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Trend of Chinese Language Learning in Punjab: Prospects for Youth in Educational Career & Prospects for Businessmen in Trade

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Abstract

Chinese language learning in Punjab is a significant educational and economic trend inspired by China's global appeal and the deepening Sino-Pakistan bilateral relations that has been further diversified under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Therefore, Institute of International Relations & Media Research, conducted a detailed study on Chinese Language Learning in the province of Punjab. This research study explores the motivations and outcomes of Chinese language (Mandarin) acquisition among students, professionals, and businessmen, as well as its impact on Chinese enterprises operating in Punjab. Findings reveal that youth primarily pursue the language for academic scholarships and future career prospects, while business communities leverage it for improved trade relations and operational efficiency. Research survey responses show that the majority of learners are at beginner to intermediate levels, with strong agreement that Chinese language proficiency enhances academic mobility and employability. Challenges include the complexity of the language, limited access to quality instruction, and a need for more regionally accessible programs. Simultaneously, Chinese firms in Pakistan unanimously report that Mandarin proficiency among staff significantly benefits communication, trade negotiations, and project execution. These firms emphasize the growing demand for local Chinese speakers in Punjab due to CPEC and show readiness to collaborate with educational institutions for tailored language programs. Digital platforms are recognized as effective tools for scalable, self-paced language learning across both Pakistani learners and Chinese stakeholders. The research concludes that Mandarin has shifted from being a niche skill to a strategic asset, and its structured integration into education and workforce development policies can yield substantial long-term benefits. As Pakistan navigates deeper economic integration with China, language education stands out as a foundational pillar for sustainable cooperation and mutual advancement.

1. INTRODUCTION

The impetus for engaging in the study of the Chinese language stems from a multifaceted array of motivations, deeply rooted in both individual aspirations and broader socioeconomic factors. For young individuals, the pursuit of Chinese language proficiency is often intertwined with the desire to enhance their career prospects in an increasingly globalized world, recognizing that such linguistic competence can serve as a valuable differentiator in the competitive job market (jingyi & Dios, 2024). This is particularly evident in sectors such as academia, research, and industry, where the ability to communicate and collaborate with Chinese-speaking counterparts is becoming ever more critical (Liu et al., 2019). Furthermore, the increasing economic prominence of China has spurred many business professionals to acquire Chinese language skills as a means of facilitating trade negotiations, establishing stronger relationships with Chinese partners, and gaining access to the vast and dynamic Chinese market (Gong & Lai, 2024). The cultural model of learning in China emphasizes lifelong self-perfection through diligent study, irrespective of challenges, which also significantly influences learning (Yin, 2018). This drive is further propelled by the understanding that linguistic proficiency transcends mere communication, fostering deeper cultural understanding and enabling more meaningful engagement with Chinese society and its people.

1.1 China Pakistan Economic Corridor

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a multi-billion dollar project, represents a strategic initiative designed to foster closer economic and cultural ties between Pakistan and China, holding the potential to reshape regional dynamics and global trade (Khan et al., 2020; Khetrn & Khalid, 2019). This ambitious undertaking is not merely a collection of infrastructure projects; it embodies a comprehensive vision for enhanced connectivity, economic growth, and cultural exchange, with implications extending far beyond the borders of the two participating nations (Surahio et al., 2022). While earlier collaborations focused on upgrading existing infrastructure such as the Karakoram Highway, CPEC encompasses a broader scope, including energy projects, internal infrastructure improvements, and the establishment of trade routes that could potentially serve as a gateway between China and Africa and the Middle East (Hussain et al., 2020). The project further aims to integrate Pakistan more deeply into the regional and global economic landscape, potentially transforming its economy and solidifying its position as a key player in the region (Gholizadeh et al., 2020).

Language proficiency plays an increasingly vital role in global trade, diplomacy, and international collaborations, serving as a fundamental tool for effective communication and mutual understanding (Darabu, 2021). In an era defined by interconnectedness and globalization, the ability to communicate across linguistic and cultural boundaries has become a critical asset for individuals, businesses, and nations alike. Proficiency in multiple languages facilitates smoother negotiations, stronger business relationships, and a deeper understanding of diverse markets, contributing directly to success in the international arena. Furthermore, language skills are essential for effective diplomacy, enabling representatives from different nations to engage in meaningful dialogue, resolve conflicts, and build alliances. As international collaborations become more prevalent in various fields, from scientific research to humanitarian aid, language proficiency fosters seamless teamwork, knowledge sharing, and innovation, ultimately driving progress on a global scale.

Many less developed surrounding areas in the past two decades have experienced better standards of living, healthcare, education, and security, which resulted in a large population influx to the region. The city's geo-strategic location has significant international economic

importance, and the city is now a part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor under the One Road One Built project. The southern corridor starts from Guangzhou and passes through the western parts of China and then Kashghar; from there, the route leads straight to Gawadar port on the Arabian Sea in Pakistan (Hussain et al., 2021) Punjab in Focus for Learning Chinese.

Punjab, being Pakistan's most populous province and its economic heartland, holds a pivotal position in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a large-scale development project aimed at bolstering connectivity and trade between the two nations (Khan et al., 2020; Khetran & Khalid, 2019). CPEC, a flagship component of China's Belt and Road Initiative, promises to reshape regional dynamics by offering landlocked Central Asian countries enhanced access to markets, fostering trade, and addressing energy demands (Hussain et al., 2020).

The economic corridor is not merely a project; it is perceived as a potential game-changer with deep implications for both China and Pakistan's economic foundations, where opportunities arising from CPEC are seen as crucial for uplifting the local environment (Surahio et al., 2022). Given Pakistan's prior isolation from the international community, partnering with China, a reliable ally and economic powerhouse, presented a strategic opportunity to enhance its international standing and foster relations with various regional players (Darabu, 2021).

1.2 Punjab's Educational Landscape

Punjab's educational landscape is adapting to meet the rising demand for Chinese language skills, reflecting a broader trend of educational development in the region. Hundreds of educational institutions, both in the public and private sectors, are incorporating Chinese language courses into their curricula, indicating a strategic effort to equip students with the linguistic tools necessary to navigate emerging economic and diplomatic opportunities. This proactive approach acknowledges the shifting dynamics of global trade and recognizes the strategic advantage of linguistic proficiency in Mandarin for Punjabi or Pakistani students. These programs are tailored to teach Mandarin, improve understanding of Chinese culture, and create opportunities for educational exchanges and partnerships. This strategy is motivated by the recognition that language proficiency is a vital instrument for navigating the intricacies of international commerce and fostering cultural understanding.

