



Attitudes towards Instructive Language in Chinese Classes at a Public School in Pathum Thani

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Abstract

This study aimed to 1) find out the students' attitudes towards instructive language in Chinese classes at a public school in Pathum Thani and 2) to investigate the students' suggestions on the instructive language in Chinese classes at the public school in Pathum Thani. In this article, the author used a mixed-method research approach. The Yamane technique was employed to determine a sample size. The number of sampled students was not less than 299. Quantitative data were obtained through the questionnaires, and qualitative data were derived from semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, data collected through questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, mean, and standard deviation. Data collected from the interviews were analyzed using the coding system: coding, categorization, and concepts. The results revealed that "Teacher Summarizes the Lesson" displayed the highest mean ($\bar{x}=4.35$), followed by "Teacher Tells Students to Work in Pairs or Groups" ($\bar{x}=4.32$), "Teacher Corrects the Mistakes" ($\bar{x}=4.25$), Speaking ($\bar{x}=4.22$), Writing ($\bar{x}=4.18$), and Reading ($\bar{x}=4.16$). Most students wanted their teacher to use Thai as the medium ($\bar{x}=4.21/SD=0.969$), followed by Chinese as the medium ($\bar{x}=4.17/SD=0.928$), and English as the medium ($\bar{x}=4.03/SD=0.993$). The choice of instructive language for teachers of Chinese as a foreign language class should be based on the actual situation of the students.

Keywords: Attitude, Instructive Language, Chinese Classes

1. Introduction

The interest in learning Chinese language in Thailand has been increasing since China and Thailand established an official diplomatic relationship almost half a century ago. Teaching Chinese as a foreign language is categorized into two categories: teaching Chinese in an environment where Chinese is used, such as teaching Chinese as a second language in China, referred to as TCSL and teaching Chinese in a non-Chinese environment or teaching Chinese as a foreign language conducted abroad, referred to as TCFL. However, Chinese teaching in Thailand belongs to the latter. The language of instruction in Chinese classrooms in Thailand has always attracted the attention of scholars in language teaching. Han, Huang, Shi and Liu (2020) believe that the reasonable use of English and Thai in teaching Chinese in Thailand can enliven the classroom atmosphere and fully mobilize students' enthusiasm and attract their attention to a certain extent. A previous study by Li (2020) found that most Chinese teachers and students at the elementary Chinese teaching stage in middle schools preferred using Thai as the medium of instruction in the classroom. However, Guo (2019) believes that the medium of instruction has become one of the important factors restricting the further improvement of Chinese teaching in Thai schools.

This study was conducted in a public school in Pathum Thani Province, Thailand. In this targeted school, Chinese is taught by Thai and Chinese teachers, and they use different mediums of instruction. As a result, students encounter some problems when learning Chinese. Before this, there was no evidence to prove whether the students' positive or negative attitudes were associated with the instruction. No previous studies were conducted on public middle school students' suggestions for the medium of instruction for Chinese teaching. Therefore, the author addressed the research gap described above by conducting a study on attitudes towards instructive language in Chinese classes at this public school in Pathum Thani.

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Language is the communication medium that people need in daily life and, for each country, to spread its own culture (Zhang, 2018). As the name suggests, instructive language is a language used as a communication medium and a bridge for teachers and students to achieve the purpose of communication and teaching. (Peng, 2016).

Attitude is the most defined concept in social psychology, and different scholars have different definitions (Maio, Gregory, Geoffrey Haddock & Bas Verplanken, 2018). Attitude is closely related to inner feelings, emotions, and intentions (Amin, A, 2020). Emotion is a part of attitude. It is in harmony with introverted feelings and intentions. Emotion is complex and influenced by stable physiological evaluation and experience, sound physiological assessment, and expertise. Emotion includes two aspects: morality and value, which is specifically expressed in love, happiness, hatred, disgust, beauty, and so on (Hao, 2016). According to the Dictionary of Psychology, "Emotion is a person's attitude and experience of whether objective things meet their own needs."

