



Investigating Beliefs, Attitudes and Motivation toward English Language Learning among Thai and Chinese Undergraduate Students in Different Study Programs

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Received 05/10/2023	ABSTRACT
Received in revised form 02/12/2023	This study investigated the beliefs, attitudes, and motivation of Thai and Chinese undergraduate students in relation to English language learning. Utilizing a mixed-method, explanatory sequential design, it aims to provide a better understanding of the three variables mentioned above. The quantitative data analysis showed disparities between the cohorts, with Chinese undergraduate students often displaying more robust orientations. However, the qualitative data analysis showed that both groups valued immersive learning experiences and technological integration. The research advocates for pedagogical frameworks in English education that align with overarching global paradigms while respecting individual cultural nuances. Such revelations are important for refining teaching practices and curricula to enhance genuine global literacy. It is also recommended that future research efforts diversify their cultural purview and give due consideration to variations in socio-economic contexts.
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Introduction

It has been observed that more and more students are choosing to study abroad. Jampaklay et al. (2022), using data collected by the Office of the Higher Education Commission in Thailand, summarize the findings related to the highest number of international students coming from China (accounting for 11,993 students in 2020), making up 40 percent of the total international student population.

According to Lightbown and Spada (2021), to be successful in language learning, students must evaluate their preferred learning method, motivation, and attitudes toward the target language to become proficient in a second language. Learners' attitudes toward language acquisition affect their language proficiency and intellectual capacities (Abidin et al., 2012). This is not an isolated observation; Getie (2020) found that students generally have positive attitudes toward English learning, influenced by social factors like peer groups and parents; however, educational context factors, such as classroom arrangements and learning environment, negatively impact attitudes. Positive attitudes are necessary for learning a second language (Gardner, 1985). For instance, Busse (2017), Lasagabaster (2017), and Getie (2020) found that students' English learning attitudes affected their language performance, while Vandergrift and Tafaghdtari (2010) stated that negative attitudes impair cognitive achievement and motivation. Therefore, attitudes affect a student's second-language learning. However, motivation does not affect student English language performance due to the impact of intervening variables such as teaching quality, learning strategies, or individual learner differences (Liu et al., 2018). Even if a student is highly motivated, without effective teaching methods, appropriate learning strategies, and a supportive learning environment, their performance may not improve as expected (Khan & Takkac, 2021).

Nomnian's (2018) study found that Chinese students in Thailand perceived English learning in China as more exam-oriented, with an emphasis placed on grammar and vocabulary. In contrast, their experience in Thailand was viewed as more interactive, focusing on communicative skills. This contrast reflected different educational philosophies in China and Thailand, influencing students' attitudes and motivation. Weerasawainon (2019) explored Thai students who were studying the Chinese language and revealed differences in attitudes and motivations. Thai students showed a practical

approach, using diverse strategies like media and self-learning, differing from more traditional methods seen in Chinese students. This highlighted how cultural and educational differences shape language learning behavior. Yang and Wu (2022) investigated the role of motivation in second language acquisition (SLA) pragmatics, in line with current research trends. Their findings showed that learners with higher motivation exhibit superior performance in expressing complaints in the target language compared to those with lower motivation. Also, a positive correlation was found between learners' levels of pragmatic production and their overall second language (L2) motivation. This includes specific motivational dimensions such as attitudes toward learning English, the ideal L2 self, intended learning efforts, and attitudes toward the L2 community.

Thus, as confirmed by many researchers (see, for example, Adithepsathit & Wudthayagorn, 2018; Chirdchoo & Wudthayagorn, 2001; Dörnyei, 1994; Horwitz, 1988; Liu, 2023) positive attitudes and beliefs toward the English language will motivate students to learn it within and outside of school. Motivation to learn English, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, greatly affects language learning success. Understanding the beliefs, attitudes, and motivations of these two groups toward English language learning is both topical and important. This study aims to address two research questions, which are as follows:

- (1) What are the beliefs, attitudes, and motivations toward English language learning among undergraduate students, both Thai and Chinese?
- (2) Are there any similarities and/or differences in beliefs, attitudes, and motivations toward English language learning among them?

Literature Review

Beliefs about Language Learning

Beliefs about language learning are significant determinants that impact language learning behavior. Scholars have defined beliefs in diverse ways. Beliefs about language learning refer to learners' opinions about language learning issues (Horwitz, 1988), the essence of language and its acquisition (Barcelos, 2003), and their own perspectives on language, language learning, and learning situations (White, 2008). According to Richardson (1996), beliefs were mental concepts that were subjectively held and represented an individual's understanding, premises, or assertions about the world that were perceived to be true. In accordance with previous research, Büyükyazi (2010) asserted that identifying the language learners' beliefs regarding the language learning approach is essential to coming up with effective learning strategies. The inquiry into optimal instructional

delivery methods relied on antecedent experiences with learning and various perspectives from learners. This perception was linguistically known as a learner's beliefs (Bidari, 2021). Horwitz (1988) stated that learners' beliefs about language learning were found to significantly influence their study habits and language learning outcomes. Horwitz (1988) posited that students prioritizing vocabulary and grammar could neglect broader educational tasks set by instructors, leading to a misalignment between their study behaviors and effective language learning strategies. This understanding underscored the importance of aligning teaching methods with student perceptions to enhance overall language learning success. Therefore, the present research defines beliefs about language learning as foundational to learners' behaviors in learning a language, consequently affecting their degree of achievement in language learning outcomes.

