

Thai Language Teaching for Chinese Students in Thailand: A Buddhist-Based and Culturally Responsive Pedagogical Approach

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Abstract

The increasing number of Chinese students enrolling in Thai higher education institutions has highlighted the importance of Thai language teaching as a key component of academic success and social integration. Thai language learning for Chinese students involves not only linguistic competence but also cultural and ethical understanding embedded in Thai society. This article aims to examine Thai language teaching for Chinese students in Thailand by integrating culturally responsive pedagogy with Buddhist-based education. The study employs qualitative documentary research and conceptual analysis of literature related to Thai language teaching, second language acquisition, intercultural education, and Buddhist educational principles. The findings suggest that a Buddhist-based approach - emphasizing mindfulness, ethical communication, and experiential learning - can enhance learners' motivation, reduce learning anxiety, and promote meaningful language use. The article proposes a pedagogical framework suitable for Thai higher education institutions and contributes practical implications for curriculum design and instructional practice at the master's degree level.

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

Introduction

International student mobility has become an important dimension of higher education development in Asia. Thailand has increasingly attracted Chinese students due to its geographical proximity, relatively affordable education costs, and long-standing cultural and diplomatic relations with China. For Chinese students studying in Thailand, Thai language proficiency is essential not only for academic engagement but also for daily communication, social interaction, and cultural adaptation.

Despite this importance, Thai language teaching for Chinese students remains challenging. Linguistic differences between Thai and Chinese, limited exposure to Thai language environments, and contrasting educational backgrounds often hinder students' learning progress. Many Chinese students are accustomed to teacher-centered instruction and examination-oriented learning, which may conflict with the communicative and student-centered approaches commonly adopted in Thai higher education.

Given Thailand's cultural context, Buddhist-based education offers a meaningful pedagogical foundation for addressing these challenges. Buddhist educational principles emphasize holistic learning, ethical development, mindfulness, and experiential practice, which

align well with contemporary approaches to language education. This article aims to analyze Thai language teaching for Chinese students in Thailand and propose a Buddhist-based and culturally responsive pedagogical approach appropriate for master’s degree-level academic discourse.

Literature Review

Thai Language Teaching for Chinese Students

Thai language teaching for non-native speakers has expanded alongside international education in Thailand. Studies indicate that Chinese learners commonly face difficulties in tonal pronunciation, sentence structure, and pragmatic language use (Koonpraneit, 2024). Effective Thai language instruction should therefore focus on communicative competence, contextual learning, and continuous language exposure in authentic situations (Krashen, 1985; Liu & Littlewood, 1997).

Learning Characteristics of Chinese Students

Research on Chinese learners highlights strong respect for teachers, preference for structured learning, and emphasis on accuracy and examinations. While these characteristics support discipline and persistence, they may limit spontaneous communication and classroom interaction (Liu & Littlewood, 1997). Language instructors must therefore design learning activities that gradually promote participation, confidence, and learner autonomy (Choomponla, 2024).

Buddhist-Based Education and Language Learning

Buddhist-based education in Thailand emphasizes the integration of knowledge, morality, and wisdom. Core principles such as mindfulness (*sati*), ethical conduct (*sīla*), and wisdom (*paññā*) support reflective learning and emotional balance (Pornsuttichaipong, 2024). In language education, these principles can reduce learners’ anxiety, enhance concentration, and promote respectful communication. (Buaphanngam, 2024).

Conceptual Framework of the Study

This study is grounded in an integrative conceptual framework that combines Thai language teaching, culturally responsive pedagogy, and Buddhist-based education. The framework illustrates how these components interact to support Chinese students’ linguistic development, cultural understanding, and holistic learning outcomes.

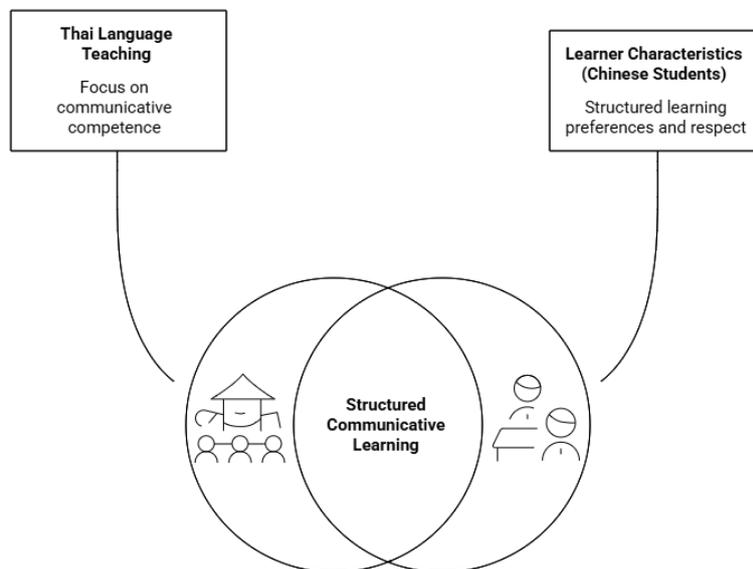


Fig.1 Conceptual Framework.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employs qualitative documentary research combined with conceptual analysis. This approach is appropriate for educational research at the master's degree level and aligns with the scope of TCI Group 3 journals, which emphasize theoretical synthesis and pedagogical analysis.

Data Sources

The data were collected from academic books, journal articles, policy documents, and previous studies related to:

1. Thai language teaching for foreign learners,
2. Chinese students' learning characteristics,
3. culturally responsive pedagogy, and
4. Buddhist-based education in Thailand.

Sources were selected based on relevance, academic credibility, and alignment with higher education contexts.

Buddhist-Based Thai Language Teaching Approach

Mindfulness-Based Language Learning

Mindfulness practices encourage learners to focus on listening, pronunciation, and tone awareness. For Chinese students, mindfulness helps reduce stress associated with tonal differences in Thai and improves concentration during language practice.

Ethical Communication and Cultural Awareness

Thai language use reflects cultural values such as politeness, respect, and social harmony. Buddhist-based education emphasizes ethical communication, enabling learners to understand appropriate language use in social and academic contexts. Integrating cultural narratives and Buddhist-inspired moral lessons into language instruction enhances pragmatic competence.

Experiential and Community-Based Learning

Experiential learning is a core principle of Buddhist education. Thai language teaching can incorporate field-based activities, cultural immersion, and community engagement to provide authentic language practice. These experiences support meaningful learning and strengthen cultural understanding.

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that integrating Buddhist-based education into Thai language teaching offers several pedagogical advantages for Chinese students. First, mindfulness-based learning supports emotional regulation and reduces language anxiety, which is a common issue among second language learners. Second, ethical and culturally grounded instruction enhances learners' understanding of Thai social norms and communication styles. Third, experiential learning bridges classroom instruction and real-life language use, promoting long-term retention and motivation.

From a culturally responsive perspective, this approach respects Chinese students' learning backgrounds while gradually introducing learner-centered practices. The proposed framework aligns with international education goals and supports holistic learner development. For Thai higher education institutions, adopting this approach can improve teaching effectiveness and enhance international students' educational experiences.

Conclusion

Thai language teaching for Chinese students in Thailand should be understood as a holistic educational process that integrates linguistic skills, cultural understanding, and ethical development. A Buddhist-based and culturally responsive pedagogical approach provides a meaningful framework for addressing linguistic and cultural challenges faced by Chinese learners. This article contributes theoretical and practical insights for Thai language instructors and curriculum developers at the master's degree level and supports the development of inclusive and effective international education in Thailand.

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