

Learning Chinese in Taiwan: International Students' Responses to Promotional Strategies, Motivations, and Challenges at Wenzao CLC

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Abstract

The researchers observed that Taiwan has recently emerged as a popular destination for learning Chinese, attracting international students through its cultural openness, safety, and scholarships. However, the researchers also found that some students experienced an expectation–reality gap after arrival. Therefore, the researchers aimed to explore how international students at Wenzao Chinese Language Center (CLC) perceive and respond to the center's promotional strategies, and how these experiences influence the students' motivation, challenges, and satisfaction.

The researchers adopted a qualitative approach combining semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and observation, collecting data from 18 students from Asia, Europe, and the Americas. Through thematic analysis, the researchers found that scholarships, university partnerships, and personal recommendations strongly influenced students' decisions, while official promotion played a minor role. Some participants experienced mismatches in placement, teaching style, and exam frequency, which affected the students' satisfaction and willingness to recommend the program.

In conclusion, the researchers connected *expectancy-confirmation theory* with international student recruitment, showing how promotional expectations interact with real experiences. In practice, the researchers suggested enhancing online visibility, establishing alumni ambassador programs, and increasing transparency in course and placement information to reduce mismatches and better meet international students' diverse goals.

Keywords: Promotional Strategies; International Students; Chinese Learning; Expectation–Reality Gap; Wenzao Chinese Language Center

摘要

研究者發現，近年來台灣因文化開放、安全環境與完善的獎學金制度，逐漸成為國際學生學習華語的重要據點。然而，部分學生在實際就讀後產生了「期待與現實落差（expectation–reality gap）」。因此，本研究旨在探討文藻外語大學華語中心（Wenzao CLC）的國際學生如何看待並回應學校的推廣策略（promotional strategies），以及這些經驗如何影響他們的學習動機與滿意度。

本研究採質性研究方法，結合半結構式訪談、文件分析與觀察，共蒐集來自亞洲、歐洲與美洲等地 18 位學生的資料。訪談內容聚焦於學生選擇文藻的原因、學習過程中面臨的挑戰，以及他們對官方推廣內容的看法。

研究結果指出，獎學金、校際合作與個人推薦是主要的吸引因素，而官方推廣的影響相對有限。部分學生在分班安排與教學方式上出現預期落差，影響了他們的滿意度與推薦意願。研究者建議華語中心應加強數位平台的推廣、建立校友大使制度，並提升課程與分班制度的透明度，以縮小期待與現實之間的差距。

關鍵詞：推廣策略、國際學生、華語學習、期待與現實落差、文藻華語中心（CLC）

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INTRODUCTION

Background

The researchers noted that in recent years, Taiwan has become an important destination for international students to learn Chinese. In the past, China was the main choice, but because of political tensions and cultural differences, many students started to look for alternatives. Taiwan's democratic system, safe social environment, cultural openness, and the use of traditional Chinese characters give it a unique position in Chinese education¹. The Ministry of Education's *Huayu BEST Program* has also increased Taiwan's international visibility and supported the development of language centers².

The researchers also observed that international students' decisions are often influenced by both opportunities and challenges. Previous studies show that students often choose Taiwan because of its affordable tuition, cultural experiences, and safe environment³. However, in reality, they may face problems such as few opportunities to use Chinese outside of class, unfamiliar teaching methods, and cultural adjustment

¹ Ming-Sho Ho, *Desinicizing Taiwan: The Making of a Democratic National Identity* (London: Routledge, 2018).

² Ministry of Education, Taiwan, "Taiwan Huayu BEST Program Overview," published 2021, <https://depart.moe.edu.tw/CHICAGO/cp.aspx?n=17A3AF026326B52C&s=B7B7F3BA51F1F83F>.

³ *Study in Taiwan*, "Taiwan Advantages," *Study in Taiwan*, accessed November 4, 2025, <https://www.studyintaiwan.org/why-taiwan/taiwan-advantages>

difficulties. These problems often cause an “expectation–reality gap,” which may reduce their motivation and satisfaction⁴.

In this context, Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages established the Chinese Language Center (CLC) in 2002 to provide Chinese courses for international students.⁵ Wenzao CLC is known for small-class teaching, a well-structured curriculum, and cultural activities. The center also uses social media, YouTube videos, and its official website to recruit students. However, the researchers found that these promotions often do not clearly explain course intensity, placement systems, or language support. As a result, some students felt an “expectation–reality gap.” This raises the key question of this study: to what extent do Wenzao CLC’s promotional strategies match the actual experiences of international students?

⁴ Hong Gao. “An Analysis of the Phenomenon of Global ‘Mandarin Fever.’” *Journal of Chinese Language Teaching and Research* (2011).

⁵ Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages. “Chinese Language Center Introduction.” Accessed October 5, 2025. <https://c040e.wzu.edu.tw/datas/upload/files/index.html>

Motivation

The researchers became interested in this topic because some members had studied Korean at language centers in Korea. They found that class size, teaching style, and school reputation strongly affected students' learning experiences and recruitment outcomes. This made the researchers reflect on Wenzao CLC and ask how its promotion influences international students' choices and satisfaction.

Theories of language learning motivation also support this study. Dörnyei points out that learners are usually driven by both "personal goals," such as cultural interest or family background, and "practical goals," such as education or career needs.⁶ For example, Southeast Asian students may study Chinese for future job advantages⁷, while Western students may do so out of cultural curiosity.⁸ These different goals show that promotion should respond to diverse motivations and provide clear information to meet students' needs.

Therefore, this study focuses on international students at Wenzao CLC. The researchers aim to explore why they choose Wenzao, how they respond to its promotional strategies, and whether promotion matches their actual experiences.

⁶ Zoltán Dörnyei, "Motivation in Second and Foreign Language Learning," *Language Teaching* (2009).

⁷ Trang Nguyen and J. Hajek, "Motivation for Learning Chinese in a Study Abroad Context: Vietnamese Students in Taiwan" (CQU, 2024), <https://hdl.handle.net/10779/cqu.28900055.v1>.

⁸ Katarzyna Korona, *A Study on the Motivation and Learning Adaptation of European Students Learning Chinese in Taiwan* (Master's thesis, National Taipei University of Technology, 2013), accessed November 4, 2025, Airiti Library, doi:10.6841/NTUT.2013.00199.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine how international students view Wenzao CLC's promotional strategies and whether these strategies affect their motivation, satisfaction, and willingness to recommend the program. Although many studies in Taiwan have discussed international students' motivations and challenges, few have focused directly on the role of school promotion and marketing.

By comparing promotion with students' real experiences, the researchers seek to identify where messages are accurate and where they are not. The findings will help explain how promotion, scholarships, exchange programs, and word-of-mouth together influence student decisions.

Research Questions

1. Why do international students choose Wenzao CLC to learn Chinese?
2. What challenges do they face during their studies at Wenzao CLC?
3. What challenges do students face at Wenzao CLC, and how do they respond to its promotional strategies?

Contribution

The researchers believe this study contributes to both theory and practice. On the theoretical side, it adds to the literature by showing that official promotion has limited influence, while scholarships, exchange programs, and word-of-mouth are

stronger factors. It also shows how the “expectation–reality gap” affects satisfaction and recommendation.

