

# The Development of Listening and Speaking Skills of Mandarin Chinese Learners in Thailand

Paisan Sukjairungwattana

Faculty of Liberal Arts, Mahidol University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand

Email: [paisan.suk@mahidol.edu](mailto:paisan.suk@mahidol.edu)

**How to cite this paper:** Sukjairungwattana, P. (2023). The Development of Listening and Speaking Skills of Mandarin Chinese Learners in Thailand. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 11, 177-185.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2023.118012>

**Received:** July 17, 2023

**Accepted:** August 8, 2023

**Published:** August 11, 2023

Copyright © 2023 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

---

## Abstract

In this qualitative study, students and Chinese teachers were interviewed for the purpose of improving Chinese language listening and speaking skills among first-year students at a university in Thailand. A total of 10 first-year students major in Bachelor of Arts in Chinese and 5 experienced Chinese teachers were interviewed, and the results of the interviews showed that motivation, self-confidence, and learning strategies are important factors in developing language skills. The findings were then used to create a customized curriculum for the students that focused on building their confidence and increasing their motivation. By providing a curriculum that incorporated these elements, the researchers were able to ensure that the students were able to learn more effectively and efficiently.

## Keywords

Chinese as a Foreign Language, Listening and Speaking, Language Teaching and Learning, Second Language Acquisition, Thailand

---

## 1. Introduction

*Leaning Chinese language in Thai universities.* China is Thailand's largest trading partner, and the Chinese economy is one of the fastest-growing in the world. Learning Chinese can provide Thai students with access to a vast market of over 1.4 billion people and potentially lucrative business opportunities. Chinese culture has a rich history and is deeply intertwined with Thai culture. By learning Chinese language, Thai students can gain a deeper understanding of Chinese traditions, customs, and values. This can promote cultural exchange and foster closer ties between the two countries. China is also home to some of

the world's leading universities and research institutions. Learning Chinese can provide Thai students with the opportunity to study in China and collaborate with Chinese researchers in various fields.

Moreover, Chinese tourists are among the largest groups of foreign visitors to Thailand. Knowing Chinese can help Thai students communicate with Chinese tourists, understand their needs and preferences, and provide better service to them. As China's influence in the global arena continues to grow, it is increasingly important for Thailand to maintain strong diplomatic ties with China. Learning Chinese can help Thai students engage with their Chinese counterparts more effectively and build stronger relationships. Therefore, learning Chinese can provide Thai students with a range of benefits, from economic opportunities to cultural exchange. As such, Thai universities should consider offering Chinese language courses to their students.

*Confucius Institute.* The Confucius Institute is a non-profit organization that promotes Chinese language and culture around the world. In Thailand, there are more than 10 Confucius Institutes, which are located in different cities including Bangkok, Chiangmai, Khon Kaen, etc. These institutes are operated in partnership with Chinese universities and offer Chinese language courses, cultural events, and exchanges between Thailand and China (Zhou & Luk, 2016). The number of Confucius Institutes is still increasing today, as Mahidol University just celebrated their opening ceremony of the establishment of Confucius Institute on June 26 this year<sup>1</sup>. Confucius Institute remains an important platform for promoting Chinese language and culture in Thailand. In addition to language courses, the institutes also offer cultural events such as Chinese New Year celebrations, calligraphy and painting workshops, and traditional music and dance performances. These events provide opportunities for Thai students and the general public to learn more about Chinese culture and deepen their understanding of China. The Confucius Institute continues to play a significant role in promoting cultural exchange and strengthening ties between Thailand and China. While there have been some challenges, the institutes remain an important resource for those interested in learning Chinese language and culture in Thailand.

*Chinese Listening and Speaking.* In today's globalized world, learning a foreign language has become increasingly important. Among the many languages available to learn, Chinese stands out as one of the most widely spoken languages in the world. With over 1.3 billion native speakers, mastering Chinese language skills can open up a world of opportunities both personally and professionally. Listening and speaking are two essential components of language acquisition. When it comes to learning Chinese, developing these skills is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, effective communication is the foundation of any successful interaction, whether it be in business, education, or personal relationships. By improving our listening and speaking skills in Chinese, we can

<sup>1</sup><https://www.ict.mahidol.ac.th/mu-la-confucius-institute/>

connect more deeply with native speakers, understand their perspectives, and express ourselves clearly and confidently. Furthermore, practicing Chinese language listening and speaking skills enhances our overall language proficiency. As we engage in conversations, we become more familiar with the pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm of the language. This familiarity helps us understand spoken Chinese more easily and enables us to communicate fluently without hesitation. The more we practice listening and speaking, the more natural and accurate our Chinese language skills become. Another important reason to emphasize listening and speaking skills in learning Chinese is the cultural aspect. Language is not just a means of communication; it is also deeply connected to culture. By actively participating in conversations, we expose ourselves to the nuances of Chinese culture, including customs, traditions, and social norms. This cultural immersion enhances our understanding and appreciation of the Chinese way of life, promoting cross-cultural understanding and fostering meaningful connections with Chinese speakers. Moreover, mastering Chinese listening and speaking skills opens up a vast array of opportunities in terms of education and career prospects. China's growing influence in the global economy has created a high demand for individuals who can communicate effectively in Chinese. Whether it's pursuing higher education in China, working for multinational companies, or engaging in international trade, the ability to speak and understand Chinese can give us a competitive edge in today's job market.

