Strategic Insights into Online Mandarin Instruction for Non-Native Learners: Perspectives from Mainland China

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ABSTRACT

With strong integration of educational technology and international Chinese education, online Chinese instruction for ASEAN countries has demonstrated distinct advantages in transcending time and space barriers. This study examines the current practices and influencing mechanisms behind the selection of online teaching strategies by Mainland Chinese instructors for non-native Chinese learners in ASEAN, within the context of China–ASEAN strategic cooperation. Employing an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, the research integrates survey data from 70 teachers in Vietnam, Thailand, and Cambodia supported by in-depth interviews from 12 teachers. The findings reveal a six-dimensional strategic framework: (1) preference for stable platforms like Tencent Meeting (M = 3.61) and Zoom (M = 3.54); (2) diverse teaching modes combining live broadcasts, gamification, and flipped classrooms; (3) interactive strategies centered on real-time participation; (4) a discrepancy between standardized and affective feedback; (5) dual demands for content creation tools and classroom management systems; and (6) a dynamic mix of lecture-based and student-centered pedagogies. Three key factors influencing strategy choice were identified: learner characteristics, systemic support, and instructional process elements. Based on these, a dual-path optimization framework is proposed—integrating synchronous interactivity with autonomous learning, and supported by intelligent tools, data-driven feedback, and teacher training. The study offers a practical solution for reconciling technological integration with effective online Chinese instruction in cross-cultural settings.

Keywords: Online Chinese Mandarin instruction, Mainland Chinese instructors, non-native learners, ASEAN countries, teaching strategies.

INTRODUCTION

With the establishment and development of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area, driven by the free trade area, China has remained ASEAN's largest trading partner for 15 consecutive years, and ASEAN has remained China's largest trading partner for 4 consecutive years (Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, 2024). This close economic and trade relationship has led to a strong demand for Chinese talent. The importance of Chinese in the ASEAN region has become increasingly prominent, and the potential economic value of learning Chinese has become more prominent. More students in ASEAN countries have chosen to learn Chinese as an important choice for future investment (Li, 2022).

The prosperous economy has increased the importance of Chinese in ASEAN countries, and Chinese has also had an important impact on the career choices of individuals in ASEAN countries. In the 2014 "Annual Report on Chinese Teaching in Southeast Asia", only three countries included Chinese in the national education system. As of 2021, seven countries in Southeast Asia have included Chinese in the national education system (Li & Wu, 2022). As Professor Wu Yinghui said, the relevant research on Chinese education in Southeast Asia is still

insufficient, which is a rich mine for studying international Chinese education (Wu, 2019). At the same time, the rapid development of information technology has brought profound changes to the field of education. Online teaching has emerged as a new teaching model, breaking the time and space limitations of traditional teaching (Sharrab et al., 2023). In Chinese teaching, the online teaching model provides Chinese learners in ASEAN countries with a more convenient and flexible learning method, allowing them to learn Chinese anytime and anywhere without being constrained by geography and time. In 2020, Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the normal teaching order of more than 20,000 Chinese schools overseas was seriously affected. The teaching of Chinese schools shifted from offline to online (Chen, 2021), further promoting the large-scale and rapid development of online teaching.

However, there are still many problems in the online Chinese teaching of Chinese instructors in mainland China for ASEAN countries. In teaching practice, some instructors have a low information literacy level, insufficient understanding of the various functions of online teaching platforms and are unable to give full play to the advantages of the platform, which affects the smooth development of teaching activities (Chen, 2023; Lin & Zhao, 2020). There is still a lack of research on strategies to improve the information literacy of Chinese teachers (Li & Zhuang, 2021), and the teaching methods are also relatively old. Many instructors simply migrate offline teaching models to online, lack innovation, and fail to fully consider the characteristics of online teaching and students' needs, resulting in unsatisfactory teaching results. In terms of classroom management, the particularity of online teaching makes it difficult for instructors to effectively supervise students' self-discipline and participation were uneven, and classroom order was difficult to maintain (Chen, 2023). In addition, as a language teaching method, online Chinese teaching is not just a one-way transmission of language knowledge, but a meaningful communication through interaction and negotiation of meaning between people. However, under the condition of time and space separation, people feel alienated from each other, and interactive and cooperative learning seem to be the biggest problem (Shi & Wang, 2021). In addition, factors such as the instability of the network environment and the differences in student equipment have also brought many troubles to online teaching, seriously affecting the teaching quality and students' learning experience.

Hence for this paper, the researchers aim to provide strategic inspiration and practical suggestions for online Chinese teaching for Mandarin teachers in mainland China by finding answers to the following research questions:

What are the online teaching strategies currently used by Mandarin instructors from Mainland China when teaching non-native Chinese learners in ASEAN countries?

What factors influence the selection and application of online teaching strategies among Mandarin instructors from Mainland China when working with non-native learners in ASEAN countries?

LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, international Chinese education has shown a rapid development trend globally, especially in the ASEAN region, where the importance of Chinese education has become increasingly prominent. According to the "Report on the Status of Language Life in China 2023" released by the Ministry of Education of China, there are more than 180 countries and regions in the world conduct Chinese teaching, 81 countries have included Chinese in the national education system, and there are more than 80,000 schools and training institutions offering Chinese courses. The number of people learning Chinese exceeds 30 million, and new progress has been made in the spread of the Chinese language and culture (Ministry of Education of China, 2023). The geographical proximity, close economic cooperation and frequent cultural exchanges between ASEAN countries and China have led to the widespread promotion of Chinese education in the region. For example, countries such as Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia have included Chinese in the national education as a compulsory or elective course (Li & Wu, 2022). At the same time, the teaching model of international Chinese education is also undergoing profound changes. Traditional face-to-face teaching has gradually shifted to hybrid online and offline or fully online teaching. Driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, online education has developed rapidly, and the rapid progress of information technology has made remote digital online Chinese teaching increasingly convenient (Wu et al., 2021). This model not only breaks through the limitations of time and space but also provides learners with a more flexible way of learning. However, the popularity of online teaching has also

brought new challenges, such as the use of technology applications, course design and student interaction (Li & Zhuang, 2021).

As an emerging teaching model, online Chinese teaching has received widespread attention from the academic community in recent years. In terms of teaching methods, researchers have proposed a variety of innovative teaching strategies that adapt to the online environment. For example, the flipped classroom model is widely used in Chinese teaching. Teachers distribute learning materials to students outside of class time so that students can learn basic knowledge. The focus of the class is to allow students to participate and interact meaningfully, via discussion, feedback and presentation. The advantage of this model is that it cultivates students' sense of responsibility and effectively improves students' learning effects (Korkmaz & Mirici, 2021). In addition, task-based language teaching (TBLT) has also been shown to have significant advantages in online Chinese teaching. The application of online classes in task-based language teaching can enable learners to improve their language accuracy in the process of completing various tasks (Vellanki, & Bandu , 2021). Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) is an approach that encourages meaningful interactions and authentic language use, aligning with the growing emphasis on communicative language teaching. It fosters student engagement, critical thinking, and language proficiency (Jin, 2024). In terms of resource utilization, online Chinese teaching relies on rich digital teaching resources. Chen Miao (2024) showed that by strengthening cooperation with the "Chinese Alliance" digital platform and using modern educational technology to optimize the classroom teaching environment, the sharing of teaching resources, the expansion of teaching content, and the innovation of teaching methods and means were achieved. It meets the needs of learners and improves their learning effects and sense of achievement. The rational use of multimedia resources can significantly improve students' learning experience and language skills. For example, the combination of resources such as video, audio and interactive exercises can provide students with a variety of learning paths to meet the needs of different learning styles.

However, how to effectively integrate and utilize these resources is still an important issue facing online Chinese teaching. In terms of teaching effect evaluation, researchers have proposed a variety of evaluation methods and tools. For example, learning analytics technology based on big data is used to evaluate students' learning behaviour and performance. Teachers' personalised feedback based on technology is helpful to improve student participation and student performance and will make students feel cared for (Xu et al., 2023). In addition, the application of formative assessment in online Chinese teaching has also received widespread attention. Researchers have confirmed the benefits of information and communication technology, such as the rapid exchange of ideas and data and the digitization of the learning process, in promoting formative assessment (Shute & Rahimi, 2017). They also suggest that instructors use information and communication technology to implement effective online formative assessments, adjusting better through real-time feedback and adjustment of teaching strategies. Although online Chinese teaching research has made significant progress, there are still some research gaps and deficiencies. First, existing research focuses on teaching methods and resource utilization, while less attention is paid to instructors' technology application capabilities and cross-cultural teaching capabilities. Second, research on students from different regions and cultural backgrounds is relatively limited, especially research on students from ASEAN countries needs to be strengthened (Wu , 2019). Finally, research on the long-term effects and sustainability of online Chinese teaching need further exploration.

The characteristics of Chinese learning among students in ASEAN countries are mainly reflected in the differences in cultural background and language foundation. First of all, the impact of cultural background differences on Chinese learning cannot be ignored. ASEAN countries have diverse cultural backgrounds, and students are often deeply influenced by their mother tongue culture when learning Chinese. For example, Thai students are often influenced by Buddhist culture and show strong collectivist tendencies and respect for authority (Klechaya & Glasson, 2017). "In Thai classrooms, the role of learners is to listen. Thai cultural customs prohibit criticizing or even questioning teachers. In the Thai context, this attribute has an impact on learning in a broader sense, because Thai learners want their teachers to be responsible for their learning" (Kainzbauer & Hunt, 2021). Therefore, Chinese instructors working in Thailand face different cultural environments and difficulties in dealing with Thai students (Power, 2015). In order to improve students' Chinese proficiency, Chinese instructors must adapt and improve their teaching methods to better understand the Thai cultural background. To successfully teach in Thailand, they must first learn to understand Thai culture. This cultural background difference not only affects students' learning motivation and learning strategies but also puts higher demands on instructors' teaching methods.

