

# Curriculum Standards for Language in China and the US in Grades One and Two\*

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**Abstract—Purpose:** In 2010, the United States issued Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (CCSS). In 2011, China's Ministry of Education also issued its Compulsory Education Chinese Curriculum Standards (CCSCE). This study hopes to compare the similarities and differences between the two documents and obtain some useful enlightenment for Chinese primary school language education.

**Design/methodology/approach:** This study uses text analysis methods to compare the differences between the two documents in the overall goal of language education, as well as reading standards, writing standards, listening standards, and language standards. (The Comparative study of reading standards, writing standards, listening and speaking standards, and language standards are limited to grades 1-2)

**Findings:** The study found that in terms of the overall goal values, CCSCE emphasizes patriotism, collectivism and socialist ethics, while CCSS emphasizes critical thinking and emphasizing evidence. In terms of reading content, CCSCE and CCSS have stories and poems. CCSCE has no drama but idioms and fables. In writing standards, CCSS emphasizes that children use digital tools to collect information and create works with the help of adults, and CCSS has specific requirements for different types and purposes of writing, which CCSCE does not mention. In writing standards, CCSS emphasizes that children use digital tools to collect information and create works with the help of adults, and CCSS has specific requirements for different types and purposes of writing, which CCSCE does not mention. In language standards, CCSCE puts more demands on the structure, stroke order, writing posture and habits of Chinese characters, while CCSS focuses on language conventions, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, etc., which are mainly attributed by the two languages themselves.

**Originality/value:** National language curriculum standards are very important for primary language teaching. Comparing the curriculum standards of different countries can learn from each other on the basis of differences.

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**Keywords:** CCSS, CCSCE, text analysis

## I. INTRODUCTION

Human civilization is based on symbols, and reading is the key to enter the symbolic world, so reading is one of the core qualities for teenagers. In 2010, the United States issued Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (CCSS). CCSS is a set of academic expectations in English language arts and mathematics that outlines what elementary and secondary school students should know by the end of each grade (ERIC, 2018). In 2011, China's Ministry of Education also issued its Compulsory Education Chinese Curriculum Standards (CCSCE). CCSCE is the basis for the Chinese language textbooks compilation, teaching, evaluation and examination propositions, and is the foundation of national management and evaluation courses. CCSCE should reflect the state's requirements for students at different stages in knowledge and ability, process and method, emotion attitude and values. CCSCE stipulates the character, objectives and content framework of Chinese language courses, and puts forward teaching suggestions and evaluation suggestions. (MEPRC, 2001). The curriculum standard is a programmatic document of national teaching, which sets the goals and contents of the national school curriculum and guides the direction of school teaching. Therefore, the curriculum standard is one of the most important education documents in a country. Grade1 and 2 is the foundation of the whole long school education. It is significant to compare the difference between the first and second grades standards of the two countries. This study hopes to find the differences between language education standards of the two countries, and get some enlightenment on the Chinese language education in primary school.

## II. METHODS

This study compares the two documents of Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History / Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (CCSS) and Compulsory Education Chinese Curriculum Standards (CCSCE) in detail. I described and explained the similarities and differences between CCSS and CCSCE in the overall goals and language standards for grades 1-2. The

differences in language standards for grades 1-2 are described in terms of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and language.

III. RESULTS

A. Overall goals

The following "Table I" lists the differences of overall goals between CCSCE (2010) and CCSS (2011).

TABLE I. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE OVERALL GOALS

	<b>Chinese Curriculum Standards of Compulsory Education (CCSCE)</b>	<b>Common Core State Standards (CCSS)</b>
Values	Cultivate patriotism, collectivism and socialist ideology and morality	
Attitude towards cultural differences	Understand the rich Chinese culture, respect cultural diversity	Come to understand other perspectives and cultures
Emotion	Love mother tongue	
Evidence	Scientific attitude	Value evidence, cite specific evidence for oral or written explanations
Reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language	The ability to read independently and read in a variety of ways	Comprehend and evaluate complex texts across a range of types and disciplines, and they can construct effective arguments and convey intricate or multifaceted information
	Basic ability of daily oral and written communication	They respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline
Basic knowledge	Learn Chinese phonetic alphabet, know about 3, 500 commonly used Chinese characters, recite excellent poetry 240	Establish a base of knowledge across a wide range of subject matter by engaging with works of quality and substance
Use of technology and digital media	Use reference books; ability to collect and process information; use new techniques and multiple media to learn chinese	Use technology and digital media strategically and capably
Critical thinking		Comprehend as well as critique

The biggest difference between the two standards is that the CCSCE put patriotism, collectivism and socialism in an important position, and emphasize how to cultivate love emotion to the motherland tongue and rich Chinese culture. However the CCSS emphasize the value of critical thinking and evidence.

