

An Analysis of Grammatical Content in Teaching Materials Used by High School Spanish Teachers in Northeastern Thailand

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Abstract

The increasing popularity of the Spanish language at the secondary and high school levels, particularly in the Northeast of Thailand, has been notable over the past decade. Currently, eight schools offer Spanish either as a full program or as elective courses. As Spanish is one of the most recent additions to the high school curriculum, the selection of teaching materials varies significantly due to the absence of standardized textbooks, specifically for Thai high school students. This study seeks to analyze the alignment of grammatical content in these teaching materials, using the A1-level grammatical topics outlined in the *Plan Curricular del Instituto Cervantes* (PCIC) as a reference framework. The findings indicate that none of the schools fully covered all the grammatical content prescribed by the PCIC. Notably, schools offering Spanish as a program included fewer grammatical content in their materials, whereas schools offering Spanish as an elective course demonstrated higher levels of content completion. It is, therefore, recommended that Spanish teachers at the high school level develop teaching materials that comprehensively cover the grammatical content specified by the PCIC. Ideally, teachers should collaborate in create a textbook that meets the A1 standard, thereby establishing a new benchmark for the teaching of Spanish in Thailand.

Keywords: Spanish grammatical content; material analysis; teaching Spanish; Spanish teachers; Spanish as a foreign language in Thailand

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Introduction

The Spanish language has experienced a notable surge in interest within Thailand's educational landscape, with courses offered across various levels and institutions, including higher education, high schools (both public and private), international schools, and specialized language institutions. This growing demand has catalyzed the ongoing development and expansion of Spanish language education throughout the country.

At the high level, Spanish language education has undergone significant expansion. As of 2023, Spanish is incorporated into curricula through various modalities, including specialized language tracks, foreign language subjects, and elective courses. Current data indicate that over 3,000 students are engaged in Spanish studies at the high level, distributed across 24 schools nationwide. Notably, the northeastern region demonstrates the highest concentration, hosting eight schools across six provinces that offer Spanish language programs. (Instituto Cervantes, 2023)

Despite this growth, a significant challenge persists due to the absence of a standardized curriculum or shared teaching materials among these institutions. This lack of uniformity results in considerable variations in content and language proficiency levels across different schools. Recognizing this issue, the researchers identified an opportunity to conduct a comprehensive collection and analysis of Spanish teaching materials utilized in high schools within the northeastern region of Thailand.

Furthermore, the introduction of a Spanish language competency exam by Khon Kaen University in 2023 underscores the need for this research. The findings will provide crucial data to faculty members in the Spanish program at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, facilitating the development of high-quality, standardized examinations that accurately reflect the teaching levels in high schools across the region.

To address these needs, the researchers have undertaken the task of collecting data from school-specific teaching materials, with a particular focus on grammatical content, a fundamental component in Spanish language acquisition. The study aims to evaluate the alignment of these materials with the guidelines set forth in the *Cervantes Institute's Plan Curricular de Instituto de Cervantes* (PCIC). Through this analysis, the team will identify both the presence and absence of specific grammatical content across the materials used in each school. The anticipated outcomes of this research are expected to yield benefits for Spanish programs at both high and higher education levels, while also establishing a foundation for the future development and standardization of Spanish language teaching in Thailand.

Literature review

This literature review examines the concept of teaching materials in language education, with a particular focus on Spanish language instruction in Thailand. The researchers analyzed teaching materials and learning concepts from eight schools in Northeastern Thailand that offer Spanish courses. This analysis forms the basis for developing an evaluation tool to assess whether teaching materials contain essential content appropriate for specific proficiency levels. The review begins by exploring various definitions of teaching materials, proceeds to categorize their types, and then examines their application in the context of Spanish language education in Thailand.

