

## **Degree Project**

Bachelor's level

### **Does Study Abroad Impact Language Attitudes? A Study of Chinese University Students**

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**Abstract:**

With the rise of globalization, knowledge of the English language and intercultural competence have become highly sought after skills. One method Chinese university students use to increase these skills is to study abroad. Positive language attitudes have been linked with language learning motivation and language proficiency, which in turn influence ability to understand and interact with the host culture. This study investigated the differences in language attitudes between female Chinese university students who live both abroad and in China. Their attitudes towards English and Mandarin were compared in terms of integrative and instrumental orientation. 15 students who study at different English-speaking universities in Europe and 20 students who study at different Mandarin-speaking universities in Mainland China responded to a 32-item Language Attitudes Questionnaire and 2 open-ended questions. The results of this study suggest that study abroad leads to more positive integrative attitudes towards English, while there were no statistically significant effects on attitudes towards Mandarin or on instrumental attitudes towards English.

随着全球化的兴起，英语知识和跨文化能力已成为备受追捧的技能。中国大学生用来提高这种技能的一种方法是出国留学。积极的语言态度与语言学习动机和语言熟练程度有关，这反过来又会影响理解东道国文化的能力。本项研究调查了居住在国外和在中国的中国女大学生之间语言态度的差异。她们对英语和普通话的态度在整合型取向和工具型取向方面进行了比较。15名在欧洲大学学习的学生和20名在中国大学学习的学生回答了一份包含32项针对语言态度的李克特量表陈述句和2个开放式问题的问卷。这项研究的结果表明，出国留学对英语产生了更积极的融合型态度，而对普通话的态度或对英语的工具型态度没有统计上的显著影响。

**Keywords: language attitudes, study abroad, China, EFL**

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Language Attitudes

Language attitudes are “the attitudes which people have towards different languages, dialects, accents and their speakers” (Trudgill, 2003, p. 73). Within the field of social psychology, attitudes are seen as consisting of people’s feelings and beliefs about a certain thing, along with how they may behave regarding this thing (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Triandis, 1971; Zanna & Rempel, 1988). For instance, as a result of having positive attitudes towards a certain language, a person may feel happy when they hear this language, decide to study this language or believe this language has a high status. While language attitudes themselves are not necessarily equivalent to *how* people use language, they are important due to their *impact* on how people use language; they may help us understand language use and behaviour (Baker, 1992) and motivation to learn a language (Gardner, 1985). Furthermore, it has been argued that attitudes not only have an impact on a personal level (i.e. feelings and beliefs) as mentioned above, but can also affect group outcomes: Bohner (2001) argues, “[a]t the *individual level*, attitudes influence perception, thinking and behaviour”, and “[a]t the *intergroup level*, attitudes towards one’s own group and other groups are the core of intergroup cooperation and conflict” (p.240, emphasis in original text). Thus, attitudes towards a certain language may also influence one’s integration with speakers of this language or into the society of this language.

## 1.2 Relevance of the study

Due to the impact of globalisation, the English language has become more and more influential. As China becomes increasingly involved in international affairs (for instance, joining the World Trade Organization in 2001 and hosting the Olympic Games in 2008), knowledge of the English language is becoming an even more important skill for Chinese people. In China, English is often believed to be difficult to learn, due to a lack of daily life assimilation and perceived insignificance outside of academic areas (Rai & Deng, 2016). Regarding study abroad, China sends away more students than any other nation: 28% of all international students enrolled at university in OECD (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries in 2020 came from China (OECD.Stat, n.d). Many Chinese students abroad manage to improve their English skills and successfully mix with their non-Chinese classmates, while countless others may remain in an exclusively Chinese group of friends and not make any advancements with their English; in a

review of the academic literature regarding Chinese students abroad, Henze and Zhu (2012) noted common problems such as language difficulties, limited intercultural communication with local students and isolation in co-national friend groups. If Chinese people have positive attitudes towards English, they may be able to learn it with more ease and thus open up a wider range of career and life possibilities for themselves; for Chinese students studying abroad in particular, having positive attitudes towards English could help them better learn it and thus better integrate into the international environment they find themselves in.

This study hopes to contribute to the existing literature on language attitudes and study abroad by bringing the two areas together and establishing a link between the two, with a focus on how the different linguistic environment found while studying abroad can affect language attitudes. As the popularity of study abroad and the importance of the English language continue to grow, this study hopes to shed some light on the usefulness of study abroad in relation to improving language skills (following on from the connection that positive language attitudes have with heightened language-learning motivation and language proficiency). Furthermore, at a time when the impact of globalisation continues to increase, the present study will give an insight into the current language attitudes of young Chinese people; whether they are becoming more closely connected to and appreciative of Western culture, they maintain their close bond to their native language and culture, or both of these things simultaneously.

Upon reviewing relevant literature, some research gaps were identified. Most of the previous language attitudes studies in a Chinese context focused on Hong Kong or Cantonese-speaking areas of Mainland China, perhaps due to the multilingual nature of these places, with few studies being conducted on Mandarin-speaking Mainland students. Furthermore, the majority of studies focused on a single group of students, with comparison studies generally focussing on different linguistic backgrounds; no comparison studies have been carried out on two groups of students with the same linguistic background but studying in different nations (China or abroad). Additionally, no studies exist on the impact that study abroad has on language attitudes, particularly in a Chinese EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context. Finally, although many studies have found that gender can have an influence on language attitudes (for instance, Kobayashi, 2002; Lai, 2007; Wang & Ladegaard, 2008; Zhang, 2011), few language attitudes studies focus on female students, and no studies focusing on Chinese females were found. To fill these gaps in the research, the present study conducted a comparison study of two particular groups: female native Mandarin students from Mainland China, studying abroad and studying in Mainland China, examining their attitudes towards English and Mandarin in relation to their location.

### **1.3 Research Question**

The main question the present study sought to answer was: In what ways does study abroad, in its environment of increased exposure to English and decreased exposure to Mandarin, impact the language attitudes towards both languages of female Chinese university students?

In answering this question, the current study also hopes to shed some light on whether studying abroad is useful for improving Chinese students' attitudes towards using English, English speakers and the importance of the language. We may also be able to understand if living outside of a Chinese context has any impact on students' attitudes towards their native language, Mandarin, and its speakers.

## 2. Literature Review

This chapter will begin with an introduction to the theoretical frameworks that have been used in attitudes research and an overview of the types of language attitudes studies published previously. Next, some recent studies on Chinese students' language attitudes towards Chinese and English, which are closely relevant to the current research, will be reviewed, followed by a discussion of the connection between language attitudes and study abroad, in both a general and a Chinese context. The impact of study abroad in a general and a Chinese context will then be examined, and finally some predictions for the outcome of the present study will be made.

### 2.1 Language Attitudes

#### 2.1.1 Approaches to attitudes research

When it comes to researching attitudes, there are two main theoretical frameworks: behaviourism and mentalism. The earlier behaviourist approach argues that attitudes can be inferred directly from people's observable behavioural responses to environmental stimuli; attitudes are located in overt behaviour (Bain, 1928). In the case of language attitudes, this "overt behaviour" would be found in real-life interactions, exemplified by language and accent choice, gestures and posture, for instance. One major problem with this theory is the fact that human behaviour is not consistent: "Every particular instance of human action is [...] determined by a unique set of factors. Any change in circumstances, be it ever so slight, might produce a different reaction." (Ajzen, 2005, p.71) This makes it an unreliable indicator of attitudes, and behaviourism is thus seen as an outdated approach. The mentalist framework, on the other hand, is the approach that has been adopted in the majority of contemporary attitudes research. The classic mentalist definition is that of Allport (1935, p.810) who suggests that attitudes are "a mental and neural state of readiness". According to this definition, attitudes influence a person's response to environmental stimuli, rather than the response being influenced by (and thus a tell-tale sign of) the attitudes, as in the behaviourist framework. Allport specifies: "The attitude is incipient and preparatory rather than overt and consummatory. It is not behavior, but the precondition of behavior." (idem, p.805). It follows, according to this framework, that attitudes have no overt substance and are thus not directly observable, instead being inferred from the subject's introspection. This leads to some methodological problems, namely from which kind of data attitudes may be inferred, and how they may be measured in physical terms (Agheyisi and Fishman 1970, p.138). Consequently, researchers must rely on subjects to report their own insights.



### ***2.1.2 Overview of previous language attitudes studies***

Research into language attitudes as a social science goes as far back as the 1930s, when researchers such as Allport and Cantril (1934) tried to determine whether people could accurately judge a speaker's personality based only on their voice. Over the years, the language attitudes literature has since expanded beyond the discipline of social psychology which characterized the first studies, and now spans several other disciplines on top of that, such as communication, linguistics, and linguistic anthropology. According to Dragojevic et. al (2021), language attitudes studies may be organized into five distinct, yet interdependent, lines of research: documentation (documenting people's attitudes towards different language varieties and their speakers); explanation (providing evidence that language attitudes do not occur in random ways); development (examining how language attitudes develop: when, how and from whom they are acquired); consequences (studying the social and behavioural consequences of language attitudes); and change (developing and reviewing means designed to counteract the negative effects of language attitudes).

In terms of a Chinese context, some examples of the more specific areas of research covering language attitudes are: heritage language maintenance and bilingualism (Hu, Torr & Whiteman, 2014; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009); cultural identity (Lai, 2011; Liang, 2014); ethnic minority groups (Zhou, 1999; Zhou, 2000); English attainment (Pierson, Fu & Lee, 1980); and gender (Wang & Ladegaard, 2008).

