



Investigating Chinese undergraduate students' pragmatic competence in interpreting through repair in a Thai classroom setting

Zhang Yawen*†, Sumittra Suraratdecha†

Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University, Nakhon Pathom 73170, Thailand

Article Info

Article history:

Received 16 February 2024

Revised 28 March 2024

Accepted 2 April 2024

Available online 28 March 2025

Keywords:

interpreting,
pragmatic competence in interpreting,
repair

Abstract

Pragmatic competence in interpreting is important to students who study translation (Bao & Qian, 2013, p. 88; Lu, 2019, p. 37). This research aims to examine Chinese undergraduate students' problems of pragmatic competence in Chinese-Thai interpreting. Hall's (2007) concept of 'repair' was used as a micro analytical lens through which to analyze classroom interactions between a Thai teacher and twenty Chinese undergraduate students, the data being collected through participant observation. The findings reveal that the Chinese undergraduate students had problems of pragmatic competence in interpreting at both the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic levels. These problems reflect the fact that Chinese undergraduate students' knowledge of the differences of language and culture between Chinese and Thai is insufficient and that they lack language training that focuses on pragmatic competence in interpreting. Repair, as an instructional practice used in the classroom, demonstrates that interaction can be used as a means for teaching Chinese undergraduate students' pragmatic competence in interpreting in the translation classroom. The research has implications for training Chinese undergraduate students and developing their pragmatic competence in interpreting and for teaching and learning Thai as a foreign language.

© 2025 Kasetsart University.

Introduction

National policies such as China's "One Belt, One Road" (National Development and Reform Commission, PRC, 2015) and Thailand's "Connectivity" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, 2014) are providing more opportunities for Chinese-Thai knowledge exchange

and cooperation. Official and business institutions in both countries need Chinese-Thai interpreters to facilitate communication, as indicated in Thai job adverts for interpreters, which put Chinese, along with Japanese, as the two most sought-after language qualifications for job seekers (Poonlarp, 2016). Therefore, cultivating competent Chinese-Thai interpreters is imperative.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: pralsily@163.com (Yawen, Z.).

Existing academic literature on Chinese-Thai interpreters is inadequate and limited to general ideas on talent training, such as the suggestion that diversified teaching materials should be used (Li, 2015), or that learners' oral expression and writing ability should be improved (He, 2017). Concrete implementation of teaching and learning for Chinese-Thai interpreters has attracted little research, therefore, an empirical study is needed that provides a feasible implemented approach of teaching and learning for the development of Chinese-Thai interpreters.

An examination of pragmatic issues in real-time interpreter-mediated communication extend research on interpreting to a dialogue interpreting perspective. In medical services, patients may be unable to understand specific terms due to a lack of medical knowledge (Estrada et al., 2015). In commercial contexts, misunderstandings often occur between partners due to a lack of contextual information (Gavioli & Maxwell, 2009). These examples suggest that successful interpreting relies on a continuous interaction between interpreter and communicators, and is inherently related to socio-cultural environment and real-time communication context. On the basis of these characteristics of interpreting, dialogue interpreting (Mason, 1999), as it is termed, was developed to support the claim that interpreting is a complex intercultural communication rather than word for word translation.

The above insight into the nature of interpreting has caught the attention of interpreter training, which should go beyond teaching pure language use competence and interpreting skills to consider the interpreters' language competence in terms of social, cultural and communication contextual aspects (Al-Qinai, 2010, p. 132; Pöchhacker, 2004, p. 186). On this point, developing pragmatic competence in interpreting (Lu, 2019) should clearly be a priority. However, the current status of research in this field remains insufficient (Lu, 2019, p. 37), and most such research tends to focus on English as a foreign language (Bao & Qian, 2013; Crezee & Grant, 2016; Cui, 2019; Li, 2010; Lu, 2019; Sachtleben & Denny, 2011). In this regard, this research fills some gaps with respect to developing learners' pragmatic competence in interpreting in teaching Thai as a foreign language for interpreter training.

Language teaching and learning can be supported by teacher-student interactions, in which repair often occurs to address learners' language use problems. Existing research on pragmatic competence in interpreting has not examined this perspective. This research uses Hall's (2007) concept of 'repair', which can be defined as an instructional practice to remediate learner produced language errors in a language learning context (Hall, 2007, p. 516), to analyze interactions through verbal exchanges between teacher and students.

Research Question and Objective

Research question

What are Chinese undergraduate students' problems with regard to pragmatic competence in Chinese-Thai interpreting?

Research objective

To examine Chinese undergraduate students' problems with regard to pragmatic competence in Chinese-Thai interpreting.

Literature review

Pragmatic competence is the ability to use language appropriately in a given communication context (Garcia, 2004). It consists of two main components, namely, pragmalinguistics, which refers to the study of language use from the viewpoint of a language structure resource, and sociopragmatics, which refers to the study of social conditions of language use (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983). Drawing upon literature on interpreting (Guan, 1995, p. 250; Hale, 2014), this research considers pragmatic competence in interpreting as being at the pragmalinguistic level, meaning that interpreters use linguistic means such as pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar to switch linguistic expressions according to target-language social conventions for correct semantic transfer. At the sociopragmatic level, the interpreter also needs to bridge the knowledge gaps between communicators, especially where idioms, proverbs and slang are concerned, and this requires socio-cultural and communicative contextual knowledge to be done effectively.

