

## **Investigation on Teaching Chinese Methods: A Case Study of Thai Teachers Teaching Chinese of OBEC, Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand**

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### **Abstract**

The objective of this research was to investigate using teaching methods of Thai teachers teaching Chinese in Ubon Ratchathani province, Thailand. The samples of this research were randomized from 15 schools (both public and private schools). The researcher used 1) questionnaire, 2) interview, and 3) observation for research tools and data analysis. The statistic used for data analysis was percentage. The research finding revealed that the sample schools in primary level mostly used 5 similar teaching methods: 1) Audio-Lingual method (93.34%); 2) Total Physical Response method (80%); 3) Grammar Translation method (66.66%); 4) Direct method (60%); and 5) Natural method (53.33%).

In addition, the sample schools in secondary level mostly used 5 similar teaching methods as follows: 1) Audio-Lingual method (86.66%); 2) Grammar Translation method (66.66%); 3) Task-Based Language Teaching method (66.66%); 4) Discussion method (60%); and 5) Direct method (60%). Besides the reflections of these samples from the interview revealed that they had various problems and limitations of teaching in their schools, such as the lack of human resource (native Chinese teacher), limitation of financial support for doing various learning activities, the lack of standard Chinese textbooks and other teaching materials, and the unclear direction of opening Chinese teaching in their schools.

**Keywords:** Teaching and learning Chinese, Teaching method, Students, Teachers, Ubon Ratchathani Province

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## Introduction

### Significance of the study

#### Teaching and learning Chinese in Thailand

At present, the influence of the economic growth of China has made the ASEAN countries, especially Thailand need to adapt and integrate its strengths for this change and challenge. As mentioned above, it is realized that Chinese has become one of the important languages that is used around the world because of that reason. Besides the economic aspect, the collaboration between Thailand and China related to cultural exchange has also been strengthened. More and more people in Thailand have started to learn Chinese and Chinese cultures. This phenomenon, "Chinese fever", has been met among all education levels to meet the current demand (Narueporn and Yang Ting, 2013).

According to Budsaba (2011), the increasing number of schools offering the Chinese language seems to provide convincing evidence that it is indeed gaining popularity. The Office of the Basic Education Commission of Thailand, on behalf of the Ministry of Education, recorded as many as 166 public and 187 private schools (a total of 353 schools) that offered the Chinese language to their elementary, middle, and high school students (Lei, 2007), in addition to vocational colleges and other educational institutions that offer the Chinese language. In addition to the Thai government's efforts and investment into education, the Chinese government has generously provided numerous supports to Thailand (Theeravit et al., 2008).

At present, in term of the context of the office of the basic education commission of Thailand, Chinese has been conducted into three main types: 1) elective Chinese courses, 2) Chinese club for interested students, and 3) Chinese as minor and major subjects in the high school level. However, a serious but important question with regard to Chinese language teaching emerges: the quality of Chinese education in Thailand. In response to this question, a number of scholars examined the success of Chinese language teaching at various levels of education (e.g., Theeravit et al., 2008; Laohathiansin et al., 2000, Sanguannual, 2003).

The overall data presented above reflected teaching Chinese in Thailand might not be as successful as it should be. One of the reasons of teaching failure might come from teaching methods selected by teachers teaching Chinese. Therefore, this study attempted to find out teaching methods chosen by those teachers and present to relevant stakeholders for upgrading Chinese education in Thailand.

### **Teaching and learning Chinese in North-Eastern Thailand**

According to Metch. S (2010), teaching and learning Chinese in the Northeast of Thailand in all education levels has been conducted for many years. However, it was found that there were five main problems: 1) Teaching and learning Chinese; 2) Lack of human resources (Chinese teachers); 3) Financial support; 4) Lack of standard Chinese textbooks and other teaching materials; and 5) Opening Chinese teaching in schools without a clear direction. Thus, the researcher, as a teacher of Chinese in Ubon Ratchathani province, is interested in indicating teaching and learning Chinese problems resulting from the inappropriate teaching methods selected by Thai teachers teaching Chinese.

### **The schools teaching Chinese in Ubon Ratchathani province**

After surveying the number of schools teaching Chinese in Ubon Ratchathani province, there are 45 schools under the supervision of the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC). Due to the limitation of study and financial support, the researcher needed to randomized some schools to be the representatives of this study

## **Objective of the Study**

The objective of the study was to investigate using teaching methods of Thai teachers teaching Chinese for the Office of the Basic Education Commission in Ubon Ratchathani province, Thailand.