On the practical side, the findings provide suggestions for Wenzao CLC and other Chinese programs. These include improving transparency about course design and placement, creating student ambassador programs to strengthen word-of-mouth, and using digital platforms to increase visibility. Such improvements can reduce the gap between promotion and reality and better support students from different backgrounds.

Finally, this study also relates to Taiwan’s role in global Chinese education. As Taiwan works to attract more international students, understanding how students interpret promotion and real experiences provides useful insights for policy and practice.

Limits

The researchers acknowledge several limitations. First, the sample size is small, with only 18 participants, so the findings cannot represent all international students in Taiwan. Second, the research site is limited to Wenzao CLC, which reduces generalizability. Third, some participants were also undergraduate students, so their schedules differed from full-time CLC students. Fourth, written answers collected through Google Forms were often shorter and less detailed than live interviews.

Another limitation of this study concerns the scope of data sources. Due to limited institutional access, the researchers were unable to interview CLC instructors or conduct classroom observations. As a result, the primary data of this study relied mainly on students’ self-reported experiences.

In addition, the researchers collected secondary data primarily from publicly available sources, including the CLC official website and social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. Therefore, the data may not fully reflect internal teaching practices or administrative perspectives. The researchers suggest that future studies could improve data triangulation by including classroom observations, instructor interviews, and internal institutional data.

Delimits

The researchers also note several delimitations. This study focuses only on international students at Wenzao CLC, not on local students or learners from other Chinese centers in Taiwan. It only looks at promotion, motivation, and challenges, and does not fully evaluate teaching methods or materials. The research mainly uses qualitative methods (semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and observation) and does not include large-scale quantitative surveys. These delimitations keep the study focused and realistic within the given resources.

Roadmap of the Thesis

The structure of this thesis is as follows. Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature, including students' motivations, challenges, and the role of promotion and word-of-mouth. Chapter 3 explains the research methodology, including data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 presents the findings and analysis based on the research questions. Chapter 5 concludes the thesis with a summary of findings,

limitations, and practical recommendations for Wenzao CLC and other Chinese programs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter reviews studies on international students' learning experiences, cultural differences, and adaptation in Taiwan. The researchers organized the literature into three parts. The first part explains the motivation and policy background that bring students to Taiwan. The second part reviews research on the challenges and comparisons in Chinese language teaching across regions. The third part discusses how promotion, word-of-mouth, and the idea of language as a market product influence expectations and satisfaction.

2.1 From Policy to Pull: Why Taiwan Looks Attractive

International students' decision-making is often explained by a push–pull model, which balances pressure from the home country with attractions from the host country.⁹ Insufficient educational resources in foreign students' home countries can be considered a push force, while the prestige of foreign degrees and language advantages serve as pull forces.¹⁰

Taiwan's pull factors include affordable tuition, a safe living environment, and

⁹ Tim Mazzarol and Geoffrey N. Soutar, “‘Push–Pull’ Factors Influencing International Student Destination Choice,” *International Journal of Educational Management* 16, no. 2 (April 1, 2002): 82–90, <https://doi.org/10.1108/09513540210418403>.

¹⁰ Felix Maringe and Nick Foskett, eds. *Globalization and Internationalization in Higher Education: Theoretical, Strategic and Management Perspectives*. (London and New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010).

cultural diversity. Policy incentives such as the Taiwan Scholarship and the *Huayu BEST Program* play a particularly important role. Launched in 2021, the *Huayu BEST Program* connects 18 Taiwanese universities, including Wenzao University, with 48 overseas partner schools.¹¹ Activities include teacher training, faculty dispatch, digital textbook development, and scholarships. *The Test of Chinese as a Foreign Language (TOCFL)* also increases Taiwan’s credibility by providing internationally recognized proficiency certification.

In the last two decades, since China joined the WTO in 2001, rapid economic growth and increased international trade have prompted countries around the world to prioritize exchanges with China. Consequently, learning Chinese is seen as crucial for improving job competitiveness and participating in the Chinese market¹². A global “Chinese fever” has created strong demand for Chinese language programs in many regions. This demand reshaped student flows and led to more investment in language centers.¹³ Due to political, economic, and cultural differences, higher education systems in different countries often exhibit different paths and conflicts in promoting

¹¹ Ministry of Education, Taiwan. “Taiwan Huayu BEST Program Finds Warm Welcome in the Southern US.” Published 2022.
https://depart.moe.edu.tw/HOU/News_Content.aspx?n=2671CEBD0B46B77E&sms=FA5053767D4DD9B9&s=8CED2884FEA14622

¹² Hong Gao, “An Analysis of the Phenomenon of Global ‘Mandarin Fever’” (2011).

¹³ Sue-feng Teng, “‘Chinese Fever’ in a Changing Global Economy—Taiwan and China Compete for the Chinese Language Education Market,” *Taiwan Panorama*, trans. Robert Wilson, April 2004, <https://www.taiwan-panorama.com/en/Articles/Details?Guid=947ffb16-6bb7-4ebe-a5bc-9df66e5a2dc7&CatId=11&postname=%22Chinese+Fever%22+in+a+Changing+Global+Economy--Taiwan+and+China+Compete+for+the+Chinese+Language+Education+Market>.

internationalization, privatization, academic freedom, and campus autonomy.¹⁴ At the same time, the closure of Confucius Institutes in the United States and other countries redirected part of this demand to alternative providers, including Taiwan's universities.¹⁵ These changes gave Taiwan new opportunities to present itself as a safe and open environment for Chinese language learning.

According to Ministry of Education statistics, the number of international students in Taiwan will reach about 123,000 by the 2024–2025 academic year, almost back to the level before the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁶ Vietnam (39,695), Indonesia (16,212), and Malaysia (9,686) are the top three source countries. This structure shows the effect of the New Southbound Policy, which makes Southeast Asia the main recruitment region.

Taiwan actively promotes internationalization, including recruiting international students, establishing dual degrees, and encouraging student exchange programs.¹⁷ These policy-driven attraction factors highlight the importance of scholarships, exchange opportunities, and institutional partnerships in student decision-making. The

¹⁴ Philip G. Altbach, *Global Perspectives on Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016).

¹⁵ Falk Hartig. *Communicating China to the World: Confucius Institutes and China's Strategic Narratives*. New York: Routledge, 2015.

¹⁶ Ministry of Education, Taiwan. *Analysis of International Student Enrollment Trends (2024 Annual Report)*. Published 2024. https://stats.moe.gov.tw/bookcase/International_Comparison/113/index.html

¹⁷ ICEF Monitor, “Taiwan Is Close to Reaching Its Pre-Pandemic Benchmark for International Enrolment,” April 2, 2025, <https://monitor.icef.com/2025/04/taiwan-is-close-to-reaching-its-pre-pandemic-benchmark-for-international-enrolment/>.

researchers note that this connects closely to findings at Wenzao CLC, where financial support and school partnerships were among the main reasons students chose to enroll. (see Section 4.1.1).

