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A STUDY OF CHINESE VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES AMONG STUDENTS MAJORING IN CHINESE, FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES, THAKSIN UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this research are 1) to study Chinese vocabulary learning strategies for undergraduate students in years 1-4 of the Chinese major at Thaksin University, 2) to study and compare the level of Chinese vocabulary learning strategies for Chinese major students at Thaksin university, categorized by academic year, gender, and prior knowledge of Chinese before entering higher education, and 3) to provide suggestions for designing an appropriate Chinese language instruction model for future learners. The target group of this research selected through purposive sampling, comprised 249 Chinese major students from all academic years at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Thaksin University, in the academic year 2023. The research instrument was a questionnaire. Data were analyzed using percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Differences in usage levels among groups were tested at the .05 level of statistical significance.

The results of the research revealed that the overall level of vocabulary learning strategies was at a frequent usage level. The most commonly used strategy was on affective strategies. When comparing the level of use for Chinese vocabulary learning strategies, it was found that first-year, second-year, and fourth-year students used affective strategies the most, while third-year students used compensation strategies the most. Male and female students, both with and without prior knowledge of Chinese before entering higher education, were found to use affective strategies the most.

Keywords: vocabulary learning strategies; Chinese vocabulary; Chinese major students



INTRODUCTION

Foreign language learning is crucial for university students in their personal development to keep pace with Thailand 4.0 and the ongoing transformations of globalization. Proficiency in more than one language is a key factor for success in both academic and professional spheres. In today's context, increasing emphasis is placed on learning a third language, in addition to English, which is considered the second language. The Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) in Thailand has introduced foreign language courses such as Chinese, Korean, Japanese, French, German, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, Burmese, Vietnamese, Khmer, and English. Among these, Chinese is the most popular, followed by Japanese and Korean (Mamah, Sadama, Sadinah, Yapha, Wanaeloh & Sama, 2016, p. 20). This trend aligns with the Master Plan under the National Strategy for Learning Development (2018–2037), which outlines directions for building 21st-century skills. These include communication skills in English and a third language, both of which are seen as essential in the modern world. The government has prioritized third language acquisition as part of the country's development agenda, especially within the education sector. Consequently, there have been efforts to enhance the efficiency of educational administration at all levels to support third language instruction and learning (National Strategy Committee, Online, 2019).

At present, Chinese language education at a tertiary level has gained widespread popularity. Both public and private universities in Thailand offer a Chinese major. In 2010, the Thai government officially granted Chinese the status of a recognized foreign language, permitting its instruction at all educational levels (Office of the Education Council, 2016, p. 29). Arguably, to achieve effective Chinese language learning, one must first have a genuine interest in the language, along with perseverance and diligence. It is claimed that Chinese is a difficult language, especially in writing and vocabulary memorization. Nevertheless, it can be argued that with a structured approach and genuine interest, learning Chinese can become easier, resulting in many learners having achieved notable success in studying the language.

It can be asserted that vocabulary acquisition is no less important than grammar learning. Knowing vocabulary without understanding grammar still allows communication to some extent. However, lacking sufficient vocabulary knowledge makes effective communication difficult or even impossible. (Wattanawelu, 2017, p. 98). Vocabulary acquisition is a fundamental component of language learning. Without a strong vocabulary,



effective communication in Chinese is impossible (Phornsuksiri, 2014, p. 2). Vocabulary learning strategies are part of broader language learning strategies and are beneficial in helping learners comprehend, retain, and recall new information for future use (Nation, 2001, p. 217, as cited in Wattanakamolkul & Praparkarn, 2019, p. 1).

Modern technological advancements have enabled the rapid connection and exchange of information from around the world, allowing individuals to learn and access news in real time. This swift technological development has transformed daily life into a digital society and emphasized the role of online media. Consequently, learning methods have undergone significant changes. Most university students today belong to the late Generation Z (born between 1995 and 2009) and are entering the transition period into Generation Alpha (born in 2010 onwards) (Areekul, 2019, p. 271). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has compelled higher education institutions to implement online learning. This shift, which has lasted approximately 2–3 years, has greatly influenced students' learning behavior, with a greater emphasis on the use of information and communication technology (ICT). This trend is consistent with the learning characteristics of Generation Z.