In teaching Chinese as a foreign language, teachers' classroom language is an integral part of the teaching activities and plays a vital role in teaching (Chen, 2018). It manifests a teacher's teaching ability and a bond of communication between teachers and students in the teaching process, directly affecting the success or failure of teaching and students' learning outcomes. Therefore, classroom language used by Chinese teachers is responsible for the dual functions of teacher-student communication and completion of teaching tasks and significantly impacts teaching (Wu, 2010).

In this public school, Chinese is taught by Thai and Chinese teachers, and they use different mediums of instruction. Students encounter some problems when learning Chinese. For example, some teachers use English as the medium of instruction in teaching the Chinese Language, yet most students have limited English proficiency. This makes students feel tired of learning. The reason of using English as a medium may be due to the Chinese teachers' incompetence in Thai language and students' limited skills and knowledge of Chinese., This forced teachers to use a language that both students and teachers master (English) to assist in teaching the Chinese Language. English is, however, neither the mother tongue of the teachers nor the students. It is, therefore, not easy to use English as a medium of instruction. There is insufficient research on the attitudes towards instructive language in Chinese classes at the public school in Pathum Thani. This is why the author focused on students' attitudes and needs for media teaching.

2. Objectives

1. To find out the students' attitudes towards instructive language in Chinese classes at a public school in Pathum Thani.
2. To investigate the students' suggestions on the instructive language in Chinese classes at a public School in Pathum Thani.

3. Materials and Methods

In this article, method mixed method was employed. *Quantitative data were obtained through the questionnaires, and qualitative data were derived from semi-structured interviews.* Data on students' attitudes towards the medium of instruction were collected using a questionnaire while those on students' suggestions on the medium of instruction were collected through semi-structured interviews. The population was 1,188 students studying Chinese in the public school. Using Yamane's sampling technique, of the research was required to recruit a minimum of 299 samples. The research then recruited a total of 302 students to participate in the survey and 10 volunteer students to participate in the semi-structured interviews. Data obtained through the questionnaire survey were analyzed the using mean, SD, and one sample T-test. The results of the discussion were analyzed by content analysis and theme-coding in this section.

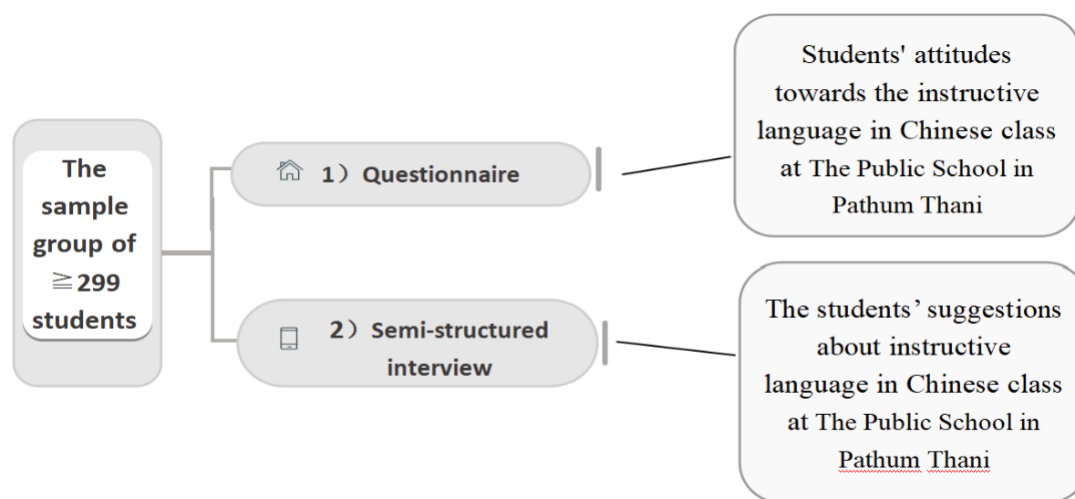


Figure 1 The conceptual framework

The research is a questionnaire-based cross-sectional study. Firstly, the questionnaire was distributed to the sample group. Secondly, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 volunteer students to learn their suggestions on the instructive language in the Chinese school classroom.

