



Perceptions and Language Learning Strategies of Chinese Students: A Case Study of Chiang Rai Rajabhat University (CRRU)

การรับรู้และกลวิธีการเรียนภาษาของนักศึกษาจีน: กรณีศึกษา

มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏเชียงราย

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore the Chinese students' perceptions towards studying at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University (CRRU) and to survey their language learning strategies. The study totally recruited 80 third- and fourth-year Chinese students majoring in Thai Language and Culture Program from Faculty of Humanities at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University (CRRU) in the academic year 2019. The questionnaire surveying perceptions and language learning strategies was developed for data collection. The data was calculated for mean and standard deviation. The results revealed that the Chinese students' perceptions towards

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learning at CRRU, in descending order, were learning environment and facilities, teaching and learning process, family supports and socio-cultural factors at the mean scores of 4.166 (S.D.=0.67), 4.05 (S.D.=0.75), 4.06 (S.D.=0.74). The Chinese students' learning strategy choices, in descending order, were socio-affective strategies, metacognitive strategies, and cognitive strategies at the mean scores of 4.123 (S.D.=0.68), 4.065 (S.D.=0.71), and 3.968 (S.D.=0.73).

Keywords: Students' Perceptions Language Learning Strategies
Chinese Students



บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาการรับรู้และกลวิธีการเรียนภาษาของนักศึกษาจีนที่มาศึกษาต่อ ณ มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏเชียงราย เก็บข้อมูลด้วยแบบสอบถามการรับรู้และกลวิธีการเรียนภาษาของนักศึกษาจีนที่มาศึกษาต่อ ณ มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏเชียงราย กลุ่มเป้าหมายคือนักศึกษาจีน ชั้นปีที่ 3 และ 4 ทั้งหมดจำนวน 80 คน ที่ศึกษาสาขาวิชาภาษาและวัฒนธรรมไทย คณะมนุษยศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏเชียงราย ในปีการศึกษา 2562 วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลด้วยสถิติเชิงบรรยาย ผลการวิจัย พบว่า นักศึกษาจีนแสดงความเห็นต่อการรับรู้ 3 ประเด็นเรียงตามลำดับค่าเฉลี่ยมากไปหาน้อย คือ สภาพแวดล้อมและสิ่งอำนวยความสะดวกด้านการเรียน กระบวนการจัดการเรียนการสอน การสนับสนุนของครอบครัว และปัจจัยด้านสังคมวัฒนธรรม มีค่าเฉลี่ยและส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน คือ 4.166 (S.D.=0.67) 4.05 (S.D.=0.75) 4.06 (S.D.=0.74) นักศึกษาจีนใช้กลวิธีการเรียนภาษาเรียงตามลำดับค่าเฉลี่ยมากไปหาน้อย ได้แก่ กลวิธีทางสังคมและจิตพิสัย (Socio-affective) กลวิธีทางอภิปัญญา (Metacognitive) และ กลวิธีทางปัญญา (Cognitive) มีค่าเฉลี่ยและส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน คือ 4.123 (S.D.=0.68) 4.065 (S.D.=0.71) และ 3.968 (S.D.=0.73)

คำสำคัญ: กลวิธีการเรียน การรับรู้ นักศึกษาจีน



Introduction

Chiang Rai Rajabhat University (CRRU) welcomes a large number of Chinese students enrolling in short and long-term courses each year from university partners in Southern China under the student exchange program such as Chuxiong Normal University, Guangxi City College, Pu'er University, Yunnan Jiaotong College, Yunnan Land and Resources Vocational College, Yuxi Normal University, and Jinghong Vocational High School. The Chinese students choose to come to Thailand and Chiang Rai due to friendliness of the people, fundamental infrastructure, affordability, beauty of the landscape, protection, and standard academic considerations (Michael & Trines, 2018). In addition, Chiang Rai posits at the gateway to the GMS Countries (Greater Mekong Subregion) including China making Chiang Rai the strategic focal point under China's Belt and Road Initiative Policy. Therefore, the number of Chinese students at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University increases annually. The study on perceptions and language learning strategies of Chinese students at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University is required to offer insight knowledge on the language learning behaviours of Chinese students. The findings may shed light on better understanding the perceptions of Chinese students towards learning at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University and thus offer useful policy recommendations to consolidate the mechanisms that successfully welcome Chinese students to Chiang Rai Rajabhat University. Also, the findings may offer the guidelines for strategies training that empower the Chinese students' language learning