On the whole, China has less social resources, and social competition is cruel, so the overall value is inclined to survival, collectivisation, and rigidity (Triandis, 2001; Gelfand, 2011, cited in Welzel, 2013; Welzel, 2013), which are reflected in China's education. Conversely, developed countries have more social resources, the overall value is inclined to emancipative, individual, and loose (Triandis, 2001; Gelfand, 2011, cited in Welzel, 2013; Welzel, 2013). The collective and rigid culture is not conducive to cultivate students' critical thinking. Influenced by the traditional culture and education, many Chinese students are "non-critical people", who are superstitious about authority and lack of independent spirit (Weiwei Xiao, 2015). In sharp contrast, some young people have strong sense of critical thinking, but do not have critical thinking skills. Instead of carefully identifying the authenticity of information on the Internet and thinking deeply about it, they only use stereotypes and personal likes and dislikes to making offensive and insulting comments on the Internet (Weiwei Xiao, 2015). These people are known as "keyboard men" or "sprinklers". In China today, it is important to cultivate students' critical thinking, but reform faces many challenges. In today's China, it is important to cultivate students' critical thinking, but this reform faces many challenges. For example, the college entrance examination has an important impact on

the development of the whole country and the interests of every family. The college entrance examination almost leads to education in primary and middle schools across the country, but the examination requires a standard answer, every student's thinking needs to be close to the standard answer (GKN, 2018).

It is a good habit to pay attention to empirical evidence in writing, but some textbooks have not set a good example for students. For instance, historical events and views are presented without identifying source of the information in history textbooks in primary and secondary school (EN, 2018).

In terms of basic knowledge, the Chinese standard mainly emphasizes the basic knowledge of language, while the American standard emphasizes the interdisciplinary knowledge. Both standards respect cultural differences, and focus on basic knowledge and skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and on effectively using technology and new media.

B. Reading content

The following "Table II" lists the differences of reading content below grade 2 between CCSCE (2011) and CCSS (2010).

**TABLE II. DIFFERENCES IN READING CONTENT BELOW GRADE 2**

	<b>Chinese Curriculum Standards of Compulsory Education (CCSCE)</b>	<b>Common Core State Standards (CCSS)</b>
Literature	Stories ,poetry ,idiom, aphorisms	Stories, dramas, poetry
Informational text		Literary nonfiction and historical, scientific, and technical texts
Foundational skills	Punctuation mark	Print concepts, phonological awareness,phonics and word recognition

In 1-2 grade reading content classification, CCSS's reading content includes: literature, informational text, foundational skills, CCSCE includes: literature and foundational skills. CCSCE's literary category includes stories, poems, idioms and aphorisms. Drama does not appear until grade 7-9 in reading content, the reasons may be complicated. CCSCE is a standard which is accepted by the whole country, but the facilities and teachers of rural schools and urban schools differ greatly. Rural schools cannot easily find drama teachers, and get corresponding facilities. In contrast idioms are unique content in Chinese culture. There are four characters form into a word, and there is an

interesting story behind each of them. It is a reflection of some of the tendencies of Chinese culture. Informational text in CCSCE was not mentioned. In foundational skills, CCSCE refers only to punctuation marks, and CCSS refers to print concepts, phonological awareness, reading pronunciation and word recognition. In the content of reading, CCSS is richer and more specific.

### C. Writing standards

The following "Table III" lists the differences of writing standards below grade 2 between CCSCE (2011) and CCSS (2010).