To support the reliability of this study the researchers used a unified questionnaire to collect quantitative data and a semi-structured interview to collect qualitative data. The reliability of the research tools was confirmed by three experts. The IOC ranges for the questionnaire and semi-structured interview were 0.835 and 0.911, respectively, indicating that both tools were acceptable in this study.

The research collected quantitative data using a questionnaire comprising three parts as follows:

Part A was aimed to collect the respondents' personal information (e.g. gender, grades, level of Chinese skills, etc.) and motivation for learning Chinese.

Part B contained 27 questions for which the respondents were requested to answer based on the 5-point Likert scale. This part was aimed to collect data on their attitudes and suggestions concerning the use of instructive language in teaching different skills including listening, speaking, reading, writing, and other teaching methods used by the teachers, e.g. warming up before the activity, explaining grammar points, correcting the mistakes, telling students to work in pairs or groups, summarizing the lesson, etc.

Part C comprised open-ended questions.

Qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews conducted after the questionnaire survey. Semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to learn students' suggestions on using the medium language used by teachers in Chinese classrooms.

4. Results and Discussion

To find out the students' attitudes towards instructive language in Chinese classes, this study used a set of questionnaires containing 27 questions. Data collected through the questionnaire were statically analyzed by SPSS software. Descriptive statistics used included mean, and S.D.

Data collected from the interviews were analyzed using a coding system: coding, categorizing, and concepts. The process of selecting a center or category, systematically linking to other categories, verifying these relationships, and filling in categories needed to be further refined and developed.

Different research analysis methods were used to interpret different types of data. Quantitative data were presented in mean and standard deviation values and ranked according to the level of significance. Meanwhile, qualitative data were analyzed for content, entering themes that emerge, and reporting themes.

**Table 1** The Preferred Instructive Language in Chinese Classroom

Items	The Strongest Theme	\bar{x}	S.D
Listening	Chinese	4.21	0.928
Speaking	Thai	4.22	0.981
Reading	Thai	4.16	0.981
Writing	Thai	4.18	0.965
Teacher Warms up before the Activity	Chinese	4.26	0.993
Teacher Explains Grammar Points	Chinese	4.25	0.969
Teacher Corrects the Mistakes	Thai	4.32	0.899
Teacher Tells Students to Work in Pairs or Groups	Thai	4.08	0.988
Teacher Summarizes the Lesson	Thai	4.35	0.906

According to Table 1, in terms of listening, the respondents preferred Chinese as the medium of instruction at a “very high” level, with a mean score of 4.21 (SD=0.928). Relatively, the lowest mean was displayed by English as the medium of instruction, with a mean score of 4.02 (SD = 1.023). This means that, in terms of listening, using Chinese as the medium of instruction was the most preferable.

In terms of speaking, students preferred Thai as the medium of instruction at a “very high” level, with a mean score of 4.22 (SD=0.981). Relatively, the lowest mean was displayed by English as the medium of instruction, with a mean score of 3.91 (SD=1.082). This means that, in terms of speaking, Thai as the medium of instruction was the most preferable.

When reading in Chinese, students prefer Thai as the medium of instruction at a “high” level, with a 4.16 mean score (SD=0.981). Relatively the lowest is that students prefer English as the medium of instruction, with a 3.91 mean score (SD=1.057). This means that in Chinese, In the reading part, teachers use Thai as the medium of instruction, which is more conducive to students' learning.

Also, in the Chinese writing section, students prefer Thai as the medium of instruction at a “high” level, with a 4.18 mean score (SD=0.965). Relatively the lowest is that students prefer English as the medium of instruction, with a 3.99 mean score (SD=1.064). This means that in Chinese, In the writing part, students prefer the teacher to use Thai as the medium of instruction.

On the one hand, in the Teacher Warms up before the Activity for teaching Chinese section, students prefer Chinese as the medium of instruction at a “very high” level, with a 4.26 mean score (SD=0.980). Relatively the lowest is that students prefer English as the medium of instruction, with a 4.05 mean score (SD=1.039). This means that in the Teacher Warms up before the Activity section; students prefer the Teacher to use Chinese as the medium of instruction.

