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# Exploring the Effectiveness of the Application of Traditional Chinese Games through TPR in Improving Listening and Speaking Skills of First-Grade Students at A Thai Primary School

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**Abstract**

**Background and Aim:** Traditional teaching methods often fail to engage first-grade students in Chinese language learning effectively. This study explored the effectiveness of traditional Chinese games combined with Total Physical Response methodology in improving the listening and speaking skills of first-grade Thai students.

**Materials and Methods:** A quantitative experimental design with pre-test/post-test was employed over 8 weeks. Twenty-four first-grade students from Pathum Thani, Thailand, participated. Traditional games, including shuttlecock kicking, hopscotch, eagle catches chicks, and jump rope, were integrated with TPR methodology. Data collection included language tests, satisfaction questionnaires, and classroom observations.

**Results:** Paired-sample t-test showed significant improvement in language skills ($p < 0.001$). Total scores increased from 6.96 to 18.75, with listening scores improving from 4.42 to 14.11 and speaking scores from 0.79 to 4.79. Student satisfaction was high across all measures.

**Conclusion:** Traditional Chinese games through TPR methodology significantly enhance first-grade students' Chinese listening and speaking skills while maintaining high student engagement and satisfaction.

**Keywords**: Traditional Chinese Games; First Grade; Chinese Classes; A Thai Primary School; TPR; Student Satisfaction

## Introduction

The close relationship between the Thai government and the Chinese government has played a crucial role in promoting Chinese language education in Thailand since diplomatic relations were established in 1975. China has provided comprehensive support for Chinese language education, including establishing Confucius Institutes, Confucius Classrooms, sending volunteer teachers, and offering scholarships and exchange programs (Klaitabtim, 2024). The cooperation between the Thai Ministry of Education and China has gradually deepened, allowing Chinese language courses to be widely offered in many Thai schools, with some schools making Chinese a required subject.

Chinese tourists represent a major source of income for Thailand's tourism industry, creating demand for Thai workers who can communicate in Chinese to improve service quality and communication skills (Guo, Shin, & Shen, 2020). As one of China's important neighboring countries, Thailand has seen unprecedented attention given to Chinese language education due to the influence of Sino-Thai economic and cultural exchanges (Wang & Zhang, 2019).

However, traditional teaching methods employed in Thai primary schools—predominantly grammar explanation, vocabulary memorization, and textbook-based instruction—often fail to engage young learners effectively. Chinese teaching in Thai primary schools mainly relies on traditional methods such as grammar explanation, vocabulary memorization, and reading comprehension. Although these methods can help students grasp basic language knowledge to some extent, they often lack interactivity and fun, which can cause students to lose interest in language learning (Wang & Zhang, 2019; Li et al., 2020). This is particularly problematic for first-grade students, who are in the initial stages of language learning, have limited cognitive abilities, and spend less time studying.

Research by Asher (1969) in the Total Physical Response (TPR) methodology demonstrates that language learning is most effective when it engages both cognitive and physical responses. This approach is particularly suitable for young learners whose cognitive development is closely tied to motor activity (Piaget, 1952). Contemporary research further supports this integration, with studies showing that embodied learning approaches significantly improve language retention and comprehension among



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elementary students (Macedonia & Mueller, 2016). Traditional Chinese games, with their cultural authenticity and physical engagement, present unique opportunities to enhance language learning through movement-based activities that align with children's natural learning patterns (Zhao et al., 2019).

The problem addressed in this study stems from classroom observations in early 2023 that conventional Chinese teaching methods in Thai primary schools result in limited student engagement, low motivation, and minimal progress in oral communication skills. This disengagement phenomenon can be attributed to several underlying pedagogical and developmental factors. First, the mismatch between traditional teacher-centered instruction and young learners' developmental needs creates cognitive overload, as first-grade students require concrete, hands-on experiences rather than abstract linguistic concepts (Vygotsky, 1978). Second, the absence of culturally relevant and personally meaningful content fails to activate students' intrinsic motivation, a critical factor in second language acquisition (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Third, the predominantly sedentary nature of conventional Chinese instruction contradicts research in developmental psychology showing that young children learn most effectively through active, kinesthetic engagement (Diamond, 2000).

