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**UNIVERSITI  
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Cawangan Negeri Sembilan

**EDISI 13**

**OKTOBER 2024**

# **BULETIN APB**

*Global  
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**AKADEMI PENGAJIAN BAHASA  
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# Cutting Through Barriers: The Impact of Chinese Paper Cutting on Student Engagement in Mandarin Language Learning

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Globalisation has created a substantial demand for multilingual individuals who can bridge cultural and linguistic divides. As businesses and communities become more interconnected, proficiency in multiple languages, particularly those of global significance like Mandarin, has become essential. In response to these global needs, the Malaysia Education Development Plan 2015-2025 has highlighted the importance of learning additional languages, including Mandarin, to better equip students for the challenges of a globalised world.

Learning a new language goes beyond mastering the grammatical structures and vocabulary; it also involves understanding the cultural context in which the language is used. Thus, it is crucial to integrate cultural elements into the Introductory Mandarin curriculum to facilitate a more comprehensive approach to Mandarin language learning.

Chinese paper cutting is one cultural activity that can empower the mastery of Mandarin and motivate learners. This traditional art form provides an avenue for practising language skills and offers insights into Chinese symbolism, aesthetics, and customs. By engaging in this activity, learners can gain a deeper appreciation for the cultural nuances of the language, enhancing their language proficiency.

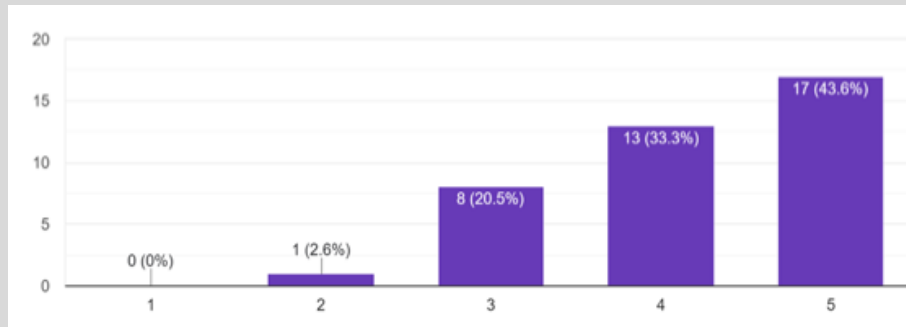
## **The impact of Chinese paper cutting on their Mandarin language learning**

Chinese paper cutting has been shown to enhance Mandarin language learning significantly. Based on the data collected, students reveal overwhelmingly positive feedback, highlighting several benefits that enrich their learning in Mandarin language classrooms. These benefits include increased engagement, better cultural immersion, and improved vocabulary retention.

### 1. Increased engagement

The Chinese paper-cutting activity is hands-on and visually stimulating, effectively boosting students' motivation and encouraging their commitment to Mandarin language studies.



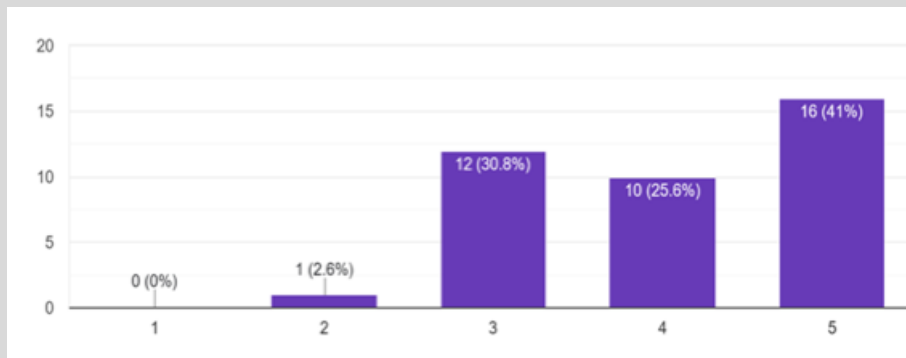


Graph 1: Students' enjoyment of learning Mandarin through Chinese paper-cutting

Graph 1 illustrates that 76.9% of students rated their enjoyment as 4 or 5, highlighting a general trend of positive feedback. The findings suggest that learning Mandarin through paper cutting is well-received; enhancing engagement and enjoyment in language learning, which aligns with the evaluation of innovative educational methods.

## 2. Better Cultural immersion

Cultural activities create opportunities for in-depth discussions about Chinese festivals, symbols, and traditions. These discussions encourage students to reflect on their creations and explore the cultural meanings behind them, deepening their understanding of cultural nuances and enhancing their overall language proficiency.

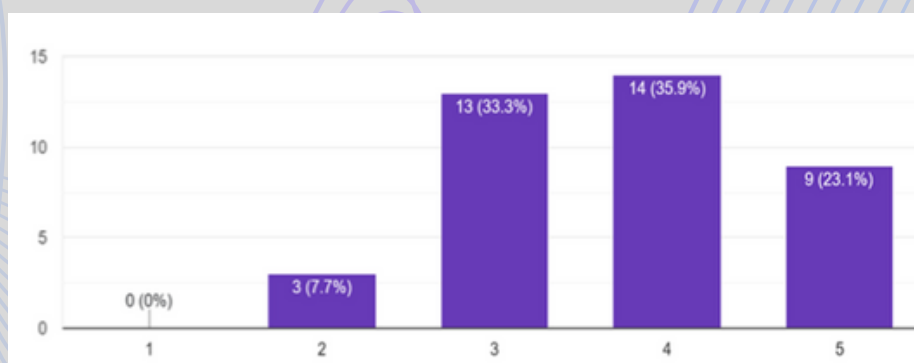


Graph 2: Impact of Paper Cutting on Understanding the Chinese Culture

Most students (66.6%) agreed that paper cutting enhances cultural comprehension. The findings highlight its role in understanding the cultural context of Mandarin, reinforcing the importance of integrating cultural practices into second or foreign language education.

## 3. Improved vocabulary retention

Chinese characters are complex, making recognising the structure and components essential.



Graph 3: Improvements in Mandarin vocabulary

In the survey, 59% of students reported that paper-cutting activities enhanced their Mandarin vocabulary. Engaging in these activities allows learners to focus on the strokes and components of each character, thereby improving their recognition and writing skills. This finding underscores the effectiveness of creative methods in enhancing Mandarin vocabulary retention.

In summary, integrating Chinese paper cutting into the Mandarin Language curriculum can greatly enhance vocabulary acquisition, cultural understanding, and student engagement. Chinese paper cutting not only helps students learn thematic and contextual vocabulary but also deepens their appreciation for Chinese culture and fosters creative expression, thereby increasing non-native students' motivation to learn Mandarin.



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