



VNU Journal of Foreign Studies

Journal homepage: <https://jfs.ulis.vnu.edu.vn/>

A QUALITATIVE META-SYNTHESIS OF CHINESE LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING: 2010-2024

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Received 21 January 2025

Revised 30 October 2025; Accepted 22 December 2025

Abstract: The rising global influence of China has significantly accelerated the spread and support for Chinese language education worldwide. This geopolitical shift has not only increased the number of Chinese language learners but also reshaped pedagogical approaches and research priorities in the field. This study investigates the evolving landscape of Chinese language teaching and learning through a qualitative meta-synthesis of academic articles published between 2010 and 2024. By categorizing 151 key words from the dataset of 60 academic articles, the present study identifies two key thematic trends: (1) Theoretical aspect: indexes of Chinese language features, and (2) Practical aspect: issues of Chinese instructional practices, two of which define key aspects of Chinese language teaching and learning respectively. The findings reveal how these two themes interconnect to reflect descriptive synthesis of relevant sub-themes identified from the categorization of key words and construction of research focus. The study concludes with implications for language policy, teacher training, and future research directions in Chinese teaching and learning contexts.

Keywords: Chinese language teaching, Chinese language learning, Chinese as a foreign language, meta-synthesis, classroom learning environments

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Email address: thanhtn@hcmute.edu.vn<https://doi.org/10.63023/2525-2445/jfs.ulis.5450>

PHÂN TÍCH TỔNG HỢP ĐỊNH TÍNH VỀ DẠY VÀ HỌC TIẾNG TRUNG: GIAI ĐOẠN 2010 ĐẾN 2024

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Nhận bài ngày 21 tháng 01 năm 2025

Chỉnh sửa ngày 30 tháng 10 năm 2025; Chấp nhận đăng ngày 22 tháng 12 năm 2025

Tóm tắt: Sự gia tăng ảnh hưởng toàn cầu của Trung Quốc đã thúc đẩy mạnh mẽ sự lan rộng và hỗ trợ đối với giáo dục tiếng Trung trên toàn thế giới. Sự chuyển dịch địa chính trị này không chỉ làm gia tăng số lượng người học tiếng Trung mà còn tái định hình các phương pháp sư phạm và ưu tiên nghiên cứu trong lĩnh vực này. Nghiên cứu hiện tại khảo sát bối cảnh đang phát triển của việc dạy và học tiếng Trung thông qua phương pháp tổng hợp định tính các bài báo học thuật được công bố trong giai đoạn từ năm 2010 đến 2024. Thông qua việc phân loại 151 từ khóa từ tập hợp 60 bài báo, nghiên cứu xác định hai xu hướng chủ đề chính: (1) Khía cạnh lý thuyết: các chỉ số đặc trưng của ngôn ngữ tiếng Trung và (2) Khía cạnh thực tiễn: các vấn đề trong thực hành giảng dạy tiếng Trung - hai yếu tố đại diện cho những khía cạnh cốt lõi trong việc dạy và học tiếng Trung. Kết quả cho thấy hai chủ đề này có mối liên hệ chặt chẽ, phản ánh sự tổng hợp mô tả các tiểu chủ đề liên quan được xác định từ quá trình phân loại từ khóa và xây dựng trọng tâm nghiên cứu. Nghiên cứu đưa ra những đề xuất với chính sách ngôn ngữ, đào tạo giáo viên và định hướng nghiên cứu trong tương lai cho cùng chủ đề dạy và học tiếng Trung.

Từ khóa: giảng dạy tiếng Trung, học tiếng Trung, tiếng Trung là một ngoại ngữ, phân tích tổng hợp, môi trường học

1. Introduction

The current ecology of languages has strongly positioned Chinese in its prospective of becoming a global language in the 21st century. Driven by the rise of Chinese speakers as well as the global population of Chinese across different countries (Zhou, 2022), the linguistic landscape of Chinese has expanded beyond its traditional boundaries. In particular, Goh and Lim (2016) conceptualize this expansion through a three-tiered framework: the Inner Circle, comprising Mainland China and Taiwan; the Outer Circle, representing overseas Chinese communities where the language is primarily used in domestic or community settings; and the Expanding Circle, which includes countries such as Japan, South Korea, and those in North America and Europe, where Chinese is taught and learned as a foreign language.

