Classroom Teaching Perceptions of Native Chinese Language Teachers in Thai Schools

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ABSTRACY

This study investigated classroom teaching challenges encountered by native Chinese language teachers in Thai schools, and proposed effective strategies employed by the teachers. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, exploring quantitative data from a questionnaire survey of 55 teachers and collecting qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews with 8 participants. The questionnaire findings revealed that the students' language ability was rated at the 'Agree' level ($\bar{x}$=3.90, S.D.=0.70), the teaching resources aspect at the 'Strongly agree' level ($\bar{x}$=4.22, S.D.=0.62), while the classroom management aspect at the 'Agree' level ($\bar{x}$=3.96, S.D.=0.80). Catering to learner differences was rated at the 'Strongly agree' level ($\bar{x}$=4.15, S.D.=0.65). The three major challenges with the highest scores were cultural differences ($\bar{x}$=4.05, S.D.=0.68), students' motivation ($\bar{x}$=3.95, S.D.=0.77), and communication with students and parents ($\bar{x}$=3.90, S.D.=0.82). Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews further highlighted language barriers, particularly in Pinyin and pronunciation instruction. Teachers also elaborated on the inadequacy of teaching materials, noting that they were not customized for Thai learners, and on the difficulties in classroom management arising from differing educational cultures and student behaviors. Effective strategies to address these challenges consisted of the use of multimedia facilities in teaching, creating a relaxing classroom atmosphere, and integrating Chinese culture into the lessons to enhance students' motivation and contextual understanding.

Keywords: teaching challenges, multimedia teaching, gamified teaching, classroom management, cultural differences, Chinese language teaching strategies

Introduction

In the context of globalization, the importance of language as a bridge for communication has become increasingly prominent (Xu, 2012). As China's global influence has grown, so has the demand for Chinese language education worldwide (Ewe, 2021). In Thailand, a country with deep historical and cultural exchanges with China, Chinese language

education has shown vigorous vitality and has been incorporated into the national education system (Chen, 2021). However, native Chinese teachers in Thailand still face numerous challenges in the actual teaching process that affect their teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes (Lim & Feng, 2021).

These challenges are multifaceted. Firstly, a significant language barrier exists, as many native Chinese teachers have limited Thai proficiency (Chen, 2018; Bancha, 2022), making it difficult to explain abstract vocabulary or complex grammar points and to communicate effectively with students and parents (Lim & Feng, 2021). Secondly, cultural differences in educational philosophies create friction; Thai education often emphasizes a relaxed, joyful learning environment (Chen, 2018), which contrasts with the more structured, exam-oriented approach common in China (Yi, 2023). This can lead to difficulties in classroom management and misunderstandings regarding student motivation (Cui, 2022). Thirdly, there is a prominent lack of teaching resources, with most textbooks being imported from China and not customized for Thai learners (Wei & Weerasawainon, 2019), which restricts teachers' teaching methods Therefore, this study aims to explore the challenges faced by native Chinese teachers, identify the most significant issues, and propose effective strategies to improve the quality of Chinese language education in Thailand.

Objectives of the study:

1. To comprehensively and thoroughly explore the challenges faced by native Chinese teachers in the Thai teaching environment.

2. To identify and analyze the major challenges encountered by native Chinese teachers in their teaching practices.

3. To explore and propose effective strategies to address the challenges faced by native Chinese teachers.

Literature Review

Cultural Differences in Teaching and Learning:

Cultural differences between Thai and Chinese society significantly shape teaching and learning experiences (Cui, 2022). These differences manifest in communication styles, classroom authority structures, and attitudes toward learning. Chinese culture, deeply influenced by Confucian values, often emphasizes hierarchy, collectivism, and communicative restraint, whereas Thai culture places a higher premium on emotional comfort, flexibility, and "sanuk" (the concept of fun or enjoyment) in daily life (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010).

