



SCAFFOLDING STRATEGIES IN CHINESE LANGUAGE TEACHING: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY ON PRACTICES AND PERCEPTIONS OF CHINESE LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN THAILANDⁱ

Xianling Shao¹ⁱⁱ,

Anchalee Chayanuvat²

¹Suryadhep Teachers College,
Rangsit University,
Bangkok, Thailand

²Assistant Professor,
Suryadhep Teachers College,
Rangsit University,
Bangkok, Thailand

Abstract:

Scaffolding is a significant teaching and learning approach in contemporary education because it provides a way for teachers to support students' learning and development. This study aimed to: 1) identify the types of scaffolding strategies used by Chinese language teachers in Thailand. 2) examine the frequency with which these scaffolding strategies are applied in classroom teaching, and 3) investigate teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of scaffolding strategies in Chinese language teaching. A purposive sampling method was used to select 45 Chinese-language teachers in Thailand for a questionnaire survey and eight of them for semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that Thai Chinese language teachers mainly used six scaffolding strategies: cognitive, affective, peer, interactive, technological, and language scaffolding. They reported that language scaffolding was used most frequently, whereas peer scaffolding was used least frequently. However, the relatively low use of peer and technological scaffolding may be attributed to students' age and limitations in teaching resources. As for the effectiveness of the scaffolding strategies, all strategies were found promising with language scaffolding strategies at the most effective. It is recommended that teachers flexibly apply various scaffolding strategies in conjunction with classroom practice to improve the quality of Chinese language instruction further.

Keywords: Chinese language teaching; scaffolding strategies; teacher practice; Thailand

ⁱ 汉语教学中的支架策略：关于泰国汉语教师实践与认知的混合研究

ⁱⁱ Correspondence: email shaoxianling95@gmail.com

摘要：

支架式教学是当代教育中一种重要的教学与学习方法，因为它为教师支持学生的学习与发展提供了有效途径。本研究旨在：1) 识别泰国汉语教师所采用的支架策略类型；2) 考察这些支架策略在课堂教学中的使用频率；3) 探究教师对支架策略在汉语教学中有效性的看法。研究采用目的抽样法，对泰国 45 名汉语教师进行问卷调查，并从中选取 8 名教师进行半结构式访谈。研究表明，泰国汉语教师主要采用六种支架策略：认知支架、情感支架、同伴支架、互动支架、技术支架以及语言支架。其中，教师报告语言支架使用频率最高，而同伴支架使用频率最低。然而，同伴支架和技术支架使用率相对较低，可能与学生年龄以及教学资源受限有关。在支架策略的有效性方面，所有策略均被认为具有积极效果，其中语言支架被认为最为有效。研究建议教师结合课堂实践，灵活运用多种支架策略，以进一步提升汉语教学质量。

关键词：汉语教学；支架策略；教师实践；泰国

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

In the context of accelerating economic globalisation, interactions among countries in trade, culture, and education have increased substantially. However, language differences remain one of the major barriers affecting international communication and cooperation (Tenzer et al., 2017). With the rapid economic development of China and its expanding global influence, Mandarin Chinese has gradually become one of the most widely learned foreign languages in the world. By the end of 2021, more than 180 countries and regions had introduced Chinese language education, and 76 countries had incorporated Chinese into their national education systems. Earlier statistics also show that by 2018 more than 2.7 million learners in 154 countries were studying Chinese as a second language, highlighting the growing global demand for Chinese language learning (Gong et al., 2020).

Thailand represents one of the most important contexts for Chinese language education in Southeast Asia. The long-standing economic, cultural, and tourism connections between China and Thailand have significantly increased the demand for Chinese language proficiency. Thailand has become a popular destination for Chinese tourists and an active participant in regional economic cooperation. The establishment of the China–ASEAN Free Trade Area in 2010 further strengthened trade and economic ties between the two countries (Sunisa, 2019). As a result, Chinese language education has been widely integrated into Thailand’s education system. Data from the Office of the Basic Education Commission indicate that Chinese language instruction is currently offered in numerous public and private schools across primary, secondary, and vocational levels (Lei, 2007). The continued strengthening of China–Thailand relations

and China's growing global role have further promoted the institutional development of Chinese language education in Thailand (Nattaporn, 2024).

