



# Problem Analysis and Countermeasures Based on the Chinese Language Acquisition of Preschool-Aged Chinese in the Philippines

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**Abstract.** Presently, Chinese language education in the Philippines is undergoing transformation and development. In order to promote the process of Chinese language education in the Philippines, the author understands the current status of Chinese language learning among preschool-aged based on the interview. Meanwhile, by analyzing the challenges faced by Filipino Chinese preschool overseas Chinese in Learning Chinese, the author puts forward effective countermeasures. The main body of this paper is separated into two sections, the challenges of Chinese language acquisition among Filipino preschoolers and the countermeasures for the development of Chinese language acquisition among Filipino preschoolers. By conducting voice interviews with Chinese parents in the Philippines, this study assessed the current state of Chinese language learning among preschool-aged Chinese in the Philippines. The author discovered that the Chinese language learning resources for preschool-aged Chinese in the Philippines are insufficient in terms of home, school, and online resources, and there is a shortage of language communication environments. In response to these issues, the author analyzed and proposed that the most direct way to improve Chinese learning among preschool-aged Filipino Chinese is to provide them with a conducive Chinese learning environment and Chinese communicative environment in terms of online resources, school education, and family environment.

**Keywords:** Preschool-aged · Overseas Chinese in the Philippines · Chinese Language Study

## 1 Introduction

With the rise of China's comprehensive national strength and international influence, an increasing number of Filipino Overseas Chinese understand the utility of learning Chinese. At the same time, it has shown a trend toward younger age in Chinese learning [1]. Since the implementation of the Filipinization Policy, local Chinese language education has also been affected, showing a gradual decline. In addition to the limitations and impacts of national laws and regulations, many practical problems need to be addressed in Chinese language schools, parents, as well as students themselves. In terms of the acquisition of a second language by preschoolers, the analysis of the status of Chinese

language learning among Preschool Overseas Chinese in the Philippines and the creation of countermeasures are of major importance to the international Chinese language education industry. It is also of great significance to the development of Chinese education in the Philippines.

Regarding the study of Chinese language learning among preschool-aged overseas Chinese, Zhao Xinyan compared the language learning situation of domestic children with that of overseas Chinese children. He concluded that the Chinese learning of overseas Chinese children lacked initiative, meanwhile, he argued that internal factors such as children's creativity, keen observation, and vivid imagination must be given full play in the teaching process [2]. Li Jingna and Tan Yalin presented a targeted Chinese classroom teaching plan with Indonesian Chinese youngsters as their subjects of study [3, 4]. Jin Hengqin and Zhang Xingyue focused on the benefits and drawbacks of Chinese learning for preschool-aged overseas Chinese children and studied the impact of the family environment on the Chinese learning of overseas Chinese children [5, 6].

Although the academic community has paid considerable attention to the study of the Chinese language learning of overseas Chinese children, there is a lack of research on the acquisition of the Chinese language by preschool Overseas Chinese in the Philippines. In order to promote the tenor of Chinese language education in the Philippines, this paper will investigate the Chinese language learning situation of preschool overseas Chinese in the Philippines, analyze problems and give suggestions.

## **2 Method**

### **2.1 Semi-structured Voice Interview**

A semi-structured voice interview, with pre-prepared open-ended questions, was conducted to inquire about the current learning situation of their children, including some basic information (age, language level), the learning environment, learning resources, learning outcomes, and parents' expectations of their children among the Filipino preschool-aged Chinese. Each interview lasted ten to fifteen minutes.

