

# Exploring the Cultural Exchange Potential of Learning Chinese as a Second Language in Pakistan

Nawal Fatima<sup>1,\*</sup> and Esha Saman<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>China Study Center National University of Science & Technology, Pakistan

<sup>2</sup>National University of Sciences & Technology, Pakistan

Email: nawal@csc.nust.edu.pk (N.F.)

\*Corresponding author

Manuscript received September 11, 2023; revised October 10, 2023; accepted November 11, 2023; published January 17, 2024

**Abstract**—As China's global influence grows, there is a growing interest in learning Chinese as a second language in many countries worldwide. In Pakistan, the potential for cultural exchange between China and Pakistan represents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to improve mutual understanding and strengthen bilateral ties. This paper aims to investigate the cultural exchange potential of learning Chinese as a second language in Pakistan through online surveys. In this paper, encouraging Chinese language education in Pakistan can play an important role in facilitating cultural exchange and strengthening people-to-people ties between the two countries.

**Keywords**—Chinese, cultural exchange, language potential, Pakistan

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the broad sense, cultural exchange takes place when people from two or more different upbringings exchange ideas, feelings, stories, and customs. Cultural exchange can be used to foster dialogue and understanding of diversity in communities, thereby enhancing community relations and cohesion [1]. Some examples of cultural exchange in the classroom include *a school trip to another country*, *a cultural venue*: such as a museum, with exhibits and artifacts from various cultures around the world, and *a culture-sharing event*. Cultural exchange is an important part of promoting student diversity, inclusion, and understanding. Here are some ideas on how to go about it: *Foster a welcoming environment*: Educational institutes should make their environment welcoming to people of all cultures. Displaying flags or symbols from various cultures, or encouraging students to share their cultural traditions, could be examples of this. *Encourage curriculum diversity*: Teachers should make an effort to incorporate materials and activities that reflect the diversity of their students. This could include reading literature by a variety of authors, researching various cultural celebrations, or learning about the history and customs of various cultures. *Create dialogue opportunities*: educational institutes can facilitate cultural exchange by allowing students to discuss their experiences and share their perspectives. Class discussions, cultural fairs, or student-led presentations could all fall under this category. *Foster connections with other institutes*: To promote cultural exchange, educational institutes can form partnerships with other institutes in different regions or countries. To include putting together exchange programs or pen pal programs. Finally, these institutes should recognize and *celebrate the diversity* of their students. This could include organizing cultural festivals, commemorating cultural holidays, or highlighting the achievements of students from diverse

backgrounds. China's rise as a global economic and political power has piqued the interest of many countries, including Pakistan. China and Pakistan have deepened their bilateral relations in recent years as two neighboring countries with shared historical and cultural ties. The promotion of Chinese language education in Pakistan is an important aspect of this relationship.

In recent years, Chinese language education in Pakistan has grown significantly, with an increasing number of schools and universities offering Chinese language courses. This is partly due to the growing demand for Chinese language skills among Pakistani students and professionals seeking employment in China or working with Chinese companies in Pakistan.

Aside from the economic advantages of learning Chinese, there is significant potential for cultural exchange between China and Pakistan through the promotion of Chinese language education. As Chinese culture becomes more widely known around the world, learning Chinese can help Pakistanis gain a better understanding of Chinese history, culture, and values. This can aid in the development of mutual understanding and strengthen people-to-people ties between the two countries.

The paper aims to investigate the cultural exchange potential of learning Chinese as a second language in Pakistan. It will go over China and Pakistan's historical and cultural ties, the current state of Chinese language education in Pakistan, and the potential benefits and challenges of promoting Chinese language education in the country. The paper will conclude with recommendations for policymakers, educators, and other stakeholders on how to expand Chinese language education in Pakistan and capitalize on its cultural exchange potential. The aims and objectives of this paper are:

(1) to examine the motivations of Pakistani learners in studying Chinese as a second language and their perceptions of its cultural exchange potential and,

(2) to provide insights for policymakers, educators, and language learners on how to promote and enhance the cultural exchange potential of learning Chinese as a second language in Pakistan.

So, the study is carrying the research questions:

(1) What are the motivations of Pakistani learners for studying Chinese as a second language, and how do they perceive its cultural exchange potential?

(2) How can policymakers, educators, and language learners promote and enhance the cultural exchange potential of learning Chinese as a second language in Pakistan?

