

## The Development History, Characteristics and Trend of Chinese Education in Romania

### Historia del desarrollo, características y tendencia de la educación china en Rumania\*

### 罗马尼亚中文教育发展历程、特征及趋势

曹瑞红

caoruihonglucky@gmail.com

Cao Ruihong\*\*

*Confucius Institute*  
University of Bucarest  
Bucharest, Romania 010798

luminita.balann@yahoo.com

Luminița Bălan\*\*\*

*Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literature*  
University of Bucarest  
Bucharest, Romania 010798

周佳磊

jjialeiz@cupl.edu.cn

Zhou Jialei\*\*\*\*

*Confucius Institute*  
University of Bucarest  
Bucharest, Romania 010798

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\*\* Cao Ruihong, assistant director of the Confucius Institute at University of Bucharest, Chinese language teacher, Ph. D. Candidate at University of Bucharest.

 0009-0001-4534-2819

\*\*\* Luminița Bălan, Professor, Head of the Chinese program at the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures of University of Bucharest, Romanian Director of the Confucius Institute at University of Bucharest.

 iD: 0009-0004-9366-3360

\*\*\*\* Zhou Jialei, Associate Professor at China University of Political Science and Law, Chinese Director of the Confucius Institute at University of Bucharest.

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**Abstract:** Throughout sixty years of development, the history of Chinese education in Romania has roughly experienced four stages: the embryonic stage (before 1956), the slow development stage (1956-2005), the rapid development stage (2006-2016), and the in-depth development stage (since 2017). Based on reviewing its development history, this paper provides important information concerning the most significant events, institutions, sinologists, textbooks, and monographs about Chinese education in different periods. From a diachronic perspective, sinology research in Romania on the one hand and language services and policy support from China on the other hand are two crucial factors that have contributed to the development of Chinese language education in Romania; from a synchronic perspective, Romanian Chinese education has built a complete talent training system for undergraduate, master, and Ph.D. However, the development of various universities is uneven; the Confucius Institute is the leading force in Chinese education in primary and secondary schools. The learners of Chinese are of different ages, and the evolution trend focuses on the young ones. The development trend of Chinese education in the new era should focus on localization.

**Key Words:** Romania; Chinese education; development history; development characteristics; development trend.

**Resumen:** A lo largo de sesenta años de desarrollo, la historia de la educación china en Rumania ha experimentado, aproximadamente, cuatro etapas: la etapa embrionaria (antes de 1956), la de desarrollo lento (1956-2005), la de desarrollo rápido (2006-2016) y la etapa de desarrollo en profundidad (desde 2017). Basado en la revisión de su historia de desarrollo, este documento proporciona información importante sobre los eventos, instituciones, sinólogos, libros de texto y monografías más importantes en relación a la educación china a lo largo de estos diferentes períodos. Desde una perspectiva diacrónica, la investigación sinológica en Rumanía, por un lado, y los servicios lingüísticos y el apoyo político de China, por el otro, son dos factores cruciales que han contribuido al desarrollo de la enseñanza del idioma chino en Rumanía. Desde una perspectiva sincrónica, la educación rumana china ha construido un sistema completo de formación de talentos para estudiantes de pregrado, maestría y doctorado. Sin embargo, el desarrollo de varias universidades es desigual; el Instituto Confucio es la fuerza líder en educación china en escuelas primarias y secundarias. Los estudiantes de chino son de diferentes edades y la tendencia de evolución se centra en los jóvenes. La tendencia de desarrollo de la educación china en la nueva era debe centrarse en la localización.

**Palabras clave:** Rumania; Educación china; historia del desarrollo; características de desarrollo; tendencia de desarrollo.

**摘要:** 纵观罗马尼亚中文教育六十多年的发展史,大致经历了四个阶段:萌芽期(1956年前)、缓慢发展期(1956年-2005年)、快速发展期(2006年-2016年)和纵深发展期(2017年至今)。本文在综述其发展历程的基础上,梳理不同时期中文教育的重要事件、机构、汉学家以及教材、专著等重要资料信息。从历时角度看,罗马尼亚的汉学研究以及中国的语言服务与政策支持是推动罗马尼亚中文教育事业发展的两大重要因素;从共时角度看,罗马尼亚中文教育已形成本、硕、博完整的人才培养体系,但各高校发展不均衡;孔子学院是中小学中文教育的主力军,学习者年龄层次多元化,且呈现出低龄化发展趋势。新时期中文教育的发展趋势应该是重点关注本土化建设。