## **Scope of the Study**

The 15 schools teaching Chinese in Ubon Ratchathani were randomized for data collection and data analysis.

## **Literature Review**

### **Theoretical Concepts of Language Teaching**

According to Anthony (1965) cited in Richards and Rodgers (2001), “approach” is the level at which assumptions and beliefs about language learning are specified; “method” is the level which theory is put into practice and at which choices are made about the particular skills to be taught, and the order in which the content will be presented; “technique” is the level at which classroom procedures are described. Besides, Richards & Rodgers (2001) point out that “approach” is a theory of the nature of language (Structural view, Functional or Communicative view, and Interactional view see more in Yule 2006) and a theory of the nature of

language learning (Behaviorism, Nativism, and Constructivism see more in Prichard 2009); “teaching technique” comprises: (1) the general and the specific objectives of the method; 2) a syllabus models; 3) types of learning and teaching activities; 4) learners roles; 5) teachers roles; 6) the role of instructional materials. In addition, Mackey (1975) states: “method” may mean different things to different people. For some, it means a set of teaching procedures; for others, the avoidance of teaching procedures. For some, it is the primary of a language skill: for others it is the type and amount of vocabulary and structure.

To summarize the different definitions of terms: “approach”; “method”; “technique” and procedure, and their coherence in language teaching, the table of the definitions of each retrieved from <http://www.slideshare.net/hernanebuela/general-methods-and-techniques-of-teaching> (2015) is presented below.

**Table 1** Definition of “Approach” “ Method” “Techniques” and “Procedure” in teaching language (source: <http://www.slideshare.net>: 2015)

Approach	Method	Techniques	Procedure
*It is a conjunction of ideas related to the nature and teaching of a given language.	*It is considered the practical realization of an approach.	*It is considered the practical realization of an approach.	*It is an ordered sequence of techniques.
* It refers to theories about the nature of language and language learning.	* It is understood as a group of procedures, a system that clearly explains how to teach a language (syllabus organization – contents and skills to be taught – roles of teachers and learners kinds of materials to use)	* It is a tool that is used to obtain an immediate result.	* A procedure can be described in terms such as first you do this, then you do that. It is a lot smaller than a method, but it is a sequence of techniques.

**Table 1 (cont.)**

<b>Approach</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Techniques</b>	<b>Procedure</b>
* It describes how people acquire their knowledge of the language and makes statements about conditions which will promote successful language learning.	* The method is based on a specific approach. The approach is axiomatic where as the method is procedural.	* It can be understood as a set of actions, operations and strategies which have to be executed accordingly to a perception on how to obtain an expected result.	* It can be understood as a set of actions, operations and strategies which have to be executed accordingly to a perception on how to obtain an expected result.
	* When a method has fixed procedure, informed by a clearly articulated approach, it is easy to describe. However, if a method takes procedures and techniques from a wide variety of sources, that they are used in other methods or are mentioned by other beliefs, it will be very hard to continue to describe it as a method.	* These techniques must be coherent with the method, and therefore, they must be in harmony with the approach.	
* It offers a method of language competence.		* Some techniques can be found in different methods whereas other ones are specific to a given method.	

**Table 1 (cont.)**

<b>Approach</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Techniques</b>	<b>Procedure</b>
* It is the level in which a whole theory and its beliefs are reflected regarding a language and its learning. It is a much wider concept than method and technique.	-	-	-
* It is the source of the principles of language teaching.	-	-	-
* It describes how a language is used and how its constituent parts interlock.	-	-	-

### **Types of Language Teaching Methods**

It is known that there are several methods of teaching Chinese to students depending on the teaching situation, setting, purposes, and the resources available. According to the definitions in table 1, it can be concluded that an appropriate teaching method should be based upon a selected approach. Meanwhile, techniques of language teaching and the teaching procedures also should be based on that particular teaching method. Richards and Rodgers (1986) state: In order for an approach to be translated into a method, an instructional system must be designed considering the objectives of the teaching/learning, how the content is to be selected and organized, the types of tasks to be performed, the roles of students, and the roles of teachers.

Listed below are brief summaries of some of the more popular second language teaching methods of the last half century. For a more detailed analysis of the different methods, see *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* Richards and Rodgers (1986) published by CUP, Cambridge.