The term "teaching material" encompasses various interpretations and is often referred to as "educational media" in Thai contexts. The Royal Institute Dictionary (2011) defines educational media as methods, tools, and equipment utilized as conduits for education. The Cervantes Institute Dictionary (n.d.) characterizes teaching materials, termed "curricular materials," as resources including textbooks, audiovisuals, and multimedia that facilitate the

learning process. These materials must align with the curriculum's objectives, content, methodology, and evaluation criteria.

The Thai Ministry of Education (2009, as cited in Hongsuphaphan, 2014) conceptualizes learning media as tools that promote and support the learning process, aiding students in acquiring knowledge and skills effectively. This perspective emphasizes the importance of aligning media with learners' developmental levels and diverse learning styles. Tomlinson (2012) offers a broader definition, describing teaching materials as any resource that facilitates language learning, encompassing textbooks, videos, vocabulary cards, games, and mobile interactions. Tomlinson notes that the majority of teaching materials are print-based, serving to provide information about the target language, guide learners in language practice, and encourage linguistic exploration.

Gerlach and Ely (1979, as cited in Dedkad, 2018) proposed a classification system for teaching materials, delineating six primary categories. This taxonomy aids educators in selecting appropriate tools to enhance student engagement and comprehension:

(1) Still Pictures: This category includes photographs, prints, diagrams, illustrations, and slides. These visual aids are particularly effective in presenting concrete representations of abstract concepts, benefiting visual learners.

(2) Audio Recordings: Encompassing records, tapes, and radio programs, these materials focus on auditory learning, enhancing listening comprehension and pronunciation skills.

(3) Motion Pictures: Films, videos, and television programs fall into this category, combining visual and auditory stimuli to convey information dynamically.

(4) Television: This refers to electronic audio-visual media, including live broadcasts and recorded programs, which can simulate real-time events or provide access to tailored educational content.

(5) Real Things, Simulations, and Models: This category includes tangible objects, real people, events, demonstrations, simulations, and models, facilitating experiential and interactive learning.

(6) Programmed and Computer-Assisted Instruction: This encompasses learning programs designed for computers, such as software, interactive tutorials, and educational games, offering personalized and adaptive learning experiences.

The Cervantes Institute's publication “El español en el mundo” (2023) provides a historical perspective on Spanish education in Thailand. The introduction of Spanish language studies began at Chulalongkorn University in 1965, with Spanish becoming a major subject by 1975. Currently, nine Thai universities offer Spanish courses, with four providing bachelor's degrees in the language. Additionally, 25 secondary schools, primarily concentrated in the northeastern region, include Spanish in their curricula. The language's inclusion as an optional subject in the Thai University Central Admission System (TCAS) and its offering in private institutions underscore its growing significance in the Thai educational landscape.

Ramos (2018), in “La situación actual de la enseñanza de español en Tailandia”, identified challenges in Spanish language education in Thailand, including a shortage of native Spanish teachers and appropriate materials. However, recent years have seen improvements in these areas.

Pranee Prabripoo et al. (2016) emphasized the crucial role of textbooks as learning media, highlighting their function as tools for stimulating cognitive potential and supporting students' knowledge and skill development in alignment with curricular objectives.

Tomlinson (2012) traced the evolution of foreign language teaching materials, noting a shift from traditional, grammar-focused approaches to more diverse and interactive methodologies. This transition has been marked by the integration of technology-based materials and a greater emphasis on communicative competence.

Furthermore, we also studied about material development from McDonough & Shaw (2003, as cited in Tomlinson, 2012) they proposed four key criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of English teaching materials:

- (1) Usability: Materials should be user-friendly for both educators and learners.
- (2) Generalizability: Resources should be applicable across various educational contexts.
- (3) Adaptability: Materials should accommodate diverse learner abilities and needs.
- (4) Flexibility: Resources should offer multiple presentation methods to engage learners and support various teaching approaches.

In summary, the evolution of English language teaching materials has played an essential role in language learning, and the development of quality assessment criteria for teaching materials has led to the creation of more effective resources to enhance the learning process.

