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Three-Stage International Chinese Language Joint Training Program: Pedagogical Implications and Theoretical Contributions

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Abstract. The rapid expansion of Chinese language education under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has intensified Sino-Russian educational collaboration, yet challenges such as inconsistent curricula, teacher shortages, and inadequate pedagogical alignment persist. This study evaluates the effectiveness of a three-stage Chinese language joint training program implemented by Russia's Perm State Humanitarian Pedagogical University (PSHPU) and China's Jining University in 2024. Grounded in Language Environment Theory (LET), the program employs a phased approach: Stage 1 (Russian-dominated instruction with limited Chinese input), Stage 2 (bilingual transition), and Stage 3 (full Chinese immersion). The research examines how these stages influence Russian students' perceptions across four dimensions—Quality of Support Received, Language Skill Improvement, Student Satisfaction, and Overall Learning Experience—while addressing gaps in empirical evidence for staged immersion models.

A cross-sectional quantitative design is adopted, with data collected from 248 Russian students who completed the program. Results indicate moderate to high satisfaction across all stages, with the Bilingual Transitional Stage (Stage 2) yielding the highest mean scores in all dimensions ($p < .001$). Students report greater accessibility of target-language input, perceived support, and skill development during this phase, underscoring the value of balanced L1/L2 mediation. In contrast, Stage 3 (full immersion) shows lower ratings for support quality and skill improvement, suggesting cognitive overload or insufficient scaffolding. These findings align with LET's emphasis on structured, emotionally secure environments and corroborate prior research on the risks of abrupt immersion.

The study offers three key pedagogical implications. First, structured support systems—including qualified instructors, tutoring services, and interactive tasks like role-playing—are critical during transitional phases to maintain engagement and confidence. Second, measurable proficiency benchmarks and formative assessments help students perceive progress, boosting satisfaction. Third, teacher training in intercultural pedagogy and curriculum integration ensures effective scaffolding across stages. Non-instructional factors, such as counseling and peer mentoring, further enhance the learning environment, reflecting LET's holistic view of environmental design.

Theoretically, the study expands LET by validating its application to staged bilingual contexts and identifying boundary conditions for immersion. It demonstrates that

gradual L2 exposure with L1 support optimizes perceptions, while premature full immersion may hinder satisfaction. The integration of academic and administrative support mechanisms into LET refines the theory, highlighting their role in mediating affective and cognitive outcomes. Methodologically, the study provides a replicable framework for analyzing perceptual differences across instructional stages, combining repeated-measures with demographic controls to isolate environmental effects.

Limitations include the cross-sectional design, which precludes causal inferences, and reliance on self-reported data. Future research should adopt longitudinal designs, incorporate objective proficiency measures, and diversify samples to strengthen generalizability. Extending this framework to other contexts, such as English immersion programs in international schools, could further validate staged models across languages and learner demographics.

In conclusion, the study underscores the effectiveness of bilingual transitional stages in international language programs, offering empirical support for LET's principles. By balancing target-language input with scaffolding and support, educators can enhance perceived learning outcomes and address the affective and cognitive needs of diverse learners. These insights inform the design of future Sino-Russian language initiatives and contribute to broader discussions on optimizing immersive education in global contexts.

Keywords: Language Environment Theory (LET), China and Russia cooperation, Chinese as a foreign language, Russian University, Belt and Road Initiative, Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (HSK)

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Научная статья

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Трехэтапная международная совместная программа обучения китайскому языку: теория и методика

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Аннотация. Стремительное развитие преподавания китайского языка в рамках инициативы «Один пояс, один путь» усилило образовательное сотрудничество между Китаем и Россией. Однако сохраняются такие проблемы, как несогласованность учебных программ, нехватка преподавателей и недостаточная педагогическая адаптация. В данном исследовании оценивается эффективность трехэтапной совместной программы обучения китайскому языку, реализованной

в 2024 г. Пермским государственным гуманитарно-педагогическим университетом (ПГГПУ) и Цзининским университетом (Китай). Программа основана на теории языковой среды (Language Environment Theory, LET) и включает три этапа: этап 1 (обучение на русском языке с минимальным использованием китайского), этап 2 (билингвальный переход) и этап 3 (полное погружение в китайский язык). Исследование направлено на изучение влияния этих этапов на восприятие российских студентов по четырем параметрам: качество получаемой поддержки, развитие языковых навыков и речевых умений, удовлетворенность обучением и развитие учебной самостоятельности.

