



Issues and Recommendations Regarding the Chinese Language Proficiency Examination in Thailand

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Abstract

Background and Aim: In 1998, the Thai Ministry of Education included Chinese as one of the elective subjects in the national college entrance examination. Since its introduction, the number of candidates taking the Chinese Language Proficiency Examination (CLPE) has consistently ranked first among foreign language subjects. However, the overall performance of candidates has been relatively low, creating a noticeable contrast between the number of candidates and their test scores. To explore the reasons behind the consistently low scores, this article will focus on analyzing the issues within the CLPE in Thailand, including its structure, examination papers, and other related factors. Based on these issues, corresponding recommendations will be proposed to address the challenges faced in the current system.

Materials and Methods: This study will employ a combination of literature analysis and interviews. By examining past examination papers, test scores, as well as feedback from candidates and teachers, this study aims to analyze the issues within the CLPE, including its structure, examination papers, and other related factors.

Results: The study found the main issues identified within the CLPE in Thailand are as follows: 1) Institutional issues: instability of the examination system, lack of score classification standards, limited diversity in examination format, and limited localization and adaptation. 2) Examination paper issues: limited diversity in the composition of question setters, lack of scientific and systematic guidelines for test construction, limited variety in question types, overall difficulty level, and so on. 3) Other issues: assessment-teaching disconnect, lack of emphasis on language skills, and so on.

Conclusion: The imbalance in the quality of Chinese education has resulted in varying levels of proficiency among candidates, and there is also a noticeable separation between the CLPE and Chinese teaching in high schools. The current examination format showcases the differences in pre-examination Chinese teaching and the language proficiency of candidates through the widespread low scores and polarized examination results. The Chinese language teaching community in Thailand needs to enhance the efficacy of the examination system, examination papers, and other elements scientifically and effectively.

Keywords: Chinese Language Proficiency Examination; Thailand; Issues; Recommendations

Introduction

The number of Chinese learners in Thailand is enormous, and Chinese education in Thailand has a long history (Wei Lijuan, 2012). In 1998, the Thai Ministry of Education took Chinese as one of the elective subjects for the national unified college entrance examination (Zhang Fan, 2009). The main purpose of this examination is to test the potential and suitability of students who are interested in studying Chinese and related majors (Tai Zong, 2013). Since 1998, the Chinese language has become one of the factors for selecting and nurturing high-level talents in Thailand and has also become a facilitator for many Thai students to enter universities. It has been 25 years since then.

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The Number of Candidates Participating in the CLPE in Thailand from 1998 to 2022

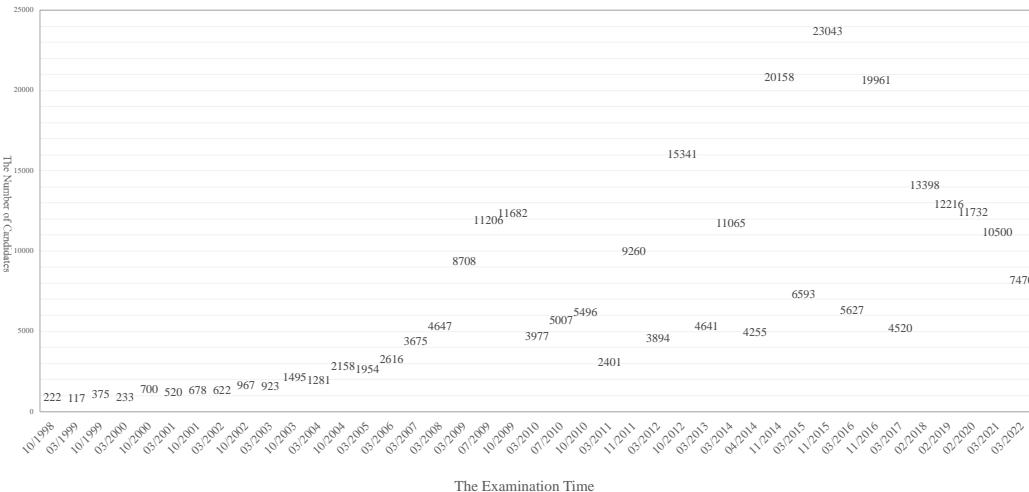


Figure 1: The Number of Candidates Participating in the CLPE in Thailand from 1998 to 2022

