

Discourse and culture in language teaching: a Romanian textbook for Chinese learners

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This paper explores the intersection of language teaching and Chinese cultural values through analysing the design of a Romanian language textbook for Chinese students. Rooted in the holistic, harmony-oriented worldview of Chinese philosophy (Shi-xu, 2014), the contemporary Chinese discourse reflects a distinct cultural and pedagogical framework that influences foreign language teaching methodologies in China. By analysing the Romanian textbook, this paper demonstrates how a language-learning tool can be seen as a discourse on Chinese culture, presenting language acquisition within the context of Chinese educational traditions and cultural norms.

Understanding the link between Chinese discourse and language learning is crucial for enhancing the teacher's intercultural competence. By reflecting on these cultural dynamics, teachers can better navigate the complexities of teaching Romanian in a Chinese context, ultimately improving the effectiveness of their pedagogical approach.

Keywords: *Chinese cultural discourse, intercultural communication competence, Romanian as a foreign language*

1. Introduction: language, culture and Chinese discourse studies

In a world undergoing an accelerated process of globalization, foreign language education plays a vital role in mediating intercultural understanding. Regardless of the didactic philosophy underlying the teaching and learning of a foreign language, a textbook holds a central place in this process. More than a repository of grammatical rules, a foreign language textbook is a complex communicative and cultural construct, a path through which the learner enters a world that is both familiar and unfamiliar, a world reflected in both the source and target languages, as in a play of mirrors.

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In this paper, I aim to analyse the Romanian language textbook for Chinese students, coordinated by Professor Ding Chao (丁超), published in 2001 in Beijing, for Beijing Foreign Studies University (北京外国语大学). Drawing from Shi-xu's paradigm of Cultural Discourse Studies (2004; 2014), I analyse how this teaching material functions as a linguistic guide through the Romanian language, and, most importantly, as a reflective surface of Chinese communicative traditions and cultural values.

My approach is informed by both personal teaching experience and theoretical inquiry. Having worked as a Romanian language teacher at Xi'an International Studies University (西安外国语大学) since 2019, I used the aforementioned textbook in my classes. My initial reaction to the textbook was one of ambivalence: it appeared structurally familiar, as I could recognize traditional methodologies, rooted in the grammar-translation method, yet I discovered cultural cues, moral reflections, and a philosophical background that were connected to the Chinese cultural worldview. This experience triggered my curiosity and made me start a deeper investigation into the cultural dimensions of this language textbook. My analysis includes a theoretical overview of Cultural Discourse Studies, a contextual, historical framework of language education in China, a close reading of some parts from Prof. Ding Chao's textbook, and reflections from classroom practice. The premise of my inquiry is that the textbook is a site of intercultural negotiation, where Romanian language is shaped and reinterpreted through the Chinese cultural lens. I argue that such materials exemplify a unique form of mediated cultural discourse and represent significant tools in the evolution of culturally conscious foreign language pedagogy.

To understand how Chinese culture informs the Romanian language textbook, it is first necessary to examine the relationship between language and culture from the perspective of Discourse Studies. A key figure in Chinese Discourse Studies, Shi-xu (2004; 2014) argues that theories of discourse cannot isolate language from the culture in which it has developed. In his view, culture is not a static, clearly defined, or secondary context to discourse, but rather the very foundation that supports communication and gives it its distinctive features, permeating "the whole way of life of people, so that people use various sorts of tools and methods – such as art, music, science, religion and linguistic communication – to construct and act upon experience or reality" (Shi-xu 2004, 53–54). As a symbolic space, highly hybridized and in constant evolution, culture is, in Shi-xu's definition, in a relationship of mutual influence and interdependence with discourse and, by extension, with language itself, since discourse shapes cultural understanding and is simultaneously shaped by it.