Previous research on developing learners' pragmatic competence in interpreting tended to revolve around English as a foreign language and consisted of three main categories: (1) listing and analyzing real examples of pragmatic failures in interpreting, and offering suggestions for interpreting training such as cultivating learners' linguistic knowledge, and cross-cultural awareness (Li, 2010; Lu, 2019); (2) investigating students' pragmatic competence in interpreting through questionnaire surveys and making suggestions such as improving teaching materials, raising teachers' awareness of pragmatics (Bao & Qian, 2013; Cui, 2019); and (3) providing instruction and practice as concrete training methods, such as improving learners' pronunciation and cross-cultural understanding through instruction in pragmatic features (Sachtleben & Denny, 2011). Learners can understand the language of daily use by conducting real

communication context tasks (Crezee & Grant, 2016). Considering dialogue interpreting - which pays attention to examining real-time interpreting performance - and the need for classroom practice, the two concrete training methods (practice and instruction) are worth learning. Combining this with language teaching methods that make students more aware of gaps in their language knowledge and language use can develop their language proficiency (Long, 1996). One possible means of developing pragmatic competence in interpreting may be for students to practice interpreting in translation classes, and receive feedback on their problems of language use in interpreting.

Teaching and learning can be supported by teacher-student interactions through verbal exchanges. In language classroom interactions, repair (Hall, 2007) is instructional practice for addressing learners' language use errors. It is composed of troubles, initiation and completion. Troubles are either linguistic accuracy - such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and syntax - or problems of fact, content and conversation (Mozaffari & Allami, 2017). Initiation and completion respectively relate to who marks the trouble and who solves it. Seedhouse (2004, p. 179) points out that in the language classroom, the definition of troubles is related to pedagogical issues such as linguistic form accuracy, and mutual understanding between teacher and students. Regarding this research, as its focus is on classroom interactions between teacher and students in dealing with Chinese undergraduate students' problems of pragmatic competence in interpreting, troubles are students' problems of pragmatic competence in interpreting. Initiation and completion are respectively the processes by which students' problems of pragmatic competence in interpreting are identified and solved.

Seedhouse (2004, pp. 164–168) found that instead of directly negative evaluation by using the words such as "wrong" or "incorrect", teachers may use implicit expressions to identify learners' language use errors. For instance: (1) "use a next-turn repair initiator to indicate there is an error". That is, the teacher says something as a signal to point out that the student needs to correct a language use error. Extract 1 (Table 1) provides

an example in which after L2 presents an incorrect sentence "I watch a movie.", instead of a negative evaluation, T initiates a repair to fix L2's error by asking "How do you say something in the past?"; (2) "provide an explanation of why the answer is incorrect without explicitly stating that it is incorrect". That is, the teacher says something as a signal in an explanatory manner to point out that there is an error in the student's language use. Extract 2 (Table 1) provides an example in which after L2 presents the incorrect word form "fastly", instead of an explicit negation, T provides "fast" as the correct version. Liebscher and Dailey-O'Cain (2003) found that learners may request explanation to solve their own learning problems. Extract 3 (Table 1) provides an example in which L5 asks about the word "retun" to show his/her own learning problem. Previous research (Lai, 2018; Mozaffari & Allami, 2017) found that students' lack of language proficiency renders them incapable of solving language use problems by themselves. So, repair is completed by teacher or classmates.

Existing research on Chinese students' problems of pragmatic competence in interpreting in the context of teaching and learning English as a foreign language found that students encounter problems of rendering vocabulary, sentences (Li, 2010; Bao & Qian, 2013; Lu, 2019), and explaining culturally-loaded expressions such as idioms (Lu, 2019). That is, students only focus on literal equivalence, arrange word order according to Chinese sentence structure, and lack cross-cultural awareness to explain the connotation behind Chinese expressions that do not exist in another culture. This may make target language receivers feel uncomfortable and have difficulty to understand, thereby hindering communication (Lu, 2019). The reason for these problems is that the teaching and learning English lacks an emphasis on cultivating pragmatic competence in interpreting. For example, the curriculum does not highlight courses related to pragmatics, teaching materials do not include content on pragmatics theories and corresponding interpreting examples and exercises, and students do not have interpreting practice that is as close as possible to real-life interpreting (Lu, 2019).

Table 1 Repair initiation strategies

Extract 1 (Ren, 2018, p. 37)	Extract 2 (Ren, 2018, p. 40)	Extract 3 (Mozaffari & Allami, 2017, p.165)
13 L1: Yesterday↑, (.) I watch	4 L1: = Fastly	→22 L5: Can we use retun?
14 a movie.	→5 T: Fastly. (0.4) ((turn over	23 T: huh?
→15 T: Emm:: (0.1) How do you say	6 and write 'fastly'on the	24 L5: Retun
something in the <u>past</u> ?	7 blackboard)) 'FAST' (.)	25 L6: Return
	8 does not take (.) the	26 T: Return to Africa. Ok.
	9 'LY' (.) Only 'fast'.	

In view of these problems, foreign teaching and learning for developing students' pragmatic competence in interpreting that includes linguistic knowledge and cross-cultural awareness as its two main aspects should be given attention (Bao & Qian, 2013; Cui, 2019; Lu, 2019).