2.2 After Arrival: Where Expectations Meet Friction

While policies attract many students, challenges often begin after arrival. International students face difficulties such as placement accuracy, the pressure of immersion teaching, frequent tests, and limited language support. Berry's acculturation theory explains how students balance keeping their own culture and adapting to the host culture.¹⁸ Without proper support, students may feel stress and lose motivation.

External challenges such as food, weather, housing, and transportation combine with internal pressures such as stress, motivation, and relationships. Universities and language learning centers therefore play a central role in placement systems, feedback channels, and counseling services. Accurate placement is especially important to keep motivation high and reduce frustration.¹⁹

Geopolitical shifts also shape choices. As Mainland China became less

¹⁸ John W. Berry, "Acculturation: Living Successfully in Two Cultures," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* (2005).

¹⁹ J. Caspersen and Jens-Christian Smeby, "Placement Training and Learning Outcomes in Social Work Education," *Studies in Higher Education* 46 (2020): 2650–63, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2020.1750583>.

accessible for some students due to political tensions, Taiwan offered a substitute destination with similar linguistic resources but a different social and political environment.²⁰

These recurring challenges and contrasts demonstrate how placement systems, immersion pressure, and cultural adaptation influence student motivation. The researchers note that such themes also appear in the Wenzao CLC context and echo the issues that will be examined in detail in Sections 4.3.1–4.3.4.

2.3 Promotion, Word-of-Mouth, and the Market for Chinese

Before enrollment, students' expectations are shaped by official promotion and by peer recommendations. Expectancy-confirmation theory suggests that satisfaction depends on how actual experiences compare with prior expectations.²¹ In higher education, reputation often depends more on peer recommendations than on official advertising.²² When promotions are vague or too positive, the gap between expectation and reality grows, leading to disappointment.

From a market perspective, language has become a form of commodity. Kotler

²⁰ H. I. Huang “Learning Scenarios in an EMI Classroom in Higher Education: Students’ Perceptions in Taiwan.” *The Asian Journal of Applied Linguistics* (2020)

²¹ Richard L. Oliver, “A Cognitive Model of the Antecedents and Consequences of Satisfaction Decisions.” *Journal of Marketing Research* (1980); ——. “Cognitive, Affective, and Attribute Bases of the Satisfaction Response.” *Journal of Consumer Research* (1993).

²² J. Hemsley-Brown and I. Oplatka. “Universities in a Competitive Global Marketplace: A Systematic Review of the Literature on Higher Education Marketing.” *International Journal of Public Sector Management* (2006)

and Fox pointed out in "Strategic Marketing for Educational Institutions" that educational institutions also need to use marketing strategies to understand audience needs, design courses, establish brand image, and strengthen competitiveness through market analysis and positioning²³. Students do not only learn Chinese for communication, but also for degrees, certificates, and mobility. In this way, language education becomes a product that students consume, similar to buying a package that includes immersion, testing, and career opportunities.²⁴

Therefore, when official promotion does not explain course intensity, placement systems, or support services clearly, students turn to word-of-mouth to reduce uncertainty. In "Hiring Education Agents for International Student Recruitment: Perspectives from Agency Theory" notes that in the context of global higher education marketization, universities are increasingly relying on educational agents and intermediaries for international student recruitment. While these intermediaries facilitate student mobility and information transfer, they also create information asymmetry, conflicts of interest, and ethical risks.²⁵ Peer testimony becomes more trusted than institutional messages.

These insights show that the gap between official promotion and actual

²³ Philip Kotler and Karen Fox, *Strategic Marketing for Educational Institutions*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1995).

²⁴ Monica Heller, "The Commodification of Language." *Annual Review of Anthropology* (2010).

²⁵ Jussi Kivistö and Pii-Tuulia Nikula, "Hiring Education Agents for International Student Recruitment: Perspectives from Agency Theory," December 2018.

experience is a recurring issue. The researchers emphasize that this framework explains the design of the ‘Promotion vs. Experience’ table in Section 4.2, where promoted features are compared with actual experiences, highlighting unmet expectations in areas such as scholarships, teaching methods, and cultural immersion.

2.4 When Language Becomes a Market: Chinese as Culture and Commodity

The researchers noted that Taiwan has gradually become a key destination for Chinese education, presenting an alternative to mainland China. Taiwan emphasizes small-class instruction, professional teacher training, and cultural immersion, while mainland China often highlights its academic tradition in linguistics and philology.²⁶ This contrast reflects different models of language education: one focusing on practical use and cultural experience, the other on academic theory.

Historical data shows that Taiwan has been hosting international Chinese learners for decades. According to the report *Learning Chinese in Taiwan*, nearly one thousand foreign students were already studying Chinese and Chinese culture in Taiwan during the 1968–1969 academic year. Among them, 292 attended 17 higher education institutions recognized by the Ministry of Education, while others studied in

²⁶ Elaine Chung and Qipeng Gao. “Mandarin Soft Power with Taiwanese Characteristics: Values, Visibility, and Challenges.” (2020).

language schools or secondary institutions.²⁷ This early foundation demonstrates

Taiwan's long-standing role in Chinese language education.

More recently, Taiwan's approach has drawn high-profile cases. In the summer of 2023, a group of Harvard University students joined a Chinese program at National Taiwan University. Their reported outcomes were described as "far exceeding initial expectations".²⁸ Students explained that the strong immersion environment required them to use Chinese almost exclusively on campus, which accelerated their progress from daily conversations to academic discussions.

Interviews with these students published by 換日線 further highlight the cultural dimension of Taiwan's Chinese education. For instance, Harvard sophomore Gu Xizhe (顧希哲) recalled his initial shock at encountering traditional Chinese characters, such as "國," which differed from the simplified forms he was used to.²⁹ Over time, however, he adapted and even developed strategies to guess the meaning of unfamiliar characters. He and his peers also began to practice Taiwanese dialects, showing that their learning extended beyond Chinese into broader cultural experiences. Gao Hong in "Target Language Use in the Classroom," argues that in

²⁷ Ministry of Education, Taiwan. *Learning Chinese in Taiwan (1968–1969 Academic Year Report)* (1970).

²⁸ 換日線. "【換日線專訪】大批哈佛學生來台學中文，直呼『遠超預期』." *Yahoo 奇摩新聞*, November 19, 2023. <https://tw.news.yahoo.com/【換日線專訪】大批哈佛學生來台學中文，直呼「遠超預期」-230055574.html>.

²⁹ 換日線. "【換日線專訪】大批哈佛學生來台學中文，直呼『遠超預期』." *Yahoo 奇摩新聞*, November 19, 2023. <https://tw.news.yahoo.com/【換日線專訪】大批哈佛學生來台學中文，直呼「遠超預期」-230055574.html>.

foreign language teaching, teachers should flexibly adjust the ratio of target language to native language.³⁰

These recurring challenges and contrasts also provide important context for our analysis in Chapter Four, where we examine how international students at Wenzao CLC interpret and respond to similar issues.

2.5 Linking the Dots: From Messages to Outcomes

The researchers connect the literature to this study with a simple process:

Promotion (official and word-of-mouth) → Expectations → Experience

(placement, teaching, cultural adaptation) → Satisfaction & Recommendation

This framework highlights how policies, challenges, and perceptions interact to shape international students' decisions and their evaluation of studying in Taiwan.

