

Exploring the Specialized Teaching Methods of Confucius Institute in Thailand Based on International Chinese Language Education

Shurou Xu, Yong Hu*

Shaanxi University of Chinese Medicine, Xianyang 712046, Shaanxi, China

*Correspondence Author

Abstract: *Confucius Institutes (CIs) are public welfare organizations established by China to promote Chinese language and culture. Compared with Confucius Academy, Confucius Institutes are smaller in scale and more flexible in form, usually relying on local schools, communities or enterprises to carry out language teaching and cultural exchange activities in a way that is closer to the public. According to statistics, there are about 550 Confucius Institutes and 1,172 Confucius Classrooms in primary and secondary schools in 162 countries around the world. Among them, Thailand has one of the highest densities of Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms in the world. As the construction of the “the Belt and Road” has been steadily promoted, the demand for Chinese language talents in various countries has continued to grow, and learning Chinese has become the “just education demand” of people in many countries [1]. Since the 21st century, Chinese language education in Thailand has continued to develop and gradually become complete, and has been fully integrated into the Thai education system. The purpose of teaching Chinese as a foreign language is to cultivate students’ ability to communicate in Chinese [2]. Under the interaction of the three core driving forces, a “triple driving mechanism” has been formed to promote the development of Chinese language education in Thailand. As an important carrier of international Chinese language education, the Confucius Institute in Thailand needs to design localized teaching strategies that take into account the Thai cultural background and learners’ needs. International Chinese language teachers in Thailand also need to improve their cross-cultural teaching skills. At the same time, with the maturity of AIGC technologies such as ChatGPT, DeepSeek, Doubao, etc., Thai Confucius Institutes are combining with them to innovate their teaching modes and improve teaching efficiency and learning experience. This paper takes the Confucius Institute in Thailand as the research object, and analyzes the challenges and opportunities it faces in the process of teaching by combining the theory and practice of international Chinese education. Through the research on the Thai Chinese education system, learners’ characteristics, and teaching resources allocation, it puts forward targeted teaching method optimization strategies to provide reference for improving the quality of Chinese education in Thailand.*

Keywords: International Chinese Language Education, Confucius Institute, Teaching Methodology.

1. Introduction

With the significant increase in China’s international influence, the demand for Chinese language learning is growing globally. As an important platform for promoting Chinese language and culture, Confucius Institutes and Academies have been established in more than 150 countries, among which Thailand is one of the countries with more mature development of Chinese language education.

Thailand is one of the first countries in Southeast Asia to establish diplomatic relations with China, and the two countries have close cooperation in the fields of economy and trade, tourism and education. Since 2006, the Thai Ministry of Education has incorporated Chinese language into the national education system, and stipulated that public schools can offer Chinese language elective courses. 2015, Thailand put forward the policy of “Chinese Language Education Development Strategy”, which aims to vigorously cultivate high-level Chinese language talents and support the talent cultivation mode of “Chinese language + vocational education”. The “Chinese Language Education Development Strategy” was put forward in 2015, aiming to vigorously cultivate high-level Chinese language talents and support the “Chinese language + vocational education” model of talent training. After two decades of development, Thailand has become one of the countries with the largest number of Confucius Institutes in the world, with 16 Confucius Institutes and 11 Confucius Academies (e.g., Confucius Academy at

Chulalongkorn University). Although Chinese language education runs through the entire education system of Thailand, including primary, secondary and university, there are still problems such as insufficient teachers, lack of localized teaching materials, and a single teaching method. The language background and cultural habits of Thai learners are very different from those of Chinese learners, which makes the teaching effect unsatisfactory. In addition, unlike Confucius Institutes, Confucius Learning Centers are smaller in scale and usually attached to primary and secondary schools or community education organizations. The teaching targets are mainly primary and secondary schools and community people, and the teachers are mostly local teachers, so the teaching quality is relatively low. Therefore, this paper mainly aims to help Thai Confucius Institutes optimize their teaching methods, improve the efficiency of Chinese language teaching, and enhance the learners’ language application ability. It also aims to enrich the country-specific research on international Chinese language education, provide theoretical references to Chinese language teaching in Thailand, and help promote the innovation of Chinese language teaching methods.

