

*The Chinese Language Teacher Competencies in the Eastern Economics Corridor
of Thailand*

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Abstract

This research aimed to (1) survey the problem of Chinese Language Teachers development in EEC area, (2) create the Chinese Language Teacher's Competencies for the EEC area, and (3) provide the guidelines for developing Chinese Teacher's Competencies for the EEC area. In order to achieve the research purpose, the research methodology was divided into parts. In the first part, content analysing of literature review for formulating questionnaire and surveying were applied to examine the problems and current competencies of Chinese Language Teachers in EEC area. In the second part, analyzing the content related to workforce skill sets and teacher's competencies of Chinese Teacher was applied to design the components of Chinese Language Teacher's competencies for EEC area of Thailand. Then, the questionnaire was formulated to survey Chinese Language Teacher's Competencies in EEC area. The third part was doing the focus group discussion which is the collecting data technique to provide recommendations for Chinese teacher competencies development. Finding was divided into three sections; the survey of Chinese Language Teacher development situation, it was evidenced that teacher has a high score in creating teaching innovation and classroom activity; there are eight components of Chinese Language Teacher's competencies for EEC area; the result of group discussion was suggested that schools should co-operate with other sectors for planning the training programme for teachers that should be in the form of on-the-job training and mentoring.

Keywords: Chinese Language Teacher, Eastern Economic Corridor, Teacher Competencies

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Introduction of the study and its importance

From the concept of “Industry 4.0,” the Royal Thai government has set a twenty-year strategy for Thailand to achieve high-income status by 2037. The aim was to unlock the country from economic challenges for innovative and value-based industry; with an emphasis on twelve fields such as automation and robotics, aviation and logistics, biofuel and biochemicals, and digital so that Thailand aims to achieve prosperity, security and sustainability for the country’s progress and development.

Moreover, this plan includes a wide range of top-down initiatives; especially in infrastructure and people development, transforming Thailand to be a more knowledge-based economy, which can shift Thailand to be an Economics Hub in Southeast Asia. Therefore, the government is developing new growth hubs by starting the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) area which covers Rayong, Chonburi, and Chachengsao provinces; located in the Eastern part of Thailand. This area lies at the heart of the Thailand 4.0 scheme (Eastern Economic Corridor Office, 2019).

The EEC is developed from the well-known Eastern Seaboard where for the past thirty years, numerous business developers have experienced a rewarding investment and exceptional achievements. The EEC development plan is a significant transformation of both physical and social development for leveling up the country’s competitiveness. The objectives of the government are to accelerate the area’s readiness to support all aspects of investment and economic growth; and fully expects that the EEC will be an important center for trading, transportation, and a strategic gateway to Asia (Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau, 2022).

From the statistics of 2022 from the Thailand Board of Investment (BOI), it shows that Chinese Citizens who are businessmen have the highest ratio of investors at 19%. This is because the Chinese government has implemented the One Belt One Road project for cooperating with the Mae-Kong River Countries; such as Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia; by enhancing the investment of industry. This creates opportunity for Economic growth from China in Thailand (Thailand Board of Investment, 2022).

The Role of Education in EEC

The uplifting of the economy in the area attracts a high number of Chinese citizen investors. Therefore, the Chinese Language has played an important role for schools in the EEC area as the tool of communication (Wuyao Zheng, 2021). Ministry of Education of Thailand has expanded the cooperation in various ways with China for developing teacher’s Chinese language abilities aiming to improve the teaching standards and techniques of this. For example, setting up Human Capital Excellence Management Center (HDEMC) for Chinese teachers; and cooperating with HANBAN for providing teacher’s training programs, arranging field trips to China, and promoting Thai and Chinese Education research work (Ministry of Education Thailand, 2020). However, the research papers related to the Chinese teaching situation in Thailand of five sources: Tian Xin (2022), Lim Chong Ewe and Feng Min (2021), Jiani Tan (2022), Huilin Luo and Pimurai Limpapath(2016), Narueporn Wittiphan and Yang Ting (2013). These sources concluded as followed:

