

CHINESE LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND THE TRAINING OF YOUNG SINOLOGISTS IN UZBEKISTAN



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Abstract: *This paper examines the development of Chinese language education in Uzbekistan and its role in cultivating young Sinologists. With the rise of China's global influence and the deepening China–Uzbekistan cooperation, the demand for qualified Chinese-speaking professionals has grown significantly. The study analyzes the institutional framework of Chinese teaching in Uzbekistan, the challenges faced by local universities, and the strategies for enhancing the training of young scholars. Drawing on recent educational reforms and international cooperation programs, the paper proposes pathways to strengthen Sino-Uzbek collaboration in higher education, particularly in Sinology.*

Keywords: *Chinese language teaching; Uzbekistan; Sinology; higher education; youth training; educational cooperation; cultural exchange; bilingualism; curriculum development; China–Uzbekistan relations*

INTRODUCTION

In the last three decades, the relationship between China and Uzbekistan has expanded rapidly across political, economic, and cultural dimensions (Laruelle 2020: 18). Language education, especially in Chinese, has become a critical field for fostering mutual understanding and supporting bilateral cooperation. The training of young Sinologists not only addresses the increasing demand for translators, teachers, and researchers but also strengthens people-to-people ties (Peyrouse 2016: 74).

Internationalization of higher education in Central Asia also provides new opportunities for collaboration (de Wit 2020: 11; Huang & Turner 2022: 302).

1. DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN UZBEKISTAN

Chinese was introduced into Uzbekistan's higher education system in the early 1990s. Currently, more than 20 universities and institutes provide Chinese language programs, including Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies and Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages (Pan & Ma 2017: 52). The Confucius Institutes in Tashkent and Samarkand also play a vital role in promoting language learning

and cultural exchange (Starr 2009: 82; Gil & Huang 2023: 415). To meet rising demand, the Uzbek Ministry of Higher Education has implemented reforms that increase teaching hours, introduce specialized tracks, and encourage the production of local textbooks adapted to the Uzbek context (Dave 2007: 143).

2. CHALLENGES IN TRAINING YOUNG SINOLOGISTS

Despite remarkable progress, several challenges persist. The shortage of qualified local Chinese language teachers remains a major obstacle (Jin & Cortazzi 2021: 113). Many programs still rely heavily on visiting lecturers from China, which hinders the development of a sustainable local teaching staff. Another problem is the limited availability of teaching materials tailored to Uzbek students, leading to a reliance on standard Chinese textbooks that do not always reflect local cultural needs (Peyrouse 2016: 67; Shadiev & Wang 2022: 201). Moreover, there is insufficient academic mobility, with relatively few Uzbek students able to pursue advanced degrees in China due to funding or language barriers.

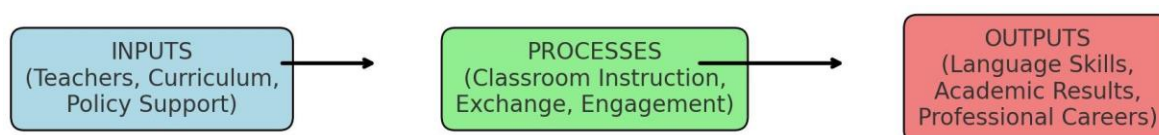
3. STRATEGIES FOR CAPACITY BUILDING

To address these issues, several strategies have been proposed. Expanding joint degree programs between Chinese and Uzbek universities allows students to study in both countries and gain broader perspectives (Dave 2007: 96). Enhancing teacher training through summer schools and online modules can strengthen the professional competence of local educators. The creation of regional research centers on Sinology and Central Asian studies will provide platforms for collaboration. Finally, leveraging digital technologies can increase access to online resources, language apps, and virtual exchange programs (Liddicoat 2011: 245; Laruelle 2018: 189).

4. MODELS FOR ANALYSIS

The development of Chinese language education in Uzbekistan can be effectively analyzed using the Input–Process–Output (IPO) model. In this framework, the inputs include teacher qualifications, curriculum, and policy support. The processes involve classroom instruction, student engagement, and intercultural exchange activities. The outputs are reflected in the language proficiency, academic achievements, and professional readiness of young Sinologists. This model helps to systematically assess strengths and weaknesses at different stages (Altbach & de Wit 2021: 21).

Figure 1. Input–Process–Output Model for Chinese Language Education in Uzbekistan

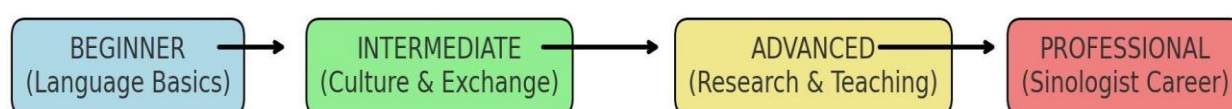


Byram's (1997) Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence provides a valuable framework for evaluating Sinology education. According to this model, effective intercultural communication requires knowledge, skills, attitudes, and critical cultural awareness. The following table summarizes its components (Liddicoat 2011: 248; Montgomery 2016: 77):

Component	Description
Knowledge	Understanding of social groups, practices, and products in both one's own and other cultures.
Skills	Ability to interpret cultural documents and to relate them to one's own culture.
Attitudes	Curiosity, openness, and readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures.
Critical Cultural Awareness	Ability to evaluate critically perspectives and practices in one's own and other cultures.

Another useful model is the Development Pathway of Young Sinologists. It illustrates the progression from beginner-level learners to professional Sinologists (Starr 2015: 210).

Figure 2. Development Pathway of Young Sinologists in Uzbekistan



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The evidence suggests that Uzbekistan is on a positive trajectory in fostering a new generation of Sinologists. Nevertheless, systemic reforms in teacher training, curriculum design, and international collaboration are needed for sustainable growth (Sanghera & Rasool 2021: 207; Montgomery 2016: 83). Importantly, educational cooperation can be aligned with China's Belt and Road Initiative, integrating academic exchange into larger socio-economic projects (Cooley 2019: 41; Laruelle 2018: 119). For example, Chinese-funded scholarships and joint research grants have already begun to support young Uzbek scholars. These initiatives not only provide academic benefits but also create professional pathways in government,

business, and culture. Cross-cultural competence, as explained by Byram, is essential for these pathways (Byram 1997: 56; Liddicoat 2011: 249).

Figure 2 illustrates the typical development pathway of young Sinologists in Uzbekistan. At the beginner stage, students acquire fundamental language skills. During the intermediate stage, they engage in cultural learning and exchange activities. The advanced stage involves deeper involvement in academic research and teaching practice. Finally, at the professional stage, graduates transition into full Sinologist careers, contributing to education, translation, and bilateral cooperation projects. This pathway highlights the progressive nature of talent cultivation and the importance of continuous support at each level to ensure the sustainable development of Sinology in Uzbekistan.

CONCLUSION

The development of Chinese language education in Uzbekistan is both a reflection of and a driver for the growing China–Uzbekistan partnership. By investing in young Sinologists, both countries can ensure deeper cultural exchange and long-term academic cooperation. Strengthening bilateral educational ties will also contribute to regional stability and mutual prosperity. Future cooperation could focus on establishing joint research centers, developing bilingual publishing platforms, and promoting the use of digital technologies and artificial intelligence in education. In addition, deeper engagement in regional academic networks may promote Central Asia as an emerging hub for Sinology research. Greater investment in youth exchange and scholarship programs will further ensure that the next generation of Sinologists is well-prepared to contribute to both national development and international collaboration.

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