

Integration of Chinese, Business, and Cultural Elements in Teaching Business Chinese as a Foreign Language: An Empirical Study Based on Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University in Thailand

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Abstract

Chinese, as the most spoken language globally, is becoming increasingly prominent in terms of importance and status. The teaching of Business Chinese as a foreign language has become more significant as China's economy continues to grow, and the demand for social and economic exchanges between Thailand and China highlights the crucial role of Business Chinese teaching in Thailand. As a specialized language instruction for specific purposes, teaching Business Chinese to foreign learners has its own target professional audience and learning needs. This paper is based on the teaching practices and survey analysis of Business Chinese at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University in Thailand. Through extensive reading of literature and previous research findings, it explores the integration of the three elements: "Chinese, Business, and Culture" in Business Chinese teaching, examines the shortcomings of theory through practical results, and identifies issues from the perspectives of the institution, teachers, teaching materials, and teaching practice. Suggestions are proposed to serve as a reference for future research and teaching. This paper explores theoretical aspects related to Business Chinese teaching as a foreign language, such as teaching objects, methods, content, curriculum design, textbooks, syllabus, teacher development, and teaching evaluation.

Keywords: Business Chinese teaching as a foreign language; Chinese; Business; Cultural elements; Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University in Thailand

1. Introduction

1.1 Rationale and Significance of the Topic

(1) Rationale for Topic Selection Teaching Chinese as a foreign language has developed for decades, resulting in extensive theoretical and research findings. However, research related to Business Chinese teaching as a foreign language is still relatively insufficient. The author chose this topic for the following reasons:

Firstly, there is an imbalance between learning needs and actual teaching and research. In the new era, following President Xi Jinping's promotion of the "Belt and Road" initiative, many countries have engaged in economic cooperation and exchanges with China. Southeast Asian countries like Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos have experienced a surge in the popularity of learning Chinese. Unlike general Chinese teaching, Business Chinese teaching is more targeted and serves a specific purpose. The increasing frequency of personnel and trade exchanges between China and Thailand has accelerated the development of Business Chinese teaching in Thailand. Some universities and vocational colleges in Thailand have also started offering Business Chinese courses. Business Chinese teaching in Thailand has a broad market demand and promising development prospects, but very few people are engaged in teaching and research. The complexity of the teaching audience, the difficulty of teaching, and poor teaching outcomes are among the reasons for this. However, as teachers of Business Chinese as a foreign language, we should take on the responsibility to bridge communication between the two nations, spread culture, and impart business knowledge and communication skills.

Secondly, the theoretical research on Business Chinese teaching as a foreign language is lacking. Business Chinese as a foreign language is a linguistic discipline that has emerged with the advancement of the times and the specialization of teaching. Its teaching theory mostly borrows and incorporates research findings from the theories of teaching Chinese as a foreign language and specialized language instruction. However, as a specialized language, Business Chinese has its own characteristics and is gradually refining its theoretical framework as it develops, much like the development of Chinese as a foreign language. It has a period of theoretical inception and maturity. To date, there has been very little comprehensive research on Business Chinese teaching in Thailand. Papers that explore the local teaching practices and investigate the core areas of Chinese, business, and culture are almost non-existent. Therefore, this topic has research value and innovative aspects.

Thirdly, the practical application and theoretical research have promising prospects. The development of Chinese language teaching in Thailand is strong, and the teaching of Business Chinese is expected to grow as well. For example, in major cities in Thailand, more schools are choosing to offer Business Chinese courses. However, during the teaching process, many problems emerge. How to better manage teaching materials, impart knowledge, convey culture, and teach skills—first requires broadening the depth and scope of research in Business Chinese teaching. Only on this basis can research outcomes be applied in practice, receive feedback, and result in sustained teaching effectiveness. Thus, this research aims to contribute to the development of Business Chinese teaching and inspire future research by combining existing research with personal teaching practices and utilizing multiple teaching theories and methods.

1.2 Research Objectives

- 1.2.1 To evaluate students' perceptions of the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of the content and teaching methods in the Business Chinese course.