Foreign language teaching and learning requires knowledge of the differences of language and culture between learners' mother tongue and the foreign one. Zhang (2014, p. 16) points out vocabulary reflects social culture. The meanings of the same word in different languages are often unequal. There are also some words that reflect specific aspects of social culture for which there are no corresponding words in another language. As for sentence structure, the significant difference between Thai and Chinese is the position of modifiers (Labyai, 2021; Zhang, 2014). For subjects or objects, Thai modifiers should be put after them, while in Chinese it is the opposite. For verbs, Thai adverbial modifiers expressing place should be put at the end of sentences but before adverbial modifiers expressing manner. In Chinese, both adverbial modifiers expressing place and adverbial modifiers expressing manner should be put before verbs (Huang & Liao, 2002, p. 94). The position of Chinese modifiers reflects the Chinese inductive way of thinking (Shen, 2021, p. 302; Zhang, 2014). That is, themes appear on the premise of sufficient background explanation. Thus, a Chinese sentence puts secondary, additional content first, followed by the main part (Zhang, 2014, p. 15).

Methodology

Research Setting

This research was conducted in a Chinese-Thai translation class that was part of a program teaching Thai language and culture to foreign students (hereinafter referred as "the program") undertaken at a research institute under the administration of a research-based multiversity Thai university located in a suburb of a province in central Thailand.

The translation class objectives were: (1) to provide foundational knowledge of Chinese-Thai translation, and (2) to develop students' language competence in interpreting through sight interpreting tasks. The classroom teaching and learning context was one in which for each lesson the teacher provided pre-designed assignments involving a number of Chinese phrases and sentences that required students to orally translate into Thai on the spot.

Sampling and Participants

This research adopted purposive sampling. The selected class was established according to a provincial policy of China that focuses on cultivating translation and interpreting talents. Compared to ordinary class, this class had more translation and interpreting lessons, more intensive and difficult teaching content. These prominent features were the reason for choosing this class as research object. The research will impact teaching and learning Thai as a foreign language in China.

The class was conducted over one academic year from August, 2018 to April, 2019. Calculated on a weekly basis, the class covered 36 weeks, where 2 hours per week was for Chinese-Thai interpreting practice. In total, over one academic year, the Chinese undergraduate students undertook 64 hours (excluding 4 weeks with a total 8 hours for midterm and final examinations) for the practice.

The participants were a Thai teacher, and twenty Chinese undergraduate students. The teacher, who held a Ph.D. degree in Teaching Chinese, was an experienced university teacher of more than 10 years. The Chinese undergraduate students were outstanding students (ranking high in academic performance) selected from various Chinese universities which offered undergraduate level Thai programs. They had started learning Thai from first year undergraduate study, and were already third-year undergraduate students when studying "the program". They had no experience in translation and interpreting.

Data Collection

Following approval from the Thai university, the researcher received permission from the director in charge of "the program" to participate in the translation classroom for one academic year for observation and data collection. The researcher then joined the classroom to inform the teacher and students about the research and invited them to participate before obtaining their formal consent.

Spontaneous utterances between the teacher and the Chinese third-year undergraduate students in the Thai translation classroom were audio-recorded. The researcher was on site for the teaching and learning sessions to operate the digital voice recorder at the beginning of each translation class and remained on site to observe and take field notes for relevant supplementary information.

Throughout this academic year, a total of 27 excerpts were collected of repair to problems of pragmatic competence in Chinese-Thai interpreting made by the Chinese undergraduate students, 26 of which were for pragmalinguistic problems, and 1 for a sociopragmatic problem.

Data Analysis

All the 64 hours of classroom interaction were audio recorded, and all interactions in the form of repair, which is used to deal with students' problems of pragmatic competence in Chinese-Thai interpreting were transcribed (Appendix) and analyzed. Transcribed excerpts were titled according to the interpreting practices, and the students' problems of pragmatic competence in interpreting were underlined. Each excerpt transcription was processed in three steps: first, with pronunciation marked below each word (using Chinese Pinyin for Chinese, and IPA for Thai); second, under the line of pronunciation, the English meaning translation of each morpheme; and third, the full English translation in italics.

The transcribed excerpts were analyzed one by one. Units of analysis were: (1) the Chinese undergraduate students' problems of pragmatic competence in interpreting at both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic levels; and (2) the Chinese undergraduate students' insufficient knowledge of differences of language and culture between Chinese and Thai.

Verification

The reliability of the method and validity of the findings are important in a study (Seedhouse, 2004). To ensure reliability, this study used repair as a research method. It is rooted in Conversation Analysis (CA), which can describe in detail spontaneous conversations through emic perspective (Seedhouse, 2004, p. 228). The strengths of this empirical approach are: (1) it can ensure that inference does not deviate from data; (2) it can generalize research results for other studies in similar contexts; and (3) it can help readers check the

accuracy of data analysis through transcribed authentic data (Atar & Seedhouse, 2018, p. 153). To ensure validity, the researcher undertook repeated transcript verification and findings analysis. She then submitted the findings to three experts to scrutinize their accuracy, reliability, and representativeness. Seedhouse (2004, p. 87) recommends that 5 to 10 lessons worth of data from a class is reasonable for L2 language classroom studies. This research's recording meets this standard to ensure the validity of the findings.

Results

This section sets out three types of problems that Chinese undergraduate students encountered during interpreting practice, namely, choosing Thai words (excerpt 1), Thai sentence expressions (excerpt 2), and bridging cultural gaps (excerpt 3) in order to answer the research question.

Chinese Undergraduate Students' Problems with Choosing Thai Words

Excerpt 1 shows that when translating the verb 降临 /jiànglín/ (arrive), after T₁ provides the answer in line 1, several students initiate a repair by using the strategy "request explanation" (Liebscher & Dailey-O'Cain, 2003) "为什么这里可以用 มาถึง (Why can say /mā: tʰɯŋ˥/ here?)" in line 2, indicating they are confused about the word มาถึง /mā: tʰɯŋ˥/ (arrive). T₁ recognizes this misunderstanding and then supplies an explanation by comparing different context "เราไม่พูดว่าลมพายุมาถึง... ก็ยังธรรมชาติที่จะมาถึงได้ (We cannot say monsoon /mā: tʰɯŋ˥/... you can say natural disasters /mā: tʰɯŋ˥/.)" in lines 3–6 to complete the repair.