1. Teachers lack a variety of new teaching techniques in language, because they are unaware of how to apply the language and the methods of teaching students as a foreign language.
2. Teachers are overburdened with many school-related tasks, and they don't have sufficient time to improve themselves.
3. Teachers lack mentoring in Chinese Language knowledge and teaching since there are a limited number of professionals in the area.
4. School principals don't enhance or emphasize the importance of Chinese Language studies in school, so teachers and students don't have more effective learning opportunities for their future horizons.
5. Schools don't implement the policy of creating community-based learning in any language course as teaching is still based on textbooks.
6. The Chinese teacher's system does not produce the suitable needs of schools in the EEC area, so they cannot create any innovation of teaching in the Chinese Language.
7. There is no consistent development of programs to improve their teaching abilities.

From the above, considering the necessity of the Chinese Language and EEC area in Thailand; it should create competencies for Chinese Language Teachers for preparing students to be a highly skilled manpower of the EEC area with a high proficiency of Chinese Language; as well as provide a recommendation for policy makers. This topic was to explore how Chinese Language teachers should be improving students' language abilities to serve the Eastern Economics Corridor of Thailand

The purpose of the study

1. To survey the problem of Chinese Language Teachers development in EEC area.
2. To create the Chinese Language Teacher's Competencies for the EEC area.
3. To provide the guidelines for developing Chinese Teacher's Competencies for the EEC area.

Definition of Terms

1. Eastern Economics Corridor: the special industrial area which covers Rayong, Chacheongsao and Chonburi provinces in the eastern part of Thailand.
2. Chinese Language Teacher: Teacher who are responsible for Chinese courses in public schools for the secondary sector in Rayong, Chachoengsao and Chonburi provinces.
3. Chinese Language Teacher's competencies: competencies for teachers who teach Chinese as a foreign language including linguistics, psychology, teaching, technology, basic knowledge of China, cross-cultural management, and classroom action research skills.

Methodology

This research project was divided into three parts, and the Research Committee of Burapha University, Thailand approved the ethical research. It was conducted by integrating quantitative and qualitative research methods.

In the first part, content analysis from research works related to Chinese Teacher's teaching problem was used for creating the survey of problems of Chinese language teachers'

development. The aim is to explore the problem of the lack of abilities of teachers in Teaching Chinese. The respondents were Chinese Teachers in secondary sector of public schools in Rayong, Chacheongsao and Chonburi provinces; with the cooperation between the Faculty of Education and Educational Office Area in all three provinces. The selection was purposive sampling all 102 teachers from 79 schools who are responsible for Chinese courses. The questionnaire was approved by the IOC from three professionals in education and Chinese linguistics. The \bar{x} and S.D. were used for analyzing the statistics and survey results.

In the second part, after the results of the first part, data for problems of teacher development was analyzed together with the study on related teacher competencies of Thailand; and Chinese for teaching Chinese as a foreign language designed for the Chinese Language Teacher's Competencies for Eastern Economic Corridor. Then the survey for Chinese Teachers was created as a check list and an open question. In this part, Exploratory Factor Analysis was implemented, to determine the factor structure of a measure and to examine its internal reliability (Creswell, 2014).

The surveying group was also Chinese Teachers in secondary sector of public schools in Rayong, Chacheongsao and Chonburi provinces from 79 schools. The questionnaire was approved by the IOC from five professionals in education and Chinese linguistics. The statistics analysis of data was by \bar{x} and S.D. as well as content analysis in the open question section.

In the third part, the focus group discussion technique was used by inviting the 10 participants from education offices, universities, public schools, and vocational schools to find the guidelines for Chinese Language Teacher's Competencies development recommendations. An interview was conducted by using open questions to ask the experts a specific situation that relevant to Chinese teacher's competencies improvement. The content analysis was used for analyzing the data (Nimer, 2023).

