

Research on the Connotation, Dimensions, and Practical Paths of Localization in International Chinese Education

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ABSTRACT

Against the backdrop of the continuous evolution of global language education, international Chinese language education is shifting from a stage of scale expansion to a new stage centered on quality improvement and sustainable development. To promote the stable implementation of Chinese education in non-Chinese-speaking countries and regions, localization has become a key issue. This article takes the localization of international Chinese education as the research object. Based on defining its connotation and core characteristics, it constructs an analytical framework from four dimensions: system and policy, teaching staff, teaching materials and curriculum, as well as teaching implementation and learning subjects. By comparing practical experiences from different regions, it is pointed out that the lack of institutional embedding, weak local teaching resources, limited adaptability of curriculum materials, and weak learner agency are structural issues commonly existing in the current localization process. Based on this, this paper proposes that international Chinese education should transition from being externally driven to internally driven development. It advocates for strengthening the governance foundation through institutional embedding, enhancing the cultivation of local teaching resources, promoting the localization of curriculum and textbooks, and strengthening the connection between Chinese learning and local social needs, in order to achieve sustainable development of international Chinese education.

Keywords: *International Chinese education, Localization, Endogenous development, Teacher construction, Curriculum system.*

1. INTRODUCTION

With the adjustment of the global foreign language education landscape, international Chinese education is gradually shifting from an early stage of scale expansion to a transformation phase centered on improving teaching quality and optimizing operational mechanisms. Whether Chinese language teaching can operate stably in different education systems across countries and regions, and effectively respond to the actual needs of learners, has become a key issue facing international Chinese language education.

By the end of 2025, international Chinese education had covered 212 countries and regions worldwide, with a cumulative total of over 200 million learners and users; Chinese has been

incorporated into the national education systems of 90 countries, and many countries have also listed it as an optional foreign language subject for high school graduation exams or college entrance exams.¹ It can be seen that the international influence of Chinese has significantly increased.

However, as international Chinese education expands rapidly, the structural issues inherent in its development model are becoming increasingly prominent. On the one hand, current international Chinese education still relies heavily on external resource supply, including teacher dispatch, textbook export, and project support. The "outward-oriented" development model effectively compensated for the lack of Chinese educational

1. Source: People's Daily Overseas Edition
<https://xq.rednet.cn/nograb/646045/67/15638219.html>

resources in the initial stage. However, as the coverage expands, issues of sustainability and adaptability gradually emerge. On the other hand, significant differences exist between countries and regions in terms of educational systems, cultural traditions, and linguistic environments. Unified and standardized teaching models often struggle to fully align with local needs in practical implementation, and may even trigger frictions at the levels of cultural identity and educational governance.

International Chinese education is currently facing a critical stage of transition from "scale expansion" to "quality improvement" and "endogenous development". How to enhance the institutional adaptability, cultural affinity, and social embeddedness of Chinese education in different countries and regions while maintaining its core attributes has become an important issue that international Chinese education urgently needs to address. The academic community generally believes that the key to achieving sustainable development in international Chinese education lies in promoting genuine localization of Chinese education in non-Chinese-speaking countries and regions, rather than simply expanding external input.

The so-called "localization" emphasizes the gradual integration of Chinese education into the local education system and social environment at the levels of institutional design, teaching implementation, and resource allocation, shifting from external drive to endogenous development. It is not to diminish the linguistic attributes or cultural connotations of Chinese education, but rather, existing scholars have pointed out that the internationalization level of international Chinese education ultimately depends on its popularity in non-target language countries and regions, and this level of popularity fundamentally relies on the level of localization.² It is not difficult to judge that relying solely on policy promotion and resource supply from the target language country will not only be difficult to meet the ever-growing learning demand, but may even produce unexpected side effects in practice.

Based on this, this paper takes the localization of international Chinese education as the research object. Different from previous studies, the author, based on relevant theories and practical foundations, conducts an in-depth analysis of the common issues

2. Li Yuming, Localization of International Chinese Education [J]. Nankai Linguistics, 2022,(02): 19-29.

faced by international Chinese education in the process of promoting localization in different regions. Furthermore, by comparing the development experiences of different regions, the author focuses on discussing issues such as "why localization", "how to localize", and "how to localize effectively", and explores a feasible path for localization development.