The youth in Punjab are increasingly recognizing the value of education as a means of professional advancement, with many actively seeking opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge (Ali et al., 2024). Having literacy rate of around 65%, the desire for professional success is driving many young people in Punjab to seek out educational opportunities that will give them a competitive advantage in the workforce. The increasing availability of Chinese language programs is viewed by many students as a pathway to new career options, particularly in sectors related to the CPEC, international trade, and diplomacy. As they see China's growing global influence and Pakistan's deepening economic ties with China, many young people are eager to learn Chinese in the hopes of enhancing their job prospects and participating in these new economic sectors. Furthermore, the Pakistani government's emphasis on English as a compulsory subject highlights a commitment to global literacy, which, combined with Mandarin, can open even more doors for young professionals (Irfan, 2021).

1.3 Trend of Learning languages in Punjab

It is essential to also acknowledge the status of English as a second language in Punjab and Pakistan, highlighting its important role in higher education, international communication, and internal communication among educated individuals (DAWAR & Yumru, 2020) (Irfan, 2020). The importance of English is highlighted by the fact that those with excellent English skills find

it easier to gain admission to top universities, whereas those with poor English skills may be denied such opportunities (Jadoon et al., 2020). However, problems such as inadequate teacher training, limited resources, and a lack of parental involvement can impede language learning. Social media's impact on language acquisition is substantial, creating new ways to learn and interact with languages, especially English (Malik & Qureshi, 2024). Punjab has a long history of multilingualism, with Punjabi, Urdu, and English being widely spoken and taught in schools. This multilingual environment has historically fostered an openness to learning new languages, positioning the population to embrace Mandarin, in addition to other languages, as a valuable asset for professional and personal growth.

The province's well-developed infrastructure and connectivity networks stand to be further enhanced through CPEC, attracting investment and facilitating trade. With CPEC set to generate an estimated 700,000 direct jobs between 2015 and 2030, it is expected to significantly boost Pakistan's economic growth rate (M.F.I., 2019). Punjab's strategic geographic location, advanced infrastructure relative to other provinces, and established industrial base make it a crucial hub for CPEC-related activities, poised to experience substantial economic transformation through industrialization and trade expansion (Gholizadeh et al., 2020; Tao et al., 2021). Punjab, Pakistan, is experiencing a notable surge in Chinese language learning, influenced by a complex interplay of educational developments, economic opportunities tied to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, and evolving youth aspirations (Ali & David, 2022). The increasing interconnectedness of global economies has made intercultural dialogue a necessity, and Pakistan's enduring relationship with China holds a special place in its political and economic discourse (Kamran & Abid, 2023). The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is a major infrastructure project aimed at improving trade and connectivity between the two countries, with large potential to boost Pakistan's economic growth and speed up its Gross Domestic Growth (Lokman et al., 2022).

1.4 Rise of Chinese Language Centers in Punjab

The rise of Chinese language centers and Confucius Institutes in Punjab signifies a growing recognition of the importance of Mandarin Chinese in the contemporary world, facilitating linguistic and cultural exchange between Pakistan and China. These institutions serve as crucial platforms for promoting Chinese language education, cultural understanding, and people-to-people connections, playing a pivotal role in strengthening the bonds between the two nations (Ishaque et al., 2020). Confucius Institutes, in particular, have expanded rapidly worldwide, offering Chinese language courses, cultural activities, and resources for those interested in learning about Chinese culture (Ali & David, 2022). The increasing popularity of these centers in Punjab reflects a broader trend of growing interest in China's language, culture, and economy, driven by the recognition of China's rising global influence. The ability to understand and communicate in Chinese is increasingly seen as a valuable asset for Pakistani students, professionals, and entrepreneurs, opening doors to new opportunities in trade, investment, and cultural exchange. With over 25 million individuals outside China learning Chinese as a second or foreign language by the end of 2021, and over 200 million people learning and using the language, the global interest in Mandarin Chinese is undeniable (Gong & Lai, 2024).

Despite the undeniable significance of English in Pakistan in general and Punjab in particular, particularly in higher education, government administration, and international communication, Urdu and other regional languages remain vital as the "mother tongue" for a significant portion of the population (DAWAR & Yumru, 2020). While English serves as the language of instruction and official communication, Urdu holds a central position in the cultural identity and daily lives of many Pakistanis. The increased focus on English in global contexts can sometimes lead to

concerns about the potential marginalization of local languages and cultural identities (Haidar & Fang, 2019). However, the growing interest in Chinese language and culture, exemplified by the rise of Chinese language centers, suggests a more nuanced and multifaceted approach to language learning in Punjab. The current educational landscape necessitates proficient teachers equipped to impart effective English language skills, requiring ongoing professional development to refine their instructional methodologies (Feroz & Sartaj, 2020). English proficiency remains a significant factor in academic and professional success, with students possessing strong English skills often gaining access to better educational and employment opportunities (Jadoon et al., 2020).

1.5 Demand & Challenges in learning Chinese in Punjab

While the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and growing economic ties create a demand for Chinese language skills (Hanif, 2017), there may be a lack of adequately trained teachers and resources to meet this demand, potentially hindering the effective acquisition of these skills by the youth and businessmen of Punjab. Furthermore, despite the growing importance of Chinese, the existing educational landscape in Punjab, with its emphasis on English and Urdu, may not fully accommodate or prioritize the learning of Chinese (Manan et al., 2017). This raises questions about how best to integrate Chinese language education into the existing system and how to ensure its quality and relevance for both educational and trade purposes.

1.6 Research Study Objectives

- Investigate the increasing trend of Chinese language learning in Punjab.
- Examine the impact of Chinese language learning on educational and trade opportunities.
- Provide valuable insights for policymakers to formulate language promotion strategies aligned with economic and diplomatic goals.
- Help educational institutions align curricula with the growing demand for Chinese language proficiency.
- Support trade organizations in developing language-specific resources for Pakistani exporters and importers.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Approach

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, primarily quantitative, to investigate the trend of Chinese language learning in Punjab and its impact on educational and trade opportunities. While quantitative methods provide statistical insights into the prevalence and correlations of language learning, qualitative insights will be gathered to provide context and deeper understanding of motivations and experiences (Bezabih & Adem, 2020; Oliveira & Bonito, 2023).

