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(IJMOE)**www.gaexcellence.com/ijmoe**A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH ON
MANDARIN TEACHING FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS**Wei Yu ^{1*}, Ahmad Abdul Rahman², Julia Tan Yin Yin³¹Faculty of Language Studies and Human Development, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, Malaysia 18946620@qq.com <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-4642-031X>¹Faculty of Language Studies and Human Development, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, Malaysia ahmad.ar@umk.edu.my <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7891-8573>¹Faculty of Language Studies and Human Development, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, Malaysia juliatanyy@gmail.com <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0676-8822>

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Abstract:

This study addresses the significant lack of empirical research on the long-term, macro-level development of Mandarin pedagogy in Chinese higher education. Existing studies rely heavily on localised, qualitative classroom summaries, resulting in fragmented knowledge. To fill this gap, this paper systematically maps the academic dynamics, evolutionary trajectories, and institutional networks across eleven structural dimensions, including publication trends, thematic shifts, collaborations, and funding landscapes. Using co-word analysis, citation analysis, and knowledge graph visualisation, a dataset of 155 documents from 1996 to 2025 was retrieved and analysed from CNKI. The findings reveal that while scholarly output peaked in 2013, the core focus has shifted from "pronunciation standardisation" to "professional competence", reflecting a paradigm shift from linguistic correctness toward competency-oriented and practice-based language education. Geographically, institutions in southern dialect zones and border minority regions show the greatest research activity, yet no dominant journal or elite author group has emerged, indicating a decentralised ecosystem. Research output has evolved from policy-driven to demand-driven and now towards technology-driven development. Specifically, this study aims to: (1) examine publication trends, (2) identify major research themes and their evolution, (3) analyse collaboration networks, and (4) explore emerging directions. The findings contribute to understanding how language pedagogy evolves under national policies and technological changes, offering data-driven guidance for university administrators, teacher educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers.

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Bibliometric Analysis, College Students, CNKI Database, Educational Reform, Mandarin Pedagogy



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Introduction

Mandarin (Putonghua) serves as both an instrument of communication and a channel of cultural identity and national consciousness in China; as such, it performs an essential function in promoting social cohesion, enabling communication between individuals who use different dialects, and developing qualified personnel for higher education. Increased emphasis on the introduction of Putonghua Proficiency testing (PSC) since the mid-1990s has resulted in “Mandarin instruction for college students” becoming an important research focus overlapping linguistics and education/pedagogy. Correspondingly, the growth of literature in support of Mandarin language instruction has rapidly increased in parallel with national language policies and social requirements.

However, despite the substantial body of literature that has accumulated in this field, existing studies mostly focus on summarising concrete teaching experiences, exploring curriculum reform or analysing individual institutions. These fragmented, case-study-based approaches have failed to reveal the overall disciplinary structure, thematic evolution, and scholarly impact from a macro perspective. A lack of systematic bibliometric analysis from a macro perspective regarding the overall disciplinary structure, thematic evolution and scholarly impact remains. Crucial questions regarding ambiguous research boundaries, unidentifiable core author groups and unclear journal distribution characteristics have yet to be effectively addressed. This hinders the development of the theoretical framework and the organised development of the academic community in this field. To fill this gap, this study introduces a novel bibliometric approach that, for the first time, integrates eleven structural dimensions to provide a longitudinal, data-driven synthesis of the field’s three-decade evolution.

As a mature quantitative analysis approach, bibliometrics can analyse large volumes of literature in depth to objectively reveal the intellectual structure, evolutionary paths and frontier hotspots of a discipline, by examining external characteristics such as publication outputs, authors, institutions, journals and keywords. This study aims to use bibliometric methods to systematically analyse the literature on college students' Mandarin teaching indexed in the CNKI database over the past three decades. The objective of this research is: (1) To uncover trends related to publication and to discover factors underlying these trends; (2) To identify major research areas and the development paths associated with those areas; (3) To investigate networks of collaboration among authors and institutions; (4.) To investigate new avenues of research in the area of Mandarin Pedagogy. This study will create knowledge maps delineating research areas and journals, determining the relative impact of the researchers in these fields,

and examining the policy-related mechanisms driving academics' output. The final goal is to provide empirical evidence that can be utilized to help future pedagogy innovation studies and language planning research.

Research Scope

For this study, the literature analysed consists of published studies/articles between the years 1996-2025, which focus on college-age students who learning Chinese at higher education within the confines of Chinese post-secondary schools. This range of years was selected in order to systematically record the development of Mandarin as a field, from initial research through subsequent expansion and refinement of research while keeping continuity in the manner in which Mandarin is taught to students in institutions that provide post-secondary education.

In terms of data sources, all literature for this study was retrieved from the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) platform. Currently the world's largest Chinese academic digital publishing platform(Lu et al., 2021), CNKI has the most comprehensive coverage and integrates over ten types of literature, including academic journals, master's and doctoral dissertations, and conference proceedings. It indexes over 8,500 Chinese academic journals (including more than 1,970 Peking University core journals) and over 4.6 million theses and dissertations at master's and doctoral level(Wang et al., 2021) There is a particular emphasis on major conference proceedings organised by national-level tier-two and above academic societies, associations and universities since 1999. This database's comprehensive coverage provides a solid empirical foundation for reflecting the contemporary state of research on Mandarin teaching in Chinese higher education institutions.

In terms of literature types and retrieval strategies, this study focuses on three main categories: journal articles, dissertations and conference proceedings. The use of journal articles is important when evaluating established research outputs in the form of academic authority, while dissertations can provide an insight into how research outputs have developed, including their conceptual and theoretical frameworks. Conference proceedings, however, should provide information on emerging themes and new frontiers of research. The retrieval method included a fuzzy topic search using 'Mandarin teaching for collegiate level students' as the main keyword; therefore, the resulting dataset was highly relevant to the research intent and allows for strong comparability between the types of literature being reviewed.

Research Objectives

This study aims to systematically examine the academic dynamics of Mandarin teaching research among Chinese university students. It will focus on development trends, influential scholars, popular research topics and the major journals and institutions publishing related papers. The study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the current state of Mandarin teaching research among this demographic. Specifically, the study achieved the following objectives:

1. To analyze data from journal articles published between 1996 and 2025.
2. To identify the main topics of Mandarin teaching research among college students.
3. To determine the characteristics of the research level of Mandarin teaching among college students.