Attitudes toward Language Learning

Gibb (1999) defined the term "attitudes" as a psychological variable, a mental or neutral state of readiness, organized through experience, and exerting a directive or dynamic influence on the individual's response to all objects and situations. For more than four decades, Gardner (1985) has asserted that an individual's attitudes was an evaluative reaction to a referent or attitudes object, inferred from the individual's beliefs or opinions about that referent.

The definitions of attitudes, however, appear to be understood in relatively broad terms without a clear link to language learning. Attitudes in the context of language learning have been extensively studied by Gardner (1985) who believed that in achieving proficiency, learners' attitudes toward learning the target language are more significant than their passion for studying a foreign language or their affinity for those who speak the target language. Through the examination of various research studies, Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) identified five areas related to attitudes in L2 learning and foreign language learning: parents, peers, learning situations, teachers, and ethnicity. Furthermore, some research has demonstrated a positive correlation between favorable attitudes toward language learning and language proficiency. For instance, Tutal and Yazar (2022) indicated that those with more positive attitudes toward the target language and culture had a better accent in English (i.e., were rated more native-like or less foreign). This line of investigation was often viewed as particularly valuable because promoting language proficiency was the primary goal of language instruction (Artamonova, 2020).

Motivation in Language Learning

Regardless of the numerous proposed definitions of motivation, it was rather surprising how little agreement there was in the literature regarding the exact meaning of this concept (Dörnyei, 1994). Relating motivation in language learning, Gardner (1985) posited a correlation between motivation and second language acquisition. He stated that motivation was a term that was often used as a simple explanation for achievement in L2 learning. As stated by Dörnyei (1994), L2 motivation was a multifaceted construct, and describing its nature and its core features required particular care. In terms of Gardner's (1985) conceptualization, motivation in language learning was characterized by effort, desire to achieve the language learning goal, and favorable attitudes toward the language. The research project conducted by Gardner and Lambert (1972) spanned over a decade, culminating in a comprehensive summary that established the study of L2 motivation as a distinct research topic. After that, Gardner has continued his study of attitudes and motivation in relation to language learning. In 1995, Gardner and his student, Tremblay, found a causal relationship between attitudes, motivation, and language achievement (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). This landmark study also discovered that language attitudes had a significant impact on goal salience, valence, and self-efficacy. Subsequently, these three variables impacted behaviors, which in turn influenced the achievement of language proficiency. This statement posited that goal salience, valence, and self-efficacy were the mediating factors in the correlation between language attitudes and behaviors.

Interaction of Beliefs, Attitudes, and Motivation

Beliefs, attitudes, and motivation are interrelated and significantly influence language learning processes. Beliefs about language learning, such as perceptions of its difficulty or usefulness, shape attitudes. Attitudes encompass learners' positive or negative feelings toward learning a language. These attitudes then impact motivation, which drives the learner's willingness to engage in and persist with language learning. A positive belief in one's ability to learn a language can foster favorable attitudes and higher motivation, leading to more effective and sustained language learning efforts. Conversely, negative beliefs can lead to unfavorable attitudes and decreased motivation, hindering the learning process. Research by Gabillon (2007) and Xu et al. (2022) underscored the intertwined nature of beliefs, attitudes, and motivation in language learning. Gabillon's (2007) study with French university students revealed how their beliefs about English language learning

influenced their attitudes and motivation. Similarly, Xu et al. (2022) focused on Thai students learning Chinese online, demonstrating how personal and educational experiences shape beliefs, which in turn affect attitudes and motivation. In both cases, the researchers found that positive beliefs and attitudes enhance motivation, which is crucial for effective language learning. These studies highlight the cycle where motivation reinforces positive beliefs and attitudes, emphasizing the need to understand and address learner beliefs to create a more effective learning environment.