**TABLE III. DIFFERENCES IN WRITING STANDARDS BELOW GRADE 2**

	<b>Chinese Curriculum Standards of Compulsory Education (CCSCE)</b>	<b>Common Core State Standards (CCSS)</b>
Text types and purposes	Opinion pieces, Informative/explanatory texts	Opinion pieces, informative/explanatory texts, narratives
Production and distribution of writing		Use digital tools to produce and publish writing, with help from adults
Research to build and present knowledge	Use the words learned from reading and life experience in writing practice, punctuation mark practice	Participate in shared research and writing projects, record science observations, and recall /gather information

There are several differences between CCSS and CCSCE in 1-2 grade writing standards, Firstly, CCSS has specific requirements for different types and purposes of writing, for explanatory texts, student should introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section. This writing ability is especially important in college and graduate school. But at present, some graduate students have lost their sense of argumentation in their dissertation writing. The concrete manifestation is the separation of evidence and discussions. In addition, presentation a bunch of ideas in the paper, but there are no logic between them. (Runzhou Li, 2018) Secondly, CCSS attaches importance to production and distribution of writing, but CCSCE does not mention this content. Thirdly, CCSCE pays much attention to punctuation practice. In addition CCSS attaches importance in shared research and writing project which develop advanced and complex skills of students, such as scientific recording, information gathering, and collaboration.

### D. Speaking and listening standards

The following "Table IV" lists the differences of speaking and listening standards below grade 2 between CCSCE (2011) and CCSS (2010).

**TABLE IV. DIFFERENCES IN SPEAKING AND LISTENING STANDARDS BELOW GRADE 2**

	<b>Chinese Curriculum Standards of Compulsory Education (CCSCE)</b>	<b>Common Core State Standards (CCSS)</b>
Mandarin	Speak Mandarin instead of dialect	
Comprehension and collaboration	Understand the main content of the speech; Retelling main content or something interesting of Stories, and audiovisual material	How to build on others' talk, ask for clarification, ask and answer questions; Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read Aloud or through other media
Manners	Listen carefully and talk With naturally and politely manners	Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions, gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion
Presentation of knowledge and ideas	Tell complete stories and some interesting experience with self-confidence	Tell stories with facts and details, speaking audibly in coherent and complete sentences; use visual displays to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings; create audio recordings of stories or poems

In speaking and listening standards, the biggest difference is that CCSCE requires speaking Mandarin, while CCSS does not. Perhaps there are too many dialects in China which interfere with normal communication. CCSCE and CCSS have some common points, they all want to understand and retelling the main content of a speech or a story, but the CCSS describes in detail, such as how to construct a conversation, how to ask for more information, how to ask questions and answer questions from a conversation. In terms of manners, CCSCE generally emphasizes listening carefully, being natural and being polite, while CCSS

describes the rules to follow in discussion. In presentation of knowledge and ideas, CCSCE simply stated the complete story telling and brief description of interesting experiences, but CCSS had more specific requirements, including record poetry and story audio, telling facts and details in coherent sentences and clarifying ideas with illustrations.

#### *E. Language standards*

The following "Table V" lists the differences of Language standards below grade 2 between CCSCE (2011) and CCSS (2010).

**TABLE V. DIFFERENCES IN LANGUAGE STANDARDS BELOW GRADE 2**

	<b>Chinese Curriculum Standards of Compulsory Education (CCSCE)</b>	<b>Common Core State Standards(CCSS)</b>
Desire to learn words	Desire to learn chinese characters	
Conventions of standard language	Learn the calligraphy and structure of chinese characters Read write pinyin correctly, recite the alphabet Correct writing posture and standard writing	Grammar and usage of english, including lexical and syntactic; the conventions of standard english capitalization, punctuation, and spelling
Knowledge of language		Understand how language functions in different contexts; Compare formal and informal uses of english
Vocabulary acquisition and use	Write chinese characters in basic strokes and commonly used side parts; Know 1600 commonly used chinese characters, of which about 800 can write; Read chinese characters with the help of pinyin and dictionary	Clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-Meaning words and phrases; Understanding of word relationships and nuances; Consulting general and specialized reference materials

In language standards, CCSCE emphasizes students' interest in Chinese characters, but in fact, Chinese characters must be learned after entering school, whether they are interested or not, so teachers can only try to make learning more interesting.

