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意大利媒体话语中的 孔子学院形象

Image of Confucius Institute in Italian Media Discourse

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随着首家孔子学院于 2004 年在韩国首尔成立, 世界各国越来越多的人开始学习汉语言文化, 孔子学院也逐渐进入人们的视野。孔子学院的管理模式和教学活动引起越来越多的人的关注, 尤其在美国媒体上, 有关孔子学院的争议涉及其创办目的、政治宣传以及学术自由等。这些争议很快得到了世界各国记者、中国学研究者、汉学家、孔子学院院长等人的讨论, 使孔子学院这一话题成为世界范畴内讨论的问题。本文以 2010 年来意大利主要报纸、杂志、网站等媒体上搜集到的 32 篇有关孔子学院的

Along with a considerable increase of the people involved in studying Chinese culture and Chinese language, Confucius Institute, initially founded in 2004 in Seoul, South Korea, provoked different reactions regarding to the management and the activity held. Especially on American press, the debate focused on what the real aim of the project consists in, has been retained responsible for political propaganda and a threat for the academic freedom. Soon the debate involved reporters, journalists, Chinese Studies experts, sinologists and Confucius Institutes directors from every part of the world, leading the debate to an

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报道为语料，试图通过分析意大利媒体中相关学者、专家的话语，来考察孔子学院在意大利媒体中呈现出的主要形象。

[关键词] 孔子学院；意大利媒体；话语；软实力；学术自由；政治宣传

international dimension. 32 articles published since 2010 on the Italian national newspapers, periodicals, specialized website and online channels, have been collected and examined in order to propose a critical analysis on how the image of Confucius Institute is perceived in Italy through examining the discourse of the Italian press and the voices of the experts in the press.

Key words: Confucius Institute; Italian media; discourse; soft power; academic freedom; political propaganda.

Introduction

It was 1978 when the Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping launched the opening-up reform policy that aims to develop a progressive integration of Chinese economy with the most industrialized economies in the world (Corradini, 1998). Introduction in the liberal market and foundation of Special Economic Zones are the first two and decisive steps for the surprising rise of Chinese economy making China, today, the second largest economy in the world. Thanks to a cautious and deeply calculated economy and political strategies adopted throughout the years, Chinese government facilitated the entrance in the WTO (2001) affirming China not only as global economic power but also as a nation endowed with diplomatic and political power in the international dynamics. Not only fast economic development, the Chinese government also realizes that the cultural impact possesses a huge power as the economic one does and aspires to spread the knowledge and the China's image all over the world, since 2004 started to open Confucius Institutes abroad. Emanated by Hanban, an affiliated organization to the Ministry of Education supervised by a council made up by the higher rank members of PCC, Confucius Institute performs as a collaborating platform between a Chinese university and a host university abroad. It organizes Chinese language course for foreign people, holds international conference and promotes events related to the Chinese culture.

Founded, as a platforms of intercultural exchange and promotion of Chinese language and culture, the Confucius Institute has been at the center of an international debate about its real aim that relies behind the Chinese government intention, the political strategy that supports their fast spread all over the world and if the image of China they are showing corresponds to the truth or not. The debate, including also the academic

freedom matter, started in the USA in 2013 dealing with the extreme decision to close some Confucius Institutes. The first tension emerged in the consequence of an article appeared on *The Nation* published by the anthropologist Marshall Sahlins on the November 18th of 2013. His voice has found a big echo in the United States, some Confucius Institute directors and scholars accepted and shared his opinion. Joseph Bosco (2015),¹ anthropologist and associated professor in the Anthropology department of Chinese University of Hong Kong, strongly criticized that the Confucius Institute is not a stand-alone structure, but incorporated in a foreign host university, damaging the academic freedom. Being an international issue, it assumed a global dimension in a very short time, involving professors, researchers, Confucius Institute directors, sinologists and journalists all over the world. Two of the most important Confucius Institute directors in Italy have taken part in the debate, the director of the Rome Confucius Institute, Prof. Federico Masini (2015)² and the director of Milan Confucius Institute, Prof. Alessandra Lavagnino (2015),³ both furnishing to the debate a different point of view stressing on the importance of the Confucius Institute in being an international platform for cultural exchange and on the maintenance of the academic freedom.

1. Literature Review

As a reflection of the growing influence of China worldwide, the global widespread of Confucius Institutes seeks to mind the gap between China's economic weight and its cultural impact abroad. The Confucius Institute project, started by the Chinese Government under the supervision of Hanban in 2004, has provoked many different opinions about the real aim that relies behind the project and how its fast diffusion is handled. Its rapid spread leads to the establishment of 500 Confucius Institutes in 12 years, provoking different opinions and ideas on the impact of its foundation on the social, economic and local cultural life.