**Table 2** Brief summaries of some of the more popular second language teaching method of the last half century (source: Richards and Rodgers, 1986)

Name of Method	Brief summary
Direct method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- mother tongue is not allowed</li> <li>- grammar rules are avoided</li> <li>- good pronunciation is emphasized</li> </ul>
Grammar-translation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- translation to and from the target language</li> <li>- Grammar rules are to be memorized and long lists of vocabulary learned by heart</li> <li>- Oral ability is little or no emphasis</li> </ul>
Audio-lingual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- much practice of dialogues of every situation</li> <li>- listen and drill extensively on target language before being seen in its written form</li> </ul>
Structural approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- sees language as a complex of grammatical rules which are to be learned one at a time in a set order</li> </ul>
Suggestopedia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the students are suggested that the language is easy</li> <li>- and in this way the mental blocks to learning them are removed</li> </ul>
Total Physical Response (TPR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the learner respond to simple commands</li> <li>- the teacher stresses the importance of aural comprehension</li> </ul>
Communicative language teaching (CLT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- enables the learner to communicate effectively and appropriately in the various situations</li> </ul>
Silent Way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the teacher says as little as possible in order that the learners can be in control of what he/she wants to say</li> </ul>
Community language learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- build strong personal links between the teacher and student so that there are not blocks to learning</li> <li>- much talk in the mother tongue which is translated by the teacher for repetition by the student</li> </ul>

**Table 2 (cont.)**

<b>Name of Method</b>	<b>Brief summary</b>
Immersion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- students are immersed in the Chinese language for the other subjects : math, sciences, humanities etc. through the medium of Chinese</li> </ul>
Task-based language learning (TBL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- teach on the completion of a task which in itself is interesting to the learners</li> <li>- learners use the language they already have to complete the task and there is little correction of errors</li> </ul>
Natural approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- stress the similarities between learning the first and second language. There is no correction of mistakes</li> </ul>
Lexical Syllabus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- base on a computer analysis of language which identifies the most common (and hence most useful) words in the language and their various uses</li> </ul>
Cooperative Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- mix levels of students ability into group and reward according to the group success of an individual member</li> <li>- face-to-face interaction/positive interdependence/individual accountability/group processing/collaborative skills</li> </ul>

### **Related Studies**

The study of Patcharee (2012), entitled “Development on the skill of remembering vocabulary by using crossword games for secondary school students (Grade 3)” was related to this research study. The method used for teaching this targeted students was inductive teaching method, one of the student-centered approaches. The findings showed that the scores of the post-test made by the students were higher than their pre-test. Their ability of remembering vocabulary was improved by this teaching method.

Further, the positive attitude of students regarding doing language activities was found. In addition, the study of Nunthida (2012) entitled “Development on the skill of remembering and reading vocabulary by using vocabulary cards (flashcards)”. The teaching method was Task-based language learning (TBL). The pre-test & post-test were used for the research tools. The results indicated that this teaching method helped the students have more ability on remembering new Chinese vocabularies.

Besides, Napawan (2013) studied about how to develop the ability on remembering Chinese vocabulary of second year vocational students. The teacher used TBL for teaching these students. The findings showed that the scores of the post-test were higher than the pre-test, and the TBL helped these students improve their ability to remember vocabulary.

In addition, the study of Sukanya (2013) entitled “Development on reading Chinese skill for daily life: A Case Study of the Primary School Students (grade 4) of Rathprachanukroh 15, Chiangrai province” was also interesting. The pre-test & post-test and the flashcard were research tools. TBL was selected for teaching the targeted students. It was found that their post-test scores were higher than the pre-test scores, and their Chinese reading skills through doing activities were improved.

Thanaporn and Anuth (2014) studied how to apply multimedia for developing basic Chinese learning of undergraduate students majoring in business Chinese at Panyapiwat Institute. It was found that teaching by using multimedia helped these students improved their Chinese competence and understand more about Chinese cultures.

The above related studies indicated that there are many interesting teaching methods that the teachers of languages can choose to teach in classroom. However, the age of the students including the readiness of classroom setting are needed to be considered before choosing teaching methods. This research study tried to survey teaching methods selected by Thai teachers teaching Chinese in the Office of the Basic Education Commission of Ubon Ratchathani province to be considered for Chinese teaching development in the future.

## **Research Methodology**

This quality research mainly focused on the results taken from the collected questionnaire and analyzed by statistic program and descriptive research.

### **Research Procedures**

To ascertain the reliability of the questionnaire, the questionnaire was tried out in the second semester of the 2017 academic year with 15 teachers of Chinese who served as the subjects of this study. The entire number of returned questionnaires

from the try-out was calculated to obtain coefficient reliability by using SPSS CP program.

