



## A Case Study of the Teaching Experience of Filipino and Chinese Teachers in a Chinese Elementary School

Genesis Balongkit Naparan,\* Marie Rose A. Apao

Saint Columban College, Pagadian City, Philippines

\*Correspondence author: [genesisbnaparan@gmail.com](mailto:genesisbnaparan@gmail.com)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21580/jieed.v4i1.20826>

Received: 2024-04-14, Revised: 2024-05-30,

Accepted: 2024-05-31, Published: 2024-05-31

### Abstract

This study examined teachers' teaching experiences in an elementary school in China who engaged Chinese and Filipino students in English classes. A qualitative multiple-case study design was employed to explore teachers' experiences handling learners. Using a purposive sampling technique, data was collected from 10 teachers with experience working with students in Lam-an, Ozamiz City, Philippines. The data collection involved in-depth interviews with teachers categorized into two groups: Case 1, consisting of Filipino teachers, and Case 2, comprising Chinese teachers. The data encompassed four main categories: methods of class management in Chinese schools, student responses to classroom management, challenges faced by teachers in student management, and strategies employed by teachers to overcome these challenges. The findings revealed that teachers utilized diverse strategies to effectively instruct Chinese students, encountering challenges such as language barriers and managing a varied student body. Additionally, the teachers made efforts to understand their students better, provide necessary reinforcement to spark student interest and implement teaching strategies tailored to the needs of their students. The study concluded that while managing students in a Chinese school is challenging, witnessing students learn and grow despite these difficulties is ultimately rewarding for the teachers.

**Keywords:** *Chinese school, Chinese teacher, Filipino teacher, teaching*

### Introduction

The term "Chinese school systems" describes educational institutions where promoting Chinese national or cultural identity is central (Lee, 2019). It has been widely acknowledged that state agencies in China's school systems are pivotal in driving reforms that improve student educational outcomes (Tucker, 2019). The



Chinese school system is visible in many parts of the world, as many countries have Chinese communities. Thus, Chinese education is also visible in those places.

In the Philippines, Chinese Filipino schools have played a significant role as an essential partner of the government in the primary education system since the first Chinese school was established in the country in 1899. Prior to the enactment of the Filipinization law in the 1970s, Chinese Filipino schools actively educated their students about the rich Chinese cultural legacy of the Philippines (See & See, 2019). In the contemporary context, numerous Chinese schools in the Philippines are educating Chinese students in the country. Consequently, there is a consistent demand for Chinese teachers in these institutions (Pamintuan, 2021). Chinese schools play a pivotal role in the Chinese community in the Philippines. They provide a structured environment for students to learn Mandarin, enabling them to reach their full potential and foster cultural awareness. For learning to occur, students must be engaged and motivated to learn Mandarin. This assists students in reaching their full potential and promoting cultural awareness. Literacy in Chinese has been a concern for educators. They have identified the need to improve learning materials to improve language literacy (Adil et al., 2020). Additionally, students must learn Mandarin as it is their primary language (Codó & Sunyol, 2019). Consequently, educational institutions in the Philippines that cater to Chinese students seek to assist these students in navigating academic challenges (Bantugan, 2022).

The city of Ozamis, Misamis Occidental, Philippines, also boasts a Chinese school. It was established in 1936 and has since provided a supportive environment for Chinese students, employing Chinese and Filipino teachers to ensure the well-being of these students. The non-sectarian, private high school provides education for both sexes and prepares them for further education. This is achieved by offering general education and foreign language in preschool, grade, junior high, and senior high schools. The school's mission is to holistically form the whole person by instilling good values, acquiring knowledge and skills to pursue academic excellence, propagating Filipino and Chinese heritage, and promoting social awareness. This is done so that each student becomes a potential leader and influential member of his family, community, and country.