2.2. Population and Sampling

The target population includes:

- **Youth:** Students enrolled in Chinese language programs in colleges and universities across Punjab, as well as youth participating in exchange programs and Chinese government-funded scholarships in the Punjab province.
- **Businessmen:** Exporters and importers actively engaged in trade with China, and members of chambers of commerce and trade organizations in Punjab.

A non-probability convenience sampling method was used to select participants due to the challenges in obtaining a comprehensive list of all Chinese language learners and business

professionals engaged in trade with China. Data was collected from representatives of thousands of students and hundreds of companies.

Structured questionnaires were administered to students and businessmen in Punjab's institutions. The survey instrument included closed-ended and open-ended questions to collect quantitative on motivations, challenges, and perceived outcomes of Chinese language learning. Surveys were distributed both online and in person to maximize participation.

Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the sample and the responses to the closed-ended survey questions (Bezabih & Adem, 2020).

3. Findings & Analysis

The charts presented in the Findings and Analysis section are derived from the responses to the questionnaire administered to both companies and students.

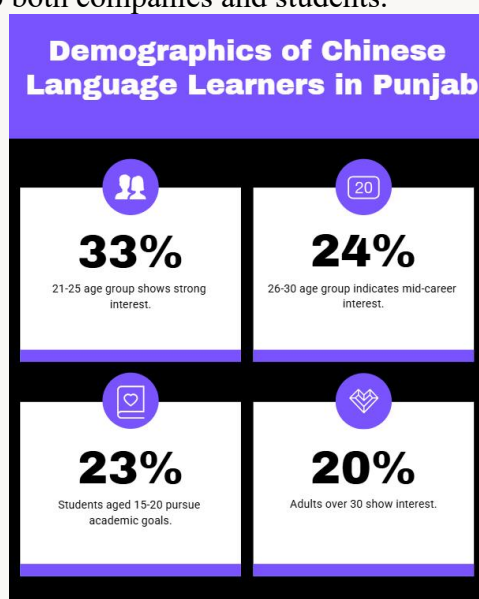


Figure 1: Age Group Distribution of Chinese Language Learners

Figure 1 offers a breakdown of the age demographics of individuals engaged in Chinese language learning in Punjab. The data reveals that the largest cohort falls within the **21–25 age range (33%)**, indicating that early-career individuals, likely recent graduates or young professionals, represent the most engaged demographic in Mandarin acquisition. This aligns well with the broader trend of increasing employability being a major motivation, especially as industries related to CPEC (e.g., logistics, infrastructure, tech) increasingly require bilingual talent.

The second-largest group, **26–30 years (24.2%)**, suggests sustained interest into the mid-career stage, likely by professionals either entering managerial roles or seeking to transition into international domains. The **15–20 age group (23.1%)** reflects interest among students at the undergraduate level, often motivated by academic aspirations such as scholarships, study-abroad programs, and cultural curiosity.

Interestingly, **learners above 30 years of age (19.8%)** also represent a significant portion of respondents. This is notable as it indicates that Chinese language learning is not limited to younger populations, older professionals and businesspersons are also recognizing the strategic importance of Mandarin, perhaps driven by trade relations, entrepreneurship, or diplomatic roles.

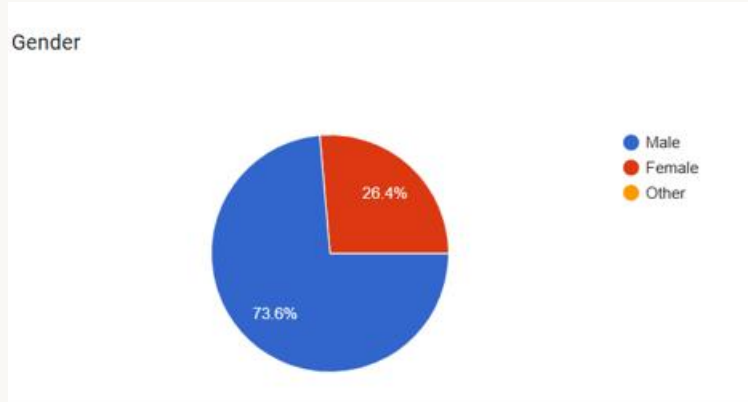


Figure 2: Gender Distribution of Chinese Language Learners

Figure 2 reveals the gender composition of individuals pursuing Chinese language education in Punjab. The results show a **significant gender disparity**, with **73.6% of respondents identifying as male** and only **26.4% as female**.

This stark gender gap may reflect broader sociocultural dynamics in Pakistan and Punjab, where men generally have **greater access to language education opportunities**, particularly those tied to economic and professional advancement such as Chinese. This is especially relevant considering many learners are pursuing Mandarin for trade, business, or CPEC-related employment.

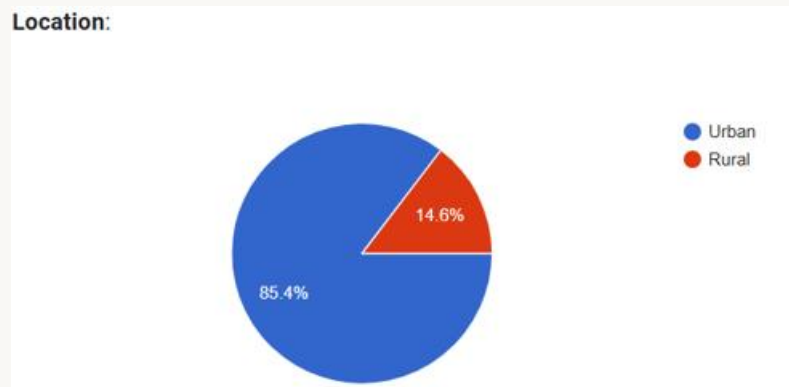


Figure 3: Location Distribution of Chinese Language Learners

The figure 3 reveals a notable geographic disparity in the uptake of Chinese language learning in Punjab. A significant **85.4% of respondents come from urban areas**, while only **14.6% hail from rural backgrounds**. This data underscores a pronounced **urban-centric trend** in Mandarin education access and participation.