³⁰ H. Gao, “Target Language Use in the Classroom,” *Language Teaching Research* (2011).

METHODOLOGY

This study focuses on the motivations and challenges of international students at the Wenzao Chinese Language Center (CLC) when learning Chinese in Taiwan. It continues the discussion in Chapter One, which introduced Taiwan's appeal as a destination for Chinese learning (such as its democratic environment, school location, job opportunities, and the Huayu BEST program), and also the gaps between students' expectations and reality (such as teaching quality, chances to use Chinese inside and outside class, and cultural differences).

The researchers used a qualitative research design. The main method was semi-structured in-depth interviews, supported by document analysis and participant observation (for example, CLC campus brochures, admission websites, and official YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook pages). This design allowed the researchers to capture both students' personal stories and the broader context. After collecting the data, the researchers applied thematic analysis to identify the main patterns related to "motivation" and "challenges."

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative case study design, focusing on international students at the Wenzao Chinese Language Center (CLC). The researchers chose semi-structured interviews because all participants answered the same core questions, while there was also flexibility to ask follow-up questions. This method helped ensure consistency and comparability of the data, while also encouraging participants to freely share their thoughts.

In addition, to support the interview data, the researchers also conducted document analysis. This included reviewing the CLC's official YouTube channel, Instagram, Facebook page, and admission website. The focus was on how these platforms presented course features, cultural activities, and admission information. By comparing these materials with the interview results, the study gained a more complete understanding of the CLC's promotional strategies and students' feedback.

Participants Selection

The research site is the Chinese Language Center (CLC) at Wenzao University of Languages in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. The participants are international students whose first language is not Chinese. To make sure there is diversity in nationality, study time, and language level, the researchers used several sampling methods.

First, with existing connections, the researchers used purposive sampling to invite qualified students. The researchers also used snowball sampling, asking participants to recommend other suitable students. Second, the researchers applied convenience sampling and voluntary sampling at the CLC, by giving out flyers, making announcements, and posting posters. To encourage participation, small rewards and prize draws were provided.

In total, 18 students joined the study. They came from Indonesia, Japan, Spain, Mexico, Belgium, Vietnam, the United States, and France. For analysis, the researchers grouped participants by gender, age, nationality, Chinese study time, and whether they had basic Chinese knowledge. Participants could choose to join by face-to-face interview, written reply (Google Form), or online interview (Zoom).

Although the total number of international students enrolled at Wenzao Chinese

Language Center (CLC) is larger, only a limited number of students were available and willing to participate in this study. The final sample of 18 participants represents approximately 10% of the accessible international student population at the time of data collection.

This study adopts a qualitative research design, which emphasizes in-depth understanding of participants' experiences rather than statistical generalization. The researchers therefore consider the sample size appropriate for an exploratory case study focusing on students' perceptions, motivations, and learning experiences.

During the participant recruitment process, the researchers organized a small prize draw to increase participation willingness. The prize draw was used solely as an incentive to encourage voluntary participation and did not influence the content of participants' responses. All participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that their responses would remain anonymous.

Data Collection

The data collection of this study included three parts: interviews, document analysis, and participant observation.

The researchers first recruited participants through personal connections and campus promotion. The researchers also confirmed the consent forms to make sure the research was used only for academic purposes. The participants could choose their preferred way to join: face-to-face interviews, online interviews (Zoom), or written replies (Google Form). The researchers adopted Google Forms as an alternative interview method for several practical reasons. First, it was difficult to recruit a

sufficient number of international students who were willing to participate in face-to-face interviews due to time constraints and academic pressure.

Second, language barriers also affected participation. Not all CLC international students were confident English speakers, and some participants expressed anxiety about answering interview questions orally in English. As a result, several students preferred to provide written responses rather than participate in live interviews.

By allowing participants to complete written responses through Google Forms, the researchers were able to reduce pressure on participants and increase their willingness to take part in the study. This approach helped the researchers collect data from a broader range of students and improve the overall data collection rate. Although written responses may lack immediacy compared to face-to-face interviews, the researchers considered this method necessary under realistic field conditions.

In the end, the researchers conducted 18 interviews. Among them, 8 were face-to-face (including 5 on Zoom), and 10 were written replies (through Google Form).

Each interview lasted about 20–30 minutes, and the place was arranged according to the participants' preference. Most face-to-face interviews were held in campus meeting rooms, which were quiet, comfortable, and professional, so participants could share opinions in a relaxed atmosphere. Online interviews gave flexibility of time and place, while still keeping an open and interactive discussion.

Written replies were more casual, but because they were text-based, the researchers could not directly observe participants' emotions, and the answers had less immediacy and detail. Follow-up questions were sometimes needed to clarify unclear parts.

All face-to-face and online interviews were recorded with the participants' agreement. The transcripts were prepared using ChatGPT and manual checking to make sure of accuracy and clarity. Written replies were completed by participants themselves, and the researchers asked extra questions when necessary.

The interview questions were designed by the researchers based on the purpose of the study and covered four main aspects:

1. Participants' personal background and learning experience at Wenzao CLC.
2. Reasons and decision-making process for choosing Wenzao CLC (including information sources, promotional content, and recommendations).
3. The gap between their expectations from promotional content and their actual learning experience.
4. Suggestions and feedback for Wenzao CLC's future promotional strategies.

Besides interviews, the researchers also collected and analyzed Wenzao CLC's official documents and media. These included the official YouTube channel,

Instagram, Facebook page, and the admission website. The researchers focused on promotional videos, cultural activity posts, and recruitment information, and analyzed how the CLC presented its courses and resources to attract international students. At the same time, the researchers also observed printed materials on campus, such as brochures, posters, and bulletin boards, to support the interview data.

The study found that semi-structured interviews ensured consistency of data while still allowing participants to give extended answers. This provided richer information than expected. However, the researchers also faced challenges, such as difficulty arranging interview times, some students' limited ability to express in English or Chinese, and unstable internet during online interviews.

Table 1 Demographic Information of Interviewees

	Age	Sex	Nationality	Chinese study time	Status at Wenzao	Interview Mode
1	19	Female	Indonesia	10 months	Wenzao undergraduate student	Face-to-Face
2	19	Female	Indonesia	1 year	Wenzao undergraduate student	Face-to-Face

3	20	Female	Indonesia	1 year	Wenzao undergraduate student	Face-to-Face
4	18	Female	Indonesia	10 months	Wenzao undergraduate student	Face-to-Face (Zoom)
5	22	Female	Japan	4 months	Exchange student	Face-to-Face (Zoom)
6	24	Male	Spain	10 months	Independent CLC student	Face-to-Face (Zoom)
7	21	Female	Indonesia	6 months	Wenzao undergraduate student	Face-to-Face (Zoom)
8	24	Male	Mexico	9 months	Exchange student	Face-to-Face (Zoom)
9	20	Male	Vietnam	3 months	Independent CLC student	Typing (Google Form)
10	22	Female	Vietnam	3 months	Independent CLC student	Typing (Google Form)

11	23	Female	Belize	3 months	Independent CLC student	Typing (Google Form)
12	21	Female	Vietnam	2 months	Independent CLC student	Typing (Google Form)
13	24	Male	Vietnam	1 month	Independent CLC student	Typing (Google Form)
14	20	Female	The United States	1 month	Independent CLC student	Typing (Google Form)
15	26	Female	Mexico	1 month	Exchange student	Typing (Google Form)
16	24	Male	Indonesia	1 month	Independent CLC student	Typing (Google Form)
17	20	Female	The United States	1 month	Exchange student	Typing (Google Form)
18	24	Male	France	1 year	Exchange student	Typing (Google Form)

Source: Organized by the Author

Note. The researchers noted that nationality and Chinese study time mainly connect to RQ1 (motivations for choosing Wenzao CLC). Study status (undergraduate vs. CLC

only) and Chinese level are related to RQ2 (challenges faced during studies).