4. To identify the main disciplinary layouts of Mandarin teaching among college students research in China.
5. To identify the 10 journals that publish the most papers on Mandarin teaching among college students in China.
6. To identify the 10 institutions that have published the most papers on Mandarin teaching among college students in China.
7. To identify the top 10 authors who have published research papers on Mandarin teaching among college students in China.
8. To identify the top 10 most cited research papers in the field of Mandarin teaching among college students in China.
9. To identify the top 10 most downloaded articles in the field of Mandarin teaching among college students in China.
10. To select the top 10 fund projects that finance Mandarin teaching among college students researches.
11. To analyze the source categories of research papers on Mandarin teaching among college students in China.

Literature Review

As an important component of the interdisciplinary fields of applied linguistics and higher education in China, research into teaching Mandarin to university students has developed in close sync with national language and writing policies, as well as socioeconomic needs. Examining the academic output of the last thirty years, it is evident that research in this field exhibits distinct evolutionary phases, diverse topic distribution, and a paradigm shift from macro-narrative to micro-empirical analysis.

The Period of Standardisation and Policy-driven Development (1996 -2004)

The research conducted during this time mainly related to the legislative beginning of the standardised use of language in China. The passing of the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language, through which Mandarin was formally defined as the national language, played an important role in the subsequent creation of a body of research around the instruction of Mandarin at universities. Most of the academic literature published before the establishment of this body of research was concerned with interpreting or analysing the relevance of the law, as well as the need and urgency for the promotion of Mandarin in the higher education system (Feng, 2019). In reviewing research around the teaching of Mandarin in higher education, the majority of authors were focused on the Office of the State Language Commission's (OSLC) promotion and use of the Putonghua Proficiency Test (PSC) as a part of the process for developing and promoting Mandarin language instruction. In addition, researchers began to investigate methods of integrating the PSC as part of the qualifications for graduation from university and for teacher certification, establishing an early research paradigm of "supporting teaching/learning through testing" (Wang, 2015). The research conducted during this period was relatively narrow in scope, mostly summarising experiences in teaching basic phonetic principles. While the academic scope of this initial period of research was limited, the initial foundation of research helped to create a strong theoretical and practical basis for standardising and institutionalising Mandarin instruction at Chinese universities.

The Explosion of Teaching Reform and The Period of Dialect Contrast (2005 -2015)

Since the second decade of the 21st century, there has been a great deal of research conducted on how to teach Mandarin to university students that has led to the golden age of research in this area. Previously, most research was focused on the implementation of new legislation. The majority of research, however, has shifted towards creating new guiding principles and developing innovative models. Specifically, a very large portion of the literature has focused on understanding differences between dialects and how to compare them. Many researchers have found that, due to the negative effects of their native dialects (Ting & Ye, 2023), university students find it difficult to learn Mandarin. Because of this finding, a number of researchers have created new teaching strategies for students who come from different dialect areas (Ting & Ye, 2023). Some scholars specifically explored the theoretical and practical issues of bilingual teaching in dialects and Mandarin. Secondly, exploring diversified teaching models yielded fruitful results. With the advancement of computer-aided testing technology, researchers began exploring its application in reforming Mandarin teaching in universities. At the same time, the research focus shifted from simple "phonetic standardisation" to "comprehensive communicative competence" (Wuttiphon, 2024), with some scholars systematically analysing the ways in which Mandarin teaching improves university students' oral expression abilities. A large volume of literature was produced during this period, forming the theoretical framework of the field, and there was a high frequency of citations.

The Interdisciplinary Integration and Professional Transformation Period (2016 To the Present Day).

In recent years, against the backdrop of the "Internet+" educational transformation and the national "Promoting Mandarin to Alleviate Poverty" strategy, research into teaching Mandarin to university students has demonstrated a strong interdisciplinary character and a sense of social responsibility. On the one hand, research into technology-enabled learning has grown rapidly. The maturity of artificial intelligence, big data and speech recognition technologies has enabled large-scale online assessments and personalised, self-directed learning. In the multimedia era, researchers have started to examine the current state of affairs, issues, and innovative strategies for Mandarin teaching in university (Kong, 2023). Scholars examined strategies and approaches to Mandarin teaching for university students in the context of language ability education from the perspective of proficiency testing. In response to issues such as a lack of engagement from students, uneven course content and monotonous teaching methods in Mandarin oral teaching at university level, scholars have proposed comprehensive improvement strategies. Additionally, some researchers have discussed the fundamental principles and practical strategies for effectively implementing Mandarin teaching in universities on a macro level. The current proficiency levels of engineering students in Mandarin have also attracted attention, with related research conducting in-depth analyses of issues such as a lack of attention to Mandarin among engineering students and the cross-influence of dialects and internet slang. In recent years, the full implementation of computer-assisted Mandarin proficiency testing has also brought the reform of Mandarin teaching in higher vocational colleges to the fore (Yu et al., 2023). From a new media perspective, the question of how to innovate and reform Mandarin teaching in colleges and universities by leveraging multimedia technology has also become a research hotspot. On the other hand, research shows a clear trend towards socialisation and professionalisation. Significant progress has been made in the research of Mandarin teaching for college students in ethnic minority areas (Qiao, 2023). At the same time, researchers have begun to focus on deeper issues in

language competence education, exploring the intrinsic connection between Mandarin proficiency testing and university-level language competence education. This research has been given macro-level significance in terms of promoting ethnic unity and assisting with students' career development(Wang, 2023).

Limitations Of Existing Research and The Value of This Study

Despite significant progress in research over the past three decades, a systematic review of the existing literature highlights the following shortcomings. Firstly, the research methods are relatively simplistic. Most existing studies are based on case studies and experience summaries from specific institutions or regions. This means that there is a lack of systematic quantitative analysis based on large sample data. This makes it difficult to objectively and accurately reveal the overall picture of the discipline. Secondly, the results of research are relatively fragmented, largely limited to isolated classroom observations, single institutional cases or localised regional datasets. This results in a certain disconnect between theory and practice (Hanks, 2019; Herrera et al., 2025). Thirdly, in the rapidly evolving digital age, there is a lack of dynamic tracking of the evolution of research hotspots and the migration of academic influence. The academic community has rarely attempted a systematic, quantitative assessment of the entire discipline over a macro time span of several decades(Csomay et al., 2024) By introducing bibliometric indicators and knowledge graph visualisation technology, this study effectively breaks down previously isolated historical contexts and institutional barriers. It provides a data-driven, macro-level overview of the cumulative structure, citation ecology and evolutionary trajectory of the field's literature. This addresses the deficiencies of existing research. Consequently, this study represents the first longitudinal bibliometric analysis of Mandarin pedagogy in Chinese higher education, offering a novel synthesis of eleven structural dimensions that have not been previously integrated in this field.

