THE INTEGRATION ON TRADITIONAL AND COMMUNICATIVE METHODS IN THAI LANGUAGE TEACHING AT GUIZHOU MINZU UNIVERSITY, CHINA

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Abstract

This study aimed to address the challenges and opportunities in Thai language teaching at Guizhou Minzu University, China by integrating traditional and communicative methods. The specific purposes included 1) to explore the current state of Thai language instruction at the university, focusing on teaching methods and challenges, and 2) to propose effective strategies that enhance students' communicative proficiency while respecting traditional educational practices. A mixed-methods approach was employed, incorporating surveys and interviews with 200 non-Thai students, ten non-Thai teachers, 80 Thai students, and 5 Thai teachers at Guizhou Minzu University with purposive sampling. The data analysis revealed significant challenges arising from the predominance of traditional teaching methods, which emphasise knowledge transmission over the development of communicative competence. Despite efforts to introduce Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), practical constraints such as limited Thai proficiency among non-native instructors, traditional educational norms, examination requirements, class sizes, and student interest hinder effective implementation. The findings highlight the feasibility and benefits of integrating traditional and communicative methods in Thai language education. This hybrid approach not only upholds academic rigor but also enhances students' communicative skills, addressing. The study concludes with practical recommendations for implementing these strategies at Guizhou Minzu University, aiming to inspire educational advancements and meet evolving societal needs.

Keywords: Traditional Teaching Method, Communicative Language Teaching, Thai Language Teaching, Guizhou Minzu University

Introduction

Learning about language is essential and essential for the communication of human societies on Earth. This is because communication is an expression of awareness and understanding of behaviour and mutual actions. Communication will result in human beings being able to perceive and understand, leading to the correct treatment of each other (Xu, 2012). However, language and culture differences in content and expression remain a major obstacle to mutual recognition and understanding if humans do not have adequate language education (Jin, 2007). Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methodology emerged in the 1980s as a response to the growing demand for a language curriculum enabling learners to use the second language in real-life situations. Previously, foreign language teaching has predominantly had its emphasis on grammatical competence, especially because grammar-translation was the most accepted teaching method rather than focusing on developing students' communication and interaction skills (Zhang et al., 2013). In addition, CLTs are currently a popular point of discussion, and their effectiveness in building students' fluency and communication skills has been taken into account by language teachers worldwide (Nawamawat & Cedar, 2021).

The processes that are involved in globalisation, the interchange of economies and cultures, have required individuals to communicate more effectively with people from around the world. Mutual language has been needed to enhance effective communication between people from different backgrounds. This is important when deliberating topics such as politics, trade, technology, tourism, education, and entertainment. Moreover, the demand for learning foreign languages is growing, and Thai, a significant Asian language, is gaining popularity. Traditional classroom teaching, focused on grammar, vocabulary, and writing, has been dominant, while the communicative approach, emphasizing real-life communication, has gained attention in recent years (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Whong, 2011; Ridge, 1992).

At Guizhou Minzu University in China, students excel in reading and vocabulary but need help understanding Thai speakers during studies in Thailand (Liao, 2004). This indicates that the goal of achieving fluency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing has not been fully realized. While both teaching methods are important, the university heavily relies on traditional methods, neglecting the necessity of practical communication skills. Many graduates struggle to effectively express or understand Thai in the workplace (Hu, 2010; Phoeun & Sengsri, 2021). This paper investigates the current state of Thai language education at Guizhou Minzu University, exploring the underlying issues and seeking solutions.

Language is a communication tool, and foreign language teaching in China aims to facilitate international exchanges (Bax, 2003). Over the past decades, Thai language teaching has progressed significantly. Initially, only affluent families had access to Thai education, but now, over 5,000 students are learning Thai in Yunnan alone.

Modern teaching methods, such as the communicative, eclectic, and task-based approaches, have been introduced and promoted in some universities (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). However, Guizhou still predominantly relies on traditional, teacher-centred methods, focusing more on language skills than communicative competence. While effective in imparting theoretical knowledge, these methods fall short in practical application, leading to students with poor oral proficiency and limited participation (Richards, 2006; Ridge, 1992). Social, economic, and political needs influence language learning. As China and Thailand strengthen their ties, the demand for professionals fluent in Thai and knowledgeable about Southeast Asian culture is growing, especially with initiatives like the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area (FEA) and the Belt and Road Initiative. This demands reforming of traditional Thai teaching methods to meet societal needs (Brandl, 2007; Phoeun & Sengsri, 2021). Reviewing the history of Thai language teaching reveals that no single method is universally applicable. Each has its merits and drawbacks, depending on the context. The author suggests an integrated approach, combining traditional and communicative methods, as the most effective for Thai language

education. The key is to adapt teaching methods to specific situations rather than rigidly adhering to one approach.