Interview mode and exposure to Wenzao's promotion materials provide insights for RQ3 (perceptions of promotional strategies).

Data Analysis Process

After data collection, the researchers carefully read all 18 interview transcripts several times to become familiar with the content. Important words, repeated ideas, and phrases related to the research questions were underlined and annotated. The researchers then applied open coding to identify key concepts such as "scholarship," "teacher quality," "location," "Chinese learning environment," and "social media promotion."

Next, the researchers conducted axial coding, grouping these initial codes into broader themes that corresponded to the three research questions:

1. Motivations for choosing Wenzao CLC (RQ1) — including scholarships, school reputation, location, and personal recommendations.
2. Challenges faced during Chinese learning (RQ2) — including language barriers, cultural adjustment, and class level differences.
3. Perceptions of promotional strategies (RQ3) — including social media content, school websites, and word-of-mouth promotion.

Through selective coding, the researchers identified recurring patterns and calculated how many participants mentioned similar ideas. For example, “scholarship” was mentioned by 12 participants, “location and safety” by 9, and “teacher quality” by 7. Meanwhile, 10 participants reported “language barriers,” and 9 mentioned “friend or teacher recommendation” as a strong influence.

The researchers also identified emerging codes that extended beyond the main categories, such as “campus diversity,” “TikTok exposure,” and “student experience sharing.” These findings suggest potential directions for Wenzao’s future promotional improvement.

To enhance reliability, two researchers coded the transcripts independently, then compared their codes and discussed differences until agreement was reached. This intercoder reliability check and triangulation across interviews, documents, and observations strengthened the credibility and validity of the analysis.

Research Timeline

The researchers designed a research timeline to guide the process. Table 2 presents the schedule of activities from preparation, data collection, to analysis and reporting.

Table 2 Timeline of Research Procedures

Stage	Timeline (2025)	Main Activities
Preparation Stage	February – March	The researchers designed interview questions, prepared consent forms and promotional materials, reviewed promotional content (websites, brochures, videos, social media posts), and conducted pilot testing.
Data Collection Stage	April – July	The researchers conducted interviews (face-to-face/Zoom/Google Form), collected official CLC documents and online promotion (YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, admission website), observed campus brochures and posters, and recorded the number of views, shares, and online exposure.

Document & Contextual Review Stage	April – July (parallel)	The researchers examined official documents in the context of Taiwan's higher education background (e.g., declining birth rate, Southbound Policy, closure of Confucius Institutes abroad, Chinese as a global market), and noted how Wenzao CLC positioned itself in this broader environment.
Transcription Stage	August – September	The researchers transcribed recordings, organized written replies, and proofread transcripts.
Data Analysis Stage	September	The researchers coded the transcripts independently, compared coding differences, conducted thematic analysis, and triangulated interviews, documents, and observations.

Source: Organized by the Author

DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the perspectives of international students at the Wenzao Chinese Language Center (CLC), based on interviews, document analysis, and observations. The researchers organized the findings according to the three research questions: (1) motivations for choosing Wenzao CLC, (2) responses to recruitment promotion strategies, (3) learning experiences and challenges, and (4) overall impressions of the program. Each section introduces major themes, provides representative quotes from students of different nationalities, and offers analysis connected to relevant theories such as Chinese Fever, commodification of language, and word-of-mouth influence in international education.

Together, the findings provide a comprehensive picture of how promotion strategies, learning conditions, and student expectations interact.

4.1 Why Students Choose Wenzao

Scholarships Open Doors

The researchers found that scholarships and inter-university partnerships were major motivations for international students to study at Wenzao CLC. Many Indonesian undergraduate students received a scholarship package that included free Chinese courses.

“It was through my senior. We knew about a scholarship program that provided one year of free Chinese courses. So, I joined CLC during my first and second years of study.” (Participant 1, Indonesia)

“I received a scholarship, and the Chinese courses were included. Because it was free, I decided to join. It was also the school’s way of encouraging us to learn Chinese.” (Participant 2, Indonesia)

A Mexican exchange student also benefited from a partnership:

“My university in Mexico has a partnership with Wenzao. Because of that, I got a scholarship to study here. Without it, I would not have had this chance.” (Participant 15, Mexico)

A French exchange student added:

“I came because my school in France had an agreement with Wenzao. It made the decision easier and less risky.” (Participant 18, France)

The researchers observed that financial support reduced the economic burden and encouraged students who had not originally planned to study Chinese. Scholarships also provided a sense of stability and trust, especially for students from developing countries who might otherwise view overseas study as financially impossible. These responses show that scholarships functioned as both an economic incentive and a symbolic signal of program quality. For exchange students, inter-

university partnerships enhanced institutional credibility and made the decision less risky. Together, these findings reflect how scholarships work not only as financial support but also as a marketing tool that attracts international students, consistent with Taiwan's scholarship-based recruitment policy and the commodification of education perspective³¹.

Power of Recommendations

Personal recommendations were another powerful factor that shaped students' decisions.

“My high school counselor and several teachers recommended Wenzao CLC to me.

My senior also strongly encouraged me to follow her path.” (Participant 1, Indonesia)

“It was my sister who told me about Wenzao. I trusted her opinion.” (Participant 12, Vietnam)

“My father said Wenzao was good, so I searched more and then decided.”

(Participant 13, Vietnam)

“It was my friend who recommended me to come here.” (Participant 11, Belize)

“My teacher in the U.S. recommended Wenzao as a strong school for Chinese.”

(Participant 14, United States)

³¹ Philip G. Altbach, *Global Perspectives on Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016).

The researchers concluded that trusted voices—such as family members, teachers, or friends—often had more influence than advertisements or websites. This trend shows that students rely on personal trust rather than institutional image when making study decisions. Indonesian and Vietnamese participants tended to follow advice from family and school networks, while Western students relied more on professors' opinions. This reflects how social networks act as cultural bridges that transfer credibility between institutions and potential students. These findings support the literature emphasizing word-of-mouth marketing as one of the most effective recruitment strategies in international education³².

Searching Online Voices

For some students, the decision came from independent research through digital platforms and online communities.

“I heard about Wenzao from Reddit. A stranger said it was good, and that made me more confident.” (Participant 4, Indonesia)

“Before applying, I watched Instagram reels and videos about Taiwan. They gave me an idea of life here.” (Participant 7, Indonesia)

“I found information both from my family and also from social media like Facebook.”