[关键词] 罗马尼亚; 中文教育; 发展历程; 发展特点; 发展趋势

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In recent years, with the development of international Chinese education, Chinese has gradually accelerated its pace towards the world. Chinese education overseas has attracted considerable attention from the academic community, and the research on Chinese education in Romania has become more and more extensive. Zhou (2006), Cao & Li (2022) conducted a comprehensive survey on the overall situation of Chinese education in Romania in different stages; Wang Hongbin & Chen Xi (2022) investigated Chinese teaching in Romania under the influence of scientific and technological revolution; moreover, relevant research on Chinese education in Romania also involves foreign language teaching policy (Cao, 2021), in-service training of Chinese volunteer teachers (Cao, 2022), teaching materials (Cao, Li & Song, 2022), etc. Over the past few years, more and more MA theses have conducted relevant research in this field, including investigating the current situation of Chinese education in a particular region or a particular teaching institution in Romania, analyzing the comprehension difficulties and misunderstandings of Romanian students in the acquisition of Chinese, exploring Chinese teaching methods, concerning game teaching method, Chinese song teaching method, situational teaching method, and cognitive approach, etc. There is a need of relevant research on the development of Chinese education in Romania from a diachronic perspective. However, according to Zhang (2008), “Systematic study of the history, characters, textbooks, and research works of Chinese education in various countries is an important and basic research content in the history of Chinese education in the world.” Therefore, by reviewing the history of Romanian Chinese education for more than 60 years, this paper will summarize the development characteristics of different periods and the unique national characteristics of its current development.

## **1. The Four Stages of Chinese Education in Romania**

The history of Chinese education in Romania for the last over sixty years can be roughly divided into the following four stages:

### **1.1 The Embryonic Stage (before 1956)**

In this stage, there was no systematic teaching of the Chinese language and culture in Romania. The first knowledge about China in the Romanian culture dates back to the second half of the 17th century, respectively, in 1676, due to the diplomat and humanist scholar Nicolae Spataru Milescu who was sent as a Tsarist ambassador to China. He wrote three volumes of notes on Chinese ambassadorship, including *China Travel*

*notes and Description of China*, alongside *the Travels*, which “contributed a lot to the early Sino-Western communication” (Ding, 2019). Then, at the beginning of the 19th century, the Romanian people started learning about China - this mysterious and remote country in Asia, mainly through Western media. Right in that period, Romanian scholars started researching China. For example, the Romanian historian, writer, and politician Nicolae Iorga, the poet, dramatist, and philosopher Lucian Blaga and the literary critic, literary historian, and writer George Calinescu, among others, wrote about the Chinese people, the philosophy of “Taoism” and the autocratic Chinese emperor Shun. The interest of the Romanian people in China was “not academic, but almost academic” (Ding, 2014). The Romanians had a high level of acceptance and recognition of Chinese culture and civilization, mainly out of a strong interest in understanding and exploring a strange and mysterious world, unlike those missionaries from other European countries who came to China for specific interests, such as economy, trade, or religion.

Under the pressure of the international situation, New China adopted a “one-sided” foreign policy at the beginning of its establishment in 1949, establishing diplomatic relations with the socialist countries one after another. Under the personal guidance of Premier Zhou Enlai, five Romanian students arrived at Tsinghua University in December 1950. They started their studies in the “Chinese Language Course for Eastern European Exchange Students”(东欧交换生中国语文专修班). These five students became the first international students in China and the first Romanians to learn the Chinese language and culture systematically. “The course not only aimed to train talents for Eastern European countries to master the Chinese language and be familiar with Chinese politics and culture but also undertook the task of training the first generation of diplomats in China for these countries” (Chen et. al, 2015). Thus, the arrival of the first Romanian students in China had a distinct political dimension.

### 1.2 The Slow Development Stage (1956-2005)

The first five Romanian students of the “Chinese Language Course for Eastern European Exchange Students Program” studied at Tsinghua University and Peking University; all of them have devoted themselves to the promotion and development of Sino-Romanian friendship and the study of Sino-Romanian relations, Chinese history, and literature for half a century. In 1956, one of these students, Toni Radian (江冬妮), presided over the founding of the Romanian Chinese Language Section (罗马尼亚汉语教研室), the predecessor of the Chinese Language and Literature Section

in the Department of Oriental Languages and Literature at University of Bucharest (UB). This event signifies the initiation of Chinese language education in Romania, which has continuously developed ever since. The Chinese Language and Literature Section has trained many talents who are proficient in the Chinese language and culture and play an active role in China and Romania's politics, diplomacy, economy, trade, education, and culture.

The strength of Romanian Chinese language education in this stage was concentrated in the Chinese program of the Department of Oriental Languages and Literature at UB. In 1956, a cultural exchange agreement between the governments of China and Romania approved the establishment of the first Romanian language program in China at Beijing Foreign Studies University and the first Chinese Language Section in Romania. The latter was established under the coordination of Toni Radian, one of the first Romanian sinologists, who had graduated from the Chinese Department of Peking University.