In foreign language learning, a learner's vocabulary knowledge significantly influences their overall language proficiency. Therefore, vocabulary acquisition is a crucial process in learning a foreign language. Currently, in Chinese language education, the researcher has observed that learners lack motivation to learn Chinese vocabulary, even though they employ a variety of vocabulary learning strategies.

As a Chinese language instructor, the researcher recognizes the importance of understanding the vocabulary learning strategies of undergraduate students in the Chinese program (Years 1–4) at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Thaksin University. The study focuses on how these students employ vocabulary learning strategies. The target population consists of individuals born between 1998 and 2001, belonging to the late Generation Z, who are transitioning toward Generation Alpha. Understanding their learning strategies will help design effective and learner-centered Chinese language instruction, thereby enhancing students' language proficiency.

Consequently, the study adopts Oxford's (Oxford, 1990) widely accepted framework of language learning strategies, divided into two main types: direct strategies and indirect strategies.



Direct strategies are subdivided into three categories: 1) Memory Strategies: Techniques such as rote memorization, guessing meaning from context, creating associations between known and new words, and categorizing vocabulary to facilitate memorization, 2) Cognitive Strategies: Processes including thinking, analyzing, practicing, receiving and producing information, and constructing structures to organize input and output, and 3) Compensation Strategies: Using context or prior knowledge to infer meaning, overcoming vocabulary gaps, and employing the first language or gestures to support comprehension.

Indirect strategies are subdivided into three categories: 1) Metacognitive Strategies: Summarizing and organizing learned material, planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's learning process, 2) Affective Strategies: Managing emotions and motivation, building self-encouragement, and maintaining a positive attitude when facing learning difficulties, and 3) Social Strategies: Interacting with others through conversation, written communication, or collaboration to support learning.

The findings of this study can be used to provide suggestions for designing Chinese language instruction that is appropriate and aligned with learners' needs, and can further serve as a foundation for developing future Chinese language curricula.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate the vocabulary learning strategies employed by undergraduate students (Year 1–4) majoring in Chinese at Thaksin University
2. To examine and compare the levels of vocabulary learning strategy use among students in the Chinese major at Thaksin University, categorized by academic year, gender, and prior knowledge of Chinese before entering higher education
3. To provide suggestions for designing an appropriate Chinese language instruction model

RESEARCH HYPOTYESIS

1. Gender differences among students lead to variations in their levels and strategies of learning Chinese vocabulary.
2. Differences in students' academic years result in variations in their levels and strategies of learning Chinese vocabulary.



3. The varying levels of students' prior Chinese proficiency before entering higher education result in differences in their levels and strategies of learning Chinese vocabulary.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

