

## **The Effectiveness of Cover Thai Songs in Chinese Listening Skills Improvement for Grade 6 Students at a Private Primary School in Thailand**

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**Abstract:** *Song conveys messages and words that are loaded with meanings, also it can be used for obtaining knowledge. However, songs in the classroom have been related to recreation and entertainment environment. Many learners do not know the meaning of “the lyrics”. In this study, the research aimed to examine if the application of cover Thai songs as a pedagogical tool would help learners improve their Chinese listening skills. This experimental research involved two classes of students, one performed as an experimental group and the other one as a control group at private primary schools in Thailand. The instruments used were pretest and posttest, and a five-point Likert scale questionnaire. Furthermore, the data taken from questionnaires were investigated to find out the students’ learning satisfaction through cover Thai songs. The study found that using cover Thai songs in Chinese listening skills was more effectively improved than the Chinese songs. In addition, the findings also showed that the cover Thai songs increased students’ learning satisfaction in a very positive level.*

**Keywords:** *Chinese listening skills, Cover Thai songs, A pedagogical tool*

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### **I. Introduction**

Since 2001, as declared by the Office of the Basic Education Commission under the Ministry of Education in Thailand, the Chinese language has acquired the status of another language of the foreign language strand in the curriculum<sup>1</sup>. In fact, each year over 300,000 students are studying Chinese in Thailand, indicating the popularity of the language<sup>1</sup>. Thai learners in high school seem to be proficient with vocabulary but poor in Chinese listening skills. Listening skills still remain one of the least understood processes and learners often regard listening as the most difficult language skill to acquire and evaluate.

Chinese listening skills are centered around the fear that you might be unable to understand the message or process the information correctly or be able to adapt your thinking to include the new information coherently. In fact, many students will actually avoid doing the listening part of their homework, because they feel they will do poorly. In other cases, students will choose to take a challenging course only if it’s a requirement. The listening part is the most challenging section for most students when teaching Mandarin in foreign countries<sup>2</sup>. Many researchers have found that songs were more easily committed to memory. Recent research has found connections between music and language that includes the transfer of abilities between music and speech<sup>3</sup>. However, the use of music and song as a pedagogical tool in the foreign language classroom has been rare<sup>4</sup>. Most Chinese teachers use Chinese songs to create an active classroom atmosphere and to impart cultural knowledge, not as a pedagogical tool<sup>2</sup>.

In the study, the researcher tried to use cover Thai songs to reduce the influence of cultural difference, so that learners can receive knowledge positively. In the Chinese listening skills class, culture is only as a vehicle to teach language. The analysis was that cover Thai songs will reduce the wrong imagination when learners translate their own song lyrics and enhance the memory. Sometimes, the lyrics refer to learners’ own culture which can be used as a foil for the target culture. Learners will be able to appreciate it more because they’ll have a way of comparing practices and traditions. The quirks of the target culture can make for memorable points of comparison.

Through this research, the researcher studied the difference between learning with Chinese songs and learning with the help of cover Thai songs to test if teaching with cover Thai songs more improve students’ Chinese listening skills. Specifically, this research sought to promote the usage of cover Thai songs in a learning environment. In addition, the research also investigated if cover Thai song would increase the students’ learning satisfaction.

### **Terminology**

**Effectiveness** refers to the degree of cover Thai songs to develop learners' Chinese listening skills.

**Cover Thai Songs** refers to Chinese songs in Thai version with same lyrics to help learners understand the meaning of songs in this study.

**Song Learning Environment** refers to teachers using songs as a pedagogical tool in Chinese language classroom.

**Chinese Listening Skills** refers to ability that learners can match what they hear with what they already know to reproduce information in this study.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Cover Thai Songs**

Learning Chinese with music is one of the best possible ways to learn Chinese language and culture. For elementary students, it is important to foster their interest in learning Chinese. At this stage, people can choose Chinese some songs with a slower rhythm, clear pronunciation and shorter spaces. Chinese songs are generally independent, contextual sentences<sup>5</sup>. Many of the lyrics of the song are repeatedly chanted and are consistent<sup>6</sup>. Songs such as this are said to be more memorable than vocabulary flashcards<sup>7</sup>, an example of one of these Chinese songs, "Honey sweet". There are other potential pitfalls to choose songs for primary students such as songs which use difficult language that isn't commonly used in everyday communication. The lyrics are easy to understand and the number of words should not be too high.

