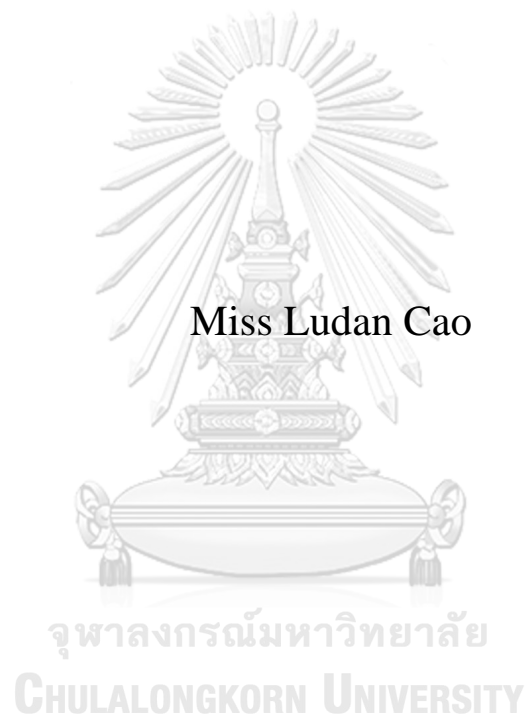


Chinese Language Education in Thai Social Context: A Case  
Study of Chinese Language Teaching at Debsirin School,  
Bangkok



Miss Ludan Cao

An Independent Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts in Thai Studies  
FACULTY OF ARTS  
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การศึกษาภาษาจีนในบริบทสังคมไทย: กรณีศึกษาการสอนภาษาจีนในโรงเรียนเทพศิรินทร์  
กรุงเทพมหานคร



สารนิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาอักษรศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต  
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By                                      Miss Ludan Cao  
Field of Study                      Thai Studies  
Thesis Advisor                    Associate Professor SIRIPORN SRIWARAKAN, Ph.D.

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งานวิจัยนี้ศีกษาปัจจัยที่ส่งผลต่อทัศนคติของนักเรียนชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 1-3 ต่อการเรียนภาษาจีนในโครงการจัดการเรียนการสอนตามหลักสูตรกระทรวงศีกษาธิการเป็นภาษาอังกฤษ โรงเรียนเทพศิรินทร์ประเทศไทย ในงานวิจัยนี้มีการใช้แบบสอบถามในการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลจากนักเรียนกลุ่มดังกล่าวจำนวน 60 คน ผลปรากฏว่ามีทั้งปัจจัยภายในและปัจจัยภายนอกที่ส่งผลต่อทัศนคติของนักศีกษา ในแง่มุมของปัจจัยภายใน ได้แก่ ความสนใจของนักเรียน ระดับของความเลี้ยงที่ยอมรับได้ และความตระหนักรู้ถึงความสำคัญของภาษาจีน ส่วนแล้วแต่มีผลกระทบอย่างมีนัยสำคัญต่อทัศนคติในด้านการเรียนภาษาจีนของพวกเขา ส่วนแง่มุมด้านปัจจัยภายนอกนั้น ได้แก่ เนื้อหาสาระของการสอน ผู้ปกครองของนักเรียน และปัจจัยที่เกี่ยวข้องกับครูผู้สอน จากผลการศีกษาสรุปได้ว่าปัจจัยภายในมีผลกระทบอย่างมีนัยสำคัญต่อทัศนคติด้านการเรียนภาษาจีนของนักเรียนกลุ่มนี้



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Ludan Cao : Chinese Language Education in Thai Social Context: A Case  
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Advisor: Assoc. Prof. SIRIPORN SRIWARAKAN, Ph.D.

This research investigates the factors affecting Matthayom Sueksa 1-3 (grade 7-9) students' attitudes towards learning Chinese language in the English Program of Debsirin School in Thailand. In this study, questionnaires were used to collect data from 60 students in those mentioned classed. The results show that there are both internal factors and external factors that affect students' attitudes. In terms of internal factors, students' interests, risk appetite, and awareness of the importance of Chinese language have a significant impact on their attitude towards learning Chinese language. On the other hand, the study also identified external factors, including teaching content, students' parents, and teacher-related factors. From the questionnaire survey, it can be concluded that the internal factors have a significant impact on students' attitudes towards Chinese learning of the M1-M3 students in the English Program, Debsirin School, Thailand.



Field of Study: Thai Studies

Student's Signature

Academic Year: 2022

Advisor's Signature

.....

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# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background of Research

In recent years, the Thai government's Chinese education policy has gradually developed based on the policy support provided by Chinese language promotion and close cooperation between China's Hanban and the Thai Ministry of Education. The popularization of Chinese language education is accelerating across all levels of education in Thailand, with the number of schools offering Chinese courses continually increasing. At the same time, more and more people choose Chinese as a second foreign language after English, gradually developing Chinese studies into a social phenomenon or trend. In 2005, the Thai Ministry of Education launched its Strategic Plan to Promote Chinese Language Teaching in Thailand and improve national competitiveness. The strategic plan's overarching aim is to provide Thai students at all levels and stages with effective Chinese language education.

Hanban has been carrying out volunteer programs for Chinese teachers in Thailand since 2003. Simultaneously, many Chinese volunteers have been stationed in Thailand. In 2006, the world's first Confucius Classroom was established in Traimit Wittayalai High School, Thailand; in the interim, many Confucius Institutes have been founded in the country, further increasing the number of Chinese language learners. In addition, in the process of second language learning, learners' own learning attitudes are positively correlated with learning outcomes (Zulfikar, 2019). Accordingly, it is necessary to understand the factors that affect students' learning attitudes to improve their learning attitudes as much as possible. As an elective course in Debsirin School's English program, Chinese is taught in an English environment with English as the language of instruction. As such, the teaching model of the English Program class is relatively novel, in that it differs from the teaching models used in regular programs: students study a non-native language (Thai) and a non-target language (Chinese) environment. Debsirin's English program model is not unique; this approach is commonplace in Thai bilingual schools, especially private and international schools. Therefore, it is necessary for English program classes to understand the specific intricacies and nuances of Chinese teaching.

## 1.2 Research Questions

This paper takes the students' Chinese learning attitude at Debsirin School as the main research object in accordance with the following purposes:

- (i) In the context of the changing Chinese language policy in Thailand, what are the changes in the status of the Chinese language in Thai society?
- (ii) What factors or reasons influence the status and development of the Chinese language in Thai society?
- (iii) What factors positively or negatively impact M1-M3 students' Chinese language learning in the Debsirin School English Program?
- (iv) In the context of the Chinese language education offered as part of the English program at Debsirin School, does Thailand's Chinese language education policy influence M1-M3 students' attitudes towards learning Chinese?

## 1.3 Research Content

This paper is divided into five sections. The first section introduces the research background, purpose, and significance, along with the literature review and relevant definitions. The second section explores the development of Thai language policy, foreign language policy, and Thai Chinese policy to investigate changes in the status of Chinese in Thai society and the reasons for such changes. The third section analyzes the factors that affect students' choice of Chinese courses by issuing questionnaires to M1-M3 students studying Chinese as part of Debsirin School's English Program. The fourth section probes the strategic planning objectives of the Ministry of Education of Thailand's *Strategic Plan of Promoting Chinese Teaching in Thailand to Improve National Competitiveness (2006-2010)* and discusses the actual situation of Chinese education in Thailand based on the questionnaire results. The fifth section puts forward the final conclusions, areas that were not addressed, and limitations.

## 1.4 Research Methods

The literature review in this paper consists of a literature research method, a questionnaire survey, and data analysis.