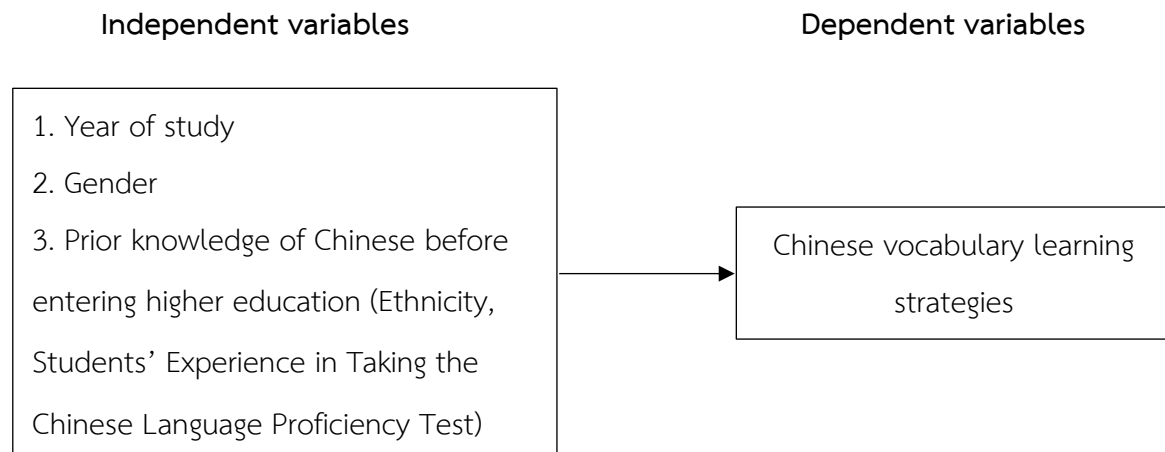


Figure 1. Research framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Target group This research selected through purposive sampling, comprised 249 undergraduate students majoring in Chinese at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Thaksin University (Thaksin University, Online, 2023). The participants included 71 first-year students, 65 second-year students, 61 third-year students, and 52 fourth-year students.

Research instrument The instrument used for data collection in this research was a questionnaire, which was adapted from Oxford's vocabulary learning strategy framework. Relevant concepts, principles, and theories were reviewed from related documents and adapted to the learners' context as a guideline for constructing the questionnaire. The revised questionnaire was then submitted to three experts for validation in terms of content accuracy and language appropriateness. The validity of the questionnaire was further examined by calculating the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC), which measures the consistency between the items and the research objectives or content. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (Cronbach, 1951), which was found to be .87, indicating a high level of internal consistency. The questionnaire includes the following three



sections. Section 1 explores the participants' general information, including their academic year, gender, and prior knowledge of Chinese before entering higher education, Section 2 investigates the participants' opinions regarding Chinese vocabulary learning strategies, using a 5-point Likert scale (Likert, 1932, p. 55) with the following interpretation for each. (5=Always used 4=Frequently used 3=Occasionally used 2=Rarely used 1=Never used), and Section 3 An open-ended question was included to allow respondents to express their opinions regarding Chinese vocabulary learning strategies.

Data collection A questionnaire was administered to 249 first- to fourth-year undergraduate students enrolled in the Chinese program at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Thaksin University, during the academic year 2023 (January-February, 2024). (Thaksin University, Online, 2023)

Data analysis The statistics used for data analysis are as follows: percentage mean and standard deviation (Likert, 1932, p. 55). Interpretation of mean scores: 4.50-5.00 indicates Always 3.50-4.49 indicates Frequently used 2.50-3.49 indicates Occasionally used 1.50-2.49 indicates Rarely used 1.00-1.49 indicates Never used

RESEARCH RESULT

General Demographic Information of the Respondents

It was found that most respondents were first-year students ($n=71$, 28.51%), followed by second-year ($n=65$, 26.10%), third-year ($n=61$, 24.50%), and fourth-year students ($n=52$, 20.88%). Regarding gender, most respondents were female ($n=220$, 88.35%), while 29 respondents (11.65%) were male. In terms of ethnicity, the majority identified as Chinese descent ($n=183$, 73.49%), whereas 66 respondents (26.51%) identified as non-Chinese descent. Additionally, more than half of the respondents had taken the HSK examination ($n=142$, 57.03%), while 107 respondents (42.97%) had not taken the exam.

Subsequent to the data collection, the gathered data underwent statistical analysis and are presented as follows.