Songs can be translated for particular purposes, as well as a functional account of how a lyric can be made to match existing music<sup>8</sup>. Translation of cover Thai songs has never been about lexical precision. Its aim is to convey the message of a song in a different language by matching words and music, and integrating the verbal component of a song into its rhythm and melody. In short, translations are as a supplement to the original lyrics or performance<sup>9</sup>.

### **Listening Skills**

A person learning a second or foreign language will first hear, talk, and then learn how to read and write<sup>10</sup>. Therefore, in teaching of modern foreign languages, the order of the four language skills should be in the following order: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Listening skills provides the right conditions for language acquisition and development of other language skills. Thai learners often have problems with Chinese listening skills due to the fact that teachers pay more attention to grammar, reading and vocabulary, with listening and speaking skills not being seen as important parts of many course books or curriculums and teachers do not seem to pay attention to these skills while designing their lessons. Most teachers take it for granted and believe that it will develop naturally within the process of language learning. Another reason why this skill is not given serious attention is the fact that many learners lack self-confidence when listening to a foreign language. The use of cover Thai songs as media in teaching Chinese listening skills is expected to motivate students in learning process. They will be more interested and also they get illustration and new vocabulary to express their idea in targeted language<sup>11</sup>.

### **Motivation for Chinese Learning in Thailand**

Motivation is usually associated with commitment, enthusiasm, and persistence to achieve goals. Motivation has been widely acknowledged by both teachers and researchers as one of the key factors that influences the rate and success of second or foreign language learning, and it is identified into two basic classifications: Intrinsic and Extrinsic motivation<sup>16</sup>. The main reason for this undermining effect is because extrinsic rewards tend to shift the individual's reasons for performing the behavior from internal (e.g., interest, fun) to external (e.g., to receive the reward), thus changing the source of the motivation and locus of causality for action<sup>12</sup>.

Intrinsic motivation is non-instrumental in nature, that is, intrinsically motivated action is not contingent upon any outcome separable from the behavior itself<sup>13</sup>. Learners with high levels of intrinsic goal orientation have a strong desire to learn the language and have positive attitudes toward the learning situation, and are more likely to expend more effort and efficiency in learning the language. According to Jun and Richard, the relationship between students' academic achievement and level of learning motivation was a strong positive significant relationship in grade 4-6 at Ladprao Bilingual School in Thailand<sup>14</sup>.

Extrinsic motivation contrasts with intrinsic motivation, which refers to doing an activity simply for the enjoyment of the activity itself, rather than its instrumental value. Extrinsic motivation is most often associated with the engagement in activities because they lead to desirable consequences separate from the activity such as tangible rewards<sup>13</sup>. In Thailand, extrinsic motivation in Chinese language learning is determined by students' parents and teachers. Parents expect their children to excel and outperform others in order to achieve defined life goals such as

developing a career opportunity, passing exams, or gaining a promotion. Hence, the behavior is a means to an end and not for its own sake<sup>15</sup>.

### **Cognitive Learning Theory**

Both Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky thought learning is what leads to the development of higher order thinking. Both have contributed to the field of education by offering explanations for children's cognitive learning styles and abilities<sup>16</sup>.

Piaget took a more constructivist view and focused on how the age-related restrictions on the individual's thinking. It informs teachers how to design age-appropriate instructions. By applying Piaget's theory in the classroom, both teacher and students benefit in several ways. Teachers develop a better understanding of their students' thinking. They can also align their teaching strategies with their students' cognitive level (i.e. motivational set, modelling, and assignments). In addition to this, a number of instructional strategies have been derived from Piaget's work. These strategies include providing a supportive environment, utilizing social interactions and peer teaching, and helping children see fallacies and inconsistencies in their thinking<sup>16</sup>.

While Vygotsky used an active theory approach that focused on social interaction. The underlying themes of Vygotsky's theory on cognitive development have thus often been summarized as: (i) the significance of culture, (ii) the role of a principal proponent of culture: language, and (iii) the student's relationship with (and development within) this social (cultural) world<sup>17</sup>. That is, the social world as defined by Vygotsky considers not only the interpersonal interactions between, say, a student and teacher, or student and peer, but also the broader sociocultural and historical influences on learning and the learning environment. In the research, the instructional tool of cover Thai song is provided a positive environment and help learner focus on their learning of Chinese listening skills.

### **III. Material And Methods**

In this study, three stages of data collections had been carried out. Pretest had been carried out to test the Chinese listening skills level that the samples shown before the lessons. Post-test had been carried out after the lessons to test if cover Thai songs developed samples better than Chinese songs. In addition, questionnaire had been carried out to investigate the satisfaction with the usage of cover Thai songs in the experimental group.