At present, in many regions, Chinese is no longer taught solely for linguistic competence but also as a gateway to cultural diversity in Chinese language education (Feng et al., 2025), which leads to a dynamic integration marked by diversification in learner profiles, instructional settings, and pedagogical strategies in the shaping of Chinese as a foreign language classroom as a multilingual and multinational learning environment (Wang & Kirkpatrick, 2012). Furthermore, power dynamics in Chinese language education also reconsiders the representation of learning environment and the formation of learner identity towards the integration with learner's engagement in Chinese language instruction (Sun, 2025). These

current developments therefore underscore the need for a comprehensive synthesis of current research to inform future directions in Chinese language education.

Against this backdrop of global linguistic growth, the present study investigates the phenomenon of Chinese language teaching and learning through a qualitative meta-synthesis of academic literature over one decade from 2010 to 2024. The selected time period was marked with significant cultural and educational shifts in Chinese language education. Recent studies revealed a synthesis of findings from research topics such as the integration of technology in Chinese language education (Xu, 2024a), motivation in learning Chinese as a second or foreign language (CSL/CFL) (Lam et al., 2025), and the trend of promoting Chinese language education and culture around the world (Song & Sercu, 2025). These studies considerably revealed key patterns and trends as well as theoretical frameworks and concepts in the domain of L2 Chinese language teaching and learning. Collectively, these studies reveal key patterns, theoretical frameworks, and emerging concepts that define the current landscape of L2 Chinese language teaching and learning around the timing from 2010 to 2024.

A particular research focus of this study is the synthesis of findings from a selection of academic articles in various research designs. In particular, this study aims to uncover key aspects that characterize contemporary Chinese language education. The implementation of qualitative meta-synthesis offers two major contributions: first, it provides a descriptive synthesis of insights and theoretical perspectives regarding the teaching and learning of Chinese language; second, it further explores the pedagogical development of Chinese language teaching and learning through the intersection between theoretical and practical aspects.

2. Methodology

This section outlines the methodological foundation of the present study. It begins with the employment of qualitative meta-synthesis as its primary methodological approach to systematically synthesize findings from previous qualitative research, to be followed by the framing of research background. This method enables the identification of themes and sub-themes across the collected academic articles, thus offering a comprehensive understanding of the evolving landscape of Chinese language teaching and learning. The last part of this section outlines specific stages of the meta-synthesis process adapted in this study.

2.1. Defining Qualitative Meta-Synthesis

Grounded on the abstraction of findings at a higher level, qualitative meta-synthesis offers an in-depth account of studying a complete phenomenon or experience using the interpretive paradigm as the theoretical platform to compare, to translate and to analyze previous qualitative studies toward the amalgamation of new interpretations and new meanings (Lachal et al., 2017). Rather than focus on the cause-and-effect relationship of the phenomenon, the component of meta-synthesis should explain the phenomenon using the act of summarizing existing knowledge in specific fields for new insights and understanding (Walsh & Downe, 2005). Furthermore, the meta-synthesis should also emphasize the explanatory nature while presenting findings and maintain the holistic perspective while reviewing findings (Walsh & Downe, 2005).

Recent developments of qualitative meta-synthesis have raised the questions regarding the aggregation of research findings to enhance generalizability (Estabrooks et al., 1994). According to Coatsworth-Puspoky et al. (2025), the synthesis means collecting quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods studies together to address the research topic before the follow-up stages of integrating and interpreting findings. In this study, a similar adaptation of

synthesizing research findings was conducted to address the separation of findings when collecting data and capturing their significance. It is due to the reason that findings from meta-synthesis may be subject to the temporary and data-driven nature of theory generation which may allow spaces for the recurrence of themes (Estabrooks et al., 1994).

Certain requirements should be met to ensure the reliability of findings from meta-synthesis studies. First, the search for truth value should come from explanatory efforts to reflect transitional stages of revision (Jensen & Allen, 1996). Second, apart from the expansion of new insights and temporary nature, the documentation of evidence in meta-synthesis studies should ensure triangulation in data interpretation. This can be achieved through the multiple data sources and multiple angles of data analysis (Pielstick, 1998).

2.2. Framing Research Background

The Context of Chinese Language Teaching and Learning

The classroom learning environment is traditionally linked with the notion of space where learning activities physically take place and they are psychologically facilitated through the interaction among teachers, learners, and broader educational context (Fraser, 1994). These identified interactions in the classroom learning environment have an implication in exploring certain issues such as level of engagement in classroom learning (Cavanagh, 2015), educational and social values as being derived from a positive classroom learning environment (Koth et al., 2008). Other aspects include learner's perspective toward teaching and learning strategies in specific classroom learning environments (Hugerat, 2016), and the quality of classroom learning environment and its link with learner's literacy development (Connor et al., 2014).

