

Editor's Note: On Chinese Literature, Language and Culture

Corina Silvia MICU¹

This volume contains the papers presented at the 1st International Symposium on Chinese Language, Literature, and Culture organized by the Confucius Institute at Transilvania University of Braşov in cooperation with the Faculty of Letters at Transilvania University of Braşov.

With a diverse range of topics (Language, Literature, Culture, Teaching Chinese as a foreign language and Translations), it is a contribution to the development of studies in this field and serves as a natural extension of research in a favorable academic context, in the year marking the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Chinese Language and Literature – Romanian Language and Literature / Foreign Language and Literature Study program at the Faculty of Letters of Transilvania University of Braşov and the 13th anniversary of the establishment of the Confucius Institute of Transilvania University of Braşov.

The present volume is intended to serve as a platform for disseminating the research outcomes of specialists in the field of Chinese studies and as a forum for dialogue on language and culture, viewed both through the lens of either the Chinese researchers, who examine the language from within, from the perspective of the native speaker, as well as through the lens of the non-Chinese researcher who approaches this subject from outside in, from an inevitably comparative perspective. Regardless of the point of view, the results, are of real use to specialists, researchers, students, and—why not—even to a broader public interested in the study of Chinese culture and language.

The volume comprises five sections: Literature, Chinese Language Studies, Chinese Language Teaching, Chinese Culture, and Translations.

The chapter on literature features a fresh and interesting set of topics:

Cătălina BĂLAN in *A Philological Approach to a Modern Sino-Indonesian Book: The Coconuts by Zheng Tufei* elaborates a case study of a philological approach to this prose published in 1929 in Shanghai, emphasizing analysis of formal levels as well as contextualization and intertextuality. Considering the fact that Philology as a discipline in the sphere of humanities has recently lost ground in favor of other approaches, as the author herself underlines, the paper shows its potential of exploring literary texts in their inner structures and outer connections as well, bringing thus rich information in the discussion.

¹ Universitatea Transilvania, Braşov, corina.micu@unitbv.ro

Konstantinos POLYMEROS, in his paper *The Numbers of War: Did Sunzi Really Do Calculations?* investigates the use and significance of numbers in Sunzi's "Art of War", addressing both their empirical and symbolic dimensions. Drawing on classical sources, the article examines how numbers such as *five*, *nine*, and *one hundred* function in military, cultural, and ritual contexts, attempting to provide a detailed picture of the interplay between arithmetic, military organization, and symbolic representation in early Chinese strategic thought.

Zhuangzi – prototypes of fiction and (proto)principles of Chinese novels authored by Sebastian-Răzvan MITU investigates Zhuangzi as a proto-fictional frameworks that anticipates the formal, rhetorical, and epistemological principles of *xiaoshuo* and, implicitly, of the Chinese novel. By situating Zhuangzi's philosophical prose within the diachronic evolution of Chinese narrative forms, the study argues that fiction in China emerges not solely from oral vernacular traditions, but also from a literary, polemical, and iconoclastic discourse that relativizes Confucian axiology.

The paper *Confucian Culture and Contemporary China - a Compatibility Issue* by Roxana RÎBU summarizes the efforts at making Confucian culture compatible with the new ways of Chinese thinking, from the fall of Qing dynasty to present days.

In the chapter on linguistics, we find interesting, interdisciplinary research topics that are distinctly innovative:

A Study on the Form Class, Prosody, and Semantics of Modern Chinese clothing Compound Words authored by Shengyi BO examines modern Chinese clothing compound words within the framework of Generative Lexicon Theory, focusing on their semantic, prosodic, and formal patterns. It also proposes a referential semantic template by incorporating implicit predicates within these compounds.

At the intersection between Semantics, Pragmatics and intercultural communication, *the article Women in Chinese and Romanian proverbs— a cross-cultural analysis from the perspective of conceptual metaphor* by Xinyu ZHOU employs Conceptual Metaphor Theory to conduct a cross-cultural analysis of gendered proverbs in Chinese and Romanian societies. It argues that while both cultures utilize the Great Chain Metaphor to ontologically downgrade women, the specific source domains reflect distinct cultural imperatives. Chinese proverbs, profoundly shaped by Confucian ethics, emphasize internal virtue, chastity, and hierarchical loyalty. In contrast, Romanian proverbs, driven by agrarian pragmatism, focus on labor utility, physical control, and economic burden. This research demonstrates that despite divergent metaphorical imagery, both linguistic systems function identically to rationalize and cement the subordination of women within the patriarchal order.

The section on Chinese language teaching and acquisitions features important contributions from authors with extensive experience in the field:

Reflections on Mandarin Teaching in the Brazilian Context by Ana Cristina BALESTRO offers a research-based reflection on Mandarin teaching in the Brazilian context. After outlining the historical processes of standardizing Putonghua and promoting Chinese internationally, the text presents two Brazilian institutional case. The analysis shows how global language-planning strategies are reinterpreted in local academic partnerships and classroom practices, highlighting both opportunities and tensions regarding cultural representation, linguistic diversity and the risk of exoticizing “Chinese culture.”