- 1.2.2 To assess the impact of integrating Chinese language knowledge, Chinese culture, and business skills on students' ability to communicate in business contexts.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Methods

This study mainly adopts the following research methods:

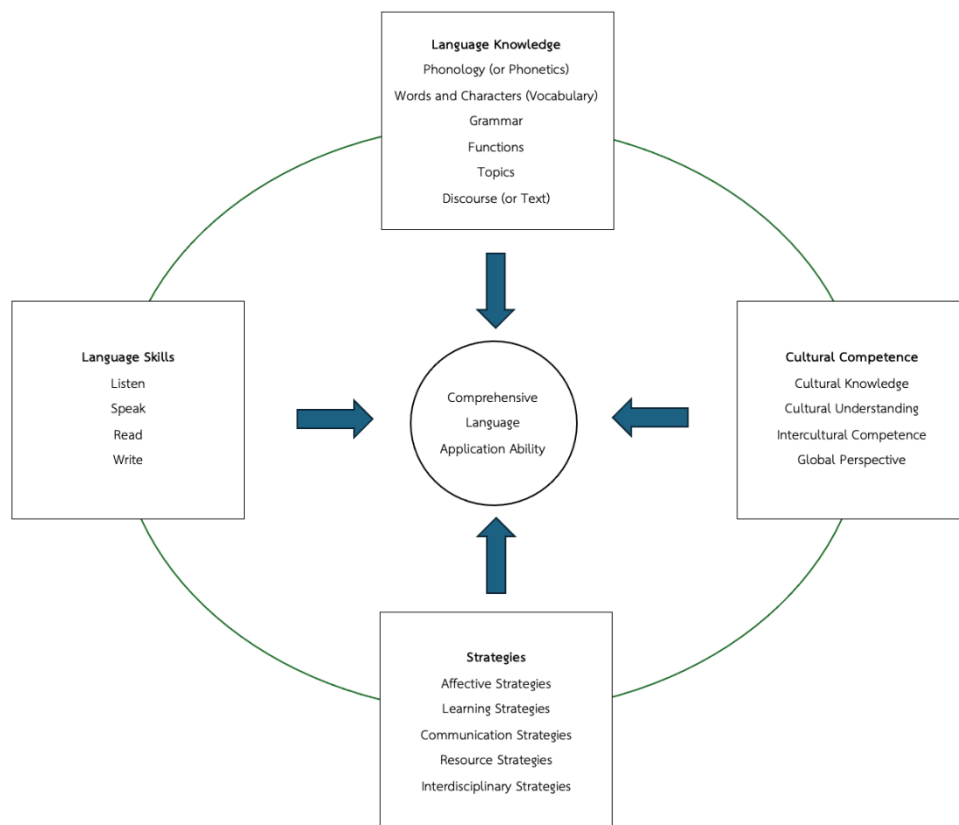
Literature Research Method: This paper conducts an extensive review of existing literature on the theories of Business Chinese teaching, including teaching strategies, textbook design, and evaluation methods. The author analyzes and draws from existing studies to propose a teaching model integrating "Chinese, Business, and Culture."

Questionnaire Survey Method: To gain insights into the current status and challenges of Business Chinese teaching in Thailand, especially at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, this paper uses questionnaires to collect data from students. The questionnaire covers students' Chinese language proficiency, learning needs, and preferences for teaching content and methods.

Teaching Practice Analysis Method: Based on the author's teaching practice at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, this paper analyzes classroom experiences and outcomes, compares them with other teaching methods, and draws practical conclusions to propose improvements.

2.2 Research Objects

This research takes the Business Chinese students at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University in Thailand as its primary research subjects. The target group consists of adult learners, including employees from various industries such as finance, trade, and tourism. These students have a specific interest in learning Business Chinese for professional and business purposes. The research aims to analyze their learning characteristics, motivations, and expectations from Business Chinese courses.



The Relationship between the Three Elements

The integration of "Chinese, Business, and Culture" in Business Chinese teaching reflects the interdisciplinary nature of the subject. Business Chinese is not merely a language course; it also includes elements of business communication, etiquette, and intercultural understanding. The relationship between these three elements is mutually reinforcing. Language is the medium, business is the content, and culture provides context and depth. Properly integrating these three aspects helps students not only to master the language but also to apply it effectively in business contexts.

Specific Strategies for Integrating the Three Elements

Language and Business Integration: Business Chinese courses should focus on teaching specific business vocabulary and expressions. However, the teaching should go beyond just learning vocabulary—it should include understanding business processes, such as negotiations, presentations, and business correspondence. For example, when teaching the vocabulary for trade negotiations, students should be introduced to relevant case studies and simulations to practice using these terms in realistic business situations.

Business and Culture Integration: In Business Chinese, understanding the business culture of China is as important as learning the language. Teachers should emphasize the importance of Chinese business etiquette, customs, and cultural norms, especially in business interactions. For example, the concept of "face" (面子) in Chinese business culture can affect negotiations, decision-making, and relationship-building. Integrating these cultural insights into business language teaching helps students navigate the complexities of Chinese business environments more effectively.