Blanco Canales (2010) developed a comprehensive framework for analyzing, evaluating, and developing Spanish language teaching materials for young learners. Her work references foundational documents such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the Curriculum Plan of the Cervantes Institute (PCIC), emphasizing the importance of integrating language proficiency with cultural understanding.

Blanco Canales' research highlights the CEFR's emphasis on comprehensive language learning, incorporating comprehension, communication, and cultural awareness. The PCIC further categorizes learning objectives and integrates cultural perspectives, recognizing the intrinsic link between language proficiency and cultural competence.

Additionally, Blanco Canales examined earlier analytical frameworks, such as that proposed by Ezquerro (1974, as cited in Blanco Canales, 2010), which categorizes the analysis of Spanish teaching materials into three main areas: explanation of book components and structure, guidelines for book usage, and presentation of vocabulary and grammar content.

This literature review establishes a theoretical and practical foundation for analyzing the incorporation of grammatical content in Spanish teaching materials used for secondary school students in Thailand. By examining definitions, types, and evaluation criteria for teaching materials, alongside the specific context of Spanish language education in Thailand, this review provides a comprehensive basis for assessing the alignment of current materials with effective teaching practices and learner needs.

Research Objective

The primary objective of this research is to conduct a comprehensive collection and analysis of the grammatical content embedded within Spanish teaching materials currently employed in high schools across the northeastern region of Thailand. This endeavor aims to

establish a robust foundation for the future development of standardized Spanish teaching materials for higher education throughout Thailand.

The study focuses analyzing grammatical content in Spanish teaching materials from eight high schools in the northeastern region of Thailand. The analytical process employs a specially designed data recording form that assesses the alignment of grammatical content with the reference documents provided by the Cervantes Institute (PCIC). The collected data will then undergo thorough analysis in alongside with the researchers' observational findings. This integrated approach will facilitate the formulation of conclusions that clarify the presence or absence of specific grammatical content within the examined materials.

Research Methodology

The materials were collected from 7 high schools where Spanish is taught as a foreign language. This study is a part of the research entitled “A Study on Relationship between Materials Used in Spanish Classes and Motivations of Spanish Learners in High Schools in Northeastern Thailand” whose number is HE673174, approved by the Khon Kaen University Ethics Committee for Human Research (KKUEC).

Date collection

The data were collected from the 30th of May to the 7th of June 2024. The 7 high schools that participated in this study are as follows:

1. Pathumthep Wittayakarn School (Nong Khai)
2. Kanthararom School (Si Sa Ket)
3. Benchama Maharat School (Ubon Ratchathani)
4. Kamalasai School (Kalasin)
5. Kalasin Pittayasan School (Kalasin)
6. Anukoolnaree School (Kalasin)
7. Khon Kaen Wittayayon School (Khon Kaen)

The teachers from the schools mentioned above were asked to share their teaching materials, which were Power Points, textbooks, printed sheets or in PDF files of materials prepared by themselves, activities, games, etc.

Research instrument

The curriculum plan of the Cervantes Institute (PCIC) was employed as an instrumental of this study. The checklist was created with the grammatical content in A1 level, as follows:

The content of the curriculum plan of the Cervantes Institute (PCIC)

Level A1

1. Noun

- 1.1 Common nouns (chico, chica, casa, coche, etc.)
- 1.2 Proper nouns (Raúl, María, Sebastián, Fernández, etc.)
- 1.3 Number of nouns (chico – chicos, profesor – profesores, etc.)

2. Adjective

- 2.1 Classes of adjectives (un chico guapo, una chica guapa, los estudiantes tailandeses, etc.)
- 2.2. Gender of adjectives (alto/ alta, delgado/delgada, francés/ francesa, etc.)
- 2.3. Number of adjectives (alto/altos, español/españoles, española/españolas, etc.)
- 2.4. Position of adjectives (un chico guapo, una chica simpática, etc.)
- 2.5. Degrees of adjectives (un chico muy guapo, etc.)