For “Teacher explains grammar points”, Chinese and Thai were at a “very high” level, displayed by the same mean score (\bar{x} =4.25/SD=0.904). Relatively, the lowest mean was displayed by English as the medium of instruction (\bar{x} =4.08/ SD=0.998). This means that, Chinese and Thai were the most preferable mediums of instruction.

In addition, in Teacher Corrects the Mistakes for teaching Chinese, students prefer Thai as a medium at a “very high” level, with a 4.32 mean score (SD=0.899). Relatively the lowest is that students prefer English as a medium of instruction, with a 4.14 mean score (SD=1.026). This means that in this part, students expect teachers to use Thai as the medium of instruction.

At the same time, in the Teacher Tells Students to Work in Pairs or in Groups for teaching Chinese section, students prefer Thai as a medium of instruction at a “high” level, with a 4.08 mean score (SD=0.988). Relatively the lowest is that students prefer English as a medium of instruction, with a 3.92 mean score (SD=1.059). This means that in this part, students expect teachers to use Thai as the medium of instruction. Finally, the Teacher Summarizes the Lesson for teaching Chinese; students prefer Thai as a medium at a “very high” level, with a 4.35 mean score (SD=0.906). Relatively the lowest is that students prefer English as a medium of instruction, with a 4.21 mean score (SD=0.974). This means that In this part, students expect teachers to use Thai as the medium of instruction.



The results revealed that “Teacher Summarizes the Lesson” displayed the highest mean ($\bar{x}=4.35$), followed by “Teacher Tells Students to Work in Pairs or Groups” ($\bar{x}=4.32$), “Teacher Corrects the Mistakes” ($\bar{x}=4.25$), Speaking ($\bar{x}=4.22$), Writing ($\bar{x}=4.18$), and Reading ($\bar{x}=4.16$). The results from the six items reflected that most students preferred Thai as the medium of Chinese instruction. In conclusion, Thai displayed the highest mean ($\bar{x}=4.21$ / S.D.=0.969), followed by Chinese ($\bar{x}=4.17$ / S.D.=0.928), and English ($\bar{x}=4.03$ / S.D.=0.993), respectively.

Qualitative data were collected by conducting online interviews with ten students (volunteers) from different classes. Their topic-based responses were classified and summarized, revealing their suggestions on the medium of Chinese classroom teaching. The results are displayed in Table 2-7.

Table 2 Themes and Frequency of Semi-Structured Interviews Question 1)

What do you think of the current Chinese class?		
No.	Themes	Frequencies
1	Online Courses	2
2	Life	2
3	Satisfaction	6

Table 2 presents the frequencies of three categorized answers to the question, “What do you think of the current Chinese class?”.

1) Satisfaction

The “like” factor was the strongest, indicating that most students were satisfied with their Chinese classrooms.

I like and enjoy it very much (Interviewee 3, 4, 7).

It's good, and I like it and will keep trying (Interviewee 6).

The teacher teaches very well (Interviewee 9).

2) Life

The data showed that some students believed that learning Chinese was very important.

I think learning Chinese in class is important in the future (Interviewee 1, 8).

3) Online Courses

The data showed that some students thought teaching should have been better without Covid.

I think the current Chinese language class is good but not the best because it's an online class because of Covid. I can understand the lesson if I reviewed it carefully (Interviewee 2).

4) If there had not been Covid-19, learning would have been more fun (Interviewee 10).

Table 3 Themes and Frequency of Semi-Structured Interviews Question 2)

2.What language do you want the teacher to use to teach Chinese?		
No.	Themes	Frequencies
1	Chinese	1
2	English	1
3	Chinese, English and Thai mixed	2
4	Chinese and Thai mixed	6

Table 3 presents the frequencies of four categorized answers to the question, “Which language do you want the teacher to use to teach Chinese?”.

1) Chinese and Thai mixed

The data showed that most students wanted teachers to use a mixture of Chinese and Thai as a medium in Chinese teaching.

Teach Chinese along with Thai language as well. to practice listening and speaking skills from teachers (Interviewee 2).

I want teachers to speak a mixture of Thai and Chinese (Interviewee 4, 5, 6, 8, 9).



