

ANNA YANG*
PEILAN TANG**

CHINESE LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN POLAND: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE ON SCHOLARSHIP AND SURVEYS (2014–2025)

1. Introduction and motivation

Chinese language education in Poland has expanded rapidly over the past two decades, yet the evidence base is fragmented across languages and uneven in scope. Polish- and English-language publications document recurring constraints – teacher shortages, limited contact hours, imported textbooks, and weak policy support – largely through descriptive, single-country lenses. Recent Chinese-language studies add comparative frames and survey data within a Central-Eastern European (CEE) perspective but remain difficult to access locally. This article brings these strands together and complements them with original data from 2023 to produce a single system-level account.

The article pursues three connected aims: (1) to synthesize Polish/English and Chinese-language research published since 2014 using transparent selection criteria and a common set of system dimensions (teacher pipeline, materials/localization, motives/retention, policy integration); (2) to establish a cross-sector empirical baseline for Poland through an institutional mapping and a nationwide learner questionnaire fielded in 2023; and (3) to assess whether observed patterns in provision and learner trajectories are consistent with the Chinese-specific mechanisms associated with crossing the intermediate–advanced threshold. Put as guiding questions: How is provision distributed across sectors and who teaches it? How do learners' tenure, certification, and motives cluster? And to what extent do these distributions cohere with theory-predicted bottlenecks (characters, lexical coverage, tones) and with policy/design misalignments?

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* ORCID: 0009-0007-5825-8871

** ORCID: 0009-0009-0611-1098

We read Poland's recent expansion through two concise lenses. In language-in-education policy, Thomas Ricento and Nancy Hornberger show how status, acquisition, and management planning are enacted across system layers – useful for interpreting staffing pipelines, curricula, and governance. Bernard Spolsky's account of policy as a nexus of practices, beliefs, and management further clarifies why Chinese remains marginal in national frameworks.¹ From curriculum and motivation, John Biggs's constructive alignment links intended outcomes to teaching and assessment, while Xiaohong Wen synthesizes motivation in Chinese as a second language (CSL) as an ecology in which cultural interest often outruns perceived utility.²

Finally, three Chinese-specific thresholds help explain the intermediate plateau (when the learners make no perceptible progress in the process of learning language despite their efforts and practice, cf. Jack Richards³) seen in our data and provide guidance on how to overcome it: Helen H. Shen shows how character/radical processing must be proceduralized to sustain reading; Marcella Hu and Paul Nation motivate the ~95–98% lexical-coverage band for unassisted comprehension; and Seth Wiener, Marjorie Chan, and Kiwako Ito demonstrate that explicit instruction plus high-variability phonetic training stabilizes tone control.⁴

The next sections summarize research since 2014 and then present a 2023 cross-sector snapshot (providers, materials, staffing) alongside learner trajectories, motivations, and barriers, followed by a results- and theory-based discussion.

2. Literature review (2014–2025)

This review covers peer-reviewed articles and substantive reports published between 2014 and 2025 in Polish/English and Chinese. We prioritized works with system reach (national or multi-institutional scope, or widely cited syntheses) and public availability; narrowly focused MA/PhD theses and single-site case notes

¹ T.K. Ricento, N.H. Hornberger, *Unpeeling the Onion: Language Planning and Policy and the ELT Professional*, “TESOL Quarterly” 1996, Vol. 30, No. 3, pp. 401–427; B. Spolsky, *Language policy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004.

² J. Biggs, *Enhancing teaching through constructive alignment*, “Higher Education” 1996, Vol. 32, No. 3, pp. 347–364; X. Wen, *Motivation and Chinese second language acquisition* [in:] *The Routledge handbook of Chinese second language acquisition*, eds. C. Ke, Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon 2018, pp. 352–372.

³ J.C. Richards, *Moving beyond the plateau*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008.

⁴ H.H. Shen, *An investigation of Chinese-character learning strategies among non-native speakers of Chinese*, “System” 2005, Vol. 33, No. 1, pp. 49–68; M. Hu, P. Nation, *Unknown vocabulary density and reading comprehension*, “Reading in a Foreign Language” 2000, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 403–430; S. Wiener, M. Chan, K. Ito, *Do explicit instruction and high variability phonetic training improve nonnative speakers' Mandarin tone productions?*, “The Modern Language Journal” 2020, Vol. 104, No. 1, pp. 152–168.

were excluded unless incorporated by later syntheses. Selection was constrained by language segmentation and uneven indexing; where possible we triangulated with institutional documents. The set of works reviewed is listed in Table 1.