Despite this rapid expansion, Chinese language teaching in non-native contexts faces several challenges. Second language teacher education research emphasises that teachers' understanding of teaching is shaped by their own learning experiences and sociocultural backgrounds (Johnson, 2009). Many native Chinese teachers are influenced by the educational traditions and classroom expectations of mainland China. When teaching abroad, differences in educational culture and classroom norms may affect how teachers interact with students and design instruction. Previous studies suggest that teachers need to adopt a student-centred perspective in which students actively construct knowledge while teachers act as facilitators of learning (Guo, 2002; Wang, 2005). However, cultural differences between China and host countries may lead some native Chinese teachers to hold unrealistic expectations regarding students' learning pace or classroom behaviour (Marjorie & Melissa, 2011). These issues highlight the need to explore more effective teaching approaches suitable for second language contexts such as Thailand.

One instructional approach that has attracted considerable attention in language education is scaffolding. Research has shown that teachers play a crucial role in creating interactive classroom environments and supporting learners' participation in second language learning (Gardner, 2019; Muhonen et al., 2016). Through appropriate scaffolding strategies, such as prompting questions, providing hints, adjusting instructional language, or allowing sufficient wait time, teachers can guide learners to gradually develop linguistic competence and confidence. Both teacher scaffolding and students' active engagement are essential factors in effective second language learning (Eadie et al., 2019; Hu et al., 2018; Ribot et al., 2018).

The concept of scaffolding originates from Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to the gap between what learners can accomplish independently and what they can achieve with guidance from more knowledgeable others (Rahman, 2024). Scaffolding involves providing temporary instructional support that helps learners complete tasks slightly beyond their current abilities. As learners gradually develop competence, the support is reduced until they can perform tasks independently (Wibowo et al., 2025). This approach emphasises interaction, collaboration, and adaptive teaching strategies that respond to learners' developmental needs.

In the context of teaching Chinese as a second language, scaffolding strategies are particularly important because native Mandarin teachers cannot rely solely on their own first-language learning experiences when teaching in foreign language classrooms. Differences in linguistic background, learning habits, and educational culture require teachers to adjust their instructional methods and provide appropriate support to learners. With the growing number of Chinese learners in Thailand, how teachers effectively apply scaffolding strategies to help students overcome learning difficulties and improve learning outcomes has become an important issue. Although previous

research has confirmed the significance of scaffolding in language education, systematic investigations into how Chinese language teachers in Thailand implement and adapt scaffolding strategies in real classroom settings remain limited.

Therefore, examining the application of scaffolding strategies in Chinese language classrooms in Thailand is both timely and necessary. By analysing how teachers select and adjust scaffolding practices during instruction, this research seeks to deepen understanding of effective teaching approaches in Chinese language education. Such insights may contribute to enhancing students' engagement and learning outcomes while supporting the sustainable development of Chinese language education in Thailand.

1.2 Research Objectives

- 1) To identify the types of scaffolding strategies used by Chinese language teachers in Thailand.
- 2) To examine the frequency with which these scaffolding strategies are applied in classroom teaching.
- 3) To investigate teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of scaffolding strategies in Chinese language teaching.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Scaffolding as a Sociocultural Framework for Second Language Learning

Scaffolding is most commonly understood through Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky (1978) defined the ZPD as the distance between learners' actual developmental level, reflected in what they can accomplish independently, and their potential developmental level, reflected in what they can achieve with guidance from adults or more capable peers. From this perspective, learning is not an isolated cognitive event but a socially mediated process in which development occurs first at the interpersonal level and is later internalised by the learner (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). In language education, this view positions interaction, mediation, and guided participation as central mechanisms of learning.

The notion of scaffolding was later used to operationalise learning within the ZPD. Wood et al. (1976) described scaffolding as temporary support that enables learners to complete tasks they could not accomplish alone. Sarmiento-Campos et al. (2022) similarly emphasised that support should be progressively withdrawn as learners gain control over the task. In second language education, scaffolding is therefore not merely assistance, but calibrated, temporary, and responsive support that helps learners move from other-regulation to self-regulation (Myhill, 2003). Van de Pol et al. (2010) synthesised this process into three defining features: contingency, fading, and transfer of responsibility. These features remain highly influential because they distinguish scaffolding from general teacher help.

Within sociocultural theory, teacher mediation is central to learning. Knowledge is actively constructed through dialogue, participation, and the use of symbolic and

cultural tools rather than simply transmitted from teacher to student (Bao & Du, 2015; Masuda & Arnett, 2015). Teachers and more capable peers create opportunities for learners to engage with language forms and meanings that would otherwise remain inaccessible. Wells (1999) argued that scaffolding is fundamentally dialogic and embedded in socially meaningful activity, while Walsh (2006) highlighted the importance of teacher–student interaction in shaping language development. In this sense, scaffolding is best viewed as a relational and interactional construct rather than a fixed instructional technique.