В исследовании используется кросс-секционный количественный подход, при котором данные собраны с помощью анкетирования 248 российских студентов, завершивших обучение по разработанной программе. Для анализа различий между этапами обучения применяется дисперсионный анализ с повторными измерениями. Результаты показывают умеренный и высокий уровень удовлетворенности на всех этапах, при этом билингвальный переходный этап (этап 2) демонстрирует наивысшие средние значения по всем параметрам ($p < 0,001$). Студенты отмечают лучшую доступность языкового и речевого материала, воспринимаемую поддержку и прогресс в иноязычных навыках и умениях на этом этапе, что подчеркивает важность сбалансированного использования родного и изучаемого языков. Напротив, этап 3 (полное погружение) получает более низкие оценки по качеству поддержки и развития иноязычных навыков и умений, что указывает на когнитивную перегрузку или недостаточное методическое сопровождение. Эти выводы согласуются с положениями теории языковой среды (LET) о необходимости структурированной и эмоционально безопасной среды, а также подтверждают выводы проведенных ранее исследований о рисках резкого перехода к погружению в иноязычную среду.

Исследование предлагает три ключевых педагогических вывода. Во-первых, структурированная поддержка (включая квалифицированных преподавателей, дополнительные занятия и интерактивные задания, например ролевые игры) особенно важна на переходном этапе для поддержания вовлеченности и уверенности студентов. Во-вторых, четкие критерии оценки (например, уровни HSK) и регулярные промежуточные тесты помогают студентам осознавать прогресс в овладении китайским языком, повышая удовлетворенность и мотивацию. В-третьих, подготовка преподавателей в области межкультурной коммуникации и интеграции учебных программ обеспечивает эффективное сопровождение на всех этапах. Немаловажную роль играют и внеучебные факторы, такие как психологическая поддержка и тьюторство, что отражает комплексный подход к проектированию иноязычной образовательной среды.

С теоретической точки зрения, исследование расширяет применение теории языковой среды (LET), подтверждая ее актуальность для многоэтапных билингвальных исследований, выявляя границы эффективности погружения в иноязычную среду. Результаты показывают, что постепенное введение изучаемого языка с поддержкой на родном языке оптимизирует восприятие студентов, тогда как преждевременный переход к полному погружению может снизить удовлетворенность и мотивацию обучающихся. Включение академических и административных механизмов поддержки в методику обучения китайскому языку подчеркивает их влияние на аффективные и когнитивные результаты. Методологически исследование предлагает воспроизводимую схему для анализа различий в восприятии на разных этапах обучения, сочетая дисперсионный анализ с повторными измерениями и контроль демографических факторов.

Ограничения исследования включают кросс-секционный подход, который не позволяет устанавливать причинно-следственные связи и полагаться на субъек-

тивные данные. В перспективе возможны лонгитюдные исследования, использование объективных критериев оценки (например, баллы HSK) и разнообразные выборки для повышения валидности получаемых данных. Применение разработанного подхода в других обучающих контекстах, например в программах погружения в английский язык в международных школах, что позволит дополнительно проверить эффективность предложенных подходов для разных языков и групп обучающихся.

В заключение исследование подтверждает эффективность билингвальных переходных этапов в международных языковых программах, предоставляя эмпирические доказательства принципов теории языковой среды (LET). Баланс между использованием изучаемого языка и методической поддержкой на родном языке позволяет улучшить результаты обучения и учесть аффективные и когнитивные потребности студентов. Полученные результаты могут быть использованы при разработке китайско-российских образовательных программ и вносят вклад в теорию и методику обучения иностранным языкам в целом и оптимизации иноязычного погружения студентов.

Ключевые слова: Теория языковой среды (LET), сотрудничество Китая и России, китайский как иностранный язык, российский университет, инициатива «Один пояс, один путь», международный квалификационный экзамен по китайскому языку (HSK)

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Introduction

Since the announcement in 2013 of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)—a global development strategy aimed at enhancing regional connectivity and cooperation—educational collaboration between China and Russia has entered a new phase [1]. In particular, the initiative catalyzed new strategies for talent cultivation that emphasized cross-border collaboration and intercultural competence building [2]. According to questionnaire data reported by the Chinese Ministry of Education, both the Chinese and Russian governments repeatedly emphasized the need to deepen educational cooperation and promote joint talent training, as reflected in policy frameworks such as China's Plan for Promoting Educational Actions in the Joint Construction of the Belt and Road [1].