Appendix Transcription conventions and abbreviations¹

(.)	duration of a pause	S	Chinese undergraduate student
(min.)	duration of omitted monologue	X	Chinese undergraduate student whose name cannot be identified
。 .	noticeably quieter speech	clf	classifier
> <	noticeably faster speech	em	emphasis marker
-	abrupt cutoff	fp	final particle
→	focus for analysis	ic	indicating certainty
(())	non-verbal activity or transcriptionist comment	ih	indicating something has happened
(--)	unclear utterance	mm	modifier marker
:	lengthening of a sound	mw	modal word
01	line number of utterance	qm	question marker
T	teacher		

1. Adapted from Jefferson (2004, pp.13–31)

Excerpt 1 4 月 3 日, 北部、东北部 中部、
 /Sì yuè sān rì běibù dōngběibù zhōngbù
 东 部 各 府 都 需 要
 dōngbù gè fù dōu xūyào/
 April three day northern northeastern
 central eastern every province all need
 特别 注意, 并 防 范 自然 灾害
 /tèbié zhùyì bìng fángfàn zírán zāihài
 降临。
 jiànglín/
 special attention and prevent natural
 disaster arrive
*On April 3, the northern, northeastern,
 central, and eastern provinces need
 special attention to the natural disasters
 are arriving.*

01 T₁ ภัย ธรรมชาติ ที่ จะ มา ถึง
 /pʰaj tʰām.má.teʰā:t tʰī: teà mā: tʰūŋ/
 disaster nature mm will arrive
Natural disasters are arriving.

→ 02 X_{several} 为 什 么 这 里 可 以 用 มา ถึง
 /Wèishénme zhělǐ kěyǐ yòng/ /mā: tʰūŋ/
 why here can use arrive
Why can say /mā: tʰūŋ/ (arrive) here?

03 T₁ (0.01min.) ตรงนี้ ก็ ต้อง- ถ้า อยู่ ใน- บอก ว่า
 ลม พายุ มา ถึง > เรายัง ผุด
 /trōŋ.ní: kō: kʰū: tʰā: jù: nāj bò:k wâ:
 lōm.pʰā:jú mā: tʰūŋ rāw māj pʰū:t/
 here also is if at in say that monsoon
 arrive we not say
 ว่า ลม พายุ มา ถึง < (.) เรายัง ใช้ ไม่ ได้ ที่ ไม่ ถึง แต่ ถ้า

/wâ: lōm.pʰā:jú mā: tʰūŋ rāw māj teʰāj
 //dāpèi/ /wâ: lōm.pʰā:jú mā: tʰūŋ tē tʰā:/
 that monsoon arrive we not use matching
 that monsoon arrive but if

05 ตรง นี้ ถ้า บอก ว่า 自然 灾害 ตรงนี้ 自然 灾害
 นะ ควร ภัย
 /trōŋ.ní: tʰā: bò:k wâ://zirán zāihài/ /
 trōŋ.ní://zirán zāihài/ /ná kʰráp pʰāj/
 here if say that nature disaster here
 nature disaster em fp disaster

06 ธรรมชาติ ที่ จะ มา ถึง ได้
 /tʰām.má.teʰā:t tʰī: teà mā: tʰūŋ dâ:j/
 nature mm will arrive can
*This time is meant to be used for coming
 natural disasters. If using for monsoon,
 you should not say /mā: tʰūŋ/ (arrive),
 but if for natural disasters you can say
 natural disaster /mā: tʰūŋ/ (arrive).*

Also, other students' problems with choosing Thai words in terms of verb, noun, and classifier are also addressed. (1) Verb. For the sentence 妈妈要去遣金山寺的和尚到家里来念经。/Māma yào qù qǐng Jīnshān sì de héshàng dào jiālǐ lái niànjīng/ (Mom is going to invite the monk from Jinshan Temple to come home to chant sutras.), a student's use of เจริญ /teʰrɔ:n/ (invite) to translate the verb 请 /qǐng/ (invite) is incorrect and instead นิมนต์ /ní.mōn/ (invite) is correct; (2) Noun. For the sentence 嘟嘟可是我的宝贝呢。/Dūdū kěshì wǒ de bǎobèi ne/ (Dudu is my dearly beloved pet.), a student's use of แก้วตากวงใจ /kē:w.tā:.dū:an.teāj/ (beloved) to translate the noun 宝贝 /bǎobèi/ (beloved) is incorrect and instead ลูกที่รัก /sùt.tʰî:.râk/ (beloved) is correct; (3) Classifier. For the phrase 7 栋楼 /qī dòng lóu/ (seven buildings), a student's use of ตึก /tūk/ to translate the classifier 栋 /dòng/ is incorrect and instead หลัง /lāŋ/ is correct.

The above findings reveal that unequal word meaning between Chinese and Thai is a challenge for Chinese undergraduate students in conducting interpreting practice. In particular, uncommon words in daily life such as the verb นิมนต์ /ní.mōn/ (invite), which is usually used in the context of inviting a monk, are even more difficult for students.