This perspective has important pedagogical implications for second language teaching. Learning emerges through structured but flexible participation in meaningful activity, and support must be sensitive to learners’ developmental needs, the classroom context, and the quality of interaction (Reham, 2022). Accordingly, scaffolding has become a major construct in research on second language pedagogy because it provides a theoretical bridge between sociocultural theory and classroom practice.

2.2 Forms and Functions of Scaffolding in Second Language Classrooms

Research has identified several major forms of scaffolding in second language classrooms, including cognitive, affective, peer, interactive, technological, and language scaffolding. Although these categories overlap in practice, together they illustrate the multidimensional nature of teacher support.

Cognitive scaffolding helps learners organise content, reduce task complexity, and focus attention on essential aspects of learning. It may include modelling, prompting, questioning, concept mapping, contextualisation, gestures, and visual aids (Kinnebrew et al., 2014; Van de Pol et al., 2010). In language teaching, gestures and multimodal cues are particularly useful because they support comprehension, memory, and form–meaning mapping (Hostetter, 2011; Macedonia, 2014). Picture association and audiovisual materials likewise reduce cognitive load and facilitate vocabulary retention (García-Gómez & Macizo, 2020, 2022).

Affective scaffolding addresses the emotional and motivational dimensions of learning. Since anxiety, confidence, and classroom climate strongly influence second language development, teachers often use praise, encouragement, reassurance, and emotionally supportive participation structures to reduce learners’ affective barriers (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). Studies suggest that affective support can enhance engagement, strengthen students’ sense of belonging, and create conditions for more sustained participation (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Aubrey et al., 2020). In practical terms, affective scaffolding is particularly relevant in classrooms where learners are hesitant, anxious, or lacking confidence.

Peer scaffolding is another important dimension of classroom support. Sociocultural theory does not restrict learning support to experts; learners can also scaffold one another through collaborative dialogue and co-construction of meaning (Donato, 1994). Research has shown that peer interaction can facilitate language development, critical thinking, and learner autonomy, especially when students explain,

clarify, confirm, or provide feedback to one another (Hanjani, 2019; Shin et al., 2020). More recent work has moved beyond expert–novice models and emphasised reciprocity among learners of similar proficiency (Dong & Liu, 2020).

Interactive scaffolding highlights the role of classroom discourse in shaping learning opportunities. Teacher questioning, wait time, recasts, prompts, and guided reformulations can all help learners produce more accurate or more complex language (Kayi-Aydar, 2013; McNeil, 2012). From the perspective of the interaction hypothesis, such support links input, negotiation, and output, thereby supporting language development through participation in classroom talk (Thornbury, 2006). In practice, interactive scaffolding is especially important in speaking classrooms because it provides learners with graduated support during real-time language production.

Technology-mediated scaffolding has expanded the possibilities of support in contemporary classrooms. Digital tools such as subtitles, prompts, glosses, multimedia materials, translation tools, and AI-supported applications can provide flexible and differentiated assistance (Seo & Kim, 2023; Yoon, 2022). Multimedia presentation also enables learners to form multiple mental representations of new information, which can enhance comprehension and retention (Liu et al., 2018; Teng, 2019). However, the effectiveness of technological scaffolding depends on its alignment with learners' needs and local classroom conditions (Paisan, 2024; Pratiwi et al., 2025).

Language scaffolding refers more specifically to discourse-level support provided by teachers, such as reformulation, extension, modelling, explanation, strategic use of learners' first language, and guided participation in target language output (Walsh, 2006). Studies have shown that these forms of support can increase classroom participation and help learners move from limited production to more elaborated and accurate language use. In multilingual settings, the strategic use of the first language can also function as a scaffold when used briefly and purposefully to clarify meaning or compare concepts (Copland & Neokleous, 2011; Hall & Cook, 2012; Storch & Aldosari, 2010).

Overall, the literature suggests that scaffolding is best understood as a flexible repertoire of support strategies rather than a single method. Its effectiveness depends not only on the type of support, but also on timing, responsiveness, and the gradual transfer of responsibility to learners.

2.3 Scaffolding in Language Skills Development and Chinese Language Teaching

Scaffolding has been widely discussed in relation to the teaching of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Across skills, its core pedagogical logic remains the same: to make tasks manageable, visible, and developmentally appropriate while gradually promoting learner independence (Mercer & Fisher, 1992; Van de Pol et al., 2010).