### **2.2 Data Collection**

The study sample consisted of 16 preschool Overseas Chinese parents in the Philippines, 11 of whom were female and 5 of whom were male, and all were between 32 and 38 years old. The basic information of the interviewees is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Basic information of the interviewees

Interviewee	Occupation	Age of interviewees' children(s)	Gender of interviewees' children(s)
A sixth-generation immigration	Self-employ	2, 5	F, M
B fourth-generation immigration	merchant	2	F
C sixth-generation immigration	Self-employ	3	F
D fifth-generation immigration	Teacher	3	M
E third-generation immigration	Self-employ	1, 4	F, F
F sixth-generation immigration	Teacher	6	M
G sixth-generation immigration	Nurse	6, 3, 1	F, M, M
H fourth-generation immigration	Secretary	5	M, F
I fourth-generation immigration	Chemist	4	M
J sixth-generation immigration	Self-employ	3	F
K seventh-generation immigration	lawyer	2	M, M
L second-generation immigration	Self-employ	2	F
M third-generation immigration	Baker	5	F
N fifth-generation immigration	Self-employ	2	M
O third-generation immigration	Self-employ	4	F
P sixth-generation immigration	Nurse	4	F
Q second-generation immigration	Dentist	5	F
R second-generation immigration	lawyer	4, 1	M, F

### 3 Result

This research examines the current state of Chinese language learning among preschool-aged Chinese Filipinos from two perspectives, learning channels, learning content, as well as some of the challenges that exist in their correspondence. Currently, the primary channels for Chinese language acquisition among Filipino Overseas Chinese of preschool age include online resources, home learning resource, and school education resources. The primary learning contents are derived from both online and offline sources.

#### 3.1 Chinese Language Resources in the Philippines Among Chinese Preschoolers

##### 3.1.1 Home Learning Resource

The home environment is one of the most influential external influences on the attitude and efficacy of Chinese language acquisition among Filipino Chinese children. During their free time, some parents will teach their children a few simple Chinese phrases or include Chinese in their daily interactions. When speaking Chinese to their children, parents follow unconsciously the “i+1” principle of language input or comprehensible input as proposed by Krashen [7], which simplifies everyday language with “mommy language” in order to provide children with understandable language that can be increased in difficulty. The infant learns to speak normally by comprehending the material and so developing linguistic expertise. The language has short phrases, simple grammar, and a limited variety of forms. Filipino children are exposed to clear, simple, slow speech from those around them, including Filipino maids and family members, as well as non-verbal behaviors such as rich emotions and gestures, which can reflect the “i+1” care language and aid in the development of Filipino children’s Chinese language skills. In addition, parents employ non-verbal strategies, such as contextualization or images, to comprehend Chinese, such as reading Chinese stories and recognizing picture cards before bedtime.

##### 3.1.2 Internet Resources

Against the backdrop of “Internet Plus,” the growth of online Chinese language instruction is maturing. However, some platforms merely assess the instructional materials according to the level of difficulty. Currently, private online Chinese teaching organizations such as Panda English, Lingo Bus, 51KID, etc. are the primary providers of online preschool Chinese education. The majority of the instruction is one-to-one or one-to-many, and the goal of teaching Chinese is accomplished through interaction with students over the Internet.

Online teaching can provide a wealth of teaching resources, make full use of online technology to show pictures and animations related to the topic, create beautiful slides, and realize interesting interactions, such as infiltrating Chinese festivals, customs, and other traditional cultures in situational teaching, and setting up classroom discussions and pop-up interactions, which have the added benefit of attracting the attention of Chinese children. However, there are certain limitations to online instruction. During the interviews, parents stated that some teachers merely move the slides mechanically,

and preschool students have problems maintaining their concentration in front of the computer screen, causing them to be “unable to remain still” and influencing the typical class topic.

In addition to obtaining specialized Chinese lessons via the Internet, Chinese preschoolers in the Philippines also learn the language by viewing Chinese cartoons and listening to Chinese children’s songs. This method of learning can improve listening and speaking abilities while allowing students to appreciate Chinese culture and perspective because of the simple vocabulary and sluggish speaking tempo of cartoons. According to the interviewed parents, this method is beneficial for some of the younger pupils who are reluctant to enroll in Chinese classes. Two parents said that their children were eager to learn Chinese through cartoons in a short amount of time and requested to view Chinese cartoons.

