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Innovative Management of Chinese Language in Thailand Education Systems Benchmark with Singapore Practices

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Abstract

The Chinese language is currently the second most popular language in Thailand. With increased communication and business interaction with China, Chinese has become one of the most widely used languages globally. Chinese teaching in Thailand dates back many centuries, to the period of significant Chinese immigration, when immigrants brought their rich cultural heritage, including the Chinese language. Many studies have found that teachers are one of the main factors influencing Thai students' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their Chinese language performance. In addition to teachers, other important factors include students, textbooks, curriculum design and implementation, evaluation methods, and support systems. This study uses Singapore's education system and the success of students in learning Chinese as a benchmark for analyzing and clarifying the challenges that arise in Chinese language education for Thai SSRU (Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University) students. It explores various aspects of teaching, teaching materials, and curriculum design that may aid the progress of Chinese learners. The study also examines the role of students in the psychological aspects of knowledge acquisition—both in terms of belief systems and language learning—and the potential for Singapore's model to enhance Chinese learning in Thailand. By analyzing students' test scores and self-evaluations, the study investigates the interrelationship between language proficiency and personal beliefs. The goal is to help learners overcome difficulties in learning Chinese and to prepare Thailand for the anticipated increase in Chinese tourists after the pandemic, thus contributing to the Ministry of Education's (MOE) lifelong bilingual education goals and creating value for Thailand's tourism development through the implementation of training programs and an appropriate education system.

Keywords: Education, Second language, Chinese language, Educational System, Benchmark

1. Introduction

Bilingual education is vital for Thailand, especially with its neighboring countries speaking diverse languages like Malay, Burmese, and Lao. Tourism, a key economic driver, saw 25% of 40 million tourists in 2019 coming from China, underscoring the importance of learning Chinese for business and cultural exchange. Nowadays, we cannot deny the efficiency of Thailand's work with the many communication channels that have been connected to each other, the business sector during the time or the culture (Kriangkrai Kongseng, 2019) However,

learning Chinese as a second language remains challenging for countries like Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore.

The following tables summarize key aspects of Chinese education in Thailand and Singapore:

Table 1: Evolution of Chinese Education in Thailand

Period	Key Developments	Enrollment Figures
Late 19th - Early 20th Century	Establishment of Chinese schools	Not documented
1991 - 2000	Educational reforms; 150 schools by late 1990s	Not documented
2005	119 registered private Chinese schools	Over 1,000 students

Table 2: Key Policies Impacting Chinese Education in Singapore

Year	Policy/Development	Impact
1904	Establishment of Chinese schools	Foundation for modern Chinese education
1966	Implementation of bilingual education system	Shift towards English-medium instruction
1980	Decline in Chinese school enrollment	Only 9 major Chinese middle schools remain
1987	Unification of schools under a national curriculum	Erosion of language-based educational identity

Table 3: Comparison of Chinese Education Policies in Thailand and Singapore

Aspect	Thailand	Singapore
Government Influence	Policy shifts significantly affect enrollment	Active role in curriculum and language policy
Language Instruction	Bilingual emphasis; resurgence of Chinese	Bilingual but increasingly English-focused
School Types	Diverse; includes private and public schools	Primarily public with a focus on ethnic education

Table 4: Challenges Facing Chinese Education in Southeast Asia

Challenge	Thailand	Singapore
Enrollment Fluctuations	Declining interest in Chinese schools	Shift towards English language instruction

Government Restrictions	Limiting Chinese language education	Emphasis on national language integration
Cultural Identity	Need for preservation amidst globalization	Balancing ethnic heritage with modernization

1.1 Research Gap

Singapore is a model for successful bilingual education, supported by strong government policies, flexible second language options, and community involvement. Thailand faces challenges in managing cultural and language differences, impacting its education system. The gap lies in understanding how Singapore's approach can inform improvements in Thailand's Chinese language education.

1.2 Research Objective:

To enhance Thailand's Chinese language education system through innovative management. To improve the standardization of teaching materials.

Significance of the Study: This study aims to identify best practices from Singapore's education system to improve Chinese language learning in Thailand.

2.1 Introduction

The development of Chinese education in Thailand and Singapore reflects the intricate interplay between local policies, historical events, and socio-economic factors. This study examines how Chinese education has evolved in both countries, highlighting the influence of government policies, cultural identity, and globalization on educational practices.

2.2 Methods

To explore the evolution of Chinese education in Thailand and Singapore, the study examines historical records, government policies, and socio-economic factors that have influenced educational systems. A comparative approach is used to understand the differences and similarities between the two countries in promoting Chinese language and culture through education.

2.3 Results

2.3.1 Chinese Education in Thailand

Chinese schools in Thailand were established in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with a notable increase following the 1991 educational reforms promoting Chinese language instruction. By 2005, the number of Chinese schools had risen to 150, despite facing challenges such as fluctuating enrolment rates and government restrictions on language education. Public schools and English medium instruction became more prevalent as alternatives to Chinese schools.

2.3.2 Chinese Education in Singapore

Chinese education in Singapore developed within the framework of its multi-ethnic identity and economic priorities. Early institutions like the Chinese High School and Nanyang Girls' High School played key roles. The Japanese occupation (1942-1945) caused a significant

disruption, and the post-World War II period saw a decline in Chinese language instruction. The introduction of a bilingual education system in 1966 promoted English alongside ethnic languages, further diminishing the role of Chinese as a primary medium of instruction.

2.4 Discussion

The evolution of Chinese education in Thailand and Singapore reflects the complex relationship between cultural identity, government policy, and educational reforms. In Thailand, the growth of Chinese schools was periodically hindered by political restrictions, whereas in Singapore, the prominence of English in education gradually diminished the role of Chinese. As globalization continues to shape educational priorities, both countries face challenges in preserving Chinese language and culture, raising questions about the future of ethnic language education in Southeast Asia. Important points: Thailand's official language is Thai. While Singapore already uses English as its official language. This makes learning Chinese in Thailand not a second language, but considered an additional third language.

3 Conclusion

This study synthesized data from the 2016 Research Project for the Development of Teaching and Learning Management Systems in Thailand conducted by the Center for Chinese Studies, Chulalongkorn University. By comparing five different schools and institutional levels, we analyzed the variations in teaching materials and identified limitations across the educational spectrum. A comprehensive survey involving 769 primary students, 707 secondary students, 173 technical students, 58 university students, and 152 non-formal school students provided insights into the current state of Chinese language education. Additionally, feedback from 200 major Chinese language students at SSRU highlighted key areas for improvement.

Based on these findings, policy recommendations focus on enhancing the administration and management of Chinese language teaching, refining curricula, improving teaching media, supporting teachers, engaging learners, and fostering collaboration with relevant agencies. These initiatives aim to promote effective Chinese language education and address existing gaps in teaching resources and methodologies.

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