capability and uphold the instructional reputation of Chiang Rai Rajabhat University among the Chinese students.

Research Objectives

1. To explore Chinese students' perceptions towards studying at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University (CRRU)
2. To survey Chinese students' language learning strategies in studying at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University (CRRU)

Methodology

Eighty Chinese students majoring in Thai Language and Culture Program at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University (CRRU), selected by purposive sampling in their academic year 2019, involved in responding to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed for data collection. Three experts in the fields of linguistics and teaching were invited to validate the questionnaire by means of Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) method. The Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) was used to evaluate the items of the questionnaire based on the score range from -1 to +1. If the questionnaire items showed the scores lower than 0.5, those items were revised. In contrast, if the scores were 0.5 or above, those were reserved.

The questionnaire consisted of three parts i.e. demographic characteristics, language learning strategies, and learning perception. Part 1 emphasizes on student's general information such as gender and years

of study. Part 2 surveyed the Chinese students' perceptions towards learning at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University in regard to teaching and learning process, learning environment and facilities, family supports and socio-cultural factors. And, part 3 surveys the Chinese students' language learning strategies taxonomy based on O'Malley and Chamot (1990) including metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and social-affective strategies.

The questionnaire data was calculated for mean (\bar{X}) and standard deviation (S.D).

Results

The questionnaire results were reported in responding to Research Objective 1: To explore Chinese students' perceptions towards studying at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University (CRRU), and Research Objective 2: To survey Chinese students' language learning strategies in studying at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University (CRRU).

Table 1 Gender of Chinese Students

Gender	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Male	27	33.75
Female	53	66.25
Total	80	100



First, this section showed the demographic information of Chinese students studying at CRRU. Table 1 revealed that majority of the Chinese students were 53 females (66.25%) and followed by 27 males (33.75%). This number concurred with the demographic trend in that the rising number of Chinese students seeking for higher education opportunities in China and overseas tended to be more female than male population (Wongcha-um, 2019).

Table 2 Year of Study of Chinese Students

Year of study	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Freshman	0	0
Sophomore	30	37.5
Junior	25	31.25
Senior	25	31.25
Total	80	100

Second, Table 2 showed that, among 80 selected Chinese student samples at CRRU, 30 of them were Sophomore (37.5%), while Juniors and Seniors were equally at 25 (31.25%). The main reason for the Chinese student samples at CRRU showed no freshman year because this group of Chinese students was in a Student Exchange Program between CRRU and universities partners in China. The students were eligible for credits transfer

and thus able to surpass the freshman year at CRRU and start their Year 2 onwards according to the MOU agreement.

Table 3: Chinese Students' Perceptions on Learning at CRRU

Perception Category	Sub-perceptions	Mean	S.D.	Level
Teaching and Learning Process	1. You are satisfied with the teaching process.	4.25	0.70	High
	2. Teachers inform objectives clearly.	3.81	0.76	High
	3. Teachers have a good interaction with students.	4.03	0.71	High
	4. Teachers are available when I have a question to ask.	4.06	0.83	High
	5. Teachers provide homework appropriately.	4.1	0.75	High
Subtotal		4.05	0.75	High
Learning Environment and Facilities	6. Instructional tools in the classroom are appropriate.	4.05	0.74	High
	7. The learning environment is appropriate.	4.56	0.61	Very High
	8. Dormitory is comfortable.	4.11	0.69	High
	9. Transportation at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University is convenient.	3.94	0.66	High
Subtotal		4.16	0.67	High
Family Supports	10. Parents support me to study at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University.	4.25	0.70	High