Driven by such policy alignment, Chinese language education at Russian universities developed rapidly. However, challenges persisted. As Li and Wu [3] noted, while enrollment in Chinese language courses surged in Russia, many institutions still struggled with inconsistent curricula, teacher shortages, and weak pedagogical alignment with Russian learners' profiles. As Peng et al. [4] observed, many instructional materials failed to align with learners' cultural and cognitive profiles, reducing engagement and comprehension in cross-cultural classroom settings. For example, several studies noted that

many Chinese textbooks used in Russian universities were literal translations lacking adaptation to learners' needs.

The absence of cultural contextualization and pedagogical scaffolding instructional support that helps learners accomplish tasks they cannot complete alone made it difficult for students to engage meaningfully with the content. Edmondson [5] emphasizes that scaffolding is critical in reducing cognitive load and promoting effective language development. In this context, identifying a Chinese language teaching model better aligned with Russian students' native language transfer patterns and cultural cognition became necessary.

Russia's Perm State Humanitarian Pedagogical University (PSHPU) and China's Jining University jointly launched a three-stage Chinese language joint training program in 2024 to address the instructional gap. This program adopted Language environment theory (LET) [6] as its guiding framework, placing emphasis on the learning environment across several program stages.

The program was arranged as follows: Stage 1 employed Russian instruction to reduce entry-level comprehension pressure, with limited Chinese input (about 20%) for basic vocabulary and pinyin drills, which Su and Shin [7] describe as structured pronunciation exercises using the Hanyu Pinyin system to teach initials, finals, and tones in early Chinese instruction. Stage 2 incorporated bilingual instruction to raise Chinese input gradually, and Stage 3 used immersive all-Chinese instruction to facilitate advanced communication. Compared with monolingual instructional models, the staged approach more effectively supported the progression of linguistic and cultural adaptation. Early classroom observations suggested that the model reduced anxiety among beginners and improved Chinese use at intermediate levels [8]. However, a lack of large-scale empirical evidence evaluating the program's effectiveness existed, which was a gap this study intended to address.

Many Russian universities encountered challenges implementing full-scale immersion language instruction due to a shortage of qualified Chinese language instructors and the limited availability of contextually appropriate teaching materials [9]. Prior research on international Chinese language education emphasized integrating linguistic input with cultural orientation in staged instructional models to support learners' cross-cultural development [10]. Russian learners frequently faced challenges: a large volume of unfamiliar vocabulary, complex Chinese pronunciation, and limited exposure to Chinese socio-cultural contexts. In the absence of structured native-language support or cultural mediation, these difficulties often contributed to anxiety and reduced long-term academic engagement [11].

This study aimed to evaluate whether students' perceptions differed across three instructional stages, focusing on four dimensions—quality of support received, language skill improvement, student satisfaction, and overall learning experience—defined as key constructs within the study's analytical framework and informed by LET. By identifying stage-specific patterns in

these perception variables, the study intended to provide empirical evidence to inform the design of future Sino-Russian joint language programs, including curriculum structuring, instructional staffing, and student support services.

As discussed, Chinese language instruction expanded rapidly under most Chinese-Russian cooperation programs. However, the absence of a clear phased progression model and the insufficient integration of Russian learners' native-language-based learning patterns have resulted in less favorable student perceptions [12–14]. Several prior studies have noted that many joint programs failed to provide sustained Chinese language exposure and adequate student-centered instructional design [15–17].

The purpose of this study was to examine Russian university students' perceptions within a three-stage instructional model jointly implemented by Perm State Humanitarian Pedagogical University (PSHPU) and Jining University. Drawing upon LET, the study focused on how students evaluated their learning experiences by examining four perception dimensions across three instructional stages.

The independent variable was the instructional stage, defined as variation in the language learning environment. The dependent variables were Quality of Support Received, Language Skill Improvement, Student Satisfaction, and Overall Learning Experience. In this study, program perception refers to these four dimensions of students' self-reported experience. Demographic variables such as gender, age group, and language background were included as controls. This design aimed to identify stage-wise differences in students' self-reported perceptions within the context of an international joint Chinese language training program.

