

МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ ОПЫТ ИНТЕГРАЦИИ ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN THE INTEGRATION OF EDUCATION



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Russian Language Teaching in China (1978–2025): A CiteSpace-Based Analysis of Trends and Hotspots

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Abstract

Introduction. In the context of globalization, foreign language education has become a critical component of national competitiveness and cultural diplomacy. Russian language teaching plays a unique role in China's higher education system. However, research in this field has long relied on qualitative analysis, failing to produce systematic, quantitative evidence of the overall landscape. Using CiteSpace software, this study aims to reveal the developmental trajectory, core themes, and evolutionary trends of Russian language teaching in China, thereby providing empirical support for teaching reform.

Materials and Methods. Data were sourced from scientific publications on Russian language teaching in the CNKI database from 1978 to 2025. A total of 2,429 papers were obtained through manual screening. CiteSpace was employed to generate three types of knowledge maps: keyword co-occurrence, clustering, and burst detection.

Results. The publication volume data showed a policy-driven pulsed growth with three distinct peaks in 2010, 2015, and 2019. Research hotspots formed five thematic areas: macro policy and talent cultivation, course-specific teaching practices, innovation in teaching strategies, frontier topics, and theoretical foundations. The research trend underwent a three-stage evolution process, each stage driven in turn by social demand, disciplinary endogenous needs, and national policy. "Ideological and political education through courses" became the most prominent research frontier in recent years with a burst strength of 20.50.

Conclusion. This study provides a panoramic CiteSpace analysis revealing structural features such as policy-driven growth, five thematic areas, and a three-stage evolutionary model. The presented critical reflection on the policy-driven model distinguishes between "policy as context" and "policy as framework", suggesting data-driven theoretical references and practical pathways for Russian language teaching reform, curriculum development, and talent cultivation. These results can be used by Russian language educators, curriculum developers and bibliometric researchers focusing on foreign language education.

Keywords: Russian language teaching in China's higher education system, CiteSpace, knowledge map, politically determined model, Russian language teaching reform

Conflict of interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Преподавание русского языка в Китае (1978–2025 гг.): анализ исследовательских тенденций и тематических приоритетов с использованием CiteSpace

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Аннотация

Введение. На фоне глобализации обучение иностранным языкам стало важным фактором конкурентоспособности страны и инструментом культурной дипломатии. В системе высшего образования Китая особое место занимает преподавание русского языка. Исследования в этой области в течение длительного времени опирались на качественный анализ, в результате чего не удавалось получить систематические количественные данные, отражающие общую картину. Цель исследования – выявить траектории, тенденции и тематические приоритеты в сфере преподавания русского языка с помощью программы CiteSpace, обеспечив тем самым эмпирическую основу для проведения реформ в данной области.

Материалы и методы. Источником данных послужили научные публикации по теме преподавания русского языка в Китае, представленные в базе данных CNKI в период с 1978 по 2025 гг. В результате ручного отбора была сформирована выборка из 2 429 работ. С помощью CiteSpace построены три вида карт знаний: совместное появление ключевых слов, кластерный анализ и анализ всплесков активности.

Результаты исследования. Динамика публикационной активности характеризуется скачкообразным ростом под влиянием государственной политики, при этом выраженные пики наблюдались в 2010, 2015 и 2019 гг. Тематические приоритеты охватывают пять областей: макрополитика и подготовка кадров, практика преподавания по отдельным дисциплинам, педагогические инновации, передовые темы и теоретические основы преподавания. Исследовательское поле прошло три последовательных этапа развития, драйверами которых выступали общественный запрос, внутренние потребности дисциплины и государственная политика. Наиболее заметным исследовательским трендом последних лет со значением всплеска 20,5 стало «идейно-политическое воспитание в рамках учебных курсов».

Заключение. Проведенный с помощью CiteSpace системный обзор научных публикаций в области преподавания русского языка в Китае выявил следующие характеристики: политически обусловленный рост публикационной активности, пять ключевых тематических направлений и их трехэтапную эволюцию. В работе критически осмысливается политически детерминированная модель и проводится различие между «политикой как контекстом» и «политикой как аналитической рамкой». Полученные результаты создают основу для планирования и осуществления реформ в сфере преподавания русского языка в Китае, включая разработку учебных курсов и подготовку кадров. Материалы статьи могут быть полезны педагогам русского языка, разработчикам учебных программ и библиометристам, занимающимся вопросами иноязычного образования.

Ключевые слова: преподавание русского языка в системе высшего образования Китая, CiteSpace, карта знаний, политически детерминированная модель, реформа преподавания русского языка

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Introduction

Cultural and people-to-people exchanges between China and Russia serve as valuable cornerstones of their bilateral relations, particularly given that the two countries are each other's largest neighbors. The comprehensive strategic partnership and cooperation between China and Russia have continued to develop in recent years, leading to a significant expansion of educational

cooperation between the two countries. As of December 2025, there are 43 China-Russia cooperative educational institutions and 133 cooperative programs¹. Among them, Shenzhen MSU-BIT University, as

¹ [Ministry of Education, PRC. Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools Information Platform] [Electronic resource]. (In Chinese) Available at: <https://www.crs.jsj.edu.cn/news/search> (accessed 02.04.2026).

the first China-Russia cooperative university with an independent legal personality², demonstrates the depth of bilateral educational cooperation. Russian language teaching is central to China-Russia people-to-people and cultural exchanges and thus directly affects the breadth and depth of bilateral cooperation.

At present, Russian language teaching in China's higher education system is at a critical stage of transformation. While the Belt and Road Initiative advocates the cultivation of interdisciplinary and application-oriented Russian specialists³, the New Liberal Arts policy, a national initiative to advance interdisciplinary humanities education, presents new challenges in terms of disciplinary positioning⁴. Meanwhile, the development of Ideological and Political Education through Courses requires teaching to undertake the function of value guidance⁵. These policy orientations impose higher requirements on research into Russian language teaching: it must address not only how to teach, but also why to teach, and for whom to cultivate specialists.