The study is delimited by the following factors:

*Geographic limitation:* The study focuses on the potential for cultural exchange in Pakistan through Chinese language education. It makes no mention of other countries or regions. *Time constraint:* The study is limited to the current state of Chinese language education in Pakistan and does not include historical trends or future projections. *Language restriction:* The research focuses on Chinese language education and its potential for cultural exchange. It does not examine other languages or their potential impact on cultural exchange between China and Pakistan. *Data limitation:* Because the study is based on publicly available data from credible sources, the scope and depth of the analysis may be limited.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Language learning has been identified as a critical factor in promoting cross-cultural communication and understanding because it equips individuals with the tools needed to navigate cultural differences and bridge communication gaps. There has been a surge of interest in the cultural exchange potential of language learning in recent years, particularly considering societies' increasing global interconnectedness [2].

Because of China's economic and political power, the Chinese language has grown in importance in the global context. Chinese language learning has gained traction in many countries around the world, including Pakistan, where there has been an increase in demand for Chinese language programs and teachers in recent years. However, while the economic benefits of learning Chinese have received extensive research, the cultural exchange potential of language learning has received little attention.

There is a growing body of literature that explores the relationship between language learning and cultural exchange. For example, researchers have investigated the potential for language learning to facilitate intercultural communication and understanding by promoting cross-cultural competence [3, 4]. Studies have also examined the ways in which language teachers can promote cultural exchange in the classroom, such as through the use of authentic materials and cultural immersion experiences [5, 6].

The Chinese language is far more popular in Pakistan. Pakistan has introduced Chinese at the most fundamental level. More schools across the country are beginning to teach Chinese at the kindergarten level [7]. Although this is primarily a private-sector trend, the federal and provincial governments are planning to make Chinese language instruction mandatory in public-sector institutions as well. At the same time, there is an increase in the number of China Study Centers at various universities in Pakistan [7]. Confucius Institutes, which were established with the assistance of the Chinese government, has played an important role in this regard [7].

There is a need to understand the attitudes and perceptions of Chinese language teachers toward the cultural exchange potential of language learning in the context of Chinese language learning in Pakistan. Previous research has looked into the experiences of Chinese language learners in Pakistan, such as their motivations for learning the language and attitudes toward Chinese culture [8, 9]. However, little is known about Chinese language teachers' attitudes toward promoting cultural exchange through their teaching practices.

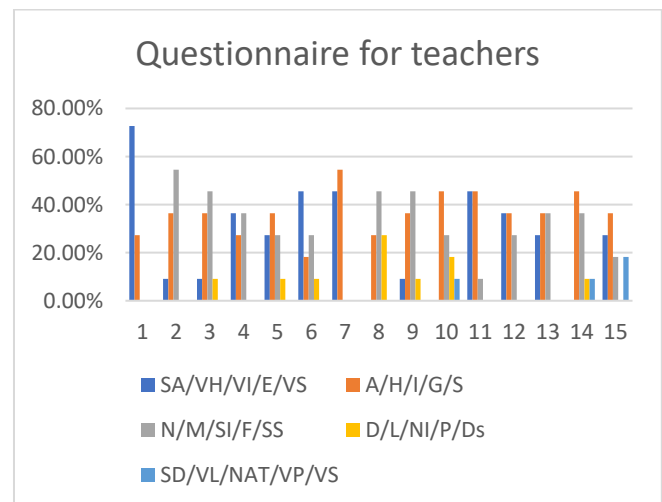
As a result, the purpose of this study is to fill a gap in the literature by investigating the cultural exchange potential of learning Chinese as a second language in Pakistan through the eyes of Chinese language teachers. This study can contribute to a better understanding of the role of language learning in promoting cross-cultural communication and understanding between Pakistan and China by examining the attitudes and perceptions of Chinese language teachers towards cultural exchange and how these attitudes influence their teaching practices.

## III. METHODOLOGY

The research methodology of the study is quantitative. The mode of data collection for this study includes surveys, with university students and educators, involved in Chinese language education in Pakistan. Online surveys were conducted to gather information on the availability of Chinese language courses, interests and quality of instruction, and student enrollment data on students and educators.