In conventions of standard language, CCSCE requires students to write in the correct stroke order and structure, which is the unique feature of Chinese characters. Chinese characters are hieroglyphics, and the rules of stroke and the structure of frame are of vital importance to the physical beauty of Chinese characters. CCSCE requires students to read and write pinyin correctly, and recite the alphabet. In

addition CCSS attaches great importance to grammar, usage, and conventions of standards English, such as capitalization, punctuation, spelling when writing and speaking. In this part, the CCSCE also suggests developing good writing habits and posture, which CCSS does not consider as a language standard.

In knowledge of language, CCSS requires students to compare formal English and informal English, but CCSCE does not have this content.

CCSS is very different from CCSCE in the part of vocabulary acquisition and use. Chinese characters are hieroglyphics, which are composed of side parts, but the

pronunciation is made up of pinyin. Students should not only memorize the pinyin alphabet, but also master the commonly used side parts of the Chinese characters. CCSS has more detailed requirements on vocabulary learning and application, including three parts. The first part is to deduce the meaning of unknown words and polysemous words. A series of strategies can be used, including using context clues, prefixes, word roots, compound words, and dictionary. The second part is to distinguish word relationships and nuances in word meanings, including real-life use words and nuances of synonyms. The third part is to practice using vocabulary which is learned from the conversation and reading. In the primary stage of school education, both standards attach importance to the use of reference books.

On the whole, the biggest difference between CCSS and CCSS is that CCSCE focuses on the overall improvement of students' language quality, with a large and holistic goal. These goals are designed from three aspects: knowledge and ability, process and method, emotion attitude and values, which permeate each other and become one. In contrast CCSS aimed at preparing for college and employment with clear and specific standards. CCSS has college and career readiness (CCR) anchor standards and grade-specific standards in each part of reading, writing, listening, speaking and language. Take the Reading standard of the first grade as an example. The CCR for Reading in the first grade consists of three parts: standards for literature, standards for informational text, and standards for foundational skills. and standards for literature also consists of four parts: key ideas and details, craft and structure, integration of knowledge and ideas, range of reading and level of text complexity. Each standard was broken down into more specific standards in the first grade, and the difficulty of these standards gradually increased with the improvement of the grade and finally formed a coherent system. These specific, coherent grade standards may be more valuable to elementary language teachers. In contrast, there is no detailed classification in the first grade reading standard of CCSCE.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The framework of CCSCE and CCSS stage standards is basically the same, including reading, writing, listening, speaking and language. Both standards are integrating model of literacy, in addition they have grade-specific standards and cross-disciplinary literacy expectation. There are many differences between the two standards. Firstly, CCSCE divides two or three grades into one section, but CCSS is a grade for a stage. Secondly, CCSCE places the education of emotion, habit and value in an important position, which CCSS does not have. Thirdly, in oral expression and text writing, CCSS attaches great importance to quoting evidence to support writer's opinion, and is able to evaluate the evidence quoted by other authors constructively. It is very important to develop the habit of emphasizing evidence since childhood, which can make your expression clearer and credible. Moreover, correct and reasonable quotation is the performance of respecting the previous labor achievements.

This habit is an essential training for future academic research.

The two countries can learn from each other's standards. Firstly, CCSCE emphasizes cultivating the values of patriotism, collectivism and socialism in the learning process, and hopes students to love Chinese characters and Chinese culture, but CCSS does not have these contents. At this point, the United States may need to learn from China, for schools are an important place to cultivate patriotism. Secondly, CCSS requires students use technology and digital media strategically and capably, it is also important for Chinese students. In the 21st century, research and media skills play an important role in personal life, career development and social production. In the overall goal, CCSS emphasizes comprehension as well as critique. It is also an important part of the core qualities that China wants its students to possess.

Schools should share the responsibility for developing students' literacy with curriculum standards. Principals of primary and secondary schools should be familiar with the national curriculum standards, and take into account it when evaluating the quality of school education. The language teacher should take account of the grade-specific standards when preparing and attending classes. To cultivate cross-disciplinary language knowledge and abilities requires the joint efforts of teachers from different disciplines. Curriculum standards focus on results rather than means that students enable to meet at each grade, but it leaves plenty of room for principals and teachers to reach them.

This study only compared the Curriculum standards for language in China and the US in grades 1 and 2. These two standards were issued before 2011 and have been in place for seven years. China will issue new language curriculum standards in the next year, and there are many follow-up studies worth doing.

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