Secondly, differences in language foundation are also an important factor affecting Chinese learning among students in ASEAN countries. ASEAN countries have a high degree of language diversity, and students have different mother tongue, which have different impacts on Chinese learning. About 70% of the words in Vietnamese are Vietnamese words with Chinese roots that are necessary to understand the mother tongue and national literature, which have used Chinese characters for centuries (Nguyễn & Nguyễn, 2023). For example, Vietnamese and Chinese have certain similarities in phonetic and grammatical structures, and Vietnamese students often show strong phonetic advantages when learning Chinese. However, there are large differences in grammatical structure between Thai and Chinese, and Thai students often face grammatical difficulties when learning Chinese. In addition, because of the inconsistency in the order of components between Chinese and Thai, Chinese students are prone to make more mistakes when learning Thai sentence structures (Yan et al., 2024). Therefore, for students with different language backgrounds, instructors need to adopt differentiated teaching strategies to meet students' learning needs.

In addition, there are significant differences in the motivation and learning goals of Chinese learning among students in ASEAN countries. Relevant studies have shown that the motivations of students in ASEAN countries to learn Chinese are mainly divided into two categories: instrumental motivation and integrative motivation (Darbyshire & Haarms, 2015). Instrumental motivation refers to students learning Chinese for career development or exam needs, while integrative motivation refers to students learning Chinese out of interest in and identification with Chinese culture. This motivation difference not only affects students' learning attitudes and learning behaviours but also poses new challenges to teachers' teaching design and teaching evaluation.

We can safely say that international Chinese education has a good development trend in the world, especially in the ASEAN region. The scale of learners is constantly expanding, and the teaching mode is gradually shifting to online and offline hybrid teaching. Online Chinese teaching has made significant progress in teaching methods, resource utilization and teaching effect evaluation, but there are still some research gaps and deficiencies, such as the limited research on instructors' technical application ability and cross-cultural teaching ability, and the research on students in ASEAN countries needs to be strengthened. Based on the discussion, this study aims to deeply understand the current situation and needs of Chinese instructors in mainland China in online Chinese teaching for ASEAN countries through questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews, and propose targeted strategies to provide a reference for improving teaching quality, and better promote the effective dissemination of Chinese in the ASEAN region, both theoretically and practically for the development of international Chinese education.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. This design integrates the quantitative and qualitative data in stages to capture general trends and promote a deeper understanding of the root causes (Ivankova et al., 2006). The study was conducted in two phases: a questionnaire survey was administered with 70 international Chinese instructors from mainland China. All of whom had experience in online teaching to ASEAN learners whose native language was not Chinese. This sampling method was adopted because their personnel's professionalism enabled the collection of rich and representative information about the research subjects.

The second phase was an in-depth semi-structured interviews with 12 international Chinese instructors (four from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand respectively), the survey data was collected via electronic questionnaires on the Wenjuxing platform, and the interviews were conducted in the form of WeChat voice calls. Subsequently, the researchers used SPSSAU to analyse the quantitative data to report the statistical analysis. For the quantitative data from the questionnaires, descriptive statistics (e.g., frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations) were calculated to summarize participant characteristics and responses.

The qualitative data which were recorded in Chinese were transcribed and translated to English by an expert before it was thematically analysed using the NVivo software. The findings are supported by excerpts from the interview data. The pseudonyms are provided with the letters C, V and T referring to the countries where the teachers are stationed.

FINDINGS

The findings of research question 1 explained the quantitative data supported by the qualitative data. The quantitative findings provide a detailed overview of the online teaching strategies employed by Mainland Chinese Mandarin instructors in ASEAN countries, across six key dimensions: teaching platforms, teaching modes, interactive tools, personalized feedback, technical support, and platform service satisfaction.

Teaching Platforms and Modes(See Table 1)：The most frequently adopted teaching platforms were Tencent Meeting (M = 3.61) and Zoom (M = 3.54), with DingTalk (M = 2.24) and Google Meet (M = 2.01) serving as secondary alternatives. Live-streamed instruction (M = 3.37) emerged as the dominant teaching mode, complemented by gamified learning (M = 3.30) and flipped classrooms (M = 3.11), while recorded courses were used to support self-paced learning.

Table 1

Online Chinese Teaching Platforms						
Platforms	**n**	**Min.**	**Max.**	**Mean**	**S.D.**	**Median**
① Tencent Meeting	70	1.000	5.000	3.614	1.231	4.000
②zoom	70	1.000	5.000	3.543	1.411	4.000
③DingTalk	70	1.000	5.000	2.243	1.345	2.000
④WeChat Video	70	1.000	4.000	1.771	0.920	1.000
⑤QQ Video	70	1.000	5.000	1.900	1.118	1.000
⑥Google Meet	70	1.000	5.000	2.014	1.028	2.000
⑦Online Confucius Institute	70	1.000	4.000	1.786	0.915	1.000
⑧Others（please specify）	70	1.000	5.000	1.300	0.922	1.000

Interactive Tools (Table 2) Among the tools deployed to foster learner participation, video-based platforms (M = 3.67) ranked highest, followed by online whiteboards (M = 3.33) and collaborative tools (M = 3.17). Gamification tools such as Quizizz (M = 3.16) were moderately used, reflecting efforts to promote student engagement through interactive learning environments.