Advocating for “a culturally pluralist reconceptualization of discourse” (Shi-xu 2004, 68), the Chinese scholar also critiques the dominance of Anglo-American pragmatics and discourse analysis, drawing attention to the particularities of Chinese discourse, especially the cultural context that has shaped it. The Chinese cultural discourse tradition, according to Shi-xu, is centred on principles deeply rooted in the millennia-old and uninterrupted Chinese cultural tradition, marked by categories such as benevolence (*ren*, 仁), harmony (*he*, 和), and the unity of man and nature (*tian ren he yi*, 天人合一). Proposing a description of the world based on complementarity rather than contradiction, placing the human beings in relation to the world of which they are a part, and understanding the boundaries between the knowing subject and the known object as permeable and negotiable, the Chinese worldview is reflected in a discourse characterized by indirectness, subtlety, and metaphor. As Shi-xu (2014, 11) notes: “Chinese speakers will use a host of indirect ways and devices of meaning making, which range from silence, reticence, taciturnity, imagery, classics, proverbs, vagueness, beating around the bush and so on.”

At the origins of this type of communicative practice, Shi-xu places the Confucian, Buddhist, and Daoist traditions, a philosophical triad that explains the complexity of Chinese cultural discourse and its seemingly irreconcilable features. With its emphasis on moral character, harmony among people and in the world at large, benevolence, and the observance of rituals, Confucianism privileges the social function of communication, viewing the ultimate role of communication as “societal harmony [which is to be] achieved or maintained” (Shi-xu 2014, 66). The word, in its Confucian understanding, is a thing that must be chosen carefully and used wisely, for the order of the world reflects in it, and it is also through language (as part of a ritual) that this order is maintained.

On the other hand, Daoist philosophy “maintains that there is an insurmountable chiasm between communication (or speech, or discourse, *yan* 言) and Dao (道, the primordial law), and hence meaning (*yi* 意), but that one has to seek and pursue meaning continuously” (Shi-xu 2014, 67). Daoism favours silence over the spoken word and prefers a multitude of potential meanings to the single shade of meaning that speech might impose, just as a mystery, once explained, risks being reduced to a logical, coherent, and rational structure. As Shi-xu notes: “speech is limited, (the written text, *wen* 文 is even more so) with regard to what one wishes to express and what is meant, whereas meaning, without predetermined shape or form, is unlimited” (Shi-xu 2014, 67).

This subtle relationship, actually a continuous negotiation between the meaning conveyed through the spoken or written word and the unactualized,

potential meanings that inhabit the speaker's imagination, translates, according to Shi-xu, into a preference for meaningful silence.

Last but not least, Chan Buddhism (*Chanzong*, 禪宗) also contributes to the shaping of Chinese cultural discourse through its aphoristic and concise expression, which relies on linguistic surprise and aesthetic formulation.

These traditions outline a communicative ethos that is not rigid, but rather capable of transformation over time, while maintaining its tendency to go "beyond observable forms, textual or contextual [as] the Chinese communicate in an implicit, indirect, holistic, general, and even vague, contradictory way," by relying on strategies such as "draw[ing] upon imageries, proverbs, fables, poetic lines, and even brevity and silence" (Shi-xu 2014, 90). As part of the Chinese cultural discourse, the Chinese pedagogical discourse reflects (both at the level of input and that of didactic output) the same characteristics as the broader cultural system to which it belongs.

2. Foreign language teaching in China

Understanding the cultural discourse embedded in a Romanian textbook for Chinese learners furthermore requires contextualizing language education within modern and contemporary China. The evolution of foreign language education reflects the dynamic of geopolitical decisions that, in their turn, shaped the educational reforms initiated in the post-imperial era. According to Peng (2018), foreign language education was officially integrated into the curriculum after the 1922 reforms, when the traditional Confucian educational system was being contested. English, taught mainly by native-speaker teachers, became, for a couple of decades, the main foreign language studied in Chinese universities, especially those in Shanghai, Tianjin or Beijing, in an unprecedented effort to modernize the Chinese educational system, which could be metaphorically summed up as a change from "brush to pen" (Keay 2009, 480). In the 1950s, the political changes influenced by the rise of Sino-Soviet relations triggered changes both in methodologies, and choice of foreign languages to be studied, hence Russian became the dominant foreign language, taught using intensive reading and grammar-translation methods. The cultural orientation of textbooks from this era emphasized ideological conformity, moral purity, and the superiority of collective identity.

