Title of Research: *Perceptions of Chinese Spanish-Language Tutors on the Learning and Teaching of Spanish Language and Cultures in China*

1. Basic information

1.1. Proposed Study Dates and Duration
- **Start date:** April 2024
- **End date:** December 2024

1.2. Team Member (s)

Name and surname	Designation	Institution	School	Staff ID nr.
Alejandro Castellano	Senior Language Lecturer	XJTLU	School of Languages / Modern Languages Centre	00100000733

2. Study Plan

2.1 Project Background

In recent years, the growing significance of the Spanish language in China has underscored the need for a deeper understanding of Spanish language education within this context. At the same time, there still exists a standing debate surrounding the effectiveness of prevailing language teaching methodologies, particularly the communicative approach, in Chinese educational settings, as well as the related-challenges that its actual implementation often brings to foreign language teachers. These reported challenges often manifest as students' reluctance to actively engage, ask questions, or participate in discussions, all of which is often attributed in part to the substantial cultural disparity between Chinese and Western teaching traditions. Addressing these cultural barriers is vital for optimizing the learning and teaching experience. Furthermore, the distinct cultural and linguistic disparities between Spain and China require thorough reflection and comprehension to facilitate effective language acquisition. At this point, getting local tutors' insights heard and understood may shed some light over the question.

By considering the perspectives of Chinese locals on these matters, the study seeks to inform more culturally sensitive and efficacious teaching strategies, thereby enhancing the overall learning experience for both students and educators. Through this comprehensive approach, the study aims to contribute to the advancement of Spanish language education in China and promote greater cross-cultural understanding and communication.

In summary, the project explores the perceptions of Chinese Spanish-language tutors regarding various aspects of the learning and teaching of Spanish language and culture in China, such as the effectiveness of teaching approaches, cultural challenges, and the impact of linguistic differences between Spanish and Chinese. The research seeks to understand how these factors influence the language learning and teaching process for both students and tutors, ultimately providing insights into the landscape of Spanish language education in China. These may ultimately prove beneficial for Spanish language tutors operating within the Chinese educational framework. Following the interviews, the gathered data will be analyzed, and the main findings will be disseminated through publications or presented at relevant conferences, seminars, or training sessions.

2.2 Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of the study is to investigate the perceptions of Chinese Spanish-language tutors on the learning and teaching of Spanish language and cultures in China. The objectives are as follows:

A. To reflect over the effectiveness of teaching approaches employed by Chinese Spanish-language tutors in China.
B. To identify the main cultural challenges encountered during the learning and teaching of Spanish in China.
C. To assess the impact of linguistic differences between Spanish and Chinese on the language learning process.
D. To determine the extent to which these factors influence the overall language learning and teaching process for both students and tutors.
E. To support further research into related topics arising from current research. The data collected at this stage of the study will lay the groundwork for advancing research in the field of Learning and Teaching of Spanish language and Cultures in China.

2.3 Research Question(s) and Methodology

Research questions:

1. How do Chinese Spanish-language tutors perceive the effectiveness of teaching approaches employed in Chinese educational settings, particularly considering the challenges associated with implementing methodologies such as the communicative approach?

2. What are the primary cultural challenges encountered by Chinese Spanish-language tutors during the learning and teaching of Spanish in China, and what are their perceptions of the challenges faced by foreign language tutors in similar contexts?

3. To what extent do linguistic differences between Spanish and Chinese influence the language learning process for students, and how do Chinese Spanish-language tutors navigate these differences in their teaching practices to optimize learning outcomes?

Methodology:

The proposed methodology for this study adopts a phenomenological approach, which aims to explore and describe the essence of the shared lived experiences of Chinese Spanish-language tutors in the context of teaching and learning Spanish language and culture in China. This approach aligns with the study's objective of uncovering the subjective perceptions and interpretations of tutors regarding various aspects of Spanish language education in China.

The study thus involves two main steps:

1) Firstly, data collection will be conducted through audio-recorded, individual interviews with Chinese Spanish-language tutors, conducted in Spanish. Individual interviews offer participants a confidential space to share their experiences, perspectives, and insights without the influence of group dynamics.