Research Questions

1. What is the tendency of research on Mandarin teaching for college students by year of publication?
2. What are the foremost research topics?
3. What are the characteristics of research gradations?
4. What is the distribution of major disciplines?
5. What are the top ten journals with the largest number of published research papers?
6. What are the top ten organizations in terms of the number of publications?
7. Who are the top 10 authors in terms of number of publications?
8. Which 10 research papers have been cited the most?
9. Which are the top 10 research papers in terms of downloads?
10. Which are the top 10 projects that received the most research grants?
11. What are the source categories of research papers?

Research Methodology

The central research paradigm of this paper is bibliometrics, which is described as an interdisciplinary approach that uses quantitative methods to evaluate the system of literature and the characteristics of publications using statistical and mathematical methods. By analysing in detail, the physical features of publications such as the distribution of authors, organisational affiliation, clusters of keywords, and frequency of citations, bibliometric methodology

eliminates the bias of subjectivity that is inherent in traditional methods of narrative review. These analyses of the external characteristics of the publications allow bibliometrics to objectively identify the structure and pathways of growth of a field, as well as to identify where the hottest areas of current research are occurring in that field. This study looks at research trends over the last 30 years using both multi-dimensional analysis (by time, topic, and institution) to evaluate current research trends at a macro level and to provide in-depth analysis of how current hot spots replace each other at a micro level. The authors followed a standardised workflow for this study that includes a PRISMA-inspired screening process to refine the dataset to ensure replicability of the research.

During the data collection phase, this study developed a rigorous retrieval strategy and selection criteria. The literature search identified the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database as the primary data source, using the keywords "college students" (大学生) and "Mandarin teaching" (普通话教学) to perform a fuzzy query. To guarantee the academic authority, systematic integrity and cutting-edge nature of the research sample, only academic journal articles, master's and doctoral dissertations and significant conference proceedings were extracted for analysis. This combination of literature encompasses peer-reviewed, mature academic outputs; dissertations that embody the deep, underlying logic of the discipline; and conference reports that reflect immediate, frontier dynamics. This construction provides a solid data foundation for subsequent comparative analysis.

The CNKI's statistical analysis functions were fully utilised in this study alongside several professional graphics programs to conduct extensive bibliometric analyses. Co-word analysis was used to create a visual map of the thematic clusters; citation analysis to measure the impact of individual publications on the academic community; and the use of CiteSpace provided an illustration of emerging trends and collaboration networks within the combined body of knowledge. This research includes both quantitative statistical analysis and graphical representation of data, in addition to systematically identifying and mapping publication trends and key thematic changes, as well as describing the nature of the disciplinary structure, core groups of authors, high-impact institutions and important landmark work in the area of Mandarin language instruction for post-secondary students in China. The analytic model was developed to eliminate fragmented sources of information by providing a clear and scientific representation of the academic landscape on multiple levels. It not only focuses on the analysis of historical publications but also uses an empirical basis to explore existing gaps in the research. The ultimate goal of the study is to provide data to facilitate future theoretical development and valid scientific data to improve current pedagogical practice at the instructional level.

Data Collection Strategy

The data acquisition process for this study was rigorously designed to ensure the comprehensiveness and representativeness of the sample. First, the researchers set up precise retrieval logic in the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database and executed a fuzzy search using the phrase 'Mandarin teaching for college students' (大学生普通话教学) as the core subject. The most recent and academically credible information on this topic was obtained by limiting the search to only academic journals, master's and doctoral theses, and major conference proceedings. Limiting the search to these types of publications excludes non-academic commentaries and newspapers, which allows for greater relevance of the data and

more direct comparisons between types of literature. A final database was created from a set of 10,427 published records after eliminating duplicate and irrelevant entries. The final data set includes publications from 1996 to 2025, making it suitable for a systematic bibliometric analysis and evaluation of the progression of research into Mandarin language education within Chinese institutions of higher education.

Table 1: Select Standard Search Strings

Criterion	Bring Into	Excluding
Language	Chinese	Non-Chinese
Schedule	1996-2025	<1995, 2025>
Document Type	Journal Articles, Dissertations And Meeting	Book Review
Publication Stage	Ultimately	-
Source Category	All The Corresponding Literature Included In CNKI	-

Source: By Author

Data Analysis

Analysis of the data for this research study will be primarily based on an approach that is characteristics of bibliometric analysis. This method uses quantitative statistics and visualisation tools to examine the underlying characteristics and trends of research on Mandarin language teaching to higher education students in Chinese universities. Academic literature was obtained for the research study by searching in the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database for literature that contained the key search term 'Mandarin language teaching to college students' dating back to 1996 through 2025. The selection of this time frame will provide for representative, authoritative sample data. During the data pre-processing phase of this project, all raw records were examined and cleaned to ensure their validity for the research study. Duplicate records, non-academic publications, and newspapers, etc., were removed from the dataset through a set of standardised operating procedures so that data following these procedures are appropriately accurate and precise for all analysis conducted using this data set. Using a metrics-based approach, this method provides objective data-driven insights that will help overcome the limitations of the traditional qualitative review methods and serve as a source of future scientific research in this area.

Gong et al. (2018) applied broad circumstantial descriptive statistical analyses to specify variations in the yearly number of publications; as well as to develop graphical representations of the distribution of key journals, significant authors and institutions from which most of the publications originated. Frequency-based analyses also were used to describe the chronological distribution of the annual output and to identify points at which the output profile had changed. Prior to conducting this study's professional visual analyses on frequency of keyword occurrence, the authors reviewed the number of citations attributed to documents relating to research foci; specifically, the Proficiency Testing of Mandarin and the reform initiatives for vocational education and training, and to understand how the creation and evolution of core themes occurred (Deng & Xie, 2022). Following the assessment of individual keywords through co-word analyses and clustering of keywords representing the greatest occurrence of association within each cluster; the authors documented and traced the evolution of thematic areas and the changes in emphasis from a focus on structural linguistics to a focus on

competency in the workplace, demonstrating the academic landscape surrounding Mandarin instruction at the community college level by examining the major indicators relating to scale of publication and frequency of citation.