Students often showed signs of disengagement, distraction, and low motivation, which resulted in minimal progress in their listening and speaking skills. These behavioral manifestations reflect deeper cognitive processing difficulties that occur when instructional methods fail to align with children's natural learning mechanisms (Krashen, 1982). The affective filter hypothesis suggests that high anxiety and low motivation create psychological barriers to language input processing, particularly problematic for young learners who are more sensitive to emotional climate in learning environments (Krashen, 1982). Furthermore, the lack of opportunities for meaningful social interaction in traditional Chinese classes deprives students of essential peer scaffolding and collaborative meaning-making that facilitate language acquisition in early childhood (Vygotsky, 1978).

First-grade students frequently exhibit signs of disengagement and distraction during traditional lessons, highlighting the need for innovative pedagogical approaches that cater to their developmental characteristics. This age-specific challenge reflects the fundamental mismatch between conventional foreign language pedagogy and the cognitive architecture of early childhood development. Research in developmental cognitive science indicates that 6–7-year-old children possess limited working memory capacity and require frequent cognitive breaks, multimodal input, and immediate feedback to maintain attention and process new information effectively (Gathercole et al., 2004). Additionally, the abstract nature of linguistic concepts in traditional Chinese instruction fails to activate the concrete operational thinking patterns characteristic of this developmental stage, creating frustration and withdrawal behaviors (Piaget, 1952).

## Objectives

This study aimed to:

1. Explore the effectiveness of traditional Chinese games through TPR in improving first-grade Thai students' Chinese listening and speaking skills
2. Assess student satisfaction and engagement with traditional Chinese game-based learning in the classroom
3. Evaluate the practical implementation of TPR methodology combined with culturally authentic Chinese games in Thai primary education settings

## Literature review

1. Traditional Chinese Games in Language Education

Traditional Chinese games serve as powerful educational tools that combine cultural transmission with language acquisition. These games are not only symbols of Chinese culture but also possess entertainment and interactive qualities that can stimulate students' interest in learning and enhance classroom participation (Zhao et al., 2019). Many traditional games contain the potential for language



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learning through activities such as role-playing and vocabulary competitions, where students can naturally engage in language use during games, achieving a subtle learning effect (Li, 2018).

Research by Li (2018) demonstrates that games such as shuttlecock kicking and hopscotch effectively promote vocabulary retention and speaking confidence through repetitive, contextualized practice. These games naturally incorporate elements essential for language learning: repetition, social interaction, and meaningful context. Traditional Chinese games such as Ti Jian Zi (shuttlecock kicking), Tiao Fang Zi (hopscotch), Lao Ying Zhuo Xiao Ji (eagle catches the chicken), and Tiao Sheng (rope skipping) are used as interactive teaching tools to promote language learning through movement, repetition, and social interaction.

Studies in gamified learning reveal significant benefits for young learners. The use of gamification in learning, especially through traditional games in language learning, has gained attention from educators based on psychological theories like motivation theory, self-determination theory, and flow theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Huang and Soman (2013) found that game-based instruction provides immediate feedback and achievement recognition, enhancing intrinsic motivation. Research shows that gamified learning methods can greatly boost learners' involvement and language skills because games create a low-pressure, highly interactive environment, which is especially important for learning a language (Landers, 2014).

2. Total Physical Response (TPR) Methodology

TPR, developed by Asher (1969), posits that language learning is most effective when it engages both cognitive and physical responses. This methodology combines physical movement with verbal instructions and is widely used in language instruction for young children and lower-grade students. TPR theory suggests that by engaging the body, students can better memorize and comprehend linguistic information (Asher, 1969; Astutik, Aulina, & Megawati, 2017).