For a long time, the main task of the Chinese language teaching program at UB was to train students who should become proficient in Chinese and contribute to the development of Romania's relations with China. Initially, there were only seven students enrolled in a class, then the number increased to 10, respectively 15. Since 2002, the annual enrollment rate has continuously increased from 20 to 50 students. At present, some 40 students enroll every year. At the beginning of the founding of the Chinese teaching program, students enrolled every four years. From 1965 to 1978, they enrolled every year. From 1978 to 1993, they enrolled every four years; from 1994 to the present, they are back to enrolling every year. The duration of the Chinese language undergraduate program was similar to all the foreign language teaching programs in Romania; at the beginning, it was five years, then it was modified to 4 years in 1975 and 3 years in 2005. At the beginning of the establishment of the Chinese program, students had Chinese as a major and Romanian language and literature as a minor. Other foreign languages were added to the list of minor languages in 1975. Besides the major, Chinese was also taught as a minor or elective course. In 2003-2004, there were 25 first-year students, 20 second-year students, 15 third-year students, and ten fourth-year students. By 2004, more than 260 graduates were trained and active in various fields as senior diplomats, journalists, and translators. They have contributed outstandingly to promoting Sino-Romanian friendship and spreading Chinese culture in Romania. (Ding, 2005)

In terms of curriculum, the required courses included Basic Chinese, Chinese Grammar, Chinese History and Philosophy, History of Chinese Literature, and Chinese Linguistics. The elective courses included Chinese for Newspapers and Periodicals, Chinese for Business, and Language and Culture. According to the weekly class schedule, the first and second years mainly studied basic Chinese and Chinese grammar. In contrast, the weight of theoretical courses (such as Chinese linguistics) gradually increased during the senior years. The primary textbooks and reference materials used then were: *Practical Chinese Textbooks* (books 1-6) edited by Liu Xun and others from China, Chinese grammar works, grammar textbooks, and accompanying exercise books, etc. by Wang Li, Zhao Yuanren, and Lu Jianming, *History of Chinese Thought* by Cheng Naishan and *A Brief History of Chinese Philosophy* by Feng Youlan, *History of Chinese Society* by Western sinologist Xie Henai, and *Chinese Lexicon* and *Chinese Syntax*, edited by Professor Florentina Vişan, a Romanian sinologist. Thus, the emphasis on linguistics in Chinese language teaching at UB has contributed to the training of students with solid theoretical knowledge and research skills, which is strongly related to UB's own academic tradition. However, Chinese language teaching at UB is less concerned with China's policy on teaching Chinese as a foreign language. As of 2004, only about ten international students to China had taken the HSK Exam (Ding, 2004).

In this stage, in addition to UB, Universitatea Hyperion (a private university) in Bucharest, Universitatea "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" in Iasi, and Universitatea Babeş-Bolyai (UBB) in Cluj-Napoca provided Chinese language courses as minor and elective courses, not as a major. Some primary and secondary schools also offered Chinese language courses with the assistance of the Education Section of the Chinese Embassy in Romania, but on a tiny scale. Before 1989, the only primary and secondary school in Romania with Chinese language classes was Şcoala Generala nr. 128. After that, there was Liceul Teoretic Mihail Sadoveanu, Şcoala Gimnazială Nr. 6, Piteşti, and International School of Bucharest (private school), etc., where the Chinese language was taught.

### 1.3 The Rapid Development Stage (2006-2016)

2006 marks a significant year in the history of Chinese language education in Romania. On the one hand, Romanian Chinese education started to cultivate talents at master and doctoral levels based on undergraduate training, so Romanian Chinese education has established a complete discipline system of undergraduate, master, and doctorate degrees; on the other hand, the first Confucius Institute in Romania was established.

With the leading role of the Chinese language program at UB and the role played by the Confucius Institute in the promotion of Chinese language courses, the Romanian Chinese language education witnessed a decade of rapid development, which is mainly revealed under the following aspects: firstly, Confucius Institutes (Classrooms) were set up one after another, and the number of Chinese teaching classes mainly in primary and secondary schools increased year by year; secondly, some universities added a Chinese major program or provided courses in Chinese language and culture for the general public; thirdly, the number of international schools, Sino-Romanian friendship associations and other institutions offering Chinese courses increased year by year; fourthly, the number of Chinese learners increased year by year, and that included university students at the beginning, but then also primary and secondary school students, kindergartens and adults. Finally, the Chinese language curriculum is diversified according to the needs of the learners, and that also includes small-scale vocational Chinese language teaching courses.

### 1.3.1 Chinese Language Education at Confucius Institute

The first Confucius Institute in Romania, the Confucius Institute at Universitatea “Lucian Blaga” in Sibiu (CIULB), was established on December 8, 2006.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, the Confucius Institute at Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai (CIUBB), the Confucius Institute at Universitatea Transilvania din Brașov (CIUT), and the Confucius Institute at Universitatea din București (CIUB) were established in 2009, 2011 and 2013 respectively. The Confucius Institutes have led to an increase in Chinese language learners and the establishment of Chinese language teaching classes, mostly in primary and secondary schools, accompanied by international schools, Chinese and Romanian friendship associations, and Chinese communities. Due to the growing demand for Chinese language learning, by the end of 2016, there were 4 Confucius Institutes, 11 Confucius Classrooms, and more than 100 teaching points in Romania, with hundreds of thousands of Chinese language learners.