3. Article

- 3.1. Definite article (el, la, los, las)
- 3.2. Indefinite article (un, una, unos, unas)
- 3.3. Absence of determination: bare nouns (hay árboles en el parque, no hay leche, etc.)

4. Demonstrative pronouns (este, esta, estos, estas, ese esa, esos, esas, aquel, aquella, aquellos, aquellas)

5. Possessive adjective (mi, tu, su, nuestro/a, vuestro/a)

6. Quantifiers

- 6.1. Proper quantifiers (dos, tres, cuatro, quince, tres mil, etc.)
- 6.2. Focal or presuppositional quantifiers (También, tampoco)

7. Pronouns⁴

- 7.1. Personal Pronouns (yo, tú, él, ella, usted, nosotros, vosotros, ellos/ellas/ ustedes)
- 7.2. Relative Pronouns (el libro que tengo, la falda que compra, etc.)
- 7.3. Interrogative Phrases (¿qué?, ¿quién/quienes?, ¿cuánto/cuánta/cuántos/cuántas?)

8. Adverbs of Place

- 8.2. Predicate Adverbs (aquí, allí, hoy, ahora, mañana, etc.)
- 8.5. Conjunctive Adverbs (entonces, también, tampoco)
- 8.8. Relative and Interrogative Adverbs (¿dónde?, ¿cómo?)
- 8.9. Adverbial Phrases (¿por qué?)

9. Verb

- 9.1. Present Indicative Tense (hablo, hablas, habla, hablamos, habláis, hablan, etc.)
- 9.4. Non-personal Forms of the Verb (estudiar español es fácil, me gusta viajar, etc.)

Results

After the data were analyzed by using the checklist of A1 level grammatical content of the PCIC, as shown in Table 1.

⁴ According to the PCIC, the grammatical content no.7.4, 8.1. 8.3, 8.4, 8.6, 8.7, 9.2, and 9.3 are not included in A1 level, so they were not mentioned in our content checklist.

Table 1

Checklist of grammatical content from materials of all schools

The grammatical content of the PCIC Level A1	Pathumthep Wittayakarn	Benchara Maharat	Kanthararom	Kamalai	Kalasin Pittayan	Khon Kaen Wittayayon	Anukoolnar ee
1.Noun	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
1.1 Common nouns							
1.2 Proper nouns	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
1.3 Number of nouns	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.Adjective	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.1 Classes of adjectives							
2.2. Gender of adjectives	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.3. Number of adjectives	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
2.4. Position of adjectives	✓	✓			✓		
2.5. Degrees of adjectives				✓	✓		
3.Article	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.1. Definite article							
3.2. Indefinite article	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.3. Absence of determination: bare nouns	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4.Demonstrative pronouns	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

5. Possessive adjectives	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6. Quantifiers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
6.1. Proper quantifiers							
6.2. Focal or presuppositional quantifiers							
7. Pronouns	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7.1. Personal Pronouns							
7.2. Relative Pronouns						✓	✓
7.3. Interrogative Phrases	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8. Adverbs of Place	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
8.2. Predicate Adverbs							
8.5. Conjunctive Adverbs	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
8.8. Relative and Interrogative Adverbs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8.9. Adverbial Phrases	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9. Verb	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9.1. Present Indicative Tense							
9.4. Non-personal Forms of the Verb	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 2

Percentage of the schools where the grammatical content were included in their teaching materials

The grammatical content of the PCIC Level A1	The number of the schools where the grammatical content was taught or included in their teaching materials	Percentage of the schools where the grammatical content was taught or included in their teaching materials
1.Noun		
1.1 Common nouns	6	85.71
1.2 Proper nouns	6	85.71
1.3 Number of nouns	7	100.00
2.Adjective	7	
2.1 Classes of adjectives		100.00
2.2. Gender of adjectives	7	100.00
2.3. Number of adjectives	6	85.71
2.4. Position of adjectives	3	42.86
2.5. Degrees of adjectives	2	28.57
3.Article	7	
3.1. Definite article		100.00
3.2. Indefinite article	7	100.00
3.3. Absence of determination: bare nouns	7	100.00
4.Demonstrative pronouns	7	100.00
5.Possessive adjectives	7	100.00
6.Quantifiers	5	
6.1. Proper quantifiers		71.43