2.1. Polish perspectives (2014–2023)

Polish-language writing on Chinese in Poland moves from disciplinary self-reflection to ground-level constraints. An early waypoint is Anna Rudakowska, which situates Polish sinology between philological tradition and pragmatic curricula shaped by Bologna reforms and market pressures, with no clear state strategy to mediate the shift.⁵

By the mid-2010s the focus turns practical. Katarzyna Mazur-Kajta and Agnieszka Paterska-Kubacka analyze the economic dimension, stressing the cognitive effort of mastering characters and the booming demand against thin labor-market absorption, as well as the dominance of Hanban's curricula and HSK exams.⁶ Around the same time, Katarzyna Bańska-Orłowska contrasts Polish and China-based provision, documenting how Polish learners face weak language environments, ill-suited teaching materials, oversized groups, and fewer contact hours than their peers in China.⁷ Monika Paliszewska-Mojsiuk and Anna Sroka-Grądziel bring learner voices to exam culture: HSK/HSKK are perceived as time-pressured and test-strategic, weakly aligned with CEFR and communicative outcomes.⁸ These studies offer fine-grained insight into learners' concrete difficulties. Most recently, Katarzyna Sarek re-surveys the field, underlining staff shortages, dependence on visiting teachers, inconsistent curricula, and chronic underfunding despite program expansion.⁹

Overall, Polish scholarship offers institutional and classroom detail yet is typically descriptive, small-N, and theory-light; it repeatedly surfaces breadth without depth – many entrants, few advanced learners, beginner-heavy materials, and fragile staffing. This nationally focused, rich in data but light in theory corpus sets up the comparative and system-level questions later pursued in Chinese-language research.

⁵ A. Rudakowska, *The Study of China in Poland after World War II: Toward the ‘New Sinology’?*, “China Review” 2014, Vol. 14, No. 2, pp. 59–90.

⁶ K. Mazur-Kajta, A. Paterska-Kubacka, *Ekonomiczny wymiar nauczania języka chińskiego*, “Prace Naukowe Akademii im. Jana Dlugosza w Częstochowie. Pedagogika” 2016, t. 25, nr 1, pp. 225–241.

⁷ K. Bańska-Orłowska, *An Analysis of Higher Education Systems of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language in Poland and China*, “Theory and Practice of Second Language Acquisition” 2017, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 29–46.

⁸ M. Paliszewska-Mojsiuk, A. Sroka-Grądziel, “HSK – językowy paszport do Chin. O egzaminie z perspektywy Polaków”, “Neofilolog” 2019, nr 53, z. 1, pp. 59–70.

⁹ K. Sarek, *Chinese Studies in Poland: History and Current Perspectives*, “Journal of Chinese History” 2023, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 613–630.

2.2. Chinese perspectives (2022–2025)

Chinese writing on Poland began well before 2022 with classroom sketches by teachers and volunteers in schools, universities, and Confucius Institutes. These vignettes flagged recurring hurdles – tones, characters, pragmatic particles – but were siloed by institution and method, offering texture rather than a system view. Many are cited in later Chinese-language research; for reasons of space, they are not reproduced here but can be provided on request.

After 2022, the lens widened. Studies started to place Poland within a Central-Eastern European frame, using policy-oriented typologies and regional data-sets. Wei Gao and Yinghui Wu diagnose the “three many’s, three few’s” (三多三少) imbalance: many undergraduate but few postgraduate programs, many general but few specialized courses, and many teachers but too few with adequate training.¹⁰ They also stress reliance on imported materials and CI infrastructure, while arguing for Chinese+ pathways that braid language with economics, law, or technology.

Country-focused work then maps the ecosystem end-to-end. Hongxia He and colleagues bring K-12 and private providers into view, revealing fragmentation, heavy dependence on visiting teachers, and uneven quality among commercial schools.¹¹ Yanhong Li, Anna Yang, and H. He add regional granularity (urban concentration in the west/south; thinner coverage elsewhere) and document teacher pressures – short postings, limited collaboration with Polish staff, scarce digital tools – amid post-closure resilience as some universities sustain programs without CI support.¹² From a policy angle, Baogui Li and Bo Xu underline Chinese’s low status relative to European languages, a shallow local teacher pipeline, and COVID-era strains that exposed weak digital readiness.¹³ Most recently, Peilan Tang and Manchun Dai connect education to language use beyond classrooms (heritage schools, private initiatives, linguistic landscape) and propose resource coordination

¹⁰ W. Gao, Y. Wu, *Zhōngdōng’ōn gāoxiào Zhōngwén jiàoyù fāzhǎn bǐjiào jí tuījìn cèliè* [中东欧高校中文教育发展比较及推进策略], “Yúnnán shifàn dàxué xuébào (Duiwài Hánnyǔ jiàoxué yǔ yánjiū bǎn)” [云南师范大学学报(对外汉语教学与研究版)] 2022, Vol. 20, No. 2, pp. 43–49.