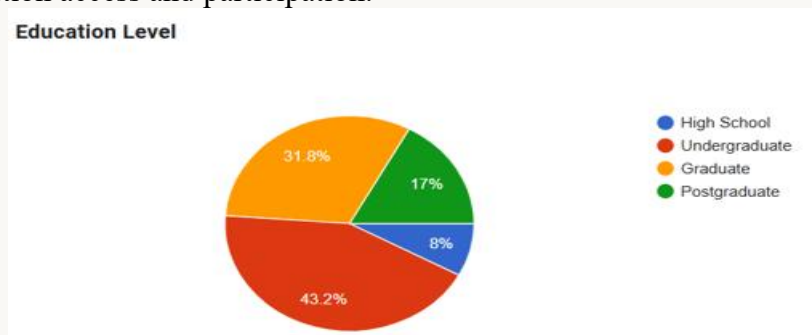


Figure 4: Educational Background of Chinese Language Learners

Figure 4 outlines the academic qualifications of Chinese language learners in Punjab. The largest group, comprising **43.2%**, are **undergraduate students**, followed by **graduate degree holders** at **31.8%**, and **postgraduate participants** making up **17%**. Only **8% of respondents were at the high school level**, indicating that most learners begin engaging with the Chinese language at or after tertiary education.

This distribution aligns with the trend that Chinese language learning is often **initiated at the university stage**, where students are exposed to international opportunities, exchange programs, and CPEC-linked internships. Undergraduate learners may be motivated by academic credits or the desire to enhance employability before graduation. The substantial participation of graduate (31.8%) and postgraduate (17%) degree holders reflects the value placed on Mandarin for **career advancement**, particularly in sectors like diplomacy, academia, and multinational commerce.

The relatively low percentage of high school participants (8%) suggests that Chinese is **not yet integrated into early educational curricula** in most institutions. This represents both a challenge and an opportunity. While current engagement is limited to older learners, the long-term sustainability of Chinese language skills in Punjab could benefit significantly from **early exposure in secondary schools**.

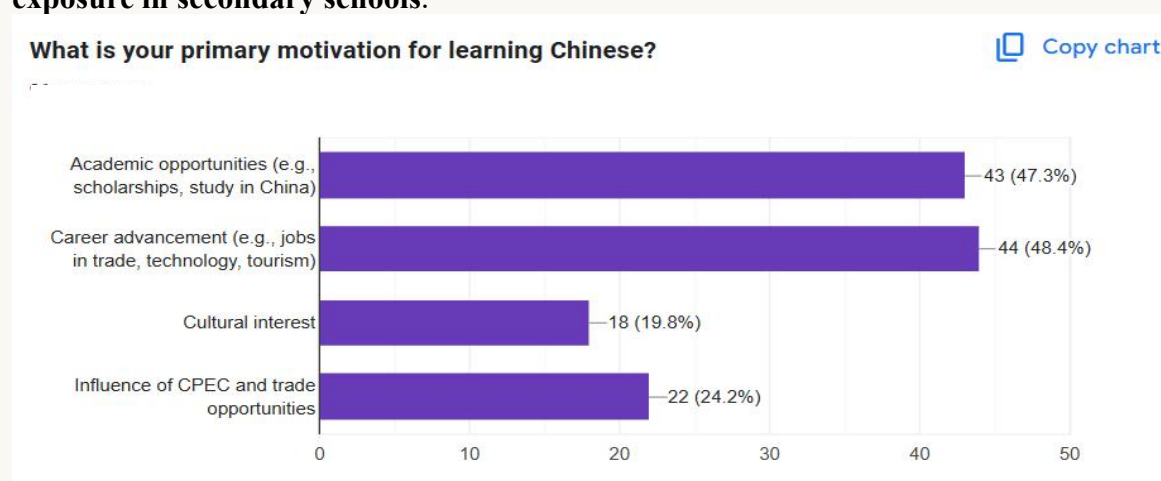


Figure 5: Primary Motivation for Learning Chinese

Figure 5, presents insightful data into the driving forces behind Chinese language acquisition in Punjab. The two most significant motivations are **career advancement (48.4%)** and **academic opportunities (47.3%)**, followed by **CPEC-related trade opportunities (24.2%)**, and **cultural interest (19.8%)**.

The top two categories i.e career and academics are nearly tied, reflecting a dual narrative in learner priorities. On one hand, respondents are eager to secure **jobs in trade, technology, and tourism** sectors, all of which are increasingly integrated with Chinese enterprises. On the other hand, many learners see Chinese as a key to unlocking **scholarships, study-abroad programs, and higher education** in China. These motivations highlight a strong instrumental value attached to language learning, rather than purely cultural or recreational interest.

Interestingly, **24.2% of learners are directly motivated by the influence of CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor)**, confirming the strategic weight this megaproject holds in shaping educational and career priorities. Language is clearly seen as a **gateway to integration with Chinese-led development initiatives**, whether in logistics, infrastructure, or business collaboration.

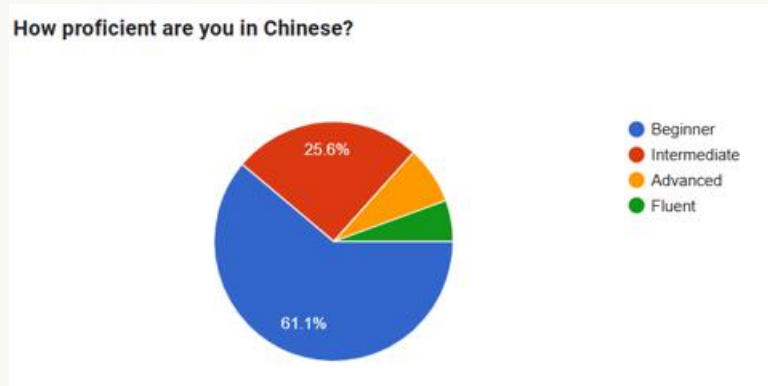


Figure 6: Self-Reported Proficiency in Chinese

Figure 6, offers a snapshot of the proficiency levels among Chinese language learners in Punjab. The majority i.e **61.1%** identify themselves as **Beginners**, followed by **25.6%** at the **Intermediate** level, while only **7.8%** report being **Advanced**, and a mere **5.6%** consider themselves **Fluent**.

This distribution indicates that most learners are still at the **early stages of language acquisition**, likely within their first year of instruction. It reflects either limited access to long-term programs or the relatively recent rise in Chinese language popularity in the region, particularly after the formalization of CPEC. The substantial proportion of intermediate learners (one in four) suggests that **some continuity exists** in training and that learners are progressing, although fewer are reaching higher proficiency levels.