The specialists are from a variety of sectors, including:

1. The directors of educational office of Chonburi-Rayong Area, and educational office of Chacheongsao Area.
2. The expert of teaching Chinese as a foreign language from Assumption University.
3. The lecturer of the Chinese major, Faculty of Education, Burapha University.
4. A teacher from vocational school in Chonburi.
5. Teachers from public schools in Chonburi.
6. Employees from companies in Chacheongsao and Rayong province.

Findings

According to the research purposes of this study, the research finding was divided into three sections.

1. Problems of Chinese Teachers' competencies development

Initially, content analysis was developed from the relevant literature of Chinese Teaching and the Chinese Language Teacher's competencies problem as well as EEC area development information, for formulating questions of a questionnaire about problems of Chinese language Teacher's competencies. Using Exploratory factor analysis, 24 items were retained.

The structure of instrument design was five rating scale. There are 86 respondents out of 102 Chinese language teachers in EEC area (84.31%), answered the questionnaire in this part. The result of the current situation of Chinese Language teachers is shown below in table 1.

Table 1: The results of responses questionnaire about the problem of Chinese Language Teachers development in EEC area

No.	items	\bar{x}	S.D.
1	Teacher has a self-study for gaining general information of EEC area development for intergrading in teaching Chinese language activity.	3.20	0.80
2	Teacher was trained by government or university sectors about preparing the education for EEC area.	3.20	1.00
3	Teacher has a participation in school planning relevant EEC area development.	3.20	1.00
4	Teacher participated in the English training program for self-improvement.	2.51	1.00
5	Teacher used teaching aids integrating with technology for arranging teaching activities.	2.51	0.98
6	Teacher was trained by 21 st century thinking skills for improving student's competencies in Chinese courses.	2.51	0.98
7	Teacher was trained annually for moral and professional ethics	3.44	0.93
8	Teacher builds an inspiration for learning Chinese to every student.	3.44	0.81
9	Teacher enhances students by arranging the acceptance of integrity among classmates in religious and culture aspects.	3.44	0.83
10	Teacher promotes the language communication in Chinese among native speakers and students.	3.14	0.86
11	Teacher arranges the careers and continuing guidance related to Chinese for students.	3.14	0.92
12	Teacher was trained related to Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language in teaching techniques.	3.14	0.95
13	Teacher studies and arranges Professional Learning Community (PLC) in Chinese Courses and integrating with other courses.	3.39	1.00
14	Teacher has attended related language and culture of Chinese and Thai in the past year.	3.39	0.99
15	Teacher understands in applying Second Language Acquisition in teaching.	3.39	0.90
16	Teacher builds the Chinese teaching activities for practical daily routines.	3.53	0.82
17	Teacher improves Chinese language course curriculum for preparing students towards EEC area development.	3.53	0.89
18	Teacher develops teaching innovation in Chinese Language Teaching class and certification in teaching.	3.53	0.91
19	Teacher creates learning community among students from other schools in the nearest area.	2.88	0.95
20	Teacher takes students to survey Chinese business companies and Chinese enterprises in EEC area.	2.88	1.12
21	Teacher conducts classroom action research in Chinese course to improve students' learning in Chinese.	2.88	0.98
22	Teacher applied evaluation technique that has emphasis on performance of student's language ability	3.41	0.79

No.	items	\bar{x}	S.D.
23	Teacher applied Sufficiency Economics Philosophy in teaching Chinese for leveling up student's learning outcomes	3.41	0.86
24	Teacher provides the guidelines of studying in China to students	3.41	0.88
Overall score		3.26	0.99

From the table 1, it can be concluded that, schools have prepared the curriculum for adjusting the education towards EEC area development; including creating teaching innovation and classroom activity which has a highest average score. In the teaching profession aspect, the teacher builds the inspiration to learn Chinese and arrange the mutual understanding of students from different backgrounds and this was ranked second on the average scores. Moreover, the third ranked was both Teacher focuses on leveling students' language ability and learning outcomes; and guiding students for going to study in China.

On the other hand, the lowest average is improving skills of teachers such as English language skills, integrating technology, and thinking skills for teaching. The next lowest was teacher does not frequently create community learning and arrange the activities with other schools in promoting learning Chinese. Finally, the third lowest was Teachers conduct classroom action research project related to Chinese language teaching to solve student's problem in the low rate.