### **Sample Group**

The 15 samples were randomized from 45 schools, which were under the supervision of the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) in UbonRatchathani Province, Thailand. The researcher randomized 15 schools from 45 schools as sample groups because data collection has limited financial support and some schools did not allow to collect data.

### **Research Tools and Data Collection**

The research tools were questionnaire consisting of 2 parts: 1) general information of respondents, and 2) questions about Chinese teaching methods.

The questionnaires were distributed to the targeted Thai teachers teaching Chinese in the 15 sample schools for data collection. Moreover, teaching observation and interview were used with questionnaires for data analysis. The researcher sent letters and the questionnaires with stamped addressed envelopes to the 3 experts in this field for checking. For the next step the respondents sent back the questionnaires by mail.

## **Results of the study**

The results were divided into 3 main parts: 1) general information of respondents; 2) types of teaching methods of respondents; and 3) suggestions of respondents. Each result is presented as below.

### **General Information of Respondents**

**Table 3** General Information of Respondents

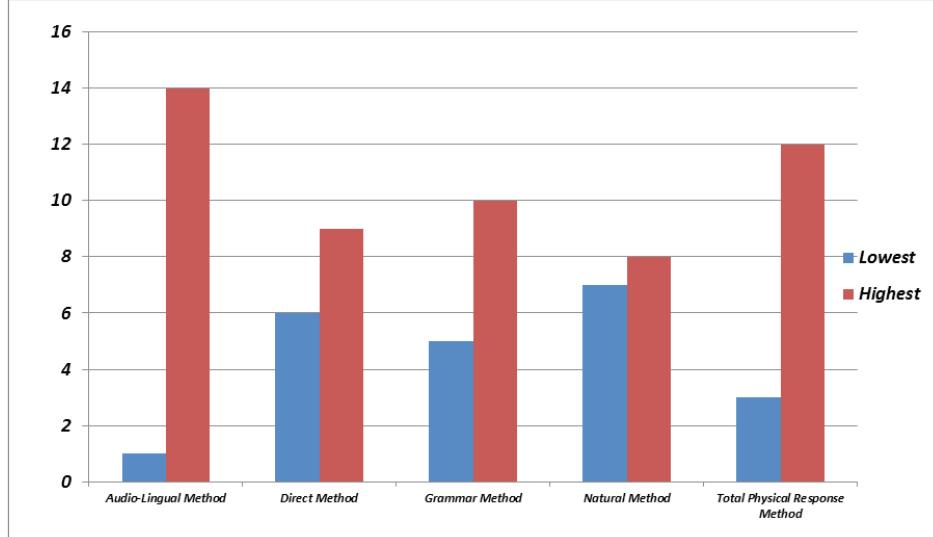
Information	Number	Percentage
<b>1. Gender</b>		
Male	4	12.12
Female	29	87.88
<b>All</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>2. Age</b>		
20-30 years old	21	63.63
31-40 years old	5	15.15
41-50 years old	1	3.03
>50 years old	6	24.25
<b>All</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 3 (cont.)**

Information	Number	Percentage
<b>3. Occupation</b>		
Government Teacher	4	12.12
Government Employee	21	63.63
Assistant Teacher	0	0
Private Teacher	8	24.25
<b>All</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>4. Working Experience</b>		
1-5 year	23	69.70
6-10 year	5	15.15
11-15 year	0	0
16-20 year	0	0
>21 year	5	15.15
<b>All</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>5. Level of qualification</b>		
Bachelor degree	32	96.97
Master degree	1	3.03
Doctorate degree	0	0
<b>All</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100</b>