This cultural gap extends directly into the classroom. In Chinese educational culture, teachers are traditionally regarded as authoritative knowledge-holders, and students are expected to follow instructions with discipline (Yi, 2023). In contrast, Thai schools actively promote "happy learning," where a relaxed, student-centered atmosphere and mutual respect are prioritized (Chen, 2018). This

often leads to a cultural mismatch: native Chinese teachers may perceive Thai students as "too relaxed" or lacking seriousness, while Thai students may find the teachers' authoritative style "too strict" (Ye, 2017). Furthermore, learning approaches differ. Chinese classrooms traditionally favor rote memorization and repetition, while Thai students are often more responsive to experiential, participatory, and game-based learning (Li, 2016).

Key Classroom Challenges for Native Chinese Teachers:

The literature extensively documents the challenges native Chinese teachers face in cross-cultural settings. These challenges can be grouped into several key areas.

Classroom Management:

Effective classroom management is a critical component of successful teaching (Reupert & Woodcock, 2011), yet it is a "pressing concern" and "frequent struggle" for many foreign language teachers (Macías, 2018). The cultural clash between the Thai emphasis on a relaxed atmosphere and the more discipline-oriented tradition in Chinese education makes it difficult for teachers to enforce rules without appearing harsh (Guo, 2014). Thai pedagogy encourages student autonomy and a low-power-distance dynamic, which can conflict with the authoritative teacher role common in Chinese education . These management difficulties can lead to emotional exhaustion for teachers, which in turn reduces their teaching effectiveness (Pisacreta et al., 2011).

Language Barriers and Teaching Resources:

A primary challenge is the linguistic barrier. For Thai learners, the logo-graphic nature of Chinese characters and the complexities of the pinyin and tonal systems present significant hurdles (Yue, 2017; Sun, 2011). This is compounded by a lack of suitable teaching resources. Studies consistently find that an unsupportive school context and the use of non-customized curriculum materials are significant obstacles (Liao, 2017). In Thailand specifically, most textbooks are imported from China and are often criticized for being outdated, culturally disconnected, and not designed for the specific needs of Thai learners (Wei & Weerasawainon, 2019; Xie, 2018).

Learner Differences:

Catering to learner diversity is another major challenge. Classrooms are typically composed of students with varied family and cultural backgrounds, different levels of prior Chinese learning experience, and diverse motivations and learning strategies (Ye, 2017; Wen, 2011). Teachers must address this heterogeneity, but many find it difficult to recognize and respond to the wide range of affective and strategic differences among students, which directly impacts learning outcomes (Pawlak, 2017; Abdullaev, 2021). The challenge is heightened when dealing with students who have special needs, for which many teachers may lack specific training (Zhou & Li, 2015).

While these challenges can lead to frustration and cultural dissonance, they also serve as catalysts for professional growth, pushing teachers to become more

adaptive, reflective, and creative in their pedagogy.

Methodology

1. Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating a quantitative questionnaire survey with qualitative semi-structured interviews. This approach facilitates both a broad examination of challenges and an in-depth exploration of teachers' lived experiences. The questionnaire was designed to quantify perceptions of teaching challenges, while the interviews provided nuanced, contextualized data on these phenomena.

2. Population and Sample

The target population consisted of native Chinese language teachers from Mainland China working in Thai secondary schools.

For the questionnaire survey, the Yamane (1967) formula was utilized to determine the sample size from a population of 64 teachers, resulting in a required minimum of 55 participants. A total of 55 valid questionnaires were collected through random sampling across different provinces and school types.

For the semi-structured interviews, a purposive sampling approach was employed to select 8 native Chinese language teachers. Participants were chosen based on diversity in gender, teaching experience, academic background, and school type to ensure a broad spectrum of perspectives.

3. Research Instruments

The research instruments included a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview protocol.

Questionnaire: The questionnaire was developed based on a literature review and categorized challenges into six dimensions: language barriers, teaching resources, classroom management,

pedagogical practice, catering to learner differences, and major teaching challenges. It used a five-point Likert scale for responses.