## IV. DATA ANALYSIS

Online surveys showed very impressive results regarding Chinese as a second language learning in Pakistan. Growing economic needs instigated Pakistani students to learn Chinese along with other languages, i.e., English. Pakistani universities and schools are paying attention to this domain to make their students well-equipped with Chinese for the coming future. 15 questions were asked to teachers (11 teachers) teaching Chinese in different institutes in Pakistan. Moreover, 15 questions were asked to the students (25 students) learning Chinese in Pakistani institutes. Here are the results of the questionnaire which was sent to the teachers to know the phenomenon.



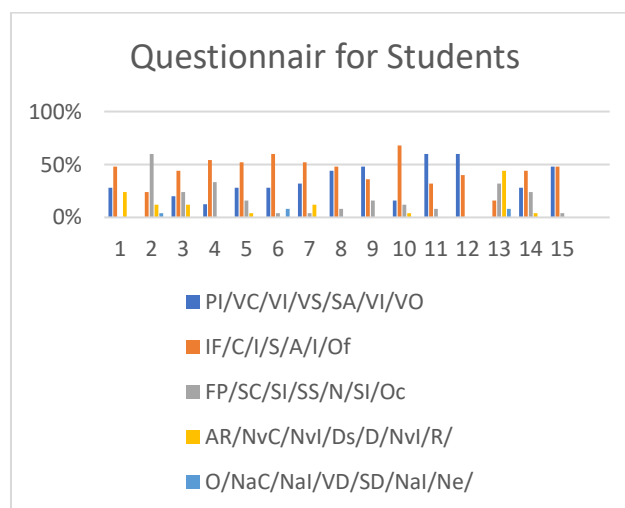
Note. X-AXIS = Questions, Y-AXIS = Percentage of the questions  
Fig. 1. Questionnaire for teachers' results bar graph.

According to Fig. 1 The 1st question of this questionnaire received positive feedback from the respondents regarding teaching Chinese which could help to promote cultural exchange between China and Pakistan. Where 72.7% is strongly agreed and 27.3% agreed that language learning is very helpful to that particular promotion. The 2nd question was about the availability of Chinese language courses in Pakistan. 45% population marked in strongly agree and agree

boxes but 54.5% were neutral. This showed that learning courses are available here but these are not in the access to the major population. The 3<sup>rd</sup> one was about the quality of Chinese language instruction in Pakistan, where 45% were satisfied but 45.5% gave it the fair status because they were just OK with it. 9.1% called the instructions poor. Fourth one statement was about, “To what extent do you believe that Chinese language education can contribute to the economic development of Pakistan? Approx. 64% of the total population thought that language learning could play a crucial role in contributing to the economic development of Pakistan. As with the 4th question, the 5th one also shows a bulky status to infer that for cultural development language learning plays a vital role. The 6th statement deals with the status of Chinese as a second language in Pakistan could be important to attain by students. 65% (approx.) of the population was in favor of that. The 7th question was” To what extent do you believe that Chinese language education can help promote people-to-people exchanges between Pakistan and China”? The results showed 100 percent in favor of this statement. But in the 8th question when it was asked about the availability of the sources for learning Chinese in Pakistan then only 27.3% of the population was satisfied but the rest of the population was dissatisfied or neutral. According to the results of the 9th question “How satisfied are you with the support provided to the educators of Chinese language courses in Pakistan”? 40% of people were satisfied but the rest of the respondents were neutral and dissatisfied. To what extent do you believe that Pakistani students are interested in learning Chinese as a second language?”, That was the 10th question where 45.5% of the respondents agreed and 27% were neutral. It shows the positive attitude of Pakistanis toward learning Chinese as a second language. 90% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that learning Chinese can help Pakistani students in their future careers (11th question). In the 12th question, no negative response was calculated when it was asked, “How would you rate the effectiveness of Chinese language education in promoting cross-cultural communication and understanding in Pakistan. The 13th and 14th questions were about the level of interest of Pakistani students in Chinese culture and society, then 36.4% (13th question) and 45% (14th question) of the respondents thought that it was high among Pakistani students. The last 15th question was, “To what extent do you believe that Pakistani students learning Chinese can contribute to the building of a stronger relationship between Pakistan and China?”, then 64% (approx.) agreed or strongly agreed on that.

Now, look at the other questionnaire Fig. 2 which was distributed among the students who are learning Chinese in Pakistan. They also exhibit very positive attitudes to learning Chinese as a second language in Pakistan. Question 1 was “What motivated you to learn Chinese as a second language?”. Then 48% of respondents answered that they wanted to improve their future opportunities, 24% for their academic requirements, and 28% showed interest in Chinese culture and society. *How confident do you feel in your ability to communicate in Chinese?* In the second question was where 60% of the respondents marked themselves as neutral. Which means that they need more assistance in this regard. The 3<sup>rd</sup> question was “How important do you think it is for Pakistani students to learn Chinese as a second language?