Research shows that TPR is particularly effective for lower-grade students, especially in foreign language teaching contexts. TPR provides a low-stress, highly interactive learning environment where students can more easily understand and retain language by imitating the teacher's movements (Li et al., 2020). Studies indicate that the TPR method can effectively reduce students' anxiety when learning a foreign language, allowing them to engage in language learning more naturally.

The integration of TPR with traditional games creates synergistic effects. Students respond physically to verbal commands during gameplay, reinforcing vocabulary acquisition through kinesthetic learning channels. This multimodal approach accommodates diverse learning styles while maintaining high levels of engagement. For example, in the game Hopscotch, teachers can instruct students using phrases such as "跳到三号格" (Jump to square number three) or "跳到红色格子" (Jump to the red square), requiring students to physically respond to language input.

3. Early Childhood Language Learning Theories

Theoretical foundations from multiple learning theories support game-based language instruction for young learners. Piaget's theory of cognitive development emphasizes that children's cognitive growth is an active, constructive process closely linked to different stages of development (Piaget, 1952). During the sensorimotor and preoperational stages, children learn by exploring their surroundings and experiencing hands-on activities, building logical thinking skills through interactions with objects.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes the central role of social interaction in children's cognitive development, introducing the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to the range of tasks children can accomplish with guidance from more knowledgeable adults or peers (Vygotsky, 1978). This perspective suggests that learning occurs in a social context through interactions between individuals, supporting the collaborative nature of traditional games.

Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory suggests that individuals possess different types of intelligence across various domains, with bodily-kinesthetic intelligence being particularly relevant to traditional games (Gardner, 1999). Traditional Chinese games provide an effective means for stimulating students' bodily-kinesthetic intelligence through physically engaging activities that allow students to



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enhance their memory through bodily involvement and reinforce language acquisition through movement-based learning.

Contemporary neuroscience research supports this connection between physical movement and cognitive processing, revealing that motor activity activates multiple brain regions simultaneously, creating stronger neural pathways for memory consolidation and language retention (Macedonia & Mueller, 2016). Studies specifically examining embodied cognition in language learning contexts demonstrate that students who engage in movement-based activities show significant vocabulary retention improvements compared to those receiving traditional sedentary instruction. Furthermore, kinesthetic learning approaches have been found particularly effective for young learners, as motor development and cognitive development are deeply interconnected during early childhood, with physical experiences serving as foundational scaffolds for abstract thinking and language comprehension (Diamond, 2000).

**Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework integrates three core components:

1. Traditional Chinese Games as cultural and pedagogical tools providing authentic contexts for language use

2. TPR Methodology facilitating embodied learning through physical response to verbal stimuli

3. Student Engagement and Satisfaction: Measuring the effectiveness and acceptability of the integrated approach

The framework posits that combining culturally authentic traditional games with TPR methodology creates optimal conditions for first-grade Chinese language learning, resulting in improved listening and speaking skills and enhanced student satisfaction.

**Methodology**

1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative experimental design with pre-test/post-test comparison to assess the effectiveness of traditional Chinese games through TPR methodology. The research process was divided into two phases: baseline assessment using traditional teaching methods and implementation of the traditional Chinese games' intervention combined with the TPR approach.

2. Population and Sample

The research population consisted of all first-grade students from a private primary school in Pathum Thani, Thailand. The school had a total of 103 first-grade students divided into four classes. Using purposive sampling, twenty-four first-grade students (13 boys, 11 girls) aged 6-7 years from one specific class were selected as the research sample. The selection criteria included: students' age range, ensuring they were in the critical period of language acquisition, beginner-level Chinese proficiency, providing a uniform baseline, and a relatively balanced gender ratio, maintaining diversity within the sample.