Research Objectives

This study aimed to address the challenges and opportunities in Thai language teaching at Guizhou Minzu University by integrating traditional and communicative methods. The specific purposes included: 1) to explore the current state of Thai language instruction at the university, focusing on teaching methods and challenges, and 2) to propose effective strategies that enhance students' communicative proficiency while respecting traditional educational practices.

Literature Review

Since communicative competence was pioneered by Hymes (1972) and shaped by Canale & Swain (1980), a new perspective of language learning emerged in language teaching. By turning the attention away from discrete linguistic segments to communicative forms and functions, second/foreign language learning began facilitating real-life communication (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). At the outset of the 1970s, British and American scholars first proposed Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to promote teaching a second language (L2) through communicative skills. Even though CLT was regarded as a counter to the audiolingual approach prevalent in the 1960s, CLT's main objective of developing the functional communicative competence of learners in L2 learning was equivalent to the primary audiolingual goal. According to Whong (2011) and Yang (2014), CLT refers to "an approach to language teaching that emphasises authenticity, interaction, student-centered learning, task-based activities, and communication for the real world and meaningful purposes." It is considered one of the most effective teaching approaches in ELT (Wei et al., 2018; Belinda & Raja, 2021; Doeur, 2022). to help develop learners' ability to use the target language in authentic situations. In addition, it is aimed at developing teaching processes in the four language skills where the interdependence between language and communication exists. It is controversial that the learners learn a language through communicating; however, meaningful communication offers a better opportunity for language learning than a grammar-based approach (Harahap et al., 2021).

Therefore, CLT or the communicative approach (CA), is an approach to language teaching that emphasises interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of study (Richards, 2006). Learners in environments use communication to learn and practice the target language by interactions with one another and the instructor, the study of "authentic texts" (those written in the target language for purposes other than language learning), and the use of the language both in class and outside of class (Nam, 2023).

Learners converse about personal experiences with partners, and instructors teach topics outside of traditional grammar to promote language skills in all situations. That method also claims to encourage learners to incorporate their personal experiences into their language learning environment and to focus on the learning experience, in addition to the learning of the target language (Nunan, 1991; Zhang et al., 2013). According to CLT, the goal of language education is the ability to communicate in the target language (Savignon, 1997; Yang, 2014). This contrasts to previous views in which grammatical competence was commonly prioritised (Bax, 2003; Nguyen, 2010; Harahap et al., 2021).

CLT also positions the teacher as a facilitator, rather than an instructor. Furthermore, the approach is a non-methodical system that does not use a textbook series to teach the target language but works on developing sound oral and verbal skills before reading and writing (Pitikornpuangpetch & Suwanarak, 2021). The CLT approach has been widely employed in second and foreign language teaching. It can shift the teaching processes from grammar-based teaching to more communicative activities. Unlike traditional approaches such as Grammar-

Translation, CLT can support students in learning a language and communicating meaningfully (Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Pitikornpuangpetch & Suwanarak, 2021). The activities in communicative classrooms require the students to negotiate meaning (a process that has a shared understanding of meaning together) and have meaningful interaction that promotes students' language learning fluency rather than engaging the students in correct repetition and memorisation of sentences and grammatical structures. Moreover, CLT is student-centred (Nguyen, 2010; Baek, 2017; Richards & Rodgers, 2014) and can be integrated to facilitate a wide range of classroom procedures.

Research Methodology

The study employed a combination of questionnaire surveys and interviews to investigate the current status of Thai language teaching at Guizhou Minzu University in China. This approach aimed to gather comprehensive data on the teaching methods utilized in Thai language classes and to identify challenges encountered in Thai language education at the university. The methodology was designed to ensure clarity on aspects with related details as follows.

Population and Sample

The population is 320 students in four grades, from freshman to senior Guizhou Minzu University, who are currently learning Thai. Using purposive sampling, the sample that participated in this research was 280 students and 15 teachers from Guizhou Minzu University. The students were selected from 8 ordinary classes. The sampling process utilised a purposeful sampling a method to ensure equal opportunity for every student to participate. The selected students were aged between 18 and 22 years old.

The teachers thoroughly explained the study's purpose before administering the questionnaire survey. Questionnaires were promptly collected after completion to achieve a 100% response rate. The student respondents included 114 non-Thai students and 46 Thai students. Among the surveyed teachers, 10 were non-Thai teachers and 5 were teachers from Guizhou Minzu University. Additionally, five teachers and 15 students were selected for interviews to gather further insights.

This approach ensured the sampling was conducted following statistical principles, allowing for a comprehensive and representative data collection process.