### 1.4.1 Literature Research Method

This paper collected, integrated, analyzed, and researched the relevant literature derived from an existing literature review database. On this basis, the paper summarizes the theories and research results pertaining to learning attitudes and second language learning attitudes at home and abroad. It was necessary to understand the research direction, methods, and achievements of the existing literature to provide reference value and a basis for the research carried out here.

### 1.4.2 Questionnaire Survey

In this study, M1-3 students learning Chinese as part of Debsirin School's English Program are taken as the research object to issue questionnaires and collect questionnaire data.

### 1.4.3 Data Analysis

In this paper, the data of the effective questionnaires were collected and analyzed by using Excel, IBM SPSS Statistics 22 software and qualitative analysis. The theoretical framework of this paper is shown in the figure below:



*Figure 1 Theoretical framework of this paper*

The role of Chinese education in Thai society and the government's policies on Chinese education.

## 1.5 Literature Review

This paper examines the literature through the lenses of learning attitude, second language learning attitude, and factors that affect learning attitude.

*Social psychology and the role of attitudes and motivation in second language learning: correlational and experiment considerations* by R.C. Gardner (1985). The author divides attitude toward language learning into two categories: the attitude toward the target language and the attitude toward the target language group. Gardner suggests that the first attitude is consistent with the language learning outcomes, whilst the second attitude exhibits a more fluid relationship. Gardner further argues that there is a mutual influence between learning attitude and learning motivation.

*Investigation and Research on Chinese Learning Attitudes of Foreign Students* by Shiyu Wang (2018). This paper conducted a quantitative questionnaire survey exploring the attitude of foreign students studying in China by referencing cultural attitude, target group attitude, and other attitude factors. It is found there are no obvious differences in Chinese learning attitudes in terms of gender, age, and nationality. Moreover, the number of years of studying Chinese is positively correlated with learning attitude.

*A Study on the Learning Attitudes of Chinese Language Learners in Betong, Thailand* by Liying Chen (2016). This paper analyzed the learning attitudes of Chinese learners in Betong, Thailand from four aspects: ethnic group, age, gender, and length of time studying Chinese. The research shows that Thai students majoring in Chinese have the most positive attitude towards the Chinese learning situation, followed by target language group attitude, learning attitude, and subjective and functional attitude, although the broader cultural attitude is weak. Based on the survey results and the problems with learning attitude reflected in various factors affecting attitudes towards studying Chinese, this paper puts forward some suggestions for optimization.

*A study on the influence of college students' learning attitude on learning effect* by Fan Zhang (2014), This paper studies the relationship between learning attitude and learning effect of Chinese college students. By means of questionnaire survey, the author investigated 1000 college students of different grades and majors to understand the current situation and possible influencing factors of college students' learning attitudes and learning goals. The results show that there is a certain degree of bad learning attitude and lack of learning goals among college students.

*Factors affecting the attitudes of students towards learning English as a foreign language* by Addisu Sewbihon Getie (2020). The study collected data from 103

students using questionnaires. In addition, group interviews were held to discuss this topic with the study subjects. The study found that these participants exhibited a positive attitude towards learning English. Social factors are considered to have a positive influence on students' attitudes. On the other hand, educational background factors, such as English teachers and learning situations, are observed to reduce students' positive attitudes towards English learning.

## **1.6 Definition of Relevant Concepts**

This paper deals with the relevant definitions of attitude, learning attitude, second language learning attitude, and language value.

For present purposes, any reference to Chinese should be seen to refer to Mandarin, the official language of China (note that it does not include Chinese dialects).

### **1.6.1 The Concept of Attitude**

There is no doubt that students' attitudes are an integral factor influencing their language learning. Herbert Spencer and Alexander Bain (1860) viewed attitude as a preconceived idea and tendency that guides thinking and judgment in a given direction. Qingde Tao (2001) is of the mind that attitude is the sum of an individual's evaluation and internal reflection tendencies towards specific objects. Moreover, such as attitude is closely related to an individual's beliefs and values. Elsewhere, it has been found that language learning is closely related to attitudes towards language (Starks & Paltridge, 1996). In the same way, a positive language attitude can furnish learners with a positive orientation towards foreign language learning. Such attitudes play a crucial role in language learning, as they appear to influence students' learning success or failure. Therefore, in the language learning process, students' positive attitude affects their willingness to improve their Chinese proficiency and vice versa.

#### **1.6.1.1 The Concept of Learning Attitude**

MJ Rosenberg and CT Hoveland (1960) posit that learning attitude consists of three elements: cognitive level, emotional experience, and behavioral tendency. Later,



Deqing Tao<sup>1</sup> (2001) suggests that students' learning attitude can be regarded as the sum of their evaluation of learning and internal reaction tendencies. Specifically, it is characterized as the core pillar of students' attitude system, constituting students' basic personality characteristics. It should also be noted that learning attitude forms a central part of many non-intellectual factors that affect students' learning.

Xun Liu (2000) believes that learning attitude can be broken down into positive attitude, general attitude, and negative attitude. From this perspective, those who have a positive attitude tend to possess important internal factors. Moreover, given their keen interest in learning itself, they often exhibit a high degree of initiative in the learning process. General attitudes are mainly influenced by external factors, such as rewards and parents. When exclusively viewing learning as an ordinary task, students lack the enthusiasm to learn and do not display any initiative. A negative learning attitude is often forced by external pressure, resulting in students both lacking interest in learning and exhibiting some degree of aversion.

### **1.6.1.2 The Concept of Second Language Learning Attitude**

Introduction to the pedagogy of Chinese as a foreign language (Xun Liu,2000) touch on several aspects of second language learning attitude: (i) Attitude towards the target language community and culture; (ii) Attitude towards the target language; (iii) Attitude towards curriculum arrangement, teachers, and teaching materials.

## **1.7 Factors Affecting Chinese Language Learning of Student's Attitudes**

Xun Liu (2000) suggests that internal factors are the motivation generated by an individual. It typically stems from the individual's interest in what they are doing and their understanding of its significance. External factors result from external dynamics, such as the influence of others, rewards, and punishments.

### **(i) Internal Factors**

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<sup>1</sup> Deqing Tao: Scale of primary and secondary school students' learning attitude: 23 - 26.  
<http://www.jylw.com/4/wz1253704.html>

According to Zulfikar et al. (2019), students' emotional attitude features four positive points: interest, feeling, preference and enjoyment of foreign language. It follows that students show a positive attitude towards content related to their interests. Dulay (1982) argues that students' willingness to take risks would affect their tendency to participate in classroom activities. Elsewhere, Zulfikar et al. (2019) find that students' awareness of the importance of a second language or a foreign language is positively correlated with their attitude towards English learning. Therefore, the greater students' awareness of the importance of a second language or foreign language to their future work, the more positive their attitude towards foreign language learning will be.

### **(ii) External Factors**

The opportunity for students to practice English as a target language has a significant impact on their attitude towards English learning (Pride, 1979; Krogh, 1990). For example, students who have more opportunities to practice a second or foreign language tend to do better than those students who have access to fewer opportunities to use the target language. Meanwhile, teachers also play a very important role in students' learning process. Effective interaction between students and teachers can shape the former's attitudes towards foreign language learning (Day & Ford, 1998). On a similar point, Spolsky (1972) argues that a lack of communication between teachers and students reduces teaching effectiveness. Wilkins (1974) believes that the attitude of students is highly similar to those of their parents. Therefore, it can be said that parents determine the effectiveness of their children in the second or foreign language, to a large extent. This is because how children act and speak tends to reflect their parents' attitudes or behaviors.

## **Chapter 2 Chinese Education Policy and the Development**

### **History of Chinese Teaching in Thailand**

#### **2.1 Thailand's Language Policy**

Thailand's language policy includes both monolingual (standard Thai) and diversified language policies.