3. Research Variables

Independent Variable: Traditional Chinese games integrated with TPR methodology

Dependent Variables:

1) Chinese listening skills (measured through comprehension tests).
2) Chinese speaking skills (measured through oral performance assessments)
3) Student satisfaction (measured through questionnaire responses)

4. Research Instruments

Pre-test and Post-test Design: The language assessment consisted of two main sections. The listening comprehension section (15 points) required students to listen to audio prompts and select the correct answers from multiple choices. The speaking performance section (5 points) evaluated students through reading tasks and situational Q&A, assessed using a five-level rating scale examining vocabulary accuracy, pronunciation clarity, speech fluency, and comprehension ability.



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Satisfaction Questionnaire: A 13-item questionnaire using a 3-point Likert scale (1=Disagree, 2=Neutral, 3=Agree) was designed to measure student satisfaction across three dimensions: Game Experience and Engagement, Learning Outcomes, and Student Attitudes and Feelings.

Classroom Observation Checklist: A systematic observation instrument was developed to evaluate teaching performance, student behavior, and classroom atmosphere across eight game-based lessons. The checklist used a 4-point scale (A=Excellent, B=Good, C=Satisfactory, D=Unsatisfactory) to assess various aspects of classroom interaction and learning effectiveness.

5. Validity and Reliability

All research instruments were validated by three experts specializing in Chinese language teaching, elementary education, and curriculum design. Content validity was assessed using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) method, with all instruments achieving IOC scores of 1.00, indicating excellent validity.

Intervention Implementation

The 8-week intervention incorporated four traditional Chinese games, each carefully selected for their physical, social, and linguistic relevance to young learners:

Week 1-2: Shuttlecock Kicking (Ti Jian Zi 踢毽子) - Focus on basic greetings and numbers. Students practiced counting kicks while saying numbers in Chinese, with TPR commands such as "kick three times" or "switch feet."

Week 3-4: Hopscotch (Tiao Fang Zi 跳房子) - Focus on colors and shapes. Students jumped to different colored squares while naming colors in Chinese, responding to commands like "jump to the red square."

Week 5-6: Eagle Catches Chicks (Lao Ying Zhuo Xiao Ji 老鹰捉小鸡) - Focus on family members and animals. Students assumed different roles while practicing family vocabulary, responding to action commands like "run fast" or "turn around."

Week 7-8: Jump Rope (Tiao Sheng 跳绳) - Focus on daily routines and body parts. Students named daily activities or body parts with each jump, practicing action verbs through physical movement.

6. Data Collection Procedure

Phase 1: Pre-intervention Assessment - Baseline Chinese listening and speaking abilities were assessed using standardized tests. Students completed initial satisfaction questionnaires regarding traditional teaching methods.

Phase 2: Intervention Implementation - Eight weeks of game-based instruction were conducted, with each lesson lasting 120 minutes. Systematic classroom observations were recorded using structured checklists during each session.

Phase 3: Post-intervention Assessment - Final assessments identical to pre-tests were administered. Post-intervention satisfaction questionnaires were completed to measure changes in student attitudes and engagement.

7. Data Analysis Methods

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS software. Paired-sample t-tests were conducted to examine pre-test and post-test differences in listening and speaking scores. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) were calculated for questionnaire and observation data. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

8. Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical guidelines approved by the university Ethics Review Board. Parental consent forms were obtained for all participants. Student anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the research process. Participation was voluntary, and students could withdraw without penalty. All activities were designed to be developmentally appropriate and culturally sensitive.

## Results

### Pre-test and Post-test Language Performance Analysis



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The language assessment results demonstrate substantial improvements in Chinese listening and speaking abilities following the traditional games intervention. All 24 participants showed measurable progress in both skill areas, with no student experiencing a decline in performance.