Table 1. Analysis of the opinion levels on the use of Chinese vocabulary learning strategies categorized by academic year

Vocabulary learning strategies	Academic year	mean	<i>SD</i>	Level of opinion
1. Memory strategies	Year 1	3.74	0.52	Frequently used
	Year 2	3.85	0.52	Frequently used
	Year 3	3.63	0.59	Frequently used
	Year 4	3.95	0.51	Frequently used
2. Cognitive strategies	Year 1	3.47	0.60	Occasionally used
	Year 2	3.65	0.59	Frequently used
	Year 3	3.48	0.55	Occasionally used
	Year 4	3.74	0.54	Frequently used
3. Compensation strategies	Year 1	3.57	0.60	Frequently used
	Year 2	3.88	0.68	Frequently used
	Year 3	3.83	0.62	Frequently used
	Year 4	4.05	0.57	Frequently used
4. Metacognitive strategies	Year 1	3.43	0.59	Occasionally used
	Year 2	3.41	0.74	Occasionally used
	Year 3	3.20	0.79	Occasionally used
	Year 4	3.75	0.65	Frequently used
5. Affective strategies	Year 1	3.95	0.63	Frequently used
	Year 2	4.21	0.61	Frequently used
	Year 3	3.81	0.73	Frequently used
	Year 4	4.09	0.64	Frequently used
6. Social strategies	Year 1	3.47	0.68	Occasionally used
	Year 2	3.58	0.72	Frequently used
	Year 3	3.56	0.66	Frequently used
	Year 4	4.03	0.63	Frequently used



Table 1. (Continue)

Vocabulary learning strategies	Academic year	mean	<i>SD</i>	Level of opinion
Overall	Year 1	3.56	0.47	Frequently used
	Year 2	3.71	0.49	Frequently used
	Year 3	3.55	0.50	Frequently used
	Year 4	3.88	0.50	Frequently used

From Table 1, the analysis results of the levels of opinion regarding the use of Chinese vocabulary learning strategies, categorized by academic year, showed that overall, the students from all academic years frequently used these strategies. The mean scores were as follows: Year 1 (mean=3.56, *SD*=0.47), Year 2 (mean=3.71, *SD*=0.49) Year 3 (mean=3.55, *SD*=0.50) and Year 4 (mean=3.88, *SD*=0.50). It can be concluded that the first-year, the second-year, and the fourth-year students used affective strategies the most when learning Chinese vocabulary, while the third-year students most frequently employed compensation strategies, followed by affective strategies. Additionally, metacognitive strategies were the least used by the first-year, the second-year, and the third-year students. Cognitive strategies were also the least used by the third-year students. The analysis of differences in the use of Chinese vocabulary learning strategies revealed that, overall, the students from different academic year levels demonstrated statistically significant differences in their levels of agreement regarding the use of vocabulary learning strategies at the .05 level. Furthermore, when considering each strategy category, statistically significant differences at the .05 level were also found across all aspects.



Table 2. Analysis of the opinion levels on the use of Chinese vocabulary learning strategies classified by gender

Vocabulary learning strategies	Gender	mean	SD	Level of opinion	t-score
1. Memory strategies	Male	3.84	0.57	Frequently used	0.52*
	Female	3.78	0.54	Frequently used	
2. Cognitive strategies	Male	3.71	0.51	Frequently used	1.27*
	Female	3.56	0.59	Frequently used	
3. Compensation strategies	Male	3.99	0.73	Frequently used	1.52*
	Female	3.80	0.62	Frequently used	
4. Metacognitive strategies	Male	3.45	0.71	Occasionally used	0.13
	Female	3.43	0.72	Occasionally used	
5. Affective strategies	Male	4.16	0.71	Frequently used	1.24*
	Female	4.00	0.66	Frequently used	
6. Social strategies	Male	3.80	0.70	Frequently used	1.31*
	Female	3.62	0.70	Frequently used	
Overall	Male	3.78	0.48	Frequently used	1.26*
	Female	3.65	0.50	Frequently used	

* $p < .05$

From Table 2, it can be concluded that the male and female students used Chinese vocabulary learning strategies in the same order of preference. Affective strategies ranked the highest, followed by compensation strategies, memory strategies, social strategies, cognitive strategies, and metacognitive strategies. The analysis of differences in the use of Chinese vocabulary learning strategies by gender revealed that, both overall and in each strategy category, there was no statistically significant difference in the students' levels of agreement regarding their use of vocabulary learning strategies at the .05 level.