The existing literature has not extensively addressed the experiences of Filipino and Chinese teachers employed in a Chinese school. Consequently, this study aimed to examine the classroom management strategies employed by these teachers, the responses of learners to these strategies, and the challenges and coping strategies of teachers in teaching Chinese students.

This research aimed to explore the experiences of selected teachers from Chinese schools in the District of Misamis Occidental, Division of Ozamiz City, during the 2022-2023 academic year. In particular, the study aimed to examine how

teachers describe their teaching experiences in teaching Filipino and Chinese learners, as well as to identify the challenges they face in achieving key result areas and to examine how they address them.

### **Methods**

The researchers employed a qualitative approach, conducting a case study based on the methodology outlined by Merriam (1998). The study took place in Lam-an, Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental, Philippines, focusing on a Chinese elementary school that serves both Chinese and Filipino students, with a teaching staff comprising Chinese and Filipino teachers. Specifically, the study involved ten teachers from an elementary school in Lam-an, Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental, who had prior experience teaching at a Chinese school.

The researchers were the main instrument of this study, aided by interview guide questions to gather some data from the participants. The semi-structured interview guide was used to explore the participants' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about the phenomenon being studied through open-ended questions. The participants were interviewed using an interview guide. The guide included open-ended questions about their experiences in teaching Chinese and Filipino students. The researchers also explored the participants' strategies and challenges and their approaches to addressing them.

The data were analyzed after each interview was conducted. This process began with the first interview and continued throughout the data collection phase. Case Study 1: The participants in this study were designated FTP 1, FTP 2, FTP 3, FTP 4, and FTP 5. These Filipino teachers have experience teaching Chinese and Filipino learners online and face-to-face. They are currently employed in Chinese schools. This designation ensured that their responses would be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Case study 2: The participants in this group were labeled CTP 1, CTP 2, CTP 3, CTP 4, and CTP 5 (Chinese teachers who have experience teaching both online and face-to-face settings in Chinese schools and another Chinese school in the Philippines).

The data were analyzed using Merriam's (1998) approach. Merriam defines analysis as the process of making sense of data. The process of making sense of data involves combining, summarizing, and interpreting the respondents' responses and the researchers' observations and readings. The data were evaluated in search of the most common answers to questions and the discovery of facts and patterns that would assist in answering the study questions. From the data transcripts, the researchers noted all the open codes responsive to the research questions. They then unified all the open codes and developed axial codes based on the essence of the participants' sharing. The researchers then developed the categories presented and elaborated on them based on the axial codes in the findings and discussion

section. Finally, the researchers adhered to ethical considerations when treating the interview data.

The study employed several ethical considerations when conducting research. Firstly, the researchers avoided coercion during the study. Secondly, the participants gave their full consent to participate in the study. Before the commencement of the interviews, the participants were required to sign an informed consent form outlining their participation conditions. Secondly, the authors ensured the confidentiality of the data. Finally, the authors adhered to other ethical principles when conducting the study, addressing any potential ethical issues that may have arisen.

## **Results and Discussion**

A comprehensive examination of the transcripts revealed the underlying meanings behind the responses of the participating teachers. The researchers identified several emerging categories pertaining to how the teachers described their experiences compared to their experiences teaching Filipino and Chinese learners.

### ***Teachers' Methods of Managing the Classroom***

The four objectives of the study are teachers' ways of managing the class in Chinese schools, responses of learners to classroom management in Chinese schools, challenges that teachers face in handling learners, and teachers' ways of coping with the struggles and challenges in the classroom. Three categories emerged from Teachers' ways of managing the class in Chinese schools: being authoritarian, using English, Filipino, and Chinese languages as mediums of instruction, and developing classroom routines.