In order to provide a comprehensive measurement of the accumulation of knowledge in this field, this study cross-analysed the citation and download frameworks in order to differentiate between long-term peer-reviewed validation and immediate pedagogical market demands. As an important metric for measuring academic impact, citation analysis identified the core scholars leading the development of the industry and the landmark research achievements that have had a profound influence. Additionally, categorical distribution analysis was applied across various dimensions, including institutional typologies (e.g. traditional universities and vocational colleges), geographical regions, funding agencies and journal indexing ranks (e.g. Peking University Core and CSSCI), to reveal structural characteristics at different levels. By comprehensively evaluating disciplinary affiliations, citation frequencies and journal hierarchies, this study aims to provide a robust empirical foundation for future educational decision-making and discipline development. Metric analysis also revealed the cross-disciplinary distribution of this research among fields such as linguistics, pedagogy, and information technology, demonstrating significant interdisciplinary collaboration. Visualising the data enhances the intuitiveness of complex information and improves the interpretability of research conclusions, thereby guaranteeing the empirical objectivity and structural rigour of the subsequent findings section (Syzykbayeva et al., 2025).

Findings and Conclusion

What Is the Tendency of Research on Mandarin Teaching for College Students by Year of Publication?

A search on CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) yielded 155 papers. Figure 1 shows the annual publication dates of these 155 papers over the past 30 years.

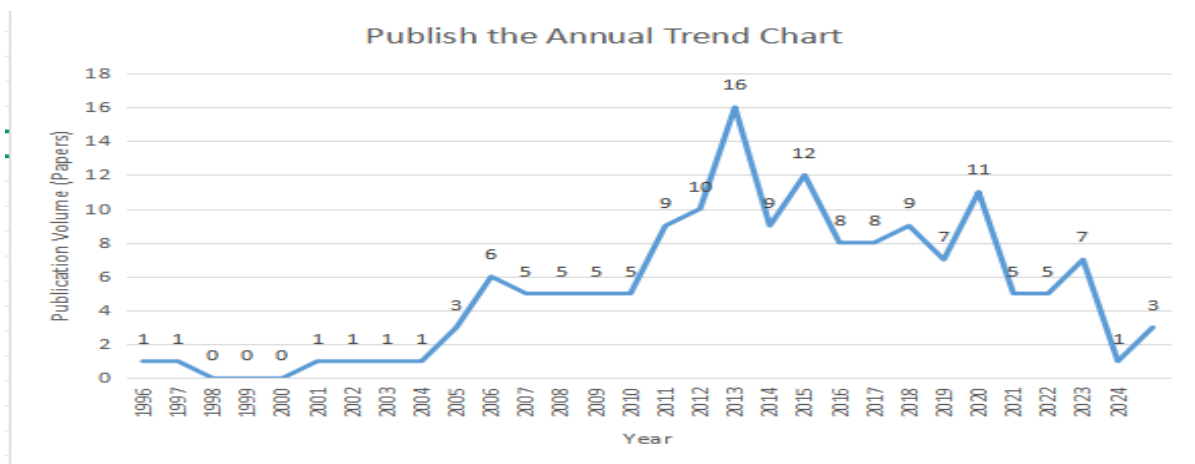


Figure 1: Graph Of Overall Trends in Published Literature

Source: CNKI

The total number of publications for each year provides an intuitive metric for measuring the number of researchers working in a field and as a 'barometer' to gauge the attention to these researchers and their fields. Figure 1 presents a graphical representation of the historical trajectory of Mandarin language research for Chinese university students. The period from

1983 through 1996 shows a close relationship between the curves of the volume of publications and both updates to state language policies and updates to higher education.

Phase 1 (1996 to 2004): A total of 1 to 0 publications were published per year on average. As such, it was not already an area of significant focus for researchers in the area of Mandarin language pedagogy for university students. Predominantly creating awareness of the curriculum at the state level continues to be the primary objective of the bureaucratic system at the national level developing policies concerning state language education is the major focus of state efforts. At this time, institutions were not developing systems of academic teaching in such a way that will be seen over the next 30 years, thus allowing the information produced in this timeframe to continue.

Rapid Growth Phase (2005-2012): Since 2005, the number of publications has risen steadily due to the nationwide implementation of the 11th five-year plan on language. The Putonghua Proficiency Test (PSC) was rolled out across all universities, and this governed both teacher certification and graduation, and was a significant driver of academic research in dialect correction, test strategy, and curriculum development by using 'test-driven teaching'.

Historical Peak Phase (2013-2020): The field reached a record number of publications in 2013, with 16 publications issued. This was the point at which the field entered full maturity, as the focus of research shifted away from 'how to promote' and toward 'how to optimise'. Researchers began to look toward innovative methods to improve higher education quality as a result of the national policy push to enhance the quality of higher education and included such innovations as situational teaching and multimedia-assisted instruction. Although the volume of publications fluctuated over time, the overall volume remained high, indicating ongoing vitality in the field.

Digital Transformation Phase (2021-Present): The volume of publications has declined since 2021, stabilising but sharply at a declining trend. The decline in the volume of publications is not indicative of reduced public interest in the field, but rather a paradigm shift from 'scale expansion' to 'connotative development'. In the post-pandemic era, with the increase in artificial intelligence, research has gravitated toward new 'hot button' areas for research that included digital transformation, AI-assisted speech recognition for pronunciation correction, and the development of online/open courses, in order to increase precision and personalisation in meeting the needs of students in a variety of dialect areas.

The trend of research output reflects an evolution whereby there was initially a policy-driven focus towards demand-based and ultimately technology-driven development. The peak in 2013 reflected previous promotional success and was also a turning point that established the foundation for deep pedagogical reform. Future research will likely include a focus on integrating artificial intelligence into teaching languages, thereby leading to smart vocational-based Mandarin education.

*What Are the Foremost Research Topics?***Table 2: Topic Distribution**

No.	Topic	Publication Count
1	Mandarin	64
2	Mandarin teaching	58
3	Mandarin proficiency	12
4	Higher vocational colleges	8
5	Mandarin Course	6
6	Mandarin Proficiency Test	6
7	An Initial Exploration of Reform	5
8	Teaching Model	5
9	Teaching strategies	4
10	Oral expression ability	4
11	Mandarin oral teaching	4
12	Spoken Mandarin	4
13	College Mandarin Course	3
14	Problems and countermeasures	3
15	Teaching Mandarin pronunciation	3
16	Mandarin proficiency	3
17	Oral language teaching	3
18	undergrad	3
19	Teaching countermeasure	3
20	Research on teaching strategies	3

Source: CNKI

This study uses statistics to analyze the current state of research in Mandarin teaching for post-secondary college students. The primary terms, "Mandarin" and "Mandarin teaching," show a concentration on the foundational principles and broad (macro) practices surrounding this area of research. Additionally, one of the most prominent aspects of this field is the assessment system; for instance, the frequency of the terms "Mandarin proficiency/ability" (15 uses) and "Mandarin Proficiency Test/PSC" (6 uses). This indicates that a defining characteristic of "Mandarin teaching" is the focus on teaching to pass tests, which leads to teaching objectives being directed towards increasing students' success rates on the Mandarin language exams.