In listening instruction, scaffolding can reduce processing difficulty by activating background knowledge, pre-teaching a limited number of key items, using visuals, segmenting input, and guiding attention through structured questions or information tables (Ahmadi Safa & Beheshti, 2018; Ahmadi Safa & Rozati, 2017; Vandergrift & Goh,

2012). In reading, scaffolding often involves making text structure explicit through previews, genre cues, paragraph-level annotation, and visual organisers, all of which support comprehension and strategic reading (Clark & Graves, 2005; Grabe, 2009; Hadianto et al., 2021). In writing, scaffolded instruction has been shown to support both process and product by combining modelling, deconstruction of texts, guided drafting, language resources, and staged movement toward independent writing (Rababah & Almwajeh, 2018; Wette, 2014). In speaking, scaffolding has been linked to reduced anxiety, improved participation, and greater control over oral production (Adillah, 2019; Zarandi & Rahbar, 2016). These findings collectively suggest that scaffolding is effective across both receptive and productive dimensions of second language learning.

In Chinese language education, however, research on scaffolding remains relatively limited compared with English language teaching. Existing studies have mainly focused on the applicability of scaffolded instruction to vocabulary learning, Chinese characters, oral Chinese, and writing. Wang (2012) argued that scaffolded instruction is compatible with second language vocabulary learning environments, while Liu (2013) found that it can promote active and independent learning among beginning Chinese character learners. Tang (2009) highlighted the role of scaffolding in adjusting questions and tasks to learners' cognitive levels, thereby supporting confidence and language development. In writing instruction, Sun (2019) showed that dynamic cognitive and affective scaffolds can improve both writing performance and motivation. Zheng (2019) further examined scaffolded oral instruction and pointed to both its pedagogical potential and unresolved problems. Rui (2008) proposed several practical scaffolding forms in teaching Chinese as a foreign language, including operational demonstration, immersion, concept organisation, text reconstruction, and reflective cognition, while Sun (2008) incorporated scaffolding throughout oral Chinese teaching models.

Taken together, these studies indicate that scaffolding has substantial promise in Chinese language pedagogy, especially because Chinese presents distinctive challenges in pronunciation, character learning, vocabulary, syntax, and discourse production. At the same time, the literature remains fragmented. Much of the existing work is conceptual, small-scale, or focused on instructional design rather than on teachers' sustained classroom practices. There is still limited evidence concerning how Chinese language teachers actually select, adapt, and evaluate scaffolding strategies in real teaching contexts.

2.4 Chinese Language Education in Thailand and the Research Gap

Chinese language education in Thailand has expanded rapidly since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Thailand in 1975. Economic integration, tourism, cultural exchange, and the strategic importance of bilingual competence have all contributed to growing demand for Chinese language learning (Lertpusit, 2023; Narueporn, 2024; Xue, 2019). Chinese is now widely taught across educational levels in Thailand, and universities such as Chulalongkorn, Thammasat, Kasetsart, and Srinakharinwirot have established Chinese language programmes (Lertpusit, 2023). The

influence of Chinese media platforms and broader regional initiatives has also increased the social and economic value of Chinese proficiency in Thailand (Skaggs et al., 2024).

Despite this growth, the literature consistently points to significant challenges in Thai Chinese language education. These include insufficient teaching resources, uneven teaching quality, inadequate localisation of instructional materials, limited learner autonomy, and a heavy reliance on teacher-centred pedagogy (Sun & Yang, 2024; Wang, 2021). Research also indicates that many Thai learners are highly social and responsive to engaging learning experiences, but may show low confidence, weak learning initiative, and anxiety when facing difficult language tasks or assessment pressure (Wang & Imsamran, 2023). These learner characteristics suggest the value of supportive, interactive, and emotionally sensitive teaching approaches.

Teacher-related issues are equally important. Imported Chinese teachers in Thailand, especially volunteer teachers, often have limited teaching experience, insufficient understanding of Thai learners, and short service periods, all of which constrain continuity and instructional quality (Chen, 2013; Ewe & Min, 2021). Previous studies have also identified classroom management, learner diversity, textbook inadequacy, and the difficulty of adapting Chinese teaching methods to local contexts as persistent concerns (Yue, 2017; Zhang & Li, 2010). These conditions make scaffolding particularly relevant, since scaffolding offers a way to adapt instruction to learner differences, reduce anxiety, and support gradual movement toward independence.

However, research specifically examining scaffolding in Chinese language classrooms in Thailand remains scarce. Existing Thailand-based studies have tended to focus on oral Chinese difficulties, situational teaching, online teaching challenges, or general classroom problems rather than on teachers' scaffolding practices as such (Shen & Chayanuvat, 2025). Although scholars have suggested increasing interaction, using varied teaching methods, and developing more localised materials, there is still limited empirical evidence on what kinds of scaffolding Thai-based Chinese teachers actually use, how frequently they use them, and how they perceive their effectiveness.

