



Chinese Language Education under the Integration of Chinese and Thai Languages and Cultures

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Received 13/12/2023

Revised 19/12/2023

Accepted 20/01/2024

Abstract

Background and Aims: This article analyzes the development process of Chinese education in Thailand and compares its different characteristics regarding Chinese cultural inheritance and language dissemination with other Southeast Asian countries. It is believed that the integration of Buddhist and Confucian cultures between China and Thailand, as well as Thailand's harmonious and inclusive ethnic policies and cultural environment, are the main reasons for the steady development of Chinese education in Thailand. In the language and cultural integration process between China and Thailand, there has also been a certain degree of excessive and cross-border integration. "Moderate integration" and "excessive integration" constitute the characteristics of Thai Chinese language education, and their dual characteristics jointly influence the progress of Thai Chinese language education.

Methodology: Using the literature research method and induction by looking at the literature to summarize the viewpoints proposed by relevant scholars. Conduct an extensive review of existing literature on language education, focusing on Chinese and Thai languages and cultures. Analyze academic papers, textbooks, and relevant educational materials to identify effective strategies for language integration. Evaluate existing Chinese language education curricula and materials in both China and Thailand. Identify commonalities and differences, and explore ways to integrate elements that reflect both Chinese and Thai cultures.

Results: The vigorous development of Thai Chinese education is closely related to integrating Chinese, Thai Buddhist, and Confucian cultures, as well as Thailand's harmonious and inclusive ethnic policies and cultural environment. This is a positive manifestation of Thai-Chinese education's "moderate integration" and a proper interpretation of Thai-Chinese education under the premise of integration. However, there has also been a certain degree of excessive and cross-border integration of language and culture between China and Thailand, resulting in negative impacts such as Chinese language variation, structural imbalance in teaching systems, and a lack of competitive environment for the Chinese language.

Conclusion: The sorting out of the joint representation of "moderate integration" and "excessive integration" in Thai Chinese education reflects and abandons the survival mode and cultural landscape inherited and condensed by Thai Chinese education over a long period in the historical evolution.

Keywords: China; Thailand; Language and Culture; Chinese Language Education

Introduction

Thailand is a multi-ethnic country comprising over 30 ethnic groups, with Chinese being the largest ethnic group after the Thai. Since the mid-Ming Dynasty, many Chinese ancestors along the southeastern coast of China, especially in the Chaoshan region, began to migrate to Siam. From then on, a continuous bloodline has spread between China and Thailand. Thailand's unique cultural



environment and gentle and inclusive policies have promoted the integration of Chinese and Thai cultures. This is rare in Southeast Asian countries, where Chinese cultural heritage and language dissemination in foreign lands often suffer from bloodshed, struggle, and hardship. However, Thai-Chinese education presents a warm and harmonious side despite historical storms and storms. However, deep-rooted anti-China prejudices and bloody racial conflicts ultimately disappeared from the common Buddhist beliefs of China and Thailand. The mutual acceptance of cultural integration And the dual characteristics of "moderate integration" and "excessive integration" influence the progress of Thai Chinese language education (Wu and Feng, 2011).

Moderate Integration of Thai Chinese Language Education

The mutual integration and deep infiltration under the influence of Buddhist and Confucian culture

Thailand is a major Buddhist country, and over 90% of Thai people believe in Buddhism. After the Northern and Southern Dynasties, Mahayana Buddhism in China gradually spread to Thailand, and its classics, rituals, and ideas had an impact on Thai Buddhism. The belief in Bodhisattva and Pure Land in Chinese Buddhism has also permeated Thai Theravada Buddhism to varying degrees, making Thai Buddhism incorporate Chinese elements (Xu, 2002). The Buddhist philosophy of tolerance and kindness in life integrates the Thai national personality of tolerance, generosity, humility, and kindness. This tolerant mindset enables Chinese and Thai people to live peacefully together in this land of Thailand.

The long-standing and common beliefs of the same origin and lineage have led to a certain consensus between the people of China and Thailand in terms of their experience of the universe and life, as well as their recognition of ethical norms. This consensus is externalized as a shared recognition of the essence of Confucian culture, such as moral systems and values, by both parties (Liu, 2001).