#### **Samples**

The samples of the study were 50 students from two classes. The researcher used purposive selection method to select one section as the experimental group and the other as the control group. The targeted samples were chosen from each class according to their good academic performance in the last term. The research was carried out among the experimental group and the control group, each of the group comprised of 25 students aged between eleven and twelve years old. All the samples started their Chinese education at Grade 1 so they have been learning it for five years.

#### **Validity and Reliability**

In order to verify validity, the researcher's pre-test and post-test t multiple choices and answer items was given to two experts in teaching Chinese language in Thailand over 15 years in the primary schools, by utilizing the index of item-objective congruence (IOC) measurement.

In order to verify the reliability of the research instrument, the pre-test and post-test of 30 multiple choice questions were tried out with a trial group of grade 8 students who are one grade higher than the sample group prior to the experiment.

Kuder-Richardson formula (KR-20) was applied to find out the reliability of questionnaire. The KR-20 coefficient should be equal to or greater than 0.70 for the instruments to be reliable. The result was 1.00, which was greater than 0.07, then the questionnaire was reliable to be used in the study.

#### **Data Collection**

In this research study, data was collected in the forms of pre-test and post-test both in the experimental group and the control group. Questionnaire was carried out only in the experimental group.

The Quantitative data in this study was collected by using the learning achievement tests of 30 multiple choice questions which were conducted for both.

The questionnaire developed 7 items using five-point Likert rating scale. It was administered after the treatment to find out students' satisfaction on using the cover Thai Songs for the experimental group. The rating of satisfaction levels is: strongly agree (5 points), agree (4 points), neutral (3 points), disagree (2 points), and strongly disagree (1 point).

In addition, the research included five Lesson Plans for both experimental group and control group to support in data collection process. The selection criteria of cover Thai songs are a slower rhythm, clear

pronunciation and shorter spaces. The lyrics are easy to understand and the number of words should not be too high. Also the lyrics of the song are repeatedly chanted, and are consistent. Songs that include classical Chinese are said to be difficult for foreign Chinese learners if the rhythms are too fast.

Contents of the Study in the Lesson Plans are as follows:

Lesson Plans	Topics	Songs	Schedule in 2017
I	Where are you going?	Hidden wings.	Two weeks in July
II	Family	Mom is the best in the world.	Two weeks in July
III	Friendship	Friend.	Two weeks in August
IV	Love	The moon represents my heart.	Two weeks in August
VI	I am very happy.	Sweet honey	Two weeks in September

### Data Analysis

Pre-test and post-test Analysis: A comparative statistical analysis using independent t-test and paired sample t-test was done within the pre-test and post-test of experimental group as well as the control group. The comparison between pre-tests and post-tests score of the two groups were analyzed in SPSS based on the mean scores ( $\bar{X}$ ), standard deviation (SD), mean difference (MD) and Significance (Sig.).

Questionnaire Analysis: SPSS was used to measure the mean scores ( $\bar{X}$ ) of each item, standard deviation (SD) and total average of seven items.

## IV. Data Analysis and Results

The data analyses were done based on pretest and post-test scores and questionnaires of students learning satisfaction. The demographic profile of the sample is presented and followed by the other results of data analysis.

### A. Demographic Information of the Samples

**Table 1** The demographic of the samples

Gender	Experimental Group	Control Group	Total
Female	6	8	14
Male	19	17	36
Total	25	25	50

Table 1 shows the total of 50 students participated in the survey, 25 students in each group, the experimental group consists of 6 females and 19 males and 8 females and 17 males in the control group.

### B. The Analysis of Pre-test and Post-test Scores

The comparison of the pretest and posttest scores of the Thanornpitvithaya School students regarding the Chinese listening skills was done in the experimental group and the control group. The analysis was done using SPSS. The mean scores ( $\bar{X}$ ), mean difference (MD), standard deviation (SD), significance (Sig.) and p-value were compared in the independent t-test as follows.

**Table 2** Comparison of pre-test and post-test scores in the experimental group

Items	Experimental Group	Control Group
Number of Students	25	25
$\bar{X}$	17.44	27.00
MD		- 9.56
SD		1.16
Sig.		0.00
t-Value		- 41.29

Table 2 showed the paired t-test for independent samples with mean scores of 17.44 ( $\bar{X}$ = 17.44) in the pre-test and mean scores of 27.00 ( $\bar{X}$ = 27.00) in the post-test. The difference of mean scores was -9.56 (MD=-9.56). The significance is 0.00 (Sig. < 0.05) with t-value of -41.29. It showed that the level of Chinese listening skills between the pre-test and post-test was significantly improved.