Therefore, practicing Chinese language listening and speaking skills is of utmost importance in today's interconnected world. By honing these skills, we can enhance our communication abilities, deepen our understanding of Chinese culture, and unlock countless opportunities both professionally and personally. Whether for academic, career, or personal reasons, investing time and effort in improving our Chinese language skills is a wise choice that will yield long-lasting benefits.

## 2. Related Works

Despite the fact that many previous studies have examined how Chinese can be taught and acquired in various countries and learning environments (e.g., [Gong et al., 2021](#); [Wang & Jiang, 2022](#)), very few studies have specifically examined how Chinese listening and speaking skills can be taught and developed. In terms of learning English, the importance of listening and speaking abilities has been sufficiently discussed (e.g., [Xu & Ferreira Martins Cheang, 2023](#); [Yu et al., 2022](#)). However, this issue differs in terms of learning Chinese. For learning Chinese, the focus has traditionally been on reading and writing skills, rather than listening and speaking. This is due to the fact that the characters of the Chinese language are complex and require more time for mastery. However, there is an increasing trend toward emphasizing the importance of oral communication in Chinese language learning. To achieve this goal, some schools are now incorporating more speaking and listening activities into their Chinese language curri-

cula. Additionally, there are now more online resources and apps available to help students learn Chinese in a more interactive and engaging way (Gao, 2020).

This shift is seen as important because it allows students to develop their ability to communicate with native Chinese speakers in a more natural and fluent way, as well as giving them the confidence to use the language in a real-world setting. It also allows them to become more aware of the cultural nuances of the language (Gong et al., 2021), which is an essential part of being proficient in a language. For instance, Chinese students learn the importance of using the correct tone when speaking, as the use of an incorrect tone can completely alter the meaning of a sentence. However, some may argue that learning a foreign language in a classroom setting is not the most effective way to become proficient in the language (Mango, 2021). They may point to research that shows that people who learn a foreign language by immersion (by living in a country where the language is spoken) are more likely to become proficient in the language than those who learn it in a classroom setting. Nevertheless, this does not mean that classroom-taught language is not useful - it may still be the right choice for those who do not have the opportunity to live in the language's native environment. Classroom-taught language education still provides a variety of benefits to students, such as a structured environment and the opportunity to practice communication with other students. Additionally, there is a wide range of language resources available to support students in their language learning journey, especially for listening and speaking practice.

### 3. Methods

In the present study, the author conducted semi-structured interviews with 10 first-year Chinese language students from three different Thai universities as well as five experienced Chinese teachers. Among them all of the students and 2 teachers are local Thai citizens, 3 teachers are from China. As part of the interviews, students were asked to describe their ideas for improving Chinese listening and speaking skills, as well as their experiences and achievements during their university studies. Conversely, interviews were conducted with teachers and experts concerning their teaching experience with Chinese listening and speaking skills, as well as how to improve teaching methods and learning outcomes. Students were asked to explain their experiences of studying Chinese listening and speaking skills, such as which strategies they used to improve their skills, any difficulties they encountered, and what advice they would give to others. The teachers and experts were asked to provide their perspectives on the challenges of teaching Chinese listening and speaking skills, and how they would recommend teaching the skills in a more effective way.

The goal of this research was to gain an understanding of the different perspectives of both the students and the teachers. The student interviews provided insight into how the students felt about their language skills and what strategies they have used to improve them. The teacher interviews provided insight into

the teaching methods and learning outcomes used in the classroom, as well as what can be done to improve them. Data was collected and analyzed from both the student and teacher interviews. The results of the study were used to develop a set of best practices for teaching Chinese listening and speaking skills. Finally, the findings were used to create a set of recommendations for teachers and students. The recommendations were then distributed to teachers and students, and the results were evaluated to identify areas of improvement. The data was further analyzed to identify any potential trends that could improve learning outcomes. Finally, the best practices were implemented in future classes.

#### 4. Findings

In terms of improving Chinese listening and speaking skills, the following points were determined to be important by the students:

*Learning Difficulties:* Students might report difficulties in distinguishing and reproducing the four tones of Mandarin Chinese, understanding native speakers, and constructing grammatically correct sentences.