6.2. Focal or presuppositional quantifiers	0	0.00
7.Pronouns	5	
7.1. Personal Pronouns		71.43
7.2. Relative Pronouns	2	28.57
7.3. Interrogative Phrases	7	100.0
8.Adverbs of Place	5	
8.2. Predicate Adverbs		71.4
8.5. Conjunctive Adverbs	6	85.7
8.8. Relative and Interrogative Adverbs	7	100.0
8.9. Adverbial Phrases	7	100.0
9. Verb	7	
9.1. Present Indicative Tense		100.0
9.4. Non-personal Forms of the Verb	7	100.0

From Table 2, it can be described by the grammatical content as follows:

1. Nouns:

Table 2 shows that both common nouns and proper nouns were covered in 85.71% of schools, indicating that most institutions ensure students understand these two fundamental categories of nouns. Additionally, the number of nouns, which includes singular and plural forms, was taught in all schools. This suggests a universal emphasis on mastering the number agreement in nouns early on in language learning.

2. Adjectives:

Adjectives were given substantial attention, with classes of adjectives and gender of adjectives being taught in all schools (100%). However, coverage for the number of adjectives is slightly lower at 85.71%. Interestingly, the position of adjectives is covered in only 42.86% of schools, suggesting that it is considered a more advanced topic at this level. Similarly, degrees of adjectives (comparatives and superlatives) are taught in 28.57% of schools, showing limited emphasis at this early stage.

3. Articles:

This section indicates comprehensive coverage of articles, with definite articles, indefinite articles, and the concept of bare nouns (absence of determination) being taught in 100% of schools. These topics are clearly viewed as essential for beginners, ensuring that learners can differentiate between using articles and not using them when necessary.

4. Demonstrative pronouns:

The table indicates that demonstrative pronouns is universally taught in all schools.

5. Possessive adjective:

Relative pronouns, which are more complex, are covered in only 28.57% of schools, while interrogative phrases receive universal coverage (100%), emphasizing their importance for forming questions early in language learning.

6. Quantifiers:

The topic of quantifiers is divided into two categories: proper quantifiers are taught in 71.43% of schools, showing moderate emphasis. However, focal or presuppositional quantifiers are not taught at all (0%), reflecting their more advanced nature and likely irrelevance to Level A1 learners.

7. Pronouns:

However, personal pronouns were taught in all schools, reflecting a basic and important topic that students should learn. Relative pronouns, which are more complex, were taught in only 28.57% of schools, while interrogative phrases receive universal coverage (100%), emphasizing their importance for forming questions early in language learning.

8. Adverbs of Place:

Adverbs are another important focus, with predicate adverbs taught in 71.43% of schools, showing that the majority include this in their curriculum. Conjunctive adverbs are taught in 85.71% of schools, and both relative and interrogative adverbs and adverbial phrases receive full coverage (100%). This suggests that understanding how adverbs function in questions and sentences is seen as critical at this level.

9. Verbs:

Verb usage is a major focus in Level A1, with present indicative tense and non-personal forms of the verb (e.g., infinitives and gerunds) being taught in all schools. This reflects the fundamental importance of these verb forms for basic communication, with universal coverage across all institutions.