2. DEFINITION AND CORE CHARACTERISTICS OF LOCALIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL CHINESE LANGUAGE EDUCATION

2.1 Definition of Localization of International Chinese Education

Wu Yinghui (2014) believes that the ultimate goal of international Chinese education is to promote Chinese to the world and make it a global language. The key path to achieving this goal is the localization of international Chinese education.³ Different scholars have slightly different definitions of localization. Li Yuming (2017) reflects a development trend where Chinese education gradually integrates local factors and gradually acquires local characteristics.⁴ From the perspective of language education theory, localization and adaptation represent the local integration of language teaching at the institutional arrangement, implementation subject, and operational mechanism levels. Many Chinese scholars emphasize in discussions on international Chinese education that the international dissemination of language education does not equate to simply exporting teaching models. Its effectiveness ultimately depends on the degree of popularization and institutionalization of the language in the target language environment.⁵

In terms of specific connotations, the localization of international Chinese education encompasses the localization of educational objects, educational content, educational resources, and

3. Wu Yinghui, Making Chinese a Global Language: Exploring Global Language Features and the Long Range Goal of International Dissemination of Chinese [J]. Chinese Language Globalization Studies, 2014,(02): 1-12+213.

4. Li Yuming, Shi Chunhong, Reflections on the Localization of Chinese International Education [J]. Studies of the Chinese Language, 2017,(02): 245-252+256.

5. Yang Runcong, Zhu Zonghui, The Problems and Countermeasures of International Communication of Chinese Discourse under the Western Political Polarization Situation [J]. World Socialism Studies, 2025,10(01): 72-81+115.

teaching personnel.⁶ Among them, the localization of educational objects emphasizes the shift of Chinese learners from primarily being ethnic Chinese groups to a broader group of local learners; the localization of educational resources is reflected in the adaptation of textbook content, curriculum design, and evaluation systems to local language environments and cultural backgrounds; and the localization of implementation subjects underscores the principal role of local teachers in Chinese education. Some scholars also point out that the localization of Chinese language teaching should also include important aspects such as the localization of teaching syllabus and teaching methods.⁷

This article argues that the localization of international Chinese education should not be understood as a "decentralization" of Chinese language elements or the connotation of Chinese culture, but rather as a transformation process of development path and operational mechanism. Based on this, this article defines the localization of international Chinese education as the process where Chinese education in non-Chinese-speaking countries or regions gradually shifts from being externally driven to internally driven in terms of institutional design, curriculum system, teaching resources, teacher teams, and learning subjects, and deeply embeds into the local education system and socio-cultural environment.

2.2 Core Characteristics of Localization of International Chinese Education

The localization of international Chinese education is a dynamic process that evolves continuously alongside the development stages of Chinese education. Drawing on practical experiences from various countries and regions,⁸ it is not difficult to observe that the localization of

international Chinese language education typically exhibits the following notable characteristics.

Firstly, localization exhibits distinct phased characteristics. In the initial stage of the development of Chinese education, external resource input often plays a crucial supporting role, including teacher dispatch, textbook provision, and project funding support. Localization does not mean denying the necessity of this stage, but rather gradually promoting the transformation from "external supply-driven" to "locally generated" after Chinese education has reached a certain scale.

Secondly, localization exhibits significant characteristics of variability. There are significant differences in political systems, educational systems, language policies, and cultural traditions among different countries and regions, making it difficult to adopt a single model for the localization of international Chinese education. Some countries have achieved institutional embedding by incorporating Chinese into their national curriculum systems, while others have promoted the development of Chinese education through higher education or vocational education as a breakthrough. These differences collectively constitute a diverse landscape of localization of international Chinese education.

Thirdly, localization emphasizes subject transfer and responsibility reconstruction. The essence of the localization process is not whether Chinese education "exists" or not, but rather "who will lead it" and "how it will operate". When local teachers gradually become the mainstay of teaching implementation, and when local education management departments play a greater role in curriculum setting and quality assurance, international Chinese education can truly achieve the transformation from project dependence to system operation.

3. ANALYSIS DIMENSIONS OF LOCALIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL CHINESE EDUCATION

To avoid the concept of "localization" becoming abstract in discussions, this article, from the perspective of practical operability, divides the localization of international Chinese education into four interrelated but differently focused analytical dimensions. These four dimensions can serve as an analytical framework for subsequent regional

6. Wang Jianjun, Basic connotations, training modes and future for the localization of TCSOL teachers [J]. Journal of Yunnan Normal University (Teaching & Studying Chinese as a Foreign Language Edition), 2015, 13(03): 9-14. DOI: 10.16802/j.cnki.ynsddw.2015.03.002.

7. Ding Anqi, On the Localization of Chinese Language Teaching Syllabus: Taking the French "Chinese Language Teaching Syllabus for Junior High School" as an Example [J]. Research on Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, 2013, (02): 24-33.

8. Li Qiuyang, Chen Chen, Óscar FERNÁNDEZ-ÁLVAREZ, Characteristics, Motivation and Development Strategies of Indigenization of Chinese Education in Spain [J]. Applied Linguistics, 2022, (02): 15-25. DOI: 10.16499/j.cnki.1003-5397.2022.02.002.

comparisons and provide a logical basis for proposing localized development paths.