Semi-Structured Interviews: The interviews were centered on the same six dimensions as the questionnaire, allowing for deeper exploration of the challenges.

4. Validity and Reliability

Validity: The content validity of the instruments was ensured by three experts using the Indicator of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) method. All items were reviewed for relevance and alignment with the research objectives.

Reliability: The internal consistency of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's alpha. The overall Cronbach's alpha was 0.860, indicating high reliability.

5. Data Collection

Data collection occurred in two phases. First, the questionnaire was distributed electronically via Google Forms to native Chinese language teachers. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 8 selected teachers, either in-person or via video call. All interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent.

6. Data Analysis

Quantitative Data: Questionnaire data were analyzed using SPSS 20.0 for descriptive statistics, including means (M) and standard deviations (SD).

Qualitative Data: Interview transcripts were analyzed using Lichtman's (2013) 3Cs model: Coding (identifying keywords), Categorizing (grouping codes into topics), and Conceptualizing (extracting overarching concepts and themes).

Findings

1. Findings from the Questionnaire

Respondent Characteristics

The demographic profile of the 55

participating teachers is summarized in Table 1. The data reveals a teaching force that is predominantly female (69.1%) and highly educated, with 90.9% holding at least a bachelor's degree. A key finding is that a majority of teachers (60.0%) rate their Thai proficiency as "average," suggesting that language barriers are a widespread issue.

Table 1: Individual Characteristics of the Sample (N=55)

Background	Detail	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	17	30.9%
	Female	38	69.1%
Education	Bachelor's degree or above	50	90.9%
	Master's degree or above	22	40.0%
Teaching Experience	1-3 years	22	40.0%
	4-6 years	19	34.5%
	More than 6 years	14	25.5%
Thai Language Level	Good command	8	14.5%
	Average level	33	60.0%
	Poor skills	14	25.5%

Descriptive Analysis of Perceived Teaching Dimensions

The questionnaire data revealed native Chinese language teachers' perceptions across several key dimensions. The responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree). The overall scores for the primary teaching dimensions are summarized in Table 2

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of Perceived Teaching Dimensions

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Teaching Resources	4.22	0.62	Agree
Teaching Practice	4.22	0.70	Agree
Learner Differences Catering	4.15	0.65	Agree
Classroom Management	3.96	0.80	Agree
Language Barriers	3.90	0.70	Agree

The summary table shows that teachers generally hold a positive view across all dimensions, with all aggregate scores falling within the 'Agree' range. Teaching Resources ($\bar{x}$=4.22) and Teaching Practice ($\bar{x}$=4.22) received the highest scores, indicating confidence in these areas. While still positive, Classroom Management ($\bar{x}$=3.96) and Language Barriers ($\bar{x}$=3.90) received comparatively lower scores, suggesting these are areas of greater concern.

Major Teaching Challenges

While the overall perceptions were positive, Table 3 details the specific challenges that teachers identified as most significant. The highest-rated challenge was related to cultural differences

affecting teaching (x̄=4.05), followed by students' lack of motivation (x̄=3.95). These findings pinpoint that the most pressing issues are often external and student-related factors rather than a perceived lack of teacher skill.

Table 3: Teacher Perceptions of Major Teaching Challenges

Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Students have a weak language foundation and find it difficult to master Chinese Pinyin and pronunciation.	3.85	0.72	Agree
Students have poor memory and writing abilities for Chinese characters.	3.90	0.78	Agree
Difficulty in classroom discipline management makes it difficult for students to concentrate.	3.80	0.75	Agree
Cultural differences affect teaching, and students have limited understanding of Chinese culture.	4.05	0.68	Agree
Lack of suitable teaching resources and auxiliary tools.	3.70	0.80	Agree
Students lack motivation and interest in learning Chinese.	3.95	0.77	Agree
Difficulty in language communication with students and parents, which affects teaching effectiveness.	3.90	0.82	Agree
Total Score	**3.88**	**0.76**	**Agree**

The quantitative results from Table 3 indicate that the most significant challenge perceived by teachers is cultural differences (x̄=4.05), which affects students' understanding of the language's cultural context. This was closely followed by students' lack of motivation (x̄=3.95) and difficulties with Chinese character writing (x̄=3.90). The challenge of inadequate teaching resources received the lowest score among the major challenges, but still fell within the "Agree" range (x̄=3.70), confirming it remains a concern.