Regarding Chinese teaching in Confucius Institutes, the courses are delivered mainly by young and highly motivated Chinese volunteers and teachers selected in China. Introducing information about various aspects of contemporary Chinese society and culture into their classroom teaching

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<sup>1</sup> See: <http://www.chinaqw.com/hwjy/hjxw/200711/12/94679.shtml>. December 8, 2006 was the date when the Confucius Institute was approved, and November 12, 2007 was the date when the opening ceremony of the Confucius Institute was held.

opens a window for the Romanian people to know more about China. Since the Confucius Institutes have a wide range of learners of various ages, from preschool, primary, and secondary school students to university students and adults, that implies diverse learning needs. Each Confucius Institute offers courses in Chinese according to the age of the learners and the language skills they need to acquire, respectively speaking, listening, reading, and writing. At the same time, according to the needs of learners, Confucius Institutes also offer Chinese vocational courses, such as Chinese for Media, Chinese for Tourism, and Chinese for Business; Chinese culture courses, such as Chinese Tea Culture, Taijiquan, Chinese Calligraphy and Go, as well as Chinese Proficiency Test (HSK) tutoring courses. The Confucius Institute has promoted the test (HSK) since 2009. By the end of 2021, 6,615 people took the HSK, 230 people took the HSKK, and 328 people took the YCT (Youth Chinese Test) throughout Romania, making a total of 7,173 people.

Confucius Institutes attach great importance to cultural activities. They regularly organize activities for “Confucius Institute Day”, “China Day”, and traditional Chinese festivals. Besides, they cooperate with Chinese and Romanian partner institutions and integrate the local community to carry out many high-quality and high-impact cultural activities with local characteristics. For example, Embassy Festivals, Asian Culture Festival, and other Chinese cultural events, including Chinese calligraphy, martial arts, and tea ceremony, are very popular among locals.

In addition to Chinese language teaching and cultural activities, the Confucius Institute has actively organized the “Chinese Bridge” competition and sent some outstanding contestants to the finals. Projects such as International Chinese Education Scholarships, Chinese Government Awards, Summer Camps Project, and Educational Delegation Visits to China have also played an active role in bridging the educational and cultural exchanges between China and Romania.

### 1.3.2 Chinese Language Majors in Universities

As of 2016, there are six universities in Romania offering Chinese language undergraduate programs: UB, UBB in Cluj, Universitatea “Lucian Blaga” (ULB) in Sibiu, Universitatea Transilvania (UT) in Braşov, Universitatea Creştină “Dimitrie Cantemir” and Universitatea de Vest “Vasile Goldiș”. Three universities that have not yet offered Chinese language majors offer public courses for all students: Universitatea de Medicină și Farmacie “Grigore T. Popa” in Iasi, Universitatea Aurel Vlaicu in Arad and Universitatea “Vasile Alecsandri” in Bacău. In addition, nine universities offer Chinese language elective courses as teaching institutions

under Confucius Institutes. Only UB has a master's and doctoral program in Chinese.

UB, the “leader” in higher Chinese language education in Romania, offers Chinese language courses within the Department of Oriental Languages and Literatures of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures. In 1956, the University started its undergraduate education; in 2006, it started master's and doctoral studies. The MA program in Far Eastern Studies is a two-year program to train talents who understand Far Eastern languages and cultures. Around 25 MA students are enrolled each year. The Chinese program at UB had more than 100 BA students, 10 MA students, and 3 Ph.D. students in the 2015-2016 academic year.

This stage witnessed a boom in Chinese language education in Romania, which, in addition to what has been mentioned above, is also reflected in the increasing number of Chinese language classes offered by international schools, Sino-Romanian friendship associations, and other institutions. At the same time, small-scale vocational Chinese language education has emerged. Employees of Romanian companies doing business with China are highly motivated to learn Chinese. Since most of these enterprises are very small in scale, they only hire part-time Chinese teachers considering the high costs and the small number of Chinese learners. Due to these aspects, most of them currently learn Chinese through language training institutions, tutors, and Confucius Institutes.

### 1.3.3 Other Chinese Language Education Institutions

In addition to the above-mentioned Chinese teaching situations, there are some relatively special groups of Chinese learners in Romania, such as military personnel of the Ministry of Defense, journalists of the Chinese Department of Romanian International Radio, martial arts instructors, and students of martial arts associations, individual artists, etc. The characteristics of Chinese language education for these groups are similar to those of Business Chinese courses, focusing on oral language and targeted learning content. The Confucius Institute (Classroom) also offers Chinese language courses for them for particular purposes.

### 1.4 The In-depth Development Stage (since 2017)

“Foreign Language Role refers to the role that a certain foreign language plays for the foreign language country”, According to Li (2020), there are six hierarchic categories of foreign language roles: A. Diplomatic Language; B. Foreign Language for Special Fields; C. Foreign Language for Multi-fields; D. Foreign Language in Basic Education System; E. Important Foreign Language; F. Important Language. A ladder of foreign language

roles is formed from A to F, indicating the importance of foreign languages in a country and the degree of its development.