## **2.2 Chinese students' Language Attitudes towards Chinese and English**

Various studies have been carried out in recent years to investigate university students' language attitudes in a Chinese context. The studies mentioned in this section all used the quantitative method of a Likert-scale questionnaire survey as their main method of data collection. As subjects report their own insights in a questionnaire, this method is in line with the mentalist approach to attitude research. Furthermore, the studies in this section all discuss language attitudes in terms of "integrative" and "instrumental" aspects, drawing from Gardner and Lambert's (1972) theory of motivation, which distinguished between the types of motivation by which an individual may be guided when learning a foreign language: integrative and instrumental. According to Gardner and Lambert, integrative orientation refers to a learner's motivation to learn a language due to a desire to interact with its culture and communicate with members of its community. Instrumental orientation, on the other hand, refers to the pragmatic reasons for learning a language, particularly the desire to gain social recognition or economic advantages. This theory can be extended to refer not just to motivations for language learning, but to feelings towards the language itself, where

integrative orientation refers to language attitudes related to a connection with the language's community and speakers, and instrumental orientation refers to language attitudes related to the language's value in terms of pragmatic benefits like jobs, education, or social status.

Lai (2005) investigated the language attitudes of 1,048 secondary school students in Hong Kong aged 15-17 who grew up amid the significant changes in the wake of the political handover of the state from Britain to China. In addition to the questionnaire survey, a matched guise test and focus group interviews were also carried out, though the paper reports only on the findings of the questionnaire survey. Cantonese, the local language, had the highest integrative value; English had the highest instrumental value and perceived social status; while Mandarin turned out to be the lowest ranked from both the integrative and instrumental perspectives. It was additionally found that, for the native language Cantonese, students' integrative orientation was much stronger than their instrumental orientation, while English and Mandarin were valued more for their instrumental values.

Liu (2011) studied the attitudes towards English (in relation to Chinese language and culture) of 302 Chinese university students from five top-rank universities in Beijing. 4 open-ended questions were included alongside the questionnaire survey. The results showed that many Chinese university students have positive attitudes towards English, valuing their association with English-speaking culture and people, but still consider their native language Mandarin as the "superior language" (p.967).

Ng and Zhao (2015) explored the attitudes towards Cantonese, Mandarin, and English of 75 Cantonese-speaking university students in Guangdong Province, Mainland China. After responding to the questionnaire statements, participants answered 6 open-ended questions. This study found that many Cantonese-speaking students acknowledge the importance of Mandarin and English in terms of instrumental aspects - particularly career advancement and education - and note their prestige in Chinese society, but ultimately, they were more intimately connected with and integratively orientated towards Cantonese.

In a study of university students in Hong Kong, Liu (2018) looked at the differences in attitudes of 30 local students and 30 Mainland students towards Cantonese, Mandarin, and English, using a qualitative questionnaire survey as the exclusive method of data collection. The local students showed a strong integrative loyalty to Cantonese, while Mainland students favoured Mandarin in this respect; English was the most highly regarded language by both groups in terms of instrumental value and was also well-viewed by both groups from the integrative perspective. Regarding the

choice of language for communication purposes between Hong Kong and Mainland students, it was revealed that English was preferred by both groups.

As can be seen from the results of the above studies, Chinese students typically feel a closer bond to their native language in the integrative sense, while favouring English for its instrumental benefits.

### **2.3 Language Attitudes and Study Abroad**

It has been shown that language attitudes have an impact on the adaptation of international students in their host country/environment (Yu, 2010). Various studies have shown that positive attitudes towards a language are linked to increased motivation to learn the language (Altasan, 2016; FirdosFrida & Ravindra, 2016; Pourfeiz, 2016) and language proficiency (Gardner, 1985; Shinge & Kotabagi, 2021; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995; Yang et. al, 2018). This is relevant for study abroad as enhanced language proficiency is beneficial in allowing international Chinese students to socially integrate into their host nation (Xing, Popp & Price, 2020). In a study of 606 Chinese students studying abroad at the University of Melbourne in Australia and at 6 universities in Hong Kong, Pan et al (2008) found that proficiency in the host-language influenced several important aspects of the students' stay abroad: their academic work, their understanding of the host culture and their social lives. Limited language proficiency, on the other hand, can make it difficult for Chinese international students to integrate into the local culture (Lai, Wang & Ou, 2023) and can prohibit them from participating in classroom discussion (Henze & Zhu, 2012). In a survey of 3000 international students in New Zealand, 43% of whom came from China, it was found that about one third of the students found their deficiency in English an impediment to making friends with the host nationals (Ward & Masgoret, 2004).

### **2.4 Impact of Study Abroad**

Though no studies were found which specifically investigated the impact of a study abroad experience on university students' language attitudes, much research has been done on the influence it has on other aspects, particularly those to do with language and culture learning. While this is not directly linked to the present study's topic of language attitudes, increased knowledge of a language and its culture may in turn lead to a change in one's attitudes towards the language, people, and culture themselves. It has been shown that studying abroad contributes to linguistic gains (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2021; Hernandez, 2016; Issa, Faretta–Stutenberg & Bowden, 2020; Tseng et al., 2021); cultural awareness (Haas, 2018); intercultural awareness and competence (Chieffo & Griffiths,

2004; Czerwionka et al., 2015; Humphreys & Baker, 2021; Sobkowiak, 2019); development of global citizenship identity (Sklad et al., 2016; Kishino & Takahashi, 2019) and pragmatic development (Ren, 2019; Morris, 2023; Shively, 2011). Some studies, however, found that studying abroad has limited impact on intercultural elements (Baker & Fang, 2021; Bloom & Miranda, 2015; Salisbury, An & Pascarella, 2013).

In recent years, the impact of studying abroad in a Chinese context has been investigated in terms of various aspects. Li (2017) examined the changes of the English learning motivation of a small group of Chinese tertiary level students over a three-month period of ESL (English as a Second Language) study in New Zealand. While many students maintained or increased their overall motivation, some students saw a decrease in their motivation to learn English after the period abroad, potentially due to a lack of clear future goals for learning English, which made difficulties hard to overcome and led to a loss of the original momentum. Shifts in motivational intensity were observed.

Du and Jackson (2018) also looked at the impact of a period of study abroad on motivation. They examined the changes in the English learning motivation of eight Mainland Chinese students during their period of study at a university in Hong Kong where English was the main medium of instruction. After arrival in Hong Kong, the participants' English motivation remained fairly stable, though some fluctuations were noted. It was found that instrumental reasons, such as an upcoming English proficiency test, led to an increase in motivation. One factor that did not incite a motivational increase was the participants' integrative-oriented aspiration to connect with people from different backgrounds to their own.

Jackson (2015) investigated the impact of a semester abroad on Chinese university students' intercultural competence and readiness for the global workplace. She found that simply being present in a foreign environment does not automatically lead to successful results; rather, many internal factors, such as degree of extroversion and willingness to communicate in the host language, and external factors, like housing arrangements and the effort of the receiving institution to integrate international students with local ones, are responsible for the development of "global-mindedness" (the ability of an individual to understand the world and how they fit into it, along with a readiness to be active in global issues).

Chen and Chen (2021) examined the influence of a short-term study abroad on Chinese students' engagement in second language learning activities and on their original motivation for studying abroad; 123 undergraduate students were studied, the majority of whom had English as their medium of instruction. Both aspects underwent changes in the wake of the study abroad experience.

The increased opportunity to talk with native speakers provided by the overseas environment led to an increase in usage of the second language in the participants' daily life, however other activities such as watching movies and reading novels saw a decrease.

## **2.5 Summary**

Summarising the literature presented in this chapter, there are two frameworks of language attitudes research: mentalism, the contemporary approach; and behaviourism, the old-fashioned approach. Though having roots in social psychology, language attitudes research now spans several other disciplines and in a Chinese context has covered topics like identity, language maintenance and language learning among others. Questionnaire studies carried out in Mainland China and Hong Kong found that, in the integrative sense, students always feel most connected to their native language (Mandarin or Cantonese), while generally having the strongest instrumental attitudes towards English. Language attitudes have been shown to impact various aspects of an international student's stay abroad, including adaption in the host country, motivation to learn the language and language proficiency, the latter in particular being linked with Chinese students' academic performance, their understanding of the host culture and their ability to integrate with local students. Study abroad has been found to generally lead to advancements in students' linguistic ability, cultural awareness, intercultural competence, global citizenship identity and pragmatic development. In a Chinese context, study abroad has some impact on English learning motivation, and the increased opportunity to communicate with native speakers can lead to increased usage of the second language.

Following on from the strong integrative bond found between the Cantonese speakers in the previous studies (Lai, 2005, Ng & Zhao, 2015 and Liu, 2018) and their native tongue Cantonese, a similar result in the participants of the current study is expected to be seen with their native Mandarin. English came out top in terms of instrumental attitudes in the studies in Hong Kong (Lai, 2005 and Liu, 2018), a region with a strong English presence; the participants of the current study who study abroad at an English-speaking university are expected to also have positive instrumental attitudes towards English. Study abroad has been shown to have a positive impact on language and culture learning, so it is expected that the participants of the current study who study abroad will have improved their English skills and intercultural competence.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Instrument

As detailed in section 2.1.1, previous research into language attitudes has followed either a behaviourist or a mentalist framework. As human behaviour is inconsistent and is thus seen as an unreliable and outdated approach for examining attitudes, this study adopts the mentalist approach, drawing conclusions on the subjects' language attitudes based on their answers to questions rather than observation of their behaviour. The chosen method of data collection was one of the most common methods linked with the mentalist approach - a questionnaire survey - which collected participants' individual responses to evaluatively worded statements (Gardner, 1985), similar to previous studies in this area (see Lai, 2005, Ng & Zhao, 2015 and Liu, 2018). Such a quantitative method allowed for explicit conclusions to be drawn and direct comparisons to be made. However, to allow the participants some form of free and personal expression, a qualitative aspect was also included, in the form of two open-ended questions. The attitude statements were principally taken from the previous language attitudes studies (Lai, 2005, Ng & Zhao, 2015 and Liu, 2018) and modified, though some statements were formulated by the author.

