

## Introduction

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China has been noted for its role in sustaining the global craze for English language education, but the important role that China could play in promoting and sustaining the learning and teaching of foreign languages other than English (LOTEs) is often overlooked. For instance, Mainland China alone sends the largest number of international students to non-Anglophone countries such as France, Germany, and Spain. In 2014, 19,792 Chinese students took College Russian tests and Tests for Russian Majors, 17,649 took College German Tests and Tests for German Majors, 10,741 took Tests for French Majors, and 10,563 were enrolled in Spanish major programs at undergraduate, Masters or PhD level (Wang & Xu, 2015).

While most contexts worldwide are characterised by funding cuts for LOTE education during the post-Brexit era (Lanvers *et al.* 2018), the Chinese government has renewed its commitment to globalisation and promoted new initiatives such as Mainland China's 'Belt and Road' initiative. Concomitant with these developmental strategies, LOTE education in China are often accorded new value, and enhanced investment is made in teaching and learning these languages. Unlike English that is taught as a compulsory school subject, the learning of LOTEs, with European languages as the most common choices, are more likely to be associated with cultural appreciation, travel, and studying abroad. The Ministry of Education imitated a nation-wide reform in 2018 that mandates three additional foreign languages (i.e. French, German and Spanish) be incorporated into the existing foreign language subjects of English, Russian and Japanese in the National Matriculation Foreign Language Test (MOE 2018). This newly implemented policy has expanded the LOTE education from tertiary-level to secondary-level education, thus impacting millions of Chinese students' language learning experiences.

Such a massive expansion of European language programs is unprecedented—yet little research has been conducted to address the critical issues surrounding the actual teaching and learning processes in the Chinese context. Building on our previous special issue on multilingualism and higher education in Greater China (Gao & Zheng, 2019), we brought together a series of studies that address a variety of topics related to European language education in a non-Anglophone context and to share critical insights into the learning and teaching of European languages in universities. The group of researchers also represent the vibrant research force in multilingualism research in the Chinese context (Zheng *et al.*, 2022).

### INTRODUCING THE SPECIAL ISSUE

Given the journal's focus on language pedagogy, the special issue collects studies that address some key issues related to culture representation and reconstruction in textbooks, teaching practices in classrooms as well as emotions and beliefs of learners and teachers. The European languages investigated in the special issue include French, German, Portuguese and Spanish.

Four major themes are covered in the special issue: (1) Textbook analysis: The first two articles adopt a multimodal discourse perspective (Chen, He and Geng) and an ecological view (Mou and Wu), respectively, to unpack the representation and reconstruction of a particular culture in language classrooms. (2) Teaching pedagogy: The third paper, Chen, Zhao and Dang's study offers a critical examination of how translanguaging was used by a novice teacher in preparing a French-medium in content and language integrated learning (CLIL) course in a Chinese

university. A similar emphasis on teacher's fluid and diverse practices of translanguaging could be found in the fourth paper (Lu and Zuo) on a third-language Spanish audio-oral classroom. The fifth paper, contributed by Sun, Qi and Díaz, narrows down the discussion to teaching the Spanish past tense aspect (indefinite preterit and imperfective preterit) to Chinese learners. The sixth paper by Li, Gao and Ma's study approaches language pedagogy through investigating the role of scaffolding in the French classroom from a sociocultural perspective and a microgenetic approach. (3) Learner emotions and motivation: The seventh paper (Chen, Chen and Liu) explored the enjoyment and anxiety experienced by German language learners in a Chinese university; The eighth paper contributed by Gong, Zheng and Gao's study examined how a group of university students in Macau accessed different forms of capital as a result of their Portuguese language learning in a multilingual and multicultural context. (4) Language teachers' emotions: The ninth paper by Lian, Li and Tao explored the emotions of teachers who taught German in Chinese secondary schools. Last but not the least, Shan and Xu's paper discussed teacher beliefs about teaching French as a foreign language from a multilingual perspective.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

This special issue showcases the state-of-the-art scholarship on teaching and learning European languages, such as Spanish, German, French, and Portuguese, in the Chinese higher education context. The ten articles in this collection adopt different theoretical and methodological approaches to examine how European languages and cultures are represented, reconstructed, and negotiated in the Chinese context. It is through these articles that we can see how individual learners and teachers navigate their learning and teaching against the backdrop of foreign language education reform. Findings reveal the complex and dynamic interactions between linguistic, cultural, and affective factors that shape the learning outcomes and experiences of Chinese learners of European languages. They also highlight the challenges and opportunities for curriculum designers, textbook developers, and teachers to foster intercultural communicative competence, translanguaging practices, and ecological awareness among their students. Teaching and learning European languages in Chinese universities is not only a matter of enhancing linguistic proficiency, but also a process of identity construction, cultural mediation, and social transformation. In this sense, this special issue offers valuable insights for researchers, educators, and policy makers who are interested in European language education in non-Anglophone contexts. We are hopeful that these findings could serve as academic resources for exploring the implications of teaching and learning European languages in other contexts as well, where similar or different issues may arise.

**Andy Xuesong Gao and Yonygang Zheng**  
Guest Editors

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