*Practice Opportunities:* They could express a desire for more opportunities to practice speaking and listening skills, such as language exchange programs or conversation clubs.

*Resource Availability:* Students might mention the usefulness of multimedia resources, such as music, movies, and podcasts in learning Chinese.

*Motivational Factors:* They could discuss factors that motivate them to learn, such as interest in Chinese culture, future career prospects, or personal challenge.

And by the teachers and experts:

*Teaching Methodology:* Teachers might emphasize the importance of interactive and immersive teaching methods, such as role-plays, debates, and discussions to improve students' speaking skills.

*Linguistic Challenges:* They could highlight challenges students face, such as tonal differences, pronunciation issues, and difficulty understanding fast or colloquial speech.

*Cultural Context:* Teachers might discuss the necessity to understand cultural context and idiomatic expressions for effective listening and speaking.

*Technological Tools:* They could mention utilizing various digital tools and online resources for teaching, such as language learning apps, podcasts, and videos.

According to the findings, effective learning of Chinese language listening and speaking skills requires a combination of the right resources, adequate practice, suitable teaching methods, and motivation. Both students and teachers must take into consideration the cultural, linguistic, and technological elements of the language in order to enhance learning outcomes. Therefore, it is important for students and teachers to be mindful of their learning approaches and the resources they use. By doing so, they can ensure that their language learning experience

rience is effective and successful.

## 5. Discussion

For the purpose of developing Chinese listening and speaking skills, three main aspects can be summarized after analyzing the information and findings of the interviews with students and teachers:

**Motivation** is key when it comes to practicing Chinese listening exercises. Developing strong listening skills in a foreign language is crucial for effective communication and comprehension. By engaging in regular listening exercises, learners can improve their ability to understand spoken Chinese, enhance their vocabulary, and become more confident in their language abilities (Darvin & Norton, 2023). One of the main reasons why practicing Chinese listening exercises is so important is because it helps learners become accustomed to the rhythm and flow of the language. Chinese is a tonal language, meaning that the meaning of a word can change depending on the tone used. By actively listening to native speakers and focusing on the tones, learners can train their ears to recognize and reproduce the correct tones, thus improving their overall pronunciation. Moreover, practicing Chinese listening exercises exposes learners to a variety of vocabulary and sentence structures. By listening to different speakers and topics, learners can expand their vocabulary and become familiar with common phrases and expressions. This exposure to authentic spoken Chinese helps learners develop a more natural and intuitive understanding of the language. Furthermore, regular practice of Chinese listening exercises helps improve overall language comprehension. By actively listening to a wide range of audio materials, such as podcasts, songs, or videos, learners can develop the ability to understand the language in different contexts and accents. This enables learners to better understand native speakers, even in real-life conversations where the pace may be faster and the accents more diverse. In addition to these linguistic benefits, practicing Chinese listening exercises can also be a fun and engaging way to learn the language. By incorporating interesting and relevant audio materials into their practice routine, learners can stay motivated and enjoy the learning process. Whether it's listening to Chinese music, watching Chinese movies, or engaging in language exchange with native speakers, finding enjoyable listening exercises can make the learning journey more enjoyable and rewarding. Therefore, motivation plays a crucial role in the practice of Chinese listening exercises. By recognizing the benefits of improved pronunciation, expanded vocabulary, enhanced comprehension, and overall language proficiency, learners can stay motivated and committed to regular practice. With dedication and consistent effort, learners can make significant progress in their Chinese listening skills and become more confident and fluent in the language.

Developing **self-confidence** in practicing Chinese listening and speaking skills can be challenging, but it is certainly achievable with the right approach and mindset, and it is related to learning motivation, and it plays a crucial role

(Akbari & Sahibzada, 2020). Having self-confidence in your abilities can help the students stay motivated to practice and improve your Chinese listening and speaking skills (Diyora & Umarova, 2023). When you believe in yourself, you are more likely to put in the time and effort needed to achieve your goals. Moreover, speaking and listening are essential components of communication. When the students have self-confidence in their ability to communicate in Chinese, they are more likely to engage in conversations, express their ideas, and communicate effectively with others. Self-confidence can also enhance students' learning experience. When they have confidence in their abilities, they are more likely to take risks and try new things, which can accelerate their learning process. Chinese language and culture are closely intertwined. Developing self-confidence in their Chinese listening and speaking skills can help them better understand and appreciate Chinese culture, which can enhance their overall cultural competence.

**Learning strategies** are particularly significant for university students who are studying Chinese listening and speaking skills because these strategies can help them optimize their learning outcomes.

*Time management:* University students often have a lot on their plates, and learning strategies can help them manage their time more effectively. For example, breaking down language learning tasks into smaller, more manageable chunks can help students make progress without feeling overwhelmed.