The questionnaire was created using the online platform QQ Survey (<https://wj.qq.com/>), with the questions and possible answers being provided in written simplified Chinese. There were three parts to the questionnaire: Part 1 – background information; Part 2 – attitudes towards Mandarin; and Part 3 – attitudes towards English. Parts 2 and 3 were each made up of 16 attitude statements to be rated on a 5-point Likert scale according to the respondent's personal opinion (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, with 3 = neither agree nor disagree), and 1 open-ended question which asked the participants to briefly describe their feelings when speaking the language in question.

Incorporating into the research Gardner and Lambert's (1972) theory of motivation, which distinguished between integrative orientation towards a language (desire to interact with its culture and communicate with members of its community) and instrumental orientation (opinion of a language based on pragmatic reasons like its status or its ability to provide social or economic advantages), each attitude statement was carefully written in order to evaluate either the integrative orientation or the instrumental orientation of the respondent. Thus, the attitude survey examined four factors in total: integrative orientation towards English, instrumental orientation towards English, integrative orientation towards Mandarin, and instrumental orientation towards Mandarin. Of the 16 attitude statements per language, there were 8 regarding instrumental orientation and 8 regarding integrative orientation. The survey was carried out online for practical reasons.

The questionnaire data was first categorized into Group A and Group B according to the participants' "study abroad" status. The data of each group was then analysed in terms of the frequency of the five response categories to reveal the general pattern of the participants' attitudes towards Mandarin and English, with statistical significance of differences in the results being checked using the composite mean values. The responses to the open-ended questions were analysed according to the themes that occurred.

### **3.2 Participants**

All participants were female university students who originally come from Mainland China and whose native language is Mandarin. They were recruited through personal connections, word of mouth and online chatrooms. The participants were categorized into two distinct groups: those who are currently studying abroad (and have been for at least the past 6 months), at a university where English is the main language of instruction ("Group A"); and those who are currently studying at a Mandarin-speaking university in Mainland China and have never studied abroad ("Group B"). Background information including gender, current location, study abroad experience and time spent abroad (if applicable) was collected in order to confirm participants' eligibility and categorise them into the two groups. Other information like age, degree level and English background was collected to give the reader an overview of the profile of each group. As linguistic ability can affect language attitudes (for instance, if a person is proficient in English, it follows that they will be more comfortable speaking it and will not mind having it as a medium of instruction, to give a few examples), it was determined particularly insightful to provide the reader with information on participants' self-reported English ability and time spent learning the language.

Group A was made up of 15 participants, all of whom study at universities in Europe, in countries whose official language is not English. The countries represented were Italy (n = 6), Sweden (n = 3), Switzerland (n = 1), Hungary (n = 1), Denmark (n = 1), Belgium (n = 1), Poland (n = 1) and Germany (n = 1), where "n" stands for number of participants. Time spent abroad ranged from a minimum of 6 months to 4+ years. This information is displayed in Table 1. All but three of Group A's participants were in the age range of 21 to 29, with two being in the range 18 to 20 and one being 30+. There were two PhD students, while all other participants were either Bachelor's or Master's students. 3 of the participants had been studying abroad for less than one year, while over half had been studying abroad for two or more years. Group B was composed of 20 participants, and apart from one participant in the age range 18 to 20, all were 21 to 29 years old. Like in Group A, there were two PhD students with the rest being Bachelor's or Master's students. English

proficiency was self-assessed by the participants, choosing from a choice of 6 increasing options going from “beginner level” (given a value of 1) and “proficient level” (given a value of 6). This information can be seen in Table 2.

TABLE 1: STUDY ABROAD BACKGROUND INFORMATION

<b>Country of study</b>	Italy	6
	Sweden	3
	Belgium	1
	Denmark	1
	Germany	1
	Hungary	1
	Poland	1
	Switzerland	1
<b>Time spent abroad</b>	6-12 months	3
	1-2 years	3
	2-4 years	5
	4+ years	4

TABLE 2: PARTICIPANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

		<b>Group A</b>	<b>Group B</b>
<b>Age</b>	18-20	2	1
	21-23	5	7
	24-26	6	10
	27-29	1	2
	30+	1	0
<b>Degree level</b>	Bachelor's	7	3
	Master's	6	15
	PhD	2	2
<b>Time spent studying English</b>	Less than 5 years	1	0
	5-10 years	4	2
	11-15 years	7	13
	16+ years	3	5
<b>English level (self-assessed)</b>	1: beginner	0	1
	2: elementary	3	7
	3: intermediate	3	7
	4: upper intermediate	4	1
	5: advanced	4	3
	6: proficient	1	1

Using the values assigned to each level, the mean English proficiency of Group A was calculated as 3.8, while that of Group B was 3.05. Tables of individual participants' background information can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B. Six months was determined to be a significant enough



period in order for language attitudes to be affected. The requirements of Group A being abroad for at least six months, and all participants being female, were set to help ensure that the language attitudes expressed by participants are due to the matter in question – their experience of studying abroad – and not other factors which may also affect language attitudes. It was, however, impossible to control every variable; other variables such as length of stay abroad and country studied in (for Group A), age, time spent studying English and English proficiency may also have an influence on language attitudes, which is a limitation of this study.

### 3.3 Data Quality

#### 3.3.1 Data reliability

Cronbach's reliability test was applied to check internal consistency of the four factors of the attitude survey. Any alpha values ( $\alpha$ ) greater than 0.7 would indicate high internal reliability within the factor (Fitz-Gibbon & Morris, 1987). Table 3 displays the four values that were revealed, proving the reliability of the attitude survey.

TABLE 3: CRONBACH'S ALPHA FOR THE FOUR SURVEY FACTORS

Factor 1: Integrative orientation towards English	$\alpha = 0.77$
Factor 2: Instrumental orientation towards English	$\alpha = 0.77$
Factor 3: Integrative orientation towards Mandarin	$\alpha = 0.84$
Factor 4: Instrumental orientation towards Mandarin	$\alpha = 0.70$

#### 3.3.2 Data validity

Regarding internal data validity, the attitude survey statements and open-ended questions were unambiguous in meaning, written with straightforward language and a clear message. Furthermore, they were written in the participants' native language (Mandarin), with the accuracy of the language being checked by a native speaker. These steps ensured that the questions were not misinterpreted by the participants and that they had no problems in understanding the meaning. As the statements were mostly taken from previous research papers, they have been tried and tested several times, suggesting validity of the statements in their ability to adequately examine what they are supposed to (integrative and instrumental attitudes towards English and Mandarin). Additionally, participants

were informed of the anonymity of their responses, which may have encouraged them to respond honestly. As for external data validity, although there was some variety among the participants in terms of location (for the students who study abroad), age and English proficiency, the samples were not representative of the entire population due to practical constraints: the number of participants was limited, and the countries represented (for the students who study abroad) were all European. As participants were asked only to provide the country in which they live, in order to keep the responses as anonymous as possible, it was not known in which Chinese cities the participants of Group B lived, so a variety of locations cannot be guaranteed. The results of the present study therefore only reflect a limited number of experiences, and thus may not be generalisable beyond the current participants. Limitations of the study are discussed further in section 5.1.3.

### ***3.3.3 Ethical considerations***

The beginning of the survey contained an information message in Mandarin Chinese explaining the purpose of the questionnaire, the time it would take to complete, and the researcher's contact information, allowing for informed consent. The participants were also informed that participation was voluntary and that they were entitled to stop participation in the survey at any moment. No sensitive information was collected from the participants, and specific personal information was not collected, allowing for anonymity of the participants. Participants were asked to provide their age range (ex. 21-23, 24-26 etc.) rather than their specific age, and their country of residence rather than particular city or university, so they could not be identified. All participants were over the age of 18. The questionnaire contained no sensitive questions, and all results from the questionnaire were reported accurately.

## 4. Results

In this chapter, the results of the questionnaire will be analysed according to the response category (5 points of the Likert scale) of the participants' responses to the questionnaire's attitude statements. The following abbreviations will be used in the tables presenting the results: "SA" = Strongly Agree; "A" = Agree; "N" = Neither agree nor disagree; "D" = Disagree; "SD" = Strongly Disagree.

### 4.1 Attitudes towards English

#### 4.1.1 Integrative attitudes towards English

Table 4 shows the two groups' integrative attitudes towards English. Regarding Group A, a large majority of the participants liked English (80%) and English speakers (66.7%); on top of this, not one participant disagreed with either of these statements, which demonstrates consistency between the non-negative attitudes of all participants regarding English and its speakers. A large majority also believed that Chinese people should be able to speak fluent English (80%), and thought English should be used more widely in China (66.7%). A majority of participants neither agreed nor disagreed with wanting to speak English to feel modern and westernised (53.3%) or with feeling comfortable speaking English in informal situations (53.3%), as seen in the responses to statements 30 and 34. These statements recorded at least one vote in each of the five response categories, showing that the participants had varying opinions on these matters. Respondents also displayed a range of responses towards feeling more comfortable using English and the idea that a non-native person who speaks fluent English is usually educated, intelligent and well-off (statements 32 and 31).