In the specific case of Chinese language teaching and learning, the classroom learning environment considerably adapts the historical transformation of teaching practice in specific sociocultural contexts. Mainland China context, for instance, observed a transition from teaching Confucian classics and literature to the hybrid of Western culture in Chinese education; and this transition evidently had certain impacts on the way cultural thinking is reconstructed and re-conceptualized (Deng, 2011). The expansion of teaching contexts from Mainland China to worldwide has shaped Chinese language pedagogy into the development of critical issues among which include the borrowing of Western theories, the compilation of textbooks and learning materials, and the design of proficiency tests (Gao et al., 2014).

The Intersection Between Theories and Practices in Chinese Language Teaching and Learning

To identify the intersection between Chinese language teaching and learning, it would be essential to incorporate theories into the shift of teaching and learning practices. Derived from theoretical development of second language acquisition for CFL teaching and learning (Zhang, 2016), language patterns can be also identified from Chinese language classroom interaction between teacher and learners through the use of conversational analysis (He, 2004) or through the inclusion of cultural and educational background into learner's use of strategies for Chinese language learning (Rao, 2006). Furthermore, features of Chinese language can be integrated with linguistic motivation as the mediator for the interaction between form and meaning in teaching listening, speaking, vocabulary, and grammar for learners through language patterns and visual aids (Huang, 2012).

In terms of practices, driven by the concerns of constructing learning outcomes associated with specific learning environments (Chua et al., 2011), specific indicators are also derived for curriculum developers to evaluate the effectiveness of the designated courses on

learning achievement and learning satisfaction toward the learning courses. Another controversial issue in Chinese language pedagogy is the gap of authenticity identified in the forms of instructional language in spoken form and how to reduce the gap between authenticity and artificiality in language usage (Tao, 2005).

2.3. Approaching Qualitative Meta-synthesis

In this section, we further explain in detail how to integrate the intersection between theories and practices- two key aspects of Chinese language teaching and learning- with the adaptation of qualitative meta-synthesis for the collection of selected academic articles in various research designs. Driven by Lachal et al. (2017) and Walsh and Downe (2005), this section explains details on the implementation of 6 steps to approach qualitative meta-synthesis in the present study.

Step 1: Determining Research Scopes

The researchers decided to perform the search strategy in two rounds to ensure both breadth and depth in identifying general research scopes for the present study. In the first round, an initial pool of articles from Google Scholar was collected using broad search terms such as *Standard Chinese language teaching*, *Chinese language learner perception*, and *Chinese language teaching ideology*. These combinations were mainly derived from Gong et al. (2020)'s commentary on development of the teaching of Chinese as a second or foreign language (CSL/CFL) and aimed to establish a foundational dataset that reflects both the diversity and scope of research for the present study.

Step 2: Performing and Narrowing Search Strategy

In the second round, the researchers incorporated the context with the intersection between theories and practices by processing the searching terms following the specific formula: [theoretical/practical aspects] + [domains of Chinese language]. This search primarily aimed to refine the focus on studies that addressed both theoretical and practical aspects in the Chinese language teaching and learning and the context diversified by domains of Chinese language.

Suggested keywords for the string [theoretical/practical aspects] included the following search terms: *teaching*, *learning*, *language attitude*, *language policy*, *nativeness*, and *intelligibility*. Apart from *teaching* and *learning* as general search terms, the other search terms were derived from Gao et al. (2014) (*language policy*), Wang & Jenkins (2016) (*nativeness*, *intelligibility*), and Yao et al. (2022) (*language attitude*).

To define the domain of Chinese language, the search incorporated terms included *Mandarin Chinese*, *Standard Chinese*, and *Non-standard Chinese*. These three search terms were suggested from Chan et al. (2022)'s review on CFL learning and teaching and were chosen to represent the range of linguistic varieties encountered in the context of Chinese language teaching and learning.

Step 3: Constructing Inclusion Criteria

In this step, certain inclusion criteria were set to meet requirements of qualitative meta-synthesis as follows. First, the inclusion of native Chinese speakers, Chinese learners and foreign language learners should appear as the target population in either English-written or Chinese-written academic articles. Second, the synthesis of academic articles was applicable for either qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods research design for empirical studies or conceptual studies addressing issues in Chinese language teaching and learning. Third, the time span for selected articles would be between 2010 and 2024.

The screening and selection process was conducted independently by two researchers through discussion to enhance reliability and consistency. Finally, a selection of 60 academic studies formed the final data set for the synthesis of findings (*see Appendix for final data set of academic articles*). Gao et al. (2014) suggested this same number as fitting the limited space for reviewing a similar research scope in the present study.