Perception Category	Sub-perceptions	Mean	S.D.	Level
and Socio-cultural Adaptation	11. Thai friends comfort me to learn Thai culture easily.	3.83	0.77	High
	12. I can adapt myself to Thai society well.	4.08	0.75	High
	13. I have learned Thai culture happily.	4.08	0.74	High
Subtotal		4.05	0.74	High
Total		4.08	0.72	High

Third, this section outlined the Chinese students' perceptions towards learning at CRRU in regard to 3 aspects including teaching and learning process, learning environment and facilities, family supports and socio-cultural factors. Table 3 showed that Chinese student samples at CRRU ranked their perception aspects towards learning at CRRU in descending order which were **learning environment and facilities**, **teaching and learning process**, **family supports and socio-cultural factors** at the mean scores of 4.17 (S.D.=0.67), 4.05 (S.D.=0.75), 4.06 (S.D.=0.74) respectively. The Chinese students' perception towards **learning environment and facilities**, in descending order, were "(7) The learning environment is appropriate; (8) Dormitory is comfortable; (6) Instructional tools in the classroom are appropriate; (9) Transportation at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University is convenient." at the mean scores of 4.56 (S.D.=0.61), 4.11 (S.D.=0.69), 4.05 (S.D.=0.74), 3.94 (S.D.=0.66) respectively.

The Chinese students' perception towards **teaching and learning process**, in descending order, were “(1) You are satisfied with the teaching process; (5) Teachers provide homework appropriately; (4) Teachers are available when I have a question to ask; (3) Teachers have a good interaction with students; (2) Teachers inform objectives clearly.” at the mean scores of 4.25 (S.D.=0.70), 4.10 (S.D.=0.75), 4.06 (S.D.=0.83), 4.03 (S.D.=0.71), 3.81 (S.D.=0.76) respectively. The Chinese students' perception towards **family supports and socio-cultural factors**, in descending order, were “(10) Parents support me to study at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University; (12) I can adapt myself to Thai society well; (13) I have learned Thai culture happily; (11) Thai friends comfort me to learn Thai culture easily.” at the mean scores of 4.25 (S.D.=0.70), 4.08 (S.D.=0.75), 4.08 (S.D.=0.74), 3.83 (S.D.=0.77) respectively.

Table 4 Chinese Students' Language Learning Strategies

Strategy Taxonomy	Sub-strategies	Mean	S.D.	Level
Cognitive Strategies	1. I connect my previous knowledge about vocabulary with its usage to memorize it more easily.	4.2	0.71	High
	2. If I face the same words or phrases many times, it is easier for me to remember it.	3.79	0.74	High

Strategy Taxonomy	Sub-strategies	Mean	S.D.	Level
	3. At my accommodation, I practice the Thai phrases we learned in class regularly.	4	0.71	High
	4. When I am learning Thai, I write down the words I am learning and their connotations with different examples to help me understand the text easily.	3.75	0.75	High
	5. When I learn a new word in Thai, I write it down immediately.	4.1	0.75	High
Subtotal		3.96	0.73	High
Metacognitive Strategies	6. I examine my Thai language.	3.75	0.75	High
	7. I try to study and practice my Thai language regularly.	4.1	0.75	High
	8. I try to recognize my grammatical errors in Thai and figure out why I make them.	4.05	0.74	High
	9. I learn Thai language from my mistakes.	4.56	0.61	Very High
	10. I estimate my Thai improvement.	3.86	0.68	High
Subtotal		4.06	0.71	High
Social-affective Strategies	11. When my instructor corrects my Thai use, it helps me to remember it.	4.01	0.72	High
	12. I feel appreciated when someone corrects my Thai if I use the sentence incorrectly.	3.75	0.75	High