The early Thai government adopted a monolingual policy whereby standard Thai was the sole language medium. Particularly during the reign of King Rama 4-5, the Thai government (Siam) needed the country to unite against Western power and perceived threats. The Thai authorities have adopted an assimilation policy or 'Thaification', one strategy of which is the adoption of a single standard Thai language. The Thai government has indirectly adopted the national language policy as a tool to achieve national integration, integrating ethnic minorities and immigrants into the main ethnic group dominated by the Thai and facilitating their acceptance of the Thai language and culture. In the process of building a nation-state in Thailand, the government continues to strengthen the status of the Thai language as a means to promote the national identity of immigrants and ethnic minorities.

Since the 1930s, the authorities have repeatedly espoused their belief that foreign languages, especially Chinese, are an obstacle to national security. As a result, many Chinese schools were closed and Chinese courses banned (Zhang Bing, 2009). Standard Thai is an important factor in the change of social class, as only by receiving Thai education can one integrate into and become an active member of society. However, most individuals of Chinese descent born in Thailand hope to be recognized by Thai society to obtain equal development opportunities in the education system and political economy (Zhang Bing, 2009). Likewise, this policy approach restricted other language policies, even if the result was the elimination of other ethnic groups' language cultures. At present, the Chinese community is relatively untroubled, although protests are still ongoing in the Muslim south.

At present, the whole world is included in the globalization system, and against

this backdrop, social diversity is constantly advocated. In 2008, the *Language Policy: Language Diversity and National Unity* conference was held in Bangkok, Thailand. The conference promoted the *Mother Tongue Based Program*<sup>2</sup> to provide bilingual teaching based to Thai minorities based on their mother tongue to strengthen children's learning and development capabilities in areas such as the deep south of Thailand. In 2006, the Thai government approved a policy drafted by the Royal Thai Academy of Arts, which was signed and approved by a resolution. The policy focuses on the maintenance and promotion of Thai as the official language of the country, the maintenance of the various Thai dialects and Thai language and cultural identity, and the promotion of language learning by those with disabilities or language impairments<sup>3</sup>. In addition, the policy promotes Thai students to be more active in learning foreign languages so as to improve national competitiveness and the ability to cooperate and communicate internationally. As noted above, Thailand has adopted a policy of language assimilation motivated by national security concerns. This policy strengthens other ethnic groups' sense of identity in the country, thereby promoting ethnic integration and national unity. The disadvantage of such an approach is that it strengthens the dominant position of Thai in society and inhibits the development of other national languages, much to their detriment. In light of shifts in international relations and economic development, Thailand's language policy is adjusting in response to increasing globalization. The importance of Thailand's language and foreign language policy is further affirmed from the perspective of national security to enhance international competitiveness.

## 2.2 The Evolution of Chinese Education Policy in Thailand

The teaching of the Chinese language in Thailand began with Chinese immigrants moving to Thailand. Although Thailand has a long history of Chinese teaching, the

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<sup>2</sup> Mother Tongue Based Program official website <https://www.unicef.org/thailand/press-releases/mother-tongue-based-education-provides-ethnic->

<sup>3</sup> Development of the National Language Policy (2006-2010) Committee to Draft the National Language Policy The Royal Institute of Thailand <https://royalsociety.go.th/development-of-the-national-language-policy-2006-2010-committee-to-draft-the-national-language-policy-the-royal-institute-of-thailand/>

government has not been supportive of Chinese teaching for some time. The development of Thai Chinese has gone through a process of rise - decline - brief revival - decline and prosperity.

**(i) The rising period after the 1860s**

From the perspective of the changes in Chinese education policies in Thailand and the social and historical causes, the entry of Chinese into Thailand has not only been influenced by the Chinese education policies in Thailand, but also Thailand's openness to the outside world at any given time. For example, prior to the 1860s, the Thai government explicitly stipulated that no foreign immigrants were allowed to enter the country. After the 1860s, Thailand began to open up to the outside world, at which point the Thai government encouraged and welcomed Chinese immigrants (LijuanWei, 2012). As for the Chinese language education policy in Thailand, the Thai government generally supports the use of Chinese by Thai Chinese communities. In the view of the Thai government at that time, Chinese immigrants brought with them Chinese culture. Specifically, early immigrants brought about language and writing contact between Thai and Chinese communities, leading to the adoption of Chinese loanwords in Thai, such as เต้าหู้. Overall, the usage and scope of Thai Chinese at that time were not extensive or popular.

From the 1860s onwards, Thai Chinese enjoyed a rapid rise, marked by *The Treaty of Beijing* in 1860; in this policy context, Thai Chinese began to develop. However, at that stage, Thai Chinese was still only a means of internal communication language in many Chinese families. Simultaneously, with the rise of nationalism in China at that time, Chinese education gradually began to develop. For example, Zhongshan Sun came to Thailand to host The Bangkok Branch of the China Tong Meng Association and founded The Chinese Association in Thailand, which engaged in the Chinese education of immigrant Thai Chinese (Fang Zhang, 2014). Since 1910, Chinese immigrating to Thailand have established Chinese language schools of their own initiative, such as Peiyuan School, Bangkok. After the 1920s, Chinese schools and Chinese language education developed rapidly in Bangkok: the Chinese community gradually unified, ending the previous division of the Chinese society dominated by geography and mediated by their respective dialects. During this period, the Chinese language and Chinese schools continuously evolved.

### **(ii) The recession phase during World War II—1939-1945**

In 1939, Plaek Phibunsongkhram became Thailand's first Prime Minister. He implemented pro-Japanese policies externally and Thaification (Thaiization) internally. In 1940, the Chinese schools were gradually closed, citing violations of the 1918 *Civil School Regulations*. From 1939 to 1945, Chinese education fell to its lowest point. At this stage, the language value of Thai Chinese did not duly consider its emotional value, which directly or indirectly led to conflict among individuals between their social identity and their mother tongue (Zhiguo Zhang, 2019).

### **(iii) A brief period of recovery and recessionary decline at the end of World War II**

At the end of World War II, Chinese schools reopened. In 1946, China and Thailand signed the *China-Siam Friendship Treaty*, which marked an important turning point in Thailand's Chinese education policy. In the treaty, the Thai authorities (Siam) explicitly promised to restore all the Chinese language schools that had been suspended up to this point, further stipulating that Chinese and their children enjoy the political rights and freedoms relating to Chinese language education in Thailand, whilst Thai Chinese have the right to freely establish Chinese language schools. Thus, Chinese education once again achieved a brief revival and legal status. In 1947, Plaek Phibunsongkhram regained power and re-implemented anti-Chinese policies, restricting the development of Chinese language education. As a result, Chinese education in Thailand shifted again from revival to decline.

### **(iv) Further stages of development after the 1980s**

In the 1980s, China and Thailand began to establish diplomatic relations (1975), agreeing to full cooperation and development in political, economic, cultural, educational, military, and other aspects. In particular, Sino-Thai economic and trade links have become increasingly close. Notably, the Thai government has gradually relaxed its policies on Chinese education in Thailand: In addition to allowing the revival of Chinese education in Chinese schools, it also actively encourages the Chinese in Thailand to promote Chinese language teaching. Under the influence of this education policy, Chinese education in Thailand experienced yet another revival and developed rapidly in the intervening years.

In 1992, the Thai government made another major adjustment to the Chinese education policy and listed Chinese education as a foreign language education, thus allowing the Chinese language to be taken as an optional course. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1975, there have been various forms of Chinese education, such as Thai language training centers. However, the Thai government's policy adjustment on Chinese language education was to remove the restrictions on Chinese language teaching in a meaningful way. In 1998, Chinese was included in the foreign language selection of the college entrance college examination, marking the formal inclusion of Chinese in the national education system.