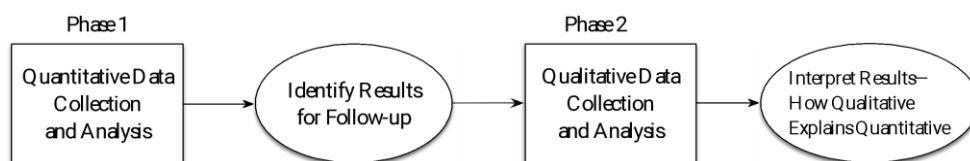
Methodology

Research design

The mixed-method explanatory sequential design was adopted for the current study. In this two-phase design, qualitative data were collected following the quantitative data collection, which were used to help explain the quantitative findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

Figure 1

Explanatory Sequential Mixed Method Design (two phases)



Note. Adapted from Creswell and Creswell's "Three Core Design" (2023, p. 236)

Population and Sample

The study was conducted at a private university located in the northern part of central Bangkok. The population comprises 2,300 undergraduate students from China and 6,000 undergraduate students from Thailand. Each group enrolled in two distinct international programs. There were two groups of 105 students each, one of undergraduate Chinese students and the other of undergraduate Thai students. The Chinese students, predominantly enrolled in the International College (IC) and Chinese International College (CIC), majored in "International Business" and "Tourism Management," with coursework conducted in both English and Chinese. These students also used English and Chinese for everyday activities, including shopping and communication at various on-campus offices and beyond. On the other hand,

Thai students, primarily from “Business English,” “International Business,” and “English for Business Communication” majors, used English as the primary medium of instruction. Additionally, they utilized English and Thai for collaborating with international peers on homework and assignments, applying their English language skills both inside and outside the classroom.

The G*Power software and an effect size of 0.5 were used to determine the sample size. Cohen (1989, p. 348) categorized the effect size of $d = 0.5$ as “medium.” The predetermined sample size comprised 210 students. In this study, however, the researchers were able to recruit 332 students. Their demographic characteristics are elaborated in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N=332)

Demographic characteristics	Subcategories	Count (n)	Percentage (%)
Nationality	Thai	154	46.39
	Chinese	178	53.61
Gender	Male	151	45.48
	Female	181	54.52
Years in the programs	Freshman (1st year)	198	59.64
	Senior (4th year)	134	40.36

Table 1 provided a comprehensive snapshot of the study’s participants, highlighting the variation in nationality, gender, and academic progression in terms of years in the programs. In terms of nationality, Chinese participants constituted a slight majority at 53.61% (N=178), compared to 46.39% (N=154) for Thai participants. A gender distribution was found. Females represented 54.52% (N=181), and males accounted for 45.48% (N=151). When examining the study status, a notable distribution emerges. Freshmen constituted the majority at 59.64% (N=198), while seniors represented 40.36% (N=134).

Research Instruments

Questionnaire

By adapting Horwitz’s (1987) Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) scale and Gardner’s (1985) Attitudes/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) scale, the researchers employed a detailed questionnaire with five-point Likert-scale responses covering personal background, beliefs about language learning, attitudes toward language learning, and motivation in

language learning. To mitigate potential misunderstandings and difficulties during the questionnaire completion, the researchers employed a rigorous translation procedure for all items into Thai and Chinese. This included the use of back translation to translate texts back into the original language so that translation accuracy could be ensured. To further validate the translation accuracy, a panel of bilingual experts reviewed the translations, comparing them against the original for semantic and contextual consistency. The questionnaire was piloted with a small group of students who did not participate in this study ($N=19$). To assess the reliability of each section of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated. The results indicated high reliability of each part for beliefs, attitudes, and motivations, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.81, 0.95, and 0.95, respectively.

Semi-structured Interview

The study employed a semi-structured interview approach, crafting content questions that were derived from the quantitative analysis findings. Specifically, these questions targeted the dimension with the highest average value, with the intent to uncover the most salient and notable responses in that area. To validate the appropriateness and clarity of these questions, a pilot test was conducted with a small group of students. This piloting process allowed for the fine-tuning of the questions, ensuring they were precisely aligned with the study's objectives. After careful calibration, the refined interview questions were finalized (see Appendix). These questions, refined through the pilot testing, were then utilized in the primary study to delve into the nuances of the targeted dimension, thereby enriching the qualitative data collected.

Ethical Consideration

The study was approved by the Research Ethics Review Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects: The Second Allied Academic Group in Social Sciences, Humanities and Fine and Applied Arts at Chulalongkorn University (No.660299). The data were obtained confidentially and were used exclusively for the purposes of this study.

Data Collection

The data collection took place at a private university located in Bangkok in the first semester of the academic year 2023. Prior to administering the questionnaires, participants were given a brief overview of the study's objectives and the importance of their honest responses. Each

participant was allocated 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire, ensuring a streamlined and efficient data collection process. This time frame was established after preliminary tests determined it to be adequate for individuals to thoughtfully answer all questions without feeling rushed.

Following the quantitative phase, the study transitioned into a qualitative stage. Thirty-one participants (15 Chinese and 16 Thais) were selected for deeper exploration, ensuring a diverse spectrum of perspectives. Using a semi-structured interview approach, each participant had about a 15-minute session. Specific probes complemented these questions, ensuring clarity and depth in the responses.