Table 2

Use of Interactive Tools						
Item	**n**	**Min.**	**Max.**	**Mean**	**S.D.**	**Median**
① Video tools	70	1.000	5.000	3.671	1.305	4.000
② Collaboration tools	70	1.000	5.000	3.171	1.444	3.000
③ Testing and feedback tools	70	1.000	5.000	2.714	1.374	2.000
④ Online whiteboard	70	1.000	5.000	3.329	1.338	3.000
⑤ Learning management system	70	1.000	5.000	3.043	1.279	3.000
⑥ Gamification tools	70	1.000	5.000	3.157	1.379	3.000
⑦ Discussion and social learning tools	70	1.000	5.000	2.986	1.245	3.000
⑧Others (please specify):	70	1.000	5.000	1.229	0.802	1.000

Personalized Feedback (Table 3) Feedback strategies varied in usage, with test and homework feedback (M = 3.53), progress-oriented feedback (M = 3.46), and one-on-one tutoring (M = 3.39) being the most common. In contrast, data-driven feedback (M = 2.81)—despite its technological potential—was the least applied.

Table 3

Personalized Feedback Strategies						
Item	**n**	**Min.**	**Max.**	**Mean**	**S.D.**	**Median**
①Feedback on learning progress	70	1.000	5.000	3.457	1.236	4.000
②Test and homework feedback	70	1.000	5.000	3.529	1.359	4.000
③Data-driven feedback	70	1.000	5.000	2.814	1.277	3.000
④One-on-one tutoring and feedback	70	1.000	5.000	3.386	1.344	3.000
⑤Real-time classroom feedback	70	1.000	5.000	3.357	1.319	4.000
⑥Delayed feedback	70	1.000	5.000	3.329	1.305	3.000
⑦Self-reflection guidance	70	1.000	5.000	3.214	1.454	3.000
⑧Emotional support and motivational feedback	70	1.000	5.000	3.371	1.265	4.000
⑨Others (please specify):	70	1.000	4.000	1.114	0.468	1.000

Technical Support Services (Table 4) Multimedia content creation tools (M = 3.60) and language learning auxiliary tools (M = 3.37) were the most utilized technical supports, followed by video conferencing (M = 3.36). Notably, AI and adaptive learning tools had the lowest usage (M = 2.60), suggesting limited integration of advanced technologies in routine teaching practices.

Table 4

Technical Support Services						
Item	**n**	**Min.**	**Max.**	**Mean**	**S.D.**	**Median**
① Learning management system	70	1.000	5.000	2.943	1.503	3.000
② Video conferencing tools	70	1.000	5.000	3.357	1.319	4.000
③Interaction and collaboration tools	70	1.000	5.000	3.071	1.428	3.000
④ Evaluation and feedback tools	70	1.000	5.000	3.071	1.355	3.000
⑤ Multimedia content creation tools	70	1.000	5.000	3.600	1.160	4.000
⑥ Language learning auxiliary tools	70	1.000	5.000	3.371	1.230	4.000
⑦ Artificial intelligence and adaptive learning tools	70	1.000	5.000	2.600	1.356	2.000
⑧Teaching resource platforms	70	1.000	5.000	3.343	1.350	4.000
⑨ Others (please specify):	70	1.000	5.000	1.171	0.680	1.000

Platform Service Satisfaction (Table 5) The real-time interactivity feature received the highest satisfaction rating (M = 3.16), followed by network fluency (M = 3.00) and platform stability (M = 2.99). The clarity of audio and video (M = 2.86) was rated lowest, revealing persistent concerns about audiovisual quality.

Table 5

Platform Service Satisfaction Survey						
Item	**n**	**Min.**	**Max.**	**Mean**	**S.D.**	**Median**
①Fluency of network speed	70	1.000	5.000	3.000	1.494	3.000
②Stability of platform operation	70	1.000	5.000	2.986	1.518	3.000
③ Clarity of audio and video quality	70	1.000	5.000	2.857	1.627	3.000
④Teachers and students can use platform tools to interact in real time	70	1.000	5.000	3.157	1.548	3.000
⑤Fluency of homework submission	70	1.000	5.000	2.986	1.429	3.000
⑥Platform comfort level	70	1.000	5.000	2.914	1.359	3.000

While instructors widely adopt diverse online teaching strategies, the findings underscore a need for enhanced digital infrastructure, pedagogical innovation, and deeper integration of emerging technologies to improve instructional effectiveness in cross-cultural, online learning environments.

To enrich the understanding of survey findings, in-depth interviews with 12 experienced Mandarin instructors from Mainland China were conducted, focusing on their online teaching practices in ASEAN countries. Thematic analysis revealed six major strategic dimensions: platform selection, instructional modes, interactive participation, feedback mechanisms, technical support, and instructional methods (Table 6). These dimensions reflect both contextual adaptation and evolving pedagogical orientations under cross-cultural online teaching conditions.