Despite these demands, research on Russian language teaching in China has long been dominated by qualitative analysis and experiential summarization, while a systematic quantitative overview of the entire field is lacking. Until now, no study has adopted a scientometric knowledge mapping approach to conduct a panoramic quantitative analysis of research on Russian language teaching in China.

² [Official Website of Shenzhen MSU-BIT University] [Electronic resource]. (In Chinese) Available at: <https://www.smbu.edu.cn/xxgk/xxgk.htm> (accessed 02.04.2026).

³ [Ministry of Education, PRC. Reply to the Proposal on Cultivating Russian-Speaking Specialists to Support the Belt and Road Initiative] [Electronic resource]. (In Chinese) Available at: http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xxgk/xxgk_jyta/jyta_jijiaosi/201812/t20181229_365488.html (accessed 02.04.2026).

⁴ [Ministry of Education, PRC. Declaration on the Construction of New Liberal Arts] [Electronic resource]. (In Chinese) Available at: http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/gzdt/gzdt/s5987/202011/t20201103_498067.html (accessed 02.04.2026).

⁵ [Ministry of Education, PRC. Guidelines for the Implementation of Ideological and Political Education in Higher Education Institutions] [Electronic resource]. (In Chinese) Available at: http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A08/s7056/202006/t20200603_462437.html (accessed 02.04.2026).

The present study is the first to use CiteSpace in this field to systematically reveal the evolution of publication volume, research hotspots, thematic structure, and frontier trends in Chinese Russian language teaching research from 1978 to 2025, as well as presenting its developmental trajectory and evolutionary patterns from a data-driven perspective.

The purpose of this study is to provide a theoretical reference for the reform and policy optimization of Russian language teaching in China. The specific tasks are as follows:

- to count annual publication volumes and analyze phased characteristics and the causes of peaks;
- to conduct keyword co-occurrence analysis to identify research hotspots;
- to perform keyword cluster analysis to uncover the thematic structure;
- to carry out keyword burst detection to classify research stages and predict developmental trends.

While this study focuses on Chinese literature indexed in the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), it should be acknowledged that research from the Russian side is used only as a reference framework for understanding the characteristics of Chinese Russian language teaching research, and no systematic direct comparison between China and Russia is carried out.

Literature Review

The history of Russian language teaching in China can be traced back to the Russian Language School established in 1708 [1]. Up until 1949, a total of 13 schools nationwide offered Russian departments [2]. Russian language teaching witnessed its first peak in the early years of the People's Republic of China, with 36 universities establishing Russian departments by 1952 [3]. However, a downturn occurred following the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations: by the end of the 1970s, there were only about 1,000 Russian language students nationwide [4]. Since China's Reform and Opening-up policy in 1978, along with the normalization of Sino-Soviet relations, Russian language teaching in China has gradually recovered. By early 2026,

185 universities across China had launched Russian language majors⁶.

Despite Russian language teaching in China having a history of more than 300 years, research on this field started relatively late, serious academic study only commencing during the 1950s. Based on shifts in research focus and methodology, the evolution of this research can be divided into the following five stages.

The first stage (1950s–mid-1990s) was dominated by the transplantation of Soviet teaching methodologies, involving the grammar-translation method as the main approach⁷ [5]. This work, which primarily served a disseminative function, brought foreign theories into Chinese academic discourse but produced little original adaptation to local teaching conditions. The second stage (late 1990s–mid-2000s) turned to in-depth interactions between language and culture [6; 7], focusing on linguistic and cultural concepts [8], as well as the linguistic worldview [9]. The third stage (mid- to late 2000s–2010s) emphasized theoretical deepening, introducing perspectives from cognitive linguistics and psycholinguistics into teaching research [10–12]. The fourth stage (2010–2020) is characterized by interdisciplinary expansion, including the Russian translation of Chinese classics and the dissemination of terminology, which start to emerge as new growth areas [13–15]. The fifth stage (2020–present) centers on digital and intelligent transformation, as well as strategic integration, with research covering intelligent-era talent cultivation [16; 17], knowledge mapping tools [18], Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) construction [19], and AI-focused media discourse [20].

The domination of qualitative analysis and experience-based summaries in Chinese

research on Russian language teaching over the past four decades has perpetuated several systemic limitations, including weak awareness of quantitative research, limited application of corpus and bibliometric visualization methods, a lack of macroscopic systematic analysis. These limitations have also contributed to insufficient scholarly dialogue between Chinese and Russian researchers in this field.

While Russian as a Foreign Language in Russia has formed a robust systematic theoretical framework following more than a century of development [21], the relatively few systematic studies on Russian language teaching in China conducted by Russian scholars have focused mostly on practical teaching. Yu.O. Okhorzina et al. identified weaknesses in Chinese Russian language teaching, including inadequate methodological foundations, faculty shortages, and differences in educational traditions [22].

In recent years, Russian scholars centered at Shenzhen MSU–BIT University have carried out active research. In comparative studies of Chinese and Russian teaching methods, B. Wang and I.K. Zabrodina found that the Chinese teaching system continues to emphasize the grammar-translation method while the domestic Russian system prioritizes the communicative activity approach [23]. A.A. Pylkova proposes that a “Sino-Russian teacher team” could integrate the strengths of both methodologies [24]. E.I. Vinokurova further emphasizes that interaction between Chinese and Russian teachers is the key to effective instruction [25]. For instance, some have focused on the application of audiovisual materials and media texts in Russian language teaching [26–28]. Other studies have explored the use of thematic presentations as audiovisual linguo-cultural tools in language learning [29] or proposed the concept of an “artificially created language environment” [30]. In the area of Russian for Specific Purposes, one study introduced a textbook compilation model of “lecture outline plus language exercises” [31].