With the promulgation of the Decree of the Minister of Education on the approval of the Chinese language syllabus for junior and senior high schools in 2017, Chinese was officially included in the Romanian National Education System. Therefore high-school students can choose Chinese as a foreign language subject for their baccalaureate examination, if they studied Chinese as a foreign language in the respective high-school. (Cao & Li, 2022) Since then, the foreign language role of Chinese in Romania has changed from “Foreign Language for Multi-fields” to “Foreign Language in Basic Education System”, marking the deep development of Chinese language education in Romania.

The shift from rapid to deep development of Chinese language education is also a shift from “large scale” to “high quality”. Those involved in Chinese language teaching in Romania are keenly aware of this shift. They have played an active role in training teachers and developing teaching resources by organizing academic research meetings and implementing research projects.

#### 1.4.1 Teacher Training

On November 10-11, 2018, CIULB successfully held the first training for local Chinese teachers in Romania. Professor Jiang Liping and Associate Professor Zhao Jing from Beijing Language and Culture University were the experts for this training. More than 50 local teachers, Chinese teachers, volunteer Chinese teachers, and future local Chinese teachers from Romania and neighboring countries attended the training. The training was divided into three formats: special lectures and seminars, teaching material application demonstration and observation, and teaching practice and discussion.

From November 1 to 3, 2019, CIUB successfully held the “Romania’s First In-service Training of Volunteer Chinese Teachers”, which was divided into three modules: basic Romanian national situation, China-Romania intercultural communication, and local Chinese teaching in Romania. A total of 41 volunteer teachers participated in the training. (Cao, 2022)

In October 2022, a joint project of the China University of Political Science and Law (CPUL) and UB in Romania was launched to train local Chinese language teachers<sup>2</sup>. With the “1+1” model, the program is dedicated

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<sup>2</sup> <http://gjhjzlc.cupl.edu.cn/info/1143/11390.htm>

to training local Chinese teachers for CIUB and Romania in Chinese language education and research.

In summary, local teacher training and volunteer teacher in-service training plays an essential role in guiding the work of in-service teachers in the short term; in the long term, the Sino-Romanian joint training program is of great significance for constructing a stable and high-quality teaching force. Lu Jianming (2017) pointed out that the construction of a high-quality teaching team should align with the development requirements of the times and innovative training modes.

#### 1.4.2 Construction of Teaching Resources

During this stage, the construction of teaching resources for Chinese language education in Romania covered the development of local Chinese language teaching materials for junior high schools and the research and revision of the local Chinese language syllabus.

Benefiting from CLEC funding, CUPL Professor Li Li, former Chinese director of CIUB (2018-2021), has been leading the project “Development of Chinese Language Textbooks for Romanian Secondary Schools (Phase I)” and has been working on the elaboration of local Chinese language teaching materials for junior high school (grades 5-8). Professor Luminița Bălan, a Romanian sinologist, was the editor-in-chief. The compilation team includes Chinese language teachers from CUPL and UB, front-line teachers from the Confucius Institute, and local Chinese teachers from Romanian junior high schools. The compilation of the textbooks is based on the comparison of Chinese and Romanian. Besides, the theoretical framework, the local specificity, and the relevance of the textbooks are fully considered, with the ultimate goal of promoting them as school textbooks approved by the Romanian Ministry of Education.

The project “Research on the Generalization and Romanian Localization of *Chinese proficiency grading standards for international Chinese language education*”, led by Associate Professor Song Chunxiang from the School of International Education of CUPL, was approved by CLEC in 2021. The project is dedicated to researching and revising the Romanian-localized Chinese language syllabus for junior and senior high schools, which is of great significance for constructing the standard system of Chinese language education in Romania.

#### 1.4.3 Academic Research

Li & Zhuang (2020) noted out that “the number of academic research results is positively correlated with the development of Chinese language teaching”. Since almost all existing studies on Chinese language education in Romania are MA theses, they are relatively lacking in research depth. As

the country-specific and localized academic research on Chinese language education based on Romanian teaching practice has been on the agenda in recent years, it will undoubtedly help to improve and solve the problem of teacher training, teaching material, and teaching method in Romanian Chinese language education.

On June 27, 2021, the first “Seminar on the Localization of Chinese Language Education in Romania” was successfully held in Romania and co-organized by CIUB and the Chinese Language and Literature Section of UB. The seminar was attended by more than 60 participants, including educators from both countries, sinologists from The European Association of Chinese Teaching (EACT), and Chinese teachers from Confucius Institutes in Central and Eastern Europe. The participants discussed in depth the topics of teacher training, teaching materials, and pedagogy of Chinese language education in Romania in the current situation. The seminar contributed to promoting mutual learning and developing the localization of Chinese language education in Romania.

In January 2022, *A Study on the Localization and Construction of Chinese Language Education in Romania*, edited by Li & Cao, which is not only the first book dedicated to the topic of Chinese language education in Romania but also one of the few country-specific Chinese language education works available, was published by China University of Political Science and Law Press. The book covers various topics, such as the current situation of Chinese language education in Romania, HSK, teaching various language elements, and studying intercultural communication. It is worth mentioning that it also includes Chinese translations of official documents such as Romanian foreign language education policy, local Chinese language syllabus, and textbook specifications for primary and secondary schools. Thus, the academic community calls the book “the most comprehensive and up-to-date study on Chinese language education in Romania”.