Strategy Taxonomy	Sub-strategies	Mean	S.D.	Level
	13. I practice memorizing Thai with my colleagues.	4.09	0.74	High
	14. I imitate how the teacher pronounces the words.	4.08	0.74	High
	15. I have learned Thai language when doing activities with Thai friends.	4.69	0.46	Very High
	Subtotal	4.12	0.68	High
	Total	4.05	0.71	High

Finally, this section reported the survey of language learning strategies deployed by Chinese students at CRRU underpinning the learning strategies taxonomy framework by O’Mallet and Chamot (1990) involving cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, and socio-affective strategies. Table 4 revealed that the learning strategy choices of Chinese students at CRRU, in descending order, were **socio-affective strategies, metacognitive strategies, and cognitive strategies** at the mean scores of 4.123 (S.D.=0.68), 4.065 (S.D.=0.71), and 3.968 (S.D.=0.73) respectively. **Socio-affective strategies** deployed by Chinese students at CRRU, in descending order, were “(15) I have learned Thai language when doing activities with Thai friends; (13) I practice memorizing Thai with my colleagues; (14) I feel more confidence when imitate how the teacher pronounces the words; (11) When my instructor corrects my Thai use, it helps me to remember it; (12) I feel appreciated when someone corrects my Thai if I use the sentence



incorrectly.” at the mean scores of 4.69 (S.D.=0.46), 4.09 (S.D.=0.74), 4.08 (S.D.=0.74), 4.01 (S.D.=0.72), 3.75 (S.D.=0.75) respectively. **Metacognitive strategies** deployed by Chinese students at CRRU, in descending order, were “(9) I learn Thai language from my mistakes; (7) I try to study and practice my Thai language regularly; (8) I try to recognize my grammatical errors in Thai and figure out why I make them; (10) I estimate my Thai improvement; (6) I examine my Thai language.” at the mean scores of 4.56 (S.D.=0.61), 4.10 (S.D.=0.75), 4.05 (S.D.=0.74), 3.86 (S.D.=0.68), 3.75 (S.D.=0.75) respectively. **Cognitive strategies** deployed by Chinese students at CRRU, in descending order, were “(1) I connect my previous knowledge about vocabulary with its usage to memorize it more easily; (5) When I learn a new word in Thai, I write it down immediately; (3) At my accommodation, I practice the Thai phrases we learned in class regularly; (2) If I face the same words or phrases many times, it is easier for me to remember it; (4) When I am learning Thai, I write down the words I am learning and their connotations with different examples to help me understand the text easily.” at the mean scores of 4.20 (S.D.=0.71), 4.10 (S.D.=0.75), 4.00 (S.D.=0.71), 3.79 (S.D.=0.74), 3.75 (S.D.=0.75) respectively.

Discussion

The findings observed from the Chinese students’ perceptions towards learning at CRRU tended to conform with the previous studies. For example, An (2010) examined the factors affecting decision-making



among 400 Chinese students in making their way to study in Thai universities in his study on An Aspect of Globalization in Higher Education Why Chinese Students Choose to Study in Thailand, Assumption University, Bangkok. The findings revealed that international learning environment was ranked the highest, followed by university reputation and ranking, knowledge gained from their study program while other subsequent influential factors were tuition fees and living costs, and future employment. In this regard, it could be seen that learning environments and facilities played an influential role affecting the perception of Chinese students towards learning at CRRU as well as other universities throughout Thailand. Teaching and learning process also showed strong effect affecting the Chinese students' perception as the students. Another study meeting this trend was Ye (2020), on the study of Factors Affecting the Decision-Making of the Chinese Students to Study in Higher Education Institutions in Thailand, Assumption University, Bangkok. Ye (2020:111) underscored the social factors affecting the Chinese students' decision-making in studying at Thai universities concerned mainly on their surrounding environment factors, in descending order of mean scores i.e. (1) Beautiful touring country; (2) Safety of Thai society; (3) Land of smile, Thai people are kind; (4) Many Thai has Chinese family background; (5) Curriculum strength of Thai institutions (6) English is highly used in Thai speaking setting. An (2010) & Ye (2020) clearly reaffirmed similar trend of the



Chinese students' perception towards their learning at CRRU and other Thai universities nationwide.