Since Chinese became an elective subject in the Thai college entrance examination, the number of applicants has consistently ranked high among foreign language subjects. However, the overall scores of the candidates have been consistently low (Wang Duo, 2014), and many candidates and high school Chinese teachers have expressed that the content of the examination paper is excessively difficult and extensive. The long-standing high registration rate for the CLPE and the comparatively lower examination scores have created a distinct contrast. To explore the specific underlying reasons and propose corresponding improvement recommendations, this paper will deconstruct the Chinese Language Proficiency Examination from three aspects: system, examination paper, and others. It will review the development process, analyze the current situation, summarize the problems in these three aspects, and finally provide corresponding recommendations for these issues.

The Average Scores of the CLPE in Thailand from 2009 to 2022



Note: The maximum score is 300.

Figure 2: The Average Score of the CLPE in Thailand from 1998 to 2022

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Objectives

This article aims to 1) analyze the main issues existing in the Chinese Language Proficiency Examination in Thailand. 2) To propose corresponding strategies to address the various issues existing in the Chinese Language Proficiency Examination in Thailand.

Literature Review

From 2009 to 2022, the Chinese Language Proficiency Test in Thailand is also known as the Professional and Academic Aptitude Test 7.4 (PAT 7.4), some Chinese and Thai scholars have conducted relevant research on the development and issues of the PAT 7.4 examination.

Wang Dan (2014) conducted a comparative analysis of the HSK Level 4 examination, the CLPE in Thailand from 1999 to 2005 and 2009 to 2011. Drawing upon Bachman's language ability model and Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive domain educational objectives, the study examined the scope and levels of abilities assessed in these three examinations. The findings of the study revealed that the CLPE focused on evaluating students' proficiency in Chinese theoretical knowledge. The content assessed in these exams exhibited significant differences from the Chinese language teaching curriculum in high schools.

Chun Lijuan (2012) surveyed for the first time, using a sampling method, to investigate the perspectives of students who had taken the PAT7.4 examination and teachers who had provided relevant coaching for it in Thailand. The surveyed teachers and students commonly expressed concerns regarding the inadequate Chinese language teaching syllabus, frequent teacher turnover, disorganized teaching materials, noticeable disparities between the Chinese language curriculum in high schools and the content of the PAT7.4 examination, as well as the high difficulty level of the PAT7.4 test questions. In response to these issues, the author proposed suggestions such as improving the Chinese language teaching syllabus, ensuring proper allocation of teaching resources, standardizing Chinese language textbooks, and adjusting the content and difficulty level of the PAT7.4 examination.

Wan Xichun (2014) conducted a study by organizing and analyzing the PAT7.4 examination papers from 2009 to 2011. The findings revealed that the PAT7.4 test questions covered a comprehensive range of Chinese language knowledge, encompassing various aspects. However, the study identified issues such as imbalanced question types, inappropriate sequencing of questions, incomplete instructions, and high difficulty levels of cultural questions that were not closely related to the current lives of Thai people. In light of these findings, the author concluded by suggesting the strengthening of Chinese language element teaching and the enhancement of Chinese logical thinking training.

Wang Duo (2014) utilized the theories of score testing to analyze the PAT7.4 examination and concluded that it exhibited low reliability and validity, high difficulty, and poor discrimination. These factors had negative consequences on the selection of Chinese textbooks, teaching arrangements, and students' learning orientation in the Thai high school Chinese curriculum. The article also analyzed the negative impacts of the problems in the Chinese subject exams on students, teachers, the Confucius Institute, and the Thai government. Corresponding recommendations were provided for each group.

Wang Baolong (2015) elucidated the current situation of Chinese language learning among Thai students. It was pointed out that there were issues such as the weak correlation between Chinese courses across different grades, a lack of unified teaching focus, and insufficient instructional hours. The article also introduced the question types in the CLPE in Thailand. The author highlighted that many candidates perceived cultural questions as the most challenging, and there was a significant disparity between the vocabulary in the exam papers and that taught in daily classes. Late initiation of Chinese learning and limited study time were identified as the primary reasons for the relatively low exam scores among the candidates.