Thai people have always regarded moral education as the top priority in educating the people. In the 1970s, the Thai Ministry of Education refined moral education into religious, ethical, and ceremonial education, among which ethical and ceremonial education not only had the shadow of Buddhism but also had the norms of Chinese Confucianism (Li). Moral education in Thai primary and secondary schools places special emphasis on virtues such as respecting teachers, loyalty and righteousness, benevolence and filial piety, humility, and magnanimity, which are no different from Chinese Confucian education. Even some Confucian traditions and moral concepts that have already disappeared in China are still upheld by the Thai Chinese. Thailand holds Teacher's Day in January and the second week of school every year; From primary and secondary schools, we attach great importance to the harmonious coexistence of all ethnic groups; Emotional education for the royal family and the country is deeply embedded in school education.

According to a survey of Chinese language learners in Thailand by relevant researchers, due to the similarity of Thai and Chinese cultures, Thai Chinese are quite familiar with Chinese Confucian culture (Wei, 2007). In the survey, nearly 90% of students chose "like" or "really like" when answering the question of "whether they like China", demonstrating a high degree of identification among Thai people with Chinese culture. The filial piety of Confucian culture is most recognized among Thai students, followed by etiquette, diligence, humility, and thrift, fully reflecting the profound influence of the value system inherited by Confucianism on Thai Chinese language learners.



Under the Influence of Ethnic Policies That Promote Equality Among All Ethnic Groups, the Integration and Absorption of Charm

Regarding ethnic policy in Thailand, except for King Rama VI, all previous kings have adopted a policy of treating Chinese people equally with Thai people, encouraging intermarriage between Chinese and Thai people, and granting titles and salaries to Chinese people. Any Chinese descendant with Thai nationality has the same rights and obligations as Thai people without discrimination. Thai Chinese political rights and citizenship issues have been thoroughly and smoothly resolved, and Chinese living in Thailand have shown more confidence and composure in ethnic identity issues. This is entirely different from other Southeast Asian countries. In terms of names, most Chinese people in Southeast Asian countries often use two types of names: one is the name of their host country, and the other is a Chinese name (Wu and Li, 2001). Thai Chinese generally use Thai names; some do not have Chinese names in the fourth and fifth generations. This reflects from one side that the ethnic relationship between Chinese and Thai people is relatively harmonious. The Thai Chinese community does not need to struggle to maintain the purity of their ethnic lineage in a foreign land to prevent their cultural heritage and Chinese imprints from being violated. On the contrary, the equality, peace, harmony, and inclusiveness in this sacred land of Buddhism have made the Chinese community feel at home and naturally "Thai". Currently, over 90 Chinese residing in Thailand have acquired Thai citizenship.

In a harmonious political environment, Chinese living in Thailand does not have to bear the burden and tragedy brought about by ethnic oppression in terms of spirit. Chinese education in Thailand has steadily developed in its ever-changing history. In 1918, Thailand promulgated the Siamese Civil Schools Act, which established many strict regulations on the qualifications of Chinese language school principals and teachers, the study time limit for Chinese language students, and the discipline, teaching, and responsibilities of Chinese language schools. Due to the strong resistance of overseas Chinese and Chinese communities, Chinese language education has remained relatively unaffected. The number of Chinese language schools continues to increase, and Chinese family classes and Chinese night school tutoring classes have spontaneously emerged. The development of Chinese language departments in universities has also continued.

From 1938 to 1947, during the reign of Luang Phrayon in Thailand, a radical nationalist policy was adopted towards the Chinese people, which placed Chinese language schools under the government's jurisdiction, causing Thailand's Chinese education policy to encounter a problematic ice age. However, these policies go against the Thai government's long-standing assimilation policy based on nationality rather than race. Not in line with the will of the people, not in line with the will of the people, it was soon canceled. As some scholars have said, "Although there have been some unpleasant incidents in the implementation of Chinese assimilation policies, it has not and cannot prevent Thailand from implementing the long-term policy of moderate assimilation towards Chinese people. After all, this represents mainstream consciousness in Thai society."