Ruihong CAO, in her paper *A Study on Chinese Language Motivational Teaching Strategies in Romania* explores “how to stimulate and sustain L2 learner’s motivation”. Using “Ten Commandments for Motivating Language Learners” presented by Hungarian linguist Zoltán Dörnyei as a theoretical framework, the author employs questionnaire survey and interview to analyze the characteristics of various motivational teaching strategy adopted in the Chinese language teaching in Romania. Research results indicate that teachers' enthusiasm, a positive classroom atmosphere, and a clear sense of learning goals are the three most effective factors in stimulating learning motivation.

From Romania to Latvia, different space, common topics - the paper *Action and Analysis on Questions in Mixed-Aged Class of Chinese as a Foreign Language in Latvia* by Dong HE, Mengran GUO, Madara SMALKĀ, Pēteris PILDEGOVIČS explores several practical challenges encountered in teaching Chinese as a second language in Latvia, focusing on common questions raised by Chinese language teachers in their daily classroom practice and curriculum design, which influence both teaching effectiveness and teachers’ motivation. Through systematic analysis, the study identifies the underlying causes and outcomes of these challenges and proposes strategies to address them. The findings offer useful insights for improving classroom practice and contribute to the professional development of Chinese language teachers in similar contexts.

When Mandarin Meets Romanian: Linguistic Interference Patterns in Chinese Learners’ Acquisition of Romanian as a Second Language by Andreea NECHIFOR and Bing WANG investigates the linguistic interference of Chinese native speakers who learn Romanian as a Second Language, through a mixed-methods analysis, which triangulates the analysis of learner journals and questionnaires, starting from the firsthand observation that Chinese learners face systematic challenges at different linguistic compartments such as Romanian’s three-gender system, lexical interference etc.

The chapter dedicated to Chinese culture takes us through filmography and... traditional furniture:

Situated at the intersection between literature and film, *Tradition and Resilience: Starting from a Story by Feng Jikai and Its Screening*, the paper authored by Romulus BUCUR aims to analyze Feng Jikai’s short story, “The Miraculous Pigtail”

(Chinese Literature, Spring 1986), and the film based on it, “The Magic Braid” (1986), from the perspective of the adaptability of tradition, always ready to face the challenges of an ever-changing history. It examines, besides the characteristics of Chinese popular storytelling, the difference between the author’s ironic style and the inevitably more impersonal language of cinema, the contrast between the description of traditional customs and their visual presentation, as well as the adaptation of the written text to meet the demands of a different art form and a different audience.

Arguably the most interdisciplinary paper of this volume, *Cultural and Philosophical Dimensions in the Creation of Chinese Ming-Style Furniture* by Xiaochen LIU, Xinyou LIU, Bing WANG contends that Ming-style furniture was profoundly shaped by Daoism, reflecting its principles in tangible form. It demonstrates how core Daoist concepts—such as Yin-Yang dialectics, Wuwei (effortless action), and Ziran (naturalness)—are embodied in the furniture’s design, structure, and decoration. The paper contributes to the broader understanding of traditional creative thought by explicitly linking Daoist philosophy to material culture. It offers insights into how spiritual values influenced material life and provides a meaningful framework for sustainable innovation in contemporary design rooted in cultural heritage. Ming-style furniture thus transcends utility, serving as a profound cultural statement.

The Translations section, less prominently featured in this edition, discusses *Geographical Characteristics and Reception Process of Overseas Dissemination of Contemporary Chinese Literature: A Case Study of Xuemo’s Works*.

The authors, Wei BIE and Qian GUO, examine Xuemo’s works as a case to explore the geographical traits and overseas reception of contemporary Chinese literature. It identifies a pattern of “geographical adaptability”: four dissemination models—academically oriented, market-community collaborative, cultural affinity-driven, and project-linked. The advocates shifting from extensive coverage to targeted adaptation, building multi-agent networks, and improving cross-cultural accessibility. Xuemo’s case offers insights for Chinese literature’s “going global”, highlighting pathways from “dissemination reach” to “cultural integration.”

This volume is edited by Assoc. Prof. Corina Silvia Micu, Ph.D., Coordinator of the Chinese Studies undergraduate program at the Faculty of Letters of Transilvania University of Brasov and Romanian Director of the Confucius Institute at Transilvania University of Braşov.

All studies included in the volume are original and have undergone peer review.

Our thanks go to all the contributors and conference participants, without whom this volume would not have been possible, and especially to the organizers of this 1st edition of the Symposium on Chinese literature, language, and culture for their tireless work and dedication.