Yang Kai (2016) conducted a comprehensive analysis of the structure of the PAT7.4 examination paper. By combining Bachman's language ability framework and relevant theories of international Chinese language proficiency, the study examined the distribution of various knowledge points in the





examination paper and analyzed the language ability structure assessed by the PAT7.4 examination. In the concluding remarks, the article presented suggestions from both the perspective of the PAT7.4 examination paper itself and the Thai Chinese language teaching. These recommendations included adjusting the language ability structure of the examination paper, reducing the difficulty level, involving multiple stakeholders in test item development, improving the Chinese language teaching syllabus, enhancing teacher resources, and refining the relevant teaching materials.

These studies combined language proficiency models, language testing theories, and principles of foreign language teaching to analyze and evaluate the CLPE in Thailand. By applying these theories, researchers were able to conduct systematic research on the structure, difficulty, content, and language abilities assessed in the examination papers, and provide corresponding improvement suggestions. These studies serve as important reference points for enhancing the teaching and assessment of the Chinese subject exams in the Thai high school context.

Methodology

Literature Analysis: The author conducted a comprehensive review and analysis of current domestic and international research on the CLPE in Thailand. Pertinent and valuable insights were extracted from existing literature to provide a solid foundation and references for this study.

Interview: The author conducted interviews with candidates and teachers to gather their evaluations and feedback on the system, examination papers, and other factors of the CLPE in Thailand.

Results

By reviewing the past examination papers and examining the relevant literature on the CLPE in Thailand, as well as considering the feedback from candidates and Chinese language instructors, the author categorizes the issues observed in the CLPE into three main categories: system, examination papers, and other factors. The specific details are as follows.

Issues and Recommendations Regarding the System of CLPE in Thailand

The institutional aspects of the Thai CLPE have revealed certain issues that require attention and improvement. The following are the identified problems along with corresponding recommendations:

1) Instability of the overall examination system: The Thai Chinese language college entrance examination system undergoes frequent changes with short cycles, leading to inconsistency and uncertainty.

Recommendation: Establish a more stable and standardized examination system by minimizing unnecessary changes and providing clear guidelines and regulations for the examination process.

2) Lack of score classification standards: The admission process lacks explicit criteria for score classification, which leads to ambiguity in determining the performance level of candidates.

Recommendation: Develop clear and transparent score classification standards that can be used to assess and rank candidates' performance accurately. This will provide a fair and reliable evaluation of their Chinese language proficiency.

3) Limited diversity in examination format: The current examination format is predominantly focused on written assessments, lacking diversity in assessing other language skills such as listening, speaking, and practical application.

Recommendation: Introduce a more comprehensive examination format that includes multiple components to evaluate different language skills, reflecting a more holistic assessment of candidates' overall Chinese language proficiency.

4) Limited localization and adaptation: The examination paper's overall suitability and localization to the Thai context need improvement. Some questions may not effectively address the practical aspects of Chinese language learning in Thailand.





Recommendation: Develop examination papers that are more culturally relevant and applicable to the Thai context. Ensure that the content and contexts of the questions align with the learning experiences and needs of Thai students studying the Chinese language.

By addressing these institutional issues and implementing the corresponding recommendations, the CLPE in Thailand can be improved to enhance its effectiveness, fairness, and relevance. These improvements will ultimately contribute to the selection and development of Chinese language talents in Thailand's educational system.

Table1: Issues and Recommendations Regarding the System of CLPE in Thailand

Issues Regarding the System of CLPE in Thailand	Recommendations Regarding the System of CLPE in Thailand
Instability of the overall examination system.	Establish a more stable and standardized examination system by minimizing unnecessary changes and providing clear guidelines and regulations for the examination process.
Lack of score classification standards.	Develop clear and transparent score classification standards that can be used to assess and rank candidates' performance accurately.
Limited diversity in examination format.	Introduce a more comprehensive examination format that includes multiple components to evaluate different language skills, reflecting a more holistic assessment of candidates' overall Chinese language proficiency.
Limited localization and adaptation.	Develop examination papers that are more culturally relevant and applicable to the Thai context. Ensure that the content and contexts of the questions align with the learning experiences and needs of Thai students studying the Chinese language.