Chinese Undergraduate Students' Problems with Thai Sentence Expressions

Excerpt 2 shows that after S₂'s interpretation in line 5, T₁ uses the strategy "provide an explanation of why the answer is incorrect without explicitly stating that it is incorrect" (Seedhouse, 2004, p. 165). T₁ explains "泰语和汉语概念是相反的, 汉语的话.....大的先说, 小的后说.....所以应该什么先说? (Concepts in Thai and Chinese are opposite. In Chinese,..... you should give the main idea first then the small one... So, what should you say first?)" in lines 6–8, indicating that S₂'s interpreting does not conform to Thai expression convention with respect to the position of modifiers. Several students recognize this error and correct it with an unclear utterance in line 9. Then, T₁ repeats the word เช้า /teʰā:w/ (morning) with an elongated pronunciation in line 10, seeking the students' clarification. Finally, several students change the modifier ทุกวัน /tʰúk.wān/ (everyday) after the word เช้า /teʰā:w/ (morning) by supplying เช้าทุกวัน /teʰā:w tʰúk.wān/ (every morning) in line 11, which is confirmed by T₁ with an affirmative 啊 /a/ in line 12.

Excerpt 2 宋诗 每天 早上 施斋
 /Sòngshī měitiān zǎoshàng shīzhāi
 给 9 位 僧人。
 gěi jiǔ wèi sēngrén/

		Song Shi everyday morning give food to nine elf monk <i>Song Shi gives food to 9 monks every morning.</i>
05	S ₂	ຖຸກ ວັນ ເຫັນ /tʰúk.wān teá:w/ everyday morning <i>Every morning.</i>
→06	T ₁	ເອົາ ຕາຍຸ ໄກສະ ພົມ ສີ ພົມ /ā:/ /Tàiyǔ hé Hànyǔ gàiniàn shì xiāngfǎn de Hànyǔ de huà shénme/ uh Thai and Chinese concept is opposite ic Chinese in case of what
07		时间 啊 地址 啊 大的 先 说 (.) 小的 后 说 (0.2 min.) 所以 /shíjiān a dízhǐ a dà de xiān shuō xiǎo de hòu shuō Suōyǐ/ time mw address mw big mm first say small mm after say so
08		应该是- 什么 先 说 (0.3 min.) /yīnggāi shi shénme xiān shuō/ should be what first say <i>Eh. Concepts in Thai and Chinese are opposite. In Chinese, when expressing concepts such as time or address, you should give the main idea first then the small one. (0.2 min.) So, what should you say first? (0.3 min.)</i>
09	X _{several}	(ເຫັນ--) /teá:w/ morining <i>Morning.</i>
10	T ₁	ເຫັນ: /teá:w/ morining <i>Morning.</i>
11	X _{several}	ເຫັນ ຖຸກ ວັນ /teá:w tʰúk.wān/ morning everyday <i>Every morning.</i>
12	T	ເຫັນ ວັນ ເຫັນ ຖຸກ ວັນ 啊 /teá:w tʰúk.wān teá:w tʰúk.wān/ /a/ morning everyday morning everyday mw <i>Every morning. Ok.</i>

Besides that, other students' problems with Thai sentence expressions in terms of modifier position, fixed sentence structure are also addressed. (1) Modifier position. For the sentence 我们昨天在文学院专心地听黄老师讲课。/Wǒmen zuótān zài wénxuéyuàn zuānxīn de tīng kǎoke. /Wǒmen zuótān zài wénxuéyuàn zuānxīn de tīng kǎoke.

Huáng Lǎoshī jiǎngkè/ (We listened attentively to Teacher Huang's lecture at the Faculty of Arts yesterday.), in which 在文学院专心地听黃老师讲课 /zài wénxué yuàn zhuānxīn de tīng Huáng Lǎoshī jiǎngkè/ (listened attentively to Teacher Huang's lecture at the Faculty of Arts) contains two adverbial modifiers, i.e. 在文学院 / zài wénxuéyùàn/ (at the Faculty of Arts)- an adverbial modifier expressing place- and 专心地 /zhuānxīn de/ (attentively)- an adverbial modifier expressing manner. A translation that meets the Thai convention should be ฟังคำบรรยายของอาจารย์หงว่ที่คณะอักษรศาสตร์อย่างตั้งใจ /fāng kʰām.bān.jā:j kʰās:.ŋā:.teā:n hǔ:aj tʰī: kʰá.ná.á.k.ś: n.sā:t jā:ŋ tāŋ.teāj/. However, a student's use of place adverbial อยู่ที่คณะอักษรศาสตร์ /jù: tʰī: kʰá.ná.á.k.ś: n.sā:t/ (at the Faculty of Arts) at the beginning of the sentence, i.e. อยู่ที่คณะอักษรศาสตร์ฟังคำบรรยายของอาจารย์หงว่ หงว่อย่างตั้งใจ /jù: tʰī: kʰá.ná.á.k.ś: n.sā:t fāng kʰām.bān.jā:j kʰās:.ŋā:.teā:n hǔ:aj jā:ŋ tāŋ.teāj/ is not perfect; (2) Fixed sentence structure. For the sentence 哪里都没有家那么好。/ Nǎlǐ dōu méi yǒu jiā nàme hǎo/ (Nowhere is as good as home.), a student's interpretation ที่ไหนก็ต้องบ้านไม่ได้ /tʰī:.nāj kōi: dī: sū: káp bā:n māj dā:j/ is not consistent with the fixed sentence structure in Thai ที่ไม่...เท่า /kōi:.māj...tʰāw/. So, the version ที่ไหนก็ไม่ได้เท่าที่บ้าน /tʰī:.nāj kōi: māj dī: tʰāw tʰī: bā:n/ is appropriate.