The category of "being authoritarian" refers to the act of issuing instructions that demand absolute obedience and prohibit the freedom to act as one wishes. In Case 1, the teacher indicated that this approach is crucial for effective classroom management, emphasizing the importance of strictly adhering to established rules. The teacher also highlighted the importance of classroom organization. Teachers in Case 2 revealed that they employ authoritarian tactics through the use of firm words that can also serve as disciplinary measures. Additionally, one teacher emphasized the importance of being firm with their words when giving instructions to learners. Chinese teachers are particularly strict about time, with students expected to be punctual or face consequences. When a teacher does not allow relationships to flourish, students to contribute and collaborate, and creates a "pins and needles" setting, students will not reach their highest potential. While being structured has its benefits, too much control can be counterproductive and hinder student growth (Alt & Itzkovich, 2019).

The use of English, Filipino, and Chinese languages as a medium of instruction is also a notable aspect of the Chinese school setting. In a Chinese School classroom setting, two teachers of different nationalities are present. English teachers who are Filipino teach English-related subjects, while Chinese teachers who are Chinese teach Chinese-related subjects. Teachers in cases 1 and 2 indicated that learners should take both English and Chinese classes in a Chinese school setting. There is allotted time for Chinese and English subjects. One of the teacher participants also revealed that Chinese schools offer English and Filipino academic subjects similar to those offered in public schools. Additionally, the teacher in Case 2 disclosed that students attend their English class in the morning and Chinese class in the afternoon.

In Chinese schools, the importance of mastering these two languages is underscored by the necessity of guidance from their teachers. Typically, the English class occurs in the morning, followed by the Chinese class in the afternoon. However, the scheduling of classes varies by grade level. The language learning situation of the aforementioned students in Chinese schools is not entirely ideal, as these learners face a curriculum that is quite congested with content to be studied and learned within a day in three languages: Filipino, English, and Chinese. Instead of acquiring multiple languages, students may experience language processing issues such as subtractive bilingualism or mild attrition due to the contact time with particular languages and interlocutors as permitted by the environment (Gonzales & Hiramoto, 2020; Low, 2020).

Classroom routines are given by the teachers that students need to follow daily. The teachers usually give these routines during the first day of classes. These routines consist of rules that students are expected to follow once they arrive at school. In cases 1 and 2, teachers indicated that managing a class in a Chinese school requires the implementation of routines and that teachers themselves are expected to adhere to these routines, which are subject to change. In case 2, teachers discussed establishing seating arrangements whereby students may be required to sit in the same seat for the entire school year.

Furthermore, routines encourage students to assume responsibility for the functioning of their classroom. In other words, routines ensure that both the teacher and the students are held accountable for creating a class environment that runs smoothly and efficiently, thereby maximizing everyone's opportunities to learn. Teachers can assign students long- or short-term classroom roles to equitably share responsibility for class routines, or students may volunteer to take on specific jobs (Collier-Meek et al., 2019).

### ***The Responses of Learners to Classroom Management***

Learners' beliefs, practices, and attitudes in Chinese schools are essential for effective classroom management. These qualities influence the learners' responses to classroom management. In Chinese schools, two themes emerge regarding the

learners' responses to classroom management: developing consistency with classroom routines and showing discipline and respect.

Developing consistency with classroom routines Classroom management consistency is defined as how students respond to the classroom routines established by the teacher. These routines are implemented by the teacher and are agreed upon by the students during the first day of class. In cases 1 and 2, the teachers indicated that learners respond to classroom management in a way that fosters consistency. The teacher in case 1 noted that classroom management consistency's impact is reduced disruptive behavior and increased peace and order within the classroom.

Teachers in Case 2 emphasized the importance of clearly and consistently setting rules and expectations. They also provided an illustrative example of how students can perceive a teacher's lack of verbal communication as a sign of anger. Learners respond to classroom management implemented by teachers consistently, and teachers consistently remind learners of the rules and consequences for breaking them. Additionally, teachers mentioned that a consistent classroom routine can contribute to a less rowdy classroom environment. Routines are a powerful tool for learning because they support the direction of attention. Attention is defined by cognitive scientists as the mechanisms by which the brain selects, amplifies, and deepens the processing of information. Consequently, it is a precious and limited resource essential for learning (Collier-Meek et al., 2019).