2. Analysis of the Development Status of Chinese Language Education and Confucius Institute in Thailand

2.1 Thailand Chinese Education System Tends to be Complete

Chinese language education system in Thailand has developed rapidly in recent years, and has gradually formed a more complete structure covering basic education, higher education, vocational training and social education. Language and cultural exchange are necessary forms of achieving and enhancing communication between different cultures [3].

At the basic education level, Chinese is included in the mainstream curriculum. Since 2008, the Thai Ministry of Education has listed Chinese as a second foreign language (second only to English), and some public primary and secondary schools offer compulsory or elective Chinese courses. Primary and secondary schools in major cities such as Bangkok and Chiang Mai have really set up “Chinese program classes” using bilingual teaching. Many private and international schools use Chinese as a core foreign language, adopt Chinese textbooks (e.g., Chinese Mandarin), hire Chinese teachers to teach, and use the YCT Standardized Curriculum as the main assessment. In terms of higher education and professional training, more than 40 colleges and universities in Thailand have set up Chinese language departments or Chinese language majors, aiming at training translators, business Chinese and other talents to meet the needs of China-Thailand economic and trade cooperation and cultural exchanges. In addition, about 50,000 students take the HSK test every year, and many universities use the HSK test results as the language threshold for graduation or studying in China. In Thailand, the “Chinese + Vocational Education” model has been developing rapidly in recent years, which mainly focuses on the cultivation of skilled talents with Chinese language ability in industries with close cooperation between China and Thailand, such as tourism, trade, e-commerce, logistics, and so on. For example, the Confucius Institute at Khon Kaen University has cooperated with the Ministry of Industry of Thailand to provide “Chinese + Mechanical Engineering” training for Chinese-owned factories. Vocational colleges offer practical courses in tourism and business Chinese to meet the needs of Chinese companies in the market. In addition to the official school system, Chinese language education in Thailand also involves a variety of social organizations, which play an important role in promoting Chinese language learning, cultural exchanges and vocational training. For example, Chinese language schools founded by Thai overseas Chinese associations or foundations are mainly for children of Chinese descent, and their curricula are integrated with Thailand’s private education system, with Chinese as a key subject, and some of the schools use bilingual teaching, introducing Chinese teaching materials and teachers. Some Chinese communities or temples offer free or low-cost Chinese language classes that incorporate moral education and are open to grassroots groups.

2.2 “Triple Driving Mechanism to Promote the Development of Chinese Language Education in Thailand

The rapid development of Chinese language education in Thailand is attributed to its unique “triple-driven mechanism of politics, economy and trade, and humanities. This mechanism has formed a combination of top-down and bottom-up development momentum through multi-dimensional synergy.

In terms of political drive, the Thai government has established an institutional framework for Chinese language education through the promulgation of Chinese language education policies and the top-level design of Chinese language education, forming a top-down explicit driving force. For example, in 2022, China and Thailand signed the Framework Agreement on Strengthening Cooperation in Chinese Language Teaching, promoting the establishment of the Sino-Thai Colleges and Universities Language Partnership Program and the Sino-Thai Institute of Language and Vocational Education, and integrating Chinese into the national education system. In addition, the Confucius Institute Development Alliance of Thailand, established in 2021, has built a regional ecology of Chinese language education through resource sharing and synergistic development. These policies not only clarify the importance and development direction of Chinese language education, but also provide legal and policy support for Chinese language education, ensuring the status of Chinese language education in Thailand’s national education system.

In terms of economy and trade, the “Belt and Road” has deepened bilateral trade and investment between China and Thailand, prompting Thai enterprises to urgently need talents with both Chinese language knowledge and professional skills. With the deepening of economic and trade cooperation between China and Thailand, the Thai economy has been developing rapidly, which provides a strong impetus for Chinese language education. Economic and trade cooperation not only brings economic benefits, but also generates diversified demand for Chinese language and culture learning, expanding the market for Chinese language education and promoting the growth of demand for Chinese language learning. Relevant studies show that Chinese language jobs in international trade, tourism and other industries account for more than 60% of all Chinese language jobs, and enterprises participate in Chinese language education investment, forming a positive cycle of “language skills - employment opportunities - economic benefits”. In terms of humanistic exchanges, Thailand has been closely interacting with China since ancient times due to its geographic proximity. During the seven voyages of Zheng He to the West Ocean in the Ming Dynasty, he arrived in Thailand three times, bringing Chinese silk and blue and white porcelain. Since 2003, China has sent Chinese language volunteers to Thailand every year to serve as Chinese language teachers in schools and universities, which has greatly promoted the development of Chinese language education in Thailand. Thailand has a large Chinese community (about one-seventh of the population) and therefore a large number of Chinese language schools. In addition, the digital field has become an important area of cultural exchange between the two countries, with live streaming platforms becoming an important tool for sharing experiences and promoting exchanges between the two peoples. Through cultural exchanges, educational cooperation and other activities, the Thai people’s understanding of Chinese culture has been enhanced and enthusiasm for learning Chinese has been stimulated.