Table 3. Analysis of differences in the use of Chinese vocabulary learning strategies classified by ethnicity

Vocabulary learning strategies	Ethnicity	mean	SD	Level of opinion	t-score
1. Memory strategies	Chinese descent	3.75	0.48	Frequently used	0.76*
	Non-Chinese descent	3.81	0.57	Frequently used	
2. Cognitive strategies	Chinese descent	3.58	0.62	Frequently used	0.05
	Non-Chinese descent	3.57	0.57	Frequently used	
3. Compensation strategies	Chinese descent	3.81	0.67	Frequently used	0.07*
	Non-Chinese descent	3.82	0.63	Frequently used	
4. Metacognitive strategies	Chinese descent	3.36	0.74	Occasionally used	0.96*
	Non-Chinese descent	3.46	0.71	Occasionally used	
5. Affective strategies	Chinese descent	3.97	0.72	Frequently used	0.59*
	Non-Chinese descent	4.03	0.64	Frequently used	
6. Social strategies	Chinese descent	3.65	0.79	Frequently used	0.17*
	Non-Chinese descent	3.63	0.67	Frequently used	
Overall	Chinese descent	3.64	0.54	Frequently used	0.36*
	Non-Chinese descent	3.67	0.49	Frequently used	

* $p < .05$

According to Table 3, it can be concluded that the students of both Chinese and non-Chinese descent used Chinese vocabulary learning strategies in the same order. Affective strategies were used most frequently, followed by compensation strategies, memory strategies, social strategies, cognitive strategies, and metacognitive strategies. The analysis of differences in the use of Chinese vocabulary learning strategies based on ethnicity indicated that, both overall and in each strategy category, there were no statistically significant differences in the students' levels of agreement regarding their use of vocabulary learning strategies at the .05 level.



Table 4. Analysis of differences in the use of Chinese vocabulary learning strategies based on the students' experience in taking the Chinese language proficiency test

Vocabulary learning strategies	Experience in taking the Chinese language proficiency test	mean	SD	Level of opinion	t-score
1. Memory strategies	Taken	3.84	0.58	Frequently used	1.59*
	Not taken	3.73	0.48	Frequently used	
2. Cognitive strategies	Taken	3.65	0.59	Frequently used	2.48*
	Not taken	3.47	0.55	Occasionally used	
3. Compensation strategies	Taken	3.90	0.62	Frequently used	2.18*
	Not taken	3.72	0.65	Frequently used	
4. Metacognitive strategies	Taken	3.51	0.75	Frequently used	1.87*
	Not taken	3.34	0.65	Occasionally used	
5. Affective strategies	Taken	4.06	0.70	Frequently used	1.30*
	Not taken	3.95	0.61	Frequently used	
6. Social strategies	Taken	3.76	0.70	Frequently used	3.14*
	Not taken	3.48	0.67	Occasionally used	
Overall	Taken	3.74	0.53	Frequently used	2.77*
	Not taken	3.56	0.45	Frequently used	

* $p < .05$

From Table 4, it can be concluded that the students who had and had not taken a Chinese proficiency test employed Chinese vocabulary learning strategies in the same order. Affective strategies were used most frequently, followed by compensation strategies, memory strategies, social strategies, cognitive strategies, and metacognitive strategies. The analysis of differences in the use of Chinese vocabulary learning strategies based on Chinese proficiency test experience revealed that, both overall and in each strategy category, there were no



statistically significant differences in the students' levels of agreement regarding their use of vocabulary learning strategies at the .05 level.