Language and Culture Integration: The Chinese language itself is deeply connected to Chinese culture. When teaching Business Chinese, instructors should integrate cultural elements into language learning, helping students understand idiomatic expressions, proverbs, and cultural references commonly used in business communication. This can be achieved by incorporating multimedia materials such as films, news reports, and case studies that highlight how language and culture intersect in business settings.

Problems and Suggestions

1. Institutional Challenges

At Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, the primary challenge is the lack of a systematic curriculum specifically designed for Business Chinese teaching. Most Business Chinese courses are integrated into general Chinese programs, leading to a lack of focus on the unique needs of business learners. The university should consider developing a dedicated Business Chinese curriculum that combines language learning with business skills and cultural knowledge.

2. Teacher Development Issues

Most Business Chinese teachers in Thailand, including those at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, come from a general Chinese language teaching background. These teachers may lack sufficient knowledge of business concepts and practices, making it difficult to effectively teach Business Chinese. The university should invest in teacher development programs that provide specialized training in both business and language teaching methodologies.

3. Teaching Material Shortcomings

The current Business Chinese textbooks used at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University are outdated and do not sufficiently integrate business and cultural elements. There is a need to develop new teaching materials that reflect modern business practices and provide students with up-to-date knowledge and skills.

4. Practical Teaching Challenges

Students at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University often struggle with applying their Business Chinese knowledge in real-life business situations. This is due in part to the limited opportunities for practical application in the classroom. To address this, the university should introduce more

task-based and experiential learning activities, such as internships, business simulations, and case studies.

5. Students' Learning Challenges

The Business Chinese students at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University come from various professional backgrounds, and their Chinese language proficiency levels are uneven. Additionally, their learning motivations and goals vary, with some focusing more on language acquisition, while others are more interested in learning specific business skills. This diversity creates challenges in curriculum design and classroom management. To address this, teachers should adopt differentiated teaching strategies, offering both personalized and group learning activities to meet the diverse needs of students.

6. Evaluation System Weaknesses

The current evaluation methods used in Business Chinese teaching mainly focus on written exams, which cannot comprehensively assess the students' language proficiency and their ability to apply it in business contexts. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce a more diversified evaluation system, incorporating both formative and summative assessments. This could include oral presentations, business project reports, and practical case analysis to better measure students' overall business communication skills.

3. Discussion

According to the research results, over 80% of students study Chinese for their future academic and career goals. When researchers surveyed students about integrating Chinese culture into the course content, the findings revealed that students generally believed learning Chinese culture greatly benefits the use of business Chinese, including enhancing understanding of trade, working with Chinese people, and conducting business. This aligns with the study by Kriengkrai Kongseng (2018), who examined the popular Chinese textbook *Hanyu Jiaocheng* used in countries like Thailand. The study pointed out that the textbook contains 21 important moral values related to Chinese culture. Therefore, integrating Chinese cultural content into business Chinese teaching is an effective way to help Thai students understand Chinese cultural values, which are reflected in the textbook.

Additionally, Chinese culture is deeply rooted in the daily lives of Chinese people. Language learning can be done through institutions or applications, just like other languages. Angwara Luangnapa et al. (2022) studied the development of an English logistics course based on technology, where researchers used 15 types of technology media for teaching, evaluation, and classroom management. The results showed that students found Interactive PowerPoint and Quizizz to be the most helpful for learning, with a significant improvement in learning outcomes at a 0.001 significance level. Thus, language skills can be effectively developed both in classroom instruction and through the use of technology media. However, given that Chinese

people place great importance on traditions, learning the language must also involve learning Chinese culture, regardless of the medium of instruction. This is particularly relevant given the close relationship between Thailand and China, such as visa exemption policies and investment plans in the electric vehicle industry. Therefore, applying Chinese cultural elements in business Chinese teaching will enable students to use their knowledge efficiently in their future careers, successfully cooperating with Chinese people and achieving professional success.

4. Conclusion

Business Chinese teaching plays an essential role in fostering effective communication and mutual understanding in today's globalized business environment. However, many challenges remain in the design of Business Chinese curricula, teaching methods, and evaluation systems. This paper explores the current situation of Business Chinese teaching at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University in Thailand and proposes a teaching model that integrates "Chinese, Business, and Culture."

By adopting this integrated teaching approach, students will not only master the language but also gain valuable insights into Chinese business practices and cultural norms, equipping them with the tools to thrive in the competitive international business arena. In the future, it is essential for Business Chinese educators to continue refining their teaching strategies, ensuring that their students can meet the demands of the rapidly evolving global economy.

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