¹¹ H. He et al., *2021–2022 nián Bólán guójì Zhōngwén jiàoyù xiànzhuàng jí duìcè* [2021~2022年波兰国际中文教育现状及对策] [in:] *Bólán fāzhǎn bǎogào* [波兰发展报告](2023), eds. C. Huáng, Y. Yú, Y. Léi, Shèhuì kēxué wénxiān chūbǎn shè [社会科学文献出版社], Beijing 2024, pp. 185–203.

¹² Y. Li, A. Yang, H. He, *Bólán Zhōngwén jiàoyù fāzhǎn de xiànzhuàng, yīnsù hé tiǎozhàn* [波兰中文教育发展的现状、因素和挑战], “Zhōngguó yúyán zhànlüè” [中国语言战略] 2024, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 73–84.

¹³ B. Li, B. Xu, *Bólán Zhōngwén jiàoyù: fāzhǎn yàngtài, xiànsí jìngyù yǔ yīnyìng duìcè* [波兰中文教育：发展样态，现实境遇与因应对策], “Guójí Zhōngwén jiàoyù (Zhōng Yǐngwén)” [国际中文教育（中英文）] 2024, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 77–86.

mechanisms, including a national alliance of Chinese programs and intermediary agencies, and brokerage for Chinese+ internships.¹⁴

Together, this new wave of studies (2022–2025) shifts the debate from case notes to structure: regional comparison, system maturity, and policy integration. Its limits are also clear – heavy reliance on administrative listings and convenience samples, modest engagement with CEFR/SLA benchmarks, and optimistic assumptions about Chinese+ demand – yet it supplies the comparative scaffolding against which Poland’s on-the-ground trajectories can now be tested.

2.3. Synthesis and outlook

Table 1 provides an overview of the Polish/English and Chinese articles discussed above. To facilitate comparison, studies are aligned on scope/method and reduced to a single system-level signal plus the practical lever it motivates.

Table 1. Comparative Overview of Polish/English and Chinese Research on Chinese Language Education in Poland (2014–2025)

Author-Year	Scope & method	Main signal	Action cue
Rudakowska 2014	PL; documents + 26 interviews	Sinology split: philology vs. pragmatic curricula; weak state strategy	Theoretical anchoring; integrate language + area studies
Mazur-Kajta & Paterska-Kubacka 2016	PL HE; secondary stats (2008–2014), labor data	Fast expansion, high demand; weak market absorption; CI dominance	Link curricula to jobs; localize content
Bańska-Orlowska 2017	PL–CN HE; case study, syllabi + textbook audit	Few hours, large groups; unsuitable materials; weak environment	Localized materials; teacher preparation
Paliszewska-Mojsiuk & Sroka-Grądzka 2019	PL learners; N = 279 survey (HSK/HSKK)	Test-orientation; time pressure; limited communicative focus	Align to CEFR; reform speaking assessment
Sarek 2023	PL HE; descriptive synthesis	Growth with chronic staff shortages; reliance on visiting teachers	Build local pipelines; long-term funding
Gao & Wu 2022	CEE HE (incl. PL); 113 univ., MOE data	“Three many’s, three fews”; teacher gaps; PL a regional leader	Regional cooperation; postgraduate tracks
He <i>et al.</i> 2023	PL system; policy/docs + interviews	Post-2010 growth; dependence on volunteers; low coordination	State-level support; localized teacher education

¹⁴ P. Tang, M. Dai, *Bólán Zhōngwén jiàoyù yǔ Zhōngwén shǐyòng zhuàngkuàng yánjiū* [波兰中文教育与中文使用状况研究], “Huáwén Jiāoxué yǔ Yánjiū” [华文教学与研究] 2025, Vol. 2 No. 98, pp. 29–39.

Table 1. cont.

Li & Xu 2024	PL; history/ policy + 4 univ., 9 schools	Regional concentration; scarce materials; early-school footholds small	Curricular integration; digital resources
Li, Yang & He 2024	PL multi-level; 2021–22 mapping from 8 univ., 40 schools	Presence across K-12/ HE; counts confirm breadth	Invest in localization; teacher training
Tang & Dai 2025	PL multi-sector; mixed methods: fieldwork, interviews, survey (N ≈ 130)	Policy weak; university-labor misalignment; Chinese+ emerging	Build Chinese+ pathways; coordination mechanisms

Source: Own work.

Polish/English scholarship (2014–2023) offers rich, close-up portraits of programs, pedagogy, assessment and staffing, typically from institutional data or small learner surveys; Chinese-language work (2022–2025) situates Poland within CEE dynamics, applies policy/maturity frames, and increasingly uses survey evidence to propose structural fixes. Polish work gives experiential depth, Chinese work structural breadth, but the two strands rarely converse; cross-citation and open data are scarce, leaving the field empirically uneven and theoretically under-integrated.