During the interviews, participants will be encouraged to discuss their experiences and insights related to the related-questions, all which are organized under the following blocks:

A. Introductory Questions
B. Cultural and Linguistic Differences China-Spain
C. Methodology and Learning and Teaching Strategies

The question list will be provided to each participant at least two days prior to the interview session, so they can reflect upon and prepare for it accordingly. Participants are encouraged to inform the primary researcher if there are any questions they prefer not to answer. The question list document is also included as an annex of this study plan, for reference. For the sake of a better understanding, questions have been listed both in English and Spanish (see "0. Interview-questions"), although it is worth noting that the interview will be carried out exclusively in Spanish.

2) Secondly, data analysis will involve transcribing and coding the recorded interviews. Significant statements derived from the interviews will be identified and organized into clusters of meaning and emerging themes using qualitative analysis software. This process will allow for the identification of the essence of participants' experiences and the exploration of fundamental structures and underlying meanings inherent in tutors' perceptions and experiences.

a. Specific indications of what will be done, when it will be done, and who it will be done to (how will participants be selected)

Participants will be selected based on specific criteria: they must be China-born individuals who have learned Spanish and are currently engaged in teaching Spanish at University level in China, regardless of the stage of Spanish language that they teach. Recruitment will involve sending invitations to potential participants via email; upon confirmation of their willingness to participate via signing a physical consent form, individual interviews will be conducted with each participant. Interviews will be scheduled at mutually convenient times and will be conducted in Spanish by the main researcher, Alejandro Castellano. All interviews will be recorded in audio format and are expected to last no longer than 45 minutes.

At this first stage of the research, invitations to participate will only be sent out to the Chinese staff teaching Spanish at the Spanish Language Division (SPA) of the MLC, so there is an expectation of a maximum of ten participants taking part on the study. This, in principle, shall be sufficient to collect enough information for the study. However, further stages of the research might demand a larger number of external participants, and who will also be selected according to the selection requirements described above.

b. Whether permissions from other parties (e.g., employers, owners of venues, the police, etc) have been gained

N/A

c. Whether and how people will be informed of the study and how consent will be gained (whether the form will be signed, or it will be agreed to as part of proceeding with an online survey)

Participants will be informed of the study through an invitation email, which will provide detailed information about the research purpose, procedures, and their rights as participants (see "2. Participant Information Sheet"). Consent will be obtained through a physically-signed consent form named "3. Informed Consent Form".

d. Where the data will be held and when and for how long and what security arrangements have been made.

Consent forms will be stored separately from audio recordings and transcripts of the participants' interviews, to avoid any identification in the event of illegal acquisition of the database: a) consent forms will be stored in secured files in the office of the primary researcher, and b) recordings and transcripts of the interviews will be stored in researchers' computers and in an external hard drive protected by a password. Participants will use aliases to ensure anonymity during data transcription, analysis, and storage. For the same reasons, every detail identifying a participant will be removed from the audio recordings and transcripts. The informed consent and recordings will be destroyed after three years. Afterward, a copy of transcripts will be stored in the primary researcher's personal computer and an external hard drive, protected by a password and completely de-identified. In order to be potentially used for future research comparisons, this copy of the transcripts will be stored for a maximum period of ten years. This shouldn't raise security concerns since participant identification is impossible without consent forms and/or audio recordings.

e. Whether personal information will be collected or not (with a note that if none is to be collected then the consent form should be adjusted to reflect the fact that it will be impossible to remove participants data once they have submitted it)

Only basic personal information will be collected through the consent form, where researcher will write the alias of each participant. If one participant requests their withdrawal, it will be possible to identify their data through this document. Consequently, in this case, any adjustment in the consent form is not necessary.

f. If personal information is collected what steps will be included to ensure that any de-identification is successful
See 2.3.d)

2.4 Work Plan and Timeline

-   April-May 2024: Recruitment of participants and scheduling of interview sessions.
-   May-June 2024: Conduct individual interviews with participants.
-   July-August 2024: Transcription and analysis of interview data.
-   September-October 2024: Compilation of research findings and drafting of the research report.
-   November-December 2024: Finalization of research findings and dissemination of findings through scholarly publications or presentations at relevant conferences, seminars, or training sessions.