### 3.1.3 School Educational Resources

School education is one of the most complete and methodical means for Overseas Chinese students to study Chinese. Local Chinese schools in the Philippines provide structured instruction from kindergarten through high school, although the efficacy of Chinese education is not positive, primarily due to a lack of teachers and a lack of teaching quality assurance.

Regarding teachers, it is difficult for schools to supply teachers with reliable and long-term lesson plans and teaching materials. These educators do not work for more than a year due to the epidemic and other circumstances. In addition, according to Shen Wen [8], the average education and qualifications of teachers are low. The sample survey of Filipino Chinese language instructors reveals that the quality of Filipino Chinese language teachers is generally low, with over 60 percent of them having only a secondary school certificate and a low teaching level, and there is little possibility for improvement through training.

## 3.2 Teaching Content of Chinese Language Acquisition Among Chinese Preschoolers in the Philippines

Teaching content is the material and information with which teachers and students engage during the teaching process in order to jointly serve the next generation of teaching. The extent to which the content matches the learners’ level and receptivity impact the learning effect of the learners [9]. There are both online and offline components of Chinese language acquisition among abroad Chinese pre-schoolers [10].

Online instruction does not require a stable textbook, and the instructional content, which includes language aspects, verbal abilities, and cultural information, is rich and frequently updated. The choice of textbooks for teaching is entirely up to the teacher.

Offline instruction is mostly focused on classroom instruction, and the majority of teaching materials are printed Chinese textbooks. Popular textbooks include *Developing Chinese*, *The Road to Success*, *Boya Chinese*, *New Practical Chinese Textbook*, and *the well-liked textbook among overseas Chinese youngsters*, *Ma Liping Chinese* [11]. In compliance with the criteria of the HSK curriculum, the content of the paper edition is more rigorous and organized more methodically; it was mostly authored by relevant

professionals. The topic is taught at the proper level of difficulty for the pupils, and they are required to acquire the four abilities to listen, speak, read, and write. The curriculum consists of reading, listening, speaking, and general lessons. In addition to textbooks, teachers and parents can assist Chinese preschoolers in reading graded books appropriate for Chinese children and construct reading programmes according to the intellectual and cognitive development stages and psychological development of Chinese children of varying ages [12]. The amount of vocabulary on a single page for Overseas Chinese children is typically between 0 and 3 words, with no more than one grammatical knowledge point, and the content is moderately difficult to comprehend and progressive and can be combined with illustrations containing traditional Chinese cultural elements to attract children and aid in learning Chinese.

### **3.3 Chinese Learning Difficulties of Filipino Overseas Chinese in Preschool**

The main problem with home learning is that parents cannot guarantee that their children receive sufficient Chinese information and practice owing to time restrictions and restricted teaching techniques. In this setting, preschool-aged Chinese children can only acquire a few simple conversation words, animal words, and object words, and they can only comprehend a few simple Chinese instructions.

Online learning is the most accessible way for preschool Chinese in the Philippines, however, there are several concerns that need to be addressed. First, it is evident that learning Chinese online is not an appropriate method for children aged one to six. A large part of the reason comes from the teachers, some of whose teaching level and teaching style are not suitable for preschoolers, which directly affects the attention of learners. Secondly, the acquisition of Chinese through ready-made Chinese cartoons and songs is very positive. However, there is one of the most important issues that this article aims to address, namely the communicative environment. When confronted with Filipino maids and other kindergarten children, the child's Chinese output was invalid to the recipient, and the long periods of ineffectual communication significantly lowered the learner's motivation to study.

The problems in school education are as follows. Regarding the teaching process and tactics, the majority of teachers use the syntactic interpretation strategy and practice language points mechanically, with few communicative activities, making it difficult for students to adapt what they learn in class to real-world communication. Additionally, short-term teaching and irregular teachers make it impossible to unite teaching materials, and pupils lack a set and unified textbook for comprehensive learning. In addition, due to the lack of specialization and standardization of teachers, teachers frequently utilize Minan dialect or English to explain what pupils do not understand, and the atmosphere of learning Chinese in the classroom is not good enough, with students lacking motivation and enthusiasm in the subject.