Across both corpora, recurring diagnoses – thin teacher pipelines, imported/beginner-oriented materials, weak policy coordination – align with an often implicit difficulty of moving learners past the intermediate band. Polish studies point to mechanisms that plausibly create this ceiling: HSK attainment concentrated at mid-levels, the character bottleneck and sequencing debates, few contact hours and oversized groups with ill-matched textbooks, chronic staff shortages, and high costs with weak labor-market pull. Chinese-language analyses frame the same constraints at the system level – “三多三少”, partial localization, marginal policy status, institutional fragmentation, and thinning the advanced pipeline. Read through Chinese-specific SLA, these conditions map onto known thresholds for breaking the intermediate plateau – automatizing character recognition and radical use, scaling multi-character lexical families toward ~95–98% coverage, and stabilizing tones through explicit, high-variability practice.¹⁵

This imbalance and its plateau dynamics motivated a nationwide survey in 2023 designed to supply a systematic baseline that links institutional provision to learner trajectories. While some aspects are cited in P. Tang & M. Dai's research,¹⁶ the

¹⁵ M. Hu, P. Nation, *Unknown vocabulary density...*; H.H. Shen, *An investigation...*; S. Wiener, M. Chan, K. Ito, *Do explicit instruction...*

¹⁶ P. Tang, M. Dai, *Bolán Zhōngwén...*

present article is the first to analyze the full dataset as a bridge between descriptive Polish accounts and structurally oriented Chinese scholarship.

3. Survey evidence on Chinese education in Poland

To complement a divided literature and provide a cross-sector baseline, we fielded a two-part study in 2023 that couples an institutional mapping with a learner questionnaire. The mapping enumerates providers and materials across higher education, K-12, Confucius Institutes/Classrooms, and the private sector; the questionnaire captures learner profiles, trajectories, motivations, and barriers. The next subsections summarize methods (3.1) and present concise institutional (3.2) and learner (3.3) findings, followed by a brief synthesis (3.4).

3.1. Data and methods

Between June and September 2023 we conducted (1) an institutional mapping of Chinese-language provision in Poland and (2) a 29-item learner questionnaire. The two components were designed to be read together: the mapping provides scale and structure; the survey adds learner-side experience.

For the institutional mapping, we canvassed official university/CI pages, study guides, curricula/syllabi, archived announcements, and public directories; when status was unclear, we sought confirmation by email. An institution was coded as “offering Chinese” if it listed an active course or program in 2022/2023 or documented continuous activity in the previous three years; discontinued or one-off initiatives were logged separately. Variables captured included provider type, program/course titles, staffing where publicly reported, and (for a textbook audit) titles named in syllabi or institutional lists. For the audit, items were deduplicated to unique titles and classified by place of publication and series. Counts reflect public listings as of 2023 and should be interpreted as indicative rather than exhaustive; detailed tallies appear in Table 2 and Figure 1.

The learner questionnaire was a Polish-language instrument (multiple-choice, Likert, short open responses) distributed via university/CI mailing lists and social media (Facebook, LinkedIn) with onward sharing by teachers and student groups, yielding a non-probability sample with an urban/higher-education skew. Eligibility required current or recent study of Chinese in Poland. Participation was voluntary and anonymous; no personally identifying data were collected. After excluding incomplete and duplicate-pattern entries, we retained $N = 115$ valid cases. Headline structure is reported in Table 3. Analysis was descriptive (proportions; cross-tabs for salience checks) with no weighting. Findings are exploratory and not statistically

representative of the national learner population. The questionnaire, codebook, and mapping source list are available on request.

3.2. Institutional survey

The institutional survey depicts a system that is broad and diversified, yet fragile in terms of resources and policy support. Two tables follow: Table 2 summarizes provision across sectors, and Figure 1 presents the textbook audit results.

Table 2. Institutional provision snapshot (as recorded 2022/2023)

Domain	Indicator	Count/ Note
Higher education	Universities with full degree programs (Sinology/ China-related)	17
	Universities that have offered Chinese courses (no full degree)	25
	Distinct Chinese/ China-related course titles recorded	142
	Universities with independent Chinese language/ culture centers	≥ 2 (Nicolaus Copernicus University; University of Silesia)
K-12 (schools)	Schools with Chinese (peak count)	≈ 125 (51 kindergartens; 31 primary; 42 secondary)
	Estimated K-12 learners	≈ 3,000 (1 class per school assumption)
	Integration in vocational education	Absent (no systematic presence reported)
Confucius Institutes	Operating in Poland	Peak 6; 4 post-2023 (after two closures)
	Confucius Classrooms	6
Teaching workforce	CI teachers (nationwide)	≈ 50
	Private-sector teachers employed by identified training institutions	128 (≈ 41 full-time)
	Typical tenure of visiting/ China-sent teachers	~ 2-year postings (high turnover)
Private sector	Identified training institutions	81
	Tutoring offers listed online	698 (e-korepetycje.net); 68 (szukaj-lektora.pl) – likely overlap
	Tutor nationality mix (sample, szukaj-lektora.pl)	~ 76% Polish; ~ 21% Chinese

Note: Counts reflect the 2023 mapping and public listings; online tutor numbers may double-count individuals and include non-credentialed offers. Figures are indicative of scale and concentration rather than a full census.