Table 6

Main Code	Sub-code	Files	References
Teaching Platforms		9	17
	▪ Microsoft Teams	2	2
	▪ Other	4	5
	▪ Tencent video conference	4	5
	▪ Zoom	5	5
Teaching mode		7	8
	▪ Live broadcast	5	5
	▪ Record and broadcast	2	3
Interactive Participation		10	28
	▪ Interactive Games	8	12
	▪ Q&A method	5	9
	▪ Communicative Approach	3	4
	▪ Real-time interaction	2	3
Feedback strategies		10	16
	▪ Real-time feedback	4	6
	▪ Motivational feedback	6	6
	▪ Test and homework feedback	2	3
	▪ One-to-one feedback	1	1
Technical support services		7	15
	▪ Auxiliary tools	3	4
	▪ Multimedia tools	2	2
	▪ Teaching resource platform	1	2
	▪ Online Management	6	7
Teaching method		11	41
	Traditional Teaching	5	9
	▪ Lecture Method	4	8
	▪ Translation method	1	1
	Student-Centered Approach	10	32
	▪ Personalized & Flexible	6	9
	▪ Diversified Strategy	8	17
	▪ Task & Practice-Oriented	3	3
	▪ Communication methods	3	3

Note: Although some teaching strategies possess both interactive and feedback-related functions, this study classifies them based on their primary purpose: strategies emphasizing student participation are categorized under Interactive Participation, while those focusing on teacher responses are classified as Feedback Strategies.

Platform selection was primarily driven by stability, accessibility, and institutional compatibility. Both Zoom and Tencent Meeting were frequently adopted due to their familiarity and robust features. As one instructor noted, “We are purely online, mainly using Zoom and Tencent Meeting apps” (Teacher Wei-V). Others emphasized environmental factors: “We used Zoom at that time, because everyone in Cambodia used Zoom” (Teacher Gao-C). This practical alignment between platform functionality and regional usage patterns exemplifies constructivist context sensitivity in digital tool selection.

In terms of instructional modes, live broadcasting emerged as the dominant choice, supported by its affordance for real-time interaction and classroom control. “The most important thing is the live broadcast method. The most intuitive method is live broadcast” (Teacher Li-T), while another instructor described interactive checking during live sessions: “I may do it like a live broadcast—students who understand press 1, those who don’t press 2” (Teacher She-T). “Though recorded lessons were also used, they were often described as supplementary, aiding students who missed class or needed review (Teacher Liu-C).

Interactive participation strategies were emphasized by nearly all participants, with gamification and Q&A methods being most frequent. Instructors cited tools such as Quizlet and Quizizz to stimulate student engagement. “You can play games like balloon popping or use Quizizz to create competition. This brings back their wandering attention” (Teacher She-T). Similarly, the Q&A format was praised for promoting real-time engagement and comprehension assessment: “Setting up classroom Q&A helps me see students’ real-time reactions and understand their grasp of grammar and vocabulary” (Teacher Luo-C).

Feedback mechanisms highlighted a divergence between quantifiable practices and pedagogical ideals. Although test and assignment feedback ranked highest in survey results, interviewees underscored the emotional and motivational value of real-time and personalized feedback. “Timely evaluation is key—it keeps students motivated and involved” (Teacher Liang-C), and “Emotional support and motivational feedback are most effective, especially because many Southeast Asian students are shy” (Teacher Wei-V). These responses illustrate that instructors prioritise affective scaffolding, even when institutional structures favour standardised evaluation.

Regarding technical support, the contrast between tool preference and system-level needs was evident. While survey data emphasised multimedia content tools, interviews revealed urgent needs for management functionalities, including attendance tracking, assignment monitoring, and asynchronous supervision. “Google Classroom allows me to schedule check-ins and view student participation through data charts” (Teacher She-T). The demand for “tools that display homework reading volume and show who is really engaged” (Teacher Zhong-T) underscores the importance of intelligent classroom oversight in sustaining learner accountability.

Finally, in terms of instructional methods, a dual-track pattern emerged. Traditional lecture-based approaches remained common due to time constraints and learners’ reluctance to appear on camera. “We stick to teaching grammar and vocabulary directly because many students don’t turn on their cameras” (Teacher Luo-C). However, a strong shift toward student-centered, flexible teaching was also evident. “There is no single method that’s best. You must adapt. For children, use TPR; for adults, more explanation” (Teacher Zhao-V). Instructors reported adapting pacing, modality, and materials to align with learner profiles, a move consistent with constructivist principles of contextualized, learner-sensitive pedagogy.

Overall, the qualitative data reveals a strategically adaptive mindset among online Mandarin instructors. They balance technological constraints, pedagogical ideals, and cultural-linguistic variables to construct responsive instructional strategies. The integration of real-time interaction, motivational scaffolding, and multimodal delivery showcases a transition from “content transmission” to “learner orchestration.” These findings affirm the value of examining instructors’ lived experiences to understand the complexity of cross-border online language education.

