

Enhancing Thai Language Teaching for Chinese Students in Thailand through a Buddhist-Based and Culturally Responsive Pedagogical Framework

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Abstract

The increasing number of Chinese students enrolling in Thai higher education institutions has drawn attention to the importance of Thai language learning for academic engagement, daily communication, and social adaptation. Thai language teaching for Chinese students involves challenges related to linguistic differences, learning anxiety, and cultural adjustment. This article aims to examine Thai language teaching for Chinese students in Thailand by exploring the integration of culturally responsive pedagogy and Buddhist-based education. The study employs qualitative documentary research and conceptual analysis of relevant literature on second language learning, Chinese students' learning characteristics, intercultural education, and Buddhist educational principles. The findings suggest that a Buddhist-based pedagogical approach may help support Thai language learning by reducing anxiety, enhancing learner motivation, and promoting meaningful language use. The article also discusses pedagogical implications for Thai higher education institutions and offers a conceptual framework for developing inclusive Thai language teaching practices.

Keywords: Thai language teaching, Chinese students, Buddhist-based education, culturally responsive pedagogy, higher education

1. Introduction

In recent years, internationalization has become an important direction for higher education institutions in Asia. Thailand has increasingly attracted Chinese students due to its geographical proximity, relatively affordable education costs, and long-standing cultural relations with China. For Chinese students studying in Thailand, learning the Thai language plays an important role not only in academic contexts but also in daily life and social interaction.

However, Thai language learning for Chinese students presents several challenges. Differences between Thai and Chinese linguistic systems, particularly tonal pronunciation and pragmatic language use, may cause learning difficulties. In addition, many Chinese students are familiar with structured and teacher-centered learning environments, which may differ from communicative and learner-centered approaches commonly used in Thai higher education.

Given Thailand's cultural background, Buddhist-based education may offer useful pedagogical perspectives for Thai language teaching. Buddhist education emphasizes holistic learning, ethical development, mindfulness, and experiential learning. These principles appear to align with contemporary approaches to language education that focus on learner well-being and meaningful communication. Therefore, this article aims to examine Thai language teaching for Chinese students in Thailand by proposing a Buddhist-based and culturally responsive pedagogical framework suitable for higher education contexts.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Thai Language Teaching for International Students

Thai language teaching for international students has gained increasing attention as Thailand expands its role in regional education. Previous studies suggest that Thai language instruction should focus not only on grammatical knowledge but also on communicative competence and cultural understanding (Wongsothorn, 2016). For Chinese learners, tonal pronunciation and pragmatic usage are often identified as key learning challenges (Sukamolson, 2018).

According to Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis, language acquisition may occur when learners are exposed to comprehensible input that is slightly above their current proficiency level. In Thai language classrooms, providing meaningful and accessible input through authentic communication may therefore support language development. However, limited opportunities to use Thai outside the classroom may restrict learners' progress. Biggs and Tang (2011) also emphasize the importance of aligning learning outcomes, teaching activities, and assessment. In the context of Thai language teaching, such alignment may help ensure that instructional practices respond to learners' communicative needs.

2.2 Learning Characteristics of Chinese Students

Research on Chinese students' learning characteristics often highlights the influence of Confucian educational traditions, which emphasize respect for teachers, discipline, and effort (Hofstede, 2011). These characteristics may support academic persistence but may also affect learners' willingness to participate actively in classroom interaction.

Liu and Littlewood (1997) suggest that Chinese learners may experience anxiety when required to speak spontaneously in class. This anxiety may influence oral language development and classroom participation, particularly in second language learning contexts. In Thai language classrooms, such anxiety may further affect learners' confidence in pronunciation and communication.

Culturally responsive pedagogy emphasizes the importance of recognizing learners' cultural backgrounds and adapting teaching strategies accordingly (Gay, 2018). For Chinese students, gradual scaffolding, clear instruction, and supportive feedback may help encourage participation and confidence in language learning.