Source: Own work.

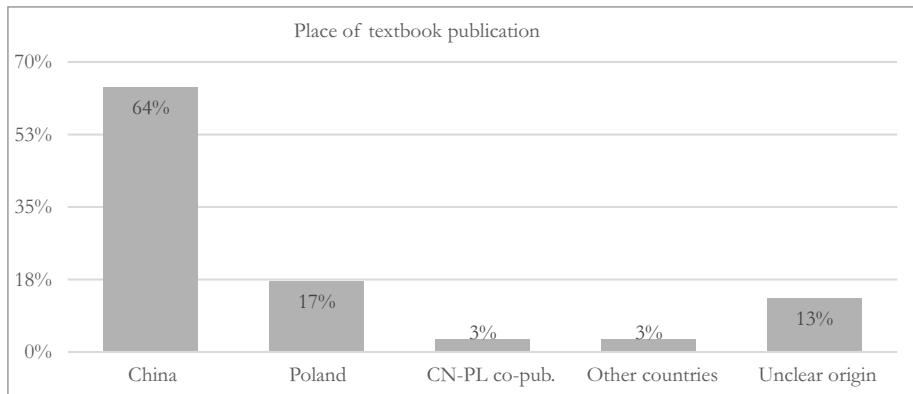


Figure 1. Textbook audit (N = 334 unique titles)

Source: Own work.

Universities remain the main drivers (some now host independent Chinese language/culture centers), while K–12 and private provision have expanded unevenly. Figure 1 shows a predominantly imported materials mix ($\approx 64\%$ China-published), with few localized or specialized resources; series such as *Boya Chinese* and *New Practical Chinese Reader* remain standard. Staffing underscores the same fragility: at peak there were six Confucius Institutes in Poland (now four after closures in Wrocław and Warsaw) plus several Confucius Classrooms; CI staff number roughly 50 nationwide. Beyond this, 81 private training institutions employ about 128 teachers (≈ 41 full-time), and online platforms list ≈ 700 individual tutors – many students or short-term arrivals – while China-sent teachers typically rotate on \sim two-year postings. Breadth is thus achieved through a large but transient teaching pool, which sustains access yet weakens continuity and localization.

Read cautiously, these patterns align with Polish/English accounts of uneven resourcing and dependence on non-local materials, and with Chinese-language diagnoses of partial policy integration and regional concentration. Heuristically applying P. Tang's six-level maturity model¹⁷, Poland sits around Level 3 ("mature development"): Chinese is present in primary, secondary, and higher education but largely absent from vocational tracks; some teacher training and specialized materials exist, yet localization remains partial. A clear contrast persists between improvised, "passive" adaptation by visiting teachers and Polish-led initiatives that are still developing.

¹⁷ P. Tang, *Wàiyǔ shēnfèn shǐjiǎo xià de Hányǔ guójì chuánbò yánjiū* [外语身份视角下的汉语国际传播研究], Beijing Language and Culture University [北京语言大学], Beijing 2019.

3.3. Learner survey

The learner questionnaire offers an exploratory profile of respondents and their trajectories (non-probability sample; urban/ HE skew). Table 3 below provides a compact overview of the learner sample (N = 115, 2023), including profile, venues of study, proficiency, motivations, continuation factors, and barriers.

Table 3. 2023 learner survey (N = 115): key distributions

Category	Variable	Distribution/ Indicator	Notes/ Observations
Demographics	Gender	78% female; 22% male	Typical imbalance in language majors
	Age	19–29 (58%); 30–39 (21%); < 19 (12%); ≥ 40 (9%)	Overrepresentation of university-age adults
Educational background	Current status	Students (69%); Working adults (23%); Secondary pupils (5%); Other (3%)	Adult/ HE concentration
Learning duration	Length of study	< 1 yr (33%); 2–3 yrs (25%); 4–6 yrs (20%); > 7 yrs (23%)	Broad but non-linear distribution
Learning intensity	Weekly hours	1–3h (29%); 4–6h (37%); 7–10h (22%); >10h (12%)	Modest exposure typical for non-immersion contexts
Learning venues	Main contexts	Confucius Institutes (41%); Universities (31%); Private schools (23%); K–12 (< 3%)	Post-secondary concentration
HSK experience	Ever taken HSK	Yes (46%); No (54%)	Nearly half attempted the certification
	Highest HSK attained	HSK 1–3 (57%); HSK 4–5 (26%); HSK 6 (17%)	Majority at intermediate level
Motivation	Primary reason	Cultural/ interest (~ 75%); Professional (~ 20%); Study/ travel (< 10%)	Cultural fascination dominates over instrumental motives
Reported barriers	Key difficulties	Characters (70%); Tones (42%); Grammar (25%); Cost/ time (24%); Few advanced materials (21%)	Reflects the structural and perceptual “difficulty” of Chinese
Continuation factors	Encouraging conditions	Practical use opportunities (41%); Supportive teacher (37%); Accessible materials (29%); Peer community (22%)	Highlights potential levers for retention

Source: Own work.