2.3 Analysis of the Development Status of the Confucius Institute

Thailand is one of the most densely populated countries in the

world with more than 2,000 primary and secondary schools offering Chinese language courses and more than one million Chinese language learners in schools by 2025, a scale made possible by the long-term support of the Thai government and society for Chinese language education, as well as the continuous promotion of the exchanges and mutual understanding between Chinese and Thai civilizations.

At present, there are 11 independent Confucius Institutes in Thailand, mainly relying on primary and secondary schools. In terms of curriculum, Chinese language is integrated into the curriculum system of primary and secondary schools. The Design for the Development of Chinese Language Teaching issued by the Thai Ministry of Education requires that “general public schools offer Chinese language classes from the first grade of elementary school; Chinese language courses for students in the fourth to sixth grades of elementary school are set as supplemental subjects, with the class hours adjusted to not less than two sessions per week and the number of students in each class not exceeding 20.” The curriculum design focuses on the integration of Chinese and Thai cultures, and organizes the “Paper Rhythm and Ink Scent - Inheritance of Intangible Cultural Heritage” activity, which teaches calligraphy, paper-cutting and other traditional skills and attracts the participation of young students. After two decades of development, Chinese language teaching at the basic education level in Thailand is moving towards increasing popularization. However, in terms of the popularization of Chinese language teaching, the popularity of Chinese language teaching at the basic education level varies greatly in different regions of Thailand. For example, in the more economically developed Eastern region of Thailand, due to the good conditions of teachers, many schools offer Chinese language classes from kindergarten onwards. However, in Southern Thailand, where the foundation of Chinese language education is relatively weak, many elementary school and kindergartens do not offer Chinese language classes, and Chinese language is even considered an elective course in many junior high schools. In addition, there is a serious shortage of Chinese language teachers in Thailand. In addition to the state-appointed teachers, there are some local teachers and Chinese language volunteers in the Confucius Institute. These volunteers and local teachers generally have weak professional backgrounds, and some of them even lack systematic knowledge of Chinese language, which leads to the lack of pronunciation accuracy and cultural knowledge among Confucius Institute students. Due to the conflict between teaching methods and cultural backgrounds, the teaching effect of the Confucius Institute is not satisfactory. Thai native Chinese teaching materials are generally outdated and of poor quality, and the teaching content is out of touch with Thai native culture, which hinders the development of Chinese language education.

Therefore, it is urgent to increase the training of teachers in Thai Confucius Institutes, improve the cross-cultural teaching ability of international Chinese teachers, adopt localized teaching strategy design, and innovate teaching methods.

3. Innovative Paths of Teaching Methods in Confucius Institute in Thailand

3.1 Design of Localized Teaching Strategies

The core issue of Chinese international education is the “three teachings”, namely teachers, textbooks, and teaching methods [4]. Thai Confucius Institutes need to design localized teaching strategies to promote the development of Chinese language education in Thailand through three dimensions: localization of teaching materials, strengthening of local teacher training and localization of teaching methods.