With China's opening-up policy in 1978, English regained its importance in the curricula. The teaching methodology also started to change, slowly incorporating the modern theories that were on the rise in the 80s – the

communicative approaches. However, Peng (2018) notes that classroom practice remained deeply influenced by the Confucian values, including respect for the teachers' authority and emphasis on memorization, therefore creating a tension between the modern approach and the traditional educational values.

The teaching of Romanian in China follows a smaller, yet quite similar trajectory. Barbu (2021) records that the first Romanian language courses were established in 1956 at Beijing Foreign Studies University (北京外国语大学), while in the same year, the University of Bucharest established its Chinese language department. In more recent years, further development can be observed, as Beijing International Studies University (lit. Beijing Second College of Foreign Languages北京第二外国语学院) and, more recently, Xi'an International Studies University (西安外国语大学) (2018) opened their Romanian language departments. While the number of students and available resources remains limited compared to other modern foreign languages, such as English, French, or German, teaching Romanian in China has persisted, due to diplomatic and cultural exchanges, particularly during the socialist period.

When asked to mention the challenges of teaching Romanian in China, Prof. Pang Jiyang, head of the Romanian language department from Beijing Foreign Studies University (quoted in Barbu 2021, 53), talked about "lack of recent audio-visual materials used in the teaching-learning process. Such materials would be extremely useful to familiarize students with correct pronunciation by native speakers." Professor Pang's observation refers not only to the fact that, given the geographical distance between China and Romania, students have fewer opportunities to interact with native speakers – interactions that should therefore be supplemented by specific didactic resources – but also, indirectly, to the emphasis placed on written communication at the expense of oral communication in the process of teaching Romanian. This imbalance can be explained, at least in part, by the educational philosophy underlying the methodology of teaching Romanian as a foreign language in China – a philosophy shaped by the characteristics of Chinese cultural discourse, as will become evident in the analysis of the Romanian language textbook published in China.

3. Chinese cultural discourse in the Romanian textbook

As a fundamental educational resource, the textbook is not a culturally neutral instrument. The methodology it relies on, the type of interaction it promotes, the selection of texts and learning tasks – all aim to develop communicative

competence in the L2, yet they also reflect the didactic philosophy of the L1. The Romanian language textbook authored by Prof. Ding Chao is a comprehensive, four-volume work that gradually introduces Romanian to native Mandarin speakers. While the organizational structure follows universal pedagogical principles applied to foreign language teaching, such as starting from phonetics and moving to syntax and stylistics, the selection of content and discursive strategies reflect Chinese educational priorities, that, in turn, reflect the Confucian educational thought, which is “people oriented [showing] respect for moral education [...] so as to achieve the ideal state of unifying the family, governing the country and levelling the world” (Xu, Chen 2024, 1-2). The strong asymmetry between the teachers’ role and that of the students during the teaching-learning process, the emphasis on the moral dimension and the prestige granted to the written word over the spoken one are among the visible Confucian influences in Professor Ding Chao’s textbook.

Volume 1 focuses on foundational linguistic concepts and introduces the learner to phonological contrasts and morphological structures. In a progression reminiscent of the grammar-translation method, language is viewed as a set of rules that students must acquire and practice through exercises that draw attention to the differences between Romanian and Chinese sounds (using contrastive pairs), as well as through dictation and sentence copying from the textbook. The introduction of morphological concepts begins with elements of the noun phrase – noun, article, pronoun, numeral, and adjective –, while verb conjugation is already introduced in Lesson 6. In the study of morphology, the emphasis is placed on memorization through substitution, and conjugation exercises. These characteristics of language instruction can, at first glance, be attributed to a traditional methodology that privileges the development of linguistic competence, especially given the fact that the L2 in question has a complex morphology, in which exceptions to the rule are nearly as numerous as the rules themselves.