Learner tenure suggests a progression bottleneck rather than a mere exposure gap: despite a steady inflow of beginners (~ 33%) and multi-year persistence,

advanced attainment remains rare; of the 46% who took HSK, most cluster at intermediate levels and only 17% reached HSK 6. Reported barriers clustered around characters (70%), tones (42%), cost/time, and a scarcity of post-beginner materials. The pattern of a large intermediate cohort and few advanced is consistent with character, lexical-coverage, and tone thresholds.¹⁸

Motivation is predominantly culturally driven (75%). As one respondent put it, “I started Chinese simply because I liked the characters and the culture, not because I thought it would help me at work.” The weak salience of Chinese+ pathways in 2023 likely reflects a timing gap between emerging market niches and learners’ perceptions.

Reasons for discontinuation emphasize perceived necessity and comparative utility as follows: “At some point you ask yourself if it’s worth the effort. Other languages are easier and more useful in Poland.” This aligns with the “three many’s, three fews” imbalance observed in CEE (many entrants, few advanced),¹⁹ while grounding it in learners’ effort-reward calculus.

Access channels are concentrated: 41% studied at Confucius Institutes, 31% at universities, 23% at private schools, with negligible primary/secondary exposure despite documented provision. This supports the view that Chinese is not systematically anchored in early schooling, potentially compressing exposure into later stages.²⁰

Reported barriers mirror prior work: high fees, uneven instructional quality, and a scarcity of post-beginner materials. “Private classes are very expensive and discourage adults from learning,” wrote one respondent; another called for continuity: “It should be possible to access materials not only for beginners but also for intermediate and advanced learners” – and for colloquial/contemporary registers beyond textbook dialog.

Overall, the learner evidence points to a peripheral, interest-driven ecology with a progression pinch at the intermediate band. Learner testimony thus both confirms Polish findings on structural obstacles and nuances Chinese-language accounts of Chinese+ uptake, showing that in 2023 professional pathways were still perceived as distant rather than immediate. While exploratory and non-representative, these signals cohere with Chinese-specific SLA mechanisms and help explain why broad participation has not yet yielded a large advanced cohort.

¹⁸ M. Hu, P. Nation, *Unknown vocabulary density...*; H.H. Shen, *An investigation...*; S. Wiener, M. Chan, K. Ito, *Do explicit instruction...*

¹⁹ W. Gao, Y. Wu, *Zhōngdōng’ón gaoxiào...*

²⁰ B. Li, B. Xu, *Bólán Zhōngwén...*

3.4. Synthesis

The 2023 surveys reveal a system that is broadening but fragile. Providers are diversifying provision, but weak policy support, regional inequalities, teacher shortages, and only partial localization continue to constrain development. From the learner perspective, cultural interest remains strong, but without clearer pathways to utility many students disengage, especially at the intermediate plateau where structural and methodological barriers accumulate.

This tension, which is visible growth coupled with fragile foundations, captures the paradox of Chinese education in Poland. The surveys place the field at a transitional moment post-COVID, after the closure of Confucius Institutes, but before new institutional frameworks have consolidated. Expansion has given visibility and social value, but without stronger structures it remains fragmented and marginal within the national system. Recognizing this paradox is crucial not only for interpreting the Polish case but also for understanding how Chinese is internationalized and localized in peripheral European contexts, where growth can be rapid yet sustainability uncertain.

4. Discussion and future directions

The survey provides a system-level baseline for Chinese language education in Poland and shows where local (Polish/ English) and regional (Chinese-language) diagnoses converge. We read it through two concise lenses from language-in-education policy and SLA and through Chinese-specific constraints on progression. Rather than re-stating these frameworks, we apply them directly to four levers: (1) workforce stability; (2) materials/ localization and methods; (3) motivation and retention; and (4) policy–labor-market integration. The subsections below develop each lever with evidence from the mapping and learner survey

4.1 Building a stable teaching workforce

Both Polish and Chinese studies identify staffing as the key weakness: the former emphasize reliance on visiting teachers, the latter frame it as a maturity issue. Our data confirm the mechanism: most instructors are short-term Chinese staff, which yields uneven quality and weak adaptation to Polish classrooms. Pay gaps magnify the problem (public schools ~ 4,900–5,900 PLN gross/ month; private tutoring 60–100 PLN/ h; business roles 7,000–14,000 PLN+²¹), pushing qualified sinologists out of education.