Presently, parents choose the one-to-one online teaching format for children, but the learning effect is not optimal. This is primarily because the teaching content of the word teaching accounts for a large proportion of the teaching, sentence drill is almost nonexistent, and teachers do not develop personalized teaching according to the different situations of each student, but instead use network technology means to increase the form, the content lacks the target.

## 4 Optimization Suggestions for Overseas Chinese Teaching and Learning in Preschools in the Philippines

External and internal factors contribute to the difficulty of Chinese language acquisition among preschool-aged Overseas Chinese in the Philippines. External factors include the government and social organizations not paying sufficient attention to this crucial period of Chinese language acquisition for preschoolers, providing few effective channels for Chinese language acquisition, and failing to strengthen the standardization and professionalism of teachers. The aforementioned two factors are the primary reasons why Chinese language acquisition for children at this level has stalled or made little long-term progress. This research will provide countermeasures from three perspectives, family environment, network resources, and social institutions, based on the analysis of the status quo and its causes presented previously.

### 4.1 Unlock the Potential of Family Education

The family environment comprises parents and friends who speak Chinese at home, the encouragement and timely teaching of the Chinese language to children, and the formation of children's Chinese identity. Parents who purposefully create a conducive home environment for learning Chinese can encourage toddlers' interest in learning Chinese, so improving their motivation and attitude toward learning Chinese. Motivation is the inner behavioral drive that inspires someone to do something, frequently expressed as the desire to exert effort in order to achieve a particular objective. According to Liuxun's interviews with fellow Filipino Chinese, preschool-aged Chinese are not adequately motivated to learn Chinese, as evidenced by their lack of attentiveness during Chinese classes [13]. Chinese is neither a native nor the first language for Overseas Chinese preschoolers; rather, it is a second language with a unique character. This unique quality is that the Chinese are not only a means of communication for the Chinese population in the Philippines, but also a means of describing the identity and traditions of the Chinese nation. Consequently, strengthening the sense of ethnic identification of Chinese preschoolers from the Philippines can increase their intrinsic motivation to acquire Chinese.

On the other hand, caregivers can increase the duration of Chinese language acquisition by speaking Chinese with youngsters. Language acquisition is enhanced by repeated practice and application. According to my interviews with Filipino-Chinese families, many parents who want their children to learn Chinese deliver bedtime stories and identify images in Chinese. This is a good way of teaching children some common Chinese terms and fostering their appreciation for the language. In addition to children's books and simple instruction, parents can also include Chinese conversations in their daily communication to increase the language environment for speaking Chinese, or intentionally apply some of the common sentences their child has learned in the course to functional communication [14]. The "natural acquisition" in the family setting provides authentic language materials and a communicative context; therefore, establishing a reasonable language environment in the family can significantly improve the effectiveness of learning Chinese in preschool. Consequently, having a suitable linguistic environment at home can significantly enhance the learning effect of Chinese for Filipino preschoolers.

According to my discussions with Filipino-Chinese families, many parents who believe their children should learn Chinese tell bedtime stories and interpret pictures in Chinese before retiring. This is a good way of teaching children some common Chinese terms and fostering their appreciation for the language. In addition to children's books and straightforward education, guardians can add a few Chinese discussions to their everyday correspondence to build the language climate for speaking Chinese, or deliberately apply a portion of the standard sentences learned to practical correspondence after comprehending what their child has learned in class. The "inherent security" in the family environment provides authentic language materials and an open environment; therefore, developing a decent language climate in the family can considerably enhance the learning effect of preschool Chinese. In this way, providing a solid language environment at home can significantly increase the learning impact of Chinese for preschool-aged Filipinos.

