International Students Learning Chinese as a Second Language in a University Context: Focusing on Gender Differences and Other Factors

Yu, Pei-Chun,
Department of Education,
University of Taipei, Taiwan.
E-mail: peichunterri@gmail.com

Huang, Tzu-Hua,
Department of Education,
University of Taipei, Taiwan.
E-mail: anteater1029@gmail.com

Abstract

This study is motivated by concerns of difficulties among international students learning Chinese as a Second Language (CSL) and to some extent to provide better facilitation through effective instructions. It aims to investigate several potential factors that crucially influence CSL learners’ Mandarin proficiency performance and to illustrate how these factors correlate to each other. Effective learning strategies use is one of the key factors that have been proved in foreign language learning for the last few decades. Affective variables such as anxiety and ambiguity tolerance in foreign language learning were neglected in the literature and they are worth examining. Following this vein, the purpose of the study is to investigate mandarin learning performance of international students in a university context, focusing on potential factors and gender differences. We have intended to identify four possible critical factors to test the differences among 36 participants, including foreign language learning anxiety, tolerance of ambiguity, foreign language learning strategies and classroom community. The results showed the variable of foreign language learning anxiety was highly correlated to grades performance in male learners and it was positively correlated to the tolerance of ambiguity. In terms of female learners, there was no significant relation among variables; however, it is suggested that potential factors of affecting mandarin learning may be varied from male learners. With statistically support, it will provide valuable suggestions in Mandarin language learning and teaching in the university context. Therefore, based on research results, educators will gain better understanding to considerate CSL learners’ needs in Mandarin language learning.

Key Words: Chinese as a Second Language (CSL), foreign language learning strategies, ambiguity tolerance, foreign language classroom anxiety, classroom community, Mandarin proficiency, gender