Research Instruments

1) Students' Questionnaire: The student survey contained ten questions focused on learning motivation, Thai language proficiency, and opinions on various aspects of Thai language education, including classroom activities, curriculum, and teaching methods. The goal was to assess the current state of Thai language teaching and identify differing perspectives between Thai language majors and non-majors. It was hypothesised that students might prefer a combination of traditional and communicative teaching methods over a single approach, which was confirmed by preliminary results. These results suggest that integrating both methods is more effective in improving Thai language proficiency at Guizhou Minzu University. In addition, the questionnaire was written in Chinese to ensure clarity, with each question offering 4 or 6 answer options to capture students' true opinions.

2) Teachers' Questionnaire: It consists of 10 questions focusing on the teachers' Thai language proficiency, attitudes towards Thai language teaching, curriculum arrangements, classroom activities, teaching materials and methods adopted.

3) Students' and Teachers' Interview Guide: The interviews conducted in this study captured perspectives from both teachers and students. Teachers were queried about their teaching methodologies in Thai language classes, and their opinions were openly discussed. Students were asked about their challenges in learning Thai, their preferences for classroom environments, and their ideal teacher characteristics.

These interviews aimed to comprehensively understand the current landscape of Thai language education at Guizhou Minzu University. Each interview, lasting approximately half an hour, was conducted in Chinese and meticulously transcribed into written materials to ensure clarity, accuracy, and relevance to the subjects.

The interview guide was developed with careful consideration to ensure reliability. Before the study, the interview questions were reviewed and validated by experts in language education and qualitative research methods. This process aimed to enhance the consistency and effectiveness of the interview tool in capturing meaningful insights from teachers and students. This approach ensured that the interviews were conducted using a reliable and validated guide, thereby strengthening the credibility of the study's findings.

Data Collection and Analysis

The questionnaire was distributed online via email and social media to address data retrieval issues and broaden data collection, ensuring authenticity and validity with school support. Structured interviews with selected teachers and students were conducted in Chinese, recorded for accuracy, and transcribed for analysis.

The collected data underwent both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Quantitative methods, including descriptive statistics, correlation, and inferential statistics, examined teaching methods and challenges in Thai language education at Guizhou Minzu University. Qualitative techniques, such as thematic, contradiction, and comparative analyses, were used to interpret interview insights, exploring teaching methodologies and student challenges. The integration of these analyses provided a comprehensive understanding of the current state of Thai language education, combining overarching trends with detailed individual insights.

Research Results

Results of Students' Questionnaire and Interview

This section will introduce and analyze the results of student questionnaires and interviews, focusing on students' attitudes towards different teaching methods, their problems in learning the Thai language, and suggestions for teaching improvements. The results of the students' questionnaire are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 showing the responses of Non-Major students (NT) and Thai Majors (M), respectively. It can be observed from the data in Table 1, the following phenomena:

1) Students' Questionnaire:

(1) Purpose for Learning Thai: The study explored students' motivations for learning Thai. About 51% of non-Thai majors cited exam preparation as their main motivation, while 63.75% believed good Thai skills would enhance job prospects. Only 6% of non-majors were motivated by interest, compared to 26.25% of Thai majors, highlighting a greater focus on instrumental motivation among majors.

(2) Self-Assessment of Thai Skills: Approximately 51% of non-majors were dissatisfied with their Thai proficiency, while 70% of Thai majors were satisfied. Non-majors lacked confidence due to low motivation, whereas Thai majors showed more confidence due to higher motivation.

(3) Weakest Link: Non-majors identified speaking (53%) and listening (14%) as their weakest areas, while Thai majors pointed to reading and grammar (both 21.25%). Non-majors focused more on grammar, neglecting communication, whereas Thai majors understood the importance of communicative skills.

(4) Most Important Aspect of Learning Thai: 69% of non-majors and 75% of Thai majors deemed oral proficiency most important. Students recognised the value of communicative skills over mere grammar and vocabulary knowledge.

Table 1 Results of students' questionnaire

Answer Item	Type of SS	A No.	A Percent.	B No.	B Percent.	C No.	C Percent.	D No.	D Percent.	E No.	E Percent.	R No.	R Percent.
1	NM	102	51%	62	31%	12	6%	26	13%				
	M	5	6.25%	51	63.75%	21	26.25%	3	3.75%				
2	NM	8	4%	66	33%	102	51%	24	12%				
	M	3	3.75%	56	70%	21	26.25%	0	0%				
3	NM	28	14%	106	53%	20	10%	2	1%	24	12%	20	10%
	M	10	12.50%	10	12.50%	17	21.25%	10	12.50%	17	21.25%	16	20%
4	NM	10	5%	138	69%	20	10%	2	1%	6	3%	24	12%
	M	4	5%	60	75%	5	6.50%	2	2.50%	6	7.50%	3	3.75%
5	NM	130	65%	70	35%	0	0%	0	0%				
	M	9	11.50%	20	25%	51	63.75%	0	0%				
6	NM	142	71%	2	1%	26	13%	30	15%				
	M	18	22.50%	5	6.25%	16	20%	41	51.25%				
7	NM	16	8%	62	31%	112	56%	10	5%				
	M	6	7.50%	51	63.75%	19	23.75%	4	5%				
8	NM	8	4%	46	23%	136	68%	10	5%				
	M	2	2.5%	54	67.5%	21	26.25%	3	3.75				
9	NM	32	16%	56	28%	100	50%	12	6%				
	M	20	25%	49	61.25%	10	12.5%	0	0%				
10	NM	66	33%	20	10%	106	53%	8	4%				
	M	11	13.75%	13	16.25%	50	62.50%	6	7.50%				