With the global boom of Chinese learning in the 21st century, Thailand's Chinese education policy has also evolved to a level of unprecedented openness. Against this backdrop, the Chinese government has seized on this to install Confucius Institutes (classrooms) through its *Belt and Road Initiative* and broader globalization strategy. In 2004, the Confucius Institute Program was officially launched, leading Chinese education in Thailand to further develop. In the Thai government's Chinese education policy, both China and Thailand are clearly supported to strengthen the teaching of the Chinese language through the Confucius Institute program and promote the dissemination and inheritance of Chinese culture. Notably, Thailand has the largest number of Confucius Institutes in Asia<sup>4</sup>. In 2006, Thailand's Ministry of Education issued its *Strategic plan for promoting Chinese language teaching to enhance national competitiveness* (2005-2010) (hereinafter referred to as the *Strategic Plan*). Led by the government, the *Strategic Plan* fully demonstrates the importance of the Chinese language. To date, under the positive influence of Thai Chinese education policy, Thai Chinese has rapidly developed and is quickly becoming one of the most important foreign languages in Thailand. Since then, the implementation of Chinese education in Thailand is no longer voluntary and driven by overseas Chinese; instead, it reflects the will of the government, which is a national will. The Thai government's initiatives facilitate the comprehensive development of Chinese education. Chinese education in

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<sup>4</sup>ASEAN-China Center [http://www.asean-china-center.org/2010-05/19/c\\_13302786.htm#:~:text=%E6%B3%B0%E5%9B%BD%E4%B9%9F%E6%98%AF%E4%B8%9C%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%9A%E4%B9%83%E8%87%B3%E4%BA%9A%E6%B4%B2,%E5%A5%BD%E6%A1%A5%E6%A2%81%E4%B8%8E%E5%A5%BD%E5%B9%B3%E5%8F%B0%E3%80%82](http://www.asean-china-center.org/2010-05/19/c_13302786.htm#:~:text=%E6%B3%B0%E5%9B%BD%E4%B9%9F%E6%98%AF%E4%B8%9C%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%9A%E4%B9%83%E8%87%B3%E4%BA%9A%E6%B4%B2,%E5%A5%BD%E6%A1%A5%E6%A2%81%E4%B8%8E%E5%A5%BD%E5%B9%B3%E5%8F%B0%E3%80%82)

Thailand has evolved from largely catering to specific groups to serving people with different needs, at different levels, and in various fields. Accordingly, the Thai government's attitude towards Chinese education is now open and diversified. At this stage, the value of the Chinese language in Thailand is mainly economic, whilst its cultural and emotional value are ancillary.

In short, through its various phases, the adjustments to the Chinese education policy by the Thai government have not been driven by educational motivations. Both restrictions and incentives have a deep political background. In recent years, the changes in the international landscape and the rapid development of China have also provided a solid foundation for further cultural, political, economic and educational exchanges between China and Thailand, which have increased the economic value of the Chinese language, as reflected in the number of speakers of the language and its scope of use. The more language users (including native language, second language and foreign-language users), the greater the use value of the language, the higher its economic value; at the same time, the more widely the language is used, the stronger the language and the higher its economic value (Zhiguo Zhang, 2019). The promulgation of the *Strategic Plan* (2006-2010) reflects that the Thai government attaches great importance to the Chinese language. These policies have strongly promoted the gradual heating up of Chinese language learning.



*Figure 2 The evolution of Chinese education in Thailand*

The role of Chinese education in Thai society and the government's policies on Chinese education.

*Table 1 The role of Chinese education in Thai society and the government's policy towards Chinese education*

	The role of Chinese language education in the social development of Thailand	Relevant Chinese language policies of the government
1	Inherit the language of Chinese culture	Civil School Ordinance 1918



2	Dangerous language to national security	Civil School Ordinance 1936
3	The language of enemies of friendly nations	1940 Thai Ministry of Education directive to control Chinese language schools
4	Language of major countries	1948 Syllabus for pre-university teaching
5	The tool language of propagating socialist thought	1951 National Education Plan
6	The communicative language of national social and economic development	1992 National Education Plan
7	Second foreign language	National Curriculum for Basic Education System 2001
8	Language to improve national competitiveness in globalization	Strategic plan for promoting Chinese language teaching to enhance national competitiveness (2005-2010)

### **2.3 Reasons for the Change in the Status of Chinese Language Learning in Thailand's Language Policy**

Due to the influence of factors such as the closeness and disconnection between China and Thailand and the value of Chinese tools and the strength of Chinese national identity, the status of Chinese in Thai language policy has undergone a tortuous development. At present, due to the strong support of the state and the Chinese language's value as a tool for various purposes, the status of Chinese in Thailand has been improved. Therefore, the development of the Chinese language in Thailand has entered an unprecedented historical period.

#### **(i) The degree of closeness and estrangement between China and Thailand**

There is a positive correlation between the affinity and the mutual transmission and influence of languages between the two countries (Lijuan Wei, 2012). It is not difficult to conclude that the change in the status of the Chinese language in Thailand is closely related to Sino-Thai relations. Thai rulers such as King Taksin encouraged the Chinese to emigrate to Thailand and treated them well; such friendly relations

between the two countries promoted the contact of language. Later, Plaek Phibunsongkhram came to power in 1938 and pursued pro-Japanese, anti-communist, and anti-Chinese nationalist policies. This government agreed to a military alliance with Japan, helped Japan to fight against the Allied powers and the United States and recognized the puppet regime in Manchukuo, China, established by Japan, which led to the deadlock in China-Thai relations and significantly hindered the development of the Chinese language in Thailand.

After the founding of New China (1945), the Thai government followed the United States in implementing containment and blockade policies against the newly Communist China. At this point, relations between the two countries gradually entered a phase of isolation, resulting in a gap in Chinese education that lasted for decades. With the improvement of Sino-US relations, the withdrawal of American troops from Southeast Asia, and the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Thailand, Sino-Thai relations gradually improved. Most notably, China and Thailand established diplomatic ties in 1975. China's economic boom, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War, and the coming of economic globalization have led to the gradual strengthening of competition and cooperation among countries around the world. Against this backdrop, Sino-Thai relations have broken new ground. In 1999, the two countries signed the *China-Thailand Joint Statement on the 21st Century Cooperation Plan*<sup>5</sup>, which stated that, based on common interests and friendly relations over the past 20 years, the countries plan to further expand all-round cooperative relations of good-neighborliness and mutual trust, thus ushering in a new stage of development for Sino-Thai relations. In 2002, the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area was established, further strengthening investment and trade relations between China and Thailand. The close contact and exchanges between the harmonious peoples of the two countries have promoted the status of the Chinese language in Thailand again.

#### **(ii) The change in the value of the Chinese language as a tool**

Language is a tool of communication, which is language's essential function (Zhang Fang, 2014). The status of a foreign language in a country is determined mainly by its instrumental value. As Thailand and China had close contact before the mid-19th

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<sup>5</sup> ASEAN-China Center Official Website [http://www.asean-china-center.org/1999-02/07/c\\_13356891.htm](http://www.asean-china-center.org/1999-02/07/c_13356891.htm)

century, Chinese culture exerted a noted influence on Thailand's political sphere, economy, society, and other aspects. This is demonstrated through the gradual emergence of Chinese loanwords in Thai, mainly from the southern dialect (especially Chaoshan dialect) referring to diet, utensils, and appellation, such as ตะเกียบ ก๋วยเตี๋ยว ชา เจ๊. The communicative value of the Chinese language has exhibited a strong influence.