The Negative Undercurrent of Thai Chinese Education Under the Surface of "Excessive Integration"

The variation of Chinese brought about by vocabulary fusion - the Thai style Chinese of "correcting mistakes"



In the process of Thai Chinese living in Thailand, they need to integrate local life and culture, "In the original Chinese vocabulary, appropriate descriptive words are often not found, so they create new words to fill the gap. These words are not found in modern Chinese but belong to regional and unique cultural words. They are independently created by Chinese people based on the nature, characteristics, and habits of things themselves, using Chinese character word formation methods" (Zhang, 2008).

1. Thai Chinese often use existing Chinese morphemes to construct new words. "Banquet welcome" means "holding a banquet welcome"; "Arsenal" means "arsenal", and so on. In addition, some of them belong to newly created abbreviations, and the abbreviation method differs from Mandarin. Such as "Shi Chang" (Minister of Industry) and "Ji Tie" (Airport Metro). Influenced by the habit of placing Thai address words before personal names, words such as "Pi Lv" (Green Brother) and "Cangjiang" (Uncle Jiang) have also emerged. There are also some direct translations of Chinese words from Thai, such as Dala (market) and "nai" (adult male).

2. Thai Chinese also retains much of the ancient Chinese vocabulary. Thai Chinese retain the Chinese emperor in vocabulary related to the royal family's imperial-specific words, such as imperial driving, patrol, imperial edicts, etc. Many titles that are no longer used in modern Chinese are still used in Thai Chinese, such as Shiye, Weng, and Kunzhong. Some ancient Chinese vocabulary that is no longer used in China still frequently appears in Thai Chinese newspapers and magazines, such as "Ruren", "Fuyin", and "Shouweng Zhugu with peach wine cups".

3. Dialect vocabulary is widely used. In addition to Mandarin, Thai Mandarin also includes Hakka, Chaoshan, Minnan, Cantonese, and Hainan. Dialect words are commonly used among Chinese and frequently appear in formal written Chinese. Standard terms such as "work value" (wages), "skylight" (dawn), "house" (house), etc. These three dialects merge into Thai written Chinese and have become one of the characteristics of Thai Chinese.

Many scholars hold a tolerant attitude towards the Chinese language variation brought about by the fusion of Chinese and Thai vocabulary. It is believed that these "unique words are a common phenomenon in the Chinese community, reflecting the local living conditions and enriching the vocabulary within the Chinese character cultural circle." It proves that "Thai Chinese have an open, friendly, equal, and very pragmatic attitude towards the various languages they use." However, this kind of "make the right mistake" Thai Chinese confuses the correct understanding of Chinese language norms among Thai Chinese. It is caused by a gap in Thai teaching staff and a need for more norms. It is a phenomenon of excessive and cross-border language and cultural integration between China and Thailand and a negative undercurrent of Thai Chinese education under the surface of "excessive integration".

Disharmonious Notes Under the Surface of a Fully Integrated Chinese Language Education Ladder - a Chaotic Teaching System

The inclusive social atmosphere in Thai society provides an appropriate space for developing the Thai Chinese language. Thai Chinese language education has also developed relatively comprehensively, forming a hierarchical early childhood, primary school, middle school, and high school system. However, the rapid scale expansion has also brought about a specific structural imbalance, which cannot balance the coherence and effectiveness of the Chinese language education curriculum, lacks a sound quality monitoring system for Chinese language teaching, and the teaching system for Chinese language education is imperfect.



