

Conference track «The English-speaking world and the East: linguacultural perspective»

## **The Confucius Institute as the Means of Spreading Chinese Influence in the English-Speaking World**

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The first decade of the 21st century saw the rapid spread of the Confucius Institute around the world. One of the reasons: changing attitudes towards the Chinese language and using its spread to the English-speaking world as a way to increase China's economic and political influence in the world.

As China's economic power grows (as of 2024, China is the second largest economy in terms of nominal GDP, second only to the United States), so too does the usefulness of learning Chinese language, history and culture for the rest of the world (for example, the number of Chinese companies around the world willing to offer jobs to Chinese-speaking professionals is growing). The international community was interested in learning about a country that had performed a true economic miracle, Chinese culture and language were becoming globalized. The Chinese leadership responded to this interest by creating a vast base of Confucius Institutes, the first of which opened in 2004. As of 2025, there are 548 Confucius Institutes and 1993 Confucius Classes in 154 countries around the world. Through these institutes, the Chinese government coordinates and guides the wave of Chinese language learning and cultural education. The main purpose of Confucius Institutes is to enable non-Chinese in other countries to learn Chinese language and culture, but it is important to note that spreading language and culture through education is one of China's main forms of soft power and cultural diplomacy. Thus, Confucius Institutes are more densely located in developed countries relative to developing countries, suggesting that Confucius Institutes are being used as a means of finding economically strong partners for China. By increasing the attractiveness of the Chinese language and culture, China aims to stimulate economic growth and take a leading position on the political and cultural world stage in the near future. [1,3]

It is worth noting that during the quantitative stage of Confucius Institutes' development, their activities revealed many problems, both internal (management organization, development strategy, quality of education) and external (funding and trust issues). At this stage Confucius Institutes are moving to a qualitative stage of development. The main goal of which will be to solve internal problems and to move from unilateral Chinese language teaching to an intercultural dialog between countries. It is this dialog that will prove the effectiveness of Confucius Institutes as China's soft power. [2]

Despite the challenges, Confucius Institutes continue to operate in many countries around the world, showing their effectiveness in spreading Chinese language and culture and creating a positive image of China among foreigners. The Chinese government will continue to promote the development of Confucius Institutes, mainly by addressing the existing problems and increasing the level of confidence in the Institutes to continue their effective use as a tool of China's soft power and cultural diplomacy and building an intercultural dialog between countries in the socio-cultural, economic and political space.

## **References**

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