Here 64% of the participants were in favor of learning Chinese considering it very important. In the 4th question “How satisfied are you with the resources available for learning Chinese in Pakistan?”, 67% of the students are satisfied with the available resources regarding Chinese. In question 5 when they were asked, “How satisfied are you with the quality of Chinese language instruction in Pakistan?”, then 80% were satisfied with that. 90% of the respondents agreed on that when it was asked the 6th question, “To what extent do you believe that learning Chinese can help promote cultural exchange between Pakistan and China?”. According to the results on the 7th question “How interested are you in learning about Chinese culture and society?”, 84% showed their interest. The next 8th question, “How important do you think it is to learn about Chinese culture and society when studying Chinese as a second language?”, approx. all the respondents agreed on it. 84% of students think alike as it was asked in question 9,” To what extent do you believe that learning Chinese can contribute to your future career prospects”. 84% were satisfied when it was asked in the 10<sup>th</sup> statement, “How satisfied are you with the support provided to students of Chinese language courses in Pakistan?”. Approx. all the students wanted to get opportunities to practice Chinese with the native speakers as they could learn the language better. It was asked in question 11, “How important do you think it is to have opportunities to practice speaking Chinese with native speakers?”. According to the 12th question, all the respondents agreed, “To what extent do you believe that Chinese language education can help promote people-to-people exchanges between Pakistan and China?”. When question 13 was asked, “How often do you engage in cultural activities related to Chinese culture and society?”, the replies were not satisfactory which means there should be more cultural activities related to Chinese culture and society in the educational institutes in Pakistan. In the 14<sup>th</sup> question, “How would you rate the effectiveness of Chinese language education in promoting cross-cultural communication and understanding in Pakistan?”, 72% responded it was very effective or effective. Last but very important question 15,” To what extent do you believe that learning Chinese can contribute to building a stronger relationship between Pakistan and China?”, all the respondents agreed or strongly agreed on that.



Note. X-Axis= Questions, Y-Axis= Percentage of the Questions  
 Fig. 2. Questionnaire for students' results bar graph.

## V. DISCUSSION

The results of the survey show a positive attitude towards learning Chinese as a second language in Pakistan. The majority of respondents believed that language learning can contribute to the cultural and economic development of Pakistan and that Pakistani students are interested in learning Chinese. Furthermore, the respondents recognized the importance of language learning in promoting people-to-people exchanges between Pakistan and China and building a stronger relationship between the two countries.

However, there were some concerns about the availability and quality of Chinese language courses in Pakistan. Only 45% of respondents were satisfied with the quality of instruction, and 27.3% were satisfied with the availability of sources for learning Chinese. Furthermore, only 40% of respondents were satisfied with the support provided to educators of Chinese language courses. These results suggest that there is a need for greater investment in Chinese language education in Pakistan, both in terms of availability and quality of instruction, as well as support for educators. This investment could pay dividends in promoting cultural and economic exchange between Pakistan and China, as well as building stronger relationships between the two countries. Overall, the survey results suggest that there is a growing recognition in Pakistan of the importance of learning Chinese as a second language and that this could have significant benefits for the country in the future. The results of the survey have several implications for the future of Chinese language education in Pakistan. First, there is a growing interest among Pakistani students in learning Chinese, driven by economic needs and the desire for cultural exchange. This indicates a potential demand for more Chinese language courses in Pakistani schools and universities, as well as for resources to support Chinese language education. Second, while the quality of Chinese language instruction in Pakistan was rated as fair by some respondents, there is room for improvement in terms of teacher support and availability of learning resources. Providing more support to Chinese language educators and expanding access to learning materials could improve the quality of Chinese language education in Pakistan. Third, there is a belief among a majority of respondents that Chinese language education can contribute to the economic development of Pakistan and promote people-to-people exchanges between Pakistan and China. This suggests that there may be opportunities for increased economic cooperation and cultural exchange between the two countries in the future.

The positive attitudes of Pakistani students towards learning Chinese as a second language have several implications for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders in Pakistan.