Note: Non-Major students (NM), Thai Majors (M)

(5) Time Spent Lecturing: About 65% of non-majors believed teachers spent 90% of class time lecturing, while 63.75% of Thai majors noted a balance between teaching and activities. Non-majors experienced teacher-centred classes, whereas Thai majors saw a mix of traditional and communicative methods.

(6) Most Beneficial Part of Class: Non-majors benefited most from grammar and vocabulary explanations (71%), while 51.25% of Thai majors preferred group discussions and oral practice. Non-majors started appreciating communicative methods as they saw the benefits of peer interaction.

(7) Satisfaction with Curriculum: About 56% of non-majors were dissatisfied with the curriculum, citing an imbalance in focus. In contrast, 63.75% of Thai majors were satisfied due to better opportunities for interaction and practice.

(8) Satisfaction with Textbooks: Most non-majors (68%) were dissatisfied with their textbooks, finding them dense and impractical. In contrast, 67.5% of Thai majors were satisfied with their more engaging and relevant materials.

(9) Evaluation of Teaching Methods: Half of the non-majors were dissatisfied with the traditional methods, finding them unengaging. In contrast, 61.25% of Thai majors were satisfied with the integrated approach that combined traditional and communicative methods.

(10) Preferred Teaching Methods: About 53% of non-majors and 62.5% of Thai majors preferred a combination of traditional and communicative methods, recognising the benefits of both approaches.

Inconclusion, the study revealed that non-Thai majors favoured traditional methods for grammar and reading but recognised the need for communicative skills. Thai majors preferred a balanced approach that improved foundational knowledge and communication skills. The findings suggest combining traditional and communicative methods is most effective in Thai language teaching at Guizhou Minzu University. It is recommended to optimise this integration further by enhancing communicative practices and balancing assessments.

2) Students' Interviews: To further understand students' attitudes towards different teaching methods and questions in learning the Thai language, we interviewed students in non-Thai and Thai majors. The interviews consisted of about ten students. They were asked to comment casually on each question, and their responses were recorded. Due to their limited English proficiency, the interviews were conducted in Chinese. The following is the English translation

of the student interviews; the representative parts are selected. Based on the data, the research results can be presented according to the following objectives.

Research Objective 1:

1.1) Through the interviews, most students believe that traditional teaching methods have obvious grammar and reading comprehension advantages. Students generally agreed that this approach helped them to master the basic knowledge of the Thai language, especially in grammar and vocabulary accumulation. However, students also pointed out that traditional methods alone could not fully exercise their oral and listening skills. Non-Thai students said that although they could remember many words and grammar rules when using traditional teaching methods, they often felt difficult and insecure in practical communication.

1.2) In the interview, the students mentioned that communicative teaching methods significantly improved their oral and listening abilities by increasing classroom interaction and practical communication. Students believed this approach was closer to the actual use situation, giving them more confidence in using Thai in real life. Thai students point out that teachers' interactive teaching methods, such as role-playing and group discussion, increase their interest in learning and enhance their ability to use Thai in real situations. In addition, students mentioned that the communicative approach helped them overcome the "mute Thai" problem in traditional teaching methods, which only writen but not spoken communication.

Research Objective 2: Through the analysis of the interview results, it can be seen that the students recognise the combination of the two teaching methods. They suggested further increasing the proportion of communicative teaching in the curriculum, while maintaining the advantages of traditional teaching methods to ensure a solid language foundation. Specific recommendations include increasing interactive activities such as group discussions and role play, enriching teaching content with multimedia resources, and providing more language practice opportunities such as language corners and communication programs. Students also suggested that teachers should flexibly adjust the proportion of teaching methods according to the learning needs of students at different stages, to achieve the best teaching results.

Here are some representative student interviews:

1) What kind of classroom mode and teacher do you like?