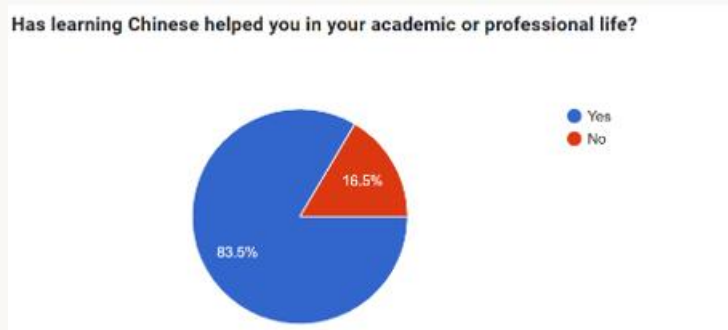


Figure 7: Impact of Chinese Language on Academic or Professional Life

Figure 7, offers compelling evidence of the perceived utility of Mandarin language skills. A resounding **83.5% of respondents answered 'Yes'**, while only **16.5% stated 'No'**, clearly demonstrating that Chinese language acquisition has had a **positive and tangible impact** on the majority of learners' educational or professional journeys.

This overwhelming affirmative response indicates that Chinese language skills are **highly valued in practical settings**. For students, this often translates into **increased eligibility for scholarships, access to Chinese universities, or preference in international academic programs**. For professionals, especially those engaged in CPEC-related sectors, it may manifest as **enhanced job prospects, greater competitiveness in interviews, or more effective communication with Chinese stakeholders** in business or government.

What challenges have you faced in learning Chinese?

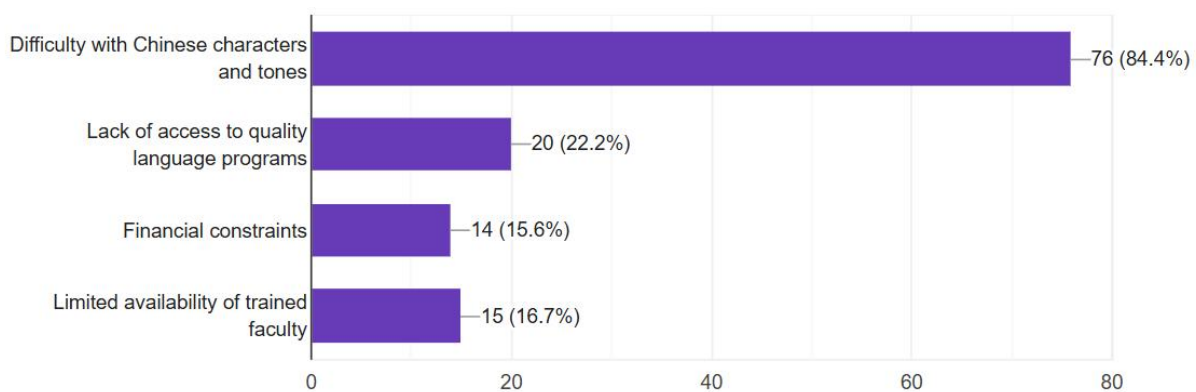


Figure 8: Challenges Faced in Learning Chinese

Figure 8, provides a detailed look at the obstacles encountered by learners in Punjab. A striking **84.4% of respondents cited “Difficulty with Chinese characters and tones”** as their primary challenge. This is a well-documented issue in Mandarin acquisition, as the language is logographic and tonal, two features that are significantly different from alphabetic and phonetic systems familiar to most students.

The second most commonly reported challenge, at **22.2%**, was **lack of access to quality language programs**, indicating a gap between demand and the availability of structured, effective Mandarin instruction. While major cities may offer Confucius Institutes and university-run courses, many learners, especially in peri-urban and rural areas in Punjab struggle to find accessible and reliable learning environments.

Do you believe learning Chinese will enhance your future career prospects?

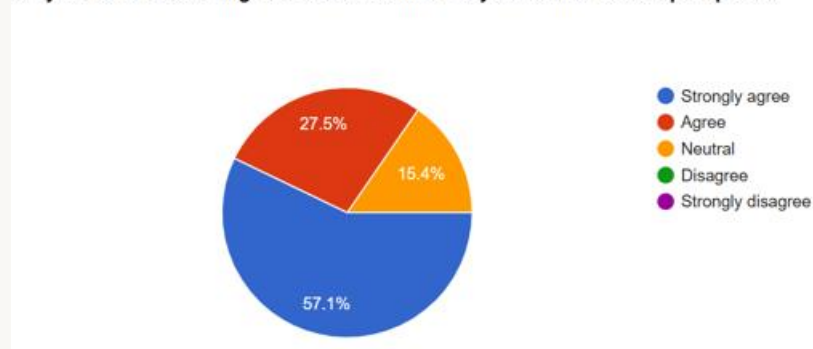


Figure 9: Perception of Chinese Language and Career Enhancement

Figure 9, presents a strong positive outlook among language learners in Punjab regarding the professional value of Mandarin. An overwhelming **57.1% of respondents “Strongly agree”** with this statement, while **27.5% “Agree”**, making for a total of **84.6%** expressing clear optimism about Chinese proficiency enhancing their career trajectory.

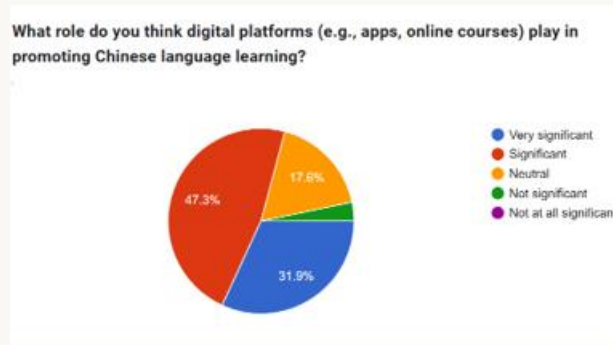


Figure 10: Role of Digital Platforms in Promoting Chinese Language Learning

Figure 10 highlights the widespread recognition of digital tools as key enablers in Mandarin education. A combined **79.2% of respondents** considered digital platforms either “**Significant**” (47.3%) or “**Very Significant**” (31.9%), making it clear that technology is not just supplemental but **central to modern language acquisition strategies**.

This enthusiasm for digital learning reflects broader global shifts in language education, where **apps like Duolingo, HelloChinese, Memrise, and HSK-focused platforms** have become integral to self-paced and remote learning. These tools are especially valuable in Punjab, where institutional access can be uneven, particularly for rural or working learners who may not be able to attend in-person classes regularly.