Step 4: Establishing Research Questions

After selecting 60 academic articles in the final set of data, it was determined that the present study would rely on the descriptive synthesis to report findings in a coherent manner. To strengthen the implementation of descriptive synthesis, the researchers established two research questions as follows:

RQ1: What is the nature of the selected academic articles in terms of (a) article distribution and (b) classification of key words into themes and sub-themes?

RQ2: How does the research focus from selected academic articles inform the construction of theoretical and practical aspects in Chinese language teaching and learning from 2010 to 2024?

Step 5: Extracting and Synthesizing Data

During the data extraction process, information from the selected 60 academic articles was organized into a table with the following categories: (1) article title, (2) journal name, (3) author, (4) year of publication, (5) abstract summary, (6) keywords, (7) participant details, and (8) additional notes.

Line of argument (LOA) synthesis was chosen as the framework to capture key themes from the collected articles. According to Sattar et al. (2021), LOA synthesis aims to incorporate concepts and themes from one study to another and explains differences and exceptions which occur from aspects of those studies. Drawn on this principle, an initial synthesis was conducted to capture the emergent themes and sub-themes as suggested by the coding procedure for key words appeared in the final dataset of 60 selected articles.

In making a link between parts of single studies and the themes and sub-themes, the researchers would ensure the collaboration of two authors in the sorting of key words in each article into specific sub-themes corresponding to theoretical and practical aspects of Chinese language teaching and learning.

Step 6: Writing the Meta-Synthesis

After the categorization of key words into specific themes and sub-themes, the qualitative meta-synthesis of 60 selected academic articles mainly involved the descriptive synthesis of the abstract and the main content. There are three notes for this procedure of writing descriptive synthesis in the present study. First, qualitative findings from relevant sections of empirical and conceptual studies were selected for summarization and synthesis. Where quantitative data appeared, it was reinterpreted into narrative or conceptual form to maintain consistency with the qualitative orientation of the meta-synthesis. Second, each selected article was referenced using bracketed numbering (e.g., [1]), corresponding to its listing in the Appendix. This system ensured clarity and traceability throughout the synthesis process. Third, the use of Copilot was acknowledged as a tool to identify grammatical errors and edit language use in the descriptive synthesis of findings.

3. Findings

3.1. Nature of 60 Selected Academic Articles

3.1.1. Article Distribution

Table 1

Categories of Academic Articles

	Categories	Quantity	Percentile
1	Language Teaching and Learning	21	35%
2	Language and Linguistics	11	18.5%
3	Education	9	15%
4	Thesis/Dissertation	8	13%
5	Others	11	18.5%
	Total	60	100%

Table 1 shows the classification of 60 selected academic articles into five main categories: Language Teaching and Learning, Language and Linguistics, Education, Thesis/Dissertation, and Others.

The majority of the dataset was published in Language Teaching and Learning (n=21, 35%), reflecting the spread of teaching and learning Chinese in various contexts across Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and countries where Chinese is considered as a foreign language. Notably, this category also contained five papers from *System* journal which is dedicated to the use of educational technology and applied linguistics to challenges of foreign language teaching and learning.

The second most represented category was *Language and Linguistics* (n=11, 18.5%), covering academic articles on various topics of language studies such as language policy, language planning, critical inquiry in linguistics, and contemporary linguistic challenges. The category *Education* (n=9, 15%) included articles addressing educational issues in various countries (e.g., China, Australia) and various forms of language education (e.g. bilingual education, overseas education).

The *Thesis* category (n=8, 13%) comprises of master and doctoral thesis covering study fields of teaching, Chinese literature, and Applied Linguistics and they were written by students from Department of Chinese Language. The *Others* category (n=11, 18.5%) included academic articles from non-linguistic domains such as psychology, global Chinese studies, technology-related educational development and also book chapters.

3.1.2. Theme Classification

Table 2

Categories and Frequency of Themes and Sub-themes

	Sub-theme	Frequency	Percentile
Theoretical aspect: indexes of Chinese language features			
1	Linguistic index	63	41.7%
2	Socio-cultural index	23	15.2%
3	Language ideologies	18	11.9%

Practical aspect: issues of Chinese instructional practices			
4	Chinese Language Teaching	22	14.6%
5	Chinese Language Learning	14	9.3%
6	Language instructions	11	7.3%
Total		151	100%

On the basis of keyword classification, Table 2 presents the distribution of 151 items as derived from the abstract section of 60 selected articles. The coding procedure resulted in 6 sub-themes that fall under two main corresponding themes: (a) Theoretical aspect: indexes of Chinese language features and (b) Practical aspect: issues of Chinese instructional practices.