(1) As a non-major student, I hope that in the Thai language class, we can be free a little bit, the teacher does not take this subject seriously, and we can discuss problems with the teacher and other students. We also hope that the teacher often plays videos, plays Thai songs and movies, and introduces something about Thai culture, that is to say, more materials outside the textbook rather than always in the textbook (Student A).

(2) I hope the classroom atmosphere is lively, interesting, and attractive; the teacher speaks more Thai and less Chinese to create a more Thai environment for us. The teacher should only use some of the class time to lecture but should leave us more time to communicate (Student B).

(3) I hope we can have more exercises in the class; it is a good opportunity to review what we have learned (Student C).

(4) As a major student, I hope we have more opportunities to apply what we learn in the class to real life. At the same time, I hope the teachers can provide us with some training in writing and reading (Student D).

2) What difficulties have you encountered in your studies?

(1) It's difficult for me to memorise words. I have put in a lot of effort but the results are unsatisfactory (Student E).

(2) I can't follow the teachers' teaching. When the teachers organise activities, it's really difficult for me because I want to participate in them, but I'm afraid because I think my Thai is poor (Student F).

(3) I think we lack a Thai language environment, we don't have many opportunities to contact foreigners, and we have few chances to practice our spoken language. Even our teachers don't speak Thai very often (Student G).

(4) As a student majoring in Thai, I find this course very interesting and enjoy learning it. Now I can easily communicate with my classmates in Thai. But when it comes to reading, I often feel puzzled by the long and complicated content of the articles. I don't know how to solve this problem (Student H).

(5) As a student majoring in Thai, I like discussing problems with my classmates. My spoken language has improved significantly. However, when I take an exam, I find solving some specific grammar problems difficult. I could do more exercises to consolidate my grammar knowledge (Student I).

Results of Teachers' Questionnaire and Interview

This section will present the results of teacher questionnaires and interviews, and explore the teaching methods teachers adopt in Thai teaching, their views on combining traditional and communicative teaching methods, and the challenges and improvement needs in current teaching.

In order to fully understand the current situation and problems of Thai language teaching in our school, this paper also conducted a questionnaire survey and interviewed non-professional and professional teachers. Through these surveys and interviews, the teachers' views on Thai language teaching methods and the difficulties encountered in practical teaching are discussed in depth.

1) Teachers' Questionnaire: The results of the teachers' questionnaire are shown in Table 2. The teacher questionnaire aims to understand the teaching methods used by teachers in Thai teaching and their views on traditional and communicative teaching methods. By analysing the questionnaire data, we can better understand teachers' actual situation and needs in Thai language teaching. The results of the teachers' questionnaire are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 shows the responses of non-professional teachers (NST) and professional teachers (ST), respectively. In this paper, some problems are selected and analysed as follows:

(1) Evaluation of Professional Thai Language Skills: 60% of non-professional teachers rate their Thai skills as average, while 60% of professional Thai teachers consider their skills excellent. Non-professional teachers, often lacking opportunities for further learning, rely on outdated knowledge, whereas professional teachers, with more recent academic backgrounds and ongoing research, feel more confident in their abilities.

(2) Weakest Link for Students: Non-professional teachers (70%) identify speaking as the weakest area, while professional teachers (60%) point to grammar. Despite recognising the importance of communication skills, non-professional teachers focus on grammar due to its emphasis on exams, leading to inadequate oral training. Professional teachers, however, prioritise communicative activities, improving students' speaking skills but potentially weakening their grammar.

(3) Importance in Learning Thai: Non-professional teachers report low satisfaction with the curriculum (90%) and textbooks (60%), finding them unengaging and not conducive to communicative skill development. In contrast, 80% of professional teachers are satisfied, believing the diverse courses and materials enhance students' comprehensive skills.

(4) Time Spent Lecturing: Non-professional teachers dominate classroom time, with 70% of the class focused on lectures. This teacher-centred approach hinders students' communicative abilities. Conversely, professional teachers split class time evenly between lecturing and activities, fostering a more engaging and communicative environment.