From the mid-19th century onwards, with the establishment of the Western world order dominated by Britain and America, the instrumental value of the Chinese declined. Meanwhile, as Thailand modernized, English became an important tool for Thai people to receive new knowledge, interact with the outside world, and develop the country's economy. As the lingua franca, it is understandable that its significant influence ensures today; a steady stream of English neologisms has entered the Thai vocabulary. Compared with English, the status of the Chinese slowly recovered until the late 20th century, mainly because of the great economic achievements made by China since its reform and opening in the 1980s. The Thai government is acutely aware that there are many development opportunities and economic benefits to be gained from economic engagement with China, the leading economic power in the region. Accordingly, the tool value of the Chinese language is increasingly recognized by the Thai public. The advantages of learning Chinese in career development and doing business also led Thai people to choose to learn Chinese. In addition, since entering the 21st century, China has vigorously promoted Chinese culture and enhanced cultural soft power. Under the influence of various factors, a new Chinese language trend has been formed in Thailand. The change in the value of the Chinese language as a tool has impacted the status of the language in Thailand.

### **(iii) The change in Chinese identity**

Chinese individuals account for 11-14% of the total population of Thailand<sup>6</sup>. The Chinese are mainly engaged in economic activities and play an important role in Thailand's economy. However, the identity of the Chinese in Thailand has fluctuated.

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<sup>6</sup> Encyclopedia of the Peoples of Asia and Oceanian  
[https://books.google.co.th/books?id=pCiNqFj3MOsC&pg=PA794&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.co.th/books?id=pCiNqFj3MOsC&pg=PA794&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false)

Most notably, 1910 was a watershed. Before 1860, Chinese immigrants naturally integrated into Thai society, though this process slowed significantly after 1860. The period after 1910 was one of forced integration. The Thai government adopted a series of measures to force Chinese immigrants to more fully integrate into Thai society. After the signing of the *Treaty of Beijing*, many Chinese moved to Thailand and formed a Chinese nuclear family composed of Chinese men and women, thus cultivating a special Chinese society in Thailand. In such families, since both parents spoke Chinese, it would be natural for their children to use the language. In the late 19th century and early 20th century, with the rise of Chinese nationalism and the establishment of Chinese schools, the political identity of Chinese society in Thailand pointed to China. King Rama VI (1910~1925) then strengthened the assimilation of the Chinese through legislation: In 1918, he promulgated the "*Regulations on Civilian Schools*", which placed Chinese schools under the direct jurisdiction and supervision of the government. He also implemented policies for the Chinese relating to culture and rewarded and entrusted the Chinese with important responsibilities relating to their economic achievements and adopted corresponding preferential assimilation policies to facilitate the business activities of the Chinese. These measures promoted the further integration of the Chinese into local society. Broadly speaking, the Chinese continued to develop in Thailand during this period (Lijuan Wei, 2012).

It is irrefutable that the Chinese identity in Thailand and the way in which it has been shaped is the direct result of the Thai government's long-term assimilation policy. After Plaek Phibunsongkhram came to power, first in 1938 and again in 1947 following a coup d'état, he revised the long-term moderate assimilation policy of previous governments and pivoted to adopt a nationalist, pro-Japan, pro-America, anti-communist, and anti-China position, strictly limiting the number of Chinese primary schools. In 1942, the Thai government issued the "*Regulations on the Reservation of Occupations*", which stipulated that there were 27 occupations that overseas Chinese were not allowed to enter, so as to support the development of Thai enterprises. This radical and draconian assimilation policy objectively promoted the assimilation of the Chinese (Zhang Fang, 2014). Meanwhile, during the Cold War, the spread of Chinese in Thailand largely stalled as the country continued its crackdown on the Chinese language, citing the need to prevent communist infiltration.

When China and Thailand established diplomatic ties in 1975, the Thai government adopted an open policy towards the Chinese marked by tolerance and assimilation, providing them with equal business opportunities, equal social status, and political treatment. However, Thailand did not lift its ban on Chinese language education until 1992, after which Chinese language education was gradually introduced into Chinese schools. After nearly 80 years, Thailand has realized the naturalization of the Chinese identity through various means, though this involved the Thai government suppressing the use of the Chinese language and Chinese education for a long time. Objectively, it has influenced the sound foundation of the Chinese language in Thailand. The national identity of Chinese groups has had an important impact on the changing status of Chinese in the language policy of Thailand.

#### **2.4 Reasons for Social Phenomena or Trends**

Although the history and development of Chinese teaching in Thailand have not been smooth, the number of people learning Chinese as a second language has been increasing steadily, becoming a prevalent trend or social phenomenon in Thailand (behind English).

##### **2.4.1 Political Reasons for Social Phenomenon or Trend**

(i) Favorable policies of the Thai Government — According to the policy of the Thai government following the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Thailand in 1975, the strict control of Chinese language schools was relaxed. In the present day, private Chinese schools in Thailand, like other private schools, can be independently managed without direct government interference. In public high schools, Chinese has been vigorously promoted and developed to become an elective subject with the same status as other foreign languages such as German, Spanish, or Japanese. Additionally, since 1998, Chinese has been included as a foreign language course in the college entrance examination. The *Outline of Basic Education* published in 2001 stipulates that Chinese is a foreign language teaching subject. To build an economic society in which Chinese is used as a communicative tool, it is important and necessary to strengthen Chinese teaching in Thailand. The Ministry of Education released a

strategic plan in 2005 to better adapt to the needs of the Thai Chinese and ensure alignment with prevailing international standards. These demonstrate the government's cutting-edge actions and efforts to promote the Chinese language in Thailand. These preferential policies have contributed to the gradual rise and growing importance of the Chinese language in Thailand.

(ii) The Thai royal family has played an immeasurable role in promoting the spread of the Chinese language in Thailand. One aspect of this is the frequent exchanges and high-level visits between China and Thailand, which have deepened the friendly relations between the two countries. For example, when Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, a member of the Thai royal family, studied Chinese at Peking University and visited China in 2000, Thai TV stations reported on the princess's studies and visited China, rapidly increasing the popularity of Chinese studies in Thailand.

(iii) The Chinese government's strong support for the promotion of the Chinese language has become a powerful disseminator of the language abroad. In particular, the founding of Confucius Institutes around the world has promoted and spread the Chinese language and culture. In Thailand, there are now 16 Confucius Institutes and 11 Confucius classrooms. China and Thailand have cooperated sincerely on various aspects of Chinese language teaching. The Confucius Institutes have formed their own school-running models in accordance with local conditions, serving as a window and bridge for the Thai people to learn the Chinese language and better understand China and Chinese culture. It is also important to note that the Confucius Institute has provided great convenience to Thai schools in terms of teaching staff, materials, and supplies. Hanban has provided public Chinese teachers and volunteer teachers to many universities and primary and secondary schools, which has greatly alleviated the severe shortage of Chinese teachers in Thailand, thus contributing to the extensive and lasting promotion of Chinese in Thailand.

#### **2.4.2 Economic Reasons for Social Phenomenon or Trend**

(i) China's huge potential for economic development and the surging business opportunities in the Chinese market have attracted many overseas investors. Chinese businessmen have unique natural advantages, such as their cultural roots in the country that provide them access to a greater range of opportunities and possibilities. For

Chinese businessmen in Thailand, Chinese has become a necessary job skill. The sustained and stable growth of China's economy positively impacted the trade of Thailand and the country's overall economy more broadly. In recent years, China has become the third-largest export destination<sup>7</sup> and the second-largest source of imports<sup>8</sup> for Thailand, driving the country's overall export growth. The growing strength of China's economy and the dependence of Thailand's economy on China's economy has promoted the status of the Chinese language in Thailand, thus rendering the Chinese language increasingly important in Thailand.