As with Group A, the majority of Group B participants liked English (60%) and English speakers (55%), though their percentage was smaller. However, most participants did not feel more comfortable using English (60%) or speaking it in informal situations (70%). The former of these statements (statement 32) recorded no positive responses. Opinions were very divided on whether English should be used more widely in China, with a similar number of positive, neutral and negative responses being recorded for statement 33; this differs from Group A's 66.7% of agreement with this statement. No strong agreement or disagreement was expressed regarding the idea that a non-native person who speaks fluent English is usually educated, intelligent and well-off, and only a small percentage of strong agreement or disagreement (10%) was shown towards wanting to speak English to feel modern and westernised or the idea that Chinese people should be

able to speak fluent English. Only 15% of Group B participants agreed with this latter statement, compared with 80% of Group A's participants.

TABLE 4: FACTOR 1. INTEGRATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS ENGLISH

Statements		SA	A	N	D	SD
27. I like English.	Group A	20%	60%	20%	-	-
	Group B	10%	50%	25%	15%	-
28. I like English speakers.	Group A	20%	46.7%	33.3%	-	-
	Group B	5%	50%	40%	5%	-
29. Chinese people should be able to speak fluent English.	Group A	6.7%	73.3%	13.3%	-	6.7%
	Group B	5%	10%	40%	40%	5%
30. I would like to speak fluent English because it makes me feel modern and westernised.	Group A	6.7%	13.3%	53.3%	13.3%	13.3%
	Group B	5%	30%	25%	35%	5%
31. A non-native person who speaks fluent English is usually educated, intelligent and well-off.	Group A	-	26.7%	40%	26.7%	6.7%
	Group B	-	35%	50%	15%	-
32. I feel more comfortable using English.	Group A	6.7%	20%	40%	33.3%	-
	Group B	-	-	40%	40%	20%
33. English should be used more widely in China (so that Chinese people can communicate better with people from other countries).	Group A	6.7%	60%	26.7%	6.7%	-
	Group B	5%	30%	35%	15%	15%
34. I feel comfortable speaking English in informal situations (e.g., speaking with friends, buying things).	Group A	6.7%	26.7%	53.3%	6.7%	6.7%
	Group B	-	20%	10%	30%	40%

#### ***4.1.2 Instrumental attitudes towards English***

As shown in Table 5, an overwhelming majority of Group A (86.7%) wished to master a high proficiency of English and believed English would help in getting a very good job. Only 13.3% of participants neither agreed nor disagreed with these statements, with no negative responses being recorded. 100% of participants believed English would help them in getting good opportunities for further studies, highlighting a very high level of consistency in the respondents' opinions. A majority of participants also believed that English is highly regarded in Chinese society (73.3%), that English is going to be important in the following years in China (60%) and that if English is widely used in China, it will become more prosperous (66.7%). Most participants had a neutral

opinion towards having English as a medium of instruction compared to Mandarin (60%) and feeling comfortable speaking English in a formal situation (53.3%), though a sizeable portion (40%) agreed with both of these statements.

TABLE 5: FACTOR 2. INSTRUMENTAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS ENGLISH

Statements		SA	A	N	D	SD
35. I wish to master a high proficiency of English.	Group A	40%	46.7%	13.3%	-	-
	Group B	55%	35%	10%	-	-
36. English will help me get a very good job.	Group A	20%	66.7%	13.3%	-	-
	Group B	40%	40%	20%	-	-
37. English will help me in getting good opportunities for further studies.	Group A	33.3%	66.7%	-	-	-
	Group B	45%	50%	5%	-	-
38. Compared with Mandarin, I prefer English as a medium of instruction.	Group A	13.3%	26.7%	60%	-	-
	Group B	10%	10%	35%	30%	15%
39. English is highly regarded in Chinese society.	Group A	13.3%	60%	6.7%	20%	-
	Group B	25%	55%	15%	5%	-
40. English is going to be important in the following years in China.	Group A	20%	40%	26.7%	13.3%	-
	Group B	15%	40%	15%	30%	-
41. If English is widely used in China, it will become more prosperous.	Group A	6.7%	60%	26.7%	6.7%	-
	Group B	5%	30%	50%	15%	-
42. I would feel comfortable speaking English in a formal situation (e.g., during a job interview).	Group A	20%	20%	53.3%	6.7%	-
	Group B	-	10%	50%	30%	10%

Similarly to Group A, an overwhelming majority of Group B wished to master a high proficiency of English (90%) and believed English would help in getting a very good job (80%) and good opportunities for further studies (95%). As was seen with Group A, no negative responses were recorded for these three statements. A large number of participants (80%) also agreed that English is highly regarded in Chinese society. Opinions were highly divided on having English as a medium of instruction, with at least 2 votes being recorded in each of the five response categories. While Group A recorded no negative responses to this statement, 45% of Group B participants disagreed with this statement. 50% of Group B's participants neither agreed nor disagreed with feeling comfortable speaking English in a formal situation, a similar value to Group A, though Group B

recorded 40% of negative responses in contrast to Group A's 40% of positive responses. Group B exhibited differing opinions on the idea that English is going to be important in the following years in China, with 45% of respondents agreeing with this statement and 30% disagreeing.

#### **4.1.3 Open response attitudes towards speaking English**

Overall, Group A had the more positive comments to make regarding their feelings while speaking English. While Group A had mixed opinions, Group B's responses were generally negative. Looking at Group A's responses first, several students mentioned the need to think before speaking, with one detailing how she is conscious that the other person comprehends her:

需要时间思考，尽力准确表达让对方了解我的意思，需要锻炼 (Translation: *Need time to think, I try my best to express myself accurately so that the other party understands what I mean. I need to train.*)

This comment also reflects how the student believes there is still work to be done on her English, similar to another comment:

Feel I still have things to improve

One student made a comparison with how she feels when speaking Mandarin:

不像普通话说说的那么容易流利 (It's not as easy to be fluent as it is when speaking Mandarin)

Some other negative feelings mentioned were “有点焦虑” (*a little anxious*) and “困难” (*difficulty*).

One student appreciated the frank quality of the English language:

Get to the point, direct

Other positive emotions described by the participants were “courageous” and “有趣，快乐” (*fun and happy*). One student's response highlighted the benefits of having a high level of exposure to English before the study abroad period:

I do love it and I went to English school and have English speaking friends. I feel happy and natural to speak it.

It is interesting to note that there were 5 responses in English, despite the question (and the entire survey) being written in Chinese. 4 of these responses in English presented a positive feeling towards speaking English. The remaining 10 responses were written in Simplified Chinese.

Unlike Group A, the majority of participants in Group B expressed negative thoughts towards speaking English. Several noted problems with expressing themselves:

绞尽脑汁，注重语法，不自信自然 (*Rack your brains, pay attention to grammar, not confident and natural*)

需要思考组织语言 (*I need to reflect on the organisation of the language*)

词不达意，力不从心 (*The words fail to convey the meaning I would like to express*)

The other negative feelings raised were “struggling”, “紧张” (*nervous*), “局促” (*ill at ease*), “谨慎” (*cautious*), “费劲” (*strenuous*), and “很烦” (*annoyed*) . One student had a very positive comment to make, revealing how her personality changes when she speaks English:

说英语时，我觉得自己更加自信，不像平时比较内向的自己，会更加乐意用丰富的英语词汇表达自己。 (*When speaking English, I feel more confident, unlike my usual introverted self, I am more willing to express myself with rich English vocabulary.*)

Another mentioned the perceived social plus brought by knowledge of English:

会说英语是一件很酷的事情 (*It's a cool thing to be able to speak English*)

One mentioned the context in which she used English:

一般只有在特定场合我才会成段、大量地使用英文，如果是在英语环境中使用，我会比较自在。 (*Generally, it is only in specific occasions that I use English in paragraphs or in large quantities. If I were to use it in an English environment, I would feel more comfortable.*)

Only 1 participant out of 20 responded using English, which is perhaps unsurprising due to their reported difficulties and discomforts with using the language.

#### **4.1.4 Analysis**

*Using English:* As seen in the responses to the questionnaire statements and open-ended question, Group A felt more comfortable and positive than Group B about using English, speaking English in formal and informal situations, English speakers, and having English as a medium of instruction. This is most likely due to the fact that Group A’s participants’ university courses are in English, so they have considerably more exposure to English than the participants of Group B, particularly in an academic or formal context. It also follows that Group A use English to some extent on an almost daily basis and are thus more comfortable using it. The fact that 5 out of 15 of Group A’s

responses to the open-ended question were written in English compared to 1 out of 20 from Group B supports the observation from the questionnaire data that the participants of Group A do in fact feel more comfortable using English. This is perhaps suggestive of the limited opportunities to use English that Chinese students in China have, and how an increased exposure to an English environment may allow Chinese students to become more comfortable in using the language, as mentioned in one of the open-ended question responses.

*Duty and desire to learn and use English:* With a decent majority of participants agreeing that Chinese people should be able to speak fluent English and that English should be used more widely in China to allow for international communication, it appears that the study abroad group, Group A, have increased their “global-mindedness”, being aware of their responsibility (and that of all Chinese people) to learn the global language English and interact with the world. A considerable portion of Group B participants, on the other hand, disagreed with the above statements, and therefore many do not consider it their duty to learn and use English. The vast majority of both groups’ participants wished to master a high level of English, though Group B had more participants who strongly agreed, and less who had a neutral opinion. Group B’s self-reported English proficiency was lower on average than Group A’s which is perhaps why they reported a stronger desire to reach a high level of proficiency.