Methodology of Research

Language Environment Theory (LET)

This study adopted LET as the primary theoretical framework to examine how the design of instructional environments across three stages influenced learners' perceptions, including Quality of Support Received, Language Skill Improvement, Student Satisfaction, and Overall Learning Experience.

LET emerged from the environmentalist tradition in second language acquisition (SLA), contrasting with nativist models focused on innate capacities. Building on Krashen's [12] Input Hypothesis, LET emphasized that acquisition thrives on comprehensible input beyond learners' current levels, supported by emotionally secure, context-rich environments. It expanded this by incorporating structured support, balanced language use, and cultural contextualization.

Horwitz et al. [18] highlighted anxiety as a key factor in input processing, showing highly anxious learners recalled vocabulary 20% slower and had 15% lower grammatical accuracy, stressing the need to address affective

barriers. LET research operationalized this through a three-part framework: emotional support reduced anxiety by 25%, scaffolded feedback improved grammar by 18% [5] and culturally relevant tasks boosted pragmatic skills by 30% [12].

Further studies confirmed the link between affective states and learning outcomes. Dewaele et al. [17] found learners in high-enjoyment classrooms retained 30% more vocabulary over six months. Taguchi et al. [19] showed gradual input escalation sustained motivation, while it was observed 25% greater neural plasticity in immersive learners, offering biological evidence for LET's environmental emphasis.

Building on LET's theoretical foundations, empirical studies have affirmed the value of immersive environments for language acquisition. Freed [20] found that study-abroad learners achieved 40% higher oral fluency than domestic classroom peers, supporting LET's focus on contextually rich input and naturalistic interaction. Similarly, it was reported 25% speaking proficiency gains from six-week intensive immersion programs, reinforcing the role of input volume and authenticity.

It was observed a 35% increase in HSK Level 3 pass rates among learners in overseas immersion, linking cultural embeddedness and daily target-language use to enhanced pragmatic competence and reduced anxiety. Taguchi et al. [19] operationalized LET through a staged immersion model, progressively shifting from native-language scaffolding to full immersion. Learners following this progression reported 30% higher confidence and 22% greater satisfaction.

Extending LET to virtual contexts, Lan [21] used VR-based simulations of Chinese settings, where participants showed 28% better vocabulary retention and 15% improved writing coherence over textbook learners, affirming LET's adaptability across physical and digital domains.

LET emphasized that high-quality, comprehensible, and contextually embedded input, paired with structured interaction, was essential for effective language acquisition, expanding Krashen's [12] early input theories. Environmental design emerged as a key mediator of language development.

Peng et al. [4] integrated Chinese cultural practices into instruction, with learners achieving 28% higher communicative competence than those in decontextualized classrooms, confirming LET's claim that culturally resonant input fosters functional application. Similarly, [11] found that biweekly exchanges with native speakers improved vocabulary retention by 20% and reduced anxiety by 35%, supporting LET's emphasis on affective safety [22].

Teacher behavior and institutional transparency also shaped LET environments. Dewaele et al. [23] reported that immediate, task-specific feedback raised learner satisfaction by 25%, while clear guidelines reduced uncertainty by 15%. Finally, Saito et al. [24] found that while auditory aptitude predicted

early pronunciation, long-term tonal accuracy improved 18% through sustained, interactive practice, affirming LET's capacity to support diverse learners via optimized environments.

Learners' perceptions of support services were central in LET, directly mediating the relationship between environmental design and language learning outcomes. Andrade [25] showed that accessible academic and life services, like tutoring and housing assistance, reduced classroom anxiety by 22% and improved oral fluency by 18%. Extending this, Botes et al. [26] found that multilingual learners with strong support systems, including peer mentoring and cultural workshops, reported 30% less anxiety and 25% greater confidence in spontaneous language use. These effects reflected LET's emphasis on institutional scaffolding to lower affective barriers and sustain engagement.

The interplay between emotional support and instructional clarity further demonstrated LET's holistic approach. It was found that learners receiving consistent emotional validation rated their Quality of Support 20% higher than peers in less supportive settings. Similarly, MacIntyre et al. [22] showed that positive social contexts, like language exchange groups, fostered belonging and boosted overall learning satisfaction by 15%, underscoring the need to address both individual and collective learner needs.