Table 5. Mean scores, standard Deviations, and levels of opinion on overall vocabulary learning strategies

Strategy category	mean	<i>SD</i>	Level of opinion
1. Memory strategies	3.79	0.54	Frequently used
2. Cognitive strategies	3.58	0.58	Frequently used
3. Compensation strategies	3.82	0.64	Frequently used
4. Metacognitive strategies	3.44	0.72	Occasionally used
5. Affective strategies	4.01	0.66	Frequently used
6. Social strategies	3.64	0.70	Frequently used
Overall	3.66	0.50	Frequently used

According to Table 5, the overall level of opinion on vocabulary learning strategies was at a frequent level (mean=3.66, *SD*=0.50). When considering each aspect individually, it was found that affective strategies had the highest mean score (mean=4.01, *SD*=0.66), followed by compensation strategies (mean=3.82, *SD*=0.64), memory strategies (mean=3.79, *SD*=0.54), social strategies (mean=3.64, *SD*=0.70), cognitive strategies (mean=3.58, *SD*=0.58), and metacognitive strategies (mean=3.44, *SD*=0.72), respectively.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study illustrate the use of Chinese vocabulary learning strategies and the relationship between various variables and the application of these strategies as follows.

1. The use of Chinese vocabulary learning strategies among the students majoring in Chinese, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Thaksin University, across all academic years



The research's findings revealed that, overall, the use of Chinese vocabulary learning strategies by the Chinese major students across all six strategy categories was at a frequent usage level. The most frequently employed strategies were affective strategies. Based on Oxford's language learning strategy taxonomy, affective strategies refer to learners' use of self-encouragement, motivation, and self-stimulation to foster a positive attitude toward language learning, especially when faced with learning difficulties.

These findings align with those of Khotsuk, Natpratan & Tayjasanant (2015, p. 817), who studied vocabulary learning strategies among Grade 11 students at Thaduangpittayakom School in Nong Phai District, Phetchabun Province. They also found that affective strategies were the most commonly used. Similarly, Wijitwetchpaisarn, Napaphongkul & Chaisaklert (2016, p. 105) reported that affective-related strategies significantly influenced foreign language learning. They claimed that creating a classroom atmosphere that feels like home—such as playing music—helped students feel relaxed and increased positive learning effectiveness. Consistent with this, Sukying (2021, p. 63) found that Thai EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners used affective strategies most frequently when learning English. Sukying contends that motivation, social interaction both inside and outside the classroom, and environmental/contextual factors—such as culture, values, tasks, and activities—could influence language learning.

Regarding the use of Chinese vocabulary learning strategies among students in the Bachelor of Arts in Chinese major, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Thaksin University, across all six strategy categories, the research showed that the least frequently used strategies were the metacognitive strategies. According to Oxford's language learning strategy taxonomy, metacognitive strategies involve summarizing and organizing the learned material through planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's learning.

This finding contrasts with the results of the study done by Thongpleaw, Bunthanateerachot, Phuthong & Rattanapinyopast (2022, p. 93), who examined vocabulary learning strategies among Chinese major students at Rangsit University. Their study found that metacognitive strategies were the most frequently used. However, based on the current research's findings, the Chinese major students at Thaksin University under investigation do not seem to prefer such strategies. They tend to use strategies involving summarizing, reviewing, and self-evaluation to a relatively low extent.



As discussed thus far, it is evident that the findings on the Chinese vocabulary learning strategies among the Chinese major students at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Thaksin University, differ from some previous studies. The strategy most frequently used by these students was affective strategies. It is possible to say that some behavioral factors related to different age groups can influence the choice of learning strategies. It is generally claimed that emotional regulation is a crucial skill that affects quality of life and academic success, particularly among Generation Z students, who often face academic pressures, social adaptation challenges, and future planning stress.

Generation Z is known for achieving success at a young age, which results in increased pressure to succeed rapidly. Combined with the fast-changing nature of the modern era and technological advancements, this generation faces emotional management challenges, as technology and social media significantly influence their lifestyle and thinking. These factors contribute to a lack of face-to-face communication skills and the ability to cope with stress (Taoto, Kasatsuntorn, Dudsdeemaytha & Saleemad, 2024, p. 44).

This aligns with the principles of 21st-century learning, which emphasize that teaching must support both cognitive and emotional development. Educators should act as facilitators by creating a conducive learning environment and scenarios suitable for Generation Z learners. Instructional approaches should be learner-centered and may include small group discussions, case studies, drama, role-playing, and the use of online media.