3.1 Localization at the Institutional and Policy Levels

Institutional embedding is a fundamental dimension of the localization of international Chinese education.⁹ The core issue lies in whether Chinese education can integrate into the local formal education system and secure stable policy support and institutional guarantees. This includes the status of Chinese language courses in national or regional curriculum standards, the credit recognition mechanism for relevant educational stages, and the degree of participation of education authorities in quality assessment and resource allocation. The degree of localization at the institutional level directly determines the long-term stability of Chinese language education.

3.2 Localization of Teaching Staff

The issue of teacher resources is one of the key factors constraining the development of international Chinese education. Multiple scholars have mentioned: "Localization is not simply about reducing the number of expatriate teachers, but about systematically training local Chinese teachers who are not native Chinese speakers, so that they can gradually become the mainstay of teaching."¹⁰ This process not only involves language proficiency cultivation, but also encompasses teaching method training, cross-cultural competence enhancement, and the construction of career development pathways. The degree of localization of the teaching staff directly affects the coverage and teaching quality of Chinese language education.

3.3 Localization of Textbooks and Curriculum System

Textbooks and courses are the core carriers of language education.¹¹ If the textbooks and

curriculum systems of international Chinese education remain in the "unified output" mode for a long time, it is often difficult to fully respond to the actual needs of learners in different regions. Localized teaching materials and courses should, under the premise of adhering to the basic laws of language teaching, fully consider learners' native language background, cultural cognitive style, and social application needs, thereby enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of teaching.

3.4 Localization of Teaching Implementation and Learning Subjects

The localization at the teaching implementation level emphasizes the learner's principal role in the Chinese learning process. This is not only reflected in the adjustment of teaching methods, but also in the degree of connection between Chinese learning and the actual needs of learners. When Chinese language learning can serve learners' academic development, career planning, and social participation, their learning motivation and learning effectiveness will be significantly enhanced, thereby promoting a virtuous cycle of Chinese language education in the local society.

4. THE PRACTICAL DEVELOPMENT PATH OF THE LOCALIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL CHINESE EDUCATION

Based on the analysis above, it can be seen that international Chinese education generally faces structural issues in the process of promoting localization, such as insufficient institutional embedding, weak local teaching resources, limited adaptability of teaching materials and courses, and weak learner agency. Based on this, the localization development of international Chinese education urgently needs to shift from external expansion to internal construction, and from single project promotion to systematic governance. Drawing on practical experience from different regions, this article proposes a realistic development path for the localization of international Chinese language education from four aspects: institutional policies,

9. Zuo Yueping, Discussion on the Issues and Countermeasures of Localization Research in International Chinese Education [J]. Sinogram Culture, 2025,(18):100-102. DOI:10.14014/j.cnki.cn11-2597/g2.2025.18.048.

10. Wang Haifeng, Teaching Chinese As a Foreign Language Abroad:Internationalization vs Localization [J]. Sinogram Culture, 2021,(09):1-6. DOI:10.14014/j.cnki.cn11-2597/g2.2021.09.001.

11. Yu Dongxing, Zhang Ripei, Chinese International Communication in the Context of Unprecedented Changes in a Century [C]// Guangzhou University, Institute of Language and

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teacher development, curriculum and textbooks, and teaching implementation.

4.1 Promoting Institutional Embedding Through Teaching and Strengthening the Foundation of Localized Governance

Institutional embedding is a prerequisite for the localization development of international Chinese education. Practice has shown that if Chinese education exists in the form of temporary projects or external support for a long time, its development is often constrained by policy fluctuations and resource changes, making it difficult to form stable expectations. Therefore, promoting the integration of Chinese education into the local formal education system is a key path towards achieving its sustainable development.

On the one hand, it is necessary to strengthen collaboration with the education authorities of the host country and promote the institutionalization of Chinese courses within the national or regional curriculum framework. By clarifying the educational stage positioning, credit recognition, and evaluation criteria of Chinese language courses, we aim to gradually transform them from "additional courses" into integrated courses within the system, thereby enhancing the institutional legitimacy and stability of Chinese language education. On the other hand, it is also necessary to respect the differences in educational systems across different countries and regions, avoiding the simple transplantation of a unified model. Instead, we should explore diversified ways of embedding the system based on the local educational structure and language policy characteristics, such as gradually promoting it in the form of second foreign language courses, elective modules, or vocational education courses.

Localization at the institutional level does not mean weakening the support from the target language country. Instead, it involves a shift from "direct provision" to "collaborative governance" through role transformation, enabling international Chinese education to form a sustainable operating mechanism within the local education system.

4.2 Strengthening the Localization of Teaching Subjects with Classroom Teaching as the Core

The localization of teaching staff is the core support for the localization of international Chinese education. From a long-term perspective, relying solely on expatriate teachers is insufficient to meet the growing demand for Chinese language learning, and it is also detrimental to teaching continuity and cultural adaptability. Therefore, the cultivation of local Chinese teachers should be placed at the core of the development of international Chinese education.