The above findings reveal that the different positions of modifiers in Chinese and Thai poses challenges for Chinese undergraduate students in conducting interpreting practice. That is, for subjects or objects, Thai modifiers should be put after them, while in Chinese it is the opposite. For verbs, Thai puts adverbial modifiers expressing place at the end of sentences but before adverbial modifiers expressing manner. However, in Chinese, both adverbial modifiers expressing place and adverbial modifiers expressing manner should be put before verbs (Huang & Liao, 2002, p. 94). The position of Chinese modifiers is opposite to Thai due to Chinese inductive way of thinking (Shen, 2021, p. 302; Zhang, 2014). That is, the emergence of theme is on the premise of sufficient background explanation. So, in a Chinese sentence, the secondary, additional content should be put before the main part (Zhang, 2014, p. 15).

Chinese Undergraduate Students' Problems with Bridging Culture Gaps

Excerpt 3 shows that although S₁₇ presents a complete translation in line 1, confirmed by T₁ with a positive response ຖຸກຕ້ອງ /tʰù:k.tɔ̄:ŋ/ (correct) in line 2, T₁ detects S₁₇'s lack of awareness of the need to bridge the culture gap. Then, applying the strategy “use a next-turn repair initiator to indicate there is an error” (Seedhouse, 2004, p.165),

T₁ asks “ภาษาไทยมีไหมอ่ะ (Is there such an expression in Thai?)” in line 2, indicating that the interpretation is not yet perfect. After several students respond “ไม่มี (There isn't.)” in line 3, T₁ continues with the explanation to complete the repair in lines 5–9 by pointing out that the literal translation for idioms is not sufficient since there is no such content in Thai culture. Therefore, culture bridging by explaining the idioms should be considered.

Excerpt 3 走马观花

/zǒu mǎ guān huā/
walk horse look flower
Riding a horse too quickly to look at the garden. (Gain a shallow understanding from a fleeting glance.)

01 S₁₇ ชี ม้า ชม สวน

/kʰì: má: tēōm sǔ:an/
ride horse look garden
Riding a horse too quickly to look at the garden.

→02 T₁ (0.2 min.) ถูก ต้อง ครบ >ชี ม้า ชม สวน< .(.)
ภาษา ไทย มี ไหม อ่ะ

/tʰù:k.tō:ŋ kʰráp kʰì: má: tēōm sǔ:an pʰā:sā:.tʰāj mī: māj à/
correct fp ride horse look garden
Thai have qm mw

(0.2 min.) *Correct. Riding a horse too quickly to look at the garden. Is there an expression in the Thai language?*

03 X_{several} ไม่มี

/māj mī:/
not have
There isn't.

04 T₁ ภาษา ไทย เรา ไม่ ค่อย มี (0.3 min.) ถ้า คุณ
บอก ว่า > คุณ ชอบ ชี ม้า

/pʰā:sā:.tʰāj rāw māj.kʰō:j mī: tʰā: kʰūn bō:k wā: kʰūn tē:hō:p kʰì: má: /
Thai we seldom have if you tell that you like ride horse

05 ชม สวน คน ไทย ไม่ เข้า ใจ เพรา สำนวน นี้ ไม่ ได้
เป็น สำนวน

/tēōm sǔ:an kʰōn tʰāj māj kʰāw.tēāj pʰrō
sām.nū:an ní: māj dā:j pēn sām.nū:an/
look garden people Thai not understand
because idiom this not can is idiom

06 ไทย < (.) แต่ เรา สามารถ ใช้ คำ ไทย ไป แปล
สำนวน จีน ได้ ตรง

/tʰāj < tè: rāw sā:.mā:t tē:hāj kʰām tʰāj pāj
plē: sām.nū:an tēī:n dā:j trōŋ/
Thai but we able to use word Thai to
translate idiom Chinese can direct

07

พอดี(.) 但是 它有一个 内涵 (0.4 min.) 你不能光翻译说

/pʰɔ:.dī:/ /Dànsì tā yǒu yī gè nèihán Nǐ
bù néng guāng fānyì shuō/
just enough but it has a clf connotation
you not can only translate say

08

ชี ม้า ชม สวน (.) 你去讲给其他的泰语老师他不懂(.)

09

/kʰì: má: tēōm sǔ:an/ /Nǐ qù jiǎng gěi
qítā de Tàiyǔ láoshī tā bù dǒng/
ride horse look garden you go tell
give other mm Thai teacher he not
understand

你要解释啊

/Nǐ yào jiěshì a/
you should explain mw

In the Thai language, we have few idioms like this. (0.3 min.) If you say it like /kʰì: má: tēōm sǔ:an/ (riding a horse too quickly to look at the garden), Thais would not understand. That's because this idiom does not exist in Thai. In Thai, we are able to use a Thai word to translate the idiom directly into Chinese, but it has a connotation (0.4 min.). You cannot only translate /kʰì: má: tēōm sǔ:an/. So, if you go say that to your Thai teachers, they won't understand. Ultimately, you need to provide explanations.

The above finding reveals that explaining the connotation of Chinese idioms that do not exist in Thai is a challenge for Chinese undergraduate students in conducting interpreting practice.

To sum up, in conducting interpreting practice from Chinese to Thai, the Chinese students' problems with choosing correct Thai words (excerpt 1), and Thai sentence expressions (excerpt 2) reveal their problems of pragmatic competence in interpreting at a pragmalinguistic level, and their problems of bridging cultural differences (excerpt 3) reveal their problems of pragmatic competence in interpreting at a sociopragmatic level.