(ii) Chinese has become an indispensable element of Thailand's economic development. Thailand is a country that attaches great importance to international and regional cooperation and economic diplomacy and emphasizes a degree of adaptability in its foreign policy to respond to the international economic situation and facilitate domestic economic development. In recent years, Thailand's investment in China has developed greatly, as is exemplified by the Charoen Pokphand Group. There are a growing number of enterprises cooperating with Thailand and China, and the Chinese language plays a very important role in international trade.

(iii) The effective bilateral trade relations between China and Thailand provide a realistic possibility for the promotion of the Chinese language in Thailand. China and Thailand enjoy friendly diplomatic relations that support a developed bilateral economic and trade relationship. China and Thailand have a long history of trade. Since the beginning of the 21st century, Sino-Thai economic and trade cooperation have developed rapidly, with bilateral trade volume increasing year on year. In bilateral trading relationships, frequent exchanges, mutual benefit, and language communication assume particular importance. Thai university students and other adults also have very practical motivations for learning Chinese, which have strengthened in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic downturn, and ongoing geopolitical tensions. This simultaneous economic and political instability has brought the Thai people a sense of crisis. The employment market is increasingly tight, with Thai university graduates even struggling to find work. However, the momentum of

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<sup>7</sup>Thailand Exports <https://knoema.com/atlas/Thailand/topics/Economy/Short-term-indicators/Exports>

<sup>8</sup>Thailand Imports <https://knoema.com/atlas/Thailand/topics/Economy/National-Accounts-GDP-by-Expenditure-Percentage-Distribution-Shares/Imports>

China's economic development, coupled with productive bilateral trade relations between China and Thailand, make it easier for students who master Chinese to find a job. Thus, learning Chinese is not only motivated by a desire to learn, but also to obtain employment.

### **2.4.3 Cultural Reasons for Social Phenomenon or Trend**

(i) The importance of linguistics in modern society — With the turn of the 21st century, the world has entered into the information age: the economy is globalized, and the status of language science in the 21st century is continually increasing. Moreover, as the language of the most populous nation, the Chinese language is inherently important. With the enhancement of China's comprehensive national strength, the development of its economy, and the promotion of its international status, the number of people learning Chinese is ever rising. Language is the carrier of information, such that those who master the language have the information.

(ii) The sense of identity and belonging the Thai Chinese feel towards Chinese culture has played a role in promoting the popularity of Thai Mandarin. Thailand has a large Chinese population, and the Chinese language is an important symbol of China and the embodiment of the Chinese cultural identity.

(iii) The charm of Chinese culture itself is also an important component of the growing interest in studying the Chinese language. China and its culture have a five-thousand-year history spanning a wide range of areas. With the growing strength of China, ancient Chinese philosophy, literature, art, traditional Chinese medicine, and martial arts attract people from all over the world to learn Chinese as a necessary means to understand the premise of Chinese culture. In Thailand, due to the frequent exchanges of popular culture between Thailand and China in recent years, the Thai population has been exposed to many Chinese films, TV stars, and singers. Especially, it is based on classic films and dramas, which are well-known and loved by Thai viewers, such as Justice Pao and Lijun Deng. The desire to understand contemporary Chinese culture is also another important factor that attracts many Thai students to learn Chinese.



## Chapter 3 Questionnaire Survey Data Analysis

### 3.1 Questionnaire Content

This part answers the research questions through the questionnaire results. The focus of this section is the factors that affect the Matthayom Seuksa 1-3 students' attitudes towards Chinese as a foreign language learning, which are analyzed through questionnaire responses. This section covers the research object, the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, and the data analysis.

#### 3.1.1 The Object of Study

The questionnaire is divided into two parts: The first part asks for basic personal information and the second part contains 19 questions. This questionnaire adopts the Likert Scale 4-level scale (an even level scale), each question has 1-4 levels, where 4 is strongly agree, 3 is agree, 2 is disagree, and 1 is strongly disagree. The 4-level scale<sup>9</sup> was designed to help respondents better understand the answer items the scale pertains to. Due to the particularity of the respondents, the intermediate item ("uncertain or unknown") was removed from this questionnaire so as to avoid the tendency effect.

#### 3.1.2 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire is divided into two parts: The first part asks for basic personal information and the second part contains 19 questions. This questionnaire adopts the Likert Scale 4-level scale (an even level scale), each question has 1-4 levels, where 4 is strongly agree, 3 is agree, 2 is disagree, and 1 is strongly disagree. The 4-level scale<sup>10</sup> was designed to help respondents better understand the answer items the scale pertains to. Due to the particularity of the respondents, the intermediate item ("uncertain or unknown") was removed from this questionnaire so as to avoid the tendency effect.

<sup>9</sup> Likert Scale 4-level scale <https://www.woshipm.com/user-research/5522418.html>

<sup>10</sup> Likert Scale 4-level scale <https://www.woshipm.com/user-research/5522418.html>

### 3.1.3 Reliability of Questionnaire

The Cronbach's Alpha value of this questionnaire was 0.878, indicating strong internal consistency. The  $\alpha$  coefficient of Cronbach's alpha is between 0.7 and 0.8, indicating that questionnaire has good reliability<sup>11</sup>.

### 3.1.4 Validity of Questionnaire

Table 2 KMO and Bartlett's test

KMO value	0.709		
		approximate chi-square	456.839
Bartlett's sphericity test		<i>Df</i>	171
		<i>p</i> -value	0.000

According to the data in Figure 3-1, the KMO value of the questionnaire data is 0.709 and P-value=0.000<0.001, indicating that the questionnaire structure and validity of the scale are satisfactory.

To sum up, the Cronbach's Alpha value was 0.878, the KMO value was 0.709, and the P-value was <0.05. The reliability and validity of the questionnaire met the requirements to be used as a survey tool.

<sup>11</sup> Cronbach's alpha <https://spssau.com/index.html?240888&>

### **3.2 Data-Gathering and Data Analysis**

In this survey, 60 questionnaires were distributed, and 54 questionnaires were recovered (recovery rate of 90%). Of these, the answers to four of the questionnaires were all filled in as 4 (agree with the answer). Once they were removed, 50 valid questionnaires remained, meaning the effective rate of the collected questionnaires was 92%. Subsequently, statistical analysis was performed using Excel and SPSS.

#### **3.2.1 Basic Information of Students**

According to the questionnaire survey results, the age range of the student respondents is 13-15 years old. Among them, there are 20 students from M1 (40% of the total), 11 students from M2 (22% of the total), and 19 students from M3 (38% of the total). There were 37 students of Chinese descent and 13 not of Chinese descent, accounting for 74% and 26% of the total, respectively (based on the students' own self-identification; students with four generations of Chinese descent are considered as students of Chinese descent). Xun Liu (2000) proposed the time sequence in which people acquire language to define the first language, in other words, the language that people first come in contact with and acquire after birth. The students' first language is Thai.

#### **3.2.2 Factors Affecting the Attitudes of Students' towards Learning Chinese as a Foreign Language**

This part divides the main factors affecting Debsirin students' Chinese learning attitude into internal factors and external factors.

##### **3.2.2.1 Internal Factors of Impacting Students' Attitudes towards Chinese Learning**

###### **(i) Students' interest.**

Getie (2020) suggests that students' interests and attitudes are positively correlated. On this basis, a lack of interest can lead to increased pressure and negative

attitudes amongst students towards learning Chinese. For the question "I am interested in Mainland China because of", 36% answered travel, 16% answered Chinese culture, 28% answered education, and 20% answered entertainment: films and songs. This means that 36% of students are studying Chinese as they plan to travel to China to better communicate with the target language society. Secondly, 28% of the students may want to study in China, that is, to better integrate into the target language country and become bilingual. Accordingly, to Zulfikar et al. (2019), students tend to exhibit a positive attitude towards skills related to their interests, and vice versa. Therefore, it is necessary to discern what students learning Chinese are interested in. In Chinese language teaching, students' needs, and interests need to be better considered. Per Questions 9-12 in the questionnaire, compared with writing and reading skills, students are more willing to learn speaking and listening skills. The reasons given by the students for this included that Chinese characters are difficult to write and there are homophones that are hard to distinguish between. There are obvious differences in language thinking between China and Thailand: for example, whilst 'ไก่สองตัว' is written as such in the Thai language, in Chinese the order is 'สองตัวไก่'. The differences in language thinking between the first language and the second language or foreign language directly increase the learning challenges and anxiety felt by students.