Designing a learning process that suits the learners' characteristics and promoting knowledge construction through various modern learning sources can help enhance Generation Z students' learning abilities. This will enable them to achieve the expected learning outcomes with greater efficiency (Paksa & Jansuwan, 2022, p. 3).

This also corresponds with the study conducted by Susanto, Halim & Nuwrun (2019, p. 323), which found that the fundamental components influencing foreign language learning ability are motivation and vocabulary learning strategies. These two elements are widely acknowledged as critical factors in language proficiency. Educators should identify students' strengths in vocabulary learning and foster motivation to help them achieve higher levels of language competence. Likewise, Jingwangsa, Dumchoo, Kisawadkorn & Jirangvoraphot (2024, p. 366) conducted a study on enhancing learning through 21st-century English language teaching techniques. They emphasized that promoting both cognitive and emotional aspects is essential. Instructors should facilitate learning through appropriate environments, methods,



and materials that align with learners' language abilities. Supporting learners' emotional development can stimulate a positive learning atmosphere and help cultivate favorable attitudes toward language learning.

2. Vocabulary learning strategies in Chinese among students majoring in Chinese at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Thaksin University through the analysis by academic year, gender, and prior knowledge of Chinese before entering higher education

The vocabulary learning strategies employed by the Chinese major students at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Thaksin University, were analyzed according to the variables of academic year, gender, and prior knowledge of Chinese before entering higher education.

It was found that emotional strategies were consistently used across differences in gender, ethnicity, and prior Chinese proficiency. These variables did not significantly influence the choice of vocabulary learning strategies among these students. This finding aligns with the study done by Wattanakamonkul & Praparkan (2019, p. 55), who investigated vocabulary learning strategies among undergraduate Chinese majors at Rajamangala University of Technology Rattanakosin. Their results indicated that students across different academic years tended to use similar vocabulary learning strategies. Similarly, Chansamak & Srisapoom (2022, p. 187) studied English language learning strategies among fourth-year English major students at the Faculty of Education, Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat University. They found that students with varying levels of English proficiency employed similar overall learning strategies.

This is also consistent with the findings of the study conducted by Wattanawelu (2017, p. 96), who studied Chinese vocabulary learning strategies among students in the Chinese program at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus. She found that gender differences did not influence the choice of strategies. However, differences in academic year and prior knowledge of Chinese significantly affected the students' learning strategies, with statistically significant differences at the .05 level. Moreover, this also aligns with the research of done by Kutrasaeng (2017, p. 49), who studied English vocabulary learning strategies among naval cadets under the Royal Thai Navy. His findings showed that students with different levels of English proficiency employed significantly different learning strategies, which was also at the .05 level.

In the current study, when analyzing the use of vocabulary learning strategies by academic year, an interesting pattern emerged: the first-year, the second-year, and the fourth-



year students most frequently employed affective strategies, while the third-year students favored a different approach, primarily using compensation strategies. However, a closer look at the mean scores revealed that the third-year students rated compensation strategies the highest (mean=3.83), followed closely by affective strategies (mean=3.81). This suggests that the preference gap between the top two strategies is minimal. Similarly, the fourth-year students rated affective strategies the highest (mean=4.09), with compensation strategies as their second choice (mean=4.05), again showing a small difference in preference. In contrast, the first-year students ranked affective strategies first (mean=3.95), followed by memory strategies (mean=3.74), and compensation strategies (mean=3.57). The second-year students also placed affective strategies first (mean=4.21), followed by compensation strategies (mean=3.88). These averages indicate that both the first- and the second-year students clearly prefer affective strategies over compensation strategies, with a greater difference in mean scores compared to upper-year students. The compensation strategies, such as guessing meaning from context based on what is heard or read, are more commonly used by the senior students. This aligns with the findings of the research conducted by Watthanawelu (2017, p. 125), who noted that third- and fourth-year students, having a larger Chinese vocabulary, were better able to infer meanings from surrounding contexts.