Synthesizing the Chinese and international literature, three major differences exist between Chinese and Russian research on Russian language teaching. First, Russian research centers on the theoretical construction of teaching methodologies,

⁶ [Ministry of Education, PRC. High-Quality Organization of the China-Russia Year of Education to Support and Lead the High-Level Development of Bilateral Educational Cooperation] [Electronic resource]. (In Chinese) Available at: http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/moe_176/202602/t20260210_1428639.html (accessed 15.04.2026).

⁷ Lin Yi. A Review of the Research Work on Russian Grammar in China in Recent Years. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*. 1959;(6):359–364. (In Chinese); Zhang Huisen. [Functional Grammar Research in the Soviet Union]. *Guowai Yuyanxue*. 1989;(3):115–119. (In Chinese).

whereas Chinese research tends to emphasize narratives of institutional and disciplinary history. Second, Russian scholars focus on the appropriateness of teaching methods, while Chinese scholars prioritize the strategic needs of Sino-Russian relations. Third, Russian studies tend to adopt empirical methods, whereas Chinese studies rely mainly on literature reviews, with quantitative research being relatively weak.

Bibliometric methods including CiteSpace have been widely applied in educational research. Studies have validated their effectiveness in revealing research hotspots and evolutionary trends in various fields, particularly Russian cognitive neuroscience [32], speech act analysis [33], English medium instruction [34], cross-cultural language research [35], and education policy [36]. However, such a panoramic quantitative analysis remains unimplemented in the field of Chinese Russian language teaching research. This methodological gap constitutes the core entry point of the present study.

Based on the above analysis, this study proposes four research questions:

1. What trends does the annual publication volume exhibit?
2. What are the key research hotspots and their evolutionary paths?
3. What are the main clusters within the thematic structure?
4. What are the current research frontiers and future developmental trends?

By addressing these questions, this study aims to fill the gap in the macro quantitative review of Russian language teaching research in China, provide directional references for its reform, and offer theoretical support for Sino-Russian educational cooperation.

Materials and Methods

Data Sources and Selection Criteria. This study utilized the CNKI as the data retrieval platform. The retrieval criteria were set as follows: topic containing “Russian language teaching”, document types restricted to Chinese academic journals, with publication dates spanning from 1978 to 2025. A total of 3,566 academic journal articles were retrieved. Over the course of manual screening, non-research documents such as articles without author information,

conference announcements, calls for papers, and book reviews were excluded, and articles related to secondary education were additionally removed. Following this validation process, 2,429 documents were obtained. The selected documents were exported in RefWorks format, with exported fields including journal name, affiliation, author, keywords, abstract, publication year, and title. The output file was named “download_txt”.

Research Procedure. The study was carried out in four stages. First, publications from the CNKI database were collected and then the results were filtered by year using the platform’s built-in filtering function to obtain the annual publication counts for each year from 1978 to 2025. Second, the filtered records were exported in a format compatible with CiteSpace. Third, an annual publication trend graph was plotted in Microsoft Excel based on the yearly counts. Fourth, the data were imported into CiteSpace (version 7.0.R0) to generate three types of knowledge maps: a keyword co-occurrence network, a keyword clustering network, and a keyword burst detection map. Then, CiteSpace’s statistical output was used to classify the themes and interpret the clusters.

Methods and Tools. Data format conversion and visualization analysis were performed using CiteSpace (version 7.0.R0). Developed by Professor Chaomei Chen’s research team at the College of Computing and Informatics at Drexel University in the USA, CiteSpace functions as a scientific text mining and visualization tool [37]. It is designed to mine latent knowledge structures embedded in scientific text data and to reveal the structural characteristics and dynamic evolutionary patterns of scientific fields⁸. Using CiteSpace (7.0.R0), we selected “keyword” as the node type and set the time slicing parameter to one year to capture annual changes in research hotspots. Based on these settings, three types of knowledge maps were generated: a keyword co-occurrence network, a keyword clustering network, and a keyword burst detection map. In addition, Microsoft Excel was used

⁸ Li J., Chen C. [CiteSpace: Text Mining and Visualization in Scientific Literature: A Monograph]. Beijing: Capital University of Economics and Business Press; 2025. (In Chinese).

to calculate annual publication volumes and generate an annual publication trend graph.

Data Analysis. Based on the CiteSpace outputs and the Excel trend graph, the data were analyzed along four dimensions:

1. Annual publication volume analysis: to reveal the developmental dynamics and research activity levels within the field over time.

2. Keyword co-occurrence network analysis: to identify and visualize high-frequency keywords and their co-occurrence relationships, thereby presenting the overall distribution of research themes.

3. Keyword clustering analysis: to uncover core research hotspots and map their structural relationships.

4. Keyword burst detection: to trace the evolutionary trajectory of research themes, identify keywords that experienced explosive growth during specific periods, and consequently reveal research frontiers while predicting future trends.

Results

Annual Publication Volume Analysis. Based on statistics of the 2,429 papers indexed in CNKI from 1978 to 2025, an annual publication trend graph was generated (Fig. 1). According to the results, the annual publication volume exhibits a pulse-like growth pattern, whose surges are highly synchronized with major events in Sino-Russian relations and national policy orientations. Thus, the period from 1978 to 2008 was a stage of slow accumulation. Annual publication volume first

exceeded 100 papers in 2009, followed by three distinct peaks in 2010, 2015, and 2019. Although the period from 1978 to 2008 witnessed some fluctuations, the annual publication volume remained below 100 papers and lacked clear policy correspondences. Therefore, the analysis focuses on the three statistically and substantively significant peaks that emerged after 2008.

The peak in 2010 corresponded to the China-Russia Mutual Language Years. Research during this year largely focused on concrete teaching issues such as teaching models, vocabulary, listening, and writing, with multimedia and network technologies becoming prominent themes. The publication of the commemorative anthology “Theories and Practices of Russian Language Teaching Research in China” (2010) further indicates a close temporal correlation between policy events and academic activities, the policy context having provided an important opportunity for academic publishing.