## 2. The Characteristics of Chinese Education in Romania

### 2.1 A Diachronic Perspective

Looking at the development of Chinese language education in Romania for more than 60 years, we can find out that different historical periods have distinct national characteristics.

In “The Embryonic Stage of Romanian Chinese language education”, on the one hand, in Romania there was a firm “almost academic” interest in Chinese language and culture, which laid a good foundation for future Romanian Chinese language education. On the other hand, the students

who attended the political specialization courses later became the first generation of Romanian diplomats in China and the first generation of Romanian sinologists.

During “the slow development” period, UB attached great importance to subject theory and academic tradition, but paid little attention to China’s policy on teaching Chinese as a foreign language. There is very little cooperation with China in terms of Chinese language education in Romania.

The characteristics of Romanian Chinese education in the stage of rapid development are as follows: the Confucius Institute is the main force of Chinese education in primary and secondary schools, the learners of Chinese are of different ages. the curriculum is rich, and there are many cultural activities with a rich content; Chinese education in universities has established MA and PhD programs; more and more institutions offer Chinese courses; there is a need for Chinese vocational education.

In the period of in-depth development, academic research on Chinese education has attracted widespread attention.

From a diachronic perspective, looking at the history of the development of Chinese language education in Romania as a whole, it is not difficult to find out that Romanian sinology research, as well as Chinese language services and policy support, represent essential factors that promote the strong development of Chinese language education in Romania.

### **2.1.1 Romanian Sinology Studies**

Let us think about the “quality” of Chinese language education. We refer to 1956-2005 as Romania’s “slow development stage” of Chinese language education. The term “slow” is mainly used by comparison with the “rapid development” stage after 2006 and considering the scale of Chinese language education. We can see that its development, especially the study of sinology, was rapid during this half-century and had significant achievements. Therefore, Romanian sinology research has entered a period of rapid development ahead of Chinese education.

Romanian sinologists have contributed outstandingly to translating and disseminating Chinese literature in Romania. The early sinologists, such as professor Toni Radian and professor Ileana Hogeia Velișcu, mainly focused on ancient Chinese literature. In contrast, in the third generation of sinologists, professor Luminița Bălan began translating and studying modern and contemporary Chinese literature.

### (1) Professor Toni Radian

Toni Radian, one of the first Romanian students in China and a classmate of other well-known sinologists and diplomats such as Romulus Ioan Budura (罗明) and Anna Eva Budura (萨安娜), was engaged in the study and translation of Chinese literature for a long time, especially Chinese myths and legends. Among all her academic achievements, the most remarkable one is *Duhul crizantemei* published by World Literature Publishing House in 1966, a collection of 15 stories selected and translated by her from *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* (《聊斋志异》), by Pu Songling (蒲松龄). As the first literary work translated directly from Chinese into Romanian by a Romanian sinologist, this work is of great significance. Based on this work, Toni Radian did a lot of supplementary translations and published the Romanian version of *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* in 1983, which included 35 stories. In addition, she translated *The Spectacles in Ancient and Modern Times*, *Chinese Ancient Mythology*, and *Selected Chinese Medieval Novels*.

### (2) Professor Ileana Hogeia Velişcu

Ileana Hogeia Velişcu belongs to the fourth group of Romanian students in China who graduated from the Chinese Department of Peking University. She was a visiting scholar at Beijing Language and Culture University, where she was mentored by renowned Chinese linguists such as Professors Wang Li, Wang Huan, and Ren Yuan. Her name was included in the *Who's Who* published by the University of Cambridge for her outstanding contributions to Chinese language teaching and sinology research.

Ileana Hogeia Velişcu's representative translations include *Dream of the Red Chamber*. Although this is an abridged version, it primarily attracted Romanian readers and for many of them even aroused a deep love for Chinese classical literature. In the preface to this translation, entitled *An Individual Embodiment of the Chinese Novel*, Ileana Hogeia Velişcu discusses the work's thematic ideas, social background, the portraits of the characters, and the book's place in Chinese literary history. All these aspects were presented in order to help the Romanian readers have a better understanding of the classical novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*. The preface also provided background knowledge concerning the author Cao Xueqin and the Chinese culture, even a genealogical chart of the novel's characters, to help the readers better understand the story.

Ileana Hogeia Velişcu's doctoral thesis, entitled "*The Reception of Chinese Literature in Romania*," largely contributed to understanding the translation and dissemination of Chinese literature in Romania. Her leading publications include *A Dictionary of Ancient and Modern Chinese*

*Literature, The Formation and Evolution of Chinese Dramatic Art, Essays on China and Chinese Literature, and A History of Ancient Chinese Literature.* Her translations also include *Songs of the South* (楚辞) and *The Bird of Happiness* (幸福鸟).