As for research question 2, the researchers further explored the key factors that influence online Chinese instructors’ choice of different online teaching strategies through a qualitative approach (See Table 7).

Table 7 Factors Influencing Online Teaching Chinese Strategies

Main Code	Sub-code	Files	Responses
Learner Characteristics	Language proficiency	6	20
	Demographic characteristics	8	29
	Psychological factors	7	25
Teaching System Support	Technical infrastructure	8	18
	Teaching resources	2	23
	Instructional design	6	30
Elements of the Teaching Process	Teacher-student interaction	2	20
	Teachers' professional competence	2	13

Through systematic coding and thematic refinement, the study identified three core factors influencing the selection of online teaching strategies by Mandarin instructors from Mainland China: Learner Characteristics, Teaching System Support, and Elements of the Teaching Process. As shown in Table 7, these three main categories comprise eight specific sub-themes, each varying in frequency and distribution of supporting data across interview files and coded references.

First, under the dimension of Learner Characteristics, the data reveals three significant sub-codes. Language proficiency (6 files, 20 responses) highlights the importance of aligning instructional tasks with students' current linguistic competence, ensuring that neither under-challenging nor overly demanding content hinders engagement. Demographic characteristics (8 files, 29 responses) emerged as the most referenced sub-theme within this category, suggesting that learners' national backgrounds, age groups, educational levels, and prior exposure to Chinese substantially shape teachers' strategy choices. Psychological factors (7 files, 25 responses) underscore the role of learner motivation, self-efficacy, and learning anxiety. These elements indicate that psychological readiness is a key premise for designing effective online teaching strategies. Collectively, this category emphasizes that instructors must adopt a learner-centered approach, tailoring their pedagogy based on diverse learner profiles. This finding aligns with the constructivist framework, particularly Jonassen's (1999) emphasis on "learner experience-centered" design, where teaching effectiveness is contingent upon the learner's prior knowledge, needs, and engagement readiness.

Second, the theme Teaching System Support comprises three sub-codes. Technical infrastructure (8 files, 18 responses) reflects concerns over platform stability, internet connectivity, and device accessibility, which can directly enable or hinder pedagogical innovation. Teaching resources (2 files, 23 responses) were less distributed across files but demonstrated high intensity within specific cases, suggesting that while not all instructors equally emphasize this aspect, those who do consider it critical for student engagement and content clarity. Instructional design (6 files, 30 responses) received the highest number of references overall, indicating its centrality in ensuring effective pedagogy. Strategic lesson planning, sequencing, and goal alignment are seen as indispensable for successful implementation. These findings suggest that robust teaching strategies require the interplay between functional digital infrastructure, high-quality teaching content, and thoughtfully designed instructional sequences. This pattern resonates with the Professional Standards Framework (PSF, 2023), particularly the domains of digital literacy and pedagogical design competency.

Third, the dimension Elements of the Teaching Process includes. Teacher-student interaction (2 files, 20 responses), which, despite being coded in only two interviews, accounts for a substantial number of citations, reflecting the critical role of synchronous and asynchronous interaction in maintaining student engagement and learning efficacy. Teachers' professional competence (2 files, responses) highlights instructors' self-efficacy, subject mastery, and adaptability as essential components that shape the implementation quality of online teaching strategies. Although limited in file distribution, both sub-codes demonstrate intensive coding frequency, indicating that during the strategy implementation phase, Mandarin instructors rely heavily on their professional

capabilities and sustained interaction with students. These elements not only shape the delivery process but also influence how learners experience and respond to instruction.

In conclusion, the data suggests that the online teaching strategies in Mandarin instruction targeting ASEAN countries is shaped by a dynamic interplay of learner attributes, systemic support, and teaching practice elements. These factors do not operate in isolation but rather form a multi-level, interdependent decision-making framework that guides teachers in platform selection, instructional mode innovation, interaction design, and feedback mechanisms. Such a comprehensive perspective provides empirical support for designing responsive and adaptive online Chinese language teaching frameworks in cross-cultural settings.

DISCUSSION

This research first explored the online teaching strategies of Chinese teachers from mainland China in ASEAN countries. The study found that in terms of the choice of online Chinese teaching platforms for ASEAN countries, Chinese teachers from mainland China mainly use Tencent Meeting and Zoom. This finding is consistent with the research findings of Liu (2022) that the main online platforms used by Chinese instructors include Tencent Meeting Room, ZOOM, and Google Meeting Room. The instructional setting is characterized by an online network environment. The teaching mode chosen is live broadcast as the main one and recorded broadcast as the auxiliary one. The reason for choosing these two teaching platforms is because of their stability and accessibility in the target countries. The three influencing factors of learner characteristics, teaching system support and teaching process elements are fully considered (see Table 8). Constructivist scholar Jonassen (1999) pointed out that the selection of cognitive tools should follow the principle of "context adaptation". The choice of teaching platforms and teaching modes by online Chinese instructors in mainland China precisely reflects the rational response to the network infrastructure of ASEAN countries and the social and cultural context of the students' countries and is a vivid practice of the "learner-centered" principle in constructivism. This selection is also in line with the "digital literacy" dimension of PSF (2023), which emphasizes that educators should select appropriate technical tools to promote effective teaching. The phenomenon of choosing live teaching as the main method can be further explained by constructivist theory. Learning is a social process, and real-time interaction is crucial to constructing knowledge (Bruner, 1997). In short, through the joint confirmation of quantitative data, thematic analysis and theoretical literature, the technology adoption of online Chinese instructors in mainland China has gone beyond the instrumental rationality level and formed an ecological selection strategy based on teaching scenarios (Huang, R., et al., 2023).