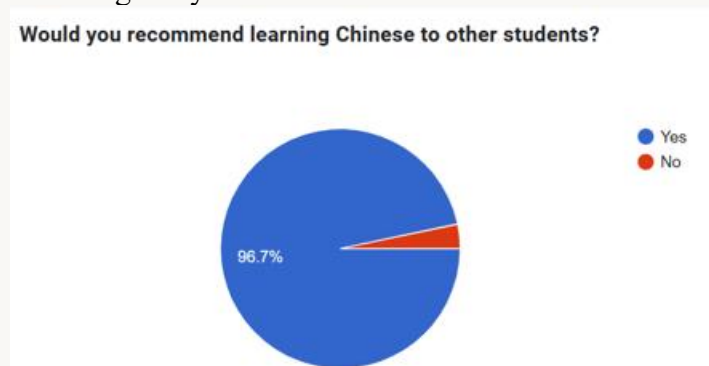


Figure 11: Willingness to Recommend Chinese Language Learning

Figure 11, showcases an overwhelming endorsement of Chinese language learning among current or former students. A remarkable **96.7% of respondents answered “Yes”**, while only **3.3% responded “No”** indicating near-universal satisfaction and advocacy for Mandarin education within this cohort.

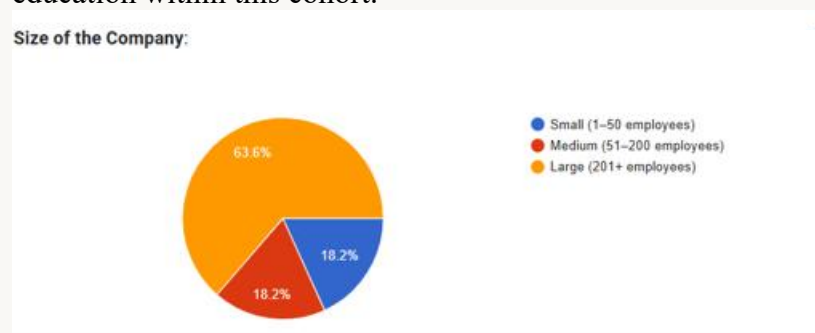


Figure 12: Company Size of Chinese Enterprises Operating in Punjab

Figure 12 shows that Chinese enterprises working in Punjab, illustrates the organizational scale of these businesses in terms of employee count. The data reveals that a significant majority of **63.6%** fall into the “**Large**” category (**201+ employees**). This is followed by **Medium-sized companies (51–200 employees)** and **Small enterprises (1–50 employees)**, each comprising **18.2%** of the sample.

This distribution is a telling indicator of the **scale and seriousness of Chinese investment** in Punjab. The dominance of large firms suggests that many Chinese companies are not merely exploring opportunities but are actively engaged in **full-scale operations** including manufacturing, construction, logistics, and service delivery i.e often linked with long-term infrastructure or energy projects under the CPEC framework.

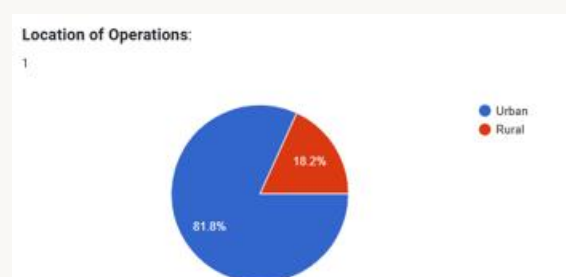


Figure 13: Operational Locations of Chinese Enterprises in Punjab

Figure 13, highlights the geographic distribution of Chinese companies working in Punjab. A substantial **81.8% of these enterprises operate in urban areas**, while only **18.2% have operations in rural locations**.

This finding is consistent with expected patterns of foreign direct investment, where **urban hubs offer better infrastructure, workforce availability, logistics networks, and policy support**, particularly in Punjab. These cities also host **Special Economic Zones (SEZs)** and other CPEC-linked infrastructure, which are attractive for Chinese businesses seeking ease of access to transportation corridors, skilled labor, and administrative support.

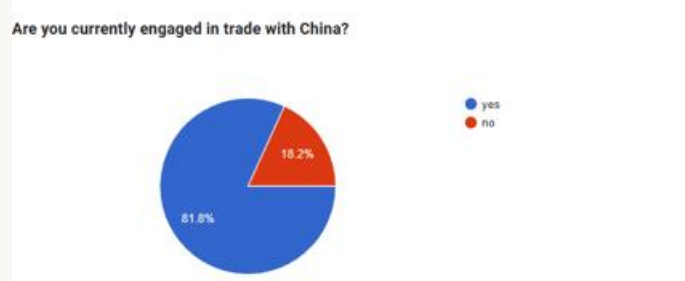


Figure 14: Current Engagement in Trade with China

Figure 14, reveals that **81.8%** of these businesses are **actively involved in trade with China**, while **18.2% are not** currently engaged in direct trade.

This data affirms the **strong bilateral commercial integration** underpinning the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and broader economic cooperation between the two countries. The overwhelming majority of firms involved in trade suggests that **supply chains, procurement processes, logistics, and business strategies** are transnational in nature, relying on regular and sophisticated communication between counterparts in China and Pakistan.

The **18.2% not engaged in trade** may represent service providers, education-focused institutions (like Confucius Institutes), or early-stage ventures still establishing operations locally before expanding into formal trade channels.

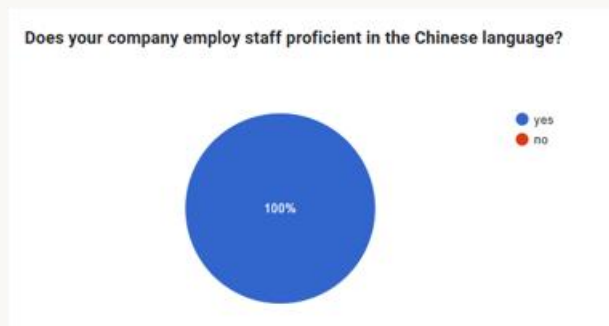


Figure 15: Employment of Chinese-Proficient Staff in Companies

Figure 15, reveals a **100% affirmative response**, every single firm surveyed reported employing staff who are proficient in the Chinese language.

This unanimous result is **highly significant**. It reflects a universal recognition among Chinese enterprises of the **critical importance of language proficiency** for effective operations in Punjab, Pakistan. Whether the companies are engaged in manufacturing, services, trade, or infrastructure, communication remains the foundation of operational success — and that communication must often be bilingual.