(3) professor Luminița Bălan (白罗米)

Professor Luminița Bălan is a famous sinologist and translator of Chinese literature in Eastern Europe. She won the “Best Translator Award” of the Romanian Writers Association in 2017 and the 12th “Chinese Book Special Contribution Award.” in 2018. In September 2019, Luminița Bălan won the “Chinese Government Friendship Award” of the People’s Republic of China. Luminița Bălan mainly translates and researches modern and contemporary Chinese literature. Her published translations include “Xunzi” (2004), “Zhuangzi” (2009), “Garlic Ballads in Paradise” (2013), “Wine Republic” (2014), “Woman with a Bunch of Flowers” (2016) by Mo Yan, “The Chronicle of a Blood Merchant” (2017) by Yu Hua, “The King of Chess” (2018) by Ah Cheng, and “I’m Not Pan Jinlian” (2019), by Liu Zhenyun.

Professor Florentina Vișan (维珊) is a student of Toni Radian and a representative of the second generation of Romanian sinologists. Her main research interests are Chinese philosophy, and her most important translations are *Annalects*, by Confucius, and the book *Lieh Tzu*. In addition, she translated some works of Western sinologists, such as M. Kaltemark’s *Chinese Philosophy*, C.P. Fitzgerald’s *History of Chinese Culture*, and Anne Cheng’s *History of Chinese Thought*.

Besides, in 2001, the Department of Oriental Languages and Literatures of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures of UB established the Center for Sinology, which used to organize academic conferences, symposiums, and cultural activities connected to the study of the Chinese language and culture, making UB an essential center for high-level Chinese language education and Chinese cultural studies. After the establishment of the Confucius Institute in UB in 2013, more and more academic and cultural events, as well as cultural exchanges, were organized in this institute with the contribution of the staff from the Chinese language and literature section. Therefore, the center ended its activity in 2018.

Regarding the linguistic research, Romanian scholars focus on modern Chinese grammar, vocabulary, sociolinguistics, etc. They have also compiled a certain number of textbooks and books: Toni Radian contributed not only to the founding of the Chinese Language and Literature Section at UB (which trained much key personnel of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Trade and Ministry of Defense, as well as the second generation

of Romanian sinologists, represented by professor Florentina Vișan), but she also made a compilation of Chinese language teaching tools, such as the *Chinese-Romanian Linguistic Terms Dictionary* (1986); Ileana Hogeia Velișcu used to be a leading figure in the Chinese language program at UB. She trained a large number of students and also published *A Comparative Study of Romanian and Chinese Grammar, Classical Chinese - Lyricism, Syntax, and Utterance*, etc. She is the co-author of the textbook *Chinese Language* (volume 1-2) (1996), the other co-author being Professor Ren Yuan from Beijing Language and Culture University; Professor Florentina Vișan published *Chinese Grammar - Morphology* (volume 1) and *Syntax* (volume 2).

### 2.1.2 Chinese Language Services and Policy Support

There is no doubt that the ten years of rapid development of Chinese language education in Romania are inseparable from the radiation effect of the Confucius Institute. Moreover, China has provided a series of language services and policy support to promote the development of Chinese education in Romania.

The two cities of Baia Mare and Bucharest cover 80% of the primary and secondary schools in Romania that offer Chinese credit courses, and that is inseparable from the radiation effect of CIUBB in the north of the country and CIUB in the south. Among the six universities offering Chinese majors, four are the Romanian cooperation units of the Confucius Institutes. In addition, programs such as the HSK test, International Chinese Education Scholarships, and Summer Camps Program help students realize their dreams of studying abroad and visiting China. They were learners first, then they grew into a new generation of Romanians who spread the Chinese language and culture; the “Education Delegation Visits China” project allows the Romanian school headmasters to see China with their own eyes and have a direct contact with the Chinese culture. This project is of great significance for boosting the development of Chinese language education in Romania because many delegation members are the decision-makers for offering Chinese courses.

In addition, in recent years, Romanian Chinese education practitioners have been engaged in Romanian Chinese education-related academic projects with the financial support of the CLEC of the Ministry of Education of China.

## 2.2 A Synchronic Perspective

### 2.2.1 Higher Chinese Education

The Romanian Chinese education discipline has a complete talent training system for undergraduates, MA and Ph.D. program graduates