The former main theme included three sub-themes: Linguistic index (63 occurrences, 41.7%), Sociocultural index (23, 15.2%), and Language ideologies (18, 11.9%), all of which reflect theoretical dimensions of Chinese language features. Keywords in the sub-theme of Linguistic index initially reflected Mandarin Chinese and its varieties (e.g. *Taiwanese Chinese*, *Southern Min*, *Hakka*) and the positions of Chinese language in the linguistic ecology (e.g. *Chinese as a second language*, *foreign language*, *heritage language*), standard form of Chinese language (e.g. *standard language*, *Standard Mandarin*, *Mandarin Chinese*), linguistic mechanisms (e.g. *code-mixing*, *code-switching*, *speaker adaptation*).

Meanwhile, the sub-theme of Socio-cultural index contained keywords covering the values of social, cultural, and political domains in the spread and development of Chinese language (e.g. *nationalism*, *cultural elements*, *geopolitics*, *foreign and home language environment*). The last sub-theme Language ideologies addressed critical dimensions of Chinese language (e.g. *language attitude*, *language changes*, *language contact*).

The latter main theme comprised three sub-themes: Chinese Language Teaching (22 occurrences, 14.6%), Chinese Language Learning (14, 9.3%), and Language Instructions (11, 7.3%). Together, these sub-themes offered a comprehensive framework to address issues of Chinese instructional practices. The sub-themes of Chinese Language Teaching and Chinese Language Learning covered areas which were related to teaching methods (e.g. *Mandarin Chinese/ Taiwanese Chinese language teaching*), pedagogical values (*foreign language pedagogy*), classroom contexts (e.g. *Chinese language teacher*, *classroom interaction*), types of Chinese learners (e.g. *beginners*, *ethnic minority students*), and learner's psychology (e.g. *language learning anxiety*, *learners' perceptions*).

Finally, the sub-theme of Language instructions included instructional dimensions of Chinese language (e.g. *learning demands*, *learning needs*, *lexical explanation*, *mediatization*, *medium of instruction*).

3.2. Research Focus of 60 Selected Academic Articles

3.2.1. Theoretical Aspect: Indexes of Chinese Language Features

3.2.1.1. Linguistic Index

As derived from selected academic articles within the time period 2010-2024, an interesting insight identified in this sub-theme is the progressive acceptance of Taiwan Mandarin as a new variant of Chinese language with regards to linguistic index connecting distinct features of phonology, grammar, and vocabulary. Article [40] mentioned Taiwan Mandarin Chinese (i.e. Guoyu) as a new variant of Mainland Mandarin Chinese (i.e. Putonghua) in its marked differences of phonological features in Hakka and Beijing dialects and this new variant is considerably accepted in the effort to standardize and popularize

Mandarin Chinese in Taiwan teaching context.

There are certain contributors accounting for differences between Taiwan Mandarin and Mainland Mandarin Chinese. First, internal development of Mandarin Chinese in Taiwan is argued to incorporate grammatical and lexical features of Southern Min (i.e. Minnan Hua), a so-called Taiwan variant. Article [36] specifically explored the linguistic index of Southern Min through the comparison between spoken and written form on newspaper, media, and Internet; the purpose of which is to trace the influence of Southern Min on subsequent development of grammar and vocabulary in Taiwan Mandarin.

Second, geographical distribution of Chinese language also considerably contributes to differences in the mode of Chinese language across Taiwan Straits and across Chinese dialects in Taiwan context. The geographical concern further explores the interactional dimension and the change of pragmatic features across two sides of Taiwan and Mainland China [39] as well as the five representative dialects in Taiwan context including second-generation Mandarin from other provinces, Taiwanese Chinese, and Northern Chinese, Southern Chinese, and Taiwanese Mandarin [33].

Other contributors included the profiles of speakers and learners. Article [39] examined the change of daily life language from the adoption of words from Putonghua to Guoyu and concluded that age factor considerably contributed to the phenomenon of speaker adoption in the differentiation in language use across the Taiwan Strait. The value of Mandarin standardization in the design of textbooks for university students [38] and the comparison of phonic features between young and past generation speakers of Mandarin Chinese in Taiwan [45] were two other particular cases to explain differences between Taiwan Mandarin and Mainland Mandarin Chinese.

In terms of linguistic mechanism, the mixing of Mandarin Chinese and Southern Min was a unique case of code-mixing and code-switching. Article [44] compared the phenomenon of word-mixing between the southern and the central and northern regions among the consideration of various factors including age, gender, culture, and attitude. The mixing of two languages was defined as the result of language adoption from the act of interacting and communicating among users of Chinese language.