²¹ *Wynagrodzenie język chiński – Sprawdź średnie wynagrodzenie dla język chiński na Jooble*, Jooble.pl, n.d., <https://pl.jooble.org/salary/j%C4%99zyk-chi%C5%84ski> (access: 30.09.2025).

In language-in-education planning terms, heavy reliance on short-term visitors signals shallow acquisition-planning pipeline-recruitment, preparation, and retention, and not a temporary anomaly.²² Crucially, advancement beyond the intermediate band depends less on raw hours and more on automatizing character recognition and raising reading rate, which is work that requires instructional continuity across semesters and which itinerant staffing undermines.²³ Remediation therefore spans macro-meso-micro action: national incentives and funded posts; institutional career ladders and co-teaching models; classroom mentoring with a focus on reading-rate growth and formative assessment.²⁴

4.2 Materials, methods, and localization

Polish work has long noted the scarcity of suitable textbooks; Chinese studies recast this as incomplete localization. Our 2023 audit aligns with both: 64% China-published titles, few local/ specialized resources, and limited coverage of colloquial or professional registers. These observations echo findings from earlier research, which showed that textbooks in wide use such as *New Practical Chinese Reader* or *Great Wall Chinese* prioritize grammar drills over authentic usage, leaving students with thin communicative competence.²⁴

The dominance of imported, grammar-forward materials with limited advanced pathways reflects weak constructive alignment between intended outcomes (communicative/professional use), teaching activities, and assessment.²⁵ Circulation is part of the bottleneck: ministry of education (MOE) platforms, like that created under the auspices of the Chinese Ministry of Education *chineseplus.net*, already offer hundreds of free and paid courses ranging from pronunciation and characters to culture and business. These, however, are little known or insufficiently adapted for Polish learners.

Progress beyond B1–B2 typically requires a 96–98% lexical-coverage threshold reached via multi-character word families plus proceduralized skills built through high-quality practice.²⁶ Sparse localized materials above the beginner stage plausibly depress both coverage and practice opportunities. A coordinated “identify–adapt–circulate” mechanism would move provision from beginner-heavy to progression-oriented and align teaching with pragmatic and professional use.

²² T.K. Ricento, N.H. Hornberger, *Unpeeling the Onion...*; B. Spolsky, *Language policy...*

²³ M. Hu, P. Nation, *Unknown vocabulary density...*; H.H. Shen, *An investigation...*; S. Wiener, M. Chan, K. Ito, *Do explicit instruction...*

²⁴ A. Kuniczuk, *Duìwài Hanyǔ jiàocái zhōng jìjué yáyǔ xíngwéi de yúyòng pínggu* [对外汉语教材中拒绝言语行为的语用评估], Beijing Foreign Studies University [北京外国语大学], Beijing 2015.

²⁵ J. Biggs, *Enhancing teaching...*; X. Wen, *Motivation and Chinese...*

²⁶ M. Hu, P. Nation, *Unknown vocabulary density...*; H.H. Shen, *An investigation...*; S. Wiener, M. Chan, K. Ito, *Do explicit instruction...*

4.3. Motivation and retention of learners

Polish studies warned that enthusiasm can be fragile; Chinese research pointed to emerging Chinese+ incentives. In 2023, cultural interest still dominated, and attrition clustered where characters felt onerous and utility unclear. In L2 terms, the motivational self system is underdeveloped: learners lack vivid possible selves tied to concrete career affordances undermine long-term persistence.²⁷

Pedagogically, programs that combine contextualized practice with explicit skill-building make a difference; in particular, embedding high-variability tone training in task-based work is one of the few interventions linked to upper-intermediate listening gains and reduced plateau effects.²⁶ Motivation endures when effort is paired with visible payoffs and steady progress in hard-to-automatize subskills (characters, prosody, multi-word lexis).

4.4. Policy, labor market, and systemic integration

Chinese remains marginal because status planning (formal recognition, curricular anchoring) and management (posts, funding, assessment) lag behind social demand in classic policy misalignment. Universities expand provision, but graduates face uncertain pathways. Chinese+ can function as a meso-level instrument that links acquisition planning (programs, internships) to labor-market status within the policy onion.²⁸

Market signals are present but weakly perceived by learners. In 2023, at least 3,468 companies with Chinese capital operated in Poland (with 266 new entrants that year), concentrated in Mazowieckie, Śląskie, and Wielkopolskie and spanning e-commerce, logistics, manufacturing, and IT.²⁹ Language alone does not guarantee success, but Chinese + sectoral expertise is a clear advantage. Embedding Chinese+ modules (e.g., finance/ logistics/ IT) alongside advanced reading-rate and tone-training targets would operationalize the Chinese-specific mechanisms above within system-level pathways.³⁰