When examining the distribution by subject, research associated with higher vocational colleges is much more productive than that relating to traditional undergraduate colleges. Publications about "higher vocational colleges" were produced (8 publications) more than double the number of publications about "undergraduate colleges" (3 publications), indicating the emphasis on competitiveness within the vocational education system and highlights that Mandarin language proficiency is an essential skill for future employment within that type of system.

Also, in terms of the focus on curriculum reform, many researchers used the terms "Mandarin course" (6), "reform" (5) and "teaching model" (5) in their research, indicating that the research community is focused on identifying effective methods of teaching and evaluating the quality of Mandarin courses.

Current research trends are also turning away from simple knowledge transfer the past focus has now shifted toward cultivating pragmatic abilities; thus, topics such as 'oral expression ability' (four times), 'Mandarin oral teaching' (four times), and 'spoken Mandarin' (four times) reflect the blurred demarcation of oral communication as the major focal point. Nevertheless, 'teaching strategies' (four times) and 'teaching countermeasures' (three times) have indicated that researchers have been searching for systematic solutions to the challenges of present teaching.

Embedded with great practicality, current Mandarin teaching research has been mostly on the down trend towards higher vocational colleges towards higher attention paid to appreciation of classic courses. Future research trends may transcend the test-driven teaching framework and explore the deeper integration of Mandarin teaching with students' professional backgrounds and career planning.

What Are the Characteristics of Research Gradations?

Table3: Table Of Number of Publications at Research Gradations

No.	Research Gradations	Publication Count
1	Subject Education and Teaching	16
2	Applied research	6
3	Development Research - Policy Research	1
4	Development Research - Management Research	1
5	Development Research	1

Source: CNKI

Statistical data shows a strong hierarchical structure for college-level Mandarin teaching research with significant differences in the research completed in the field of education with respect to the level of education received by an individual during his/her life, with both practical experience and research studies providing evidence of the predominance of practice-oriented methodology in regard to teaching methodology. For instance, the subject area "Teachers and Training" represents a substantial portion of the sample with 64% of the entire sample containing 16 papers. Therefore, most researchers utilize methodologies such as curriculum design methods and methodologies for teaching and assessing learners in the classroom, along with interaction among teachers, learners, and school personnel, to address a wide variety of practical-oriented problems. A number of researchers have additionally incorporated findings from linguistics, psychology, or educational technology to inform their use of the methodologies of teaching the content of the Mandarin language. Additionally, applied research constitutes the next most highly represented area, which is evident by the presence of six papers in this area and which may serve to connect research findings to theoretical models. Some researchers also perform research aimed at targeting learners whose primary language(s) is/are from different dialect regions than Mandarin Chinese.

Macro-level management and policy research has been significantly under-developed by comparison. Here again we see that 'development research', 'policy research', and 'management research' have produced only one paper each indicating a continued and predominant academic focus for research at the micro level or 'classroom level', and little or no systematic investigation into macro-level policy orientations; meso-level management models; or evaluation of the implementation of policy. Mandarin teaching today is

predominantly seen as a passive implementation of an existing policy rather than an active search for new ways to manage (and therefore innovate) in the field of education. As a result, the overall findings of this research could be represented as a clear ‘pyramid’ structure; with the base consisting of many individual studies of actual teaching practices whilst the apex; consisting of policy and management level research is extremely limited. This inclination towards practice rather than theory demonstrates that most of the data collected is based upon the summarisation by frontline teachers of their own professional experiences; and much of this data has not yet been rationally ‘sublimated’ from a management innovation standpoint.

Research in the future should aim to both expand and consolidate practical teaching experience at an appropriate level. First, there should be attention on areas related to the management of Mandarin teaching, including but not limited to the status of Mandarin learning programs under new credit systems, as well as how national language policies are being implemented. Second, as a way to broaden the scope of applied research in Mandarin teaching, use of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence speech recognition and data mining should be examined for their application to Mandarin teaching research in order to create upgraded smarter and more effective methodologies to address the current weaknesses in management and policy research.

What Is the Distribution of Major Disciplines?

Table 4: Disciplines Distribution

No.	Discipline	Publication Count
1	Chinese language and writing	140
2	Higher Education	44
3	Vocational Education	13
4	Educational Theory and Educational Management	9
5	Computer Software and Computer Applications	4
6	Secondary Education	3
7	Primary education	2
8	culture	1
9	physical education	1
10	Literary Theory	1

Source: CNKI

The statistics illustrate an overall characteristic of research into teaching Mandarin to university level students having the “one core, many strengths, and interdisciplinary integration” phenomenon. There are 140 articles published in the “Chinese Language and Writing” area, and these clearly outnumber all other competitive disciplines’ publications. Thus, research into teaching Mandarin is based on strong linguistics background with the majority of research being developed in phonetics, lexicology, grammar and standardising language; therefore, it provides the basis on which all other research into the teaching of Mandarin will be undertaken.

The primary research concentrations in regards to areas of application have been two; Higher Education at 44 papers (the second most research based area of application), where consistently academic attention has been given to how to improve language literacy for all college students, and Vocational Education - 13 papers, where Mandarin has been recognised as a fundamental skill for professions within the vocational college system and therefore has received

considerable academic study. There is also a substantial number of papers that relate to Educational Theory/Educational Management (9 papers) at macro-levels of support for micro-level teaching practices, which provide systematic evidence of how to implement pedagogical principles for teaching, assessment and curriculum management.

It is worth noting that an interdisciplinary research trend has begun to emerge. Although 'Computer Software and Computer Applications' currently has only four publications, in the context of 'Internet + Education', this signals that researchers are beginning to explore computer-assisted instruction, speech recognition technology and online learning platforms to improve teaching outcomes. Simultaneously, research boundaries are extending toward marginal subjects such as the articulation of secondary and primary education, cultural studies, physical education and literary theory. Although publication volumes are small, these reflect attempts to integrate Mandarin teaching with other fields.

In summary, research on teaching Mandarin to college students has formed a pattern centred on linguistics and supported by pedagogy, gradually developing across fields such as computer science. It is expected that, with the deep intervention of artificial intelligence and big data technologies, technology-driven language learning and assessment research will become a new academic growth point for this field.