³² Felix Maringe and Nick Foskett, eds. *Globalization and Internationalization in Higher Education: Theoretical, Strategic and Management Perspectives*. (London and New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010).

(Participant 13, Vietnam)

“I searched the official website, but I also checked blogs and reviews from other students.” (Participant 5, Japan)

The researchers noted that online information sometimes felt more authentic than official promotion. Students trusted posts from real learners more than polished advertisements. These findings connect with the broader phenomenon of “Chinese Fever,” where informal digital narratives and social media reviews significantly shape study-abroad motivations. Online communities thus became a form of global word-of-mouth that influenced expectations even before official contact with the institution. This observation supports Gao’s analysis of global “Mandarin Fever,” emphasizing that social media has become a major factor in shaping perceptions of Chinese language education³³.

Reputation and Location

Reputation and location were also key factors for many students.

“Many of my friends compared the reviews, and Wenzao had better comments than other schools.” (Participant 1, Indonesia)

“Wenzao is a language university, so I felt it was very professional compared to other

³³ Hong Gao, “An Analysis of the Phenomenon of Global ‘Mandarin Fever’” (2011).

centers.” (Participant 6, Spain)

“Kaohsiung was attractive to me. It is my partner school, and the location is

convenient.” (Participant 5, Japan)

“I saw pictures of Kaohsiung online. The lifestyle seemed relaxing and open, so I

wanted to come.” (Participant 15, Mexico)

The researchers concluded that Wenzao’s reputation as a specialized language university and Kaohsiung’s comfortable living environment both enhanced students’ confidence in their choice. For many learners, the idea of studying in a safe, friendly, and culturally diverse city aligned with the image presented in Taiwan’s higher education policy (see Section 2.1). These factors reduced uncertainty and reinforced students’ perception that Wenzao was a reliable and welcoming place to study Chinese.

4.2 The Impact of Promotion

Limited Visibility Online

Many participants mentioned that they had little exposure to official recruitment materials before applying to Wenzao CLC.

“I didn’t see any promotion. My decision was from my senior’s advice and scholarship information.” (Participant 1, Indonesia)

“I saw a video, but it was not really for recruitment. I expected more interactive teaching, but in reality it was textbook-based.” (Participant 6, Spain)

“I only found Wenzao’s university website, not the CLC site. It was very general.”
(Participant 5, Japan)

The researchers observed that weak visibility increased the risk of expectation–reality mismatch. Students mainly relied on word-of-mouth or social media instead of direct institutional information. This created gaps between expectations and real learning conditions, as applicants often imagined an “interactive” or “Western-style” teaching approach based on other online content. Such findings echo the challenges described in studies on international student marketing, where smaller institutions in regional cities face difficulty maintaining a global online presence compared to competitors in capital areas. Clearer, more detailed digital promotion could reduce confusion and prevent misunderstanding about course style or language of instruction³⁴.

Agents and Counselors’ Role

Several students learned about Wenzao through intermediaries such as agents, counselors, and teachers.

³⁴ ICEF Monitor, “Taiwan Is Close to Reaching Its Pre-Pandemic Benchmark for International Enrolment,” April 2, 2025, <https://monitor.icef.com/2025/04/taiwan-is-close-to-reaching-its-pre-pandemic-benchmark-for-international-enrolment/>.

“My mother’s friend had an agency. They introduced Wenzao CLC, and I felt safer.”

(Participant 7, Indonesia)

“My high school teachers told me Wenzao was a good place. Their advice made me trust it.” (Participant 2, Indonesia)

“My professor recommended Wenzao, saying the program was reliable.” (Participant 14, United States)

The researchers found that trusted messengers substituted for weak official promotion and acted as important gatekeepers. Students often valued human reassurance more than online marketing because it reduced uncertainty. For Southeast Asian students, educational agents and school counselors provided both information and emotional security, while Western students tended to trust academic mentors. This pattern is consistent with research on third-party influence in international student recruitment³⁵, which argues that intermediaries fill information gaps but may also create asymmetry or unrealistic expectations if not carefully monitored. Universities therefore need to ensure that their local partners communicate accurate, updated information to maintain credibility abroad.

³⁵ Jussi Kivistö and Pii-Tuulia Nikula, “Hiring Education Agents for International Student Recruitment: Perspectives from Agency Theory,” December 2018.

Students Suggest New Paths

Participants also shared practical suggestions for improving CLC's promotion.

"They should post more content on TikTok. That's what many Indonesian students

use." (Participant 4, Indonesia)

"They can make a 10–15 minute YouTube video to introduce the courses and

facilities. When I searched before, I found almost nothing." (Participant 2, Indonesia)

"Maybe invite alumni to share their stories. Hearing from them is more real."

(Participant 13, Vietnam)

The researchers noted that most suggestions emphasized the importance of authenticity and social media presence. Students preferred short and visual content that showed the real campus and daily learning atmosphere. Some also hoped for alumni ambassadors who could share genuine experiences in different languages.

These ideas match current trends in digital communication, where storytelling and short-form videos shape brand identity more effectively than traditional brochures.

The researchers agreed that aligning promotional content with students' media habits—especially platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram—could strengthen CLC's visibility and competitiveness in the global education market.

When Ads Meet Reality

Students' experiences revealed both alignment and gaps between advertisement

and actual learning.

“I thought courses would be in English, but actually they were in Chinese. That was a big shock.” (Participant 5, Japan)

“There were too many exams. I didn’t expect that from the promotion.” (Participant 6, Spain)

“It even exceeded my expectations, especially in resources and location.” (Participant 14, United States)

The researchers observed that unclear or overly general promotion sometimes led to wrong assumptions about class language, assessment methods, and course intensity. This mismatch reflects the concept of expectation–reality gap in marketing theory, where students form mental images of the program before arrival based on limited cues. When real experiences fail to confirm those expectations, satisfaction decreases. At the same time, a few students reported positive surprises—showing that accurate information can also lead to pleasant disconfirmation. The researchers suggested that institutions like Wenzao should provide more detailed course descriptions, clarify the language policy, and explain exam frequency to avoid misinterpretation and enhance transparency³⁶.

³⁶ Philip Kotler and Karen Fox, *Strategic Marketing for Educational Institutions*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1995).

4.3 Inside the Learning Journey

Placement Gaps and Progression

Some students faced difficulties related to placement tests and class progression.

“After finishing Level 1, there was no Level 2, so I had to jump to Level 3. It was too hard.” (Participant 1, Indonesia)

“We were placed directly in Level 3. I was shocked and could not keep up.”
(Participant 3, Indonesia)

“The placement test was not very accurate. Some of us were put in classes that were too easy.” (Participant 9, Vietnam)

The researchers concluded that placement accuracy and course progression had a strong influence on students' motivation. Students who were placed in levels that were too advanced experienced anxiety and loss of confidence, while those in classes that were too easy became bored. Several participants also mentioned that it was difficult to transfer between levels once classes began. This reflects the importance of flexible placement systems in maintaining students' motivation and engagement. The issue also connects with literature on language placement and learner frustration, which stresses the need for mid-term evaluation and teacher feedback to correct

mismatches³⁷.