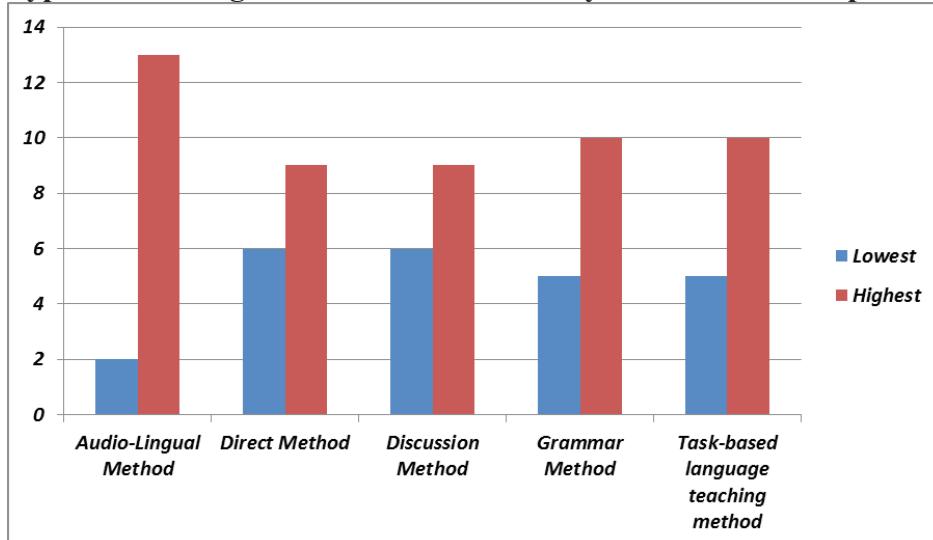
Table 3 showed that most respondents were females. Their mean age was from 20 to 30 years old. Their working experience was in the period of 1 to 5 years.

**Types of teaching methods in the primary school level of respondents**



**Figure 1** Types of teaching methods in the primary school level

**Types of teaching methods in the secondary school level of respondent**



**Figure 2** Types of teaching methods in the secondary school level

## Conclusion and Discussion

According to the results of this study shown in the figure 1 above, it was seen that there were 5 types of teaching methods mostly selected for teaching Chinese in primary school level of Ubon Ratchathani province. The 5 types of teaching methods were as follows. 1) Audio-Lingual method (Highest 93.34% and Lowest 6.66%); 2) Direct method (Highest 60% and Lowest 40%); 3) Grammar translation method (Highest 66.66% and Lowest 33.34%); 4) Natural method (Highest 53.33% and Lowest 46.67%); and 5) Total Physical Response method (Highest 80% and Lowest 20%).

In addition, the teaching methods mostly selected by teachers of Chinese in secondary school level of Ubon Ratchathani province also have 5 methods: 1) Audio-Lingual method (Highest 86.66% and Lowest 13.34%); 2) Direct method (Highest 60% and Lowest 40%); 3) Discussion method (Highest 60% and Lowest 40%); 4) Grammar Translation method (Highest 66.66% and Lowest 33.34%); and 5) Task-based language teaching method (Highest 66.66% and Lowest 33.34%).

From the critical analysis of teaching methods for both primary schools and secondary schools. There are some teaching method that are similar for example Audio – Lingual method, Grammar Translation method and Direct method.

The researcher found that 1) Audio-Lingual method is the highest percentage because there is much practice of dialogues of every situations and listen and drill extensively on target language before being seen in its written form. 2) Grammar Translation method because translation to and from the target language Grammar rules are to be memorized and long lists of vocabulary learned by heart. Moreover oral ability is little or not emphasis. 3) Direct method because mother tongue is not allowed and grammar rules are avoided. Besides good pronunciation is emphasized.

Besides, the reflections of these samples from the interview revealed that they had various problems and limitations of teaching in their schools, such as the lack of human resource (native Chinese teacher), limitation of financial support for doing various learning activities, the lack of standard Chinese textbooks and other teaching materials, the unclear direction of opening Chinese teaching in their schools. These problems and limitations were relevant to the study of Metch. S (2010).

The findings of both primary school level and secondary school level presented above indicated that Thai teachers teaching Chinese in Ubon Ratchathani province faced the obstacles on teaching Chinese in their schools, but they tried to adapt their Chinese teaching to suit their school contexts by considering the age of the students, the difference and the readiness of students' language ability, including the way to manage classroom settings properly.

In term of classroom management, it needs to be considered on the actions and directions that teachers use to create a successful learning environment to make a positive impact on students achieving given learning requirements and goals. Besides, good teacher-student relationships in the classroom could help cooperative learning go smoothly. The language teachers might examine on “5Ws and 1H” (What, When, Where, Who, Why, and How) to select appropriate teaching methods for the successful learning of their students.

## **Suggestion**

Due to the time limitation of this research study, the researcher could collect the data only in Ubon Ratchathani province. Besides, most representatives of this study were female teachers and their mean age was from 20 to 30 years old. Thus, their teaching experiences might be related to their teaching method selection. The suggestions for a further study are: 1) the scope and the area of the next study should be expanded, and 2) the samples should be selected from all mean age of teachers of Chinese equally.

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