While immersion offers benefits, LET recognized risks when demands outpaced readiness. It was warned that early full-target language immersion could overload beginners, suppressing input processing. Supporting this, Taguchi et al. [19] reported 25% lower retention in abrupt immersion groups. Their staged model, gradually shifting from 80% L1 to full L2 over six months, reduced anxiety by 35% and improved vocabulary retention by 28%, exemplifying LET's emphasis on adaptive, learner-sensitive environments.

International Chinese Education in the Belt and Road Initiative

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has significantly deepened Sino-Russian higher education collaboration in international Chinese language education. Since 2013, bilateral agreements grew by 60%, leading to over 120 joint programs and increased student exchanges, surpassing 70,000 by 2016 with a goal of 100,000 by 2023 [16, 27]. Language education became central to this effort. By 2021, Russia integrated Chinese into its national curriculum, with 300 schools offering mandatory courses [28]. Simultaneously, China established 15 Russian language centers and increased Russian majors by 40% [29]. Confucius Institutes further supported this growth, with 20 institutes enrolling 50,000 students annually by 2023 [30].

Despite progress, challenges persisted. Zhang [30] found 35% of joint programs faced curriculum mismatches and credit transfer issues. Language barriers also remained, with 63% of Russian learners struggling in immersive classrooms and 78% of Chinese instructors lacking Russian proficiency [28]. Additionally, only 30% of programs used standardized assessments [27].

To resolve these issues, scholars proposed a centralized resource platform and bidirectional teacher training, improving instructional efficacy by 25% [16, 30]. Third-party audits like HSK-CEFR alignment were recommended to standardize learning outcomes across 85% of programs within five years. These reforms reflect BRI's adaptive strategy, combining ambition with institutional pragmatism.

Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (HSK)

The Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (HSK) is a standardized Chinese proficiency test for non-native speakers, developed in 1984 and implemented in 1992 to assess everyday, academic, and professional language use [7]. With the rise of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), HSK's global reach expanded, establishing over 1,100 test centers in 130 countries by 2017, particularly along BRI routes. It became a requirement for Chinese university admissions and a credential for employment and enterprise certification.

The HSK's six-level structure provided progressive learning goals: basic communication (HSK 1–2), fluency and accuracy (HSK 3–4), and academic/professional competence (HSK 5–6). This framework informed the phased instructional model in this study, from Russian-dominated instruction to full Chinese immersion. Standardized exam formats helped structure teaching content and track learner progress. Though central to course design, HSK scores were not primary assessment tools here, serving instead as pedagogical resources.

Cross-cultural adaptation research identified three key areas: support staff roles, programming, and operational challenges. Non-teaching staff played a vital part in reducing stress and improving adaptation. Smith and Khawaja [31] showed peer-mentoring lowered stress by 34% and boosted participation. Andrade [25] and Dewaele et al. [23] linked life-support services to reduced anxiety and increased satisfaction.

Cross-cultural activities, like cultural salons, enhanced pragmatic skills. Peng et al. [4] found students involved in these activities improved pragmatic competence by 28%. Yet, challenges persisted: Russian-speaking students struggled with integration due to language gaps [11], and administrative ambiguity undermined trust [23].

Recommended solutions included dedicated counselor teams, clearer policies via bilingual handbooks, and cross-cultural affairs units [23, 31]. Cross-cultural adaptation directly influenced language learning by shaping students' adjustment to academic, social, and linguistic challenges [32].

Research and Results

Conceptual Framework

This study developed an integrated conceptual framework based on LET to analyze how the three-stage instructional design of the Chinese–Rus-

sian joint program influenced Russian students' perceptions. In this framework, the instructional stage (Stage 1: Russian-dominated; Stage 2: bilingual; Stage 3: Chinese immersion) was treated as the independent variable, while four self-reported variables—quality of support received, language skill improvement, student satisfaction, and overall learning experience—were the dependent variables.

A supplemental variable, cross-cultural adaptation, was included as a descriptive factor to assist in interpreting differences in overall experience. According to LET, variations in the language environment—including the volume of target language input, the ratio between L1 and L2 used in instruction, and the provision of support resources—jointly influenced learners' cognitive and emotional responses [6, 19]. Increased exposure to the target language, accompanied by structured instructional support, was associated with changes in learners' perceptions.