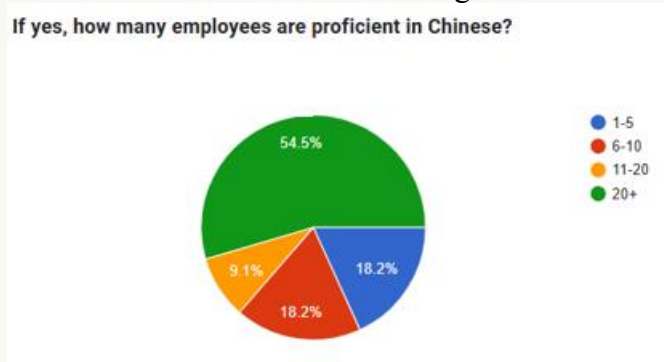


Figure 16: Number of Employees Proficient in Chinese

Figure 16, explores the depth of Chinese language capability within companies operating in Punjab. The chart shows that a majority, **54.5% of companies employ more than 20 Chinese-proficient staff**. Additionally, **18.2% each employ 1–5 and 6–10 Mandarin speakers**, while **9.1% have between 11–20 proficient employees**.

This distribution is highly indicative of the **institutional commitment** these firms have toward bilingual or multilingual operations. The large share of companies employing **20+ Mandarin speakers** suggests these firms are either large-scale operations (e.g., in manufacturing or infrastructure) or highly integrated into cross-border functions where communication with Chinese teams is constant and critical.

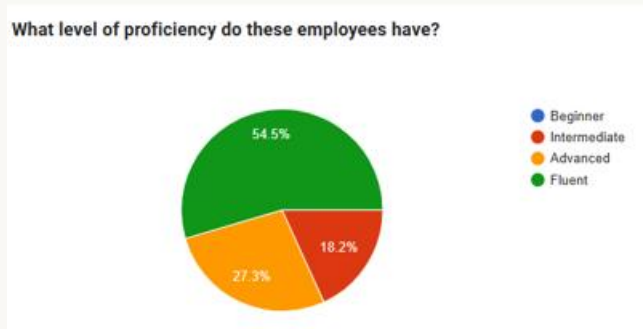


Figure 17: Proficiency Level of Employees in Chinese

Figure 17, provides insight into the language competence of their Mandarin-speaking staff. The results show that a majority, **54.5% of employees are considered “Fluent”**, followed by **27.3% at the “Advanced” level**, and **18.2% at “Intermediate” proficiency**. Notably, **no respondents reported having employees at only a Beginner level**.

This distribution indicates a **high level of language expertise** within the workforce of Chinese companies operating in Punjab. The dominance of **fluent and advanced speakers (81.8%)** underscores the fact that these companies prioritize effective, accurate, and independent communication in Mandarin across a wide range of operational areas, from project management and procurement to customer service and legal documentation.

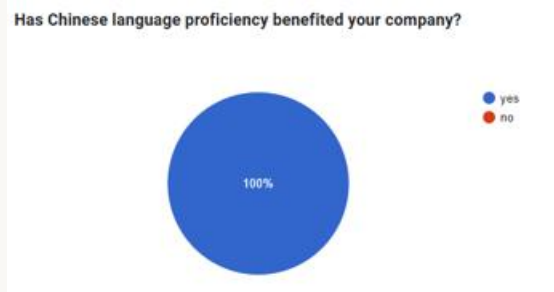


Figure 18: Impact of Chinese Language Proficiency on Company Performance

Figure 18, delivers a clear and unanimous result: **100% of respondents answered “Yes.”** Every company surveyed reported tangible benefits from employing staff proficient in Mandarin.

This absolute consensus provides **powerful empirical validation** of the strategic role language plays in cross-border business. From smoother operations and reduced miscommunication to more effective trade negotiations and regulatory compliance, the ability to communicate fluently in Chinese appears to be a **critical success factor** for these firms operating in a foreign context.

Policy Recommendation: Government trade and industry bodies can leverage this insight to advocate for **language-linked economic development programs**. For instance, subsidized Chinese language training for SMEs looking to enter partnerships with Chinese firms could help accelerate integration and increase competitiveness.

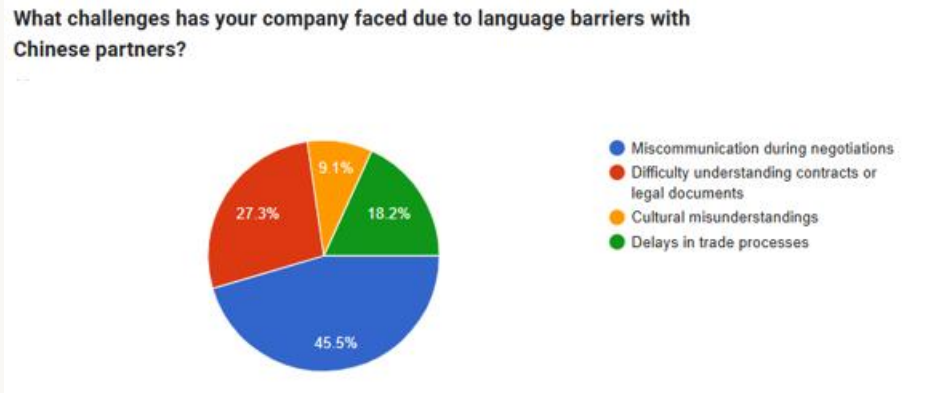


Figure 19: Language Barrier Challenges in Chinese-Pakistani Business Partnerships in Punjab

Figure 19 reveals several common issues stemming from linguistic and cultural disconnects. The most frequently reported challenge is **“Miscommunication during negotiations” (45.5%)**, followed by **“Difficulty understanding contracts or legal documents” (27.3%)**, **“Delays in trade processes” (18.2%)**, and **“Cultural misunderstandings” (9.1%)**.

These findings highlight the **real-world consequences of insufficient language proficiency**, even among firms that actively employ Chinese-speaking staff. The fact that **nearly half the companies** struggle with negotiation miscommunication underlines the complexity of conducting high-stakes discussions where clarity, tone, and nuance are critical. Even minor linguistic errors in negotiations can result in **misaligned expectations, missed opportunities, or reputational damage**.

The **second-most cited issue is “legal and contractual difficulties”** which reflects a more **technical challenge**: the precise understanding of binding documents. Legalese in Chinese or English can be hard to parse even for native speakers, so this concern emphasizes the need for **specialized legal language training** or professional translation support.