*Study skills:* Learning strategies can help university students develop effective study skills. For example, using flashcards or practicing with language exchange partners can help students improve their listening and speaking skills.

*Academic success:* Learning strategies can also be important for academic success. By using effective learning strategies, university students can improve their Chinese language proficiency, which can lead to better grades and academic performance.

*Career readiness:* For many university students, language learning is an important component of their career readiness. Learning strategies can help students develop the Chinese language skills they need to succeed in their future careers.

*Personal development:* Learning Chinese listening and speaking skills can be a rewarding personal development experience. By using effective learning strategies, university students can maximize their language learning potential and develop greater confidence in their abilities.

## 6. Conclusion

The present study examined the necessity and methods of developing Chinese listening and speaking skills among university students in Thailand. The purpose of this study was to explore the methods of developing Chinese listening and speaking skills among university students in Thailand and to determine if such skills are necessary for them. According to the findings, motivation, self-confidence, and learning strategies are key factors that contribute to achiev-



ing this goal. Therefore, it is important to provide appropriate learning environments and resources for students to develop listening and speaking skills. Additionally, teachers should focus on helping students increase their motivation and self-confidence to improve their language skills (Lou & Noels, 2019; Xu et al., 2022). The study also suggests that teachers should be mindful of their students' individual needs and develop tailored teaching approaches that can meet those needs. This approach helps to ensure that teaching is more effective, as it is tailored to meet the individual needs of each student. Additionally, this approach allows students to develop their language skills in a way that better suits their own strengths and weaknesses.

Learning Chinese listening and speaking skills is significant for personal development, particularly for university students. It can help them manage their time, develop effective study skills, achieve academic success, enhance career readiness, and experience personal growth. Personal development involves improving oneself through education, health and fitness, relationships, career development, and language learning. Learning Chinese can provide benefits such as cultural understanding, cognitive development, personal growth, career development, and social connections. It is a lifelong process that aims to enhance one's knowledge, skills, and abilities, as well as improve one's overall well-being and quality of life.

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

### References

- Akbari, O., & Sahibzada, J. (2020). Students' Self-Confidence and Its Impacts on Their Learning Process. *American International Journal of Social Science Research*, 5, 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.46281/aijssr.v5i1.462>
- Darvin, R., & Norton, B. (2023). Investment and Motivation in Language Learning: What's the Difference? *Language Teaching*, 56, 29-40. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444821000057>
- Diyora, T., & Umarova, M. (2023). Risk-Taking and Self-Confidence in Language Learning. *Spectrum Journal of Innovation, Reforms and Development*, 14, 111-117.
- Gao, X. (2020). Australian Students' Perceptions of the Challenges and Strategies for Learning Chinese Characters in Emergency Online Teaching. *International Journal of Chinese Language Teaching*, 1, 83-98.
- Gong, Y., Gao, X., Li, M., & Lai, C. (2021). Cultural Adaptation Challenges and Strategies during Study Abroad: New Zealand Students in China. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 34, 417-437. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2020.1856129>
- Lou, N. M., & Noels, K. A. (2019). Promoting Growth in Foreign and Second Language Education: A Research Agenda for Mindsets in Language Learning and Teaching. *System*, 86, 102-126. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2019.102126>
- Mango, O. (2021). Flipgrid: Students' Perceptions of Its Advantages and Disadvantages in the Language Classroom. *International Journal of Technology in Education and Science*,



---

5, 277-287. <https://doi.org/10.46328/ijtes.195>

Wang, Q., & Jiang, Y. (2022). A Positive Psychology Perspective on Positive Emotion and Foreign Language Enjoyment among Chinese as a Second Language Learners Attending Virtual Online Classes in the Emergency Remote Teaching Context amid the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Frontiers in Psychology, 12*, Article ID: 798650.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.798650>

Xu, W., & Ferreira Martins Cheang, A. M. (2023). Teaching English for Tourism: Bridging Research and Praxis (a Review). *Training, Language and Culture, 7*, 131-133.

<https://doi.org/10.22363/2521-442X-2023-7-1-131-133>

Xu, W., Zhang, H., Sukjairungwattana, P., & Wang, T. (2022). The Roles of Motivation, Anxiety and Learning Strategies in Online Chinese Learning among Thai Learners of Chinese as a Foreign Language. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*, Article ID: 962492.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.962492>

Yu, Z., Xu, W., & Sukjairungwattana, P. (2022). Motivation, Learning Strategies, and Outcomes in Mobile English Language Learning. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher, 36*, 1-16.

Zhou, Y., & Luk, S. (2016). Establishing Confucius Institutes: A Tool for Promoting China's Soft Power? *Journal of Contemporary China, 25*, 628-642.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2015.1132961>