Another factor influencing the third-year students' higher use of compensation strategies may be that 15 students in this cohort had an opportunity to take a short course at Jinan University in the People's Republic of China, allowing them to acquire vocabulary in an immersive, native-speaking environment. One key tool for enhancing language learning is studying the culture alongside the language. The cultural context embedded in vocabulary not only forms an essential learning element but also greatly aids learners in understanding the deeper meanings of words (Xu, Online, 2018).

Thus, it is evident that variables such as gender, ethnicity, and prior Chinese knowledge had minimal influence on the choice of vocabulary learning strategies. Instead, the students' strategy preferences are likely shaped by a combination of internal and external factors, as highlighted in the study by Wattanakamolkul & Praparkarn (2019, p. 16). They divided influential factors into internal (e.g., personal interest) and external (e.g., language environment, instructors, language difficulty, learner expectations), all of which support and enhance vocabulary acquisition in Chinese.



3. Research findings on Chinese vocabulary learning strategies among Chinese major students at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Thaksin University, and their implications for instructional design

The research findings indicate that, on average, the students frequently employed vocabulary learning strategies. The top three strategies most commonly used were as follows.

1. Affective strategies – Students often learned Chinese vocabulary by finding ways to relax during the learning process (mean=4.15).

2. Compensation strategies – Students frequently guessed the meaning of vocabulary using contextual or sentence-level clues (mean=4.17).

3. Memory strategies – Students frequently reinforced vocabulary retention by reviewing words through repeated writing (mean=4.17).

An interesting insight from the analysis of average item scores across all six strategy categories is argued to be that metacognitive strategies showed the highest mean score (mean=4.18) for the item: "learning vocabulary through watching Chinese television programs, series, or movies, and underlining or highlighting vocabulary they want to remember."

These findings provide guidance for designing Chinese language instruction that aligns with the learning preferences of Generation Z students. The implication is that an instructional design should emphasize creating a relaxed and engaging learning environment that fosters positive attitudes toward vocabulary acquisition. Teachers should serve as facilitators and focus on learner-centered methods. The examples of the teachers' facilitative roles are as follows.

- Encouraging students to infer word meanings from context
- Reinforcing vocabulary through review and repetition
- Incorporating engaging materials like Chinese music, vocabulary games, TV shows, digital media, and mobile apps for vocabulary learning

This approach can better support vocabulary acquisition by tapping into the internal motivation and external engagement channels favored by modern learners.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for applying research findings

1. Teacher should enhance their knowledge and actively explore online media to be integrated into teaching practices. Media can create an engaging learning environment, stimulate students' interest, and foster positive attitudes toward vocabulary acquisition.
2. Teachers should encourage students to review vocabulary regularly by organizing activities that support and enhance vocabulary learning and retention. Instructional methods should also be adapted to align with students' natural learning tendencies.
3. The findings indicate that learners rarely communicate with native speakers or seek assistance from Chinese instructors when encountering learning difficulties. As speaking is a crucial skill in foreign language acquisition, learners should place greater emphasis on speaking practice, particularly through direct interaction with native speakers, in order to improve their Chinese proficiency.
4. The curriculum should include more activities that promote Chinese language communication both inside and outside the classroom. Suggested activities include small group discussions, case-based analytical thinking using Chinese, drama performances, and role-playing exercises.

Recommendations for future research

Although the results of this study are evident, several research limitations remain. The researcher has identified areas for further investigation and development as follows:

1. Limitations in the study population

This study focused solely on a single university as the target group. Future research should consider expanding the sample size to include a broader population within Songkhla Province or across different regions. Such an approach may yield more diverse perspectives and better reflect the effectiveness of Chinese vocabulary learning strategies.

2. Scope of instructional innovation

This research specifically examined Chinese vocabulary learning strategies among the Chinese major students at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Thaksin University. Future studies are encouraged to develop and incorporate instructional innovations aimed at enhancing vocabulary learning skills, which would potentially improve the overall learning outcomes more effectively.



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