What Are the Top Ten Journals with The Largest Number of Published Research Papers?

Table5: Journal Distribution

No.	Journal Name	Publication Count
1	Language and Literature Journal (Education Edition)	5
2	Henan Education (Higher Education)	4
3	Modern vocational education	4
4	Curriculum and teaching research	3
5	Chinese language construction	3
6	Times Education	3
7	Central China Normal University	3
8	Chinese character culture	3
9	Education and Teaching Forum	3
10	Modern Chinese	3

Source: CNKI

A statistical analysis of source journal distribution reveals the academic ecology of Mandarin teaching research for college students. Research achievements in this field fall into two main categories: professional language journals (e.g., Chinese Language Construction, Chinese Character Culture, Modern Chinese) focusing on standardisation and linguistic theory, and comprehensive education journals (e.g., Henan Education, Modern Vocational Education, Curriculum and Teaching Research) emphasising teaching practices and curriculum reform. This cross-disciplinary trend reflects researchers' effort to balance linguistic theory with pedagogical practice.

As shown in Table 5, the top ten journals exhibit a low concentration, flattened distribution. Language and Literature Journal (Education Edition) lead with five publications, followed by Henan Education and Modern Vocational Education with four each. The remaining seven

journals are tied with three publications each. This decentralised pattern indicates that no single journal monopolises the field.

There are many structural features evident in the above distribution. One example of this structure is the division of linguistics and pedagogy: while linguistic journals tend to publish articles about phonetic rules, structural linguistics, etc., educational journals will publish articles that discuss Mandarin as an operational aspect of higher education programs. Another example of the structural nature of applied vocational training is the high ranking of Modern Vocational Education Journals as a leading research area, and they can serve as a source for a majority of the educational institutions that conduct research in this area. A third example of how regional and institutional variables match with journal distribution is illustrated by the journal distribution in localized venues like Henan Education, which suggest that there may be more research capacity for specific provinces or specific teacher training institutions.

To sum up, the distribution of journals in a college level Mandarin teaching environment is quite decentralised but functional. No single predominant flagship journal exists in this field, yet there is a sufficient variety of top ten journals, providing an ecosystem that is equally made up of applied pedagogy and formal linguistics and that bridges the two types of journals together. Moving forward into future research, researchers need to keep an eye on the specialized linguistic journals for their theoretical bases, and at the same time reference vocational education journal publications to capture evidence of actively changing teaching paradigms to realise better integration of theoretical breadth and practical innovation.

What Are the Top Ten Organizations in Terms of The Number of Publications?

Table 6: Statistics Of the Top 10 Organisations Published Relevant Papers

No.	Institution Name	Publication Count
1	Changji University	4
2	Baise University	4
3	Central China Normal University	3
4	The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	3
5	Hong Kong Baptist University	2
6	Anshun University	2
7	Xihua University	2
8	Soochow University	2
9	Hunan Normal University	2
10	Guizhou Normal University	2

Source: CNKI

An examination of publishing organizations sheds light on both the institutional landscape and collaborative structures within this publishing space. In terms of overall publication volume, the number of publications by the identified institutions as indicated in table 6 is indicative of a relatively low level of publication across all of the top-tier institutions. Changji University and Baise University rank highest with 4 publications each, and 2 other institutions (Central China Normal University and The Hong Kong Polytechnic University) rank next with 3 each. The remaining six institutions each produced two publications. Based on this information, we can conclude that there is a low concentration of academic publishing use in the top-tier

institutions – that is, there is no central research hub that dominates the academic output from these institutions (decentralized).

Examining these ten institutions in more depth reveals three distinct trends. First, ethnic and border region(s) demand for research is a driver of research output. Leading research institutions are Changji University (Xinjiang), Baise University (Guangxi) and Anshun University and Guizhou Normal University (Guizhou), and these four institutions' established socio-educational mandate to provide standardization of Mandarin language instruction among Mandarin Chinese-speaking college students, thus leading to a high level of localized research output. Second, the Greater Bay Area context (e.g. the newly formed region encompassing the two regions of Shenzhen and Hong Kong) and the resulting increase in demand for students proficient in Mandarin due to the increased focus on 'Bi-literate and Tri-lingual' in both institutions has resulted in Central China Normal University and Hunan Normal University establishing themselves within the top tier of academic institutions for research being produced. Third, normal universities possess a systematic advantage through their focus on pedagogy and linguistics, such as the advantageous position of Central China Normal University and Hunan Normal University.

In conclusion, the institutional landscape is markedly decentralised yet clearly reflects regional linguistic needs. Minority-region colleges and Hong Kong universities lead practical research, but the field lacks large-scale, sustainable cross-institutional collaboration. Future research should encourage cross-regional alliances, transcending localised limitations to build a more integrated national research network.

Who Are the Top 10 Authors in Terms of Number of Publications?

Table7: Statistical Table of The Top 10 Authors of Relevant Research Publications

No.	Author Name	Publication Count
1	Tian Baozhu	2
2	Lao Pengcheng	2
3	Yan Cuiping	2
4	Yan Xiu	2
5	Pan Jun	2
6	Teng Xinxian	2
7	Yan Chunyan	2
8	Li Jing	2
9	Hu Chibing	2
10	Peng Jing	2

Source: CNKI

Analyzing a sample of all authors' relative productivity and an individual's productivity within it and identifying the characteristics of the academic ecology for that domain is a statistical examination of the number of highly productive authors. Table 7 provides the distribution of the ten most productive authors in China in terms of their publications on teaching Mandarin to college students. In addition, the published record of each of the ten authors — Tian Baozhu; Lao Pengcheng; Yan Cuiping; Yan Xiu; Pan Jun; Teng Xinxian; Yan Chunyan; Li Jing; Hu Chibing; and Peng Jing — consists of two publications each. That all ten scholars produced the same number and widely distributed number of publications indicates that there is not yet a

dominant or elite research group in this field and that the concentration/value of the research output in this field is low. The primary characteristics of the academic ecology of the research domain are best defined in three main areas/characteristics. First, the fragmentation and newness of the research efforts in this field, as evidenced by the absolute minimum number of publications by the ten authors (i.e., two publications per author), indicates that most researchers view the teaching of Mandarin at the University level as a peripheral interest or as a temporary project rather than as an area of scholarship. In addition, this field is currently missing authoritative leaders. When a research area becomes established, a hierarchical structure is established based largely on the productivity of research authors within that field. The data provided here indicates that there is not a hierarchy of research authors within the field of teaching Chinese to college students, but rather, there is a flat distribution of research authorship. Therefore, the development of the field of Chinese to college students remains at an early or exploratory level and lacks academic leaders who can aid in the creation of new paradigms on a large scale. A potential exists for research fundamentals for developing the field and the total number of research authors currently in existence exists as ten separate research authors. These ten separate research authors represent a diverse set of research fundamentals and could act as individual components throughout their respective institutions to eventually develop a larger body of research.