Data Analysis

According to the mixed-method research design, the analysis of quantitative data was carried out. Subsequently, based on the quantitative findings, a qualitative analysis was conducted. The upcoming sections will provide a detailed description of these analyses.

Quantitative Analysis

All the quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS 26. For the first research question, descriptive statistics, including the calculation of mean scores, standard deviations, and percentages, was employed. The interpretation of mean scores, following the guidance of Liu (2023) and Dewaele (2019), is presented below.

4.21 – 5.00 = Highest level of beliefs, attitudes, and motivation

3.41 – 4.20 = High level of beliefs, attitudes, and motivation

2.61 – 3.40 = Moderate level of beliefs, attitudes, and motivation

1.81 – 2.60 = Low level of beliefs, attitudes, and motivation

1.00 – 1.80 = Lowest level of beliefs, attitudes, and motivation

For the second research question, an independent sample *t*-test was performed to determine whether the mean scores of beliefs, attitudes, and motivation held by Thai and Chinese were statistically different.

Qualitative Analysis

After the interviews concluded, the responses underwent content analysis as described by Selvi (2019), highlighting key themes and patterns. The data were coded based on nationality, using labels like “C (Chinese) or T (Thailand)” followed by a numeral. This efficient coding streamlined analysis and ensured clarity, helping to derive insights that aligned with the research objectives.

Findings

Response to Research Question 1

Table 2

An Overview of Beliefs about English Language Learning (N=332)

Dimensions	N of Items	M	SD
a) belief about foreign language aptitude	2	3.32	1.24
b) belief about the difficulty of language learning	4	3.10	1.10
c) belief about the nature of language learning	5	3.74	1.12

Among these three dimensions, “belief about the nature of language learning” demonstrated a highest mean score of 3.74, followed by “belief about foreign language aptitude” with the mean score of 3.32, and “belief about the difficulty of language learning,” with the mean score of 3.10. The standard deviations were relatively narrow, ranging from 1.10 to 1.24. Due to the highest mean score, the researchers examined each item of the “belief about the nature of language learning” separately, as seen in Table 3.

Table 3

Beliefs about the Nature of Language Learning (N=332)

Items	1	2	3	4	5
1) It is necessary to know about English-speaking cultures in order to speak English.	7.8%	19.0%	35.2%	28.6%	9.3%
2) It is best to learn English in an English-speaking country.	2.6%	9.3%	12.2%	39.8%	36.1%
3) The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning vocabulary words.	10.8%	22.1%	21.8%	23.1%	22.2%
4) The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning grammar.	6.0%	16.6%	31.9%	31.0%	14.5%
5) The most important part of learning English is learning how to translate from my native language.	6.5%	19.4%	13.6%	34.3%	26.2%

Some key findings are highlighted in Table 3. Thai is to say, in Item 2, a tendency was observed, with a substantial 75.9% of participants expressing agreement (36.1% strongly agreeing and 39.8% agreeing) that learning English is most effective in an English-speaking country. A prevalent

belief regarding the role of translation in English learning also emerged in Item 5. A majority of participants, totaling 60.5% (with 34.3% strongly agreeing and 26.2% agreeing), leaned toward the idea that translating from one's native language is a pivotal component of the learning process.

The positive beliefs underscore the value participants place on immersive experiences and linguistic connections to one's native tongue. These findings set the stage for a deeper exploration in the subsequent qualitative interviews, aiming to unpack the underlying motivations, experiences, and nuances that have shaped such beliefs among the participants.

Table 4

An Overview of Attitudes toward English Language Learning (N=332)

Dimensions	No of Items	M	SD
a) attitudes toward English-speaking people	4	2.35	1.06
b) attitudes toward the English course	3	2.96	1.09
c) attitudes toward the English teacher	3	3.53	1.14
d) interest in foreign languages	3	3.48	1.21
e) integrative orientation	3	3.39	1.17
f) instrumental orientation	3	3.19	1.16

Upon analyzing the mean scores across various dimensions, two of them stand out. The first, concerning "attitudes toward the English teacher," holds a mean score of 3.53 ($SD=1.14$). The second dimension, focusing on "interest in foreign languages," registers a mean score of 3.48 ($SD=1.21$). Comparing these mean scores with the level indication scale, it becomes evident that both dimensions are situated within the high-level range. This categorization signifies that participants exhibit a high level of positive attitudes toward their "English teachers" and show strong "interest in foreign languages" which can be clarified in Table 5.