2. Findings from Semi-structured Interviews

The analysis of the eight semi-structured interviews revealed four overarching themes regarding the challenges and strategies of native Chinese teachers.

Theme 1: Pervasive Language Barriers in Pronunciation and Tones

A core challenge consistently highlighted by all interviewees was the language barrier related to phonetics. Teachers reported that Thai students struggle significantly with mastering Chinese pinyin and tones due to interference from their native language. One teacher stated, "The most difficult part is helping students master the tones of Chinese. Thai language itself does not have the concept of four tones, and students are completely unable to understand the subtle differences" (T4). This often leads to frequent pronunciation errors and affects listening comprehension, which can diminish student confidence.

Theme 2: Inadequacy and Lack

of Localization in Teaching Resources

Interviewees unanimously expressed concerns about teaching materials. Most rely on textbooks imported from China, such as "Happy Chinese" or "New Practical Chinese Textbook," which are not culturally adapted for Thai students. A teacher explained, "most of the content in the textbook is about Chinese life and culture, lacking local Thai content, which leads to students feeling alienated" (T2). Furthermore, many schools, particularly in rural areas, lack sufficient multimedia facilities like interactive whiteboards or learning software, which limits teachers' ability to implement diverse and engaging teaching methods.

Theme 3: Cross-Cultural Classroom Management Difficulties

Teachers described classroom discipline as a persistent challenge stemming from cultural differences in educational norms. Thai students are accustomed to a relaxed and "happy learning" atmosphere, which can be perceived as a lack of discipline by teachers from a more structured educational background. One teacher noted, "The classroom discipline of students is relatively loose, especially for younger students who are easily distracted" (T1). To cope, teachers adopted strategies such as setting clear rules, using group competitions, and implementing interactive activities to maintain student engagement and focus.

Theme 4: Adaptive Strategies Combining Multimedia, Gamification, and Cultural Integration

Despite the challenges, teachers demonstrated significant adaptability by employing innovative strategies. The most common strategies included:

Multimedia-Assisted Instruction: Using PPTs and videos to make abstract concepts like stroke order and pronunciation more visual and understandable. As one teacher said, "I often use PPT and Chinese videos in class... It helps students visualize the content more clearly" (T2).

Gamified Teaching: Incorporating games like "Pinyin competitions" or "character matching" to create a relaxed atmosphere and reduce learning anxiety.

Cultural Integration: Introducing Chinese culture through festivals, food, and music to stimulate interest and provide context.

Differentiated Instruction: Grouping students by ability and designing different tasks to meet their varied learning needs.

Conclusion

This study explored the major classroom teaching challenges faced by native Chinese teachers in Thailand and identified the strategies they adopted to address them. Through a mixed-methods approach, the research identified three primary areas of difficulty in the Thai teaching environment: pervasive language barriers, particularly in pronunciation; a lack of suitable, localized teaching resources; and cross-cultural classroom management difficulties. The most significant challenges in teaching practice were found to be navigating cultural differences, managing inconsistent student motivation, and addressing students' difficulties with Chinese character memorization and writing.

Despite these obstacles, teachers demonstrated significant adaptability

by implementing a range of effective strategies. These include the widespread use of multimedia teaching to make abstract concepts accessible, gamified and scenario-based learning to enhance student engagement and reduce anxiety, cultural integration to provide context and stimulate interest, and differentiated instruction to cater to diverse learner needs.