Scholarship programs add another layer: generous funding exists, but information is patchy, and procedural barriers (e.g., reliance on Chinese university partners) deter applicants. Institutions also note non-return among some students who study in China, which creates a “brain drain” (as reported in interviews with program

²⁷ J. Biggs, *Enhancing teaching...*; X. Wen, *Motivation and Chinese...*

²⁸ T.K. Ricento, N.H. Hornberger, *Unpeeling the Onion...*; B. Spolsky, *Language policy...*

²⁹ km, *Nie tylko Huawei czy Xiaomi: Chińczycy stawiają na Polskę i zatrudniają coraz więcej osób*, “Pulshr.pl”, 24.04.2024, <https://www.pulshr.pl/zarzadzanie/nie-tylko-huawei-czy-xiaomi-chinczycy-stawiaja-na-polske-i-zatrudniaja-coraz-wiecej-osob,104749.html> (access: 30.09.2025).

³⁰ W. Gao, Y. Wu, *Zhōngdōng’ōn gǎoxiào...*; P. Tang, M. Dai, *Bólán Zhōngguén...*

administrators). Stronger coordination is needed to publicize opportunities, streamline applications, and ensure reintegration of returnees.

Addressing these challenges requires systemic integration at multiple levels: embedding Chinese in national curricula, aligning university training with market demand, and fostering cooperation across Polish and Chinese universities, private providers, and heritage schools. Without such measures, Chinese will remain peripheral, and it will be valued symbolically but lack stable institutional foundations.

5. Conclusion

This article integrates three strands that rarely meet – Polish-/ English-language scholarship, recent Chinese-language studies, and original 2023 survey data – to offer a single, system-level account of Chinese language education in Poland. Framed by language-in-education policy and SLA, the evidence consistently answers the guiding questions posed at the outset: provision is broad but unevenly anchored across sectors and relies heavily on short-term staffing; learner tenure, certification and motives cluster around the intermediate band; and these distributions align with theory-predicted bottlenecks specific to Chinese. In short, wide participation coexists with few advanced learners because beginner-heavy inputs and weak alignment constrain progression.

The article makes three connected contributions: (1) it synthesizes and renders recent Chinese-language analyses accessible, putting them in direct dialogue with Polish/ English scholarship; (2) it provides the first integrated empirical baseline for Poland combining cross-sector institutional mapping, a harmonized textbook audit, and a learner survey; and (3) it interprets these data within language-in-education policy and SLA, linking observed patterns to trainable mechanisms and specifying four levers for action (workforce stabilization; localized, CEFR-aligned materials and assessment; motivation-to-utility links via Chinese+ and targeted automation in characters/ lexis/ prosody; as well as policy-labor-market integration). Poland thus exemplifies rapid growth on uncertain foundations – but also a feasible path from expansion to consolidation if these levers are activated.

Limitations remain. The design is exploratory: institutional counts synthesize publicly available records and signal scale rather than exhaustiveness; the learner survey is a non-probability sample recruited through higher-education and social networks. Even so, the mapping combined with the survey provides system-level signals that are relevant for policy and set a replicable baseline. Next steps include longitudinal tracking, evaluations of constructive alignment in curricula and assessment, pipeline studies of teacher retention, and open datasets to enable cross-study comparability.

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STRESZCZENIE

KSZTAŁCENIE W ZAKRESIE JĘZYKA CHIŃSKIEGO W POLSCE. BADANIA W PERSPEKTYWIE PORÓWNAWCZEJ (2014–2025)

Kształcenie w zakresie języka chińskiego rozwija się w Polsce dynamicznie, ale opiera się na kruchych podstawach. W badaniach publikowanych w językach polskim i angielskim wskazuje się na niedobory, import materiałów i słabą politykę; najnowsza praca chińskojęzyczna wspomina ponadto o modelach regionalnych, które rzadko docierają do lokalnych czytelników. W niniejszym artykule dokonano syntezy tych wątków oraz przedstawiono wyniki mapowania instytucji i ankiety przeprowadzonej w 2023 r. wśród osób uczących się języka chińskiego (N = 115). W pracy tej, uwzględniającej politykę językową w edukacji, konstruktywne dopasowanie i specyficzne dla języka chińskiego progi przyswajania wiedzy (znaki, zakres leksykalny, tony), wskazano na szereg słabości, takich jak: krótkoterminowe zatrudnienie, import materiałów, kulturowo uwarunkowana motywacja i certyfikacja skupiona na poziomach średniozaawansowanych. Zaproponowano ukierunkowane środki zaradcze, takie jak: stabilizacja siły roboczej, opracowanie lokalnych materiałów i ocen zgodnych z Europejskim Systemem Opisu Kształcenia Językowego, łączenie nauki języka z nauką umiejętności zawodowych („chiński+”) oraz ścisłej integracji polityki z rynkiem pracy.