Table 2 Results of teachers' questionnaire

Answer Item	Type of TS	A No.	A Percent.	B No.	B Percent.	C No.	C Percent.	D No.	D Percent.	E No.	E Percent.	R No.	R Percent.
1	NST	2	20%	6	60%	2	20%	0	0%				
	ST	3	60.00%	2	40.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%				
2	NST	1	10%	7	70%	0	0%	2	20%	0	0%	0	0%
	ST	0	0.00%	1	20%	1	20.00%	0	0%	3	60%	0	0%
3	NST	2	20%	7	70%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	10%
	ST	0	0.00%	3	60.00%	0	0.00%	2	40.00%	0	0.00%	0	0%
4	NST	3	30%	7	70%	0	0%	0	0%				
	ST	0	0%	1	20%	4	80.00%	0	0.00%				
5	NST	6	60%	1	10%	1	10%	2	20%				
	ST	1	20.00%	0	0%	1	20.00%	3	60%				
6	NST	0	0%	1	10%	9	90%	0	0%				
	ST	0	0.00%	4	80.00%	1	20%	0	0.00%				
7	NST	1	10%	3	30%	6	60%	0	0%				
	ST	0	0.00%	4	80.00%	1	20.00%	0	0%				
8	NST	1	10%	2	20%	6	60%	1	10%				
	ST	0	0%	4	80.00%	1	20.00%	0	0%				
9	NST	1	10%	3	30%	6	60%	0	0%				
	ST	3	60.00%	1	20.00%	1	20.00%	0	0.00%				
10	NST	3	30%	2	20%	5	50%	0	0%				
	ST	0	0.00%	1	20.00%	4	80.00%	0	0.00%				

Note: Non-Specialist Teacher (NST), Specialist Teacher (ST)

Items 4, 7, 9 and 10 in Table 2 relate to teaching methods and classroom activities. It can be inferred from the data in Table 2 that most non-professional teachers dominate the classroom. 70% of the time is occupied by the teachers' speech, their teaching methods cannot satisfy the students, and students do not like having class, although still 30% of students prefer the traditional teaching method, 50% of students prefer the combination of traditional teaching method and communicative teaching method.

The analysis reveals that traditional teaching methods are still prevalent among non-professional teachers, who emphasise grammar and vocabulary at the expense of communicative competence. Professional teachers, however, adopt a balanced approach, combining traditional methods with communicative practices, which better support students' language development.

2) Teachers' Interviews: To further understand the teachers' actual teaching methods in Thai language teaching and their attitudes towards different teaching methods, we interviewed some teachers. The interview was conducted in Chinese. The following is the English translation and analysis of the interview. Based on the data, the research results can be presented according to the following objectives:

Research Objective 1:

1.1) to explore the differences between traditional and communication teaching methods in Thai language teaching.

Teacher A's point of view: Teacher A said that traditional teaching methods have always played the most important role in Thai language classrooms due to the influence of traditional Chinese education forms and the lack of time and opportunity to receive training in advanced teaching methods. Teaching is mainly conducted through translation, repeated reading of materials, and explaining grammar knowledge and sentence structure. This shows the advantages of traditional teaching methods in imparting basic knowledge, but also exposes its shortcomings in improving students' practical application ability.

Teacher B's point of view: Teacher B joined the Department of Thai Language at Guizhou Minzu University in 2019, and learned various teaching methods in advance, such as communication listening, and situational. Teacher B believes that combining traditional and communicative methods helps improve students' overall language ability. This shows that introducing and applying modern teaching methods can effectively make up for the deficiency of traditional teaching methods.

1.2) to analyse the application of traditional and communication teaching methods in Thai language teaching at Guizhou Minzu University.

Teacher C's point of view: Teacher C points out that traditional teaching methods are insufficient to cultivate students' language abilities, especially communicative competence. Although we hope to use more advanced teaching methods in the classroom, there are difficulties in organising classroom activities due to the excessive class size, which leads to the poor implementation of the new teaching methods. In addition, the students are afraid of making mistakes and rely too much on the teacher's explanation, which also affects the effectiveness of the communicative teaching method. This shows that teachers face practical challenges and students' habits when implementing communicative teaching methods.

Teacher D's point of view: Teacher D recalled that when he was in school, the teacher rarely realised the importance of verbal communication skills, resulting in students with only good reading comprehension and grammar knowledge, but a lack of oral English skills. Now, as a professional teacher, teacher D is more inclined to combine traditional with communicative teaching methods, and finds that students have progressed in listening, speaking, reading and writing. This suggests combining the two teaching methods can comprehensively improve students' language skills.

Research Objective 2: Suggest suggestions and improvement measures for integrating traditional and communicative teaching methods.

Teacher E's point of view: Teacher E emphasises that as a professional teacher, it is irresponsible for students only to teach textbooks, which will not help their future careers. They found a suitable teaching method, that is, to use the advantages of modern communicative teaching methods to make up for the shortcomings of traditional teaching methods. Only in this way can we meet the needs of students and the society for Thai-language talents. Teacher E's view again emphasises the importance of combining teaching methods and points to the effectiveness of this combination in meeting practical needs.

Based on the teachers' interviews, we can draw the following conclusions: Although traditional teaching methods still play an important role in grammar and vocabulary teaching, communication teaching methods have gained advantages in cultivating students' practical language application ability

From the above data and interview feedback, it is evident that lay teachers in schools are still using traditional teaching methods. However, most teachers seem willing to adopt the combination of conventional and communicative teaching methods to improve students' overall language ability, although some non-professional teachers accustomed to traditional teaching methods have more difficulty to accepting the new teaching methods. Moreover, most teachers are not satisfied with the current curriculum, and they believe this is ineffective in improving their overall language skills. Therefore, it can be seen that the Thai language teaching at Guizhou Minzu University needs to be reformed.