Table 5

Attitudes toward the English teacher and interest in foreign languages (N=332)

Items	1	2	3	4	5
Attitudes toward the English teacher					
1) I look forward to going to class because my English teacher is so good.	9.6%	18.7%	37.0%	20.5%	14.2%

2) My English teacher has a dynamic and interesting teaching style.	15.6%	23.3%	22.2%	19.8%	19.1%
3) My English teacher is a great source of inspiration for me.	8.7%	19.0%	35.2%	24.7%	12.3%
Interest in foreign languages					
4) I wish I could speak many foreign languages perfectly.	8.1%	13.0%	22.3%	28.6%	28.0%
5) I wish I could read newspapers and magazines in foreign languages.	9.0%	33.1%	23.8%	14.5%	19.6%
6) I enjoy meeting people who speak foreign languages.	10.5%	15.4%	34.6%	24.7%	14.8%

In Table 5, a neutral response was observed for Item 1 “I look forward to going to class because my English teacher is so good” at 37.0%, for Item 2 “My English teacher has a dynamic and interesting teaching style” at 22.2%, and for Item 3 “My English teacher is a great source of inspiration for me” at 35.2%. Furthermore, when considering “interest in foreign languages,” it was found that “I enjoy meeting people who speak foreign” in Item 6 yielded a neutral response rate of 34.6%. These quantitative results demonstrate a significant portion of participants holding a middle-ground stance toward their English teacher and their interest in interacting with foreign language speakers. These findings set the stage for a deeper exploration through qualitative interviews to further understand the nuances behind these neutral perceptions.

Table 6

An Overview of Motivation in English Language Learning (N=332)

Dimensions	N of Items	M	SD
Self-efficacy			
a) English use anxiety	1	3.06	1.11
b) performance expectancy	12	2.98	1.08
Behavior			
c) motivational intensity	2	3.55	1.10
d) attention	3	3.29	1.10
e) persistence	3	3.70	1.11

In the investigation of Table 6, two highest mean scores were identified which are “motivational intensity” ($M=3.55$, $SD=1.10$) and “persistence” ($M=3.70$, $SD=1.11$). In order to comprehend these two dimensions, further investigation was carried out in Table 7.

Table 7*Motivational Intensity and Persistence (N=332)*

Items	1	2	3	4	5
Motivational intensity					
1) I really work hard to learn English.	7.8%	18.7%	23.6%	37.4%	12.5%
2) After I get my English assignments back, I always rewrite them, correcting my mistakes.	7.5%	22.9%	33.1%	27.4%	9.1%
Persistence					
3) I work on my English homework regularly.	9.6%	15.4%	29.2%	34.1%	11.7%
4) I usually finish my English homework before watching television or going out.	8.1%	16.6%	34.9%	29.5%	10.8%
5) I usually maintain a high level of effort throughout an entire course.	9.3%	13.9%	36.7%	28.3%	11.8%

Table 7 revealed trends in “motivational intensity” and “persistence.” The majority strongly agreed that they work hard to learn English (37.4%), as shown in Item 1. However, when it came to the assignment revision and correction, in Item 2, the tendency moved toward neutral agreement (33.1%). On the persistence section, the majority strongly completed their English homework in Item 3. However, the tendency moved toward neutral agreement, as the majority reported, in Item 4, that they usually finish their homework before doing something else (34.9%) and in Item 5, that they usually maintain a high level of effort throughout the course of study (36.7%).

Response to Research Question 2

Table 8

T-test results comparing Thai and Chinese undergraduate students on beliefs, attitudes, and motivation (N=332)

Variables	Thai (n=154)		Chinese (n=178)		<i>t</i> (330)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Beliefs	2.85	1.21	4.15	.75	11.82	.000	1.29
Attitudes	2.69	1.01	4.38	.79	14.90	.000	1.87
Motivation	2.94	1.04	4.09	.67	13.60	.000	1.32

An independent sample *t*-test indicates that Chinese students held stronger beliefs ($M=4.15$, $SD=0.75$) compared to their Thai counterparts

($M=2.85$, $SD=1.21$), $t(330)=11.82$, $p= .000$. Similarly, Chinese students displayed more positive attitudes toward English language learning ($M=4.38$, $SD=0.79$) than Thai students ($M=2.69$, $SD=1.01$), $t(330)=14.90$, $p= .000$. In terms of motivation, Chinese students again showed higher levels ($M=4.09$, $SD=0.67$) in contrast to Thai ($M=2.94$, $SD=1.04$), $t(330)=13.60$, $p= .000$.

The effect sizes, based on Cohen (1989), are also calculated: 1.29 for beliefs, 1.87 for attitudes, and 1.32 for motivation. These values, by conventional standards, are indicative of a large effect size, considering that a Cohen's d of 0.8 or higher is typically seen as representing a large effect. This suggests that the observed differences in scores between Thai and Chinese across these constructs are not merely statistically significant, but they also carry considerable practical significance.

Based on the differences between Thai and Chinese, the qualitative data were collected sequentially by employing semi-structured interviews. The findings are shown below.