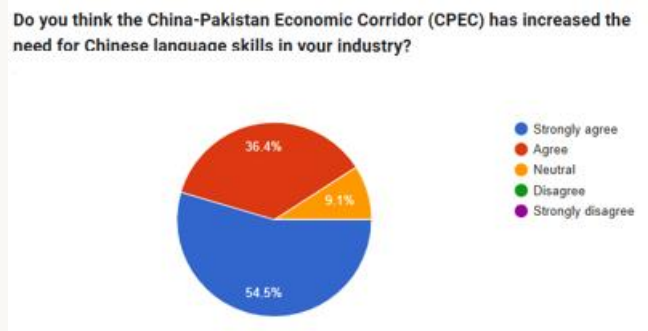


Figure 20: Impact of CPEC on Demand for Chinese Language Skills

Figure 20, offers compelling insight into how macroeconomic policy initiatives are influencing linguistic requirements at the industry level. A strong majority of **54.5% of respondents “Strongly agree”** and **36.4% “Agree”** that CPEC has elevated the demand for Mandarin proficiency in their respective sectors. Only **9.1% remained neutral**, and notably, **no respondents disagreed** with the statement.

This overwhelming consensus affirms that **CPEC is not just an infrastructure project, but it is a cultural and communicative shift** in the workforce landscape. The initiative’s expansion into energy, logistics, industrial zones, and technological collaboration has brought a **surge in cross-border interaction**, making Chinese language skills a practical necessity.



Figure 21: Provision of Chinese Language Training by Companies

Figure 21, reveals that **54.5% of companies offer in-house or sponsored language training**, while **45.5% do not**. This nearly even split reflects both progress and remaining gaps in the institutionalization of language learning within the Chinese industrial presence in Punjab.

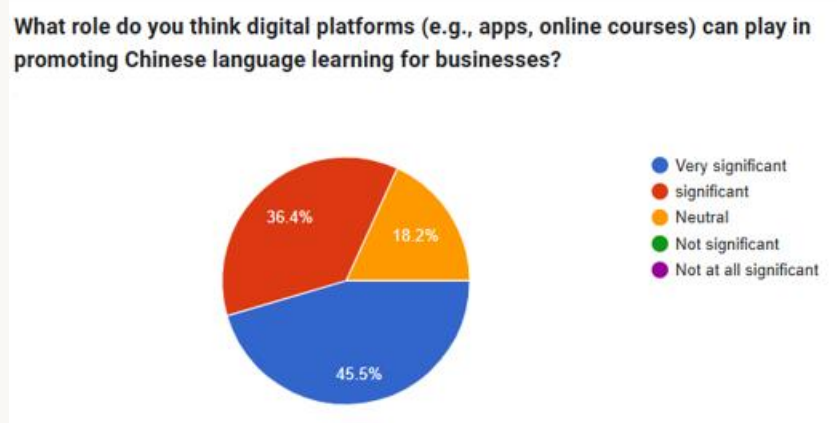


Figure 22: Role of Digital Platforms in Promoting Chinese Language Learning for Businesses

Figure 22, reflects strong confidence in technology-driven language acquisition. A total of **81.9% of respondents rated digital platforms as either “Very Significant” (45.5%) or “Significant” (36.4%)**, while only **18.2% remained Neutral**. Importantly, **none of the respondents considered them “Not Significant” or “Not at all Significant.”**

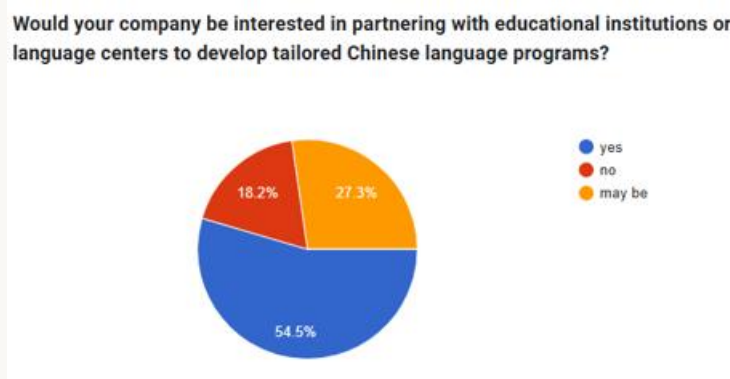


Figure 23: Willingness to Partner with Educational Institutions for Tailored Chinese Language Programs

Figure 23, shows promising interest in cross-sector collaboration. A clear **54.5% of respondents said “Yes,”** indicating an active willingness to engage with educational institutions to **co-create customized Mandarin training**. An additional **27.3% expressed interest conditionally with a “Maybe,”** while **only 18.2% declined**.

This distribution demonstrates a **strong industry appetite for collaborative language development models**, particularly those that address sector-specific vocabulary, business scenarios, and workforce roles. With over 80% of respondents either willing or open to partnerships, the data reflects a readiness among firms to move beyond generic training and toward **strategic, needs-based programming**.

CONCLUSION

This comprehensive study on Chinese (Mandarin) language learning in Punjab, Pakistan, reveals a transformative linguistic and socio-economic shift catalyzed by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Mandarin, once a peripheral foreign language, has now emerged as a strategic asset intricately tied to education, employment, industrial collaboration, and diplomatic engagement. The data underscores an increasing recognition among students, professionals, and businesses of the instrumental value of Mandarin in securing scholarships, accessing international opportunities, improving cross-border trade, and enhancing employability in CPEC-linked sectors.

The study highlights both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, the enthusiasm for learning Mandarin is high—reflected in the overwhelming percentage of students who see it as beneficial to their academic or professional lives. On the other hand, proficiency levels remain modest, access is skewed towards urban and male learners, and a shortage of qualified instructors and immersive environments limits deeper language acquisition. Chinese companies operating in Punjab affirm the critical operational need for bilingual professionals, yet many still lack structured training programs, signaling a gap between demand and delivery.

The findings call for a paradigm shift in national language policy and skills development strategy. Mandarin must be recognized not merely as a language of cultural interest but as a core competency aligned with Pakistan’s economic vision. Policies must promote gender and geographic inclusivity, digital accessibility, public-private partnerships, localized content development, and integration into mainstream and vocational education systems. Furthermore, cultural exchange programs, digital hubs, and institutional collaboration can act as multipliers for impact.

Ultimately, Chinese language learning in Pakistan, especially in Punjab, represents more than a linguistic trend—it symbolizes a broader reorientation toward regional integration, youth empowerment, and strategic preparedness. By investing in Mandarin education today, Pakistan equips itself with the soft infrastructure necessary to navigate tomorrow’s geopolitical and economic landscape with confidence, competence, and connection.

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