Issues and Recommendations Regarding the Examination Paper of CLPE in Thailand

After reviewing the relevant past papers on the CLPE in Thailand from 1999 to 2022 and consulting the relevant literature on CLPE, the author conducted a comprehensive analysis. Based on this analysis, the issues observed in the papers of CLPE in Thailand and the corresponding suggestions are summarized as follows:

1) Limited diversity in the composition of question setters: The composition of the examination setters lacks diversity and may result in a narrow perspective in question design.

Recommendation: Enhance the diversity of the examination setters by including experts with different backgrounds and experiences in Chinese language teaching and assessment. This will ensure a more comprehensive and balanced representation of question design.

2) Lack of scientific and systematic question-setting guidelines.: The examination papers lack a solid foundation of scientifically established question-setting guidelines.

Recommendation: Develop scientifically grounded and systematic question-setting guidelines that





incorporate language learning theories, assessment principles, and the specific goals of the Chinese language college entrance examination. This will ensure the validity and reliability of the examination papers.

3) Limited variety in question types: The examination papers predominantly feature a narrow range of question types, limiting the opportunity to assess various language skills and competencies.

Recommendation: Introduce a wider variety of question types that cover listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. This will provide a more comprehensive evaluation of candidates' language abilities and promote a more balanced assessment.

4) Uneven distribution of question proportions: The distribution of question proportions in the examination papers may be uneven, resulting in a disproportionate emphasis on certain language skills or content areas.

Recommendation: Achieve a more balanced distribution of question proportions by aligning with the intended learning outcomes and considering the relative importance of different language skills and content areas. This will ensure a comprehensive evaluation of candidates' overall language proficiency.

5) Overall difficulty level and insufficient localization: The examination papers often exhibit a high level of difficulty that surpasses the realistic language proficiency of Thai high school students. Additionally, the papers may lack sufficient localization and relevance to the Thai context.

Recommendation: Adjust the overall difficulty level of the examination papers to align with the language proficiency of Thai high school students. Incorporate more localized and contextually relevant content and situations into the examination papers to enhance their practicality and authenticity.

By addressing these examination paper-related issues and implementing the corresponding recommendations, the CLPE can be improved to provide a more valid, comprehensive, and culturally appropriate assessment of candidates' Chinese language proficiency.

Table 2: Issues and Recommendations Regarding the Examination Paper of CLPE in Thailand

Issues Regarding the Examination Paper of CLPE in Thailand	Recommendations Regarding the Examination Paper of CLPE in Thailand
Limited diversity in the composition of question setters.	Enhance the diversity of the examination setters by including experts with different backgrounds and experiences in Chinese language teaching and assessment.
Lack of scientific and systematic question-setting guidelines.	Develop scientifically grounded and systematic question-setting guidelines that incorporate language learning theories, assessment principles, and the specific goals of the CLPE.
Limited variety in question types.	Introduce a wider variety of question types that cover listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.
Uneven distribution of question proportions.	Achieve a more balanced distribution of question proportions by aligning with the intended learning outcomes and considering the



Issues Regarding the Examination Paper of CLPE in Thailand	Recommendations Regarding the Examination Paper of CLPE in Thailand
Overall difficulty level and insufficient localization.	<p>relative importance of different language skills and content areas.</p> <p>Adjust the overall difficulty level of the examination papers to align with the language proficiency of Thai high school students.</p> <p>Incorporate more localized and contextually relevant content and situations into the examination papers to enhance their practicality and authenticity.</p>

Issues and Recommendations Regarding Other Aspects of CLPE in Thailand

Apart from the institutional and examination paper aspects, there are additional issues in the CLPE that require attention and improvement. The following are the identified problems along with corresponding recommendations:

1) Assessment-teaching disconnect: There is a noticeable misalignment between the content and format of the examination and the Chinese language teaching in high schools, resulting in a disconnect between what is taught and what is assessed.

Recommendation: Foster a stronger connection between the examination and teaching by aligning the examination content, format, and assessment criteria with the goals and objectives of Chinese language education. This can be achieved through regular communication and collaboration between examination administrators and Chinese language teachers to ensure coherence and relevance.

2) Lack of emphasis on language skills: The current Chinese language education in Thailand tends to focus more on grammar and vocabulary acquisition, neglecting the development of practical language skills such as listening, speaking, and writing.