Table 9

English-speaking Country and Translation responded by Thai and Chinese (N=31)

Themes	Sub-Themes	Sample Response
English-speaking country	Immersion experiences	C3: <i>"I feel that being around people who talk normally and having to use English ... every day are both effective ways to learn."</i> T2: <i>"It offers a real-world context that classroom learning can't replicate."</i> C6: <i>"I think it helps, especially with listening and speaking. In China, I felt more structured."</i>
	Financial concerns	T5: <i>"It might be expensive for many people. So, if my family can afford it ... Local institutions with good English programs can help too."</i> C7: <i>"I feel... English is difficult. Maybe if I live in the States, I learn faster? My parents cannot send me there, so I learn in China."</i> C9: <i>"For me, very difficult in English country. People speak fast, use hard words. In Thailand, teacher slow and use simple English, easier for me to understand."</i>
Translation	Supportive effect in initial learning	C1: <i>"It helps in bridging the gap between what I know and what I am learning."</i> T1: <i>"In the beginning, I often translated Thai sentences to English in my head before speaking."</i> C7: <i>"As you advance in your English skills, you'd better change always translating and begin thinking in English. But in the beginning, it is helpful."</i>
	Cultural and linguistic challenges	T4: <i>"For Thai students, some phrases and idioms don't translate well in English. While it can help in communication, relying too much on translation sometimes lead to misunderstandings."</i>

C6: “Translation is like a bridge between my culture and the English-speaking world. It helps me make sense of the new language in terms of what I already know.”

T7: “It’s a mixed bag. Sometimes, translating helps me understand the deeper meaning of a phrase or sentence, especially idioms. But...I feel like I’m not really learning English, just how to convert Thai to English.”

T12: “I find it hard to translate Thai idioms and expressions into English because the cultures are different.”

Although the quantitative data analysis showed that Thai and Chinese were statistically different in terms of beliefs, attitudes, and motivation, the qualitative data analysis provided wider and deeper perspectives regarding their English language learning. It was found out that both Thai and Chinese students agreed that being around people who speak the target language helps them learn it better. This showed that they both had a positive view of immersion experiences. They believed that such environments provide practical language use that classroom settings cannot. However, both groups acknowledged that expense was a barrier, demonstrating a similarity in the perceived economic difficulties associated with studying English abroad.

In addition, both Thai and Chinese students recognized its merits in the initial learning stages. However, they were also aware that over-reliance on translation can lead to challenges, especially with idiomatic expressions that do not align culturally or linguistically. Differences might be more nuanced here, with individual students expressing varying degrees of reliance on translation, potentially influenced by their personal experiences and educational contexts.

Table 10

Attitudes toward the English teacher and Interest in Foreign Languages responded by Thai and Chinese (N=31)

Themes	Sub-Themes	Sample Response
Attitudes toward the English teacher	Interactive learning techniques	C5: “Instead of just bookish knowledge, [she brought in] magazines, movies, and even songs.” T7: “Instead of just textbook scenarios, we had role-play situations like ordering food at a restaurant or attending a job interview.” C7: “He did not just teach, he performed. Every class was like a stage, full of energy, and enthusiasm. We were not just learning English; we were living it.”
	Traditional methods and structure	C13: “He used Chinese literature and compared it with English literature. This comparative study was insightful and enhanced my grasp of both cultures.”

		T16: "We used English storybooks, even the ones meant for kids. Reading them aloud, discussing the stories, and understanding the morals in a language different from ours was an excellent way to grasp English."
Interest in foreign languages	Multilingualism as a window to culture and global connection	T2: "Yes, I would love to be. If I could speak many languages, it'd be like having many lenses to see the world." C5: "Learning languages opens the world for you. If I could speak many languages, I feel like I hold a key to different cultures and histories. It is like travelling without leaving home." C13: "I feel so confident traveling and making friends all over the world. It is not just about communication, but also about understanding different mindsets."
Pragmatism		T2: "Yes, if I could speak many languages, it would be like having many lenses to see the world." T5: "Maybe...I think it is good to know many languages, but I also think it is essential to master one properly rather than knowing bits of many." C9: "Not sure. My focus right now is English, as it is so widely spoken. But...of course, speaking multiple languages would be impressive." T13: "I am content with both. But if I were multilingual, it would be a bonus. I think it is more about the depth of understanding than the number of languages."

In Table 10, both Thai and Chinese students highlighted the importance of interactive learning techniques. However, C13 emphasized the appreciation for a comparative approach that integrates Chinese literature with English, thus combining traditional methods with novel insights. Based on the desire for multilingualism, both sets of students recognized the cultural and global advantages of being multilingual. However, a divergence emerges in their pragmatic views on multilingualism. While T5 and T13 emphasized mastering one language or striking a balance, C9 articulated a more strategic focus on English, citing its global prominence. In summary, while both Chinese and Thai students exhibit a shared appreciation for interactive language learning and the cultural benefits of multilingualism, their perspectives diverge when considering traditional teaching methodologies and the depth versus breadth approach to language learning.