Overall, the situation in Chinese Teacher's competencies development was in the medium level (3.26 out of 5).

2. Chinese Language Teachers for the Eastern Economic Corridors

In this part, at the beginning, content analysis was conducted from three parts; EEC working skills set, Teacher's competencies for Thailand, and Chinese Teaching as a Foreign Language Teacher's competencies. Then formulating items for the questionnaire was from the analyzing content results by applying using Exploratory factor analysis for designing five rating scale questionnaires. There are two parts for designing the component of Chinese Language Teachers' Competencies.

Part 1 Content analyzing data from 3 components as follows:

(1) EEC working skills set

EEC is the special industrial area for enhancing the investment of industry. The start of the 21st century has been marked by a significant change in the global economic landscape. It is one of the Thailand 4.0 strategies to promote sustainable economic growth based on the so-called "New S-Curve" industries with research, innovation, and the digital economy at their core. The EEC aims to bring innovation to improve the quality of living through "7 Smarts" solutions: Smart Mobility, Smart People, Smart Living, Smart Economy, Smart Governance, Smart Energy and Smart Environment. In order to reach the aim of EEC area, there are three main activities in the EEC development area project: (1) Upgrading of Thailand's transport and logistics infrastructure in order to provide a solid connectivity platform to link the EEC region with markets of the Asia Pacific, the Indian Ocean Rim, and beyond, (2) Establishing areas of concentration for investments in the "New S-Curve" industries, such as "EECi" to promote innovation, and "EECd" to promote digital economy, and (3) Creating areas for sustainable economic and social development through the use of new and environmentally-

friendly technologies to enhance quality of life. So, it is important to explore the skills set of working towards the future for further enhancing the productivity of its workforce to be ready to take advantage of new opportunities emanating from the growth industries of the future.

In order to explore the skills set in EEC’s workforce, it started with examining the essential skills from 21st Century skills, of UNESCO, EEC requirement skills by EEC Human Resources Development Center, OECD Future of Education and Skills 2030, Future of Work skills from World Economic Forum, and Future Job skills 2025. It can be concluded that the essential skills for EEC area workforce includes critical thinking, Emotional Intelligence, cross cultural understanding, digital literacy and ICT, communication, problem-solving skills, building partnership and learning community, and compassion and disciplinary. Then the essential skills for EEC area in the forum of comparative table is shown in table 2 below.

Table 2: The results of content analyzing for the essential skills for working in EEC area

21st Century Skills	EEC Requirement Skills	OECD Future of Education and Skills	Future of Work skills	Future Job Skills for 2025	Results
Critical Thinking	-	Critical Thinking	Critical thinking and analyzing skills	Critical Thinking	Critical Thinking
Creativity and creating Innovation	-	Creativity	Creativity, and creating innovation		Creativity, and creating Innovation
Collaboration Teamwork and Leadership	Teamwork	-	Emotional Intelligence	Emotional intelligence	Emotional intelligence
Cross-cultural understanding	English and Chinese	Global Competency	Leadership and social influence	Cross-cultural	Cross-cultural Management
Computing and ICT	Technology STEAM Coding and Digital Literacy	-	Technology design and programing	Digital Tech attitude Tech Management Skills	Computing and ICT
Communication	-	Reading Science Mathematics	Complex, problem-solving and ideation	Out-Centric Leadership Principles	Communication Complex, problem-solving
Career and Learning	Partnership		Active learning and learning strategy	-	Partnership Career and Learning community
Compassion			System analysis and evaluation	Inter disciplinarily	Compassion disciplinarily

Sources: 21st Century skills (UNESCO,2017), EEC requirement skills by EEC Human Resources Development Center(Thaipost,2022) , OECD Future of Education and Skills 2030 (OECD,2019), Future of Work skills(World Economic Forum,2023), and Future Job skills 2025(Barbala Palmer,2020)