Ultimately, the field of teaching Chinese to college students is still in an early, distributed stage of development. Although the individual contributions of these ten authors are relatively small, each of these ten authors represents critical founding members of the field. For further development of the field, academic leaders who are specialised must be nurtured, and sequential, consistent research must occur instead of isolated, short-term studies.

Which 10 Research Papers Have Been Cited the Most?

Table8: Top 10 Cited Papers on Related Topics

Rank	Citation Count	Author(s)	Title (English Translation)	Year
1	27	Xie Xuhui; Cheng Zhaoji	An Exploration of Constructing a Standard Mandarin Teaching Model for Higher Normal Schools in Dialect-Complex Areas	2005
2	21	Zhao Jing	A Survey and Analysis of College Students' Language and Writing Application Status	2006
3	20	Zhou Baisheng; Liu Yi	A Study of the Promotion of Mandarin in Hong Kong from the Perspective of Teachers, Students, and School Curriculum	2003
4	17	Yang Ying	Research on Mandarin Proficiency Test Training Course	2016
5	13	Tang Yan; Huang Pei	A Survey on the Influence of Language Attitudes on Language Use: A Case Study of University Students Whose Native Language is Hengyang Dialect	2011
6	11	Wang Li	On the Characteristics and Teaching Principles of Mandarin Learning among College Students	2006

7	11	Zhu Xinhua; Chen Ruiduan; Wen Hongbo	The Development and Changes in the Mandarin Proficiency of Hong Kong University Students Over the Past Decade: Based on Ten Years of Examination Data from Hong Kong Polytechnic University	2012
8	10	Li Qiqun	A Brief Discussion on Mandarin Teaching for Ethnic Minority University Students	2001
9	10	Zhou Yushan	A Study on the Current Status of Mandarin Learning among Yi Ethnic Minority Teacher Training Students Majoring in Preschool Education—Taking Xichang National Preschool Teacher Training College as an Example	2018
10	9	Deng Honghua	A Preliminary Exploration of the Reform of Mandarin Classroom Teaching in Higher Education Institutions	2006

Source: CNKI

The academic impact, intellectual structure and foundational role of key literature in this field can be revealed through the statistical analysis of the distribution of highly cited papers. The top ten most-cited research papers in the field of teaching Mandarin to college students were analysed to evaluate their academic impact and foundational role. As shown in Table 8, the papers received between 9 and 27 citations, reflecting modest but steady academic influence between 2001 and 2018. Xie Xuhui and Cheng Zhaoji's (2005) study on constructing standard Mandarin teaching models for normal schools in dialect-complex areas ranks first with 27 citations, establishing itself as a seminal work. This is followed by Zhao Jing's (2006) survey of college students' language use (21 citations), and Zhou Baisheng and Liu Yi's (2003) study of Mandarin promotion in Hong Kong (20 citations). The remaining highly cited papers received between 17 and 9 citations.

A thematic evaluation of these highly cited works reveals three predominant research areas that define the intellectual foundation of this field, which can be summarised by three main characteristics. The first of these is regional and dialect-specific interventions. Top-ranked studies focus heavily on practical pedagogical challenges within highly complex dialect zones (e.g. the Hengyang dialect, as discussed by Tang and Huang, 2011) and border minority institutions (e.g. Li Qiqun, 2001; Zhou Yushan, 2018). This proves that contextualised teaching remains a primary academic concern. The second characteristic is the Hong Kong cross-border context, in which studies centred on Hong Kong hold significant citation weights (Zhou and Liu, 2003; Zhu et al., 2012). The body of work under the phrase 'Merit-based Governance' in Mandarins' proficiency trends being studied from the perspective of cross-border socio-education is also validated by this study. Investigations into instructional testing, training programs (Yang Ping, 2016) as well as classroom reforms (Deng Honghua, 2006) are another core area in this study's literature; there is substantial shared scholarly interest regarding continued systemic improvements in teaching.

To summarise, the citation landscape of the family of articles collectively provides a theoretical umbrella which has helped create regional linguistic diversity and a background for many geopolitical differences between areas providing instruction (e.g. regions such as Hong Kong), as well as providing significant practical modifications within the curriculums themselves.

While citations have yet to produce "blockbuster" citations at a broad scale for this area, the top 10 cited articles in this family presently constitute the watchful eyes of academic research and continue to enlighten and point towards the next generation of scholars working in this area.

Which Are the Top 10 Research Papers in Terms of Downloads?

Table 9: Top 10 Downloaded Papers

Rank	Download Count	Author(s)	Title (English Translation)	Year
1	3,335	Yang Ying	Research on Mandarin Proficiency Test Training Course	2,013
2	1,595	Zhao Jing	A Survey and Analysis of College Students' Language and Writing Application	2,006
3	1,115	Tang Yan; Huang Pei	A Survey on the Influence of Language Attitudes on Language Use: A Case Study of University Students Whose Native Language is Hengyang Dialect	2,011
4	895	Zhou Baisheng; Liu Yi	A Study of the Promotion of Mandarin in Hong Kong from the Perspective of Teachers, Students, and School Curriculum	2,003
5	786	LEE WONG PING	A Study on College Mandarin Teaching Based on Learning Differences: A Case Study of the Education University of Hong Kong	2,019
6	723	Ma Miqi	A Study on the Current Situation of Standard Mandarin Phonetics Teaching among Primary and Secondary School Teachers in Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province—Taking Dazhuang Hui Township, Kaiyuan City, Honghe Prefecture, Yunnan Province as an Example	2,015
7	713	Zhou Yushan	A Study on the Current Status of Mandarin Learning among Yi Ethnic Minority Teacher Training Students Majoring in Preschool Education—Taking Xichang National Preschool Teacher Training College as an Example	2,018
8	702	Zhu Xinhua; Chen Ruiduan; Wen Hongbo	The Development and Changes in the Mandarin Proficiency of Hong Kong University Students Over the Past Decade: Based on Ten Years of Examination Data from Hong Kong Polytechnic University	2,012
9	632	Zhang Aihong	Developing college students' language expression skills with a focus on job-seeking needs	2,021