Table 3

Percentage of the content included in their teaching materials of each school

School	Percentage of the content included in the teaching materials of each school
1. Pathumthep Wittayakarn School	87.50%
2. Kanthararom School	70.83%

3. Benchama Maharat School	87.50%
4. Kamalasai School	87.50%
5. Kalasin Pittayasan School	91.67%
6. Anukoolnaree School	75%
7. Khon Kaen Wittayayon School	66.67%

From Table 3, we can rank the percentage of the content included in their teaching materials, with Kalasin Pittayasan School having the highest percentage of 91.67%, followed by Pathumthep Wittayakarn School, Benchama Maharat School and Kamalasai School, at the same percentage of 83.50%. On the other hand, the teaching materials of Anukoolnaree School covered only 75% of all, Kanthararom School at 70.83%, and Khon Kaen Wittayayon School having the lowest at 66.67%.

Conclusions and discussions

This study aims to analyze the grammatical content in teaching materials used in Spanish classes collected from seven high schools in the Northeast of Thailand. The PCIC was employed as a reference framework or research instrument to check the completion of their materials and the alignment with the A1 level of language proficiency. The findings of this study revealed that, from 24 subtopics of Spanish Grammar mentioned in the PCIC, 13 subtopics were included in materials employed by all seven schools, which was at the percentage of 54.17%. Those topics were number of nouns, classes and gender of adjectives, both definite and indefinite articles, along with the absence of determinations, demonstrative pronouns, possessive adjectives, interrogative phrases, relative and interrogative adverbs, and adverbial phrases, present indicative tense and non-personal forms of the verb.

The grammatical subtopic notably absent from the teaching materials of all schools was focal or presuppositional quantifiers (e.g., *también*, *tampoco*), which is generally regarded as a relatively simple concept. Its exclusion from the materials may be attributed to the perceived ease of its usage; instructors may assume that students can acquire this knowledge through contextual examples, thus deeming explicit instruction unnecessary. In contrast, another topic, the use of relative pronouns, was only present in the materials of the two schools. Unlike the previously mentioned content, relative pronouns are considered more complex for students at the A1 proficiency level. At this stage, learners are typically introduced to the relative pronoun *que* (that) primarily for the purpose of enhancing their reading comprehension.

Unexpectedly, some A2 level grammatical structures, such as the *pretérito indefinido* and *pretérito imperfecto* (past tenses in Spanish), were identified in the teaching materials of Benchama Maharat School (where Spanish is offered as a full program) and Kamalasai School (where Spanish is an elective course). In terms of content coverage, Kalasin Pittayasan School achieved the highest percentage of completed grammatical topics, with an average of 91.67%. This is noteworthy, given that Spanish is offered only as an elective foreign language course for students in the mathematics and science program. Among the schools where Spanish is offered as a full program, Pathumthep Wittayakarn School and Benchama Maharat School both achieved a coverage rate of 87.50%, followed by Anukoolnaree School (75%) and Khon Kaen Wittayayon School (66.67%).

The selection of grammatical content is often based on the textbooks used by teachers in a given school. Since there is no standardized Spanish textbook specifically designed for Thai students across all schools, teachers independently choose textbooks they believe best suit their students or source materials from the internet. It is recommended that all schools collaborate to develop a comprehensive textbook covering the grammatical content of the PCIC, ensuring that students can achieve at least an A1 level in Spanish by the time they graduate from high school.

The findings of this study should serve as a valuable resource for teachers in the region to improve their teaching materials and align the grammatical content with the A1 level standard as prescribed by the *Plan Curricular del Instituto Cervantes* (PCIC). It is essential to ensure that students are taught at least A1-level grammatical content when finishing their Spanish courses in school. This is particularly crucial for students who choose to study in Spanish programs, as reaching the A1 level will enable them to sit for the A-Level examination, if they wish to pursue Spanish studies at the university level.

One limitation of this research was the inability to obtain teaching materials from one of the schools in the region, as the school did not consent to participate in the study. Consequently, the research does not reflect the full scope of materials used in all schools offering Spanish in the Northeast of Thailand. For future studies, the researchers would like to collect data from all schools in Thailand where Spanish is taught in order obtain more comprehensive and significant results that could be beneficial for the development of teaching materials and a standardized curriculum.

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