#### **(ii) Students' risk-taking willingness**

Question 2, "To study Chinese language is necessary," had a mean of 3.23, ranking fourth when the means were listed from highest to lowest. This shows that the students are aware of the importance and status of the Chinese language. Larsen and Long (1991) pointed out that students' willingness to take risks affects their tendency to participate in classroom activities. Although the students were not thought to be good at Chinese, they were clearly eager to take part in classroom activities in an effort to improve their skills. Question 19 had a mean of 2.86, ranking 18th. "Have a clear Chinese learning plan or goal" can be seen in students' negative attitudes towards learning goals. If the students lack learning goals, this may reduce their motivation to learn.

#### **(iii) Student's awareness of the importance of Chinese Language**

Question 3, "To know the Chinese language is to improve your chance of competition in future work," had the second-highest mean score of 3.49. For Question

1, "Chinese language is important internationally", the mean score was 3.33, ranking third. From this, it can clearly be seen that the students have a clear understanding of the function and status of Chinese and hold a positive attitude towards it. Zulfikar et al. (2019) posit that students' awareness of the importance of foreign languages is positively correlated with their attitudes towards foreign language learning. As a result, the students realize the importance of Chinese in their future work and career and thus adopt a more positive attitude towards Chinese learning. In addition, Chinese is both included in the education system and as a foreign language optional subject of the college entrance examination in Thailand. Even so, the real success of Thai education remains to be seen. The *Strategic Plan* issued by the Thai Ministry of Education in 2005 embodies the Thai authorities' recognition of the importance of the Chinese language. Therefore, students' understanding of this fact bolsters their attitude towards Chinese learning. Students who are proficient in Chinese can improve their competitiveness and leverage advantages in the Thai job market. With the increase in economic and trade exchanges between China and Thailand, the value of the Chinese language economy continues to be impressed upon the Thai public. This is not only an issue of language transmission, but also the shift of the world's economic and cultural centers to the East to a certain extent. In the past, Chinese learners with Chinese ancestry studies the language based on the sentimental value of Chinese, though this motivational factor is gradually weakening. It also means that the emotional linguistic value that some ascribe to Chinese is being replaced by other linguistic values.

### **3.2.3.2 External Factors of Impacting Student's Attitudes towards Chinese Learning**

#### **(i) Teaching and learning content**

Question 14, "Chinese teacher is able to create a learning environment without boring," ranked fifth with a mean score of 3.31, demonstrating that students adopt a positive attitude towards the learning environment created by teachers. Chinese teachers should endeavor to establish an interesting learning environment and select learning content that can help students reduce their fear of learning a new language; ways to do so include using language games or other fun activities that can improve the

learning environment. Ehrman (1996) notes that purely studying theory without providing practical opportunities may reduce students' positive attitude towards foreign or second language learning. Chinese language skills are a way to improve one's competitiveness in the job market. Although Chinese is an elective course in Debsirin School, some students may be forced to choose Chinese to meet each semester's credit requirements. In other words, if a student wants to learn other foreign languages at school, but the school only offers Chinese and Japanese courses, the student must diverge from his original intention and choose between Chinese and Japanese. Meanwhile, Question 15, "you will spend your spare time learning Chinese," had the lowest mean score of 2.78. It can be seen from this that the surveyed students hold a negative attitude towards learning Chinese knowledge after class or during breaks. Being forced to learn or lacking the will to learn may make students feel inadequate and then diminish motivation to learn.

#### **(ii) Teacher-related factors**

Question 13 "Chinese teacher is very excellent" ranked first out of all responses, with a mean value of 3.6. A learner who interacts more with the teacher is more likely to develop a positive attitude toward the target language than one who less frequently interacts with the teacher. Without communication between teachers and learners, there is little opportunity for effective education (Spolsky, 1972). It should be stressed that teachers are one of the most important variables affecting language learning attitudes. This kind of influence may be positive or negative depending on the knowledge of the subject, the attitude towards the students, and the personality and professional knowledge of the teachers (Getie, 2020). Chinese as a foreign or second language is important to Thai society and individuals, such that governments and schools should encourage students to learn and develop their goals and skills.

#### **(iii) The student's parents**

According to the questionnaire results, the parents of 42 students support their learning of Chinese, accounting for 84% of the total. Therefore, many parents (84%) hold a positive attitude towards their children learning Chinese and encourage them to do so. Wilkins emphasizes the influence of parents on learners' second foreign language learning, pointing out that it is particularly interesting that children's attitudes are highly similar to their parents' attitudes. Therefore, it can be said that parents largely determine

the success of their children's second foreign language learning, as children always want to act and speak in a manner similar to their parents (Wilkins, 1978).

To sum up, the results of the questionnaire reflect the positive factors that influence students in the Chinese learning process. (i) Thai primary and secondary school students have a certain interest in learning Chinese; most of them want to learn Chinese well, like their Chinese teachers, and hold a positive attitude towards Chinese class. (ii) Most students are curious about China and hope to have the opportunity to travel or study in China in the future. Contrastingly, the negative factors identified include (iii) unclear Chinese learning goals and a lack of lasting motivation and long-term planning. Limited by age and experience, it is difficult for middle school students to realize the functional purpose of learning Chinese without input and encouragement from the external environment. Internal factors have a significant influence on students' attitudes towards Chinese learning. This means that, rather than actively desiring to study the subject, most students only choose Chinese passively due to the structure of the school curriculum, and regard studying Chinese as a hard task. In other words, most students learn passive input rather than active input and output. If the learning interest stemming from the initial novelty or curiosity is not strengthened and cannot generate sufficient internal motivation, the enthusiasm will gradually erode and be difficult to maintain.

There are also negative factors at play: (i) Unclear Chinese learning goals and a lack of lasting motivation and long-term planning. Limited by age and experience, middle school students do not readily recognize the purpose of learning Chinese without input from the external environment. On the contrary, irrational emotional factors play a crucial role in mediating their learning effect. Whether students are interested in China and like their Chinese teacher are indicators of their ability to concentrate. It should be pointed out that even if they are enjoying the new and interesting Chinese world, they cannot inherently continue to learn this type of knowledge due to their lack of language learning drive, thus increasing the likelihood they will merely dabble in Chinese language learning and give up halfway. (ii) Fear of learning Chinese. The learning difficulties experienced due to the characteristics of Chinese are daunting to many students. In terms of language types, Chinese is different from many other languages in the world: Firstly, Chinese contains many vowels and tones. Secondly, the ideographic writing system of Chinese characters carries the long

history of Chinese culture. These features of Chinese are simultaneously attractive and challenging for language learners. Although Thai and Chinese belong to the same Sino-Tibetan language family, Thai is a pinyin script and lacks individual sounds found in Chinese, such as complex finals. Therefore, when some students are faced with complex characters and difficult pronunciation, they will be afraid of difficulty, thereby hindering their studies of Chinese.





## **Chapter 4 The Analysis of the Strategic Plan for Promoting Chinese Language Teaching to Enhance National Competitiveness (2006-2010)**

At present, Thai Chinese education has been included in the national education system as an important foreign language, becoming the second foreign language after English. To improve Thailand's competitiveness, the Thai Ministry of Education launched an important Chinese education policy in 2006, through which the government takes the lead in Chinese education, thereby affirming the importance of the Chinese language.