10	618	Yan Chunyan; Liao Pengcheng	A Study on the Difficulties and Countermeasures of Promoting Mandarin in Universities in Ethnic Minority Areas	2009
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Source: CNKI

In contrast, download figures provide an approximate current market demand and practical relevance to researchers/practitioners for current use. As can be seen from Table 9, total downloads have a wider range than citation counts (618-3,335). Yang Ying (2013), in his research on a Mandarin Proficiency Test Training Course, was the most downloaded article with a total of 3,335 downloads, indicating a significant amount of demand for training frameworks focused on preparing individuals to take tests. Following this article was Zhao Jing (2006), who had 1,595 downloads for his survey of students' use of language and writing applications and Tang and Huang (2011), who had 1,115 downloads for their case study of people's attitudes toward language in dialect areas. The next seven most downloaded articles have three-digit download totals; the highest number of downloads was 895 (Zhou and Liu, 2003) and the lowest number of downloads was 618 (Yan and Liao, 2009).

A thematic synthesis of this download data highlights several prominent market-driven and application-oriented interests, which can be summarised as three main characteristics. The first is practical skills and employability. The immense popularity of articles such as those by Yang Ying (2013) and Zhang Aihong (2021) (with 632 downloads focusing on job-seeking needs) highlights the fact that those providing actionable paths for career certification and workplace communication skills attract the most user traffic. The second is regional policy and cross-border adaptation. Parallel to citation trends, papers concerning Hong Kong (Zhou and Liu, 2003; Lee Wong Ping, 2019; Zhu et al., 2012) have steady download profiles, indicating constant societal interest in cross-border language integration. Thirdly, there is interest in minority and border area strategies. Studies detailing localised strategies in ethnic minority areas (e.g. Ma Miqi, 2015; Zhou Yushan, 2018; Yan and Liao, 2009) have received substantial downloads, which validates the widespread attention given to educational equity and policy implementation in complex linguistic environments.

In conclusion, the landscape of downloads shows that, although high-level theoretical frameworks are important, active user engagement in this field is primarily driven by highly practical, test-oriented curriculum training, communication skills focused on employment, and localised implementations in specific linguistic regions, such as Hong Kong and communities of ethnic minorities. Future academic exploration should strike a better balance between theoretical innovation and these in-demand practical applications in order to maximise scientific and societal value.

Which Are the Top 10 Projects That Received the Most Research Grants?

Table10: Top 10 Projects That Received the Most Research Grants

Rank	Funding Source (English)	Publication Count
1	National Social Science Fund	3
2	Hunan Provincial Education Commission Research Fund	2
3	Guizhou Provincial Higher Education Teaching Quality and Teaching Reform Project	1

4	Guangxi Educational Science Planning Project	1
5	Humanities and Social Sciences Research Project of Guizhou Provincial Department of Education	1
6	Fujian Provincial Young and Middle-aged Teachers' Educational Research Project	1
7	Guangdong Provincial Department of Education Scientific Research Project	1
8	Sichuan Provincial Soft Science Research Program	1

Source: CNKI

Funding allocation is a vital indicator of national and regional academic guidance in a specific discipline. As summarised in Table 10, the financial support framework for research into teaching Mandarin to college students is dominated by public and government funding bodies. This consists of eight primary grant categories that have successfully generated academic publications. The empirical data demonstrates a highly concentrated hierarchy at the top, balanced by a decentralised base at provincial level. The National Social Science Fund occupies the leading position, financing three publications, which highlights the national acknowledgement of the popularisation of Mandarin as a significant socio-cultural strategy. Second is the Hunan Provincial Education Commission Research Fund, which financed two publications. The remaining six funding projects, spanning various regions including Guizhou (Ranks 3 and 5), Guangxi (Rank 4), Fujian (Rank 6), Guangdong (Rank 7) and Sichuan (Rank 8), each sponsored one published paper.

An analysis of the funding sources reveals two defining features of the ecosystem within which higher education has developed, focusing on two thematic dimensions. The first dimension is related to the “national strategic direction”. For example, The importance of the National Social Science Fund illustrates that Mandarin instruction (at the college level) is more than developing language skills – it also supports governmental priorities relating to national heritage, standardising language, and promoting national cohesion. The second dimension reflects the provincial specificity of local government and education departments that provide funds to support the teaching of Mandarin in their respective provinces. In particular, the provinces where there are large concentrations of population and/or regionally dialectical languages (e.g., Hunan, Guizhou, Guangxi) have allocated financial resources from provincial departments to create linguistically appropriate methods of instruction.

In conclusion, research into Mandarin teaching among college students is steadily supported by a combination of high-level national grants and various provincial initiatives. While the publication output per project remains low, these grants are an invaluable source of funding. To encourage a shift from single-paper outputs towards more systemic, high-impact institutional curriculum designs, future project funding should prioritise long-term, multi-year longitudinal grants.

What Are the Source Categories of Research Papers?

Table11: Source Categories of Research Papers

Rank	Source Type (English)	Publication Count
1	PKUC	13
2	CSSCI	5

3	WJCI	2
4	CSCD	1

Source: CNKI

Journal articles are a critical source for assessing the academic hierarchy and scholarly status of research domain. As shown in Table 11, high-level publications in this field are classified into four Chinese and international database categories, totalling 21 highly accredited articles. Empirical data demonstrates a clear stratified structure dominated by domestic core indexes. PKUC (Peking University Core Journals) ranks first with 13 publications, establishing itself as the primary vehicle for disseminating high-quality research. CSSCI follows with five publications, representing top-tier domestic social science research. WJCI occupies third place with two papers, offering a modest international perspective, while CSCD concludes with one publication, reflecting cross-disciplinary contributions from science fields.

Structural analysis reveals two major characteristics. First, strong professional recognition: PKUC and CSSCI together occupy over 85% of the total indexed dataset, indicating that Mandarin teaching research has secured a stable position within China's core pedagogy and linguistics journals. Second, a localised disciplinary focus: the high concentration in domestic databases versus the lower presence in global indexes like WJCI reveals that this topic is deeply embedded in localised educational policies, making it highly relevant to domestic application but less so to international frameworks.

In conclusion, college-level Mandarin teaching research possesses a solid, accredited academic foundation in China. While the high volume of PKUC and CSSCI papers guarantees theoretical and practical quality, future researchers should aim to publish in a wider range of sources, including more international indexes. This will elevate China's localised language planning experiences into global academic dialogues.

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