(2) Teacher's competencies for Thailand

Exploring Teacher's essential competencies for teaching profession in Thailand was divided into 3 sources; Ministry of Education, Thailand (2017) has regulated teaching profession's competencies for teachers; Education Commission Council (2018) has set the competencies for teachers towards Thailand 4.0 scheme; and skills set and role of teachers for 21st century of Thailand (Sumai Binbai,2015). Then, the content analysis by integrating EFA method is shown on the table 3 below;

Table 3: The results of content analysis of teacher's competencies of Thailand

Teaching profession's competencies for teachers	Competencies for teachers towards Thailand 4.0 scheme	Skills set and role of teachers for 21 st century of Thailand	Results
1. Core Competencies 1.1 Focusing on the outcomes of work 1.2 Service-mind 1.3 Self-improvement 1.4 Teamworking 1.5 Being Ethical in profession of education 2. Functional Competencies 2.1 Curriculum and teaching management skills 2.2 Improve learners' ability. 2.3 Classroom management 2.4 Critical analysis and research to improve learners. 2.5 Leadership 2.6 Building partnership and relationship with community	1. General knowledge and ability 2. Professional knowledge and understanding 3. Professional skills 4. Attitude and Values 5. Professional Practice 6. Professional Engagement	1. Knowledgeable in content of teaching 2. Computer Integration 3. Being constructionist in providing self-directed learning teaching style 4. Connectivity 5. Collaboration 6. Communication 7. Creativity in teaching 8. Caring for students and Colleagues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service-mind and caring students • Teamwork and Collaboration • Ethical profession • Content of teaching for improving curriculum and teaching • Professional Practice • Computer and digital skills • Communication and partnership

Sources: Ministry of Education, Thailand (2017), Education Commission Council (2018), and Sumai Binbai (2015).

From the table 3 of content analysis, from three sources, it can be concluded that Thai teachers should include competencies; Service-mind and caring students, Teamwork and Collaboration, Ethical profession, Content of teaching for improving curriculum and teaching

techniques, Professional Practice, Computer and digital skills, Communication and building partnership.

(3) Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language teacher’s competencies

In the last part of content analysis, exploring for teaching Chinese who teach Chinese as a foreign language’s competencies was from the study of four sources: P.Duff and P.Lester (2008), Ying Lan hua (2018), Guo Rui (2010), and Simon Brog (2018). These sources concluded that Chinese Language Teachers who teach a foreign learners’ competencies contained: Chinese Linguistics, Educational Psychology, Pedagogy, Educational Technologies, general knowledge about China, Cross Cultural Management and Classroom Action Research skill.

In conclusion of content analyzing, it can be summarized that Chinese Language Teachers for Eastern Economic Corridors of Thailand consists of eight components: general basic knowledge of EEC area development, Moral and Ethical in Teaching Profession, Improving students ‘ability, building the relation with the community Chinese Linguistics, Educational Psychology, Language Pedagogy, and Research skills for student’s improvement.

Part 2 Qualitative method for surveying

The content analysis of this study has concluded the study domain of Chinese Language Teacher’s Competencies in EEC area. After the items were rearranged by IOC (Index of items objective congruence) from five experts for formulating questionnaire, the tool has achieved adequate validity and reliability. The questionnaire was designed in five rating scale form and the respondents were also Chinese Language teachers in EEC area. Data was analyzed by using \bar{x} and S.D.as a statistical result. So, table 4 below shows the results of each component.

Table 4: The result of surveying in Chinese Language Teacher competencies for EEC area of Thailand

No.	Components of Chinese Language Teacher competencies	\bar{x}	S.D.
1.	Applying general basic knowledge of EEC area development	3.18	0.87
2.	Chinese Linguistics	3.86	0.88
3.	Educational Psychology	3.74	0.93
4.	Moral and Ethical in Teaching Profession	4.08	0.87
5.	Improving students ‘ability	3.89	0.85
6.	Language Pedagogy	3.87	0.89
7.	Building relationship with the community	3.31	0.88
8.	Research skills for student’s improvement	3.71	0.85
	overall	3.68	0.93

From table 4, it can be seen that Teacher has a highest rate competency in moral and understand ethical in teaching profession, next teacher understands the operation of pedagogy in language and knowledgeable in Chinese linguistics respectively. On the other hand, it is significant that most teachers do not apply much about general knowledge of EEC area development to the classroom, so it was the lowest rate. Following this, Building the relationship with surrounding community in the area. Whereas teachers understanding educational psychology and language pedagogy were in the middle ranks of component.