This gap is important for both theory and practice. From a theoretical perspective, the Thai context provides an opportunity to examine how scaffolding, as a sociocultural and interactional construct, operates in a non-native Chinese learning environment characterised by multilingualism, large classes, diverse proficiency levels, and uneven resources. From a practical perspective, identifying teachers' scaffolding strategies and perceptions can inform teacher education, material design, and classroom improvement. For this reason, further research is needed to investigate scaffolding practices in Chinese language teaching in Thailand in a more systematic and context-sensitive manner.

3. Material and Methods

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a sequential mixed-methods design to investigate the scaffolding strategies used by native Chinese teachers in Thailand. A mixed-methods approach was

appropriate because it allowed the study to combine the breadth of questionnaire data with the depth of interview data, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' classroom practices and perceptions (Bryman, 2012). The quantitative phase focused on identifying the major types of scaffolding strategies used in Chinese language teaching and examining how frequently these strategies were applied. The qualitative phase was then used to elaborate and interpret the questionnaire findings by exploring teachers' experiences, evaluations, and reflections in greater depth. In this way, the design enabled triangulation across data sources and strengthened the interpretive value of the study.

3.2 Participants and Sampling

The target population consisted of native Chinese-speaking teachers currently teaching Chinese in Thailand. In the quantitative phase, 45 teachers completed the questionnaire. This sample size was considered adequate for a small-scale exploratory study using descriptive statistics in educational research. Participants were recruited through convenience and purposive sampling, primarily via professional contacts, email, and social media invitations. To ensure relevance to the study aims, participants had to meet two inclusion criteria: they had to be native speakers of Chinese and they had to be currently teaching in a Thai school.

In the qualitative phase, 8 teachers were selected from the questionnaire respondents for semi-structured interviews. Interview participants were chosen purposively to reflect diverse teaching contexts and to provide information-rich accounts. The number of interviewees was guided by the principle of data saturation, according to which data collection may stop when no substantially new themes emerge. The interview sample included teachers from different school types, including public and private institutions.

3.3 Instruments

3.3.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to examine the scaffolding strategies used by Chinese language teachers in Thailand. It consisted of three sections. The first section collected demographic and professional information, including school type, years of teaching experience, student level, class size, and the language skills taught. The second section measured teachers' use of scaffolding strategies across six dimensions: cognitive scaffolding, affective scaffolding, peer scaffolding, interactive scaffolding, technological scaffolding, and language scaffolding. Each dimension contained six items, resulting in a total of 36 items. The third section included open-ended questions that invited teachers to provide additional examples and reflections on their scaffolding practices.

The questionnaire was prepared bilingually in Chinese and English. Back-translation was used to ensure semantic equivalence and clarity across the two language versions. This procedure helped reduce ambiguity and improve participants' comprehension of the items.

3.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

To complement the questionnaire data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 8 teachers. The interviews were designed to explore how teachers understood scaffolding, how they applied it in practice, and how they perceived its effectiveness, strengths, and limitations in Chinese language teaching. The interview protocol included 7 guiding questions aligned with the research objectives. To ensure clarity and allow participants to express themselves fully, the interviews were conducted in Chinese, the participants' native language. Each interview lasted approximately 15 to 20 minutes and was conducted either face-to-face or online, depending on participant availability.

3.4 Validity and Reliability

3.4.1 Content Validity

Content validity of the questionnaire and interview protocol was assessed using the Item–Objective Congruence (IOC) method developed by Rovinelli and Hambleton (1977). Three experts in Chinese language teaching and related research were invited to evaluate the consistency between each item and the research objectives. Each item was rated on a three-point scale: +1 for clearly congruent, 0 for uncertain, and -1 for incongruent. An IOC value above 0.67 was considered acceptable. The evaluation results indicated that all questionnaire items achieved acceptable validity, with IOC values meeting or exceeding the required criterion. These results suggested a high degree of consistency between the instrument items and the study objectives.

3.4.2 Reliability

The internal consistency of the questionnaire was examined using Cronbach's alpha. Reliability analysis was conducted for each of the six scaffolding dimensions as well as for the overall instrument. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients were 0.746 for cognitive scaffolding, 0.834 for affective scaffolding, 0.834 for peer scaffolding, 0.895 for interactive scaffolding, 0.800 for technological scaffolding, and 0.858 for language scaffolding. The overall questionnaire yielded an alpha coefficient of 0.953. Since all subscales exceeded the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, the instrument was considered to demonstrate satisfactory to excellent internal consistency.

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, the questionnaire was distributed online to 45 Chinese language teachers in Thailand through Google Forms. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study and assured that their responses would remain confidential and be used solely for academic research. Clear instructions were provided before questionnaire completion, and participation was entirely voluntary.