Recommendation: Increase the emphasis on language skills development by incorporating interactive and communicative activities in the classroom. Encourage students to practice their language skills through authentic and meaningful tasks, such as role-plays, discussions, and presentations.

3) Insufficient cultural content: The examination and Chinese language teaching in high schools often lack sufficient cultural content, which is essential for fostering intercultural competence and a deeper understanding of the Chinese language and culture.

Recommendation: Integrate cultural elements into the curriculum and examination by introducing cultural topics, literature, traditions, and contemporary issues related to Chinese-speaking communities. This will enhance students' cultural awareness and appreciation, as well as their overall language proficiency.

4) Limited resources and professional development: Teachers often face challenges due to limited resources and opportunities for professional development in the field of Chinese language education.

Recommendation: Provide adequate resources, training programs, and professional development opportunities for Chinese language teachers. This can include workshops, seminars, and collaborations with educational institutions to enhance their pedagogical skills, content knowledge, and instructional strategies.

By addressing these problems and implementing the suggested measures, the CLPE in Thailand can become more effective in evaluating students' Chinese language abilities, promoting their overall development, and fostering a higher quality of Chinese language education throughout the country.

Table 3: Issues and Recommendations Regarding Other Aspects of CLPE in Thailand

Issues Regarding the Other Aspects of CLPE in Thailand	Recommendations Regarding the Other Aspects of CLPE in Thailand
Assessment-teaching disconnect.	Foster a stronger connection between the examination and teaching by aligning the examination content, format, and assessment criteria with the goals and objectives of Chinese language education. This can be achieved through regular communication and collaboration between examination administrators and Chinese language teachers to ensure coherence and relevance.
Lack of emphasis on language skills.	Increase the emphasis on language skills development by incorporating interactive and communicative activities in the classroom. Encourage students to practice their language skills through authentic and meaningful tasks, such as role-plays, discussions, and presentations.
Limited variety in question types.	Introduce a wider variety of question types that cover listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.
Insufficient cultural content.	Integrate cultural elements into the curriculum and examination by introducing cultural topics, literature, traditions, and contemporary issues related to Chinese-speaking communities. This will enhance students' cultural awareness and appreciation, as well as their overall language proficiency.
Limited resources and professional development.	Provide adequate resources, training programs, and professional development opportunities for Chinese language teachers. This can include workshops, seminars, and collaborations with educational institutions to enhance their pedagogical skills, content knowledge, and instructional strategies.

Conclusion and Discussion

By reviewing the past examination papers and examining the relevant literature on the CLPE in Thailand, the study found the main issues identified within the CLPE in Thailand are as follows: 1) Institutional issues: instability of the examination system, lack of score classification standards, limited

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diversity in examination format, limited localization and adaptation. 2) Examination paper issues: limited diversity in the composition of question setters, lack of scientific and systematic guidelines for test construction, limited variety in question types, overall difficulty level, and so on. 3) Other issues: assessment-teaching disconnect, lack of emphasis on language skills, and so on.

In general, the imbalance in the quality of Chinese language education at the basic education stage in Thailand has resulted in varying levels of proficiency among candidates, and there is also a noticeable separation between the Chinese language college entrance examination and Chinese language teaching in high schools. The current examination format, which is purely written and fully multiple-choice, vividly showcases the differences in pre-examination Chinese language teaching and the language proficiency of candidates through the widespread low scores and polarized examination results.

The CLPE not only reflects the students' Chinese language proficiency and level but also reflects the status and quality of Chinese education in Thai high schools and even the overall education system. As a national selective examination, the CLPE plays a role in selecting talents for Chinese-related majors in higher education institutions and cultivating Chinese-related talents in Thailand. As the examination serves as both a selection and a proficiency test, it is necessary to ensure the confidentiality of the examination while scientifically and effectively improving the examination system and test papers, enhancing the examination's contribution to the selection and cultivation of Chinese-related talents in Thai universities and nationwide, and promoting the comprehensive development of Chinese education at all stages involved in the examination. The relevant educational authorities in Thailand, as well as the Chinese language teaching community, need to enhance the efficacy of the examination system, examination papers, and other elements scientifically and effectively. This will elevate the role of the examination in selecting and cultivating Chinese language-related talents for Thai universities and even nationwide.





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