In the classroom management implemented by the teachers, learners develop discipline and respect. The learners demonstrated self-discipline and respect for their teachers and other school authorities. The teachers in Case 1 and 2 indicated that the learners responded to classroom management, which developed discipline and respect. The teachers in Case 1 noted that the learners exhibited limitations and desired respect from others in return for the respect they expected to receive from others. In Case 2, the teachers revealed that the Chinese school environment values respect for authority figures. One teacher in Case 2 also indicated that she employs discipline and control in her classroom. She also informed her students that she is strict in class.

The learners' responses regarding classroom management in Chinese schools consistently demonstrate discipline and respect. The students consistently follow the rules implemented by the teacher at the beginning of the class. One student also compared classroom management in high school and elementary school. The student participant noted that if the teacher is not present, conflict can occur within the classroom. A respectful classroom environment is a space where all students feel safe, comfortable, and valued academically and emotionally (Subiarto & Wakhudin, 2021).

### ***Challenges that Teachers Face in Handling Learners***

Teachers face two categories of challenges when handling learners in Chinese schools. These include language barriers between students and teachers and difficulties in managing diverse learners.

Language barriers. One challenge of handling learners in Chinese schools is language barriers. This refers to having multiple languages in the classroom, which creates a barrier to communication between people who cannot speak a common language. Teachers in cases 1 and 2 indicated that one of the challenges they face in the classroom is the language barrier. Teachers in case 1 mentioned that some learners do not use the vernacular or English language, which can affect their performance. One of the teacher participants in case 1 also revealed that executing the lesson well, especially in the Filipino language, is difficult when the language barrier exists. In Case 2, one of the teacher participants noted that when the teacher and students do not share a common language, it can be challenging for the teacher to explain concepts clearly and for students to understand instructions and feedback.

One of the challenges teachers face in handling learners is the language barrier, which can significantly impact how students perceive information. There are differences in the Chinese language level among learners, with some already demonstrating proficiency and others still struggling to grasp the lesson. Filipino teachers also discussed the execution of lessons, particularly in the context of the Filipino language. It was observed that most learners experienced difficulty in understanding, mainly when the teacher utilized the Filipino language in the classroom. One Chinese participant also highlighted the challenge of communicating with their parents regarding their child, particularly in the context of Filipino parents. These arise from the different meanings and uses of words, symbols, images, gestures, languages, dialects, accents, linguistic ability, technical terminology or jargon, volume of voice, ambiguous words, mispronunciation of words, faulty translation, wrong interpretation of messages, misunderstanding of messages, complicated messages, and different individual linguistic abilities of the sender and the receiver (Flint et al., 2019).

The difficulty of managing diverse learners is a significant challenge for educators. Diverse learners are defined as learners who differ in cultural backgrounds and languages. This term encompasses students with exceptionalities and English language learners. These groups represent a wide range of skills, abilities, and backgrounds. Teachers in cases 1 and 2 have identified that managing diverse learners in the classroom is a significant challenge. They have also described various strategies they employ to address this challenge, such as taking turns, as mentioned by one of the teacher participants in case 1. Furthermore, one of the participants in case 2 observed that fostering positive experiences for both teachers

and students can be beneficial in managing diverse learners. This can be achieved by recognizing and rewarding developments at the end of the school year.

In teaching a diverse population of learners, educators may consider small groups with similar interests, learning styles, or mixed groupings of abilities. Studies have shown that peer teaching can be an effective strategy, encouraging independence and strengthening social relationships (Glazewski & Ertmer, 2020). Moreover, teachers must ensure that every learner is valued in the classroom (Naparan & Balimbingan, 2020).