In the second stage, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 8 selected participants after preliminary analysis of the questionnaire results. Interview appointments were scheduled in advance through email or social media. With

participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were then translated into English for reporting and analysis.

3.6 Data Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative data were analysed separately and then interpreted together. Quantitative questionnaire data were analysed using SPSS 27.0. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were calculated to identify the major scaffolding strategies used by teachers and to determine how frequently each type of scaffolding was employed. Interpretation of mean scores followed the criteria proposed by Best and Kahn (2006), with higher scores indicating more frequent use of a given strategy.

Qualitative interview data were analysed using thematic analysis. After transcription, the interview data were read repeatedly to identify meaningful units related to teachers' scaffolding practices and perceptions. These units were coded and grouped into broader categories, from which recurrent themes were generated. This analytic process made it possible to capture patterns in teachers' experiences while also preserving contextual detail. The qualitative findings were then used to complement and explain the quantitative results.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

This study complied with the ethical principles governing research involving human participants. Ethical approval was granted by the Research Ethics Review Committee of Rangsit University (Project No.: RSU-ERB2025/375.0412). All participants were informed of the study's aims, procedures, and their rights prior to participation. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without penalty.

To protect participants' privacy, no personally identifiable information was reported. All data were anonymised using digital codes and stored securely in password-protected files accessible only to the researcher. Audio recordings and transcripts were used solely for research purposes and will be destroyed after the study in accordance with ethical requirements.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Participant Profile

A total of 45 valid questionnaires were collected from Chinese language teachers working in Thailand. The sample covered a range of school contexts, teaching experience, class sizes, and instructional levels, thereby providing a useful basis for describing scaffolding practices across different teaching situations. See Table 1.

Table 1: Participant characteristics (n = 45)

Variable	Category	n	%
School type*	University	8	17.8
	Secondary school	24	53.3
	Primary school	22	48.9
	Tutoring institution	7	15.6
Main teaching level*	Beginner	23	51.1
	Lower-intermediate	23	51.1
	Intermediate	20	44.4
Years of teaching	< 1 year	1	2.2
	1–3 years	10	22.2
	4–6 years	11	24.4
	7–10 years	10	22.2
	> 10 years	13	28.9
Class size	≤ 10	5	11.1
	11–20	19	42.2
	21–30	13	28.9
	31–40	7	15.6
	≥ 41	1	2.2
Main teaching skills*	Listening	44	97.8
	Speaking	43	95.6
	Reading	38	84.4
	Writing	33	73.3

Note: *Multiple responses were allowed for some categories.

The sample was weighted toward teachers working in primary and secondary schools, and over half reported teaching beginner or lower-intermediate learners. Nearly one-third had more than 10 years of teaching experience. Most teachers taught listening and speaking, while somewhat fewer taught reading and writing.

4.2 Overall Use of Scaffolding Strategies

The questionnaire examined six types of scaffolding strategies: cognitive, affective, peer, interactive, technological, and language scaffolding. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating more frequent use. See Table 2.

Table 2: Overall use of scaffolding strategies

N	Mean	SD	Level
45	3.99	0.64	Often

Overall, teachers reported frequent use of scaffolding strategies in Chinese language teaching (M = 3.99, SD = 0.64). This result suggests that scaffolding formed a regular part of teachers' classroom practice rather than an occasional or peripheral strategy.

4.3 Differences Across Scaffolding Types

Although all six categories were used relatively frequently, their mean scores varied, indicating different levels of reliance across strategy types. See Table 3.

Table 3: Mean scores by scaffolding type

Scaffolding type	N	Mean	SD	Level
Cognitive scaffolding	45	4.00	0.66	Often
Affective scaffolding	45	4.19	0.68	Often
Peer scaffolding	45	3.55	0.95	Often
Interactive scaffolding	45	4.10	0.79	Often
Technological scaffolding	45	3.85	0.87	Often
Language scaffolding	45	4.27	0.72	Always

Language scaffolding had the highest mean score ($M = 4.27$), making it the only category reaching the “always” level. Affective scaffolding ($M = 4.19$) and interactive scaffolding ($M = 4.10$) were also highly used, followed by cognitive scaffolding ($M = 4.00$). Technological scaffolding was used moderately often ($M = 3.85$), whereas peer scaffolding had the lowest mean score ($M = 3.55$), although it still fell within the “often” range.

These results indicate that teachers relied most heavily on direct linguistic support, including simplifying language, repeating key vocabulary, and adjusting input to students’ proficiency levels. By contrast, peer-based support appeared less central in teachers’ routine practice.