The language learning strategies employed by the Chinese students at CRRU, in descending order, were socio-affective, metacognitive and cognitive respectively. This sequential order, to some certain extent, was different from the other studies. For example, Nguyen (2020:44) in the study on Understanding the Use of Listening Strategies in Watching English Captioned Movies by EFL Students at Ho Chi Minh City Industry and Trade College (HITC). This study reported the findings that students' strategy choices, in descending order, were cognitive, meta-cognitive and socio-affective. The plausible explanation for this discrepancy may be the fact that Chinese students at CRRU were all Chinese students learning Thai language without having other foreigners or Thai students sharing their class. This homogeneous classroom context illustrates the preference of socio-affective strategies by Chinese students at CRRU because this strategy option aims to assist students to cooperate with their classmates and to get attentions and clarification from teachers, share the ideas with their peers for better comprehension and more confidence on their learning process, better handling their feelings, motivations or attitudes in studying (Nguyen, 2020:39). Another interesting finding supporting socio-affective strategies preference over the other strategy choices among Chinese students at CRRU were clearly outlined by Cheng (2018), on A Study Improving Intercultural Communicative Competence of Chinese Students

in Thailand, National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA), Thailand. Cheng (2018:104) discussed the reasons underpinning the Chinese students' preference to spending time with their Chinese peers as of the following statements:

“...after spending a period of time in Thailand, most of the Chinese students can speak Thai fairly well, and Thai language is becoming their first language to communicate with Thai people. Many of them still insist however that although they speak better Thai now, they still sometimes have communication problems with Thai people. These Chinese students tend to live in groups. The majority of them naturally wish to have fellow Chinese students as roommates, most of their friends are still Chinese students and when in need, they would ask their Chinese friends for help first.” Cheng (2018:104)

The use of meta-cognitive strategies over cognitive strategies by Chinese students at CRRU was also in line with the trend observed from the past learning strategies studies. For example, Sari et al. (2018), in their study on Language Learning Strategies Used by Successful Students of the English Education Study Program at University of Bengkulu, Indonesia, indicated that metacognitive strategies were dominant among successful students at University of Bengkulu followed by compensation strategies, cognitive strategies, socio strategies, memory strategies and affective strategies. Another study supporting this trend was Rahman (2020), on EFL Learners' Language Learning Strategies: A Case Study of Qassim University,



Saudi Arabia, reported the investigation of language learning strategies among 30 students from level four of the Department of English Language and Translation by using Oxford (1990)'s Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). The findings pointed out that repeated strategy choices, in descending order, were metacognitive, compensation, social, memory, cognitive, and affective strategies. However, Nguyen (2020:44) showed a contradictory report that the language learning strategy choices among EFL students at Ho Chi Minh City Industry and Trade College (HITC), in descending order, were cognitive, meta-cognitive and socio-affective. The discrepancies among the sequential order and the relationship of language learning strategies choices among learners from different contexts were consistently observed and investigated. For example, Saks and Leijen (2018), in their study on Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies as Predictors of Language Learning Outcomes, University of Tartu, Estonia, the findings revealed the role of cognitive and metacognitive strategies deployment observed from 269 final-year students of high schools who involved in the standardized English as a state foreign language exam. The results showed that cognitive strategies offered direct effect on students' test results, while metacognitive strategies delivered the indirect effect. Consistently, Supakorn et. Al. (2018) in their study on "Strategies for Better Learning of English Grammar: Chinese vs. Thais" also offered interesting findings on the distinctive strategies preference between Thai and Chinese students learning English grammar. It was found that socio-affective, cognitive and metacognitive