Starting with Lesson 11, however, we notice the occurrence of content elements that cannot be explained solely by methodological choices, such as Romanian proverbs, which appear at the end of each lesson. This interesting and nevertheless surprising inclusion transforms the proverb from a background element into a central discursive tool. Proverbs such as “Tot începutul e greu” [All beginnings are difficult] or “Frate, frate, dar brânza e pe bani” [Literally, “Brother or not, you have to pay for the cheese”, meaning that irrespective of family bonds, one must recognize, through paying, the worth of other people’s work], which are to be found in Lesson 11, are both idiomatic expressions and carriers of moral, economic, and social values.

Proverbs, as expressions that preserve a community's lived experience, also serve as models of concise, sometimes playful language, in which devices such as ellipsis, repetition, or inversion, to name just a few, exemplify the use of language beyond its purely instrumental function. By drawing on folk wisdom and employing various formal innovations, proverbs represent linguistic structures that align with the Chinese cultural discourse's preference for conciseness, simplicity, elegance, and the transmission of moral values. The selection of proverbs as relevant linguistic material in learning Romanian reflects an interest in the Romanian cultural context and the Chinese teacher's concern with educating students in the spirit of morality. No matter how modern his didactic approach may be, the role of the Chinese teacher, from a Confucian perspective (still visible today) is also to offer students a moral code that allows them to integrate harmoniously into society. This approach, I believe, is obvious even in a detail such as ending each lesson with a proverb.

Volume I of the Romanian textbook concludes with the presentation of three well-known Romanian songs: "La mulți ani" [Happy Birthday], "Bună dimineața la Moș Ajun" [Good Morning on Christmas Eve], and "O, brad frumos!" [O, Christmas Tree!]. As was the case of the proverbs, the inclusion of these songs can be interpreted from two distinct perspectives. On the one hand, they are widely known by all Romanians and accompany them during meaningful moments in life – be it a birthday or a major religious celebration such as Christmas. Anniversaries and important yearly holidays are part of a special kind of time – the time of celebration – which can be fully understood only through familiarity with the customs that mark it. Among these customs is the singing of particular songs. Incorporating these songs in the textbook, the foreign language is embedded in a cultural context, and intercultural competence is thus "brought" into the Romanian language classroom. It is also worth noting that two of the songs presented are carols: one traditionally Romanian ("Bună dimineața la Moș Ajun"), and the other of Germanic origin ("O, brad frumos!") but it has been translated into Romanian, and it entered the country's Christmas songs repertoire. This choice broadens the students' cultural horizon by placing Romanian culture in the wider European context. Although the author of the textbook does not provide background information on the carols, it is expected that the Romanian language teacher will clarify these aspects in class, thus offering students full access to the ritual's meaning.

Someone unfamiliar with the place music occupies in Chinese culture might stop at this level of interpretation, viewing the selection of songs merely as a window into the Romanian world, integrating the musical pieces into the context of various celebrations. And that would not be incorrect, only that there is yet

another dimension, one that becomes obvious when one knows that, in the classical Confucian context, music is considered “the supreme expression of harmony” (Cheng 2001, 54), and it is closely associated with *li* (禮, ritual), the force that holds the world together. Strictly regulated behaviour, solemnity, elegance, and beauty – all belong to the paradigm of ritual, of which music is an important part. Thus, in Chinese culture, music means far more than mere beautiful sound and words. At the same time, music is a component of philosophical thought or an ideal described in the *Analects* of Confucius and in countless classical commentaries; it is also an important element of the everyday lives of Chinese people, starting from early education – as, for example, music education is compulsory for students aged 13 to 17. Being linked, nationally, to school entrance examinations, the music curriculum “helps to develop students' musical literacy and competence at a higher level” (Jin 2022, 67). Developed during school years, the interest in music often persists long after graduation. In informal, everyday contexts, Chinese people enjoy spending time singing, so much so that impromptu orchestras made up of neighbours from the same apartment block or neighbourhood are a regular presence in public spaces, parks, and squares. Having a complex role that ranges from identity marking (Lau 2015) to the simple pleasure of sharing a public performance with friends, music plays a particularly special role in everyday life in China. It is therefore no surprise that, when learning a foreign language, students are also given the opportunity to discover the music of another culture, a music that can accompany them when spending time with friends from other countries.