Discussion

This section first discusses Chinese undergraduate students' problems of pragmatic competence in interpreting by relating to similar previous studies. Then it discusses interactions in repair can be used as

a means for developing Chinese undergraduate students' pragmatic competence in interpreting in the translation classroom.

Chinese Undergraduate Students' Problems of Pragmatic Competence in Interpreting and Language Training

The Chinese undergraduate students encountered problems using Thai at both the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic levels in this research. This is similar to previous studies of Chinese undergraduate students' problems of pragmatic competence in interpreting in the context of teaching and learning English as a foreign language, which found that students encountered problems rendering vocabulary and sentences (Bao & Qian, 2013; Li, 2010; Lu, 2019), and explaining culturally-loaded expressions such as idioms (Lu, 2019, p. 41). These problems are evident when students only focus on literal equivalence, arrange word order according to Chinese sentence structure, and lack of cross-cultural awareness to explain the connotation of expressions that do not exist in another culture.

The problems of pragmatic competence the Chinese undergraduate students exhibit in interpreting demonstrate that their knowledge of the differences of language and culture between Chinese and Thai is insufficient, and that methodologies used in teaching Thai as a foreign language lack efforts to cultivate pragmatic competence in interpreting. The reasons for this may be similar to those concerning the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language such as when the curricula do not highlight courses related to pragmatics, teaching materials do not include content on pragmatics theories and corresponding interpreting examples and exercises, and students do not get interpreting practice that is as close as possible to real-life interpreting (Lu, 2019). In view of this, priority should be given to language training aimed at developing Chinese undergraduate students' pragmatic competence in interpreting involving linguistic knowledge and cross-cultural awareness as its two main aspects (Bao & Qian, 2013; Cui, 2019; Li, 2010; Lu, 2019). This is to some extent a response to the view that language training for interpreters should go beyond grammatical limitations to consider language competence in terms of social, cultural and communication contextual aspects (Al-Qinai, 2010, p. 132; Pöchhacker, 2004, p. 186).

Repair and the Development of Pragmatic Competence in Interpreting

Chinese undergraduate students' problems of pragmatic competence in interpreting are addressed by

repair. On the one hand, this supports previous research (Crezee & Grant, 2016; Sachtleben & Denny, 2011) which found that pragmatic competence in interpreting can be taught in translation classes through practice and instruction. On the other hand, repair is a form of interaction, and this research also reflects the fact that interaction can be used as a means for teaching pragmatic competence in interpreting in the translation classroom.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This research applied repair to identify and address the Chinese undergraduate students' problems of pragmatic competence in Chinese-Thai interpreting. In this regard, more attention should be paid to language training for these students.

This study utilized repair to examine problem pragmatic competence in interpreting encountered by Chinese undergraduate students. Other methods of investigating similar problems are also worth exploring.

In addition, this research only reveals that repair or interaction can be used as a means for teaching pragmatic competence in interpreting, but it does not examine the impact of such use on learning outcomes such as students' academic performance and real-life interpreting performance. Therefore, further studies are needed.

This research has implications for training Chinese undergraduate students' pragmatic competence in interpreting and for teaching Thai as a foreign language. For example, in practice, it is necessary to incorporate pragmatic competence in interpreting into the development of curricula, syllabi, assessment systems, and teaching materials.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgments

My sincere thanks go to the research institute of a research-based multiversity Thai university for their assistance in data collection.

References

Al-Qinai, J. (2010). Training tools for translators and interpreters. *Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics*, 14(2), 121–139. <https://platform.almanhal.com/Reader/2/8283>

Atar, C., & Seedhouse, P. (2018). A conversation-analytic perspective on the organization of teacher-led clarification and its implications for L2 teacher training. *International Journal of Instruction*, 11(2), 145–166. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1174911>

Bao, X. Y., & Qian, M. D. (2013). 学生口译语用能力培养模式构建 [The construction of a training model for the students' pragmatic competence in interpreting]. *Foreign Language World*, 1, 88–94. [in Chinese]

Crezee, I., & Grant, L. (2016). Thrown in the deep end: Challenges of interpreting paramedic language. *Translation and Interpreting*, 8(2), 1–12. <https://search.informit.org/doi/epdf/10.3316/informit.510243729160145>

Cui, J. J. (2019). 西安外国语大学 MI 口译学生英语语用能力调查报告 [A survey report on English pragmatic competence of MI students in Xi'an International Studies University] [Unpublished master's thesis]. Xi'an International Studies University. [in Chinese]

Estrada, R. D., Reynolds, J. F., & Hilfinger-Messias, D. K. (2015). A conversation analysis of verbal interactions and social processes in interpreter-mediated primary care encounters. *Research in Nursing and Health*, 38(4), 278–288. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/nur.21660>

Garcia, P. (2004). Pragmatic comprehension of high- and low- level language learners. *TESL-EJ*, 8(2), 1–15. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1068107.pdf>

Gavioli, L., & Maxwell, N. (2009). Interpreter intervention in mediated business talk. In H. Bowles, & P. Seedhouse (Eds.), *Conversation analysis and language for specific purposes* (2nd ed., pp. 141–182). Peter Lang.