**Table 1** Descriptive Statistics and t-test Results

| Assessment | Pre-test (M±SD) | Post-test (M±SD) | Improvement | 95% CI | t-value | df | p-value | Cohen's d |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Score | 6.96±1.14 | 18.75±1.16 | +11.79 | [11.31, 12.27] | 50.62 | 23 | <0.001 | 10.35 |
| Listening | 4.42±0.89 | 14.11±0.95 | +9.69 | [9.26, 10.12] | 45.23 | 23 | <0.001 | 9.24 |
| Speaking | 0.79±0.67 | 4.79±0.82 | +4.00 | [3.65, 4.35] | 24.15 | 23 | <0.001 | 4.93 |

**Listening Skills Performance:** The listening comprehension section, consisting of 15 multiple-choice items, showed remarkable improvement. Pre-test scores ranged from 2 to 7 points (out of 15), with a mean of 4.42. Post-test scores demonstrated substantial gains, ranging from 12 to 15 points, with a mean of 14.11. This represents a 219% improvement rate. The narrow standard deviation in post-test scores (0.95) indicates consistent performance across all participants, suggesting that the intervention was effective for students with varying initial abilities.

**Speaking Skills Performance:** Speaking assessment, evaluated through reading tasks and situational responses using a 5-point scale, showed equally impressive results. Pre-test speaking scores were notably low, ranging from 0 to 2 points, reflecting students' initial reluctance and limited ability to communicate orally in Chinese. Post-test scores ranged from 3 to 5 points, with a mean of 4.79, representing a 506% improvement. The large effect size (Cohen's d = 4.93) indicates profound practical significance beyond statistical significance.

**Individual Student Progress Analysis:** Examination of individual progress patterns revealed that 22 out of 24 students (91.7%) achieved total scores above 17 points in the post-test, compared to none reaching this level in the pre-test. The two students who scored below 17 points still demonstrated substantial improvement (increases of 9 and 8 points, respectively), indicating that the intervention benefited all participants regardless of initial proficiency levels.

**Student Satisfaction and Engagement Analysis**

The satisfaction questionnaire revealed overwhelmingly positive responses across all measured dimensions, with 13 items assessing game experience, learning outcomes, and emotional responses to the intervention.

**Table 2** Student Satisfaction Questionnaire Results (N=24)

| Item | Mean Score | SD | Response Distribution | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Agree/Neutral/Disagree | |
| I learned more Chinese words through games | 3.00 | 0.00 | 24/0/0 | High |
| I like using traditional games in Chinese class | 3.00 | 0.00 | 24/0/0 | High |
| I would be happy to continue using games | 2.96 | 0.20 | 23/1/0 | High |
| Playing games makes me feel relaxed | 2.92 | 0.28 | 22/2/0 | High |
| I like cooperating with classmates during games | 2.92 | 0.28 | 22/2/0 | High |
| I feel happy when playing games | 2.90 | 0.31 | 22/2/0 | High |
| Playing games helped me remember pronunciation | 2.88 | 0.34 | 21/3/0 | Medium |



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| Item | Mean Score | SD | Response Distribution Agree/Neutral/Disagree | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Games made me more confident in speaking Chinese | 2.88 | 0.34 | 21/3/0 | Medium |
| Games increased my interest in learning Chinese | 2.88 | 0.34 | 21/3/0 | Medium |
| Games made learning Chinese easier | 2.75 | 0.44 | 18/6/0 | Medium |
| Games made the time pass quickly in class | 2.79 | 0.41 | 19/5/0 | Medium |
| Games helped me understand the teacher's Chinese | 2.75 | 0.44 | 18/6/0 | Medium |
| I can concentrate while playing games | 2.63 | 0.49 | 15/9/0 | Medium |

*Note: Scale 1=Disagree, 2=Neutral, 3=Agree; High: 2.90-3.00, Medium: 2.75-2.89, Low: 1.00-2.74*

**Unanimous Positive Response Items:** Two items received perfect scores (3.00) with zero standard deviation, indicating complete consensus among participants. All 24 students agreed that they learned more Chinese vocabulary through games and enjoyed using traditional games in Chinese class. This unanimous approval demonstrates the intervention's exceptional appeal and perceived effectiveness.