Previous studies in second language acquisition reported that classrooms with higher levels of target-language use were associated with increased engagement, while elevated anxiety levels negatively affected perceived learning progress [7, 33]. These patterns aligned with the central premise of LET, which proposed that environmental factors such as language input and instructional support influenced learners' evaluation of the learning experience. More recent studies further demonstrate that positive language learning environments foster enjoyment and reduce anxiety, two affective variables that predict perceived progress and satisfaction [34]. In addition, evidence from large-scale immersion program evaluations suggests that instructional design, particularly language ratio and support configuration, can have measurable effects on learners' perceived academic gains and emotional experiences [35].

Research Design

Figure 1 illustrates the research design framework, presenting the study's structure and logic. This study was grounded in the LET, with the instructional stage used as the independent variable to examine its effects on four student-perceived variables: quality of support received, language skill improvement, student satisfaction, and overall learning experience. gender, age, and language background were included as control variables for data analysis.

First, this study adopts a cross-sectional quantitative research design. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered once the three-stage instructional sequence was completed by the students. The cross-sectional approach enabled the simultaneous collection of multiple variables across distinct instructional conditions without requiring longitudinal tracking. Such designs have been employed in educational research to examine multiple factors at a single point in time [36].

Second, the research design was observational and non-experimental. Participants were not randomly assigned to different instructional stages; instead, they progressed sequentially according to the predetermined structure

of the joint training program. This quasi-experimental design permitted within-subject comparisons across three instructional environments: the Russian-Dominated Stage (Stage 1), the Bilingual Transitional Stage (Stage 2), and the Chinese Immersion Stage (Stage 3). Each participant served as their own control, thereby supporting statistical power by reducing between-subject variability [33].

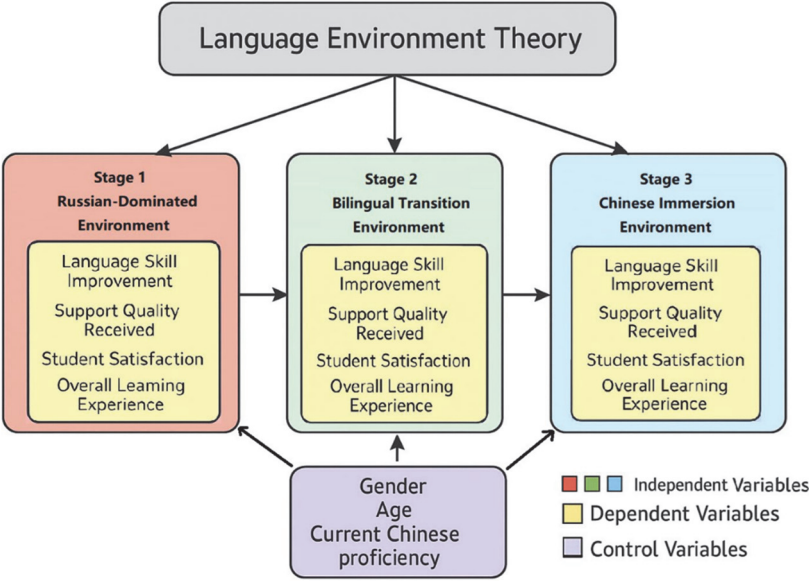


Figure 1. The Research Design Framework

Moreover, the design was grounded in the theoretical framework of LET, which emphasized the role of environmental variables in shaping language acquisition and language learning processes. The independent variable was the instructional stage, and the dependent variables included quality of support received, language skill improvement, student satisfaction, and overall learning experience. The data analysis identified stage-related differences in learners' perceptions through repeated measures collected at a single retrospective point, consistent with the study's purpose of examining variations across staged instructional environments.

Results Summary

Data collection targeted 300 Russian students who participated in the three-stage Chinese language joint training program from March to December 2024. After applying data cleaning procedures, including the removal of incomplete responses and the exclusion of students who did not complete all three instructional stages, a total of 248 valid questionnaires were retained for empirical analysis. Across all four measured constructs—quality of support

received, language skill improvement, student satisfaction, and overall learning experience—students reported evaluations that exceeded the midpoint of the scale. This distribution indicated moderate to high levels of perceived satisfaction among participants.