The peak in 2015 coincided with the comprehensive implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative. That year, the journal *Teaching Russian in China* launched a special column proposing the “Grand Russian Concept on the Silk Road Economic Belt” [38]. Emerging factors such as dual major training models including “Russian + Aircraft Design and Engineering” [39], as well as area studies becoming part of the research agenda [40], contributed to a breakthrough for Russian language teaching research from the traditional framework of language skills.

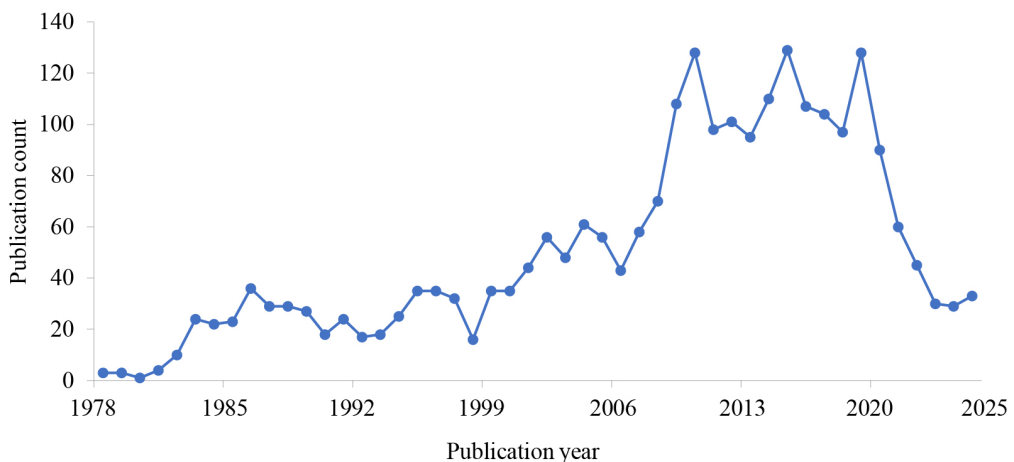


Fig. 1. Annual publication trend

Source: Compiled by the author based on data from CNKI.



The peak in 2019 corresponded to a policy-driven empirical turn. The Belt and Road Initiative evolved from a macro concept into a concrete problem framework, giving rise to numerous case studies targeting specific regions, institution types, and curriculum models. Curriculum articulation and textbook development for Sino-Russian cooperative education programs became an independent research field.

The above analysis demonstrates that research on Russian language teaching in China features a distinct policy-driven characteristic. The progression of the three peaks: from “exploration of teaching practices within a policy context” to “directional transformation under a strategic framework”, and then to “empirical implementation driven by policy”, reveals an evolutionary trajectory of the field moving from “inside the classroom” to “within the national strategy”.

Keyword Co-occurrence Network Analysis. Keywords concisely summarize the core content of documents. High-frequency keyword analysis and cluster analysis can effectively reveal the hot topics and thematic structure of a research field. Table lists the 20 most frequent

keywords, reflecting the research focus of this field.

In terms of frequency, “Russian language teaching” ranks first with 426 occurrences, nearly twice that of the second-ranked keyword, to confirm its position as the core topic in this field. High-frequency keywords such as “teaching reform” (96), “Russian major” (82), and “teaching model” (71) reflect researchers’ sustained attention to teaching reform, program development, and model innovation.

Two phenomena merit special attention. The first of these is the rapid penetration of policy. As national strategic keywords emerging in recent years, “Belt and Road” (first appearing in 2016) and “ideological and political education through courses” (first appearing in 2020) have quickly risen to the top of the high-frequency list, ranking 9th and 11th respectively. This confirms that policy signals can be rapidly transformed into academic productivity. The second notable phenomenon is the absence of Russian for specific purposes. Keywords such as “medical Russian”, “tourism Russian”, and “business Russian” did not enter the top 20, indicating that applied Russian language teaching research remains marginalized.

Table. Top 20 High-frequency Keywords

Keyword	Frequency	Centrality	First Year
Russian language teaching	426	0.39	1995
Russian language	223	0.12	1996
Teaching	103	0.22	1995
Teaching reform	96	0.19	1996
Russian major	82	0.26	2000
College Russian	75	0.17	1995
Teaching model	71	0.07	2007
Teaching method	58	0.22	1999
Belt and Road	40	0.03	2016
Higher education institutions	38	0.09	2004
Ideological and political education through courses	37	0.25	2020
Application	35	0.02	2003
Countermeasures	32	0.10	1995
Classroom teaching	31	0.04	2002
Problems	31	0.01	2007
Talent cultivation	31	0.25	2003
Reform	28	0.10	1999
Multimedia	26	0.07	2001
Strategies	25	0.03	2010
Russian language specialists	24	0.28	2006

Source: Compiled by the author.

This stands in contrast to the practical demands of Sino-Russian economic and trade cooperation, suggesting considerable room for growth in this area.

Centrality reflects the ability of a keyword to connect different parts of the knowledge network. “Russian language teaching” has the highest centrality (0.39), while “Russian language specialists” (0.28), “Russian major” (0.26), “talent cultivation” (0.25), and “ideological and political education through courses” (0.25) constitute the second tier. “Ideological and political education through courses” achieved a centrality of 0.25 in just five years, indicating that it is being integrated into the core agenda of Russian language teaching research, although the stability and depth of this integration remain to be tested over time. In contrast, “Belt and Road” has a centrality of only 0.03, confirming its status as an independent research direction, whose integration with other themes requires further development.

As shown in the keyword co-occurrence network (Fig. 2), “Russian language teaching” occupies the absolute center of the network, whose dense connections to nodes

such as “teaching methods”, “teaching reform”, “teaching models”, and “talent cultivation” exhibit a clear core-radiation structure. All research essentially revolves around “how to teach” and “what to teach”, which ultimately converge on the core goal of “talent cultivation”.

“Ideological and political education through courses” is directly connected to “Russian major” and “talent cultivation”, demonstrating that the integration of ideological and political elements is not an isolated issue but is deeply embedded in program development and educational goals.