## **4.2 Attitudes towards Mandarin**

### ***4.2.1 Integrative attitudes towards Mandarin***

As seen in Table 6, a majority of Group A participants (at least 60%) agreed with all statements except statement 14, that is that a non-Chinese person who speaks fluent Mandarin is usually educated, intelligent and well-off. There was a variety of opinions towards this statement, though a majority of them were neutral (53.3%). The statements which received the largest portion of agreement were statement 10, “I like Mandarin” (80%) and statement 12, “Chinese people should be able to speak fluent Mandarin” (73.3%). The former of these statements was the only one that did not receive a single negative vote.

Similarly to Group A, a majority of Group B (at least 55%) agreed with all statements, aside from statement 15, “I feel more comfortable using Mandarin”. Although 50% of participants agreed with this statement, the responses were rather varied, with 35% neither agreeing nor disagreeing and 15% disagreeing, highlighting the lack of consistency in the opinions of the respondents. 15% of participants also did not like being able to speak Mandarin in allowing them to feel more connected to other Chinese people. The statements which received the largest percentage of approval were



statement 10, “I like Mandarin” (80%) and statement 17 “I feel comfortable speaking Mandarin in informal situations” (80%). Of the two, statement 10 received the stronger approval, as 45% strongly agreed with this statement compared to the 20% who strongly agreed with statement 17. A large majority of respondents also liked Mandarin speakers (75%), with 40% of responses being strong agreement. Of these three statements, the group’s opinions were most conglomerated towards Mandarin and its speakers, with no participant expressing disagreement, indicating consistency of the opinions. On the other hand, 10% of opinions were negative towards feeling comfortable speaking Mandarin in informal situations.

TABLE 6: FACTOR 3. INTEGRATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS MANDARIN

Statements		SA	A	N	D	SD
10. I like Mandarin.	Group A	40%	40%	20%	-	-
	Group B	45%	35%	20%	-	-
11. I like Mandarin speakers.	Group A	33.3%	33.3%	26.7%	6.7%	-
	Group B	40%	35%	25%	-	-
12. Chinese people should be able to speak fluent Mandarin.	Group A	46.7%	26.7%	20%	6.7%	-
	Group B	25%	40%	30%	5%	-
13. I like being able to speak Mandarin as it makes me feel more connected to other Chinese people.	Group A	26.7%	40%	26.7%	6.7%	-
	Group B	5%	60%	20%	15%	-
14. A non-Chinese person who speaks fluent Mandarin is usually educated, intelligent and well-off.	Group A	20%	6.7%	53.3%	6.7%	13.3%
	Group B	10%	45%	35%	10%	-
15. I feel more comfortable using Mandarin.	Group A	20%	40%	33.3%	6.7%	-
	Group B	15%	35%	35%	10%	5%
16. Mandarin should be more widely used outside of China.	Group A	26.7%	40%	26.7%	-	6.7%
	Group B	20%	50%	25%	5%	-
17. I feel comfortable speaking Mandarin in informal situations (e.g., speaking with friends, buying things).	Group A	33.3%	33.3%	26.7%	-	6.7%
	Group B	20%	60%	10%	5%	5%

#### 4.2.2 Instrumental attitudes towards Mandarin

Table 7 shows the two groups' instrumental attitudes towards Mandarin. Group A displayed very positive attitudes in general, with the majority of participants agreeing with every statement, and six of eight statements having an agreement majority of 73.3% or more. The participants had very consistent opinions and strong support of Mandarin's high status in Chinese society, with 100% of respondents having a positive opinion, 66.7% of which was strong agreement. A vast majority of participants believed that Mandarin would continue to be used as a lingua franca for Mainlanders, Taiwanese, and Hong Kong people in the future (80%) and reported feeling comfortable speaking Mandarin in formal situations (86.7%), with neither of these statements receiving negative responses. Though still with a majority of support (53.3%), the statement that received the least votes of agreement was the idea of having Mandarin as a medium of instruction over English (statement 21). The participants expressed a range of opinions on this matter, with every response category being represented, and a sizeable portion (33.3%) having a neutral opinion.

TABLE 7: FACTOR 4. INSTRUMENTAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS MANDARIN

Statements		SA	A	N	D	SD
18. I wish to master a high proficiency of Mandarin.	Group A	40%	40%	13.3%	-	6.7%
	Group B	50%	50%	-	-	-
19. Mandarin will help me get a very good job.	Group A	20%	53.3%	13.3%	13.3%	-
	Group B	20%	40%	40%	-	-
20. Mandarin will help me in getting good opportunities for further studies.	Group A	26.7%	53.3%	6.7%	13.3%	-
	Group B	20%	25%	45%	10%	-
21. Compared with English, I prefer Mandarin as a medium of instruction.	Group A	13.3%	40%	33.3%	6.7%	6.7%
	Group B	20%	55%	15%	10%	-
22. Mandarin is highly regarded in Chinese society.	Group A	66.7%	33.3%	-	-	-
	Group B	35%	55%	5%	5%	-
23. Mandarin will continue to be used as a lingua franca for Mainlanders, Taiwanese, and Hong Kong people in the future.	Group A	46.7%	33.3%	20%	-	-
	Group B	50%	50%	-	-	-
24. If Mandarin is more widely used in China, it will become more prosperous.	Group A	40%	26.7%	26.7%	6.7%	-
	Group B	25%	50%	25%	-	-
25. I would feel comfortable speaking Mandarin in a formal situation (e.g., during a job interview).	Group A	40%	46.7%	13.3%	-	-
	Group B	40%	55%	5%	-	-

Group B also revealed high levels of agreement to most of the statements. All participants wished to master a high proficiency of Mandarin and believed that Mandarin would continue to be used as a lingua franca for Mainlanders, Taiwanese, and Hong Kong people in the future, with 100% of participants agreeing with these statements, 50% being strong agreement in both cases. Almost all participants also believed that Mandarin is highly regarded in Chinese society (90%) and reported feeling comfortable speaking Mandarin in formal situations (95%). Though not a majority, a significant proportion of participants neither agreed nor disagreed that Mandarin would help them in getting a good job (40%) and good opportunities for further studies (45%). The former statement revealed a majority of approval (60%), though the latter did not, with only 45% of participants agreeing and 10% disagreeing, highlighting the range of opinions. Only two other statements recorded negative votes; 10% of respondents disagreed with preferring Mandarin over English as a medium of instruction (though 75% agreed) and 5% did not agree that Mandarin is highly regarded in Chinese society (though 90% agreed).

#### ***4.2.3 Open response attitudes towards speaking Mandarin***

Both groups unsurprisingly highlighted the positive feelings they have when speaking Mandarin. Two terms that came up multiple times among the participants of both groups were “很舒服” (*comfortable*) and “自然” / “natural”, reflecting the ease with which one typically speaks their native language. Looking first at Group A’s responses, one student noted that she doesn’t feel too special about Mandarin, but interestingly at the same time mentions her pride in the language:

I feel very natural to speak it since it is my first language. But it is only a language, aka a communication tool so I don’t feel too special about it. Anyways I’m proud of this language.

This apparent contradiction is really an indication of the inherent pride, connection and positive attitudes people typically have regarding their native language, without being aware of having any attitudes at all. Most other responses pointed to the simplicity and convenience of speaking Mandarin, rather than mentioning the actual feelings evoked while speaking Mandarin. Again, a portion of responses were written in English – 4 in total, and 11 in Chinese.

In terms of Group B, several participants mentioned how they feel more kind and friendly when they speak Mandarin. One participant explained how she feels better if foreigners communicate to her in Mandarin:

说普通话让我觉得很舒服、自在，跟外国人交流说，如果他们会说普通话，能用普通话跟我交流，我会觉得更加亲切。 (*Speaking Mandarin makes me feel very comfortable and at ease.*)

*When communicating with foreigners, if they can speak Mandarin and communicate with me in Mandarin, I will feel more amiable.)*

This comment indicates a preference of Mandarin over English as the preferred language of communication with non-Chinese people. Another participant expressed a similar view regarding communication, mentioning also how she strives to speak a high level of Mandarin:

流利、准确、富有逻辑性地讲出普通话是我一直在追求的目标，能够使用普通话进行交际活动让我感到亲切。 (*Speaking Mandarin fluently, accurately, and logically is the goal I have been pursuing. Being able to communicate in Mandarin makes me feel amiable.*)

As in Group A, several participants mentioned the ease of communication allowed by Mandarin. Some participants also stated “正式” (*formal*). Other words that came up were: “放松” / “relaxed”, “方便” (*convenient*), “庄重” (*dignified*) and “流畅” (*fluent*). Only one response in English was recorded, with the rest being written in Simplified Chinese.

#### **4.2.4 Analysis**

*Using Mandarin:* A strong connection with Mandarin and its speakers was seen in both groups. Group B had a larger percentage of strong agreement, perhaps unsurprisingly due to the fact that they live in China and are thus in closer contact with their native tongue and its speakers. Both groups also reported feeling comfortable using Mandarin, as seen in the majority of positive questionnaire responses and in the open-ended question responses. The study abroad group, Group A, revealed the larger percentage of positive responses towards using Mandarin in general and specifically in allowing them to feel more connected to other Chinese people; perhaps being required to use English and potentially another foreign language daily, and having less encounters with other Chinese people, has made them more aware and appreciative of their comfort in speaking Mandarin and its ability to allow them to connect with their compatriots.

*Desire for Mandarin proficiency:* Both groups expressed a strong desire to be proficient in Mandarin, though it was Group B that revealed the larger percentage of positive attitudes to this statement, with all participants in agreement. Moreover, Group B had a larger percentage of positive attitudes towards mastering a high proficiency of Mandarin than towards mastering a high proficiency of English (the reverse being true for Group A). Studying in China and having Mandarin as their medium of instruction, when it comes to writing papers and completing exams, an advanced level of Mandarin is indispensable for the members of Group B – even more so than a high level of English. While the members of Group A naturally appreciate the importance of

proficiency in their mother tongue, no longer needing it for academic purposes means that an extremely high level is not vital.