**Table 3** Comparison of pre-test and post-test scores in the control group

Test	Pre-test	Post-test
Number of Students	25	25
$\bar{X}$	17.04	25.08
MD		-8.04
SD	2.23	
Sig.		0.00
t-Value		-18.06

Table 3 showed the paired t-test for independent samples with mean scores of 17.04 ( $\bar{X}$  = 17.04) in the pre-test and mean scores of 25.08 ( $\bar{X}$  = 25.08) in the post-test. The difference of mean scores was -8.04 (MD = -8.04). The standard deviation was 2.23 (SD = 2.23). The significance is 0.00 (Sig. < 0.05) with t-value of -18.06. It showed that the level of Chinese listening skills between the post-test and pre-test was also improved.

**Table 4** Comparison of pretest scores in the experimental and control groups

Item	Experimental Group	Control Group
Number of Students	25	25
$\bar{X}$	17.44	17.04
MD		0.4
Sig.		0.33
P-Value		0.53

Table 4 showed the comparison of the pretest scores between the experimental group and the control group. The findings showed the independent t-test for independent samples with mean scores of 17.44 in the experimental group and 17.04 mean scores in the control group. The difference of mean scores between the two groups was 0.4 (MD = 0.4). The significance is 0.33 (Sig. > 0.05) with p-value of 0.53 (P > 0.05). It showed that the level of Chinese listening skills between the experimental group and the control group was not significantly different, both groups had the similar level of Chinese Listening skills at the beginning of the study.

**Table 5** Comparison of post-test scores in the experimental and control groups

Item	Experimental Group	Control Group
Number of Students	25	25
$\bar{X}$	27.00	25.08
MD		1.92
Sig.		0.51
P-Value		0.005

Table 5 showed the independent t-test for independent samples with mean scores of 27.00 ( $\bar{X}$  = 27.00) in the experimental group and mean scores of 25.08 ( $\bar{X}$  = 25.08) in the control group. The difference of mean scores between the two groups was 1.92 (MD = 1.92). The significance is 0.51 (Sig. > 0.05) with p-value of 0.005 (P < 0.05). It showed that the level of Chinese listening skills between the experimental group and the control group was significantly different. The assumption that the level of Chinese listening skills in the experimental group was higher than that in the control group was true.

### C. Questionnaire of Students Learning Satisfaction in the Experimental Group

This part is an analysis of the students' opinions towards using the cover Thai songs to develop the Chinese listening skills in the experimental group. There were seven questions in the questionnaire. These questions would ask students about learning satisfaction by using the five rating scale. The rating of satisfaction levels is: strongly agree (5 points), agree (4 points), neutral (3 points), disagree (2 points), and strongly disagree (1 point).

Score Range:	The criteria of mean scores evaluation
0.00- 1.50	Very negative
1.51- 2.50	Negative
2.51 - 3.50	Moderate
3.51- 4.50	Positive
4.51 – 5.00	Very positive

**Table 6** Mean scores ( $\bar{X}$ ) and standard deviation (SD) in the experimental group

Questions	$\bar{X}$	SD	Result
1. Are you interested in learning Chinese?	4.80	0.42	Very positive
2. Do you think it is interesting to learn Chinese in the form of songs?	4.84	0.37	Very positive
3. Are you satisfied with the songs the teacher uses in the class?	4.64	0.70	Very positive
4. Do you think songs are useful in developing your listening skills?	4.84	0.47	Very positive
5. When you learning a song, do you want to know the meaning of lyrics?	4.72	0.61	Very positive
6. Do you understand the meaning of the lyrics of the songs that you learned in the class?	4.92	0.28	Very positive
7. Do you practice the songs you learned in the class after class?	4.48	0.82	Positive
Total Average	4.75		Very positive

Table 6 displayed the students' opinions level in each item. Question number one "Are you interested in learning Chinese?" showed a mean score of 4.80, at a very positive level. Question number two "Do you think it is interesting to learn Chinese in the form of songs?" a mean score of 4.84, at a very positive level. Question number three "Are you satisfied with the songs the teacher?" a mean score of 4.64, at a very positive level. Question number four "Do you think songs are useful in developing your listening skills?" a mean score of 4.84, at a very positive level. Question number five "When you learning a song, do you want to know the meaning of lyrics?" a mean score of 4.72, at a very positive level. Question number six "Do you understand the meaning of the lyrics of the songs that you learned in the class?" a mean score of 4.92, at a very positive level. Only the question number 7 regarding "Do you practice the songs you learned?" a mean score of 4.48, at a positive level.