## 4.2 Utilize Network Resources

Regarding the scenario and issues faced when Chinese preschoolers utilize online resources and online acquisition channels, the following modifications might be done.

First, raise the teaching bar for online instructors and develop regular assessment criteria. Teachers of Chinese as a foreign language represent the image of China to some extent. In addition to the need to increase the quality of instruction, strict requirements for teachers include the need to better express the voice of China. Online teachers must have strong Chinese language skills, fluency with computers and other technical tools, the capacity to personalize their lessons to the unique needs of each student, an awareness of Chinese culture, etc. Relevant educational institutions should raise the threshold for admittance when examining the qualifications of online teachers, and perform ongoing training and assessment in order to quickly adapt to contemporary teaching technologies.

Second, the usage of multimedia teaching resources should be reasonable in order to encourage student participation, and POWERPOINT should be provided in a variety of formats while considering their practicality and relevance. However, excessive flair may cause pupils to focus on the animated form rather than the Chinese language itself, detracting from the effectiveness of the instruction; teachers should strike a balance. During the teaching process, teachers should consider the physical and mental developmental characteristics of preschoolers. Rather than relying solely on multimedia resources and POWERPOINT, they should create interactive online forms, add dialogues, and ask simple questions to enliven the classroom environment [15].

Again, establish the reasonable instructional topic and employ flexible teaching approaches. The teaching process is dynamic, so teachers prepare an effective lesson plan before to class, can make appropriate extensions and supplements based on the condition of the students, and can make revisions based on the environment of the class and students' acceptance. Teachers should be sympathetic to students' interests when instructing, and when appropriate, they should impart their understanding of Chinese, such as the basic and derived meanings of a word, as well as its polyphonic and morphological connotations. Utilize "heuristic" instruction to stimulate the initiative and interest of children in learning Chinese.



### 4.3 Set Up Professional Chinese Learning Institutions

In response to the drawbacks of offline learning, the author asserts that effective learning input also requires a decent language environment for learners to communicate. Therefore, establishing social institutions for preschoolers' early Chinese education is a solution.

This study discovered that there are no local educational institutions or schools for preschoolers to learn Chinese, and that school instruction and online resources do not match the needs of parents for their children to learn Chinese proficiently. The Philippine government or private institutions may follow China's lead in establishing early learning facilities for toddlers to facilitate Chinese language instruction.

It is vital to build early education facilities that are suited for preschoolers to learn Chinese, as well as a new teaching methodology that fulfills the features of Chinese language acquisition for preschoolers abroad. Consider the features and benefits of Chinese preschoolers for language acquisition. Physically, their ability to imitate language, short-term memory, and sensory capacities are much superior to those of adults learning a second language. However, their cognitive system is still under development, and in terms of acceptance, Chinese is comparable to their native tongue. Second, preschool-aged Chinese are significantly less influenced by their mother tongue in terms of phonological proficiency than adults [16]. Adults learning a second language are always unable to speak phonetically, and it is difficult to overcome the transfer impact of the first language's phonetics, even with extensive study. Again, language cannot be separated from culture, and the identity of Chinese children makes them influenced by Chinese cultural values and moral concepts, and ways of thinking since they were young in their families, so they implicitly understand Chinese cultural connotations, and the understanding of the target language culture is extremely beneficial to the mastery of the target language. Consequently, the objective and task of teaching Chinese preschoolers are to develop their verbal skills and verbal communication skills through the acquisition of Chinese vocabulary, grammar, and other basic language knowledge, as well as through the practice of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, so that they can use Chinese for communication purposes.

On the basis of an analysis of the features and motivations of Chinese preschoolers, it is proposed that early education institutes for Chinese children adhere to the following concepts. First, "listening comes first." Preschoolers acquire language primarily through imitation and application, a characteristic that shows the auditory strengths of this age group. Moreover, children should not be subjected to excessive learning pressure. If they focus on the four skills of listening, reading and writing in stages, they can reduce the pressure while bringing a sense of accomplishment. Therefore, teachers of Chinese children can employ more listening and speaking instruction and suitably delay reading and writing instruction.