### 4.3 Comparison of attitudes

The two groups' composite mean values for each of the four factors were used to compare within-group attitudes, followed by between-group attitudes, the latter of which was used to answer the research question. First, paired-samples t-tests were used to perform a within-group comparison of each group's attitudes towards both languages based on type of orientation (integrative and instrumental), followed by a within-group comparison of each group's integrative and instrumental attitudes based on language type (English and Mandarin). Finally, two-sample t-tests assuming unequal variance were used to carry out a between-group comparison of Group A and Group B's attitudes to test the effect of studying abroad.

#### 4.3.1 Integrative orientation and instrumental orientation

Two paired-samples t-tests were carried out to compare the difference in participants' integrative orientation towards English and Mandarin respectively. Figure 1, which displays the composite mean values, shows that both groups appeared to be more positively inclined towards Mandarin than they were towards English in the integrative sense. The difference in Group A's integrative attitudes was shown to be statistically significant, with  $p < 0.05$ . The difference in Group B's integrative attitudes was also shown to be statistically significant, with  $p < 0.001$ .

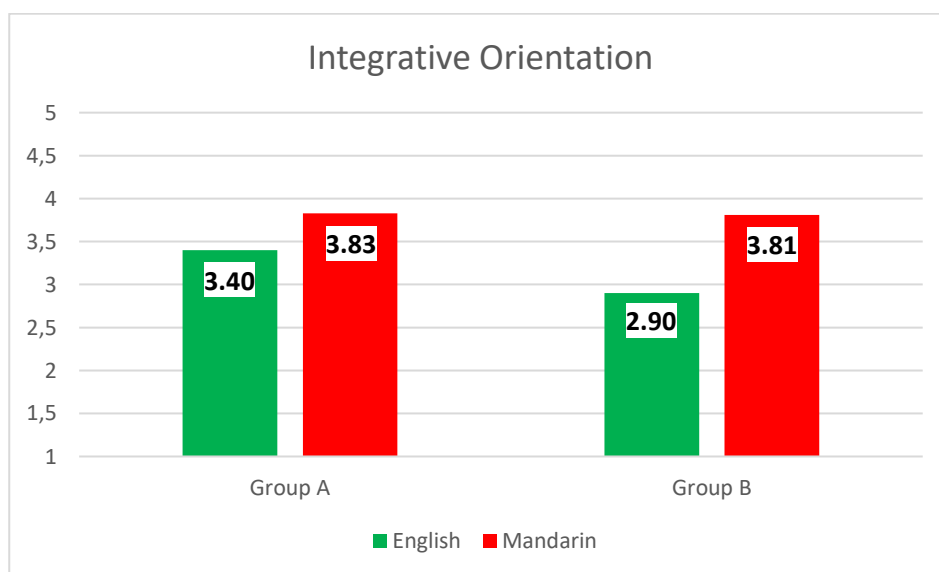


Figure 1: integrative orientations towards English and Mandarin

Another two paired-samples t-tests tested the difference in participants' instrumental orientation towards English and Mandarin respectively. As seen in Figure 2, both groups appeared to be more positively inclined towards Mandarin than they were towards English in the instrumental sense, with this difference being smaller for Group A. The difference between Group A's instrumental attitudes was proven not statistically significant, with  $p > 0.05$ , while for Group B the difference was statistically significant, with  $p < 0.05$ .

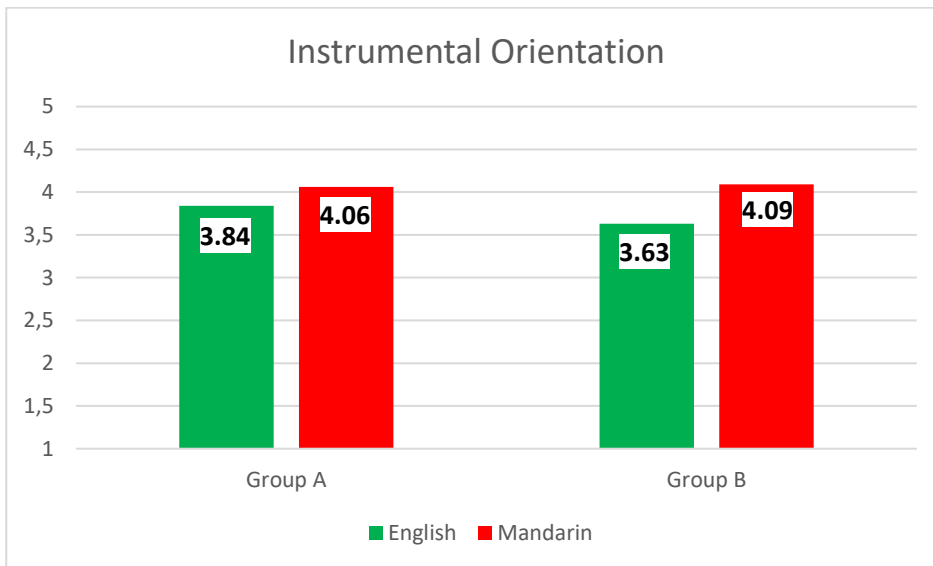


Figure 2: instrumental orientations towards English and Mandarin

Based on the results of the t-tests, it can be said that Group A were significantly more inclined towards Mandarin than they were towards English in the integrative sense, and Group B were significantly more inclined towards Mandarin in both the integrative and instrumental sense.

#### 4.3.2 Attitudes towards English and attitudes towards Mandarin

Next, two paired-samples t-tests were carried out to compare the difference in participants' attitudes towards English in the integrative and the instrumental sense. Figure 3 shows that both groups appeared to be more positively inclined towards English in the instrumental sense rather than in the integrative sense. The difference in Group A's attitudes towards English was shown to be statistically significant, with  $p < 0.001$ . The difference in Group B's attitudes towards English was also shown to be statistically significant, with  $p < 0.001$ .

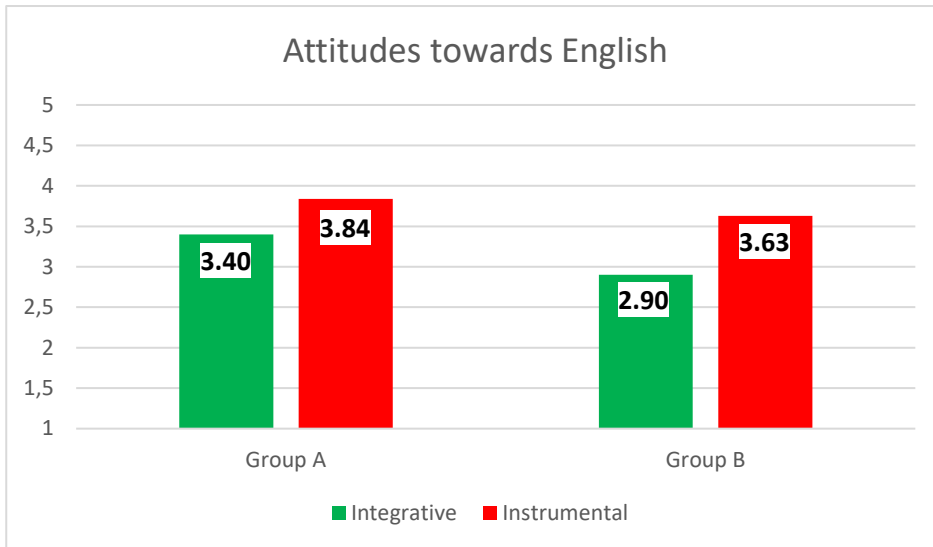


Figure 3: integrative and instrumental attitudes towards English

Two paired-samples t-tests were again applied to compare the difference in participants' attitudes towards Mandarin in the integrative and the instrumental sense. As seen in Figure 4, both groups appeared to be more positively inclined towards Mandarin in the instrumental sense rather than in the integrative sense, with this difference being smaller for Group A. The difference in Group A's attitudes towards Mandarin was proven not statistically significant, with  $p > 0.05$ , while the difference in Group B's attitudes towards Mandarin was statistically significant, with  $p < 0.05$ .

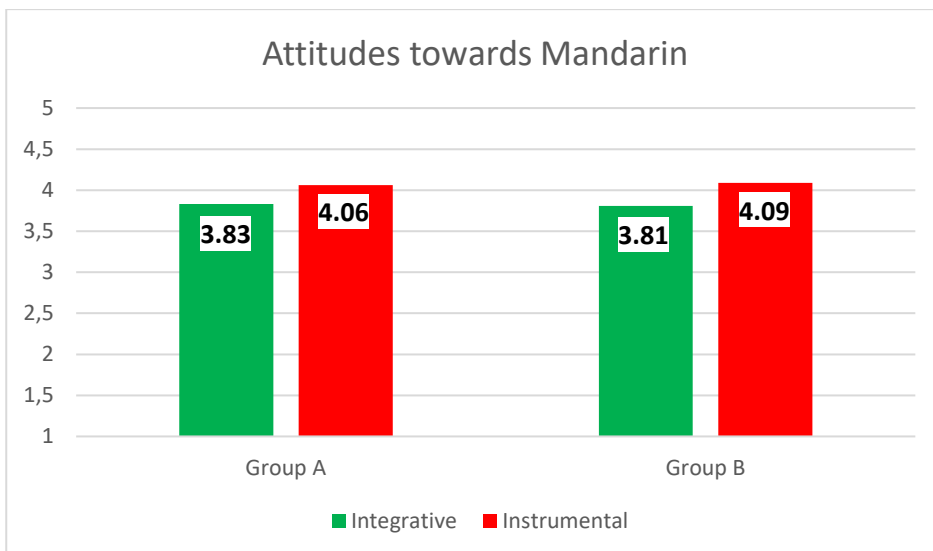


Figure 4: integrative and instrumental attitudes towards Mandarin

Based on the results of the t-tests, it can be said that, for English, Group A's instrumental orientation was significantly stronger than their integrative orientation. Group B's instrumental

orientation was significantly stronger than their integrative orientation for both English and Mandarin.