One-way repeated-measures revealed significant differences among the three stages for all four constructs (all $p < .001$), with the highest mean scores observed during the Bilingual Transitional Stage. Specifically, students reported higher levels of perceived support, language skill development, satisfaction with curriculum and teaching quality, and overall learning experience during this stage compared to the Russian-Dominated and Chinese Immersion stages.

The internal consistency of the measurement instruments was confirmed, as Cronbach's alpha values exceeded .80 across all scales. In addition to the stage-specific evaluations of overall learning experience, the study also collected a single-instance rating of satisfaction with cross-cultural adaptation training.

Comparative Discussion with Existing Literature

The findings of this study remained consistent with prior theoretical models and empirical observations. The results corresponded with the propositions of LET, Krashen's Input Hypothesis, and staged immersion models, thereby reflecting the conceptual orientation described in earlier chapters. The comparative analysis indicated that the Bilingual Transitional Stage corresponded with higher reported language input accessibility and perceived support. This pattern of enhanced perceptions in Stage 2 suggests that conditions involving both target language exposure and language mediation were associated with more favorable learner perceptions in terms of quality of support received, language skill improvement, student satisfaction, and overall learning experience.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study provided several pedagogical implications for designing and implementing staged Chinese language joint training programs involving Russian university students. By comparing learners' self-quality of support received, language skill improvement, satisfaction, and overall experience across three instructional stages, the results offered stage-specific insights that could inform future program design under the LET framework.

First, given the central role of quality of support received, educators needed to promote structured support systems during the transitional phase, which required greater instructional support. During the Bilingual Transitional Stage, students reported the highest satisfaction levels. This approach included staffing qualified instructors and mentors, establishing clear and responsive communication channels, and providing accessible learning resources such as language laboratories, tutoring services, and structured study materials. Within the classroom, instructors could adopt interactive, student-

centered strategies that maintained learner engagement and reinforced language acquisition.

For example, integrating group dialogues, role-playing exercises, and task-based activities simulating real-world conversations could encourage active Chinese language use. Providing timely corrective feedback and appropriate scaffolding also helped learners address difficulties and maintain confidence, as structured support systems have been associated with improved learner experience [37].

Second, because observed language skill improvement demonstrated an association with student satisfaction, curriculum design needed to emphasize measurable perceived learning progress at each instructional stage. Educators might set explicit proficiency benchmarks, such as HSK certification targets, and embed frequent practice sessions and formative assessments to make learning progress visible. Incorporating practical speaking and listening exercises, such as multimedia comprehension tasks and conversational drills, allowed students to perceive improvements in their linguistic competencies. When students observed progress, such as understanding native speech or expressing themselves with greater fluency, their academic confidence and program satisfaction tended to increase [34].

Third, targeted teacher preparation remained necessary across all stages during the transitional phase. Research on immersion-based Chinese language programs emphasized the importance of specialized training in curriculum integration and intercultural pedagogy. Institutions needed to prioritize professional development initiatives that equipped educators with expertise in designing multi-subject immersion curricula and addressing cultural diversity. Teachers trained in second language acquisition strategies and intercultural competence were better positioned to mitigate language barriers and support students' adjustment processes [17].

Finally, program administrators were encouraged to consider the broader learning environment as a determinant of the overall learning experience. Well-equipped classrooms, language laboratories, and digital learning platforms contributed to student engagement. Providing ancillary services—such as visa counseling, mental health support, and structured peer mentoring—helped alleviate non-academic stressors and supported student retention [25].

The integration of educational technologies, including virtual language laboratories and multimedia learning resources, strengthened traditional instruction by offering personalized learning pathways. A responsive, student-centered approach to program management, informed by ongoing student feedback and sensitive to differences observed across instructional stages, was likely to promote continued learner satisfaction and enhance program effectiveness.

Theoretical Contributions

This section presents the theoretical implications of the findings by refining the application of LET through a structured comparison of instructional

stages. It further delineates boundary conditions and incorporates support mechanisms and methodological refinements into the theoretical model.

1. Expansion of LET: The study has extended the scope of LET by applying it to a three-stage international Chinese language instructional model involving Russian university students. While earlier research based on LET focused on uniform immersion or monolingual acquisition contexts [6, 12], this study has analyzed learner perceptions under instructional conditions involving varying L1/L2 language ratios. The analysis has shown that students reported the highest levels of quality of support received, language skill improvement, and student satisfaction during the bilingual instructional stage. These results support LET's position that structured L2 input, when delivered with accessible scaffolding, could influence learner perceptions across cognitive and affective domains [19].