Keyword Cluster Analysis. To further reveal the thematic structure of research on Russian language teaching in China, keyword cluster analysis was conducted to identify 20 largest clusters for closer examination. The results indicated that the clustering structure was significant with high internal homogeneity (modularity $Q = 0.8744$, mean silhouette $S = 0.9589$) (Fig. 3).

Based on content characteristics, the 20 clusters can be grouped into five core areas. The core features of each area are elaborated below.

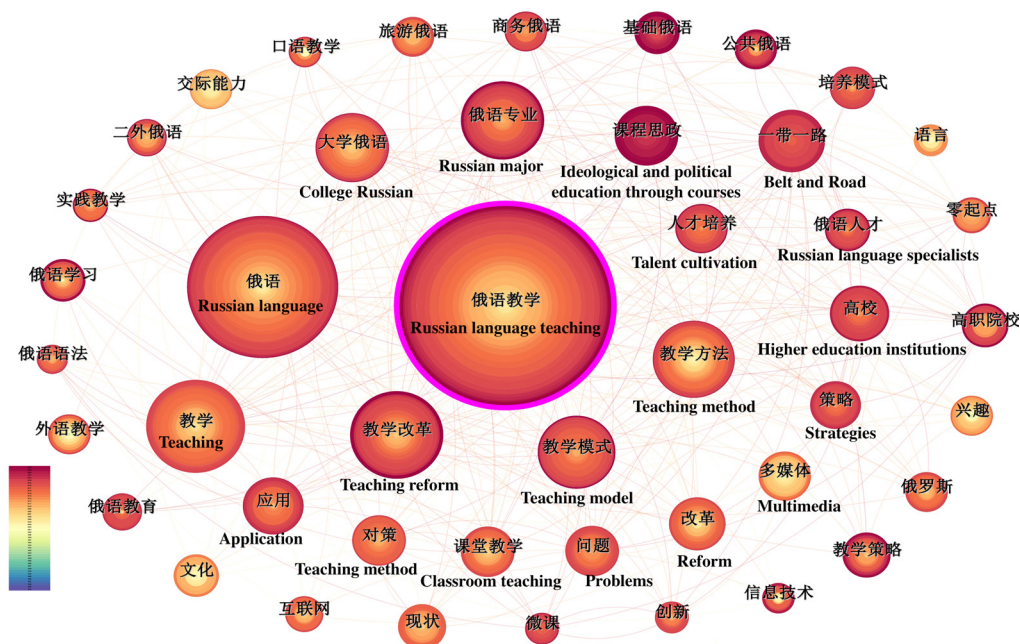


Fig. 2. Keyword Co-occurrence Network

Note: Keywords are shown in Chinese, with English translations provided for the top 20 high-frequency keywords for readers' convenience.

Source: Hereinafter in this article all figures were drawn up by the author using the CiteSpace software.

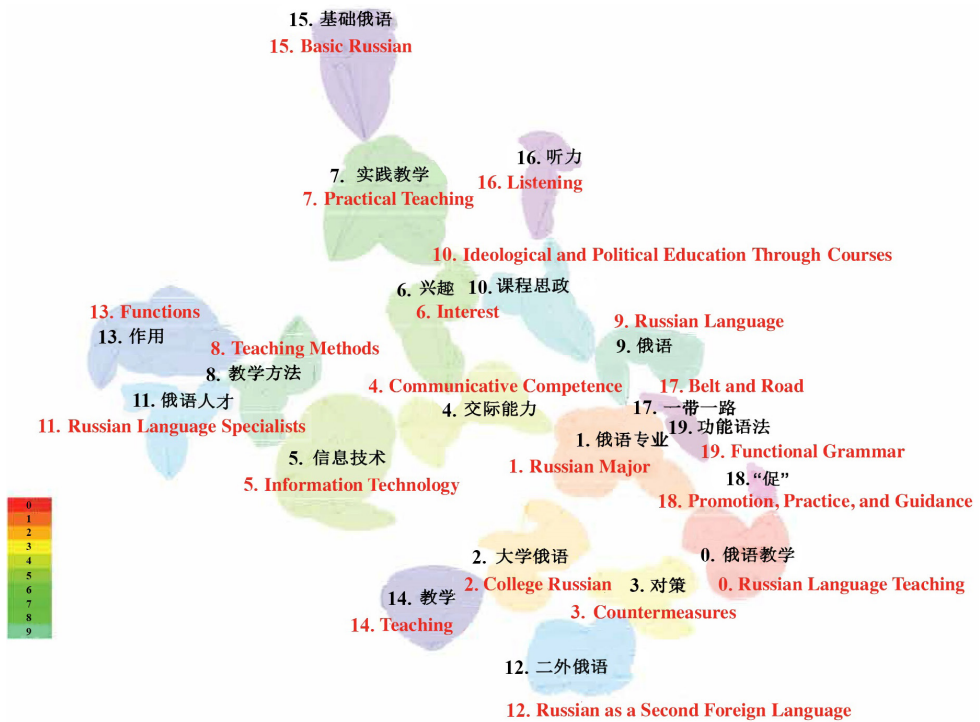


Fig. 3. Keyword Clustering Network

Note: Cluster labels are shown in Chinese, with English translations marked in red for readers' convenience.

1. Macro-Level Policy and Talent Cultivation System Development. This area includes three clusters: Russian Language Teaching (Cluster 0), Russian Major (Cluster 1), and Russian Language Specialists (Cluster 11). The keywords in Cluster 0 – “teaching reform”, “interdisciplinary talents”, “writing ability”, “problems” – demonstrate a shift in research focus from knowledge transmission to systematic teaching reform, which emphasizes cultivating interdisciplinary and application-oriented talents. In Cluster 1, attention is given to disciplinary construction, which is exemplified by keywords such as “business Russian”, “classroom teaching”, “talent cultivation”, as well as National Standards, reflecting the ongoing exploration of developing professional standards and optimizing the curriculum system. The third cluster comprising this core area is Cluster 11, which emphasizes talent development within the framework of Sino-Russian people-to-people exchanges. Significantly, this cluster stresses the integration of area studies with language proficiency.