In terms of specific approaches, a tiered and categorized local teacher training system should be established based on the development stages of Chinese language education in different regions. In regions where Chinese language education has a relatively mature foundation, the focus can be on enhancing the professionalization level of local teachers, strengthening their teaching method literacy and curriculum design ability through systematic training. In regions where Chinese language education is still in its infancy, the primary goal should be to expand the scale of local teachers, and gradually establish a reserve of local teachers through various means such as university training, in-service training, and Sino-foreign cooperation.

At the same time, there is a must to pay attention to the professional development and identity recognition of local Chinese teachers, provide them with clear career paths and professional support, and enhance their willingness and stability to engage in Chinese education for the long term. International Chinese education can truly take root in local society by shifting the teaching focus from expatriate teachers to local teachers.

4.3 Localizing Learners' Textbooks and Courses to Enhance the Adaptability of Teaching Content

Textbooks and courses are the direct carriers of language education practice, and their degree of localization largely determines the actual effectiveness of Chinese language teaching. Currently, there is a widespread issue in international Chinese education where the content of textbooks is disconnected from the needs of learners.

There is an urgent need to promote localization reforms while maintaining the standardization of language teaching. In terms of textbook development, local educational institutions and teachers should be encouraged to participate in the process of textbook compilation and revision, so as to make the content of textbooks more closely aligned with the local socio-cultural context and learners' life experiences. At the same time, while adhering to the structure and teaching principles of the Chinese language, it is necessary to fully consider the characteristics of learners' native language and cognitive styles, thereby enhancing the relevance and comprehensibility of teaching materials.

In terms of the curriculum system, a multi-level and multi-objective curriculum structure should be constructed based on the needs of different learning groups. For example, in the basic education stage, emphasis is placed on cultivating language interest and basic abilities. In the higher education and vocational education stages, the academic and practical functions of Chinese are emphasized, thereby achieving effective integration between Chinese learning and learners' academic development and career planning.

4.4 Enhancing Learner Agency and Deepening the Connection Between Chinese Education and Social Needs

The localization of international Chinese education is not only reflected in the systems, teachers, and teaching materials, but also in learners' recognition and intrinsic motivation towards Chinese learning. Only when Chinese language learning is closely linked to the personal development of learners and the needs of society, can Chinese language education achieve a virtuous cycle in the local community.

At the level of teaching implementation, emphasis should be placed on the localized design of teaching methods and teaching scenarios, enhancing classroom interaction and practicality, and improving learners' sense of participation and achievement. At the same time, Chinese education should be guided to integrate with local economic development, social needs, and cultural exchanges, so that Chinese learning can have practical value in employment, academic pursuits, and cross-cultural interactions.

Furthermore, in terms of cultural content presentation, one-dimensional cultural output

should be avoided, and emphasis should be placed on the interaction and dialogue between Chinese and foreign cultures. Mutual understanding should be promoted on the basis of respecting local cultural differences, thereby enhancing the social acceptance and cultural affinity of Chinese language education.

5. CONCLUSION

Against the backdrop of the continuous evolution of global language education, international Chinese education is currently at a critical stage of transition from scale expansion to connotation development. This article takes the localization of international Chinese education as the research object. Based on a systematic review of relevant concepts and theories, it explores the practical path for the localization development of international Chinese education through comparative analysis of practical characteristics in different regions,

Firstly, the sustainable development of international Chinese education relies on the continuous improvement of localization level. Localization does not mean weakening the linguistic attributes and cultural connotations of Chinese education. Instead, it involves gradually integrating Chinese education into the local education system and social environment through institutional embedding, subject transfer, and resource localization. The "project-driven" development model, which relies solely on external resource input, is difficult to sustain the stable development of Chinese language education in the long run. It is of practical necessity to promote the transformation of Chinese language education from being externally driven to internally driven.

Secondly, while there are significant differences in the localization paths of international Chinese education across different regions, the structural issues they face share strong commonalities. Regional comparisons indicate that insufficient institutional embedding, a weak local teacher training system, limited adaptability of teaching materials and courses, and weak learner agency are key factors that hinder the deepening of localization in international Chinese education. These issues are not isolated phenomena in a specific region, but rather common and real challenges that exist at different stages of development.

Thirdly, the localization of international Chinese education should take systematic

promotion as its basic orientation. This article proposes a development path from four dimensions: institutional policies, teaching staff, textbooks and courses, and teaching implementation, emphasizing the importance of multi-agent collaboration and multi-level linkage. Localization is neither a task that can be accomplished with a single policy tool nor achieved by simply replicating the experience of a certain region. Instead, it should formulate a phased and categorized promotion strategy based on respect for differences.

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