Guan, S. J. (1995). 跨文化交流学——提高涉外交流能力的学问 [Intercultural communication—the study of improving communicative competence concerning foreign affairs]. Peking University Press. [in Chinese]

Hale, S. B. (2014). Interpreting culture. Dealing with cross-cultural issues in court interpreting. *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology*, 22(3), 321–331. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/0907676X.2013.827226?needAccess=true>

Hall, J. K. (2007). Redressing the roles of correction and repair in research on second and foreign language learning. *The Modern Language Journal*, 91(4), 511–526. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2007.00619.x>

He, L. P. (2017). 泰语口译语用素养问题及应对策略 [Interpreter literary skills in Chinese-Thai interpreting and measures for improvement]. *Course Education Research*, 14, 125. [in Chinese]

Huang, B. R., & Liao, X. D. (2002). 现代汉语 [Modern Chinese]. Higher Education Press. [in Chinese]

Jefferson, G. (2004). Glossary of transcript symbols with an introduction. In G. H. Lerner (Ed.), *Conversation analysis: Studies from the first generation* (pp. 13–31). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Labyai, R. (2021). ความสนใจด้านความเข้าใจภาษาไทยของนักศึกษาจีนในโครงการแลกเปลี่ยน ภาคภาษาไทย มหาวิทยาลัยรังสิต: การสื่อสารต่างวัฒนธรรม [Thai language understanding ability of Chinese exchange students, Thai Department, Rangsit University: Intercultural communication]. *Journal of Liberal Arts, Rangsit University*, 17(1), 21–34. <https://rsujournals.rsu.ac.th/index.php/jla/article/view/2659/2101> [in Thai]

Lai, Y. T. (2018). *Repairs in the interaction between teacher and student of one-to-one Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language class*. https://repository.upf.edu/bitstream/handle/10230/35649/Lai_2018.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Leech, G. (1983). *Principles of pragmatics*. Longman.

Li, A. (2010). 文化视角下看口译中的语用失误 [A survey of pragmatic failure in interpretation from a cultural perspective] [Unpublished master's thesis]. Shanghai International Studies University. [in Chinese]

Li, H. X. (2015). 以就业市场需求为导向的独立学院泰语口译课程教学新模式-以广西大学行健文理学院英语专业英泰双语特色班为例 [A new model of teaching and learning a Thai interpreting course from an independent college oriented to the needs of the job market-taking the English and Thai bilingual classes of Guangxi University Xingjian College of Science and Liberal Arts as an example]. *Journal of Suzhou Education Institute*, 18(1), 99–100. [in Chinese]

Liebscher, G., & Dailey-O'Cain, J. (2003). Conversational repair as a role-defining mechanism in classroom interaction. *The Modern Language Journal*, 87(3), 375–390. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1540-4781.00196>

Long, M. H. (1996). The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. In W. C. Ritchie, & T. K. Bhatia (Eds.), *Handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 413–468). Academic Press.

Lu, L. (2019). Pragmatic failure in interpretation and the development of students' pragmatic competence in interpreting. *English Language Teaching*, 12(3), 37–45. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1203607.pdf>

Mason, I. (1999). Introduction. In I. Mason (Ed.), *The translator*, 5(2). *Special issue on dialogue interpreting* (pp. 147–161). St Jerome Publishing.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand. (2014). การดำเนินการของกระทรวงการต่างประเทศที่ต้องดึงด้วยกับ “นโยบายรัฐบาล นโยบายด้านการต่างประเทศเป็นส่วนประกอบสำคัญของนโยบายองค์รวมทั้งหมด ในการบริหารราชการแผ่นดิน” [The implementation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs corresponds to the “government policy, the overseas policy is an integral part of the holistic public administration of the state affairs”]. Retrieved April 13, 2017 from <http://www.mfa.go.th/main/th/policy> [in Thai]

Mozaffari, F., & Allami, H. (2017). Organization pattern of English language teachers' repair practice. *Iranian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 20(1), 151–148. <https://ijal.knu.ac.ir/article-1-2767-.pdf>

National Development and Reform Commission, PRC. (2015). *Vision and actions on jointly building silk road economic belt and 21st-century maritime silk road*. Retrieved March 25, 2017 from http://www.sdpc.gov.cn/gzdt/201503/t20150330_669392.html

Pöchhacker, F. (2004). *Introducing interpreting studies*. Routledge.

Poonlarp, T. (2016). ความต้องการล่ามในตลาดแรงงานไทย: การศึกษาประการรับสัมภาระออนไลน์ [Investigating the needs for interpreters in the Thai labor market through online job advertisements]. *Journal of Letters*, 45(2), 263–303. <https://digital.car.chula.ac.th/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1078&context=jletters> [in Thai]

Ren, S. (2018). 'Repair' in Chinese and American ELT classrooms: A conversation analysis perspective. *ARECLS*, 15, 29–63.

Sachtleben, A., & Denny, H. (2011). The teaching of pragmatics as interpreter training. *International Journal of Interpreter Education*, 3, 4–15. <https://open.clemson.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1156&context=ijie>

Seedhouse, P. (2004). The interactional architecture of the language classroom: A conversation analysis perspective. Cambridge University Press.

Shen, X. L. (2021). 汉语与中国文化 [Chinese and Chinese culture]. Fudan University Press. [in Chinese]

Thomas, J. (1983). Cross-cultural pragmatic failure. *Applied Linguistics*, 4(2), 91–112. <https://academic.oup.com/applj/article-abstract/4/2/91/167524?redirectedFrom=fulltext>

Zhang, M. (2014). 中泰文化差异在对泰语教学中的正负迁移作用 [The positive and negative migration effect of Chinese-Thai cultural differences in teaching Chinese to Thai students] [Unpublished master's thesis]. Xi'an International Studies University. [in Chinese]