### **4.1 The Specific Objectives of Annual (Yearly) Strategic Planning. Objectives**

(i) Students in Thailand's formal schools receive a robust Chinese language education at each stage, allowing their Chinese language proficiency to reach the standard of excellence as follows: (i) At least 20% of the graduates of Stage 4 of basic education (senior high school) have studied Chinese; (ii) 4,000 students with a special talent in Chinese should be able to communicate and learn in Chinese and, through continuous improvement, reach a very proficient or expert level in Chinese; (iii) Thai working-age personnel: at least 100,000 people should have learned Chinese so that they can use it both for communication at work and as a means of employment.

### **4.2 The Analysis of Strategic Planning Objectives**

After analyzing the above objectives, the *Strategic Plan* can be seen to have the following characteristics: (i) Integrality: to promote the introduction of Chinese language courses at all levels of education in Thailand and support the Chinese language teaching development projects in schools. (ii) Equality: to increase the opportunities for all levels of the Thai labor force to learn Chinese. (iii) Standardization: The Thai Ministry of Education is acutely aware of the importance of Chinese standards and has implemented measures to improve Chinese teaching in all aspects of strategic implementation projects. (iv) Professionalism, the Thai government's Chinese teaching institutions closely follow data on the shortage of Chinese professionals and actively

design and implement plans to train relevant talents. In response to the goal of increasing the number of Chinese learners, the number of primary and secondary schools offering Chinese courses has increased since the *Strategic Plan* was introduced in 2006. From this perspective, it can be seen that the *Strategic Plan* mainly focuses on the external factors of learners' learning of foreign languages, with less consideration given to internal factors or learners' actual needs. If students do not have sufficient opportunities to practice Chinese after learning it, it may affect their trust in the Thai Chinese education system. Although Chinese courses are offered at all levels of education nationwide, the teaching effect and quality remain to be further investigated.

#### **4.3 The Reflections on Strategic Planning from the Results of the Debsirin School Questionnaire**

The analysis of the results of the above questionnaire shows that there is scope for further analysis of the government's strategic plan to promote Chinese education. Following the implementation of the *Strategic Plan*, the characteristics of M1-M3 students in the Debsirin School English project are now reflected in the following aspects: (i) Chinese background before entering Debsirin School: 76% of students have studied Chinese prior to enrolling at the school. (ii) As for coherent Chinese teaching, the survey results show that only a small number of students have been learning Chinese in school classes in the period from primary school to junior high school (though it should be noted that some students learn Chinese through informal institutions, such as remedial institutions. Moreover, 24% of students had not studied Chinese before entering Debsirin School. This means that the development of a consistent Chinese curriculum is still ongoing, and a comprehensive, systematic Chinese curriculum needs to be further developed. (iii) Factors affecting students' Chinese learning. The survey results show that the first factor for students' Chinese learning is excellent Chinese teachers, 3.6. The second factor is that Chinese is professionally beneficial and increases personal competitiveness, 3.49. The third factor is China's role and status in the world, 3.33. Most students learn a foreign language on the basis that it is an instrumental language.

#### **4.4 Gaps**

There are a lot of research results pertaining to the current situation of Chinese teaching in Thailand, all of which are targeted at different survey objects. However, little attention has been paid to Chinese teaching through the English program class model. The English program class model means that English is used as the teaching medium and Chinese is as an elective course, with students not learning in their mother tongue, nor in a learning environment of the target language (Chinese). For schools in Thailand, whether public, private, or international, the current situation of Chinese teaching under this model is special and representative, as many schools in Thailand offer bilingual English programs. Secondly, this paper combines theory with practice by integrating the questionnaire results with the policy and social background of Thai Chinese to analyze the changes in Thai Chinese in Thai society.

#### **4.5 Limitation**

Learning attitude is a broad concept, with academics offering contrasting definitions. At the same time, the process of quantifying and defining learning attitudes towards specific things is somewhat subjective. The weaknesses of this article are as follows: (i) Students may have problems filling out the questionnaire without being based on facts as they do not receive assistance completing the answers. (ii) It is not certain whether the students' real thoughts are reflected in their questionnaire answers. (iii) The reliability of the survey results requires further investigation as the respondents are relatively single and the sample size is limited. This article studied just 60 students from one school. It is understood that different schools will have variations in the source of students, Chinese curriculum settings, and other aspects of the great differences in the learning attitudes of students.

## Chapter 5 Conclusion and Suggestions

### 5.1 Conclusion

Chinese is a foreign language in Thailand, which has experienced several different stages of free development and later restriction and oppression, followed by the rapid development of the modern day. Chinese education has changed from an initial social behavior to the government's behavior. By sorting out the different statuses of Chinese in Thai language policy in different historical periods, this paper points out that the change in the status of the Chinese language in the context of Thai language policy is closely related to the degree of affinity and disaffinity between China and Thailand, the value of the Chinese language as a tool, the change of national identity of Thai Chinese, and other factors. Thailand's Chinese policy takes economic value as the main factor and cultural and emotional value as the ancillary factors. The economic value of Chinese in Thai society is constantly highlighted and will directly influence and shape learners' decisions to study the second language. The motivation for learning Chinese for the purpose of emotional value seen in the early stage of the development of Chinese education in Thailand has gradually weakened. Meanwhile, Chinese language education in Thailand has evolved from being mainly for a specific group of people to being a common choice for most people today. This phenomenon or trend is a manifestation of Thailand's Chinese language policy.

Debsirin School has been running an English program for seven years. Debsirin School more broadly emphasizes internationalization. As part of this, it offers a bilingual teaching policy that sets up M1-M3 Chinese elective courses with English as the language medium and pays attention to the cultivation of students' foreign language abilities. According to data collected from 60 M1-M3 students at the school, there are many factors influencing students' attitudes towards learning Chinese, which can be divided into internal influencing factors and external influencing factors. As for the internal factors, learners have a positive attitude towards Chinese learning. Most students are aware of the importance and status of Chinese, and they hope to improve their competitiveness in the job market by learning Chinese. Most students do not have clear goals or plans for learning Chinese. Secondly, students hold a negative attitude

towards spending time learning Chinese after class. They believe that Chinese, as an elective course, does not warrant too much time and energy. As for external factors, the attitudes of most students' parents support their children in learning Chinese. The students hold positive attitudes towards their Chinese teacher and classroom atmosphere. The M1-M3 students of Debsirin School have a positive attitude towards Chinese. Students' internal factors clearly affect their attitude towards Chinese learning

## 5.2 Suggestions

(i) The students have a positive attitude towards learning Chinese as a foreign language and are aware of the status and importance of Chinese (Questions 1 and 2).

(ii) Students have negative attitudes towards learning Chinese after class or during breaks (Question 15). Some students view Chinese as an elective course, which they do not need to pay too much attention to. Students have positive attitudes towards Chinese teachers and Chinese classes (Questions 13 and 14). The teacher tries to create an interesting class to capture the students' attention. Engage the students to listen and master the knowledge points in class as far as possible. In this way, students can spend more time on the required courses and their performance in their Chinese studies will not be diminished.

(iii) Students hold negative attitudes towards learning objectives (Question 19). A lack of clear goals can lead to a lack of sustained motivation and long-term planning. Teachers and schools should encourage students to set feasible goals. Learning goals can be set for the short, medium, and long terms, otherwise they will not be successful. For example, a weekly short-term goal is to learn 15-20 common fruit words. After completing the goal, the teacher can make fruit cards for random questions to test the students' actual mastery of the new vocabulary.

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