The core of textbook localization is content localization, which means combining Chinese cultural elements with Thai local culture. Yu Haikuo (2020) The development of teaching materials for Chinese language international education should also pay attention to over-countryzation while achieving diversification, three-dimensionalization, digitization and networkization [5]. Thai primary and secondary school students need to feel that the texts are closely related to their own lives. Therefore, in the process of selecting and writing the content of the texts, the learners’ preferences, cultural backgrounds and living habits need to be fully considered. For example, by comparing Chinese and Thai festivals and customs, food culture, etc., the textbook can help learners understand the cultural differences and enhance the sense of cultural immersion. In the design and layout of the teaching materials, it is also necessary to take into account the layout characteristics of native Thai teaching materials. Since the teaching target of Confucius Institute is Thai primary and secondary school students, the design of the textbook needs to include beautiful and interesting illustrations to attract students’ interest and help them better understand and learn Chinese. Secondly, localization of teaching methods is also very important. Chinese classrooms are teacher-oriented and focus on cultivating students’ knowledge and discipline, which is very demanding for students. The Thais, on the other hand, emphasize students’ acceptability and abide by the principle of living within one’s means. The classroom teaching atmosphere in Thailand is relaxed and students’ attention span is shorter. Therefore, Chinese teachers should use fewer complicated grammar rules and classroom instructions, and teach through interactive games and real-life situations to increase learners’ interest and participation. Finally, increasing the training of native Thai Chinese teachers is the key to improving teaching in Confucius Institutes. As the relationship between China and Thailand grows closer, there is a growing demand for Thai people to learn Chinese, and more and more schools are offering Chinese language courses, the problem of insufficient Chinese teachers is becoming more and more prominent. In many schools, the Chinese teachers are local teachers. However, these local teachers do not have enough professional knowledge and lack relevant cultural background, so the teaching effect in the classroom is not satisfactory. Therefore, it is of great significance to accelerate the training of local teachers and expand the pool of local teachers to promote Chinese language teaching in Thailand.

3.2 Enhancement of International Chinese Language Teachers’ Intercultural Teaching Competence.

International Chinese language education should take into account the differences in education targets and strive to cultivate students’ intercultural communication skills. Gao Liping (2022) believes that in teacher training, we should deepen our thinking in terms of facing cultural differences,

developing cultural self-awareness, enhancing cultural confidence, expanding international vision, and innovating teaching methods and skills [6]. Intercultural communication is also known as intercultural communication, that is, the mutual communication between people of different cultural backgrounds, national beliefs, and countries. Usually this kind of intercultural communication does not include communication between different subcultures in the same cultural system. Intercultural communication mainly uses language as a means of information communication, however, language is a carrier of culture, directly reflecting culture, so in the process of language communication, although there are many understandable commonalities, the differences in culture are very obvious. Li Quan, Sun Ying (2023) suggested that Chinese culture teaching focuses too much on the systematicity and representativeness of the content, and lacks consideration based on the learners' linguistic ability and cultural needs [7]. In response to this situation, Confucius Institutes in Thailand have taken innovative multi-level and multi-disciplinary initiatives to enhance the cross-cultural teaching competence of international Chinese language teachers, combining localized needs and international standards to form a distinctive training system. For example, targeted teacher training: Confucius Institute at Khon Kaen University designs HSK enhancement courses at different levels for the differences in Chinese language proficiency among local teachers in Northeast Thailand, strengthens teaching through the four major modules of listening, reading, writing, and speaking, and adopts a combination of online and offline modes to improve efficiency. Establishing a three-tier framework of "Basic Competence - Intercultural Communication - Country Studies", for example, the experience of the Confucius Institute at the University of Sheffield in the UK has been borrowed, whereby Chinese and foreign tutors work together to provide guidance on cultural adaptation and classroom practice. In terms of cultural teaching, the Confucius Institute at the University of Sheffield in the UK has adopted the experience of the "dual tutor system", in which Chinese and foreign tutors jointly guide cultural adaptation and classroom practice. In terms of cultural teaching, activities such as "cultural caravan" and traditional festival experience have been organized to promote cultural exchanges between China and Thailand; cases such as "archaeological Chinese" in Cambodia have inspired Thai Confucius Institutes to combine language teaching with local culture. Yang Wei (2022) proposed that cultural teaching emphasizes personalized teaching, and the teaching process should be differentiated according to individual characteristics [8]. In terms of future development, Thai Confucius Institutes plan to further deepen the characteristics of "Chinese language + vocational skills", serve the "Belt and Road" initiative, and optimize teacher training, digital resources (e.g., the "Smart Confucius Institute" platform), and third-party evaluation. In the future, the Confucius Institute in Thailand plans to further deepen its "Chinese + Vocational Skills" feature, serve the "Belt and Road" initiative, and continuously improve its intercultural teaching ability by optimizing teacher training, digital resources (e.g. the "Smart Confucius Institute" platform), and third-party evaluation.