In terms of interactive participation strategies, teacher-student interaction, peer interaction, and task collaboration design are widely adopted. These strategies reflect Chinese instructors' understanding and application of the constructivist concept of "learning community" (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and the flexible use of multiple interactive strategies in online Chinese teaching. This is consistent with the core value of "encouraging active participation and cooperation" proposed by PSF (2023:p.5). It is important to note that the real-time interactive strategy was the most frequently mentioned strategies in the quantitative results (M=3.16), but the qualitative data revealed a more detailed understanding of the interactive implementation methods. Specifically, instructors highlight the effectiveness of interactive games and question-and-answer in enhancing learner engagement and sustaining motivation. This divergence suggests that while real-time formats are commonly employed, educators perceive the quality and dynamics of interaction—rather than the medium itself—as critical to learning success. This supports constructivist perspectives (Vygotsky, 1978), which posit that meaningful learning occurs through socially mediated and cognitively stimulating tasks.

Online Chinese instructors stimulate learners' learning initiative through diverse interactive designs, indicating that online Chinese instructors are fundamentally changing from "teaching-centered" to "learning-centered." As Gunawardena (1992) and Liu and Liu (2022) argued, in a learner-centered classroom, the main role of the teacher is to guide students to cooperate and communicate. Chinese instructors have gradually changed from the front and center roles of the classroom to guides, regulators, communicators, supporters, curriculum designers, and media experts (Xu & Huang, 2021).

In terms of personalized feedback, the quantitative results show that test and homework feedback (M = 3.53) and learning progress feedback (M = 3.46) ranked first and second in the quantitative results, and the average

values of other types of personalized feedback were relatively uniform. However, in stark contrast to the quantitative results, the thematic analysis revealed that instructors had a deeper feedback concept, that is, they attached great importance to the "timeliness" and "humanistic care" of feedback. Therefore, real-time feedback (4 participants, 6 responses) and motivational feedback (6 participants, 6 responses) were the most valued in personalized feedback. Although instructors rely more on standardized and technologically convenient forms of feedback in practice, they still pursue emotional connection and personalized guidance of feedback in educational philosophy. This research result is consistent with the research of Pérez-Segura et al. (2020), which shows that personalized feedback has a significant contribution to improving learning outcomes. Feedback has been proven to enhance students' learning motivation and make them work harder in the learning process (Yang et al., 2020). This is consistent with the emphasis of PSF (2023) on positive feedback promoting learning. Hattie and Timperley (2007) also emphasized the importance of feedback in the learning process in the feedback model, pointing out that effective feedback should help learners answer questions such as "where will I go", "where am I now" and "where to go next", thereby promoting learners' self-regulation and cognitive development. However, in the results of personalized feedback, it is worth noting that data-driven feedback is not fully utilized (M=2.81), and data-based feedback is not captured in the thematic analysis.

Therefore, the results of this study show that between actual feedback behavior and educational philosophy, instructors are trying to find a balance between efficiency and emotional support; data-driven feedback is still rarely used, and there is a lack of high-level feedback strategies. This provides an important direction for improvement in future platform design and teaching training. In terms of technical support services, quantitative findings showed that multimedia content creation tools were the most valued technical support service, while qualitative data indicated that in actual teaching, the most pressing need was effective online class management and the use of auxiliary tools. This difference suggests that teachers have dual expectations: they need both high-quality material creation tools and powerful system-level capabilities to manage synchronous learning environments. The high focus on management-related issues in the interviews reflects the situational pressures teachers face to maintain engagement and discipline in live courses. Recent empirical studies echo this distinction. For instance, Sun (2024) found that while Chinese EFL university teachers appreciated technological tools for content delivery, their primary concern during synchronous online instruction was maintaining classroom order and managing student engagement. Similarly, Zuo et al. (2022) revealed that teachers' negative emotions during online teaching were largely driven by challenges in live classroom control and the inability to effectively monitor student participation, especially in less tech-equipped environments. These findings reinforce the conclusion that effective online instruction requires not only access to quality content tools but also robust support for real-time classroom management.

