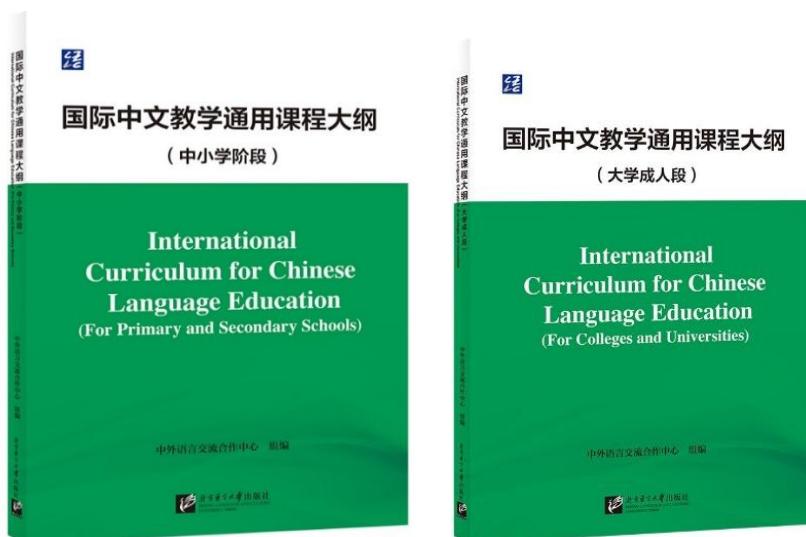


บทปริทัศน์หนังสือ (Book Review)

Innovating Standards, Guiding the Future: A Book Review of the “International Curriculum for Chinese Language Education”

Lin Caijun^{1*}



Author: Center for Language Education and Cooperation

Pub Year: 2024

Publisher: Beijing Language and Culture University Press

Price: 18.88\$

Page Count: 230

¹ Assistant Professor, School of Sinology, Mae Fah Luang University.

*Corresponding author; email: caijun.lin@mfu.ac.th

The Curriculum Outline, also known as the Teaching Syllabus, is a fundamental document guiding both instruction and learning. It serves as a key reference and standard for curriculum planning, selection of teaching content and methods, assessment of teaching quality, and the development of educational resources. In 2024, China's Ministry of Education's Center for Language Education and Cooperation officially released the latest version of the "International Curriculum for Chinese Language Education" in response to the rapidly expanding global reach of Chinese language instruction and the growing need for standardized curricula in various countries. It is divided into parts for elementary and secondary education as well as colleges and universities. This curriculum acts as a comprehensive structure for teaching Chinese to non-native speakers.

The ICCLE is composed of three main parts: the main text, appendices, and supporting resources. The main text constitutes the core of the Outline, offering detailed descriptions of curricular objectives, content, and assessment methods for Chinese language instruction. The appendices include sample integrated teaching models, examples of common assessment forms, and sample test items. The resource section, published as a separate volume, includes references such as an introduction to modern Chinese linguistics, syllable charts, and categorized vocabulary lists that align with the "Chinese Proficiency Grading Standards for International Chinese Language Education." It also features directories of various instructional resources. These materials provide rich content references for teaching practices and professional development.

The ICCLE represents a continuation, development, and innovation of previous versions of the "International Curriculum for Chinese Language Education", released respectively by Hanban in 2008 and by the Confucius Institute/Hanban in 2014. It is the first national-level curriculum guideline in the field of international Chinese language education that directly targets learners across different age groups and educational stages. The ICCLE is set to play a significant guiding and regulatory role in Chinese language education at all levels on a global scale. Its publication

represents a major advancement in refining and systematizing the international framework for Chinese language education, marking a milestone in this field.

I. Addressing Gaps in the Curriculum System and Responding to Practical Needs

For a long time, international Chinese education has primarily focused on adult and higher education learners, resulting in limited development of instructional standards for primary and secondary school students. The ICCLE is the first to target learners aged 6–18 globally, systematically differentiating language proficiency levels, competence goals, and content requirements for primary (ages 6–12) and secondary (ages 13–18) education. This not only fills a critical gap in the curriculum system but also provides a scientific basis for the design of Chinese curricula, instructional planning, textbook compilation, and assessment in overseas primary and secondary schools.

As international Chinese education enters a new phase characterized by standardization and systematization, long-standing issues such as unclear instructional goals, fragmented content, and the lack of assessment benchmarks have hindered frontline educators and project administrators. There is an urgent need for a professional curriculum guideline that meets both national language policy requirements and the practical needs of international Chinese education. The ICCLE emerges in this context, synthesizing prior experiences in international Chinese teaching while providing an institutional and forward-looking framework for the future.