In conclusion, while native Chinese teachers in Thailand face considerable linguistic, pedagogical, and cultural hurdles, they respond with resilience and creativity. The findings strongly suggest that their effectiveness could be significantly enhanced through systematic support, including targeted professional development in cross-cultural pedagogy, the creation of localized teaching materials, and improved institutional resources.

Discussion

This study's findings corroborate existing literature on cross-cultural teaching challenges while also providing new, context-specific insights into the experiences of Chinese teachers in Thailand. The three primary challenges identified—language barriers, inadequate resources, and classroom management—reflect a complex interplay of linguistic, pedagogical, and cultural factors.

The persistent difficulty with Chinese pronunciation and tones reported by teachers extends the observations of Chen (2015) and Sun (2011), who identified the negative impact of phonological interference from the Thai language. This study further underscores that teachers' own limited Thai proficiency can exacerbate this issue, highlighting a need for bilingual competence in cross-language instruction. Although teachers employ multimedia tools to mitigate this, as recommended by Zhao (2019), the root of the problem lies in systemic linguistic differences that demand more targeted pedagogical interventions, such as contrastive phonology.

The challenge of inadequate and culturally inappropriate teaching resources affirms the work of Wei & Weerasawainon (2019) and Xie (2018). The reliance on non-localized textbooks creates a cultural and contextual gap that renders the language abstract and disconnected from students' realities. While teachers proactively adapt materials, this bottom-up effort cannot fully compensate for the absence of system-level support for creating culturally responsive curricula. This points to a critical need for policy-makers and educational institutions in Thailand to invest in the development of localized Chinese language materials.

Regarding classroom management, the findings reflect the cultural mismatch detailed by Ye (2017). The clash between the Thai value of "sanuk" (fun) in learning and the more disciplined, teacher-centric model familiar to many Chinese teachers fosters what Wang (2020) termed an "ambiguous authority role." Teachers are caught between maintaining order and adapting to a culture that prioritizes a relaxed atmosphere. Their success in navigating this often depends on their cross-cultural communication skills and their ability to build rapport, emphasizing the need for pre-service training that covers culturally sensitive classroom management strategies.

Finally, the adaptive strategies employed by teachers—multimedia use, gamification, and cultural

integration—demonstrate their professional resilience and creativity. These practices align with modern pedagogical principles that promote student engagement and motivation. However, the effectiveness of these strategies is often constrained by the systemic challenges discussed. This suggests that while individual teacher effort is crucial, sustainable improvement in Chinese language education in Thailand requires a more holistic approach that addresses structural issues related to teacher training, curriculum development, and resource allocation.

Recommendations

1. For Implementation

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

Strengthen Pronunciation Instruction: Teachers should dedicate specific instructional time to systematic Pinyin and tone training, using audiovisual aids and interactive drills to address common pronunciation errors.

Develop Localized Teaching Materials: Educational authorities should support the creation of textbooks and supplementary materials tailored to Thai students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as these have been shown to be more effective than standard imported materials.

Enhance Classroom Management Training: Teacher training programs should include modules on Thai classroom culture and positive reinforcement strategies to help teachers manage behavior more effectively.

Promote Differentiated Instruction: Teachers should adopt flexible instructional strategies based on students' proficiency levels, with additional support for weaker learners and more challenging content for advanced ones.

2. For Future Research

Expand Sample Scope: Future studies should include a larger, more diverse sample of teachers from various regions and school types to improve the generalizability of findings.

Incorporate Student Perspectives: Research should include the voices of Thai students to gain a more holistic understanding of classroom interaction and learning challenges.

Conduct Longitudinal Studies: Longitudinal research is recommended to track the adaptation process of native Chinese teachers over time, providing insights into how their strategies evolve.

Investigate Technology's Role: Future studies should explore the impact of technology-enhanced learning (e.g., mobile apps, AI tools) on addressing resource shortages and improving student engagement in Thai classrooms.

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