The second type of interaction is "communicative interaction." The objective of learning Chinese in early childhood is to communicate and use the language, not to acquire language information. Therefore, teachers should utilize the 'Situational Approach', 'Communicative Approach', and 'Task-based Teaching Approach' to give a variety of real-life settings and to master common functional phrases, so that students may apply what they learn in the classroom in real-world situations. The interaction

between teachers and students is improved, as is the contact between students. Young children are not suited to tedious mechanical drills, and a classroom that is lively and engaging is more likely to hold their interest and attention.

The identification of overseas “Chinese” imparts on preschoolers a “Chinese temperament” derived from their familial upbringing. Despite the fact that Chinese children’s native language is not Chinese, these Chinese families place a high value on the transmission of Chinese culture, and they continue to utilize Chinese manners and customs to force the next generation to master Chinese [16]. Therefore, it is vital to incorporate cultural content into Chinese language instruction for preschoolers, whose comprehension of Chinese cultural implications is more accurate than that of non-Chinese individuals. It is possible to combine the teaching of culture and linguistic points by emphasizing communicative culture and introducing intellectual culture progressively through communicative culture.

## 5 Conclusion

It differs from teaching Chinese as a foreign language to adults, and the preschool years are physiologically and psychologically crucial for Chinese language acquisition. The current status of Chinese language learning among Overseas Chinese preschoolers in the Philippines has not met the standards and expectations of Chinese families regarding the Chinese language learning of their children.

From the perspective of learning resources, there are three learning resources for Filipino preschool-aged Chinese which is online resources, school education, and the home environment. The learning content mainly comes from offline teaching mode and online teaching mode. At present, there are some problems both in the learning resources and contents of preschool overseas Chinese in the Philippines.

Online resources have the problems of poor targeting and interactivity of one-on-one lessons, while school education mainly has the problems of unstable teachers and low quality of teaching. Children’s exposure to the Chinese language mainly comes from Filipino maids or their parents’ families, and the family environment for speaking Chinese is not rich enough. Under such circumstances, preschoolers can only understand elementary Chinese instructions and cannot effectively master the language.

In terms of learning content, offline classes are primarily based on textbooks, but due to the instability of teachers, the textbooks are frequently changed and there is no fixed and systematic learning plan, and there are few textbooks for Chinese children; online classes are primarily one-on-one, but there is little sentence practise, which is not conducive to the development of communication skills. Due to diverse motivations, learning channels, and learning contents, the current learning situation and learning level of Filipino preschool-aged Chinese learners are distinct, and we should pay attention to the existence of these variances.

For the current situation of Chinese language learning among preschool-aged Chinese, the author proposes development strategies from three perspectives, the cultivation of the family environment, the use of online resources, and the establishment of social institutions. The author believed that families should pay attention to the inheritance of Chinese culture, attempt to create a better language environment for their children to speak Chinese, and assist their children in learning simple reading and writing. In addition, online teaching should overcome its deficiencies in three ways, increasing the teaching threshold of teachers, leveraging multimedia resources fairly, and employing flexible teaching methods to provide decent learning resources for preschool Oversea Chinese. In order to provide ideas for the development of Chinese language education for preschool-aged Chinese in the Philippines, the author proposes that early education institutions should adhere to the three principles of “listening and speaking, communicative interaction, and cultural integration” based on an analysis of the physical and mental characteristics of preschool-aged Chinese and the purpose of Chinese language learning. The purpose is to offer suggestions for the development of Chinese language education for preschoolers.

However, based on the problems existing in Chinese learning among Chinese preschoolers in the Philippines, the author proposes ways to improve Chinese learning. Among them, the construction of Chinese early education institutions in the Philippines needs further research and development by scholars according to the actual situation.

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