### ***Teachers' Strategies to Overcome Classroom Struggles and Challenges***

Teachers working with learners in a Chinese school employ appropriate coping strategies to address their challenges. These strategies include coping with the language barrier and the difficulty in handling diverse learners. The coping strategies include understanding diverse learners, providing positive and negative reinforcement, and adapting teaching strategies.

One of the noted challenges is diverse learners. Teachers have developed a coping strategy, which involves understanding individual differences. This entails recognizing one's identity, acknowledging our unique qualities, and understanding our fundamental similarities. It also involves exercising patience and showing respect for each individual difference. In this way, teachers are able to reflect on their students' behavior. In cases 1 and 2, teachers mentioned that understanding differences is a key way to cope with the challenges and difficulties encountered in the classroom. In case 1, it was noted that teachers maintain a reflection notebook to document their students' behavior. In case 2, one teacher mentioned seeking assistance from an English teacher to manage a class and also reflected on areas of her teaching that required improvement.

One teacher participant suggested using clear and concise instructions and a reflection notebook to handle the behavior of learners. Individual differences help educators understand what makes humans similar to one another and what makes them different. By considering the variations that can occur from one person to another, educators can best understand the full range of human behavior (Wynter-Hoyte et al., 2019).

Another strategy is the use of positive and negative reinforcement. This implies identifying and rewarding the positive behaviors you desire your child to exhibit. Providing positive reinforcement can also motivate students to engage in positive behaviors related to school. Negative reinforcement encourages certain behaviors by removing or avoiding a negative outcome or stimuli. Teachers in cases 1 and 2 indicated that one strategy for addressing challenges and difficulties in the classroom is using positive and negative reinforcement. Teachers in case 1 also indicated that if learners engage in unnecessary behaviors during discussion, they



will provide negative reinforcement. One teacher also noted that she would call the student's attention to the misbehavior and then discuss and agree on the consequences of repeating the behavior. One teacher in case 1 also mentioned praising the students, such as saying "very good" or "good job." Moreover, one teacher in case 2 revealed that they would provide rewards, such as candy if the students answered questions or performed well in class. Positive reinforcement introduces a desirable stimulus to the situation, while negative reinforcement removes an undesirable stimulus, both in the service of reinforcing the behavior that was displayed (Sidin, 2021).

It is essential for teachers to be open to implementing changes in order to facilitate better learning experiences for all students, regardless of their individual differences. One of the obstacles they face is the language barrier, which they address by adjusting their teaching strategies. By doing so, they can foster greater creativity in their approach to educating a diverse student body. In both case 1 and case 2, teachers mentioned that they adapt new teaching strategies to tackle the challenges they encounter in the classroom. For instance, teachers in case 1 utilize various translation applications to communicate with Chinese students, employing key words and careful, step-by-step reading. Meanwhile, teachers in case 2 use visual aids such as pictures and charts to complement their verbal instructions.

Utilizing various innovative approaches that would assist the diverse abilities of learners is essential for equipping the learning process and ensuring teaching success. Innovative techniques in teaching facilitate the practical understanding of visual and conceptual ideas, thereby developing self-confidence among teachers and fostering critical thinking in students (Eli, 2021).

### **Conclusion**

Teachers in Chinese schools describe their experiences teaching learners as challenging, exciting, and rewarding. They view teaching as a means of making a difference in students' lives and helping students grow through their educational experiences. Teachers discussed the challenges they faced while teaching learners in Chinese schools, including limited resources and access to technology. However, they also highlighted that these challenges were outweighed by the benefits of teaching learners in a Chinese school. Many teachers discussed the significance of employing pedagogical approaches that align with each student's learning style and personality. The teachers who participated in this study emphasized that this approach enables them to establish a connection with each learner individually and create an environment where all students feel welcome and safe.

This research is limited to the teachers' experiences in handling Chinese students in the Philippine setting. It only included sharing Filipino and Chinese teachers in a Chinese school environment. Further research could examine the

students' perspectives on how their teachers foster literacy and values. Another avenue for further study could be the case of Chinese or international students in schools where most students are Filipino.