3.2.1.2. Socio-cultural Index

A highlighted phenomenon mentioned in the discourse of selected articles in the sub-theme of socio-cultural index was the context of immigration and studying abroad as well as the particular population of heritage learners. The mentioned cases of Chinese learners and heritage learners in New Zealand in [55, 58, 60] addressed socio-cultural indexes embedded in development of Chinese language programs, language maintenance, social language and planning in educational context and in line with stake-holders' perspective. These articles shared similar concerns of language needs where dialect-background of learners and historical background of migration were integrated into the construction of their self-identity while engaging in using Chinese at home and school.

Another notable feature was the integration of socio-cultural indexes with broader concerns. One of such concerns is related to language attitudes towards Taiwanese accent and phonological features of Chinese language in the form of rejection and stereotypes [32, 40] or the link between the discourse of Sinophone literature and the expansion of Chineseness in East Asia [35]. Finally, through the process of mediatization [32], the expanded scopes of socio-cultural index were also linked with broader coverage on social media in representing socio-cultural issues such as the association of periphery relational structure found in the world system

of Chinese literature [35] as well as the notion of Chinese nationalism and the associated image of community [40].

3.2.1.3. Language Ideologies

The concept of *language ideologies* was theoretically defined in two particular aspects: either as sets of beliefs of language use in social worlds where conceptualizations about languages, speakers, and practices are shaped by groups of speakers or among individuals (Silverstein, 1979) or as the link between ideologies and social differentiation where social factors such as age, gender, social classes constructed the division of groups or individuals (Irvine, 1989).

Based on this classification, sorted articles in the theme of language ideologies firstly mentioned the conceptualizations about languages and speakers addressing ethnicity of identities constructed from individual learners in their own learning environment as the social worlds [10] and negotiation of identities against the status of Chinese as a global language [11] or as a *lingua franca* [13]. In terms of practices, language ideologies are linked with conceptualization about written and spoken forms [36] or ideologies between standard and colloquial languages on the stereotypes of language aspects including accent, grammar, and vocabulary [32].

The other selected articles in this category highlighted the link between language ideologies and social differentiation on the focus group of minority students [8, 9], on economic and practical reasons [12, 14], and on the socio-cultural/socio-historical aspects of language norms, language perceptions, and language attitudes [37, 42]. The focus group of minority students constructed the setting of learning environments in Hong Kong where were perceived as cultural brokers and they faced the threat of limited access of using their heritage language in schools [8] and in Jiang Su Province where minority students encountered learning disadvantages and power inequalities in the flux of Chinese and English education at university level [9].

Other cases with language ideologies included learner's perception for correct pronunciation to be used in the classroom or in the public context [37] and public's perception toward Taiwanese Mandarin as an independent language variety [42]. These findings raise the awareness of conceptualizing Chinese with the vital localization at specific context of use and specific development of features reflecting unique speaker's identity and social representation as driven by the semiotic process of language socialization in classroom discourse [37] or the concept of enregisterment in public discourse [42].

3.2.2. Practical Aspect: Issues of Chinese Instructional Practices

3.2.2.1. Chinese Language Teaching

When it comes to teaching Chinese, there are macro aspects of the entire program such as the *Eight-Year Plan towards a Major Country Exporting the Chinese Language Education Industry* in which the main aim is to enhance both the quality of instruction and future development [50]. The development of teaching programs could consider areas such as (a) learning and instruction of reading Chinese as an additional language, (b) learner identity in CSL/CFL education, (c) teaching and learning Chinese through immersion, (d) technology assisted CSL/CFL teaching and learning, and (e) mobile assisted learning CFL [53].

The core of developing teaching programs should be primarily integrated into types of training for CSL/CFL teachers. There are different types of training for CFL teachers such as pre-service training [1], training for assessment [3], and oral ability training for Chinese teachers [49]. Training for Chinese language teachers should include thoughtful reflection grounded in strong language knowledge [4] as well as strong focus and adaptability to student-centered approach and cultural contexts [51].

Furthermore, the development for teaching programs should also emphasize teaching methods for unique features such as tones and characters and insightful pedagogical skills [59]. Meanwhile, other components such as (a) motivations and ideologies of different stakeholders (managers, teachers, students) [2], (b) practical teaching tactics [4], and (c) intercultural communication [5] played a critical role in shaping pedagogical effectiveness and responsiveness to diverse learning environments in teacher training.