A special commentary in this context can be made in connection to the songs featured at the end of Volume II of the textbook: “La oglindă” [In Front of the Mirror], “Aşa beau oamenii buni” [This Is the Way Good People Drink], and “Radu mamii, Radule!” [Radu, Mom’s Boy]. Famous in Romania as party songs, they represent the joy of time spent with friends and, in the logic outlined above, can be considered part of a *performance* that may function as a cultural mediator. Of course, one must also consider to what extent, in the contemporary Romanian society, these songs – although surely familiar to young people – are still perceived by them as representative of their world. Even so, based on empirical observation, we may assume that the popularity of these songs grants those who know them – even partially – a surprising form of symbolic capital in the eyes of native speakers. Hearing a Chinese student sing “Radu mamii, Radule” elicits complex reactions of surprise, tenderness, and a kind of affectionate admiration. In this sense, such moments become genuine expressions of *intercultural awareness*, in the sense proposed by Michael Byram (1997), which involves knowledge of cultural elements

and the capacity to interact with them empathetically and reflectively. Thus, the song is no longer merely a linguistic or phonetic exercise, but a form of temporary, yet profound, belonging to a shared imaginary.

Within the same sphere of meanings associated with festive time and the music that accompanies it, we also find a passage from Volume II of the textbook, in which students are presented with a dialogue centred on Romanian religious holidays.

De Sărbători

- *De Paști, m-aș duce la părinții mei, la țară.*
- *Ai dreptate. Sărbătoarea învierii lui Isus Hristos e mai frumoasă la țară decât la oraș.*
- *Parcă numai Paștele? Dar la Florii sau de Rusalii (降灵节)... Toate sărbătorile religioase sunt mai frumoase la țară. De Crăciun și de Anul Nou sunt atâtea obiceiuri tradiționale: colindatul, plugușorul, jocurile de măști, sorcova... Apoi, de Bobotează (主显节)...*
- *Dar ce, în Bucureștii² nu avem atâtea colindători prin tramvaie, troleibuze și autobuze?*
- *E o rușine! O degradare, nu numai pentru tradiția colindatului, ci și o degradare umană. (Ding (ed.) 2001 vol. II, 123, subl.n.)*

On Holidays

- *At Easter, I would go to my parents, in the countryside.*
- *You're right. The celebration of Jesus Christ's resurrection is more beautiful in the countryside than in the city.*
- *Not just Easter, though! What about Palm Sunday or Pentecost (降节)..
religious holidays are more beautiful in the countryside. On Christmas and New Year's, there are so many traditions: carolling, the Plugușor ritual, masked dances, Sorcova... And then there's Epiphany (主显节)..
But come on, **don't we also have plenty of carollers in Bucharest – on trams, trolleys, and buses?***
- ***It's a disgrace! A degradation – not only of the tradition of carolling, but emphasis added.)***

² The form "Bucureștii" is an old or stylistically marked definite form of the noun "București". While not incorrect per se, this form is not correct in contemporary standard Romanian.

The selected passage is a compelling example of how the intercultural dimension can be integrated into the process of language teaching. By evoking fundamental moments from the Orthodox religious calendar – Easter, Palm Sunday, Pentecost, Christmas, New Year, and Epiphany – the text enables the development of learners' intercultural competence (Byram, 1997), granting them access to both the vocabulary associated with these holidays, and the symbolic, spatial, and emotional structures through which they are experienced.