However, it also needs to be a more balanced development of various universities regarding discipline affiliation, teacher qualifications, and teaching material construction. First, the disciplines of Chinese majors are not evenly assigned to each school. Among the six universities offering Chinese and related majors, the Chinese majors of four universities belong to the Department of Foreign Languages, the Department of Asian/Oriental Languages and Literatures, the Department of Modern Languages of the Faculty of Humanities, or the Department of Cultural and Literary Studies. By contrast, at UBL in Sibiu, “Chinese used to be a second major, and now students can also choose it as their first major, but it belongs to the British, German and American Cultural Studies Department” (Cao & Li, 2022). The person in charge of the Chinese major is a professor of English with no knowledge of Chinese language. Under these circumstances, Chinese has an unclear status and cannot be valued properly; as such, its development is greatly affected. Secondly, the Chinese departments in Romania are understaffed: for example, the local teachers at UB account for 1/3 of the country’s total number. As of the end of 2021, among the Chinese majors in Romania’s universities, there are 15 local Chinese teachers, all of them having a Ph.D. degree. There are only three professors and associate professors at UB. Thirdly, the results of local teaching materials construction also come from UB. Professors Florentina Vișan and Luminița Bălan, representatives of the second and third generations of Romanian Sinologists, teach at the UB. They co-edited or independently compiled the local textbooks *Manual de limba Chineza* (Modern Chinese Textbook), *Lexicologie Chineza* (Modern Chinese Vocabulary), *Gramatica limbii Chineze. Morfologia* (Modern Chinese Grammar. Morphology), *Gramatica limbii chineze. Sintaxa* (Modern Chinese Grammar. Syntax) and *Lingvistica chineza* (Chinese Linguistics), etc., have significantly contributed to the construction of teaching materials for Chinese language education in Romania.

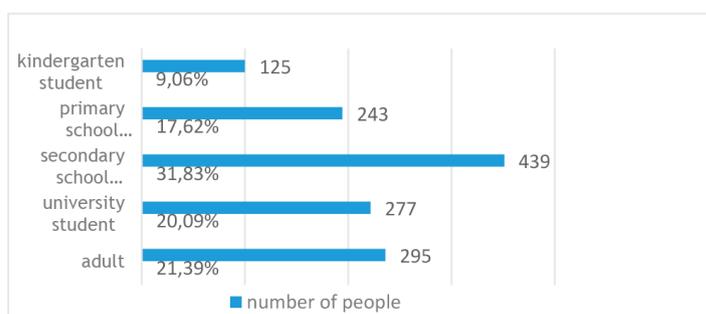
The unbalanced development of Chinese education in universities is related to the history of establishing Chinese sections. UB has the most extended history of Chinese majors, established in 1956; UBB in Cluj and ULB in Sibiu account for only ten years. The only university in Romania that offers master’s and doctoral degrees in Chinese is UB. The Chinese major of the other three universities has been established in 2016, with a history of only a few years.

### 2.2.2 Chinese Language Education at Confucius Institute

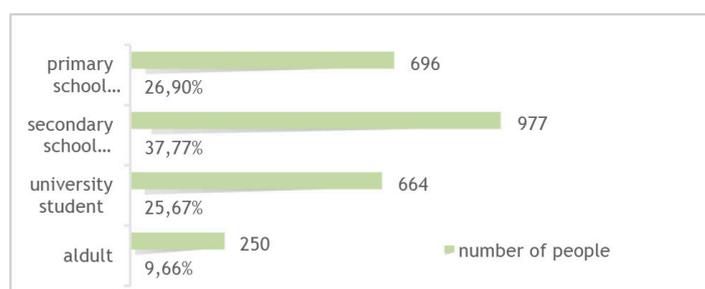
Most of the teaching institutions under the Confucius Institute are primary and secondary schools. In addition, it also includes kindergartens,

universities, teacher training centers, China-Romania Sustainable Development Association, the Children’s Palace, libraries, etc. The occupations and age levels of the teaching objects are very diverse. Moreover, learners have shown a trend of younger age in recent years. Taking the Confucius Institute at UB as an example, in 2019, non-adults (primary and middle school students and young children) accounted for 58.5% of the total number of students (see Figure 1 for details), and in 2021 the proportion of non-adult (primary and middle school students) learners was 64.67% (details See Figure 2).

**Figure 1: Statistical table of the number of students of different age groups at CIUB (2019)**



**Figure 2: Statistical table of the number of students of different age groups at CIUB (2021)**



Regarding curriculum, after being integrated into the national primary and secondary school education system, Chinese can be taught as a second foreign language compulsory or elective credit course. However, since Chinese has been included in the Romanian national education system for a

short time, Chinese courses are still mainly interest courses. In 2021, about 80 primary and secondary schools across the country will offer Chinese courses, of which only eight Romanian schools and three international schools offer credit courses.

### 3. The Trends of Chinese Education in Romania

It is obvious that the development of Chinese language education in Romania has gone through a process of development from its infancy to its growth and integration into the national education system; from a single Chinese major to the formation of a Chinese subject system; from higher education to basic education and pre-school education; and from extra-curricular elective classes to formal credit courses. All these aspects prove that Chinese language teaching in Romania has achieved remarkable results. The current stage marks the beginning of the development of Chinese language education in Romania from a rapid to a deeper stage. The key word in this phase should be “localization”, which includes the localization of teachers, teaching resources and teaching concepts. Paying great attention to localization is the only way to effectively promote the transformation of Chinese from a “Foreign Language in the Basic Education System” to an “Important Foreign Language” in Romania. Only in this way can we achieve the long-term goal of Chinese becoming an “Important Language” in the world.

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