**High Satisfaction Areas:** Items scoring above 2.90 are primarily related to emotional and social aspects of learning. Students reported feeling relaxed, happy, and cooperative during game activities, suggesting that the intervention successfully created positive learning environments. The high scores for willingness to continue using games (2.96) indicate sustained motivation and engagement.

**Areas for Improvement:** The lowest scoring item concerned concentration during games (2.63), with 9 students providing neutral responses. This finding aligns with classroom observations and suggests that while games increased engagement, maintaining focused attention on learning objectives required additional instructional strategies.

**Detailed Classroom Observation Analysis**

Systematic observations across eight lessons provided comprehensive insights into teaching effectiveness and student behavior during game-based instruction.

**Table 3** Comprehensive Classroom Observation Results (N=8 lessons)

| Observation Category | Mean Score | SD | Range | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Teaching Performance Indicators** | | | | |
| Clear communication of objectives | 4.00 | 0.00 | 4.00-4.00 | High |
| Objectives related to game content | 4.00 | 0.00 | 4.00-4.00 | High |
| Games help target language use | 3.75 | 0.43 | 3.00-4.00 | High |
| The teacher adjusts the game rhythm appropriately | 3.25 | 0.83 | 2.00-4.00 | High |
| Uses questioning and encouragement | 3.50 | 0.71 | 2.50-4.00 | High |
| Verbal/non-verbal encouragement | 3.63 | 0.48 | 3.00-4.00 | High |
| Creates a relaxed classroom atmosphere | 3.38 | 0.48 | 3.00-4.00 | High |
| Active teacher-student interaction | 3.63 | 0.48 | 3.00-4.00 | High |
| Effective classroom management | 3.13 | 0.78 | 2.00-4.00 | High |
| **Student Performance Indicators** | | | | |
| Active participation in games | 3.38 | 0.52 | 2.50-4.00 | High |



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| Observation Category | Mean Score | SD | Range | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Teaching Performance Indicators** | | | | |
| Correct vocabulary usage | 3.13 | 0.83 | 2.00-4.00 | High |
| Answering questions in Chinese | 3.00 | 0.93 | 1.50-4.00 | High |
| Maintaining attention during activities | 2.38 | 0.52 | 2.00-3.00 | Medium |
| Following instructions and avoiding distractions | 2.50 | 0.93 | 1.00-4.00 | Medium |
| Cooperating with peers | 2.38 | 1.30 | 1.00-4.00 | Medium |
| Demonstrating positive team spirit | 2.63 | 0.52 | 2.00-3.00 | Medium |
| **Classroom Atmosphere Indicators** | | | | |
| All students actively participating | 3.63 | 0.52 | 3.00-4.00 | High |
| Students effectively achieve objectives | 2.63 | 0.52 | 2.00-3.00 | Medium |
| Games welcomed by students | 3.63 | 0.52 | 3.00-4.00 | High |
| Activities suitable for the language level | 3.25 | 0.46 | 2.50-4.00 | High |
| Need for activity content adjustment | 2.75 | 0.71 | 2.00-4.00 | High |

*Note: Scale A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1; High: 2.70-4.00, Medium: 1.04-2.69, Low: 0.00-1.03*

**Teaching Excellence Indicators:** Two teaching performance indicators achieved perfect scores across all observations: clear communication of objectives and alignment between objectives and game content. These findings suggest consistent instructional quality and effective lesson planning throughout the intervention period.

**Student Engagement Patterns:** High scores for active participation (3.38) and positive reception of games (3.63) confirm strong student engagement. However, attention maintenance (2.38) and cooperation (2.38) showed greater variability, with some lessons achieving excellent ratings while others required additional support for focus and collaboration.