Articles in this theme also addressed the reasons why achieving expected learning outcomes in teaching Chinese language is challenging [49]. For instance, there was the gap between the learner's needs and realities of teaching staffs, classrooms, and university context [55]. Other challenges included the issue of nativeness on pronouncing Mandarin Chinese words [45] and the COVID-19 pandemic which raised the increasing demand for online CFL classes [56]. These issues call attention to addressing learners' expectations for engagement, support for personalized instruction, and opportunities for authentic interaction to bridge these gaps.

3.2.2.2. Chinese Language Learning

The theme of Chinese language learning encompasses topics pertaining to the Chinese learners themselves. Articles in this sub-theme addressed topics pertaining to learner-related background including (a) their levels of anxiety, (b) learning methods, (c) language diversity, (d) learning motivation and needs, and (e) prior knowledge of spoken Chinese. Moreover, development of learning methods should also address specific learning goals and create learning environments that value learner's cultural heritage, their identity, and their sense of self-worth [25].

Regarding the source of anxiety among learners, it was found that speaking and listening anxiety is highest for learners with no prior Chinese background and those from non-Mandarin backgrounds and due to their low level of motivation, perceived learning difficulties, and past performance in Chinese classes [17]. On the other hand, reading and writing were reported as major sources of anxiety for foreign learners of Chinese, considering the case of Ghanaian students and their mastery of Chinese characters, radicals, stroke orders, and overall structure of characters in studying Chinese writing system [22]. Therefore, it suggests that foreign language programs should evaluate a learner's monolingual ideology and consider using translanguaging to improve learner's engagement and retention [26].

Other articles mentioned the use of learning apps such as WeChat for Chinese language development in enhancing interaction, collaboration, resource sharing, knowledge internalization, and sustainable learning among learners [21]. The transition to online learning for international students studying Chinese in China due to COVID-19 offered valuable insights for sharing learning experiences for international students, and thereby leading to higher levels of learning motivation and engagement [20].

3.2.2.3. Language Instructions

The sorted articles in this sub-theme are divided into three particular aspects including: (a) educational context of the Chinese language classroom, (b) interactional function of Chinese language, and (c) perceptions towards Chinese language.

Most of the articles in this sub-theme explored instructional variables in the educational context of Chinese language classrooms. First, learner-related variables include the effects of task design on increasing learning motivation and active participation [18] and preference of instructional language (Chinese or English) for lexical explanation in Chinese language classrooms [19]. Second, the learning platform variable included main differences between

traditional and virtual teaching platforms [23, 52] and the concern of how to maintain the balance of language teaching in both traditional and virtual platforms [57]. Third, teacher agency emerged as a key variable in incorporating cultural knowledge into teaching practices [27], integrating their professional and sociocultural identities into teaching intercultural communicative competence [30], and projecting learner diversity to the design of teaching materials and curriculum [54]. These variables collectively illustrate an interplay between language instructions and educational contexts in Chinese language teaching and learning.

The aspect of interactional function of Chinese language was mentioned in the analysis of feedback types in classroom interaction [16] and the effectiveness of corrective feedback in error self-correction [28], and the pattern of talk in the system of initiation-response-feedback (IRF pattern) [29]. These studies emphasized the importance of interactional pattern in shaping learner's engagement, developing communicative competence, and reinforcing Chinese language instruction. Meanwhile, the aspect of perceptions towards Chinese language discussed the learner's perspective towards the status of Taiwan Mandarin [31], stereotypes of Taiwanese accent from the perspective of internet users [32], and how young Taiwanese perceived five different types of Mandarin varieties [33]. As a whole, the navigation for learner's perception towards different varieties of Chinese language can reinforce the social associations between instructional choices and formation of learners' identity.

4. Conclusion

4.1. Summary of Findings

Findings regarding the qualitative meta-analysis of the data set of 60 academic articles related to Chinese language teaching and learning are structured into two main themes: Theoretical aspect addressing indexes of Chinese language features and Practical aspect mentioning issues of Chinese instructional practices. The main theme Theoretical aspect heavily dominates the data accounting for 68.8% of the total frequency of key words while Practical aspect constitutes for the remaining 31.2%. The most common sub-themes for these two main themes are Linguistic index (63 occurrences, 41.7%) and Chinese Language Teaching (22 occurrences, 14.6%) respectively.

The main theme Theoretical aspect focuses on distinctive features of Chinese language. A key focus lies in the Linguistic index, which promotes the recognition of Taiwan Mandarin as a distinct variant. This distinction is marked by unique features in its phonology, grammar, and vocabulary. In contrast, the Socio-cultural index addresses the language context of specific groups and societal concerns, including negative attitudes toward the Taiwanese accent and Chineseness. Lastly, the Language ideologies sub-theme examines how individuals negotiate their ethnic identities in relation to the global status of Chinese language and under the influence of linguistic processes such as language socialization and enregisterment.