Table 11

Motivational Intensity and Persistence responded by Thai and Chinese (N=31)

Themes	Sub-Themes	Sample Response
Motivational intensity	Active engagement	<p>T3: <i>"I have been learning English since childhood. My parents enrolled me in English-medium schools. Engaging in school plays and speeches helped a lot."</i></p> <p>T4: <i>"Songs! I memorize English songs, and it was fun. It might not be conventional, but singing helps with pronunciation and rhythm."</i></p> <p>C5: <i>"I dedicate at least two hours every day to English. Joining an English debate club on campus helps. It forces me to think quickly in English, and the competitive nature pushes me to continuously improve."</i></p>
Persistence	Immersive use of technical media	<p>C7: <i>"I struggled initially, especially with pronunciation. So, I started watching English movies without subtitles. It was tough at first, but significant improvements."</i></p> <p>T7: <i>"I combine learning with my hobbies. For instance, I love cooking, so I watch English cooking shows. This way, it does not feel like studying."</i></p> <p>C10: <i>"I always had an affinity for languages. Apart from textbooks, I use app like Duolingo and Rosetta Stone. They gamify the learning process, which keeps me motivated."</i></p> <p>T14: <i>"Flashcards have been my savior. Every time I learn a new word, I make a flashcard. It is an old method, but it works wonders for me."</i></p>

In Table 11, several shared and distinct tendencies emerge. Thai and Chinese students both exhibited strong motivation in their language learning endeavors, often engaging in active immersion techniques such as participating in school activities or employing technological tools. However, there are discernible cultural nuances in their approach. Thai often integrate language learning into personal interests from a young age, utilizing mediums like singing or watching hobby-related shows in English. Meanwhile, Chinese tend to have a well-structured approach, dedicating specific hours to English practice and seeking competitive platforms like debate clubs. Thus, while their end goal is similar, the pathways they adopt reflect their distinct cultural backgrounds and individual preferences.

Discussion

This study, underpinned by both quantitative and qualitative analyses, has illuminated the multifaceted nature of English language learning among Thai and Chinese students, highlighting the complexities and nuances of their beliefs, attitudes, and motivations. In light of the existing literature, the findings underscore the pivotal role of cultural and individual contexts in shaping these experiences. Background differences are frequently mentioned as factors that could influence student achievement. Consistent with Choi and Nieminen's (2013) observation that East Asia, particularly China, places a

significant cultural emphasis on educational excellence, the findings of this study support this notion. The cultural value system in question has the potential to enhance the allure of immersive learning environments by perceiving obstacles as advantageous to the educational journey as opposed to hindrances. These viewpoints, in conjunction with the widespread implementation of contemporary educational technologies, demonstrate a worldwide tendency to prioritize immersive and technologically advanced learning experiences. By contrasting particular cultural incentives with worldwide educational patterns, this analysis offers an impartial and comprehensive perspective on the various elements that impact student performance in varied academic environments.

The findings of this study, highlighting the integration of technology into education, reflect a global trend and are in harmony with Kessler's (2018) assertions about the pervasive influence of technology in education. Both emphasize the alignment of educational practices with current technological advancements. This agreement with Kessler's (2018) work, while acknowledging the broader academic conversation about technology in education, illustrates a convergence without overlooking the diversity of approaches and pedagogical challenges documented in other studies, thus maintaining an unbiased narrative.

Undeniably, experiential learning offers invaluable benefits, particularly in terms of facilitating authentic and sustained language exposure. By submerging students in an environment where the target language is used ubiquitously, it fosters a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the language beyond the confines of a classroom (Blyth, 2018). However, this immersion can present a daunting set of challenges, especially evident among Chinese students studying in Thailand. Navigating a novel cultural and academic landscape necessitates that these students employ English not just as a medium for academic discourse but as an essential tool for day-to-day interactions. While this scenario presents continuous and authentic opportunities for language application and reinforcement, it also imposes a significant cognitive and emotional demand on students. Such demands range from understanding academic content to interpreting nuances in everyday conversations, discerning cultural undertones, or even managing potential misunderstandings.

The observed differences, particularly in the heightened attitudes among Chinese and Thai students, challenge the prevailing notion of homogeneity in language learning processes across diverse cultures. It challenges the prevailing notion of homogeneity in language learning, as previously seen in Nomnian's (2018) research, which highlighted the dynamic and engaging nature of English learning in Thai universities, attributed to interactive teaching styles and reduced emphasis on high-stakes testing.