#### 4.3.3 Effect of study abroad

To compare the means of Group A participants' and Group B participants' attitudes towards each language, and thus examine the effect of study abroad, two-sample t-tests assuming unequal variance were performed. As shown in figure 5, Group A appears to have the more positive attitudes towards English, though the difference in means between the two groups regarding instrumental orientation is smaller. The difference between Group A and Group B's integrative attitudes is shown to be statistically significant, with  $p < 0.05$ . Thus, it may be said that studying abroad does have a significant effect on the integrative attitudes towards English of the particular sample of female Chinese students examined in this study. The result of the t-test for instrumental attitudes ( $p > 0.05$ ) showed that the difference in the two groups' attitudes towards English in the instrumental sense was not statistically significant, so it cannot be said that study abroad has a significant effect on the instrumental attitudes towards English of the participants in the present study.

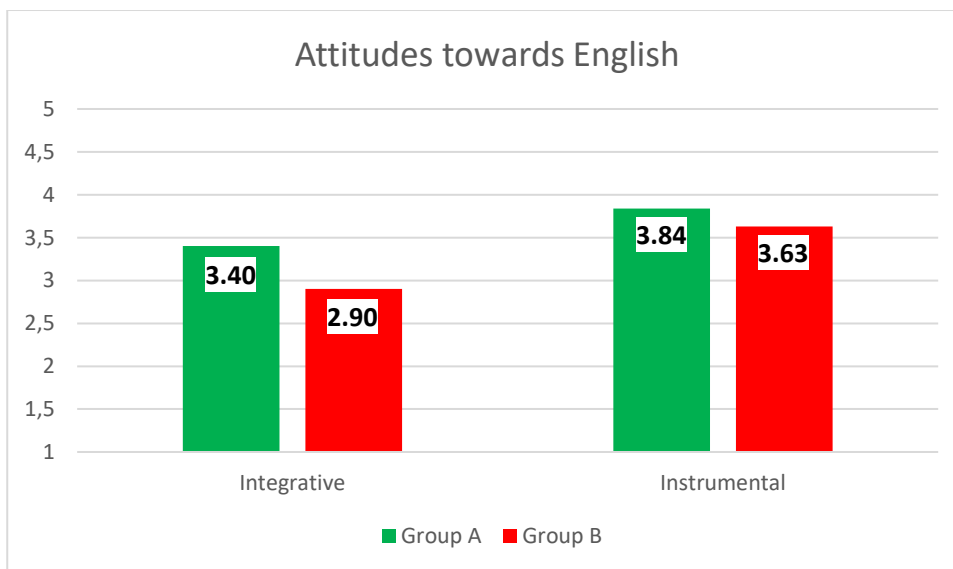


Figure 5: comparison of both groups' integrative and instrumental orientation towards English

As for Mandarin, the two groups' composite mean values were virtually the same in terms of both integrative orientation and instrumental orientation, as shown in figure 6. The differences between Group A and Group B's integrative and instrumental attitudes towards Mandarin were proven to be not statistically significant through two unequal variance t-tests ( $p > 0.05$  in both tests). Therefore,



it cannot be said that studying abroad has a significant effect on the attitudes towards Mandarin of the participants in the present study.

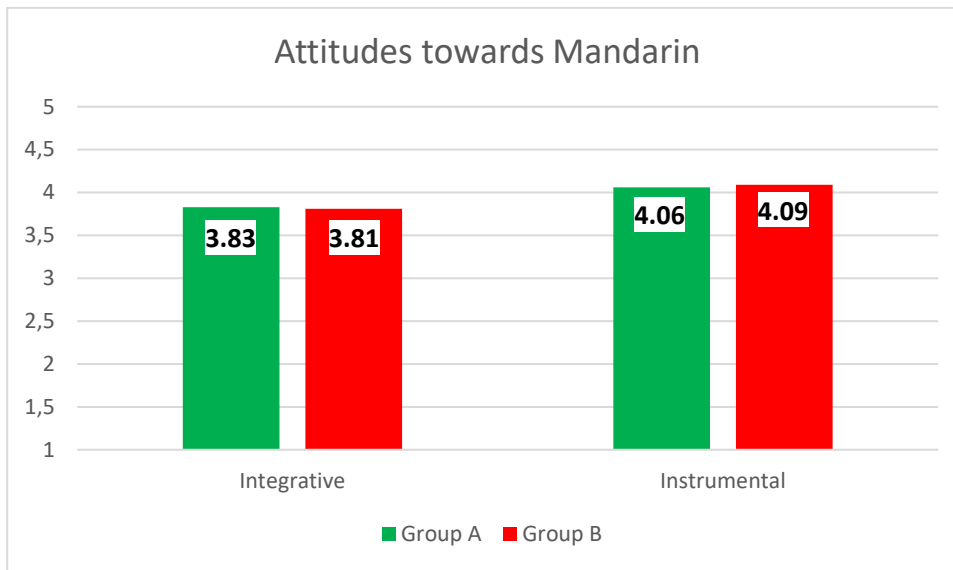


Figure 6: comparison of both groups' integrative and instrumental orientation towards Mandarin

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter will provide a discussion of the results in relation to the aim of the research, connecting findings with those of the previous studies. The contributions and limitations of the study will then be presented, followed by a conclusion.

### 5.1 Discussion

#### 5.1.1 Research Question

This study set out to examine the impact of studying abroad, in its provision of an increased exposure to English and a decreased exposure to Mandarin, on female Chinese university students' language attitudes towards English and Mandarin. This was done by comparing the language attitudes of Chinese students studying abroad at an English-speaking university with the language attitudes of Chinese students studying at a Mandarin-speaking university in Mainland China.

Following on from the results of the paired-samples t-tests, both groups showed a significantly stronger integrative orientation to Mandarin rather than to English, and Group B additionally showed a significantly stronger instrumental orientation to Mandarin rather than to English. This indicates that, in the integrative sense, Chinese students regard their national language most highly, regardless of whether they live in China or abroad. The finding that the participants display the strongest integrative orientation towards their native language is in line with the results of previous studies (Lai, 2005, Ng & Zhao, 2015 and Liu, 2018). Following on also from these studies (Lai, 2005, Ng & Zhao, 2015 and Liu, 2018), where English came out as the highest rated language in terms of instrumental orientation, the participants of the current study (in particular those studying abroad) were expected to feel most instrumentally orientated towards English; however, unlike the previous studies, Group B preferred their native Mandarin over English in the instrumental sense, while there was no significant difference in Group A's instrumental attitudes towards the two languages.

The results of the paired-samples t-tests also revealed that both groups were more strongly inclined to English in an instrumental sense rather than in an integrative sense. This is in line with the finding from Lai (2005) that English was preferred for its instrumental values. Lai (2005) also found that, for the native language, the integrative orientation was stronger than the instrumental one, though this outcome was not found in the current study; Group A showed no significant difference in their two orientation types towards Mandarin, while Group B's orientation towards Mandarin was stronger in the instrumental sense.

In terms of the effect of study abroad, the participants that currently study abroad displayed significantly more positive attitudes towards English in the integrative sense than the participants that study in China, according to the results of the two-samples t-tests. This is most likely due to the greater level of exposure to English they enjoy; thanks to their status of studying abroad in an international environment, they use English daily for schoolwork, communication with classmates and perhaps even daily tasks like buying things. There was no significant difference in the two groups' instrumental attitudes towards English. The study abroad group's comparatively higher rate of English language responses to the present study's open-ended survey questions backs up Chen and Chen's (2021) finding that the increased opportunity to talk with native speakers in a study abroad context led to an increase in usage of the second language in the participants' daily life. Based on the number of positive responses in the survey questionnaire, it appears that the study abroad group felt more comfortable and positive about using and speaking English in different situations, had more positive attitudes to English speakers, had a greater belief that English should be used and spoken in China, and prioritised English proficiency over Mandarin proficiency. As for Mandarin, the results of the two-samples t-tests revealed that there was no significant difference in the two groups' integrative attitudes, nor in their instrumental attitudes. However, based on the percentage of positive responses in the survey questionnaire, there were some small differences in the two groups' opinions, despite being insignificant overall. In having less opportunities to speak Mandarin, the study abroad group may have gained an appreciation of their native language, revealing a larger percentage of positive attitudes than the group that studies in China regarding speaking Mandarin and its role in allowing them to feel more connected to other Chinese people. However, as it is no longer necessary for the study abroad group to use the extremely high standard of Mandarin that would be required for formal matters like university exams and homework, they showed a lower percentage of positive attitudes than the group living in China towards mastering a high proficiency of the language.

Though not the main focus of the present study, the idea that study abroad contributes to language and culture aspects such as linguistic gains and development of global citizenship identity, as mentioned in several previous studies (see, for instance, Hernandez, 2016; Tseng et al., 2021; Sklad et al., 2016; Kishino & Takahashi, 2019) is supported in the results of the present study. The group that studies abroad revealed a higher (self-assessed) level of English proficiency and greater comfort in speaking the language, along with a considerably larger percentage of agreement that Chinese people should be able to speak fluent English and that English should be used more widely in China to allow for international communication. While Jackson (2015) argued that simply being present in a study abroad environment does not lead to an automatic improvement in Chinese

students' intercultural competence and readiness for the global workplace, the above outcomes of the present study suggest that the English language environment provided by study abroad does in fact have some positive impact on these issues.