Conclusion and Discussion

Overview of Findings

This section has provided a comprehensive discussion and interpretation of the research findings on the integrating of traditional and communicative teaching methods in Thai language education at Guizhou Minzu University. The data collected through questionnaire surveys and interviews have revealed several critical insights into the current state of Thai language teaching and the effectiveness of different teaching methodologies.

Effectiveness of Integrated Teaching Methods

The quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrate that integrating traditional and communicative teaching methods effectively enhances Thai language proficiency among students. Conventional teaching methods are irreplaceable in teaching grammar and

vocabulary, providing a solid foundation for language learning. Meanwhile, communicative teaching methods improve students' practical language application skills, fostering better listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities in real-world contexts. This is consistent with the research of Saengboon (2014); Wei et al. (2018) and Pitikornpuangpetch & Suwanarak (2021) who found that an integrated teaching approach can lay a solid foundation for language learning very well. In addition, the communicative teaching method is excellent in developing learners' language application skills. Improved speaking, reading, and writing. It is also consistent with Hu's (2010) teaching method model, which states that in the environment of Chinese people learning a language, there must be an appropriate integration of both theoretical and practical teaching styles or methods, so that learners can have skills that genuinely meet their needs.

Perceptions of Students and Teachers

Both students and teachers recognise the benefits of combining these methods. Students reported higher engagement and better understanding when both methods were utilised, indicating that a balanced approach leads to more comprehensive language development. Teachers acknowledged the challenges of solely relying on traditional methods, especially in developing students' communicative competence, and supported the integration of communicative activities to address these gaps. This is consistent with the research of Xu (2012); Zhang et al. (2013); Wei et al. (2018); Doeur (2022), and the statement of Whong (2011), who found and said that to learn a good language, it must be integrated by the involvement between learner and teacher, which indicates that a balanced approach leads to more inclusive language development. Teachers should be aware of the challenges of relying on various teaching methods, especially in developing learners' communication skills and supporting the integration of communication activities to build their learning significantly.

Challenges Identified

The study identified several challenges in the current teaching practices. These include the need for more incorporation of communicative activities in the curriculum, limited use of authentic materials, and the need for ongoing teacher training to blend the two methodologies effectively. Additionally, there is a need for more continuous and formative assessment methods to provide regular feedback and support student progress. This is consistent with the research of Jin (2007); Wei et al. (2018); Nawamawat & Cedar (2021) and Nam (2023), including those who found that many of the challenges in today's approach to language teaching are that integrating learning through practical communication activities or using a blended learning management model can contribute to the development of fundamental learning skills and abilities. In addition, practising operational skills based on modern technology will allow the instructor to know that the learner can achieve the learning outcomes that are precisely the set goals.

Suggestions for Improvement

The section concludes that integrating traditional and communicative teaching methods has significantly improved Thai language teaching outcomes at Guizhou Minzu University, further optimisation is needed. Suggestions for future practices include:

1) Enhancing Communicative Activities: Increase the proportion of communicative activities in the curriculum to enhance students' practical language skills.

2) Providing Comprehensive Teacher Training: Equip teachers with the skills to integrate both methodologies effectively.

3) Developing a Balanced Curriculum: Ensure the curriculum includes traditional grammar and vocabulary instruction and communicative practice.

4) Incorporating Authentic Materials: Use real-life resources to provide practical language exposure.

5) Implementing Continuous Assessment: Provide regular feedback and support student progress through formative assessments.

6) Utilizing Technology: Enhance language learning experiences with online platforms and digital tools.

7) Promoting Cultural Immersion: Facilitate cultural exchange programs and activities to deepen understanding of Thai culture.

8) Fostering a Student-Centered Approach: Encourage active participation and autonomous learning.

9) Ensuring Continuous Improvement: Regularly update teaching methods and curriculum based on feedback and research.

Recommendation

Based on the research objectives, this paper first collected data from students and teachers through questionnaire surveys and interviews, then conducted detailed data analysis and discussion. The results indicate that although current teaching methods have limitations, the effective integration of traditional and communicative teaching methods can significantly improve Thai language teaching outcomes. Therefore, it is recommended to further optimize this combined teaching model in future teaching practices to maximize its advantages and provide students with a more comprehensive language learning experience.

