

Minich, Oskar (2025). Die soziale Konstruktion von Fachlichkeit. Eine praxeologische Studie zur Ausdifferenzierung des Fächerkanons am Beispiel des Schulfaches Chinesisch. [engl.: The Social Construction of Subject Specific Nature. A Praxeological Study on the Differentiation of the Canon of Subjects using the Example of Chinese as a School Subject.] Erziehungswissenschaftliche Studien 21. Universitätsverlag Göttingen. <https://doi.org/10.17875/gup2025-2959>

Outline

- 1 Introduction
- 2 School Subjects: Approaches, Perspectives, and Backgrounds
 - 2.1 Studies on the Development of School Subjects and Their Subject Specific Nature
 - 2.2 On the Development and Status of Modern Foreign Languages in the Canon of Subjects
- 3 Subject Specific Nature as Knowledge Practice
 - 3.1 Knowledge from a Praxeological Perspective
 - 3.2 Historicizing Praxeology
 - 3.3 Interim Conclusion
- 4 A Praxeological Methodology
 - 4.1 Fundamental Methodological Choices
 - 4.2 Strategy of Collecting Data
 - 4.3 Strategy of Data Analysis
 - 4.4 Interim Conclusion
- 5 The Social Construction of Subject Specific Nature for Chinese as a School Subject
 - 5.1 (Not) A Subject Like Any Other
 - 5.2 The Construction of the Inevitability of Chinese as a School Subject – Social Developments, that make the School Subject Seem Necessary
 - 5.3 Between Strategic Utility and Special Educational Value – Mandates and Objectives
 - 5.4 Making Chinese Learnable – The Role of Teaching
 - 5.5 The Specific Role of Materiality for Learning Chinese – Classroom Artifacts
 - 5.6 The Same, with Limitations – Learning Categories
 - 5.7 Facing the Challenges – The Construction of Learners
 - 5.8 Called to Extraordinary Performance – The Construction of Teachers
 - 5.9 Retaining Students for Chinese as a School Subject – Examination Practices
 - 5.10 Lack of Knowledge Resources – Circulating Knowledge
 - 5.11 The Tireless Advocacy for Chinese as a School Subject – The Modus of Stakeholders
- 6 Summary and Discussion
 - 6.1 The Social Construction of Subject Specific Nature as Knowledge Practice
 - 6.2 Discussion of the Findings
 - 6.3 Scientific Relevance and Outlook

Summary

This dissertation investigates the construction of the subject specific nature ("Fachlichkeit") of Chinese as a school subject. It is based on the assumption that Chinese as a foreign language can be considered as established, insofar as generalized examination standards for the Abitur ("Einheitliche Prüfungsanforderungen in der Abiturprüfung") have been established since 1998. Furthermore, the school subject is offered as a second and a third foreign language education at numerous secondary schools in Germany for several years. Despite all efforts, Chinese still does not remain a self-evident part of the school curriculum, as it is still not available at most secondary schools.

Interviews with experts on the development of Chinese as a foreign language reveal that the school subject is simultaneously treated as a *regular foreign language* and *something else*. Based on this discrepancy, the dissertation investigates the construction of subject specific nature for Chinese through an educational perspective. Thus it aims to contribute to an empirically based, in-depth understanding of the differentiation of the canon of subjects in modern foreign languages and the conflicts and tensions that go with it.

Theoretically, the dissertation is situated within praxeological research on teaching and focuses on the specific nature of subjects as a knowledge practice. The approach for reconstructing this specific nature is based on an ethnographic approach and on grounded theory methodology. The empirical data comprises interviews with experts, ethnographic observations, field documents, and other – including historical – documents. These diverse data (sources) are equally taken into account and triangulated when dealing with the research question.

The reconstructed key category, "(Not) A Subject Like Any Other", consists of two tense components: On the one hand, Chinese is constructed as a *normal foreign language* that can be learned as a part of a normal school subject. On the other hand, Chinese is constructed as *not being a normal foreign language* but rather distinct from established European languages. These tense constructions permeate the specific nature of Chinese as a foreign language and also indicate that its specific nature is still in question. With regard to the differentiation of the canon of subjects, the example of Chinese as a foreign language exemplifies a multiplication of modern foreign languages within the curriculum, insofar as the construction of Chinese as *not a normal foreign language* establishes and consolidates a new category of a school subject.