3.3 Innovation of Teaching Methods with the Support of AIGC

The rapid development of artificial intelligence technology has brought new opportunities to the field of education. Through AI technology, educators can more accurately understand students' needs and provide personalized teaching content and methods. Many Chinese schools and educational institutions in Thailand offer Chinese language courses, but most of them still use traditional teaching methods and lack personalized teaching content and strategies. The emergence of AI technology has forced us to face up to the challenges we need to face: the limited availability of teaching resources restricts the presentation of high-quality teaching content, the diversity of students' backgrounds increases the difficulty of Chinese language teaching and cultural understanding, and traditional teaching methods are unable to meet the individualized needs of students in the age of AI. The solution lies in the reasonable use of AI technology to promote education reform, and the use of personalized tutoring and adaptive learning to improve teaching effectiveness.

Artificial intelligence technology includes machine learning, natural language processing, intelligent recommendation systems, etc. These technologies have been applied in many fields and achieved remarkable results. In educational practice, the intelligent tutoring system developed based on AI technology can provide personalized tutoring and support according to students' learning progress and performance, breaking through the long-standing dilemma of large-class teaching that makes it difficult to realize personalized tutoring. The emergence of artificial intelligence also provides a solution to the imbalance of educational resources. Students can learn knowledge through the Internet and improve their Chinese education through AI conversations. The adaptive learning platform dynamically adjusts the content and difficulty of learning according to students' needs and abilities, supporting their independent learning. The use of AI technology also enables automatic assessment and timely feedback, improves the accuracy and immediacy of assessment, and helps teachers to continuously optimize their teaching design and enhance teaching effectiveness. In terms of teacher empowerment, ChatGPT helps teachers quickly generate teaching cases, design interactive activities, and automatically correct assignments. Short videos on "Chinese + Logistics" released through TikTok and other platforms, as well as activities such as the "Confucius Challenge" expand the influence of the Chinese language.

4. Conclusion

As an important practical platform for international Chinese language education, the Confucius Institute in Thailand must base its exploration of unique teaching methods on Thai culture, educational characteristics and learners' actual needs. The strategies proposed in this paper, such as "localized teaching strategy design", "cross-cultural teaching competence enhancement for international Chinese language teachers", and "teaching method innovation under the support of AIGC", aim to enhance Chinese language teaching through cultural integration, technological empowerment, and interesting interaction. These strategies aim to enhance the attractiveness and effectiveness of Chinese language teaching through cultural integration, technological empowerment and interesting interaction. Practice has shown that these methods

can significantly improve learners' classroom participation, language ability and cultural awareness. In the future, Chinese language teaching in Confucius Institutes in Thailand should further deepen the localization research, optimize the teaching mode of "Chinese language + vocational skills", and strengthen the collaboration and innovation between Chinese and Thai teachers. At the same time, it is necessary to combine artificial intelligence, virtual reality and other emerging technologies to build a more intelligent and personalized learning system, so that Chinese language education can better serve the needs of Thailand's social and economic development. Eventually, through continuous teaching innovation and cultural exchanges, the Confucius Institute will become an important bridge for language and civilization exchange between China and Thailand, and provide a "Thailand model" for the sustainable development of international Chinese language education.

References

- [1] WU Yinghui. New dynamics, new fields and new methods in international Chinese language education[J]. Journal of Henan University, 2022, 62(02):103-110.
- [2] Liu Xun. Introduction to teaching Chinese as a foreign language [M]. Beijing Language and Culture University Press, 2000:45-50.
- [3] Zhao Xincheng. The road to the development of international Chinese language education discipline[J]. Degree and Graduate Education, 2022, (10):34-41.
- [4] Zhao Yang. Changes and constancy in Chinese international education[J]. Journal of Tianjin Normal University, 2021, (01):7-14.
- [5] Yu Haikuo. Diversification and nationalization of teaching materials development in Chinese language international education[J]. Chinese University Teaching, 2020, (09): 91-96.
- [6] Gao Liping. The dual construction of language and culture in international Chinese language education[J]. Journal of Shanghai Jiao Tong University, 2022, 30(03):41-50.
- [7] Li Quan, Sun Ying. New ideas for teaching Chinese culture: localizing content and storytelling methods [J]. Language and Literature Application, 2023, (01):33-44.
- [8] YANG Wei. Content Selection of Cultural Teaching in International Chinese Education under the Perspective of International Communication[J]. Journal of Tianjin Normal University, 2022, (04): 42-46.