Textbooks, Exams, and Methods

Several participants described the teaching system as textbook-based and heavily focused on exams.

“The system is too rigid. Too many exams, too little communication practice.”

(Participant 6, Spain)

“At first I didn’t understand anything because the teacher spoke only Chinese. It was difficult, but later it helped me improve.” (Participant 3, Indonesia)

“There were many tests, and sometimes it reduced motivation.” (Participant 15, Mexico)

The researchers found that the classroom approach created mixed feelings among students. While some valued the immersion method and recognized that it forced them to use Chinese actively, others preferred a more flexible and communicative style. This dual reaction shows that learning preferences differ by culture and educational background. Southeast Asian students generally appreciated structured lessons that guided their progress, whereas European students wanted freer interaction. The researchers suggested that the CLC could balance exam requirements

³⁷ J. Caspersen and Jens-Christian Smeby, “Placement Training and Learning Outcomes in Social Work Education,” *Studies in Higher Education* 46 (2020): 2650–63, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2020.1750583>. J. Caspersen and Jens-Christian Smeby, “Placement Training and Learning Outcomes in Social Work Education,” *Studies in Higher Education* 46 (2020): 2650–63, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2020.1750583>.

with interactive tasks to make learning more communicative while maintaining academic standards.

Facing Language Barriers

Language was another major challenge, especially for beginners.

“Teachers tried to help, but some could not answer in English, so communication was hard.” (Participant 1, Indonesia)

“The class was only in Chinese. At first it was shocking, but later I adapted.”
(Participant 3, Indonesia)

“In Kaohsiung, people rarely spoke English. It forced me to use Chinese all the time.”
(Participant 18, France)

The researchers observed that total immersion accelerated improvement but also increased stress during the first few weeks. Students who lacked English support sometimes felt isolated. Over time, however, most adapted and became more confident in using Chinese daily. These experiences demonstrate the balance between cognitive challenge and emotional adjustment that second-language learners often face. The findings support Gao’s research on target language use in classrooms, which argues that effective immersion requires proper scaffolding to prevent discouragement³⁸.

³⁸ H. Gao, “Target Language Use in the Classroom,” *Language Teaching Research* (2011).

Cultural Shock and Adaptation

Cultural adjustment was another theme raised by participants.

“I was shocked because Taiwanese food was not spicy. It took time to adjust.”

(Participant 7, Indonesia)

“Before arriving, I imagined Taiwan through IG reels. Real life was different and harder.” (Participant 4, Indonesia)

“They should even offer Taiwanese language classes. That would help us adapt to local culture.” (Participant 18, France)

The researchers concluded that cultural adjustment both challenged and enriched students. Many faced minor but continuous differences in food, lifestyle, and communication styles. Indonesian participants often mentioned difficulty adapting to local food and weather, while European students emphasized cultural distance and independence. Despite the challenges, most participants viewed these experiences as valuable for developing intercultural understanding and resilience. This pattern aligns with Berry's acculturation theory, which highlights how adaptation requires balancing one's cultural identity with openness to new environments³⁹.

³⁹ John W. Berry, “Acculturation and Adaptation of Immigrant Youth,” *Applied Psychology* (2005).

Students' Own Solutions

Several students offered suggestions for improving both learning and management.

"For scholarship students, don't put classes at night. It is too tiring." (Participant 1, Indonesia)

"The placement system is not flexible enough. Also, the teaching materials are outdated." (Participant 6, Spain)

"The CLC should cooperate with more foreign universities and invite alumni as ambassadors." (Participant 7, Indonesia)

The researchers observed that students expressed practical and constructive opinions. They wished for more flexibility in class schedules, updated materials, and stronger connections with foreign partner universities. Some also recommended adding alumni ambassadors to help future students prepare better. These ideas suggest that students view themselves not only as learners but also as contributors to program improvement. Their feedback confirms that academic and administrative changes—such as modernizing textbooks, offering balanced schedules, and building alumni networks—could enhance both learning outcomes and promotional effectiveness.

4.4 Final Impressions of CLC

Positive and Supportive

Many students expressed satisfaction with their experience at Wenzao CLC.

“This was a precious experience. I could study five days a week and make international friends.” (Participant 5, Japan)

“It exceeded my expectations. The resources and teachers were excellent.”
(Participant 14, United States)

“The staff really supported me. It was better than I imagined.” (Participant 15, Mexico)

The researchers noted that positive impressions often came from students who appreciated teacher support, cultural openness, and classroom diversity. Many interviewees highlighted the kindness of teachers and staff, describing them as approachable and patient. Students also enjoyed opportunities to meet peers from different countries, which enriched their cultural awareness. These responses show that a supportive environment and consistent teacher engagement were major sources of satisfaction. The findings align with the literature on student-centered teaching and confirm that interpersonal connection is a critical factor in international education satisfaction.

Mixed or Neutral Views

Some students gave neutral or mixed evaluations.

“The teachers are good, but tuition is expensive, and night classes are hard.”

(Participant 1, Indonesia)

“I think the CLC is okay. Not bad, not perfect. If I had more time, maybe it would feel better.” (Participant 2, Indonesia)

The researchers observed that these moderate opinions reflected both appreciation and frustration. Scholarship students tended to evaluate their experience more positively, while self-funded students were more sensitive to cost and workload.

Some students found the night class schedule inconvenient, especially when combined with their undergraduate responsibilities. This variation in opinion demonstrates that satisfaction depended on students' personal conditions and resources. It also echoes the expectancy-confirmation model, which states that satisfaction occurs when perceived performance meets initial expectations.

Strong Criticism Raised

A few participants expressed strong criticism of the program.

“The teaching system is too old. Too many exams, too little communication.”

(Participant 6, Spain)

“The tuition is around NT\$33,000 to NT\$35,000. That is higher than some other

centers. ” (Participant 16, Indonesia)

The researchers found that negative feedback often focused on two areas: the heavy examination load and the relatively high tuition fee. Some students compared Wenzao’s CLC to other language centers in Taiwan and believed that the program was more academically strict but less flexible. These concerns suggest that while the CLC provides structure and discipline, it may need to modernize teaching materials and reduce test frequency to meet students’ expectations of communicative learning. Clearer communication about course value and teaching style in promotional materials could also help manage these perceptions.

Would They Recommend?

Opinions about recommending Wenzao to others were divided.

“This is the best Chinese language center in Kaohsiung. Yes, I would recommend it.” (Participant 9, Vietnam)

“I would not recommend it to friends. The teaching system is too rigid.” (Participant 6, Spain)

“If my friends want a supportive school, then Wenzao is a good choice.” (Participant 14, United States)

The researchers observed that willingness to recommend largely depended on

individual goals, learning expectations, and scholarship status. Students who valued discipline and structure tended to recommend Wenzao, while those expecting flexible or conversational classes were less satisfied. Scholarship recipients expressed more positive attitudes, feeling grateful for financial and academic support, whereas self-funded students were more critical about value for money. These contrasting views show that the CLC's reputation relies on how well it aligns promotion, curriculum, and student needs. The findings correspond to earlier sections, reinforcing that expectation-reality balance is key to maintaining student satisfaction and word-of-mouth reputation.