1. Chinese schools in Thailand operate independently and need more relevant standards and assessment requirements to recognize Chinese language proficiency. Although many Chinese language students in Thailand have undergone about six years of Chinese language learning, their Chinese proficiency could be better, and there are even situations where they need more understanding of Chinese Pinyin and accurate pronunciation. Most tutoring classes in society also exist in the form of elementary classes, with only a few intermediate and advanced classes left. According to research, about 89.7% of Thai Chinese language learners are at the elementary level, about 7.3% are at the intermediate level, and about 3% are at the advanced level. Some people have pointed out that there are currently three "zero" phenomena in Chinese language learning in Thailand, namely "starting from scratch in primary school, starting from scratch in junior high school, and starting from scratch in university (Zhu, 2013)." This reflects one aspect: the level of Chinese language education in Thai society is still at a relatively low stage, and the teaching effect needs to be more satisfactory. Although it is formally fully equipped and well-equipped, its essence is still in the dilemma of babbling.

2. There are significant differences in the level of learners and significant difficulties in selecting textbooks and scheduling teaching progress. There are a variety of Chinese language teaching materials in Thailand. Some are self-compiled, some are imported from the Chinese Mainland, some are from Taiwan, China, and Hong Kong, and some are from Singapore. Mixed traditional and simplified forms and phonetic and phonetic symbols are prominent. Due to different sources, it is not easy to distinguish clearly. Some schools even have the confusion of sharing a textbook for junior, intermediate, and senior classes. Wei Wanchuan surveyed the use of Chinese language textbooks in Thailand among 120 Thai university students and 30 teachers, and the results showed that over 85% of students and over 90% of teachers were dissatisfied with the textbooks. Due to the need for unified planning and operational guidelines for Chinese language education in Thailand, different levels of education overlap under the surface of harmonious integration, resulting in excessive waste of educational resources.

3. The teaching quality is relatively low. Similar to the historical development trajectory of Chinese education in most Southeast Asian countries, Chinese education in Thailand has also experienced decades of cold winters. Despite the lifting of the ice age and the emergence of spring breeze, the rupture of the teaching chain takes time to close again. Most Chinese language teachers without formal education show a certain degree of arbitrariness in the teaching process, and there are many problems with teaching outline, teaching content, teaching process, and teaching progress. Jiang Aoshuang and others conducted a teaching survey on 203 Chinese language teacher volunteers teaching in Thailand. These volunteers were engaged in Chinese language teaching in universities, primary and secondary schools, kindergartens, and amateur training institutions in Thailand. The survey showed that only 9.8% of the volunteer teaching schools had well-developed Chinese language curriculum teaching outlines, and 73.4% needed precise teaching schedules and requirements.

In addition, the full integration of Chinese and Thai people has also led to a need for a competitive environment for developing Chinese language education in a certain sense. "Chinese and Thai people get along very well, and Chinese do not need to unite to develop Mandarin to protect their interests. Therefore, in Thai Chinese families, parents speak Thai or a mixture of Thai and Mandarin to their children. Mandarin also gradually loses its motivation and cohesion (Wu and Feng, 2009)."



Conclusion

In the decades since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Thailand, bilateral trade has developed rapidly, and its macro trend has provided broad room for the development of Chinese language education. Since the 1990s, the Thai government has begun to lift the ban on Chinese language education, confirming the legal status of Chinese language education. The Thai royal family has also spared no effort in promoting Chinese education. Princess Sirindhorn has visited China more than 20 times and actively promoted Mandarin, forming the phenomenon of Princess Sirindhorn. The number of Confucius Institutes in Thailand ranks first in Asia. Since the establishment of Confucius Institutes in Thailand in 2006, 12 Confucius Institutes and 11 Confucius Classrooms have been established. The vigorous development of Thai Chinese education is closely related to integrating Chinese, Thai Buddhist, and Confucian cultures and Thailand's harmonious and inclusive ethnic policies and cultural environment. This is a positive manifestation of Thai-Chinese education's "moderate integration" and a proper interpretation of Thai-Chinese education under the premise of integration. However, there has also been a certain degree of excessive and cross-border integration of language and culture between China and Thailand, resulting in negative impacts such as Chinese language variation, structural imbalance in teaching systems, and a lack of competitive environment for the Chinese language. The sorting out of the joint representation of "moderate integration" and "excessive integration" in Thai Chinese education reflects and abandons the survival mode and cultural landscape inherited and condensed by Thai Chinese education over a long period in the historical evolution.

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