The findings offer empirical evidence consistent with LET's assertion that staged increases in target-language exposure, when accompanied by appropriate instructional design, influence self-reported learning experiences. The observed differences across stages reinforce previous LET-based arguments regarding the importance of L1 mediation in early stages of acquisition and its gradual reduction in later phases.

2. Boundary Conditions and Limitations of Immersion: The study has also identified limitations in applying full immersion models without transition mechanisms. During Stage 3, students reported lower ratings of support quality and skill development, suggesting that the removal of L1-mediated scaffolding may have affected their perception of instructional quality [23, 33]. This outcome indicates that high levels of target-language exposure alone did not yield uniformly favorable results.

The comparative data suggest that abrupt transitions into full L2 environments are associated with reduced learner satisfaction and perceived effectiveness. These patterns correspond with previous findings [5], which indicated that cognitive overload and limited support could interfere with learner adaptation. Accordingly, the study has specified that gradual transitions with sustained support are necessary to maintain learner engagement. These findings add detail to existing theoretical models by clarifying conditions under which immersion contributes to or limits perceived learning outcomes.

3. Integration of Comprehensive Support Mechanisms: The results further highlight the role of non-instructional elements within LET. Previous applications of LET placed primary emphasis on linguistic input and teacher behavior, whereas this study has incorporated both academic and administrative support mechanisms. Student responses indicated that support systems such as counseling, coordination services, and cultural orientation activities influence their perceptions of the instructional environment [25, 26].

These observations expand the theoretical construct of LET by recognizing support resources as components of the learning environment. The inclusion of

institutional services in learner experience models suggests a broader interpretation of environmental design in second-language acquisition [31]. The findings encourage further theoretical refinement by integrating support systems into language learning models within cross-institutional programs.

4. Methodological Refinements and Replicable Framework: This study also contributes a replicable methodological framework for future applications of LET. The integration of repeated-measures and structured demographic controls enabled systematic comparisons of instructional stage effects on students' self-reported perceptions. This analytic approach supports precise assessments of perceptual variation under differing language input and support conditions, following measurement principles recommended in applied linguistics research [36].

The framework developed in this study could be applied to future research involving similar international or bilingual learning contexts. By identifying instructional configurations and learner responses across staged environments, the research provides a basis for empirical testing of LET assumptions in multilingual and culturally diverse programs [33, 35].

Conclusion

This study conducted a comparative analysis of Russian university students' perceptions within a three-stage international Chinese language joint training program. The research examined how students evaluated quality of support received, language skill improvement, student satisfaction, and overall learning experience across the three instructional stages.

The analysis demonstrated that enhancing support mechanisms and defining clear instructional objectives were associated with higher student satisfaction and overall learning experience. Improvements in instructional guidance, academic and intercultural services access, and language development scaffolding corresponded with increased learner engagement and more favorable perceptions. Addressing instruction's cognitive and affective dimensions emerged as a necessary consideration in optimizing the design and delivery of international language education programs.

At the theoretical level, the study extended the application of LET to staged joint training contexts. The findings highlighted the importance of instructional input, L1/L2 language ratio, and support structures in shaping student perceptions, reinforcing the view that variations in the instructional environment influence both affective and cognitive aspects of language learning.

Future studies should adopt longitudinal research designs, incorporate objective proficiency assessments, and expand sampling to include participants from varied cultural and institutional backgrounds. Such methodological improvements will support more comprehensive evaluations of staged instructional models and contribute to refining theoretical frameworks such as LET.

An extension of this research could involve applying the same staged immersion framework to international English education in high-school contexts, such as China's international schools, IB (International Baccalaureate) programs, or AP (Advanced Placement) tracks. Such comparative studies may help determine whether bilingual or staged-input models are equally effective in developing academic English proficiency across culturally diverse adolescent learners.

In conclusion, this study provided empirical evidence that learners' perceptions of support services and language development differed across instructional stages. The Bilingual Transitional Stage demonstrated the highest ratings across all four measured dimensions, supporting the structured use of L1/L2 input and targeted support mechanisms. Strengthening these program features may improve student satisfaction and perceived effectiveness in comparable international language education initiatives.

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