II. Competency-Oriented Approach with Integrated Literacy and Progressive Proficiency Levels

The ICCLE centers on the comprehensive use of the Chinese language, emphasizing integrated development of the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, with “translation” added at intermediate and advanced levels. It also includes extra goals like understanding different cultures, improving learning and thinking skills, and developing emotions and attitudes, which reflects the idea

of combining "language-thinking-culture" and the features of well-rounded education. The ICCLE establishes _communicative, task-based language activities tailored for various stages. This approach encourages learners to apply their knowledge in authentic contexts and fosters a connection between language knowledge and practical skills. This reflects the trend of multiple objectives in modern language education and enhances both the educational scope and depth of international Chinese instruction.

The ICCLE is structured into three tiers and nine levels, with a stage-based, progressive design that takes into account the real-world needs of Chinese language instruction globally. For primary and secondary education, it defines five levels: Lower Primary (L1), Upper Primary (L2), and Secondary (L3-L5). This structure maintains continuity and aligns with children's cognitive and language development patterns, ensuring operability and valubility. For university-level and adult learners, the framework includes three stages: A (Basic), B (Intermediate), and C (Advanced), each further divided into two sub-levels (e.g., A1, A2), totaling six levels. This system is fully aligned with the "Chinese Proficiency Grading Standards for International Chinese Language Education". Drawing from the "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages" (CEFR), the grading system also highlights the ICCLE's emphasis on the nature of language acquisition and learner diversity. It effectively addresses the problem of uniformity in international Chinese curricula, rendering curriculum design more scientific, feasible, and assessment-driven.

III. Comprehensive Curriculum Content and Evaluation, Balancing Localization and Diversity

The curriculum content in the "Curriculum" comprises five core elements: themes, language knowledge, language skills, cultural knowledge, and learning strategies. Its assessment framework consists of guiding principles, evaluation dimensions, and methodologies. Together, these elements offer a detailed framework for instruction, supporting curriculum planning, textbook development, and evaluation practices.

Moreover, the ICCLE upholds the principle of "primarily general, with allowances for diversity," providing a unified reference structure while encouraging localization based on national circumstances, educational systems, and learner characteristics. Its modular structure, consisting of curriculum objectives, content, and evaluation across the three tiers and nine levels, allows users to flexibly and scientifically select content according to specific instructional contexts. For instance, the curriculum differentiates vocabulary range, grammar structures, and cultural content between heritage learners and foreign learners of Chinese, highlighting the ICCLE's flexibility and adaptability.

IV. Integration of Teaching Materials, Instruction, and Assessment, with a Focus on Authentic Contexts and Real-World Tasks

The ICCLE is built on three core components—curriculum objectives, content, and assessment—which together create a solid foundation for the integrated development of teaching content, implementation, and evaluation in international Chinese education. This supports the development of teaching materials (e.g., the “Hello! Chinese” series), instructional activity design, and future proficiency assessments (e.g., alignment with YCT and the HSK 3.0), enabling standardized, regulated, and scientific instruction.

The ICCLE emphasizes not only the communicative and cultural value of language but also its practical and economic utility. For example, the competency objectives for university-level learners are frequently grounded in real-world task activities, such as making a medical appointment, drafting an outline for a research paper, and participating in discussions at conferences. This enables learners to apply their language skills in authentic situations and aligns teaching more closely with real-life and academic needs, enhancing classroom engagement and effectiveness.

Admittedly, the ICCLE is marked by a high degree of professionalism, systematization, and leadership. It serves as a valuable reference for the development of national and institutional Chinese language curricula at both the primary/secondary and adult education levels. It is important for international

Chinese language education administrators, frontline educators, language education researchers, and graduate students in related fields to pay attention to this matter. However, several challenges persist in its global implementation. First, considerable variation in curriculum systems and instructional conditions across countries raises the question of how to maintain the core value of the ICCLE during localized implementation. Second, disparities in foundational Chinese language education globally pose challenges for adapting the ICCLE to local contexts. Third, the ICCLE sets high expectations for teachers' instructional design and assessment capabilities, placing new demands on professional training systems. The task-based, intercultural, and competency-based pedagogies advocated by the ICCLE require a substantial enhancement in teacher qualifications, which in turn necessitates further improvements in training systems.

Looking forward, future revisions of the ICCLE could consider the inclusion of more detailed teaching cases, classroom activity templates, and assessment tools to better support instructional practice. Additionally, developing global teacher training programs and evaluation systems that are based on the ICCLE would promote its sustainable development. It is also recommended that supplementary teaching outline templates, sample curricula, instructional activity cases, and assessment tools be developed. This would facilitate the integrated construction of curriculum, textbooks, and assessment, ensuring the coordinated development of standard-setting, resource support, and instructional implementation.

References

The Center for Language Education and Cooperation. (2024). *International Curriculum for Chinese Language Education (For Primary and Secondary Schools)*. Beijing: Beijing Language and Culture University Press.

The Center for Language Education and Cooperation. (2024). *International Curriculum for Chinese Language Education (For Colleges and Universities)*. Beijing: Beijing Language and Culture University Press.