**Game-Specific Performance Variations:** Analysis of individual game effectiveness revealed variations in student response. Eagle Catches Chicks generated the highest participation scores (mean 3.8 across relevant lessons) due to its dynamic, role-playing nature. Hopscotch showed the most consistent attention maintenance (mean 2.9) as its structured format provided clear expectations. Jump rope activities demonstrated the greatest vocabulary usage accuracy (mean 3.6) through their repetitive, rhythmic nature.

**Temporal Learning Patterns:** Observation data revealed learning progression over the 8 weeks. Early lessons (weeks 1-2) showed lower cooperation scores (mean 2.1) as students adapted to game-based learning expectations. Middle period lessons (weeks 3-6) demonstrated peak engagement (mean 3.7 for participation) as students became comfortable with the format. Final lessons (weeks 7-8) showed improved attention maintenance (mean 2.8) as students developed focus strategies for game-based learning.

## Discussion

The quantitative results provide compelling evidence for the effectiveness of traditional Chinese games through TPR methodology in enhancing first-grade students' Chinese language skills. The large effect sizes (Cohen's d > 2.0) indicate not only statistical significance but substantial practical importance for educational practice.

### 1. Language Acquisition Benefits Through TPR Integration

The significant improvements in both listening and speaking skills can be attributed to the natural integration of TPR principles within game contexts. When students physically responded to Chinese commands during gameplay, multiple pathways for memory encoding were activated simultaneously. For instance, during hopscotch activities, students heard the command "跳到红色格子" (jump to the red



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square), processed the linguistic input cognitively, identified the target location visually, and executed the physical movement, creating multisensory learning experiences that enhanced retention.

The repetitive nature of games provided numerous opportunities for vocabulary practice without the monotony of traditional drill exercises. Unlike conventional teaching methods, where students passively receive information, the game-based approach requires active participation and immediate physical responses. This embodied learning approach aligns with Asher's (1969) TPR theory that comprehension precedes production, allowing students to internalize language patterns through physical enactment before being required to produce speech.

The action-based reinforcement strengthened vocabulary retention and comprehension in natural and engaging ways. Students demonstrated improved pronunciation accuracy, increased fluency, and enhanced confidence in oral communication, as evidenced by the significant improvement in speaking scores from 0.79 to 4.79. The low-anxiety environment created by games allowed students to practice Chinese without fear of making mistakes, fostering risk-taking behavior essential for language development.

**2. Cultural and Motivational Factors**

High satisfaction scores reflect the cultural authenticity and inherent appeal of traditional games. Unlike abstract teaching materials commonly used in conventional instruction, these games connected students to Chinese cultural heritage while maintaining pedagogical effectiveness. The cultural elements embedded in traditional Chinese games allowed students to deepen their understanding of Chinese culture while learning the language, fostering cultural identification, and enhancing cross-cultural understanding (Huang, 2022; Zhang, 2019).

The social interaction elements fostered collaborative learning environments where students practiced language naturally. Games such as "Eagle Catches Chicks" required students to communicate with peers, negotiate roles, and follow rules collectively, creating authentic communicative contexts. This collaborative aspect addresses Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, where learning occurs through social interaction within students' Zone of Proximal Development.

Student responses to questionnaire items revealed that 100% of participants agreed that games helped them learn more Chinese vocabulary and that they enjoyed using traditional games in Chinese class. These uniformly positive responses indicate that the intervention successfully addressed motivational challenges commonly associated with foreign language learning among young children.

**3. Pedagogical Implications and Learning Theory Integration**

The success of this intervention suggests that culturally authentic, movement-based activities address multiple learning modalities simultaneously. The combination of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic inputs through TPR-enhanced games created rich learning experiences that conventional methods cannot replicate. This multimodal approach accommodates Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory, particularly benefiting students with bodily-kinesthetic, spatial, and interpersonal intelligence preferences.

From a constructivist perspective, traditional games provided students with environments for participation and problem-solving, aligning with the idea of building knowledge through practice and experience. Students actively constructed language knowledge through interaction with peers and the physical environment, rather than passively receiving information from textbooks or teacher lectures.