Unlike the Chinese context, which is more exam-focused, Thai universities offer a more flexible and active learning environment. This divergence in educational practices across cultures underscores the importance of considering cultural and educational contexts when analyzing language learning processes. While Nomnian's (2018) study provides a foundation, our research further elaborates on these cultural differences by directly comparing Thai and Chinese students' attitudes toward language learning. This comparison reveals a more nuanced understanding of how cultural contexts uniquely shape learning preferences and strategies, thereby contributing a new perspective to the field and ensuring a balanced view in the discourse on language education across different cultures.

Conclusion

English language learning among Thai and Chinese students was profoundly influenced by their beliefs, attitudes, and motivation. The contrast between the Chinese emphasis on educational excellence and the more interactive and flexible learning environment in Thailand spotlights the significant role that cultural backgrounds play in shaping language learning experiences. This finding challenges the assumption of a homogeneous approach to language education across different cultures and underscores the need for educational strategies that are sensitive to these diverse cultural contexts. Moreover, the incorporation of technology in education, aligned with global trends and supporting Kessler's (2018) observations, indicates a shift toward more immersive and technologically advanced learning environments. This shift not only offers new opportunities for enhancing language learning experiences but also calls for a careful balance between embracing technological advancements and addressing the pedagogical challenges they present. Importantly, the study sheds light on the benefits and challenges of experiential learning through language immersion. While immersion provides students with authentic language exposure, it also imposes significant cognitive and emotional demands, particularly for those navigating unfamiliar cultural and academic environments. This aspect is crucial for educators and policy-makers to consider supporting effective and inclusive language learning strategies.

In summary, this study contributes valuable insights into the complex dynamics of English language learning among Thai and Chinese students. It encourages a re-evaluation of conventional language education practices and advocates for more culturally and technologically adaptive approaches. The findings serve not only as a significant addition to academic discourse but also as a guide for future research and practical applications in the field of language education.

Limitations

Despite the depth of the findings, this study is not without limitations. Its focus on a specific group limits the representation of the broader Asian context, overlooking factors like socio-economic backgrounds and individual experiences that influence language learning beliefs and motivations. Future research should include diverse Asian perspectives and account for individual differences for a more comprehensive cross-cultural analysis. Additionally, the study's generalizability is limited due to the specific demographic and contextual backgrounds of the participants, suggesting that the findings might not be universally applicable. To enhance external validity, future studies should aim for a more diverse participant pool and explore these themes across varying demographics. The study's reliance on self-reported data through questionnaires and interviews may introduce biases. Future research should consider supplementing these methods with other data sources, like observational data, for more valid findings. Lastly, the measurement instruments used, while reliable, may not fully encapsulate the complexities of the psychological constructs being studied. Future studies should refine these instruments or incorporate additional tools for a deeper understanding of these constructs.

Recommendations

Pedagogical recommendations

Given the findings of this study, it is imperative to foster positive beliefs, attitudes, and motivation among students from diverse backgrounds. The need for pedagogical customization becomes paramount in this context. Educators should tailor their teaching methodologies to cater specifically to the cultural and individual nuances of both Thai and Chinese students. This approach is not about standardizing education; rather, it's about personalizing and customizing learning experiences to be more impactful and relevant to each student group. This can be achieved through a curriculum that integrates immersion and technology in a way that resonates with the specific needs and preferences of each group. Such a balanced approach to language teaching and learning, which melds global learning trends with specific cultural and individual contexts, will ensure that students are not just learning but thriving, becoming equipped to engage in a variety of global environments.

Research Recommendations

Future research should delve deeper into understanding how different educational strategies impact students from varied cultural backgrounds. Researchers should explore the efficacy of customized and personalized pedagogical approaches in fostering positive beliefs, attitudes, and motivation toward language learning. There is a significant opportunity to expand the scope of this research to include a broader range of cultural perspectives, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of global competence in language education. Such research endeavors will be invaluable in informing educational practices and policies, ensuring they are aligned with the evolving needs of an interconnected world. Investigating the intersection of cultural nuances, technological advancements, and language learning will contribute significantly to the field, aiding in the creation of an educational milieu where diverse student populations can not only learn effectively but also flourish.

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Appendix

Interview Questions

(Beliefs about the nature of language learning)

Q1: Do you believe it's more beneficial to learn English in a country where it's the native language? Why or why not?

Q2: In your opinion, is learning how to translate from your native language to English a significant part of the learning process? Why or why not?

(Attitudes about English teachers)

Q3: Can you describe the teaching style of an English teacher you admire, and explain what makes their approach dynamic and interesting?

(Attitudes about interests in foreign language)

Q4: Do you have a desire to become multilingual? How would you feel if you could speak many foreign languages perfectly?

(Motivational intensity)

Q5: Can you talk about your experience or methods for working hard to learn English or any other language?

(Persistence)

Q6: Can you provide an example of a time when you maintained a high level of effort throughout an entire course? What strategies did you employ to stay committed?