Chapter Summary

The researchers organized findings by motivation, recruitment, learning challenges, and overall impressions. They found that scholarships, partnerships, and personal recommendations were strong drivers of enrollment, while limited online promotion and mismatched expectations remained weaknesses. Learning challenges—such as placement problems, exam-heavy systems, and language barriers—shaped students' motivation and adjustment. Nonetheless, many students valued teacher support and cross-cultural friendships, which strengthened their satisfaction despite the difficulties.

Overall, willingness to recommend the program depended on personal experience: students who benefited from scholarships or appreciated structure tended to respond positively, while those expecting more flexibility or affordability were less satisfied. These insights suggest that transparency, innovation in teaching methods, and stronger alumni engagement could help CLC build a clearer and more consistent international image.

Table 3 Promotion vs. Real Experience

Promotion Message	Students' Actual Experience
“Interactive and communicative teaching”	Classes were mostly textbook-based; some students felt disappointed. (Spain, Participant 6)

“Inclusive cultural atmosphere”	Students agreed on friendliness, but cultural shock remained strong. (Indonesia, Participant 7)
“Small class sizes and strong support”	Confirmed by several students. (Mexico, Participant 15; United States, Participant 14)
“Accessible for all”	Tuition was heavy without scholarships (NT\$33,000–35,000 per term). (Indonesia, Participant 16)
“Globalized program”	Limited visibility abroad; many heard only from peers/agents. (Indonesia, Participant 1; Belize, Participant 11)

CONCLUSION

This study explored how the promotional strategies of the Wenzao Chinese Language Center (CLC) influenced international students' choices, learning experiences, and overall satisfaction. The findings showed that while official promotion had some influence, students were mainly affected by scholarships, exchange programs, and word-of-mouth. Many interviewees mentioned that financial support and trusted recommendations were key reasons for choosing Wenzao. This suggests that personal connections and school partnerships often create more trust and attraction than advertisements alone.

At the same time, the study found that there were sometimes gaps between the promotional messages and the real learning experiences. Some students said they did not fully understand details about class intensity, placement systems, or cultural support before enrolling, which led to differences between their expectations and reality. However, most interviewees still expressed strong appreciation for Wenzao's teachers, cultural activities, and friendly learning environment, which helped them improve their Chinese in a supportive way.

During the research process, the researchers used a qualitative case study, including semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and observation. Through these steps, they learned how to organize large amounts of data, stay neutral, and

patiently understand each participant's story. This was not only a research experience but also a valuable learning journey that deepened their understanding of people and education.

Although the process was sometimes difficult — with scheduling problems, language barriers, and the challenge of classifying data — these experiences helped the researchers understand their own strengths and weaknesses. They also learned how to stay flexible under pressure and keep improving along the way. Overall, this research was not just an academic project, but a meaningful journey of learning, reflection, and personal growth.

In addition, the researchers would like to give special thanks to ChatGPT for its great help and support during the research and writing process. This tool played an important role in editing English, organizing literature, and checking formatting. It helped the team express their ideas more clearly and made the paper more organized and readable.

Through using ChatGPT, the researchers also discovered that it is more than just a writing tool. It inspired them to look at their topic from different perspectives, find information more quickly, and review their own ideas with a clearer mind. This made the research process not only more efficient, but also more creative and enjoyable.

At the same time, this experience made the researchers reflect on how to use AI wisely but not depend on it. ChatGPT made the work smoother and easier, but it also reminded the team to keep critical thinking and academic honesty. The key is to find the right balance between technology and human effort.

Overall, the researchers are truly grateful for the help and inspiration that ChatGPT provided. It showed them that when technology is used in the right way, it can become a helpful partner in learning and creativity — not a replacement for human thinking. This experience taught the team not only how to finish a research paper, but also how to grow and learn together with technology.

APPENDIX A

Interview Guide

Introduction

Hello! Thank you so much for taking the time to participate in this interview.

We are conducting a research study on how the promotional strategies of Wenzao Chinese Language Center (CLC) influence international students' decisions and satisfaction when choosing to learn Chinese here. We're interested in understanding your personal motivations, experiences, and opinions related to studying at Wenzao CLC.

This interview will take about 30 minutes. With your permission, we would like to record the conversation for research purposes. Everything you share will remain completely anonymous—your real name and identity will not appear in any report.

If there's anything you'd prefer not to answer or if you wish to stop at any time, please feel free to let us know. You're welcome to share as much or as little as you feel comfortable with.

Then let's get started!

APPENDIX B

Interview Question

1. Can you briefly introduce yourself?

Where are you from, and how long have you been studying at Wenzao Chinese Language Center (CLC)?

2. How did you first hear about Wenzao CLC?

Was it through friends, social media, your home school, promotional events, or another way?

3. What were the main reasons you chose Wenzao CLC over other options?

(For example: school reputation, tuition fees, location, curriculum, recommendations, or personal interests)

4. Did you see or receive any promotional content before applying?

Were there any ads, videos, websites, or social media posts that influenced your decision? What kind of impression did they leave?

5. Did anyone recommend Wenzao to you?

(For example: friends, agents, teachers, or counselors)

How much did their opinion influence your decision?

6. How familiar were you with Taiwan or Taiwanese culture before

applying?

Had you visited Taiwan, studied Chinese before, or had any previous exposure

to Taiwanese culture? Did this familiarity affect your choice?

7. After arriving, did your experience at Wenzao match your expectations?

In what ways did it meet or differ from what you expected based on the

promotional content?

8. What suggestions do you have for Wenzao to improve its promotion to international students?

What could be done better to attract more international students to study

Chinese here?

9. If a friend asked you about Wenzao, how would you describe your experience?

What would you say about the school and your time at the CLC?

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH STUDY

Consent Form for Research Participation

Study Title: Learning Chinese in Taiwan: International Students' Responses to Promotional Strategies, Motivations, and Challenges at Wenzao CLC

Researchers: 李宥棋 劉詩好 武靖勛 張淵翔

Contact Email: janiceli0114@gmail.com

Purpose of the Study:

This study aims to explore how the Chinese promotion strategies of WenZao Chinese Language Center (CLC) influence the decision-making processes of international students when choosing a language program.

Participation and Procedures:

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to join an interview (either online or in person) that will last approximately 30 minutes. You will be asked questions about your experience with Wenzao CLC's promotional materials, your decision-making process, and your learning experience.

Confidentiality:

All information collected will remain confidential. Your real name and identity

will not be used in any reports or publications. Data will be anonymized and securely stored on a password-protected device. Interview recordings and transcriptions will be used solely for academic research purposes. All identifiable information will be deleted upon the completion of the research project (no later than January 31, 2026).

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

Consent:

By signing below, you confirm that:

1. You understand the purpose and procedures of this study.
2. You agree to participate voluntarily.
3. You understand that your personal information will be kept confidential.
4. You agree that the interview may be audio-recorded for research purposes only, and that the recording will be deleted after transcription and data analysis are completed.

I agree to be audio-recorded during the interview.

I do not agree to be audio-recorded.

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Contact for Questions or Concerns:

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact the researcher at the email provided above.

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