### ***5.1.2 Contribution of the Research***

The present study investigated the effects of studying abroad on Mainland Chinese students' language attitudes and in doing so has added a Mainland Chinese perspective to the Cantonese/Hong Kong-dominant body of literature regarding the study of language attitudes in a Chinese context. It was demonstrated that studying abroad has a positive impact on female Chinese university students' integrative attitudes towards English, and that studying abroad may thus be an effective tool for Chinese students wanting to improve integrative elements, such as intercultural skills and integration among English speakers. It was also shown that studying abroad does not appear to have any effect on the attitudes towards the native language Mandarin, so students who study abroad are able to maintain their connection to their home culture while at the same time becoming global citizens.

### ***5.1.3 Limitations***

Despite the small sample size, this study provides a useful insight into the language attitudes of female Chinese students and could provide a good indication of how living abroad affects these attitudes. However, for practical reasons, the participants were not fully representative of all Chinese students studying abroad; the participants were studying in a limited number of countries so their experiences will not necessarily be true for students in other countries. Furthermore, the population of Chinese students studying abroad is a very diverse group and what is true for some students may not be true for others. Therefore, the results of this study may have limited generalisability beyond the research participants. A more accurate way to study the impact of study abroad on language attitudes could be to examine the language attitudes of the same group of people twice; before and during/after a period of study abroad, where any changes in their attitudes would indicate the impact of the study abroad experience. Due to the participants of the two groups being different people in the current study, the results do not truly indicate the impact of study abroad; rather, they give an idea of the difference in language attitudes held by people of each group. A more extensive study is recommended, involving a larger number of participants whose attitudes are examined before and during/after a period of study abroad.

## 5.2 Conclusion

The aim of this research was to investigate the ways in which studying abroad – particularly its environment of increased exposure to English and decreased exposure to Mandarin – impacts the language attitudes towards both languages of female Chinese university students. Through a quantitative Likert-scale questionnaire and qualitative open-ended questions, and subsequent statistical tests, this study analysed the integrative and instrumental orientations towards English and Mandarin of a group of female Chinese students in universities with English as the medium of instruction outside of China and a group of female Chinese students studying in China with Mandarin Chinese as their medium of instruction, to determine the effect of studying abroad. The main findings of the current study suggest that study abroad has an impact on students' language attitudes towards English in the integrative sense, as shown by the relevant two-samples t-test result. In their responses in the “integrative attitudes towards English” section of the questionnaire, the study abroad participants also showed a greater affinity for the English language and its speakers, greater comfort in using the language, and greater support for the wider usage of the language among Chinese people. Study abroad was not found to have a significant effect on instrumental attitudes towards English, and was also not found to have a significant effect on integrative and instrumental attitudes towards Mandarin. Language attitudes are linked to language proficiency and intercultural skills, so in drawing a link between study abroad and language attitudes, this study has also shed some light on the usefulness of international study in terms of language and culture learning. At a time when English is becoming more and more influential in China, particularly concerning career opportunities, study possibilities and international travel, having positive attitudes towards English is a steppingstone to integration into today's globalised world.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**GROUP A PARTICIPANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

	Age group	Country of study	Time spent abroad	Degree level	Time spent studying English (years)	English level (self-assessed; 1 lowest, 6 highest)
Participant 1	30+	Switzerland	1-2 years	Master's	18+	5
Participant 2	21-23	Hungary	2-4 years	Bachelor's	11+	4
Participant 3	24-26	Sweden	2-4 years	Master's	20	5
Participant 4	21-23	Sweden	4+ years	Master's	10	6
Participant 5	27-29	Sweden	4+ years	PhD	15	3
Participant 6	24-26	Italy	4+ years	Master's	15	4
Participant 7	24-26	Italy	2-4 years	Bachelor's	15	3
Participant 8	18-20	Italy	6-12 months	Bachelor's	10	2
Participant 9	24-26	Italy	4+ years	Master's	7	3
Participant 10	21-23	Denmark	6-12 months	Bachelor's	0.5	2
Participant 11	18-20	Italy	6-12 months	Bachelor's	10	2
Participant 12	21-23	Italy	2-4 years	Bachelor's	10+	4
Participant 13	21-23	Belgium	2-4 years	Bachelor's	11	5
Participant 14	24-26	Poland	1-2 years	PhD	12	5
Participant 15	24-26	Germany	1-2 years	Master's	18	4

**APPENDIX B**  
**GROUP B PARTICIPANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

	Age group	Degree level	Time spent studying English (years)	English level (self-assessed; 1 lowest, 6 highest)
Participant 1	24-26	Master's	23	2
Participant 2	24-26	Master's	15	3
Participant 3	27-29	PhD	20	3
Participant 4	27-29	PhD	15	2
Participant 5	21-23	Master's	18	5
Participant 6	21-23	Master's	16	3
Participant 7	24-26	Bachelor's	10	2
Participant 8	24-26	Master's	13	2
Participant 9	24-26	Master's	15	3
Participant 10	24-26	Master's	10	2
Participant 11	21-23	Master's	16	4
Participant 12	24-26	Master's	14	6
Participant 13	21-23	Master's	15	5
Participant 14	21-23	Master's	12	5
Participant 15	21-23	Master's	13	1
Participant 16	24-26	Master's	14	2
Participant 17	24-26	Master's	12	3
Participant 18	21-23	Bachelor's	12	3
Participant 19	24-26	Master's	15	3
Participant 20	18-20	Bachelor's	12	2

## APPENDIX C

### Survey Questionnaire

#### 第一部分

1. 您今年多大?[单选题]

18岁-20岁

21岁-23岁

24岁-26岁

27岁-29岁

30岁或以上

2. 您在国外留过学吗?[单选题]

留过学

没留过学

3. 您现在在中国还是在海外读书?[单选题]

在中国

在海外(哪个国家?)\_\_\_\_\_

4. 您的性别是什么?[单选题]

女

男

其他

5. 如果您现在在海外读书, 您在国外读书多久了?[单选题]

不到六个月

六到十二个月之间

一到两年之间

两到四年之间

四年多

我现在不在海外读书

6. 您现在在攻读哪一种学位?[单选题]

本科学位

硕士学位

博士学位

7. 您现在所修的大学课程的主要教学语言是什么? [单选题]

中文

英文

另一个语言

8. 您学习英语学习了多长时间? [单行文本题]

9. 您如何评价您的英语级别? [单选题]

入门级

基础级

进阶级

高阶级

流利级

精通级

## 第二部分

(可能的答案: 1. 非常不同、2. 不同意、3. 既不同意也不反对、4. 同意、5. 非常同意)

10. 我喜欢普通话。[单选题]

11. 我喜欢讲普通话的人。[单选题]

12. 中国人应该会说一口流利的普通话。[单选题]

13. 我喜欢说普通话, 因为这让我觉得与其他中国人的关系更紧密。[单选题]

14. 能说一口流利普通话的外国人通常是聪明的, 受过良好教育的, 也是富裕的。[单选题]

15. 我觉得说普通话最舒服。[单选题]

16. 普通话应该在中国以外的地方更广泛地使用。[单选题]
17. 我在非正式场合（例如和朋友聊天，买东西）说普通话感觉很自在。[单选题]
18. 我希望掌握流利的普通话。[单选题]
19. 普通话会帮助我找到一份非常好的工作。[单选题]
20. 普通话会帮助我获得很好的深造机会。[单选题]
21. 跟英文相比，我更喜欢普通话作为教学语言。[单选题]
22. 普通话在中国社会受到高度重视。[单选题]
23. 在未来，普通话将继续作为大陆人、台湾人和香港人的通用语言。[单选题]
24. 如果普通话在中国更广泛使用，中国会变得更加繁荣。[单选题]
25. 我在正式场合（例如工作面试）说普通话感觉很自在。[单选题]
26. 请用几个词描述您说普通话时的感受（可以用中文或者英文回答）。[多行文本题]

### 第三部分

（可能的答案：1. 非常不同、2. 不同意、3. 既不同意也不反对、4. 同意、5. 非常同意）

27. 我喜欢英语。[单选题]
28. 我喜欢讲英语的人。[单选题]
29. 中国人应该会讲一口流利的英语。[单选题]
30. 我想讲一口流利的英语，因为这让我觉得我是现代人，我很西化。[单选题]
31. 能讲一口流利英语的非母语人士通常是聪明的，受过良好教育的，也是富裕的。[单选题]
32. 我觉得说英语最舒服。[单选题]
33. 英语应该在中国更广泛地使用（这样中国人可以更好地与其他国家的人交流）。[单选题]
34. 我在非正式场合（例如和朋友聊天，买东西）说英语感觉很自在。[单选题]
35. 我希望掌握高水平的英语。[单选题]
36. 英语会帮助我找到一份非常好的工作。[单选题]



37. 英语会帮助我获得很好的深造机会。[单选题]
38. 跟普通话相比，我更喜欢英语作为教学语言。[单选题]
39. 英语在中国社会受到高度重视。[单选题]
40. 在接下来的几年里，英语将在中国变得很重要。[单选题]
41. 如果英语在中国广泛使用，中国会变得更加繁荣。[单选题]
42. 我在正式场合（例如工作面试）说英文很自在。[单选题]
43. 请用几个词描述您说英语时的感受（可以用中文或者英文回答）。[多行文本题]