### References

- Adil, P. T., Policarpio, P. H., & Pamintuan, C. F. (2020). A communicative analysis of language functions in the Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) textbooks: the case of happy Chinese. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 8(8), 3725-3733. <http://dx.doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2020.080853>
- Alt, D., & Itzkovich, Y. (2019). The connection between perceived constructivist learning environments and faculty uncivil authoritarian behaviors. *Higher Education*, 77, 437-454. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-018-0281-y>
- Bantugan, B. (2022). Responding to the Learning Needs of the Chinese Students Enrolled In the College of Music and the Performing Arts of St. Paul University Manila. *International Journal of Arts and Social Science*, 5(1), 166-181. <https://www.ijassjournal.com/2022/V5I1/414659894.pdf>
- Codó, E., & Sunyol, A. (2019). 'A plus for our students': the construction of Mandarin Chinese as an elite language in an international school in Barcelona. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 40(5), 436-452. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2018.1543694>
- Collier-Meek, M. A., Johnson, A. H., Sanetti, L. H., & Minami, T. (2019). Identifying critical components of classroom management implementation. *School Psychology Review*, 48(4), 348-361. <https://doi.org/10.17105/SPR-2018-0026.V48-4>
- Eli, T. (2021). Students' perspectives on the use of innovative and interactive teaching methods at the University of Nouakchott Al Aasriya, Mauritania: English department as a case study. *International Journal of Technology, Innovation and Management (IJTIM)*, 1(2), 90-104. <https://doi.org/10.54489/ijtim.v1i2.21>
- Flint, P., Dollar, T., & Stewart, M. A. (2019). Hurdling over language barriers: Building relationships with adolescent newcomers through literacy advancement. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 62(5), 509-519. <https://ila.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/jaal.927>
- Glazewski, K. D., & Ertmer, P. A. (2020). Fostering complex problem solving for diverse learners: Engaging an ethos of intentionality toward equitable access. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 68(2), 679-702. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-020-09762-9>
- Gonzales, W. D. W., & Hiramoto, M. (2020). Two Englishes diverged in the Philippines? A substratist account of Manila Chinese English. *Journal of Pidgin*

- and *Creole Languages*, 35(1), 125-159.  
<https://doi.org/10.1075/jpcl.00057.gon>
- Lee, T. H. (2019). Education in traditional China. In *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Traditional Chinese Culture* (pp. 238-253). Routledge.  
<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781315453491-14/education-traditional-china-thomas-lee>
- Low, E. L. (2020). English in Asian schools. *The Handbook of Asian Englishes*, 107-131.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Naparan, G. B., & Balimbingan, N. A. (2020). Challenges and coping mechanisms of Muslim students in a Catholic higher education institution. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 2(1), 100021.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2020.100021>
- Pamintuan C. (2021) Reducing the Impact of Pandemic on Chinese Language Education in the Philippines through the Localization of Chinese Teachers.  
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1330054.pdf>
- See, T. A., & See, C. A. (2019). The rise of China, new immigrants and changing policies on Chinese Overseas. *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 275-294.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/26939700>
- Sidin, S. A. (2021, March). The application of reward and punishment in teaching adolescents. In *Ninth International Conference on Language and Arts (ICLA 2020)* (pp. 251-255). Atlantis Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210325.045>
- Subiarto, S., & Wakhudin, W. (2021). The Role of Teachers in Improving the Discipline Character of Students. *Dinamika Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar*, 13(2), 71-75. <http://dx.doi.org/10.30595/dinamika.v13i2.11552>
- Tucker, M. (2019). *Leading high-performance school systems: Lessons from the world's best*. ASCD.
- Wynter-Hoyte, K., Braden, E. G., Rodriguez, S., & Thornton, N. (2019). Disrupting the status quo: Exploring culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogies for young diverse learners. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 22(3), 428-447.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2017.1382465>