The total average mean score of all of the seven questions was 4.75. It displayed that students in the experimental group had a very positive motivation for learning Chinese listening skills by using the cover Thai songs.

## V. Conclusion

The researcher studied the difference between learning with Chinese songs and learning with the help of cover Thai songs to test if teaching with cover Thai songs better improve students' Chinese listening skills. Specifically, this research sought to promote the usage of cover Thai songs in a learning environment.

Both the experimental group and the control group had same Chinese listening skill levels at the beginning of the study. After the experiment, utilizing the cover Thai songs in Chinese teaching better performed than the Chinese songs, it also could increase the Chinese listening skills of the students in grade 6 at Thanornpitvithaya School. The samples had a very positive motivation on learning Chinese listening skills by the cover Thai songs. It concluded that cover Thai songs also promoted students' learning satisfaction in a very positive high level.

## VI. Discussion

The goals of this study are to examine the use of cover Thai song and to promote the impact of songs as a pedagogical tool in teaching foreign language at primary school level. Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were made: students take songs for granted. In the control group, samples were not motivated to try to understand the meaning of the lyrics. The outcomes of the post-tests on the lyrics questions showed that the students in the experimental group who were stimulated by song achieved better results than one in the control group.

The Chinese listening skills of students are improved by the usage of Chinese songs. Learning with Chinese songs is one of the best possible ways to learn Chinese listening skills and culture. Chinese songs are generally independent, contextual sentences<sup>5</sup>. For elementary students, it is important to foster their interest in learning Chinese listening skills. At this stage, people can choose some songs with a slower rhythm, clear pronunciation and shorter spaces. The lyrics are easy to understand and the number of words should not be too high. Many of the lyrics of the song are repeatedly chanted and are consistent<sup>6</sup>. Chinese songs such as this are said to be more attractive and memorable than vocabulary flashcards<sup>7</sup>. In addition, Chinese songs give a chance to develop listening skills automaticity which is the main cognitive reason for using Chinese songs in the classroom. Almost all popular Chinese songs are related to the same topic of friendship, love, dream, sorrow,

and the rest which are the common feelings of people. Such Chinese songs touch the lives of learners, and are connected with their various interests and everyday experiences.

Students have a very positive attitude towards learning Chinese listening skills using cover Thai songs. Unlike the usage of Chinese songs, cover Thai songs help to reduce the influence of cultural difference, so that learners can receive knowledge positively. They reduce the wrong imaginations when learners translate their own song lyrics and enhance the memory. Sometimes, the lyrics refer to learners' own culture which can be used as a foil for the target culture. Learners will be able to appreciate it more because they'll have a way of comparing practices and traditions. The quirks of the target culture can make for memorable points of comparison. Learners adapt to the cover Thai songs environment better than Chinese songs environment.

It is necessary for teachers to know the importance of cover Thai songs when teaching Chinese listening skills as a pedagogical tool. Because more often than not, songs in the classroom have been relegated to recreation and entertainment status. Teachers who know the role of cover Thai songs in transferring learning and easy assimilation of knowledge incorporate this in their lessons. The use of cover Thai songs as media in teaching listening skills is expected to motivate students in their learning process.

## VII. Recommendations

### **Recommendation for School Administration:**

Schools need to offer incentives and regular training so that the teachers and other educators can implement various music into existing curriculum. Teachers who lack basic musicianship find it difficult to teach a song in line with the lesson been taught. There can be a book as a guideline how to edit music relating to the teaching content.

### **Recommendation for School Teachers:**

Teachers need to be trained properly to teach Chinese listening skills using cover Thai songs as a pedagogical tool. Teachers should try as much as possible to explain in the meaning of each vocabulary in the song and how to pronounce it.

### **Recommendation for learners:**

The cover Thai songs should be considered indispensable resources when learning Chinese listening skills. Learners should use cover Thai songs as an opportunity to learn Chinese listening skills proficiently. But they should make a conscious effort to understand the lyrics. Moreover, using cover Thai songs is an effective way to avoid the interference of cultural differences between Thailand and China. Otherwise, cover Thai songs help consolidate learners' memories because of kinds of cultural similarities.

### **Recommendation for Future Research**

The research was carried out in grade 6 students because of their higher Chinese listening skills in primary school. But the other graders will be other option for further studies. The recommendation for further research which has special ability to connect music with classroom teaching when songs are as a pedagogical tool.

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