1) A mixture of Chinese, English, and Thai

The data showed that some students wanted teachers to use a mixture of Chinese, English, and Thai as a medium in Chinese teaching.

I hope to learn more language skills. Thai, English, and Chinese for more languages and knowledge in many areas (Interviewee 10, 7).

2) English

The data showed that some students wanted teachers to use English as a medium in Chinese teaching.

I want to use English to increase my language skills (Interviewee 3).

5) Chinese

The data showed that some students wanted teachers to use Chinese as a medium in Chinese teaching.

I want teachers to use Chinese mostly. But speak a little slower because I don't yet know much vocabulary (Interviewee 1).

Table 4 Themes and Frequency of Semi-Structured Interviews Question 3)

3.What kinds of languages should your teacher talk with you after class?		
No.	Themes	Frequencies
1	Chinese	5
2	Thai	1
3	A mixture of Chinese, English and Thai	2
4	A mixture of Chinese and Thai	2

Table 4 presents the frequencies of four categorized answers to the question, "Which language do you want the teacher to use to teach Chinese?"

1) Chinese

The data showed that most students want teachers to use Chinese after class.

The teacher should speak Chinese so students can always learn Chinese (Interviewee 4,6,8,9,10).

2) Thai

The data showed that few students wanted teachers to use Thai after class.

I want the teacher to use Thai (Interviewee 5).

3) A mixture of Chinese, English, and Thai

The data showed that some students wanted teachers to use a mixture of Chinese, English, and Thai after class.

English, Thai, and Chinese. I am not very good at it myself. Nevertheless, the practice of speaking often makes me remember (Interviewee 2, 7).

1) Chinese and Thai mixed

The data showed that some students wanted teachers to use a mixture of Chinese and Thai after class.

Sometimes the teacher switches between Chinese and Thai to make it easier to understand (Interviewee 1, 3).

Table 5 Themes and Frequency of Semi-Structured Interviews Question 4)

4.What are your suggestions for Chinese class?		
No.	Themes	Frequencies
1	Teen Vocabulary	4
2	Daily life more Chinese communication	6

Table 5 presents the frequencies of two categorized answers to the question, "What are your suggestions for Chinese class?"



1) Vocabulary

The data showed that some students wanted Chinese classrooms to pay more attention to vocabulary teaching, especially today's popular vocabulary.

I want to focus on memorizing a lot of words. but currently teaching is considered to be in a good level (Interviewee 2).

I want to teach vocabulary used by teenagers (Interviewee 6, 7).

I wish there was a game about vocabulary (Interviewee 10).

2) Daily application

The data showed that most students hoped that the teaching of Chinese classroom could be applied to their daily life.

Make it a part of your daily life (Interviewee 4,8,9).

I would like to listen to the Chinese accent often to get more familiar with it (Interviewee 3).

Students should be encouraged to practice conversations in order to use them in their daily lives (Interviewee 1,5).

Table 6 Themes and Frequency of Semi-Structured Interviews Question 5)

5.What are your suggestions for Chinese teachers?		
No.	Themes	Frequencies
1	None	8
2	Easy to Understand	1
3	Happy Learning	1

Table 6 presents the frequencies of three categorized answers to the question, "What are your suggestions for Chinese teachers?".

1) Other suggestion

The data showed that most students believed that the current teacher's teaching was very good, and there were no suggestions. However, some students also made some suggestions.

Teaching is easy to understand and friendly, making students dare to express themselves. Speak Chinese, even if the pronunciation is wrong, the teacher will adjust it. I think teachers are good teachers (Interviewee 3).

Let the teacher try to understand the students from the point of view for those who do not know and do not understand the language in order to find ways to teach and understand more (Interviewee 4).

I want fun learning and not easy to get sleepy (Interviewee 7).

Table 7 Themes and Frequency of Semi-Structured Interviews (Question6)

6.What are your suggestions on using Chinese as the medium language in Chinese class?		
No.	Themes	Frequencies
1	None	4
2	Very good	2
3	Make Chinese Using	1
4	Speak Aloud	2
5	Learning to become	1

Table 4 presents the frequencies of five categorized answers to the question, "What are your suggestions on using Chinese as the medium language in Chinese class?".