In Byram's terms, the passage activates several dimensions of the intercultural competence model: *savoirs* (knowledge of one's own culture and the target culture), *savoir comprendre* (the ability to interpret and relate cultural practices), *savoir être* (curiosity and openness toward the encounter with otherness), and even *savoir s'engager* (critical engagement in evaluating a cultural practice).

A conclusive example is the implicit parallel that Chinese learners can establish between New Year rituals in Romania and those in China. Although the author does not explicitly draw this comparison, we can imagine that students – either independently or guided by the classroom teacher – will uncover both the similarities and the differences between Romanian and Chinese ritual practices. In both Romanian and Chinese cultures, these moments mark the transition into a new cosmic cycle and are accompanied by collective performative customs. *Plugușorul*, *sorcova*, just like the dragon dance or fire rituals, are expressions of a worldview in which song and gesture function as means of restoring universal balance.

Moreover, the text emphasizes the role of the Romanian carol as a ritual musical form with sacred status. The carol is performed by groups of young people (*cete de colindători*, as they are called in Romanian) at fixed times of the year, and its meaning is derived from collective participation, the sacredness of space (the village, the community), and the proper enactment of the ritual. Much like Confucian ritual music, the *carol* becomes a means of preserving both social and cosmic order.

The author of the textbook excerpt explicitly criticizes the practice of *colindat* (carolling) in urban spaces, such as trams, trolleybuses, and buses, labeling it a “shame” and a “degradation.” This type of assessment reveals a moralizing stance, one that contrasts the authentic space of the countryside with the urban one, considered desacralized and chaotic. Such distinctions are common in cultural discourses influenced by Confucian thought, where *ritual* (礼 *li*) and *music* (乐 *yue*) have, since ancient times, been regarded as pillars of a just moral order.

This idealizing and normative perspective on tradition can be problematized in the sense suggested by Byram (1997), who warns against the risks of ethnocentrism and cultural conservatism in the process of intercultural mediation.

Foreign students should be supported not only in understanding the values and cultural codes of the target language, but also in developing their own questions and critical reflections regarding the norms being presented.

The previously analyzed passage is valuable for its cultural richness and for the opportunity it offers for a critical analysis of how tradition is represented, idealized, or displaced. It thus becomes a fertile ground for the development of a reflective intercultural competence – one that learns about culture and also thinks *through* and *about* culture.

A final example I analyze in order to observe how Chinese cultural discourse is reflected in the Romanian language textbook can be found in Volume III, which addresses the relationship between humans and nature. The lesson titles, such as *The Solar System, The Hydrosphere, The Atmosphere, Plants, The Planet and Living Environment, The Human Being – A Biological and Social Entity, What Is a Human?, Human Rights etc.*, suggest, even upon a simple reading, a unifying vision reminiscent of the Confucian principle *tian ren he yi* (天人合一) – the harmony between Heaven/nature and humanity. This principle implies an organic interconnectedness, a relationship of mutual influence between the human beings and the environment in which they live, a relationship that is not hierarchical, but one of co-belonging and balance (Tu, 1985).

In the texts about the solar system, atmosphere, hydrosphere, plants, and so on, the language is strictly scientific, with vocabulary drawn from fields such as astronomy and biology. In the texts devoted to the human condition, as expected, this scientific approach is interwoven with philosophical reflection. A relevant example is *Lesson 16 – What Is a Human?*, which presents an essayistic discourse written in a formal, elevated style, providing students with a clear model of written argumentation.

The argumentative text unfolds progressively: starting from an everyday conversation among children about how one might explain the concept of a “dog”, it moves, by analogy, toward a reflection on the human condition. The answers differ depending on the perspective adopted: biological, psychological, social, or philosophical. A wide range of cultural and philosophical references are invoked, from Plato and Descartes to Bergson and Lucian Blaga. The text ends on an open note: “Ce este însă trupul și, mai ales, ce este sufletul? Care este relația dintre trup și suflet? La asemenea întrebări filosofii dau răspunsuri diferite.” (Ding (ed.) 2001 vol. II, 360) [*But what, then, is the body, and, more importantly, what is the soul? What is the relationship between body and soul? To such questions, philosophers offer different answers.*] The questions invite the reader to a potential intercultural dialogue between European philosophy and Confucian ethics, between Western

analytical logic and the relational principles of Chinese thought. Through this encounter between paradigms, students learn the Romanian language and also engage in an intellectual and ethical process aimed at a deeper understanding of the relationship between the human being and the world.