3. The recommendations of improving Chinese Language Teacher's Competencies for EEC area of Thailand

In this part, the methodology was conducted with the focus group discussion technique. There are ten participants from various sectors such as local educational government, universities, basic educational schools, a vocational school, and Chinese enterprises in EEC area. They suggested that most schools in EEC area have been operating Chinese Course, and they do emphasize on Chinese Language teaching and learning. But there is no link between school and EEC area sectors, so schools have no direction on how to implement Chinese Teaching for preparing students as a workforce in EEC area. To plan the guidelines for developing competencies of Chinese Language teachers; schools should start from the school planning to cooperate with local government sectors, universities, and Chinese citizen companies for school planning Chinese course curriculum to arrange the activities related to enhance the understanding of EEC area's development. Consequently, local government sectors should cooperate with universities or private sectors to arrange long term planning for Chinese Language Teachers' competencies improvement about their language pedagogy, lesson plans, classroom action research and creating activities with the community to enhance Chinese Language learning for students in the form of on-the-job training and mentoring. Moreover, schools should design the local curriculum that students can apply in their daily life, together with emphasis on teachers to create teaching innovation in Chinese class as well as arranging communication in cross cultural experience with Chinese people.

Conclusion

This research is conducted by using the EFA method which is based on examining the relevant literature of Chinese Language Teacher's competencies; to explore the problem and components of Chinese Language Teacher's Competencies for EEC area of Thailand. It can be clearly seen from the main finding, that Chinese Language Teachers in EEC area of Thailand, mostly face the problem of cultivating thinking skills and applying technology in Chinese Language class. Because technology and thinking skills are essential in the 21st century, these will transform the way of traditional teaching style to constructivism which would ensure that teachers facilitate effective classroom activities. Moreover, they lack conducting classroom action research for improving students' language abilities. It is interesting to note that schools do have a plan for creating the curriculum, which is linked between Chinese course and local development, but students lack building relationships with the communities and the opportunity to perform their language's ability with other students from other schools. Whereas teacher has the highest rate in preparing the curriculum for preparing students toward EEC area development's workforce, creating teaching technique and arrange the activities in the classroom. From the argument of teacher's teaching, schools have well-prepared in-school curriculums but in teaching in practical terms; are not based on the curriculum that links with local development.

Language teachers have difficulties in integrating educational technologies and thinking skills in Chinese classes which would allow students to be more engaged in their language learning (Ratna Rintaningrum, 2023). Moreover, teachers usually only adhere to the content in the textbooks that students cannot apply to their surrounding context and routine usage of the language (Monica and Vianty, 2019).

According to the survey for the questionnaire, the component of Chinese Language Teacher's that teacher practices as the least building relationship with the community and applying EEC

knowledge in Chinese class. These points relate to the above results, and this is because the local government sectors pay attention to basic education by driving policy that may not be practiced or implemented in the classroom situation. Furthermore, teachers seldom develop classroom action research for improving students, due to the lack of training and implementation from school and authority sectors, as well as the limitation of school's cooperation with communities and other sectors. However, teachers have high moral standards and the motivation to improve student's abilities. Consequently, teachers should be trained for creating the local curriculum and research skills (Turner,K; Garvis,S., 2023, and Anderson-Butcher et al., 2022).

In conclusion, from the problem of the current situation in developing Chinese Language Teacher's competencies and their readiness for preparing students towards EEC area of Thailand, the participants of the focus group interview suggested the development of competencies from of on-the-job training and mentoring of research skills with the collaboration of other sectors.

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