

Bridging Languages, Building Futures: Enhancing Language Cooperation between Iran and China

Distinguished colleagues and esteemed guests,

Allow me to begin with the words of Xunzi (荀子), the great Confucian philosopher of the Warring States period, who wrote:

“不积跬步，无以至千里；不积小流，无以成江海。”

“Without accumulating small steps, one cannot reach a thousand miles; without gathering small streams, one cannot form a river or sea.”

This timeless wisdom reminds us that great achievements arise from many small, steady, and cooperative efforts.

Today, we gather to take such steps — toward a closer partnership in language education between Iran and China.

Language as the Foundation of Cooperation

Language is the first and most effective bridge between nations. It enables communication, trust, and sustainable cooperation.

For Iran and China—two civilizations long associated with scholarship and wisdom—language education is not merely an academic subject but an essential element of mutual understanding in the modern era.

Given that China plays a vital role in today’s global landscape—economically, culturally, and diplomatically—interest in learning Chinese has grown consistently worldwide, and Iran is no exception. Yet to transform this interest into long-term capability, there is a clear need for structured institutional partnerships, shared resources, and high-quality teacher training.

Iran’s Experience in Teaching Chinese: The Iran Language Institute Model

Iran has already taken significant steps to build language cooperation. The Iran Language Institute (ILI), as the country’s oldest and most reputable language education center, introduced Chinese as its ninth official language in 2020.

Since then, more than 2,000 learners have completed various proficiency levels—beginner, elementary, lower intermediate, and upper intermediate. Courses are offered both in-person in Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz, and Mashhad, and online nationwide.

Currently, ten instructors are active in the Chinese department. With additional support and collaboration with Chinese universities, ILI is fully prepared to expand classes to other major cities.

Future-oriented language education means combining modern technology, learner-centered methods, and intercultural understanding. For Chinese language learning to thrive in Iran and beyond, we must adopt flexible, innovative approaches that reflect the changing needs of learners in a connected world. This vision guides the Iran Language Institute's current efforts and future proposals.

The Institute's approach emphasizes active learner participation, phonetic and character-based instruction, and balanced assessment in both written and oral skills.

While localized materials have been developed, there remains a need for co-produced and age-appropriate resources, jointly designed with Chinese partners.

A key future goal is to establish an HSK International Chinese Proficiency Test Center within ILI — following its successful administration of IELTS, DELF, and DELE exams.

This would allow Iranian learners to obtain internationally recognized certification within their own country.

This experience demonstrates that Chinese language education in Iran is no longer symbolic — it is a serious institutional effort aimed at sustainable, high-quality instruction.

Proposals for Strengthening Bilateral Language Cooperation

To further enhance this progress, a structured cooperation framework between the Iran Language Institute and leading Chinese universities and language centers is proposed.

Key components may include:

1. **Joint Teacher Training and Exchange Programs**
 - Regular workshops and exchanges between Iranian and Chinese language experts.
 - Emphasis on pronunciation, pedagogy, and digital learning skills.
2. **Co-Development of Learning Materials**
 - Jointly authored textbooks and online platforms tailored for Persian-speaking learners.
 - Integration of Persian-language guidance for early learners of Chinese.
3. **Scholarships and Study Opportunities**
 - Dedicated scholarships for Iranian students pursuing advanced Chinese studies in China.
 - Online short courses jointly certified by ILI and Chinese partner institutions.
4. **Establishing an HSK Testing Center at ILI**
 - Formal cooperation with Chinese authorities to conduct international proficiency exams in Iran.
5. **Collaborative Research in Applied Linguistics**
 - Joint studies on effective Chinese language instruction for Persian speakers and vice versa.

Enhancing Language Education through Technology, Media, and Artificial Intelligence

Technology offers immense potential to enhance language learning.

For tonal languages such as Chinese, AI-based pronunciation systems and adaptive digital platforms can greatly improve accuracy and engagement.

The Iran Language Institute welcomes collaboration with Chinese tech partners to:

- Develop AI-assisted learning applications for Mandarin;
- Design smart evaluation systems for listening and speaking;
- Produce mobile learning tools that make studying Chinese accessible nationwide.

Such innovations can serve as a model for technology-driven language cooperation between the two nations.

To make language learning accessible to broader audiences, both sides could collaborate on a bilingual educational media initiative — for example, an online television or streaming channel focused on Chinese language teaching.

This platform could feature:

- Interactive language lessons,
- Interviews with educators and students,
- Competitions, and
- Short cultural or linguistic documentaries to support learning contextually.

A parallel initiative could develop a centralized bilingual educational portal offering shared digital resources, teaching modules, and instructor training programs.

Developing Persian Language Programs for Chinese Learners

Balanced cooperation requires opportunities in both directions.

While many Iranians are now learning Chinese, the demand for Persian language education in China is also growing — especially among scholars, diplomats, and business professionals engaged with Iran and the broader Persian-speaking region.

The Iran Language Institute is fully prepared to play an active role in this domain.

With its long-standing expertise in foreign language teaching, the Institute can collaborate with Chinese universities to:

1. Establish Persian Language Courses in China

- Supported by ILI curriculum design and teacher training expertise.
- Adapted to the needs of Chinese learners focusing on communication, business, and diplomacy.

2. **Train Chinese Persian-Language Instructors**
 - Offer specialized certification programs through ILI and partner universities.
3. **Develop Joint Persian–Chinese Learning Materials**
 - Produce textbooks and digital applications co-authored by Iranian and Chinese linguists.
4. **Launch Online Persian Language Courses**
 - Use digital platforms to reach Chinese learners nationwide, integrating pronunciation feedback and cultural context.

Such initiatives would make language cooperation mutual and sustainable, fostering deeper academic ties and ensuring that linguistic exchange benefits both sides equally.

Conclusion: A Shared Journey Forward

Ladies and gentlemen,

Language education is the quiet but steady foundation of international cooperation.

By investing in Chinese and Persian language learning alike, Iran and China can open new pathways for academic exchange, business collaboration, and mutual understanding.

The Iran Language Institute stands ready to take the next steps — in partnership with Chinese institutions — to build a robust and forward-looking framework for bilateral language education.

While this speech focuses on Iran–China cooperation, the model we propose—grounded in innovation, mutual respect, and practical collaboration—can inspire similar partnerships around the world. By sharing resources, research, and technology, we can help make Chinese language education more inclusive, accessible, and future-ready for learners in many countries.

Together, through steady progress and shared commitment, we can transform these small steps into a lasting and fruitful journey of cooperation — one that truly honors the wisdom of Xunzi:

“Without small steps, no journey of a thousand miles can begin.”

Thank you for your attention.