This difference may also reflect a gap in priorities, where instructors appreciate multimedia tools , but they have difficulty dealing with management issues in their daily work and therefore raise these issues more frequently in interviews (Hodges et al., 2020). Another point worth noting is that the application rate of artificial intelligence tools is significantly lower (M=2.6), and the level of technical support also shows a similar trend, indicating that Chinese instructors currently still rely mainly on traditional technical means. These phenomena highlight that the improvement of practice through continuing professional development proposed by PSF (2023) still needs to be further implemented in practice. Therefore, the current marginalization of artificial intelligence technology not only reflects technical constraints, but also indicates that instructors still need more training and support in terms of strategy selection.

In terms of teaching methods, according to the results of thematic analysis, traditional teaching methods coexist with student-centered teaching methods. Many Chinese instructors (such as Teacher Liang-C, Teacher Gao-C, Teacher Liu-C, Teacher Luo-C, Teacher Li-T) still mainly use traditional lecture methods, which shows that traditional teaching methods still have room for use in online teaching. Compared with traditional teaching methods, the use of constructivist teaching strategies is particularly obvious, such as collaborative learning and task-driven teaching (Zajda & Zajda, 2021). In short, whether using traditional teaching methods or learning-centered teaching methods, online Chinese instructors make local choices based on factors that affect the choice of teaching strategies. Their choices are highly consistent with the understanding and adapting to learner diversity and developing innovative teaching strategies emphasized by PSF (2023). Online Chinese instructors respond to learners' individual differences and cultural backgrounds through dynamic reconstruction of teaching methods.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the online teaching strategies employed by Mandarin instructors from Mainland China for non-native learners in ASEAN countries, identifying key influencing factors and proposing a framework for optimizing digital teaching efficacy. Utilizing an explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach, the research revealed that instructors predominantly rely on platforms such as Tencent Meeting and Zoom, with a clear preference for synchronous teaching modes such as live broadcasting, often complemented by student-centered methods including gamified learning and flipped classroom designs. These strategies reflect a pragmatic adaptation to infrastructural limitations, cultural diversity, and the heterogeneous learning needs characteristic of the ASEAN context.

The findings indicate that instructors' strategic choices are shaped by three interrelated factors: learner cognitive characteristics, including language proficiency, motivation, and digital readiness; teaching support systems, involving platform reliability and resource availability; and specific elements of the teaching process, such as maintaining learner engagement, managing interaction, and providing timely feedback. The interplay of these factors creates a complex decision-making environment that demands both pedagogical sensitivity and technological competence.

To address these dynamics, this study proposes a dual-path optimization method. At the instructional level, it recommends a hybrid "high interaction–strong autonomy" model that integrates the immediacy and presence of live instruction with the flexibility and personalization of flipped classroom design, thereby supporting differentiated learning and reinforcing student agency. At the system support level, it advocates the development of a three-dimensional support infrastructure encompassing intelligent tools such as multimodal platforms and language-specific plugins, data-driven feedback mechanisms for real-time learner analytics and scaffolding, and structured teacher development programs, including technical competence certification tailored to cross-cultural online Chinese instruction.

This study offers a practical approach to bridge the prevailing gap between technological capability and pedagogical effectiveness. In particular, the findings underscore the underutilization of data-driven feedback systems and AI-enhanced adaptive tools, highlighting the urgent need for targeted professional training and educational technology innovation. It is especially recommended to develop AI-powered intelligent supervision systems capable of monitoring learner engagement, predicting learning bottlenecks, and dynamically adapting instructional content in real time based on learners' linguistic and cultural profiles.

Overall, this study contributes both theoretical and practical value to the ongoing digital transformation of international Chinese language education. By aligning with the constructivist pedagogical principles with the Professional Standards Framework (Advance HE, 2023), and responding to the region-specific demands of ASEAN countries, it provides a replicable model for institutions, educational technology developers, and teacher training programs seeking to improve the quality, equity, and sustainability of global online Chinese instruction.

Future researchers may expand the sample to include more ASEAN countries, which would improve the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, incorporating learner perspectives would provide richer data to inform the design of a concrete teacher training module that addresses gaps in digital literacy and cultural competence among instructors from Mainland China engaged in cross-border Chinese language teaching.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted by ethical research standards. All participants were fully informed about the purpose of the research and provided their informed consent before participation. Participation was voluntary, and anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained throughout the data collection and analysis processes. The research protocol was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of Taylor's University (Reference Number: [HEC 2024/490]).

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable

request. Due to privacy and confidentiality agreements with participants, some data cannot be made publicly available.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

Interview Questions on Online Chinese Teaching Strategies

1	Please describe the teaching method you most often use in online Chinese teaching.
2	When using this teaching method, how do you evaluate learners' participation? What indicators or behaviours can reflect learners' active participation?
3	What key factors do you consider when choosing teaching strategies suitable for online classes? For example, learners' background, teaching content, technical conditions, etc.
4	When you teach Chinese online, how do you effectively carry out teaching work in terms of interaction and participation, personalized learning, resource utilization, learning community building, and classroom management?
5	In your opinion, what is the most effective way to teach online Chinese courses? Why is this method more effective than other methods?
6	Based on your experience, what online teaching strategies do you think can effectively improve Chinese learning? Please provide specific strategies and implementation suggestions.