analyze and understand students' perceptions of the importance of Mandarin in the context of international business and its impact on their motivation to learn and career choices. Sugiyono (2005:60) states that qualitative research is research that describes and analyzes a phenomenon, event, social activity, behavior, beliefs, perceptions, and human thoughts, either individually or in groups.

This research adopts a qualitative approach with a case study design as the primary research method. According to Sugiyono (2018), qualitative research is based on philosophy, and is used to investigate scientific conditions (experiments), where the researcher acts as the instrument. This approach allows the researcher to gain in-depth insights into students' perceptions. The participants in this study will include students from the 2020, 2021, and 2022 cohorts of the Mandarin for Business and Professional Communication program at Universitas Bosowa, with a total of 15 participants. Data collection techniques will include interviews, observation, and document analysis. Sugiyono (2016:194) states, "Interviews are used as a data collection technique if the researcher wants to conduct preliminary studies to identify the issues that need to be researched, and also when the researcher wants to gather more in-depth information from respondents." In-depth interviews will be used to collect primary data. Open-ended questions will be asked to students about their perceptions of the importance of Mandarin in business, their learning motivation, and their views on its influence on their careers.

Patton (in Poerwandari, 2017) emphasizes that observation is an essential data collection method in qualitative research. To ensure the accuracy and usefulness of the data, the observation should be conducted by a researcher who has undergone adequate training, and has made thorough and complete preparations. The researcher will collect data by observing in-class interactions related to Mandarin language content. Additionally, the researcher will analyze course materials, textbooks, and reading materials related to Mandarin within the curriculum of the Mandarin for Business and Professional Communication program to understand how this issue is prioritized.

The data collection technique will involve open-ended interview questions from 15 students of the Bachelor's Degree in Mandarin for Business and Professional Communication. The results of the interviews and observations will be analyzed qualitatively by using thematic analysis to identify patterns, themes, and common trends in students' perceptions. For reliability, the researcher will conduct a process of data comparison and analysis with another researcher.

It is expected that this study will provide deeper insights into how students' perceptions of the importance of Mandarin in business influence their learning motivation and how these perceptions impact their career choices in the future. This research is expected to provide valuable information for educators and educational institutions in designing programs that are more in line with students' needs and perceptions regarding the importance of Mandarin in the business world. Furthermore, the results of this study can also offer insights to students who wish to prepare themselves to meet the demands of international business.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Table of demography

NO.	GENDER	COHORT	PREVIOUSLY STUDY OR NOT
R1	Female	2020	No
R2	Female	2021	No
R3	Male	2022	No
R4	Female	2021	Yes
R5	Female	2022	No
R6	Male	2021	Yes
R7	Male	2022	No
R8	Male	2022	No
R9	Female	2022	No
R10	Female	2022	No
R11	Female	2022	No
R12	Female	2022	No
R13	Male	2020	No
R14	Female	2020	No
R15	Male	2020	No

Based on the demographic table above, it can be observed that the in-depth interview results from a total of 15 respondents, consisting of 9 females and 6 males aged between 19 and 23 years, revealed that 13 of them had never experienced learning Mandarin, either formally or informally, while 2 of them had received informal Mandarin lessons (from a language course) before enrolling in the Mandarin Language for Business and Professional Communication program at Universitas Bosowa. There are some significant differences in the research results between respondents who have taken Mandarin lessons and those who have not. For instance, those who have prior Mandarin lessons find

it easier to understand the basics of the language when starting the university course, compared to those who have not taken such lessons. However, there is a commonality among all of them when it comes to the perception of the importance of Mandarin in the field of business. Below are the results of the interviews with all the respondents regarding this matter.

1. MANDARIN FOR FUTURE PROSPECTS

Mandarin has many reasons why it is a valuable asset for future job prospects. By having proficiency in Mandarin in the business world, students can gain several benefits, including:

1.1 High Competitiveness

- Proficiency in various fields
- Confidence in job opportunities
- Filling the human resource gap
- Meeting industry demands

1.2 Broader Career Opportunities

- Job opportunities in industry
- Entrepreneurial opportunities
- International career opportunities

1.3 Negotiation Skills

- Rapid business development
- Increased opportunities for collaboration
- Ease of building relationships
- Business opportunities with investors

2. GLOBAL COMPETITIVE ABILITY

In the rapidly growing global business era, Mandarin language proficiency is a valuable asset that everyone should possess due to China's rapid economic growth, strong international business relations, and better career opportunities in certain industries. This language also enables effective communication in business negotiations and understanding Chinese culture, expanding opportunities in the increasingly interconnected global business world.