4.4 Interview Participants

To elaborate the survey findings, 8 teachers were selected for semi-structured interviews. They represented different school types, learner levels, and teaching experience. See Table 4.

Table 4: Interview participants

Participant	School type	Teaching level	Experience
T1	Secondary	Beginner, lower-intermediate, intermediate	> 10 years
T2	Primary	Lower-intermediate, intermediate	> 10 years
T3	Primary	Beginner	1–3 years
T4	Secondary	Lower-intermediate, intermediate	7–10 years
T5	Secondary	Intermediate	7–10 years
T6	Primary	Beginner	4–6 years
T7	University	Intermediate	> 10 years
T8	Primary	Lower-intermediate	4–6 years

4.5 Themes from the Interview Data

Thematic analysis of the interviews generated six major themes corresponding to the six scaffolding categories identified in the questionnaire.

4.5.1 Cognitive Scaffolding

Teachers frequently described using demonstrations, gestures, pictures, flashcards, simple drawings, and contextualised activities to reduce learners’ cognitive load and support comprehension. These strategies were especially common in pronunciation

teaching, vocabulary presentation, and beginner-level instruction. Some teachers also reported using hands-on or situational tasks to help students understand meaning through action and context. Overall, the interview data showed that cognitive scaffolding was used to break complex content into manageable steps and to make abstract language forms more concrete.

4.5.2 Affective Scaffolding

Affective scaffolding emerged as an important dimension of classroom practice. Teachers reported encouraging students with praise, avoiding public correction, simplifying tasks for shy learners, and using rewards such as stickers, tokens, or certificates. Many interviewees stressed the importance of reducing anxiety and building confidence, especially for students who were reluctant to speak Chinese in class. These findings align with the relatively high questionnaire mean for affective scaffolding and suggest that emotional support was viewed as essential for sustaining participation.

4.5.3 Peer Scaffolding

Peer scaffolding was described less consistently than other forms of support. Some teachers actively organised group work, role-play, peer explanation, and cooperative tasks, arguing that students often learn effectively from classmates. Others reported limited use of peer scaffolding because of students' young age, low language proficiency, time constraints, or classroom management challenges. Thus, while teachers generally recognised the value of peer support, its implementation depended heavily on classroom conditions. This explains why peer scaffolding received the lowest quantitative mean score.

4.5.4 Interactive Scaffolding

Interactive scaffolding was widely reflected in teachers' descriptions of classroom discourse. Teachers commonly used guiding questions, follow-up questions, comprehension checks, and step-by-step prompting to help students express themselves and understand texts. Several interviewees described questioning as a central instructional technique, particularly for reviewing prior knowledge and extending learners' responses. These qualitative findings indicate that interactional support was deeply embedded in classroom practice, even if its variety was not fully captured by the questionnaire scores.

4.5.5 Technological Scaffolding

Teachers generally viewed technology as a useful but supplementary form of support. Frequently mentioned tools included PowerPoint, YouTube videos, Wordwall, Quizlet, Google Classroom, and short-video platforms. Technology was primarily used to present content more vividly, provide extra practice, and increase student engagement. However, its use was uneven across classrooms due to differences in student age, equipment availability, and school infrastructure. Thus, technological scaffolding was

seen as valuable when conditions allowed, but not equally accessible in all teaching contexts.

4.5.6 Language Scaffolding

Language scaffolding was the most prominent theme in the interviews and strongly supported the quantitative finding that it was the most frequently used strategy. Teachers reported slowing down their speech, simplifying sentence structures, repeating key vocabulary, paraphrasing instructions, pre-teaching important words, and adjusting language to students' proficiency levels. Many also reported using Thai or English strategically when students could not understand Chinese explanations, particularly at beginner level or in urgent classroom management situations. Teachers generally considered language scaffolding indispensable because it directly supported students' comprehension and participation.

4.6 Integrated Summary of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The quantitative and qualitative findings were broadly consistent. Both data sources showed that language scaffolding was the most frequently used form of support and that peer scaffolding was comparatively less common. The interviews also clarified how teachers enacted cognitive, affective, interactive, and technological scaffolding in practice. In particular, the qualitative data revealed that teachers used a flexible combination of verbal, emotional, visual, and interactional support depending on student level and classroom context.