Meanwhile, the main theme Practical aspect focuses on issues in Chinese instructional practices. It firstly highlights the critical role of CSL/CFL teacher training in the sub-theme Chinese Language Teaching. Meanwhile, the sub-theme Chinese Language Learning emphasizes understanding for diverse learner factors such as learner anxiety, motivation, linguistic knowledge, and their interaction. Finally, the sub-theme Language Instructions stress the importance of interactional patterns to boost their learning engagement, development of communicative and interactional competence, and formation of learner's identity.

4.2. Implications for CSL/CFL Language Policy and Teacher Training

The implications for CSL/CFL language policy should account for the variation of Chinese language across different socio-cultural contexts and associated language ideologies. The situation of Taiwan Mandarin being accepted as the new standard form of Chinese language challenges the monolithic views of Chineseness and calls for support to recognize linguistic identities shaped at regional level (Shih, 2011). In the specific context of Chinese teaching and learning, the value of Taiwan Mandarin indexes social identities and cultural differentiation and emphasizes the insight of language ideology in shaping learners' perceptions and constructing their identities in Chinese language classrooms (Brubaker, 2012). Apart from the influences of socio-cultural contexts and language ideologies, the recognition of Taiwan Mandarin being accepted as standard norm depends on other contextual factors such as professions, socio-economic and socio-political contexts, and language attitudes of major groups of speakers in speech community (Chan, 2024).

In the context of language policy at higher education level, the current debate on implementing Chinese-medium instruction (CMI) in teaching curriculum is also of pragmatic concerns. The promotion of CMI policy in China aims to re-define the internalization of English medium instruction (EMI) so as to empower the status of Chinese language for international students as well as the broader impacts of Chinese language on foreign policy (Xu, 2024b). Nevertheless, the internationalization of Chinese may face certain challenges coming from diverse learner backgrounds such as ethnic identity, social pressures, and learning motivation (Comanaru & Noels, 2009).

In terms of enhancing pedagogical effectiveness, some critical elements need to be taken into consideration while conducting CSL/CFL teacher education. The priority of practical skills over abstract knowledge is necessary for the development of intercultural communicative competence for Chinese language teachers (Gong et al., 2018) along the way with the implementation of task-based instructional approaches for meaningful interaction in Chinese language classrooms (Lan et al., 2016). Similarly, Attaran and Hu (2015) highlighted the necessity to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and classroom realities in CSL teacher preparation programs so as to equip Chinese language teachers with sufficient teaching performance in the global context.

Another critical concern for CSL/CFL teacher education is the focus on learner's characteristics including the understanding of learner identity formation and heritage language development as being constructed from Chinese language varieties and the associated linguistic identities (He, 2006). Understanding the learner's psychology is also utmost in the sense that the reduction of language anxiety would enhance positive learning attitudes and strengthen learning outcomes (Wang & Du, 2020).

4.3. Suggestions for Future Research

Certain limitations in this study need to be pointed out so as to improve research framework and methodology in future research. First, only 60 academic articles from 2010 to 2024 were selected for the final round of meta-synthesis, which is considered a limited number when compared to the number of articles published in the time duration of over a ten-year period. Therefore, the data collection for academic articles in both Chinese and English language may be restricted in covering theoretical and practical aspects of Chinese language teaching and learning comprehensively.

Furthermore, the classification of themes and sub-themes considerably relied on the key words extracted from the abstracts of selected articles, which might increase the subjectivity in nature of synthesis and bias despite efforts to ensure consistency. Finally, the present study implements descriptive synthesis of findings from the dataset of 60 academic articles. The focus on descriptive synthesis might lack the depth of capturing methodological distinctions and theoretical developments across selected academic articles.

Some suggestions for future qualitative meta-synthesis on the same research topic are addressed as follows. There could be the expansion of themes for future meta-synthesis on the research topic of Chinese language learning and teaching. On the focus of Chinese language learners, the prospective categories of themes could be based on language background, learning environment, and language proficiency. Furthermore, the focus on specific teaching and learning strategies for assisting specific types and groups of Chinese language learners is also a potential research area for further investigation. Last but not least, the assistance of digital learning has become trendy for language learning worldwide, and thus it is worth synthesizing the impacts of digital learning on contemporary Chinese language teaching and learning.

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APPENDIX

List of 60 Selected Academic Articles for Qualitative Meta-Synthesis