1) Enhancement of Communicative Activities: Increase the proportion of communicative activities in the curriculum to enhance students' practical language skills. Activities such as role-playing, group discussions, and interactive exercises should be regularly incorporated into lessons. These activities help students practice speaking and listening in real-life contexts and encourage active participation and engagement in the classroom. For instance, teachers can design role-playing scenarios based on real-life situations that students might encounter, such as ordering food in a restaurant or asking for directions. Group discussions can be centred around current events or cultural topics, allowing students to express their opinions and engage in meaningful conversations. Interactive exercises can include language games, debates, and collaborative projects that require students to use Thai in practical ways.

2) Teacher Training: Provide comprehensive training for teachers to integrate traditional and communicative teaching methods effectively. This includes workshops and seminars focusing on modern teaching strategies, classroom management, and the use of technology in language teaching. Teachers should be equipped with the skills to create a dynamic and interactive learning environment that caters to diverse learning styles. Continuous professional development opportunities should be offered to help teachers stay updated with the latest trends and best practices in language education. Additionally, peer observations and collaborative teaching practices can be encouraged to foster a supportive teaching community where educators can learn from each other and share effective techniques.

3) Curriculum Development: Develop a balanced curriculum with traditional grammar and vocabulary instruction and communicative practice. Ensure the curriculum is flexible enough to adapt to students' varying proficiency levels and learning needs. A well-structured curriculum should provide a clear progression of language skills from basic to advanced levels and include various learning materials and activities. Incorporating themes that are relevant and interesting to students can make learning more engaging and meaningful. For example, lessons can be designed around Thai culture, traditions, and contemporary issues, giving students a broader understanding of the language and its context.

4) Use of Authentic Materials: Incorporate authentic materials, such as news articles, videos, and real-life dialogues, into the teaching process to expose students to practical language. This helps in bridging the gap between classroom learning and real-world application. Authentic materials include Thai newspapers, magazines, TV shows, movies, and online content. These resources expose students to the natural use of the language, including slang, idiomatic expressions, and cultural references. Teachers can design activities around these materials, such as comprehension questions, discussions, and writing tasks, to help students develop their

reading, listening, and critical thinking skills. Furthermore, inviting native speakers for guest lectures or cultural exchange sessions can provide students valuable opportunities to practice their language skills and gain insights into Thai culture.

5) Feedback and Assessment: Implement continuous and formative assessment methods to give students regular feedback on their progress. This can include peer assessments, self-assessments, and teacher evaluations focusing on accuracy and fluency. Formative assessments, such as quizzes, presentations, and projects, can help monitor students' progress and identify areas for improvement. Providing constructive feedback is crucial for helping students understand their strengths and weaknesses and guiding them towards effective learning strategies. Teachers should create a supportive environment where students feel comfortable making mistakes and view them as learning opportunities. Additionally, incorporating self-assessment and reflection activities can encourage students to take ownership of their learning and set personal goals for improvement.

6) Technological Integration: Utilise technology to enhance language learning experiences. Online platforms, language learning apps, and virtual exchanges with native speakers can provide additional practice opportunities and foster a more engaging learning environment. Digital tools like interactive whiteboards, online quizzes, and language apps, can make learning more interactive and enjoyable. Virtual exchange programs, where students can communicate with Thai speakers through video calls or chat platforms, can provide authentic language practice and cultural exchange. Additionally, online language courses and resources can supplement classroom learning and offer students flexibility in their study schedules. Teachers should be trained in using these technological tools effectively to create a blended learning environment that combines traditional and digital methods.

7) Cultural Immersion: Promote cultural immersion experiences to deepen students' understanding of Thai culture and context. This can be achieved through exchange programs, cultural events, and collaborations with Thai institutions. Organising study trips to Thailand, cultural festivals, and language camps can provide students with firsthand experience of the Thai language and culture. Collaborating with Thai universities and organisations can facilitate student and teacher exchanges, joint research projects, and cultural activities. These experiences can enhance students' language skills, cultural awareness, and global perspectives. Additionally, integrating cultural components into the curriculum, such as learning about Thai history, traditions, and customs, can make language learning more holistic and enriching.

8) Student-Centered Approach: Foster a student-centred learning environment where students actively participate in their learning process. Encourage autonomous learning and provide resources that support independent study and practice. Teachers should act as facilitators, guiding students to explore and apply language concepts in meaningful ways. Creating a classroom environment that values student input, encourages inquiry, and promotes collaboration can enhance student motivation and engagement. Access to various learning resources, such as libraries, online databases, and language learning software, can support students' independent learning efforts. Additionally, implementing project-based learning and other active learning strategies can help students develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills.

Based on the results, as well as the conclusion and discussion of the results of the past research, it can be revealed that the integration of Traditional and Communicative Methods in Thai Language Teaching at Guizhou Minzu University can enable learners to have skills to learn Thai language quickly and have a better understanding of using the Thai language. As for the application of research results, effective strategies should be selected with the learning outcomes of learners as the priority.

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