2. Course-Specific Teaching Practices. This area covers College Russian

(Cluster 2), Communicative Competence (Cluster 4), Practical Teaching (Cluster 7), Teaching Methods (Cluster 8), Russian as a Second Foreign Language (Cluster 12), Teaching (Cluster 14), Basic Russian (Cluster 15), and Listening (Cluster 16). Cluster 2 represents independent research systems for major core courses, while Cluster 12 covers public foreign language courses. Examples of keywords that illustrate differentiated research paths for different student groups include “oral teaching”, “general Russian”, “reading ability”, and “third language acquisition”. Meanwhile, the keywords in Cluster 15 (e.g., “core competencies”, “Russian curriculum”, “textbook processing”) suggest transitional changes in elementary-level teaching from knowledge-oriented to competence-oriented approaches. For Cluster 7, practical Russian skills are prioritized, particularly in “professional Russian” and “writing instruction”. Specific dimensions of language competence are targeted by Clusters 4 and 16. These clusters favor practice-oriented approaches and contain the keywords “communicative language teaching”, “speaking”, and “listening instruction”. According to Cluster 8

(“teaching methods”, “reform”, “humanities education”), translation teaching fosters humanistic literacy and cross-cultural communicative competence. Finally, Cluster 14 concerns teaching practice and includes the keywords “Russian translation”, “competence”, and “teaching”.

3. Innovation in Teaching Strategies and Methods. This area incorporates Countermeasures (Cluster 3), Information Technology (Cluster 5), Functions (Cluster 13), and Promotion, Practice, and Guidance (Cluster 18). Cluster 3 adheres to the common problem-oriented framework of problem identification, cause analysis, and strategy formulation. Keywords include “problems”, “causes”, “optimization strategies”, and “culture teaching”. Confirming the essential role of multimedia, micro-lectures, and online-offline blended teaching in improving teaching effectiveness, Cluster 5 covers “Information Technology”. Pedagogical functions are the focal point of Cluster 13, with keywords “functions”, “teaching strategies”, and “Russian-Chinese contrast”, used to underscore practical applications and cross-cultural perspectives. Although small in size, Cluster 18 manifests a refined teaching management approach, as evidenced by action verbs “promote”, “practice”, “guide”, “refine”, and “supervise”.

4. Frontier Topics and Emerging Directions. This area reflects the latest developmental trends, comprising Ideological and Political Education Through Courses (Cluster 10), and Belt and Road (Cluster 17). An analysis of the keywords in Cluster 10 (“fostering virtue through education”, “teaching model”, “curriculum design”) reveals the integration of value guidance with knowledge instruction as a prominent orientation of Russian language teaching reform. The smallest Cluster 17 primarily contains keywords such as “application-oriented”, “Russian-plus-specialty”, “employment of Russian majors”. These keywords indicate that national strategic needs are profoundly reconfiguring talent cultivation goals, propelling Russian language education toward an integrated “specialty-plus-application” model.

5. Theoretical Foundations and Teaching Methodology Research. The present area encompasses Russian Language (Cluster 9), Interest (Cluster 6), and

Functional Grammar (Cluster 19). Accordingly, Cluster 9 corresponds to the term “constructivism”, alongside associated keywords “instructional design”, “intensive reading course”, and “English”. Thus, it can be posited that constructivism has been utilized in the context of Russian teaching design. Furthermore, Cluster 6 centers on learner factors including motivation, interest, and affective variables. Cluster 19, involving the keywords “communicative teaching method” and “traditional teaching method”, indicates that some studies have reconstructed grammar teaching systems from a theoretical perspective.

According to cluster analysis, the following structural characteristics have been observed. Although research has primarily focused on “teaching reform” and “talent development”, studies on specific courses have emerged as distinct areas of research. Meanwhile, information technology and teaching model innovation continue to receive sustained attention, national policies generate emerging research directions, and theoretical research supports teaching practice.

Keyword Burst Detection. A number of keywords with burst characteristics were detected. This study selected the top 15 keywords with the highest burst strength, longest duration, and clear research significance for analysis. Their burst strength, emergence year, and active period are shown in Figure 4.

To interpret the evolutionary logic behind these bursts, this study proposes an analytical framework: the evolution of research topics in Chinese Russian language teaching is shaped by three major forces including social demand (e.g., the demand for communicatively competent talents after accession to the World Trade Organization, WTO), technological development (e.g., the proliferation of multimedia and micro-lectures), and national policy (e.g., the Belt and Road Initiative, ideological and political education through courses).

Based on the distribution of burst keywords, research trends in Russian language teaching in Chinese higher education can be divided into three main stages.

Stage 1 (1995–2005): Capacity Building Driven by Social Demand. Burst keywords in this stage include “culture”, “communicative competence”, “multimedia”, “application”, and “Russian language education”.

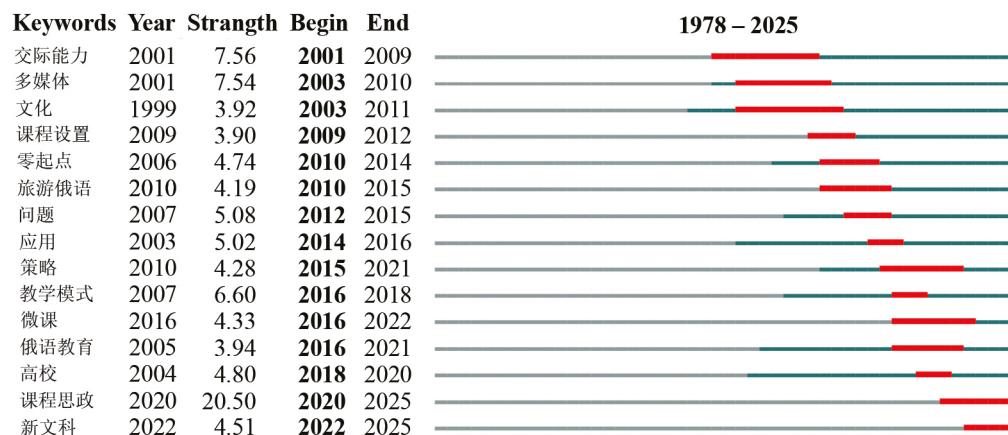


Fig. 4. Top 15 Keywords with Strongest Burst Detection

Notes: Keywords are shown in Chinese. English translations: 交际能力 – communicative competence; 多媒体 – multimedia; 文化 – culture; 课程设置 – curriculum design; 零起点 – zero-start; 旅游俄语 – tourism Russian; 问题 – problems; 应用 – application; 策略 – strategies; 教学模式 – teaching model; 微课 – micro-lecture; 俄语教育 – Russian language education; 高校 – higher education institutions; 课程思政 – ideological and political education through courses; 新文科 – New Liberal Arts.

