

Extended Abstract

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The Reasons to Select Chinese as Major /Minor Subject; A Study of

**Selected Foreign Language Students in Sabaragamuwa University
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1. Abstract

Throughout the twentieth century, our views on life and education have drastically changed. The modern sense of education is not only the knowledge acquired in school or university, but also how the students make use of their knowledge in practice. Modern education inspires the spread of modern languages. Sri Lankan education system could be traced back to two millennia. In contemporary education system, students demonstrate their interest in learning modern languages. Chinese is one such demanded language.

Chinese language could be considered as a world popular language due to the power of Chinese republic. Chinese language is one of the five major languages of the United Nations Organization and it is the second language of Australia and United States of America. Though Chinese is not one of the official languages in Sri Lanka, a considerable amount of universities have decided to offer Chinese special and general Degrees. At present, several institutions along with the universities offer Chinese language diplomas.

This research will provide an insight into the Chinese language learning inclination among Sabaragamuwa university students. The aim of this study was to find out the reasons behind the tendency among the Sabaragamuwa university students to select the Chinese language as their major or minor. Data for this study were collected from internal students who are reading B.A General and Special degree in Chinese and from the annual reports (2011-2015) of department of Modern Languages, and University of Sabaragamuwa. Students ponder studying of Chinese has advantages for finding jobs in tourist industry and getting scholarships for higher education in China. These findings will help to promote Chinese as a foreign language.

. **Keywords:** Chinese language, Job market, Sabaragamuwa University

2. Introduction and research problem/issue

No matter what subjects the students select in their university education, sometimes they end up not having a satisfying job they dream of. With the modern deployment which takes place in Sri Lanka, the country is building strong relationships with the international world. At present most of the university students tend to follow “modern languages” as their degree program. Universities such as University of Sabaragamuwa and the University of Kelaniya offer “Chinese language” general and special degrees. Thus, this research focused on finding the reasons why the students in Sabaragamuwa University have selected Chinese as their major and minor subjects to complete their

Bachelor of Arts degree. The researcher tried to find the logics behind the students’ selection of the Chinese language. The results of this research will help the other students, who are planning to select Chinese language as a component of his or her degree to make clear and strong decision. Thus this will make a generation who has a clear vision in their life. The students could consider the findings of the research and could decide who they really want to be in future after studying Chinese language for their degree.

To achieve this objective, the researcher has set a series of research questions along with hypotheses. The main research question was, “what are the reasons behind the students’ selection of Chinese languages as their major or minor subject?” this research question was powered by the hypotheses such as; lack of number of foreign languages in the Sabaragamuwa University leads the students to select the Chinese language, system of selecting the subjects in the first year, second year and third year are in unfamiliar setting with the students wants, and students select the Chinese language due to the future job market.

3. Research Methodology

Data collection method

The data for the study were collected from the undergraduates of Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka. Structured questionnaire and information through the internet were utilized as the main data collection method.

For achieving the objective of the study, primary data were collected from students from all three years. Accordingly, the researcher selected 17 students from each year which made a total number of 68 students.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was the main source of data collection method in this study. Generally, it was used to collect information from the responds for specific purpose. It had been included thirty one questions to identify the reasons behind the students to select Chinese as their major or minor subjects. Internet

As Chinese is a foreign language, the information on the internet was a great help.

Various websites and videos were collected to gather information.

Data presentation

Statistical data are presented in three different ways as textual presentation, tabular presentation and graphical presentation. For the presentation of data, pie charts, bar charts, histograms and tables were used.

4. Results and findings

When considering the results and findings, the researcher divided the results and findings into several major sections to enhance the understanding. First is by considering the reasons behind the selection of Chinese as student's major or minor subject, the availability of future jobs can be seen as one of the key reasons. 60% of the first year students, 50% of the second year students, 75% of the third year first semester students and 62.50% of the third year second semester students follow Chinese language due to this reason.

The students' enthusiasm has been increased with the availability of better jobs. The students' awareness about their future jobs has varied according to the academic year of the students. According to the data collected, 53.34% of the first year students are

not aware of the job market but when it comes to the second years, 25% of the students are well aware on the future job market and 75% of them are little aware of the future job market. Students in their third year are aware of the job market they have. 75% of the students are well aware while 25% of the students are little aware. Thus we can see a development of the awareness among the students from first year to the third year.

Thirdly, when considering the students' preference of learning Chinese with native and non-native lecturers, third year first semester students choose native lecturers and third year students prefer native lecturers. It is 62.50%.

According to the data collected, 50% of the second year students and 75% of the third year students consider it is difficult to learn the speaking style of Chinese and also find it difficult to learn to speak in Chinese.

Having Chinese as an A/L subject has been heavily discussed. When considering the votes from the students, majority consider it is good to have Chinese language as an A/ L subject. Eighty percent (80%) of the first year students consider that it will be helpful if the government could have the Chinese language in the G.C.E (A/L) Examination. 100% of the second year and their year first semester students also agree with this view.

The research also focused on the students' suggestions to improve Chinese language in the university. According to the data collected from the first year students, students prefer to have more lecturers. When considering the second year students, 50% of the students are with the view of having more lecturers to improve the language while 25% of students prefer giving scholarships and the same amount of other students have other views on improving the language. Fifty percent (50%) of the third year first semester students suggest having more lecturers while 25% of other students like having scholarships and 25% of students also suggest having a separate language lab will improve the Chinese language in the university.

5. Conclusions, implications and significance

After considering all the information gathered, the researcher came into a conclusion that the major reason to select Chinese as major or minor subject by the Sabaragamuwa University students is the job market available for them. Thus the researcher made suggestions for the internal development of the subject within the Sabaragamuwa University and external suggestions for the government to enhance the quality of the Chinese subject in universities.

As a way of giving scholarships, the government has introduced “Confucius Institute” which operates attached to the universities. Thus the researcher suggests expanding the number of “Confucius Institute”.

Upon considering the data, the researcher suggests to start Chinese language degrees in other universities as well thus giving more opportunity for the students.

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