2.1 Opening the Door to International Business

- International language
- Large Chinese market
- Export-import business

2.2 Understanding International Business Culture

- Understanding Chinese language and culture
- Understanding formal communication methods
- Deepening business culture

2.3 International business relationship

- Communication with tourists
- Access to resources

- Interaction and negotiation
- Business and economic markets

3. CHINESE ECONOMICS STRENGTH

Learning Mandarin has become increasingly important as China plays a more dominant role on the global economic stage. China has grown into an undeniable economic powerhouse, with a large market and enticing business potential. There are two factors that underpin China's economic strength, including:

3.1 Advantages of Chinese Business Players

- Pioneers of modern business
- Creating new job opportunities

3.2 Chinese Business Ethics

- Work ethic
- High work ethic
- Time discipline principle
- Cultural awareness

4. FAVORITE SUBJECTS

From the 15 students, each has their favorite subject in the curriculum. These preferences are often based on personal interest, where they tend to be more motivated and enthusiastic in learning. Mastery of the material also serves as the main reason why students favor certain subjects. In addition, the factor of a communicative and inspirational instructor, along with how the material is presented, is also crucial in determining which subject becomes a favorite for students. Below are some of the favorite subjects based on the results of the respondent interviews.

- Public Speaking
- Intercultural Business Communication
- Mandarin for Business Communication
- Comprehensive Mandarin
- Speaking and Reading

5. CURRICULUM IMPROVEMENT

(The Journey of Famous Business Figures in China)

"I am interested in studying case examples of major merchants in China, maybe like this is how to start a business, or this is the way and path if we want to try to collaborate with external parties," said R1.

"I hope to learn about the success strategies of famous business figures in China, like Jack Ma," said R11.

(Building a Business in a Specific Way)

"Business is vast, so I am interested in learning about the steps to build a business in a more specific way," said R2.

(Time Discipline)

"I want to learn business communication so I can collaborate with Chinese people, whose way of

working is different from Indonesians, as they are very disciplined with time," said R3.

"I hope there will be a course on business ethics and culture in the future, so that I can apply it when I enter the industry," said R12. (bisnis global)

"I want to know how they do business to expand internationally, as Chinese businesses are already spread across many countries, such as in mining, construction stores, and trendy beverages," said R4.

CONCLUSION

Demographic Composition:

- The respondents consist of 9 females and 6 males, with ages ranging from 19 to 23 years.
- The majority (13 respondents) had no prior experience in learning Mandarin, while 2 respondents had taken informal Mandarin lessons before joining the Mandarin for Business Communication program.

Differences in Mandarin Proficiency:

There is a significant difference in the understanding of basic Mandarin between those who had studied it previously and those who hadn't. However, there is a shared perception among all respondents regarding the importance of Mandarin in the business context.

Perceptions on Mandarin as a Valuable Asset:

Respondents generally believe that Mandarin is a valuable asset for their future and careers. Key reasons include increased competitiveness in the job market, broader career opportunities, and enhanced negotiation skills.

Mandarin as a Key to Competing in Global Business:

Mandarin is considered essential for competing in the global business landscape due to China's rapid economic growth, strong international business relations, and the ability to understand Chinese business culture.

Favorite Courses and Their Influence:

The interviews revealed that each student has favorite courses within their curriculum. This is due to various factors, such as personal interest, proficiency in mastering the material, engaging and inspiring lecturers, and the relevance of the courses to their future career interests.

Suggestion:

1. The Mandarin Language Program at Universitas Bosowa should continuously improve by providing more comprehensive training for students. This is crucial to ensure that students are prepared to face the increasingly global job market.
2. The university can establish partnerships with Chinese companies or organizations with business ties to China. This will provide students with opportunities for internships or collaborative research, enhancing their understanding of Mandarin in the business context.
3. International exchange programs with universities in China can be an option to further deepen students' Mandarin skills and provide valuable international experience.
4. It is important to continuously raise students' awareness of the importance of Mandarin in the business world. The university can organize seminars, workshops, or promotional events focusing on the career benefits of Mandarin.
5. The Mandarin curriculum at Universitas Bosowa can focus more on business aspects, including relevant business vocabulary and situations, to better prepare students for careers in the global business field.

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