“Communicative competence” (burst strength = 7.56) and “multimedia” (7.54) had significantly higher burst strengths than other keywords, representing two core themes of this stage: the shift of cultivation objectives from “knowledge” to “competence”, and the transformation of teaching tools from “blackboard” to “screen”. Although market demand for Russian-speaking talent has continued to accumulate since the normalization of Sino-Russian relations and the rise of cross-border trade in the early 1990s, academic research lagged behind, only intensifying around the time of China’s accession to the WTO in 2001. During this period, academic transformation was driven by the convergence of social demand and technological development. This stage roughly coincided with the evolution of Russian as a foreign language teaching methodology from the “conscious-practice approach” to “communicative language teaching (CLT)”.

Stage 2 (2006–2015): Model Construction Driven by Disciplinary Endogenous Needs. This stage had the most concentrated burst keywords, including “zero-start”, “teaching model”, “problems”, “higher education institutions”, “curriculum design”, “strategies”, and “tourism Russian”. The burst of “zero-start” is particularly noteworthy: most Russian major students start from zero, raising the challenge of

achieving communicative competence within a limited time. This issue, which is rooted in China’s educational context, marks a shift from “imitating the Soviet model” to “independent exploration”. The bursts of “higher education institutions” and “curriculum design” indicate that research upgraded from “how to teach a lesson” to “how to build a program”.

Stage 3 (2016–present): Research Agenda Shaped by National Policy. Burst keywords in this stage are “micro-lecture”, “ideological and political education through courses”, and “New Liberal Arts” – few in number, but highly distinctive.

“Ideological and political education through courses” achieved the highest burst strength in the entire dataset (20.50), making it the most prominent research frontier in recent years. “Micro-lecture” had a shorter burst period (2016–2018), followed by the high-intensity burst of “ideological and political education through courses” starting in 2020. The decline of micro-lecture research may reflect the natural transition of technological topics from an emergence phase to a normalization phase. However, this trade-off raises a question: in an era of intensive policy topics, is the academic visibility of technological research being suppressed?

“Ideological and political education through courses” has formed an

independent and stable cluster that moves beyond scattered policy advocacy. “New Liberal Arts” (2022–present), which became the latest frontier with a burst strength of 4.51, largely reflects endogenous disciplinary needs. However, its far lower burst strength than that of “ideological and political education through courses” indicates that policy-driven topics attract academic attention much more rapidly than endogenous ones.

Keyword burst detection reveals that Russian language teaching research in China has evolved through three stages: driven by social demand, then by disciplinary endogenous needs, and finally by national policy. This trajectory is highly consistent with the three peaks identified in the annual publication volume analysis.

The third stage, which features an unprecedented concentration of policy terms and extreme burst strength, confirms that national policy has become the dominant force shaping research agendas in recent years. The 2019 peak in publication volume seamlessly overlapped with the strong burst of “ideological and political education through courses” starting in 2020, indicating that policy influence not only reshapes research topics but also directly boosts academic output.

Therefore, four main findings should be highlighted. First, a thorough examination of the annual publication volume reveals three distinct peaks: 2010, 2015, and 2019. Each of these three years corresponds to a significant policy development in Sino-Russian relations. Second, keyword co-occurrence analysis places “Russian language teaching” at the center of the knowledge network, surrounded by closely connected nodes such as teaching reform, teaching models, and talent cultivation. Policy-related keywords have risen rapidly in recent years, while keywords for Russian for specific purposes remain conspicuously absent. Third, cluster analysis further identifies five thematic areas that together form the intellectual structure of the field. Fourth, burst detection reveals a three-stage shift in research interests: from social demand (1995–2005) to discipline-internal needs (2006–2015), and then to policy-related concerns (2016–present).

Discussion

The annual publication output of research on Russian language teaching in China shows a pulsed growth pattern that is highly synchronized with major policy events, a feature clearly demonstrated in the data of this study: three major peaks appeared in 2010 (the China-Russia Mutual Language Years), 2015 (the full implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative), and 2019 (the establishment of a new-era comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership). Further keyword burst detection reveals the internal evolution of this dynamic mechanism: from social demand-driven development from 1995 to 2005 (represented by “communicative competence” and “multimedia”) to discipline-internal demand-driven development from 2006 to 2015 (represented by “teaching model” and “zero-start”), and then to national policy-driven development between 2016 and the present. “Ideological and political education through courses” (burst strength = 20.50) marks this stage most prominently. It refers to the integration of ideological, political, and value-based education into professional courses and has become the leading frontier of Russian language teaching reform. Although this policy-driven trait is not unique to the field, the speed at which policy terminology has permeated academic discourse constitutes an atypical trend in the humanities and social sciences.