The classroom observation data revealed that while students demonstrated high engagement and participation, maintaining sustained attention remained challenging (mean score 2.38/4.00). This finding suggests that the dynamic nature of games, while beneficial for engagement, requires careful management to ensure learning objectives are consistently met. Teachers need to balance excitement with focus, implementing strategies to direct attention toward linguistic targets during gameplay.

**4. Challenges and Considerations**

Despite the overall positive outcomes, several challenges emerged during implementation. Some students occasionally became overly focused on the competitive aspects of games, potentially losing sight of language learning objectives. Teachers needed to consistently redirect attention to linguistic goals while maintaining the enjoyable nature of activities.



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The varying attention spans among first-grade students required flexible game design and implementation. Some activities needed to be shortened or modified to accommodate students' developmental characteristics. Additionally, classroom management during active games required additional planning and coordination to ensure all students remained engaged and safe.

To enhance student interest and sustained engagement in Chinese learning through traditional games, several focal processes emerged as particularly effective. First, implementing a gradual complexity progression proved crucial, where games began with simple, achievable tasks that built confidence before introducing more challenging linguistic elements (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Second, incorporating immediate positive reinforcement through verbal praise, physical gestures, and peer celebration created positive emotional associations with Chinese language use. Third, establishing cultural storytelling connections by explaining the historical and cultural significance of each game enhanced students' intrinsic motivation and cultural curiosity.

Furthermore, implementing collaborative achievement structures where students worked together toward common goals rather than competing against each other fostered positive social dynamics and reduced language anxiety. The rotation and role-switching strategy ensured that every student experienced different game positions and linguistic challenges, preventing boredom and maintaining novelty. Additionally, connecting game vocabulary to students' personal experiences and interests through questions like "What games do you play at home?" created bridges between their familiar world and Chinese language learning (Vygotsky, 1978).

The study also revealed that different games were more or less effective for different learning objectives. While shuttlecock kicking proved excellent for practicing numbers and repetitive vocabulary due to its rhythmic, counting-based nature that reinforced numerical concepts through motor memory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999), hopscotch was particularly effective for spatial vocabulary like colors and directions because it required students to physically navigate space while verbalizing location-based commands (Piaget, 1952; Gibson, 1979). This finding suggests that strategic game selection should align with specific linguistic targets, with kinesthetic games (jumping, running) being optimal for action verbs and spatial games (hopscotch, positioning) being ideal for location vocabulary, while rhythmic games (rope jumping, clapping) excel at reinforcing pronunciation patterns and tonal aspects of the Chinese language.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that traditional Chinese games combined with TPR methodology significantly improve first-grade Thai students' Chinese listening and speaking skills while maintaining high levels of student engagement and satisfaction. The statistically significant improvements ($p < 0.001$) across all measured language skills, coupled with uniformly positive student responses, provide strong evidence for the pedagogical value of this integrated approach.

The findings suggest that culturally authentic, movement-based language instruction addresses the developmental needs of young learners more effectively than conventional methods. By incorporating physical movement, social interaction, and cultural content, traditional games through TPR create optimal conditions for early foreign language acquisition.

## Recommendation

1. For Educational Practice

Schools should consider integrating traditional game-based modules into Chinese language curricula, particularly for elementary levels. Teacher training programs should emphasize TPR methodology and cultural integration strategies. Professional development workshops focusing on game-based instruction design would enhance implementation effectiveness.

2. For Future Research

Longitudinal studies examining the sustained effects of game-based learning on language retention and cultural competence development are needed. Comparative research investigating different traditional



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games' relative effectiveness would inform optimal curriculum design. Cross-cultural studies exploring the adaptability of this approach to other language learning contexts would enhance generalizability.

Research examining the relationship between teacher preparedness and student outcomes in game-based instruction would provide valuable insights for professional development programs. Additionally, studies investigating the optimal balance between traditional games and conventional instruction would inform evidence-based curriculum development.

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