2.3 Buddhist-Based Education and Language Learning

Buddhist-based education has played a significant role in Thai educational philosophy. According to Payutto (2000), Buddhist education aims to support holistic development through the integration of wisdom, ethical conduct, and mental development. This approach may contribute to creating supportive learning environments that consider both cognitive and emotional aspects of learning.

Mindfulness, a key concept in Buddhist education, has been applied in educational contexts to support attention and emotional regulation (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). In language learning, mindfulness-based practices may help learners reduce anxiety and improve concentration (Oxford, 2016).

In addition, experiential learning emphasized in Buddhist education is consistent with Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, which highlights learning through experience and reflection. Integrating experiential activities into Thai language teaching may allow learners to connect classroom learning with real-life communication.

Table 1

Synthesis of Literature Related to Thai Language Teaching for Chinese Students

Author(s)	Focus Area	Key Points	Implications for This Study
Krashen (1985)	Input Hypothesis	Comprehensible input supports acquisition	Importance of meaningful Thai language exposure
Biggs & Tang (2011)	Constructive alignment	Alignment enhances learning	Curriculum and assessment design
Liu & Littlewood (1997)	Learner anxiety	Cultural factors affect participation	Need for supportive learning environments
Gay (2018)	Culturally responsive pedagogy	Cultural awareness supports learning	Adaptation to Chinese learners
Payutto (2000)	Buddhist education	Holistic learning principles	Value-based language teaching
Oxford (2016)	Mindfulness in language learning	Mindfulness may reduce anxiety	Support for Buddhist-based approach

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative documentary research approach combined with conceptual analysis. Data were collected from academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles,

and relevant educational documents related to Thai language teaching, Chinese students' learning characteristics, culturally responsive pedagogy, and Buddhist-based education. The data were analyzed using thematic content analysis to identify key concepts and recurring themes. These themes were then synthesized to develop a conceptual framework for Thai language teaching for Chinese students in Thai higher education. As a documentary-based study, this research does not involve empirical data collection, and future studies may consider qualitative or mixed-method approaches to further explore the proposed framework.

4. Conceptual Framework

This study proposes a conceptual framework that integrates Thai language teaching, culturally responsive pedagogy, and Buddhist-based education. Buddhist principles may serve as a supportive foundation that enhances mindfulness, ethical awareness, and experiential learning, which in turn may support Thai language learning outcomes.

Table 2

Conceptual Framework for Buddhist-Based Thai Language Teaching

Component	Pedagogical Focus	Possible Learning Outcomes
Thai language instruction	Communicative and contextual learning	Improved language proficiency
Chinese learner characteristics	Scaffolding and confidence-building	Increased participation
Culturally responsive pedagogy	Cultural linkage and inclusivity	Enhanced cultural understanding
Buddhist-based education	Mindfulness and ethical learning	Reduced anxiety and holistic development

5. Discussion

The analysis of the literature suggests that Thai language teaching for Chinese students may benefit from integrating linguistic instruction with cultural and ethical learning. Mindfulness-based activities may help reduce learning anxiety and support concentration, particularly in pronunciation practice. Ethical communication emphasized in Buddhist education also appears to align with Thai cultural norms embedded in language use.

Experiential learning may further support language development by providing opportunities for authentic communication. When combined with culturally responsive pedagogy, a Buddhist-based approach may offer an inclusive framework that respects learners' cultural backgrounds while encouraging gradual participation and confidence-building. These findings correspond with the proposed conceptual framework, which positions Buddhist-based education as a supportive foundation for Thai language teaching.

6. Conclusion

Thai language teaching for Chinese students in Thailand may be more effective when approached as a holistic learning process that integrates linguistic skills, cultural understanding, and ethical awareness. A Buddhist-based and culturally responsive pedagogical framework may offer useful insights for addressing learning challenges faced by Chinese students. This article contributes conceptual perspectives for Thai language instructors and curriculum developers and supports the development of inclusive language teaching practices in Thai higher education.

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