strategies are three key strategy groups that showed learning strategies norms between Thai and Chinese students. For example, Thai students tended to prefer consulting with teachers for explicit grammar learning, and were better at handling negative feeling while learning grammar by using self-encouragement and relaxation for emotional management. However, Chinese students were good at notetaking and revision strategies, but Thai students preferred learning grammar by using tables and mental image memorization. Also, Thais were comfortable with receptive methods while Chinese students chose to work with lesson preview for grammar acquisition. This led to the conclusion that strategy choices could determine different learning preference among learners from different cultural backgrounds. For example, Thai learners learning grammar might prefer visual, auditory and social tasks, but self-directed learning activities might fit the needs of Chinese students such as lesson preview, notetaking and revision tasks. The language learning strategies used among Chinese students at CRRU thus reflected the nature of specific contextual situation of CRRU Student Exchange Program under MOU agreement and clearly portrayed their language learning strategies trend similarly to those reported in the past studies.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study explores Chinese students' perceptions towards studying at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University (CRRU) and surveys their language learning strategies. The Chinese students' perception aspects towards



learning at CRRU, in descending order, were learning environment and facilities, teaching and learning process, family supports and socio-cultural factors. These perception aspects conformed with other studies such as An (2010) & Ye (2020) showing the Chinese students' perception trend towards learning at CRRU and other Thai universities nationwide. The findings also reported that the language learning strategies deployed by Chinese students' at CRRU based on learning strategies taxonomy framework by O'Mallet and Chamot (1990), in descending order, were socio-affective strategies, metacognitive strategies, and cognitive strategies. The sequential order of language learning strategies employed by the Chinese students at CRRU clearly showed the specific context of the homogenous instructional context of CRRU Student Exchange Program and reflected the Chinese students' language learning strategy behaviors.

The recommendations for this study were proposed within 2 aspects of perceptions and language learning strategies of Chinese students at CRRU. First, perceptions of Chinese students towards learning at CRRU offer useful recommendations for devising international programs policy with an aim to successfully attract Chinese students at CRRU. For example, the previous studies and this study have reaffirmed that Chinese students seemed to concentrate on learning environment and facilities, followed by teaching and learning process, family supports and socio-cultural factors. In this regard, the university should pay attention on uplifting the physical environments that enhance learning environment



and facilities and thus promote teaching and learning process such as academic and intercultural promotion center and clubs for international students. The studies on Chinese students' perception seem limited to only the undergraduate level. This therefore may offer an opportunity to further probe into a new context of Chinese students at the graduate level since Ye (2020) emphasized that due to the One Belt One Road Policy of Chinese Government and fierce competition in job market in China have triggered high interests of Chinese students in pursuing the graduate education from overseas universities that included Thailand as Ye (2020:7) pointed out that the number of Chinese students enrolling in the graduate programs in Thailand had increased from 15.1% in 2013 to 29.8% in 2018, and this trend seems to exist for many years to come. Second, language learning strategies, it could be observed and reaffirmed that language learning strategies are vital for success in the language learning because if the students can manipulate their language learning strategies or, in other words, if the students are expert in using language learning strategies, they can develop their performances, interests, self-confidence, and attitude towards becoming successful in foreign languages learning (Rahman, 2020). This therefore leads to the recommendation that strategies training may be the answer to empower the students' language learning capability in realm of utilizing language learning strategies. CRRU, therefore, needs to offer language learning strategies training for the incoming Chinese students in order to facilitate their learning capacity at CRRU. This is also



suggested in the study by Cheng (2018:109-110) which stated that “improving language training, enhancing students’ language proficiency, and empowering intercultural communicative competence training will be beneficial to the social adaptation and academic adaptation of Chinese students in Thailand.” The final remarks on language learning strategies empowerment perhaps lie upon the language learning strategies training program which can benefit the overall instructional process and participants that include students, teachers, study program and educational institution executives for development and revision of their study programs especially for international students. In addition, the discrepancies and incongruence among sequential order of the strategy taxonomy studies as well as various versions of strategy taxonomies may offer the room for further insight investigation and further studies in this area.



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