Firstly, policymakers can focus on creating policies that promote the teaching and learning of Chinese in Pakistani educational institutions. Given that almost two-thirds of the participants believed that learning Chinese is very important, policymakers could prioritize the inclusion of Chinese language courses in the national curriculum. This would help to create more opportunities for Pakistani students to learn the language and improve their future prospects.

Secondly, educators can focus on improving the quality of Chinese language instruction in Pakistan. While 80% of the

respondents were satisfied with the quality of instruction, 60% marked themselves as neutral when asked about their ability to communicate in Chinese. This suggests that there is room for improvement in the teaching methodologies used to teach Chinese as a second language in Pakistan. Educators can focus on providing more opportunities for students to practice speaking Chinese with native speakers, which is an area that almost all respondents highlighted as important.

Thirdly, stakeholders in Pakistan can focus on promoting cultural exchange between Pakistan and China. Given that almost all respondents believed that learning Chinese can promote cultural exchange and contribute to building a stronger relationship between Pakistan and China, stakeholders can create more opportunities for students to engage in cultural activities related to Chinese culture and society. This would help to improve cross-cultural communication and understanding between the two countries. In conclusion, the positive attitudes of Pakistani students towards learning Chinese as a second language provide an opportunity for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to work together to promote the teaching and learning of Chinese in Pakistan. By prioritizing the teaching of Chinese, improving the quality of instruction, and promoting cultural exchange between Pakistan and China, Pakistan can strengthen its relationship with China and improve the future prospects of its students.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This study “*Exploring the Cultural Exchange Potential of Learning Chinese as a Second Language in Pakistan*”, suggests that the cultural exchange potential between two countries possesses strength and positivity to make two nations closer to each other. In this regard, language teaching and learning could play a crucial role in promoting the cultural exchange potential between them. China and Pakistan are two neighboring countries with a cultural exchange potential that could be used as a glue to tie the two nations very closely. China is an economic hub for the entire world and also holds many economic and developmental signs of progress so, Pakistan as a developing country should come closer to China to be economically strong and valuable for the entire world. That would be possible then when Pakistani students will be eager to learn Chinese. Pakistani educational institutes will have to work in this regard because language learning would bridge the gap between two neighboring countries: China and Pakistan. Pakistani policymakers should be inclined toward the promotion of Chinese in Pakistan through the revision of Pakistan’s language policy.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Nawal Fatima selected this topic being a Chinese Language teacher and has done personal experiments while teaching also she did a literature review, data analysis, methodology, discussions, and conclusion and Esha Saman worked on this research in collecting data from each group of people and for managing the data records for analysis

purposes also she has done paper formatting and proofreading. All authors had approved the final version.

#### FUNDING

This work is funded by the China Study Center of National University of Sciences and Technology Pakistan.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Anna Freud Centre. How to practice cultural exchange in schools. [Online]. Available: <https://www.annafreud.org/resources/how-to-practise-cultural-exchange-in-schools/>
- [2] D. Block, J. Gray, and M. Holborow, "Neoliberalism, applied linguistics and the PNLD," in *Encyclopedia of Language and Education*, M. Martin-Jones, A. M. de Mejia, and N. H. Hornberger, Eds. Springer, 2012, pp. 315–328.
- [3] M. Byram. (1997). Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence. *Multilingual Matters*. [Online]. Available: <http://spada.uns.ac.id>
- [4] C. Kramsch and S. L. Thorne, "Foreign language learning as global communicative practice," in *Globalization and Language Teaching*, D. Block and D. Cameron, Eds. Routledge, 2002, pp. 83–100.
- [5] C. Kramsch, *Context and Culture in Language Teaching*, Oxford University Press, 1993.
- [6] A. J. Liddicoat and A. Scarino, "Intercultural language teaching and learning," *Wiley-Blackwell*, 2013.
- [7] J. Wan and K. Zhou, "Thinking on the ways of cultural exchanges and cooperation between China and Pakistan under Belt and Road Initiative," *Journal of the Punjab University Historical Society*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 123–134, 2017.
- [8] M. Akhtar, "Exploring motivations of Pakistani students for learning Chinese language and culture: A case study of Confucius Institute at National University of Modern Languages," *Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 1–14, 2018.
- [9] F. A. Khan and M. Ali, "Pakistani students' attitudes towards Chinese language and culture," *China Media Research*, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 39–47, 2017.

Copyright © 2024 by the authors. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited ([CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)).