This phenomenon calls for critical reflection. Drawing on established policy studies [41; 42], which recognize policy as a key mechanism that directs academic attention and resource allocation, we argue that two distinct models of policy-driven research should be distinguished. The first takes policy as the research context, in which researchers identify social demands and transform them into academic issues: policy provides the problem setting while the analytical framework is independently generated by the discipline. The second takes policy terminology itself as the core concept and analytical framework within which research follows the narrative structure of “how to implement a certain policy”. In the present study, “ideological and political education through courses” has formed an independent cluster with a centrality of 0.25, explicitly demonstrating



characteristics of the latter model. A potential risk of this model is that when policy terminology becomes a self-evident research premise, issues of important disciplinary value not covered by policy discourse may be marginalized. The data confirm this risk: keywords for Russian for specific purposes, such as “business Russian”, “tourism Russian”, and “medical Russian”, do not appear in the high-frequency list, forming a clear contrast with the practical demands of Sino-Russian economic and trade cooperation. Digital and intelligent topics, including artificial intelligence, corpus linguistics, and big data, have not formed independent clusters and thus remain at the margins of research. This represents a notable gap from the practical needs of Russian language teaching reform in the new era, suggesting that reform should pay greater attention to technological innovation and application-oriented teaching research.

A cross-analysis between the three-stage evolution of research dynamics and the five-stage division based on research content outlined in the literature review reveals an important structural tension. The five-stage framework depicts the evolution of what is researched (transplantation of Soviet pedagogy – linguistic and cultural interaction – cognitive turn – interdisciplinary expansion – digital and strategic integration), while the three-stage framework explains changes in why research is conducted. The cross-analysis shows that in the third stage (national policy-driven), digital and intelligent issues have entered the research scope but have not become mainstream, whereas policy-related topics such as ideological and political education through courses have rapidly moved to the center. This indicates that technological and methodological innovations are at a relative disadvantage when competing for academic attention when policy agendas focus heavily on values and strategic orientations. While this finding does not deny the rationality of policy-driven research, it implies the need for a more balanced academic ecosystem in which policy topics, disciplinary endogenous topics, and cutting-edge technological topics can coexist and nourish each other.

Both convergences and divergences emerge while comparing these findings with those of existing empirical work.

Consistent with H. Xu and D. Feng [32], the present study uses CiteSpace to identify policy-related peaks in publication activity. However, unlike their study, this research focuses specifically on the field of Russian language teaching and covers a much longer time span (1978–2025). Thus, it provides a more comprehensive view of the field’s long-term evolution. Moreover, in contrast to earlier qualitative reviews on Russian language teaching in China [1–3], this study offers a quantitative, data-driven account that systematically maps the evolution of the field over nearly five decades.

Limitations. Several limitations should also be acknowledged in the study. Since the data source is limited to Chinese journals indexed in CNKI, Russian-language literature and dissertations are excluded. In addition, the research focuses on higher education, without involving secondary education or other levels; moreover, the bibliometric method emphasizes macro-level thematic structure analysis, which cannot deeply reveal the micro-mechanisms of specific teaching practices.

Conclusion

Based on the above discussion, this study draws the following conclusions regarding the dynamics of the research field itself. First, the development of research on Russian language teaching in China features a distinct policy-driven pulsed growth pattern. The three peaks in annual publications, which are highly synchronized with major events in Sino-Russian relations, provide a historical reference for the phased planning and policy adaptation of teaching reform. Second, research dynamics have evolved through three stages: first driven by social demand, then by discipline-internal demand, and finally by national policy. “Ideological and political education through courses”, having a burst strength of 20.50, has become the most prominent research frontier in recent years, revealing the evolutionary logic of teaching reform from capacity building and model construction to strategic guidance. Third, research hot-spots can be systematically summarized via keyword cluster analysis into five thematic fields: macro-level policy and talent cultivation system development; course-specific teaching practices; innovation in teaching

strategies and methods; frontier topics and emerging directions; theoretical foundations and teaching methodology research. Centered on Russian language teaching, these five fields form a multi-level thematic structure ranging from macro to micro and from theory to practice, which clearly presents the key directions and intellectual framework of Russian language teaching.

Turning to implications for educational practice, two major shortcomings in current teaching reform should be noted. There is a serious lack of research on Russian for specific purposes (economics and trade, tourism, law, science and technology, etc.). Meanwhile, digital and intelligent topics (artificial intelligence, corpus linguistics, big data) remain marginalized, creating a gap in cutting-edge research. Accordingly, three key recommendations are proposed. First, researchers should approach policy-oriented research prudently, clearly distinguish between “policy as context” and “policy terminology as framework”, and proceed from authentic teaching problems to avoid the rigid application of policy discourse. Second, research on Russian for specific purposes, along with studies into digital and intelligent teaching, should be strengthened to address the shortcomings in teaching reform and enhance the application-oriented and modernized level of talent cultivation. Third, comparative research on Chinese and Russian teaching methodologies and academic dialogue should be deepened to provide international experience for Russian language teaching reform. Future studies should expand data sources to include Russian-language databases such as the Russian Science Citation

Index (RSCI) as a means of conducting systematic comparative research between China and Russia.

Future Research Directions. Future research should proceed in three directions: first, expand data sources to include Russian databases, such as the Russian Science Citation Index (RSCI), to conduct direct, systematic comparisons between China and Russia; second, combine qualitative methods – such as interviews with key authors and in-depth case studies – to complement the limitations of quantitative analysis; and third, track the continuing impact of the “New Liberal Arts” policy to examine how it reshapes the knowledge production model of Russian language programs.

As the first panoramic quantitative analysis to introduce CiteSpace into this field, this study has not only mapped the thematic structure and evolutionary trajectory of the domain over nearly half a century but, more importantly, reveals a profound structural issue: as academic agendas become increasingly attached to policy agendas, how can the independent development space and frontier exploration capacity of a discipline be maintained? The answer lies not in rejecting policy, but in a more reflective academic practice that, while responding to national strategic needs, remains faithful to the discipline’s own logic and maintains conscious attention on issues that have not yet entered policy horizons but hold long-term value. Only in this way can research on Russian language teaching in China strike a genuine balance between policy-driven development and disciplinary autonomy, serving national needs without losing academic imagination for the future.

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Доступность данных и материалов. Наборы данных, использованные и/или проанализированные в ходе текущего исследования, можно получить у автора по обоснованному запросу.

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