From a thematic perspective, the texts included in Volume III stand out through their emphasis on the human being's relationship with the world, understood both as nature and as society. This approach triggers a dual form of awareness: on the one hand, a scientific one (understanding and using the environment), and on the other, a moral one (the responsibility to protect it). From a didactic perspective, the students are offered models of written expression and tools for logical reasoning and techniques of argumentation.

From a discursive perspective, the preference for a formal style, at times rhetorical or emphatic, reveals the influence of the Chinese cultural model, as described by Shi-xu (2004, 2014). The style and structure of this type of discourse correspond to an intellectual tradition in which form, and content are inseparable, and the refined tone is a sign of respect for the ideas being expressed. Moreover, the moral dimension through which the human-world relationship is problematized is characteristic of Chinese cultural discourse.

Adding to the analysis of several textbook excerpts my own experience as a teacher who has used this material in Romanian language classes, I can say that I have observed that the textbook succeeds in creating a familiar tonal framework for students encountering an unfamiliar language. This "tonal familiarity," as I call it, refers to an interesting dialogue between the unfamiliarity of Romanian and the cultural-discursive familiarity embedded in the textbook. Chinese students may struggle with pronunciation or verb conjugations, but they can connect to the moral principles expressed by the proverbs, to the poetic structure of folk songs or to the way in which the humans are situated within the more-than-human world. This intertextual and intercultural mapping is a powerful pedagogical tool, as it transforms the textbook into a dialogic space where cultures meet, reflect each other, and occasionally clash.

Moreover, the textbook's moral undertones align with the educational objectives embedded in the Chinese cultural discourse. Lessons on behaviour, tradition, and collective responsibility reinforce the idea that language learning is not merely a cognitive task, but a moral and aesthetic endeavour. Students are not only expected to speak Romanian correctly, but to also engage ethically with the world, in its multiple, beautiful forms.

4. Conclusions

Professor Ding Chao's textbook functions as a very helpful instrument of intercultural communication. It bridges two cultural worlds, not by flattening differences, but by suggesting different perspectives of looking at them. Romanian is taught not in isolation, but through a lens that reflects Chinese moral, aesthetic, and communicative values. In this way, the textbook becomes a mirror that shows Romanian culture to Chinese learners and also reflects the Chinese perspective on the Romanian worldview. This approach has profound implications for intercultural pedagogy, presenting a textbook that broadens the learner's existing outlook, incorporating into it a new one, partly familiar, partly very different. Shi-xu's notion of "cultural representation" (2014) as both reflective and projective is useful in understanding this process. The textbook does not merely represent Romania as it "is" but projects a version of Romania that is compatible with Chinese expectations of coherence, order, and harmony.

Analysing the Romanian language textbook for Chinese students, I drew attention upon an example of cultural discourse in practice. Through its structure, content, and the implied communicative strategies, it presents a Chinese vision of what it means to learn a foreign language: integrating moral development, aesthetic refinement, and intercultural resonance.

Seen through the lens of Shi-xu's Cultural Discourse Studies, the textbook reveals how educational materials are never culturally neutral. They carry within them implicit values, philosophical assumptions, and discursive strategies that shape not only what is taught, but how it is received. As such, they are critical tools for understanding the cultural politics of language education.

In a globalized world where linguistic borders are increasingly permeable, such culturally sensitive materials are more important than ever. They offer a model for intercultural teaching that respects difference, fosters dialogue, and promotes deeper understanding across cultural divides.

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