1) Very good

The data showed that some students thought the current Chinese class was very good and provided no suggestions.

I think it's good. It's good because we learn Chinese, even if we can't speak, we should try (Interviewee 6).



Very good, we should learn Chinese, should speak some Chinese (Interviewee 10).

2) Other suggestions

The data showed that some students provided suggestions for the Chinese class.

It is a necessity to use in the future both working in the country and abroad. To use Chinese as the lingua franca in class, I think it is a good thing to improve language skills (Interviewee 2).

I want Chinese to be the lingua franca in the classroom so that I can truly access the language. and use it properly (Interviewee 4).

Don't be shy to say it out loud. If you want more language skills (Interviewee 5).

It's a good idea for people who like to learn Chinese and want to use Chinese in their future careers (Interviewee 9).

Each respondent's data were analyzed and interpreted using content volunteers, including students from 33 different classes.

Online interviews were conducted with ten volunteers from 33 different classes, and content analysis was conducted to interpret the data obtained through the interviews. The results revealed that most students chose Thai as the language of instruction in Chinese classrooms. Following the results of the nine items (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, Teacher Warms up before the Activity, Teacher Explains Grammar Points, Teacher Corrects the Mistakes, Teacher Tells Students to Work in Pairs or in Groups, and Teacher Summarizes the Lesson), most students had a positive attitude towards teachers who used their native language as the language of instruction. The above findings are supported by the study of Xu (2017), which suggests that Chinese teachers in Thailand should try to use Thai as a medium in the teaching stage. Moreover, Ma (2017) also proposed that teachers using students' native language as a teaching medium can help teachers improve the efficiency of Chinese classroom teaching. In the primary stage of Chinese learning for Thai students, Thai-assisted Chinese teaching is better than English-assisted. Therefore, Chinese is the second choice of medium language for students. In the process of Chinese teaching, teachers should create a Chinese context for students. Han (2018) also proposed that teachers should use Chinese to teach and actively create a rich language environment. Additionally, Wang (2012) said, "Using Chinese as a language of instruction in Chinese classrooms creates a good Chinese environment for students. Teachers should increase the frequency of using Chinese in Chinese classrooms." Moreover, Wang (2018) pointed out that Chinese classrooms should improve the input-output ratio of Chinese to make it easy to use.

The results also showed that some students preferred to use Chinese as the instruction language because, in the process of Chinese teaching, teachers need to create a Chinese context for students. Similar to Wang's (2012) argument, using Chinese as the language of instruction in Chinese classrooms creates a good Chinese environment for students. Therefore, teachers should increase the frequency of using Chinese in Chinese classrooms. This is consistent with Wang (2018)'s point of view that Chinese classrooms should improve the input-output ratio of Chinese to make it easy to use.

Using English as an instruction language in Chinese classrooms is a considerable challenge among students and teachers, so in this study, it was found that English was considered as a negative option by most students. Obviously, English teaching requires both teachers and students to have a high level of English. If the students' English proficiency is low and English is used as the medium, Chinese instruction will be negatively affected. The above findings are also supported by Ma (2019) and McKay (2002), whose research showed the existence of English code-switching in Chinese classrooms. Using English can result in students lacking sufficient Chinese knowledge and skill practices.

5. Conclusion

The results showed that most students had a positive attitude towards teachers using Thai or Chinese as the medium in Chinese classrooms; however, they had a negative attitude towards teachers using English as a medium. Most of the students in the surveyed school had weakness in basic Chinese skills and knowledge. It is recommended that teachers use Thai as the instructive language in the primary teaching stage. With the deepening of teaching, the use of Thai instructive language should be gradually reduced. Teaching Chinese as a foreign language is not recommended using students' mother tongue for teaching

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because it is not conducive to cultivating their language environment. In addition, teaching Chinese as a foreign language should keep pace with the times and be close to the reality of the times, society, and students.

This article only investigated the students in a public school and did not expand to the impact of the different instructive languages used by Chinese teachers on Chinese teaching. Therefore, future research may conduct a comparative study on differences and similarities between public schools and private schools and use empirical research data to make comparisons between different teachers.

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