Table 5: Integrated comparison of quantitative and qualitative findings

Scaffolding type	Questionnaire finding	Interview finding	Overall interpretation
Cognitive	Frequently used	Demonstrations, gestures, visuals, contextualised tasks	Strong convergence
Affective	Frequently used	Praise, rewards, confidence-building, reduced anxiety	Strong convergence
Peer	Lowest mean among six types	Valued but constrained by age, proficiency, time, and management	Convergence, with contextual explanation
Interactive	Frequently used	Questioning, follow-up prompts, dialogue, comprehension checks	Broad convergence; interviews show greater depth
Technological	Moderately frequent	Used as a support tool when resources are available	Convergence
Language	Highest mean; always used	Simplification, repetition, paraphrasing, strategic L1 support	Strongest convergence

4.7 Summary of Results

The findings show that Chinese language teachers in Thailand made substantial use of scaffolding in their teaching. Language scaffolding emerged as the most dominant strategy, followed by affective and interactive scaffolding, while peer scaffolding was

used least frequently. The interview data further showed that teachers viewed scaffolding as a flexible and adaptive process rather than a fixed technique. In practice, they adjusted support according to students' proficiency, age, confidence, and classroom conditions. Overall, the results suggest that scaffolding plays a central role in Chinese language teaching in Thailand, but that different forms of scaffolding are shaped by different pedagogical and contextual demands.

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made for practice and future research.

First, school administrators in Thailand should provide stronger institutional support for scaffolding-oriented Chinese language teaching. This includes offering targeted professional development on scaffolding, classroom interaction, and differentiated instruction, as well as improving access to teaching resources such as multimedia equipment, digital platforms, and locally relevant materials. Schools may also establish teacher learning communities in which Chinese language teachers can share classroom practices and reflect on how scaffolding can be adapted to different learner profiles and instructional settings.

Second, Chinese language teachers should adopt scaffolding as a flexible and responsive pedagogical approach rather than a fixed set of techniques. In practice, teachers are encouraged to combine multiple forms of scaffolding according to students' proficiency, age, confidence, and classroom conditions. Language scaffolding should remain central, particularly through simplifying teacher talk, repeating key items, paraphrasing input, and strategically using learners' first language when necessary. At the same time, affective scaffolding should be strengthened to reduce anxiety and support participation, especially among younger or less confident learners. Where conditions permit, teachers may also expand the use of peer and technological scaffolding, since both were viewed positively by participants even though they were used less frequently in practice.

Third, future studies should examine scaffolding in Chinese language education in Thailand through broader and more diverse samples. Comparative research across regions, school types, and teacher backgrounds would help test the transferability of the present findings. Future work could also incorporate classroom observation, teaching experiments, or longitudinal designs to capture how scaffolding is enacted over time and how it affects learner engagement and language development. Such research would deepen understanding of scaffolding not only as a reported teaching practice but also as an interactional process in real classrooms.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated the use of scaffolding strategies by Chinese language teachers in Thailand through a sequential mixed-methods design. The findings showed that teachers employed multiple forms of scaffolding, including cognitive, affective, peer, interactive, technological, and language scaffolding. Among these, language scaffolding emerged as the most frequently used strategy, followed by affective and interactive scaffolding, while peer and technological scaffolding were used less often. Despite this variation, teachers generally viewed scaffolding as effective in helping students understand lesson content, build confidence, and participate more actively in classroom learning.

The qualitative findings further demonstrated that scaffolding in Thai Chinese language classrooms is adaptive and context-sensitive. Teachers did not treat scaffolding as a uniform teaching technique; rather, they adjusted support according to learner level, class size, available resources, and time constraints. They also emphasised that scaffolding should be gradually reduced as students become more independent, while still being maintained for learners who continue to need support. This reflects a clear understanding of the temporary and developmental nature of scaffolding.

Overall, the study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence from the under-researched context of Chinese language education in Thailand. It shows that scaffolding plays a central role in supporting language teaching in this setting, while also highlighting the contextual factors that shape how different forms of support are implemented. These findings offer practical implications for teacher development and classroom improvement, and they also provide a basis for future research on scaffolding in Chinese as a foreign language education.

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The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study, that no vital features of the study have been omitted, and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. These data are not publicly available due to privacy reasons.

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Competing Interests Statement

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

About the Author(s)

Xianling Shao is currently based in New Zealand under a Working Holiday Visa. She received her Master of Education in Bilingual Education and English Language Teaching from Rangsit University, Thailand. Her research interests include Chinese language teaching, scaffolding strategies, bilingual education, and second language acquisition.

Anchalee Chavanuvat, Ed.D., is an Assistant Professor at Suryadhep Teachers College, Rangsit University, Thailand. She received her Doctor of Education degree from Charles Sturt University, Australia. Her areas of expertise include Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), second language acquisition, action research, problem-based learning, and qualitative research with Grounded Theory. She has participated in various international academic training programs and educational study visits in countries including Sweden, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Australia.

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