At the beginning the argument has been circumscribed in the American academic sector, however, as the influence of Confucius Institute influence

¹ A. Cappelletti, 2015. "I Confucio come le corporation Usa, influenzano didattica e ricerca." *Cinaforum.net*, January 31. <http://www.cinaforum.net/confucio-intervista-joseph-bosco-428/>

² A. Cappelletti, 2015. "I Confucio modello di cooperazione." *Cinaforum.net*, March 3. <http://www.cinaforum.net/dibattito-confucio-masini-406/>

³ A. Cappelletti, 2015. "Confucio, non solo caratteri e aquiloni." *Cinaforum.net*, February 16. <http://www.cinaforum.net/confucio-intervista-lavagnino-568/>

grew all over the world, the discourse has involved scholars, professors, sinologists and journalists, furnishing to the debate an international dimension covering many critical aspects.

This literature review will mention the main works that have dealt with this issue, comparing the positive and negative comments, stressing the key points analyzed by the experts from every part of the world. The comparative method will be applied to the main topics to see how deeply they have been already analyzed and what research should be carried on to improve the knowledge on the Confucius Institute in Italy and how those programs will facilitate the China's cultural awareness.

1.1 Confucius Institute in developing soft power of China: relation strategy or coercion activity?

Soft power was defined as the capacity to influence the behavior of the others to accomplish the outcomes that one wants (Nye, 2004). Since China enters in the global system with an important role in international relationship, it creates her own soft power, giving the Confucius Institute the fundamental task to promote Chinese culture. In this era military power and strict territorial control do not symbolize the real and effective national power, but how the power exercises and testifies the true dimension of the power itself. Therefore diplomacy and international influence of a country has become the principal actors of the modern power and the principal elements of the foreign politics carried out by the Chinese government. Some of the scholars internationally analyzes the overseas situation of Confucius Institute and the relationship between the soft power development of and Confucius Institute. Zaharna (2014) analyzes the strategic method on which is based the Confucius Institute project and argues that the particularity of this initiative resides in its establishment in a host university abroad. "Such partnerships, which in effect incorporate the Confucius Institute into the society of the host country, represent a higher level of coordination and commitment than independent cultural institutes that are linked only to the headquarters in the home country" (Zaharna, 2014: 15).

Focusing on the importance of the language status in the international context, Guo (2008) has formed us on how powerful has been the impact of the Confucius Institutes establishment on the spreading of Chinese language and how important has been its role in the soft power dimension to develop, alongside with the Chinese economic growth, a deeper awareness of Chinese culture. Guo claims "those who are promoting Chinese language

teaching abroad believe that the popularity of a language corresponds to a nation's status in the international community". Therefore, it is the high time that the spreading of Chinese language and culture fame be corresponded with the development of China in the international context.

The Hanban has a target of establishing altogether 500 Confucius Institutes worldwide by the year 2010; by then, according to its own estimation, the number of people learning the Chinese language outside China will have reached 100 million (Guo, 2008: 33).

Hanban encourages each Confucius Institute to build relations with the local community through involving local people in the Confucius Institute activities. Establishing a tight collaboration between the Confucius Institute and the host university, it also provides the opportunity to discuss and analyze themes that otherwise barely would be discussed. As Kluver states on *China Files* in 2014,⁴

The Confucius Institute at my own university has hosted academic discussions on Taiwan, the Beijing Olympics, Chinese politics and foreign policy, Chinese demographic challenges, issues of economic growth and stagnation, the events of Tiananmen.

Therefore Confucius Institute project, as a key component of Chinese soft power, relies in the improvement of the cultural relation between the Chinese university and the host university furnishing opportunity to better understand Chinese historical background, dealing also with "no-go zones" themes.⁵

But the perception of the cooperation's nature could be different. In building such a cooperative relationship, Ding and Saunders (2006: 21) have observed an aggressive attitude carried out by the institutes themselves through the political influence on Chinese courses. Despite their neutral scholarly appearance, the new network of Confucius Institutes does have a political agenda The institutes will teach Beijing's preferred version of Chinese, with simplified Chinese characters, rather than the traditional

⁴ Cited in "The debate over Confucius Institute part II" July 1, 2014 <https://www.chinafile.com/conversation/debate-over-confucius-institutes-part-ii>.

⁵ "No-go zones" themes refer to the events that the Chinese Political Party retains sensitive such as: Tian'an Men affair, Dalai Lama exile, the independence of Taiwan or the relation that China maintains with Tibet and Xingjiang.

Chinese characters that are used in Taiwan. That would help to advance Beijing's goal of marginalizing Taiwan in the battle for global influence. The use and the teaching of simplified Chinese characters, according to Marshall Sahlins' (2013) view, would be another instrument used by the Chinese government to spread the language promoted by the party and to discourage the language used in places like Taiwan. What is here misleadingly called Standard Chinese Characters is the simplified script officially promulgated by the PRC as a more easily learned alternative to the traditional characters in which everything was written in China for thousands of years, it is not the liking of the regime continues to be written in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia and the many other Chinese communities beyond Beijing's direct control. Rather to be an international relation platform promoting cultural exchange, Lo Joe Tin-yau & Suyan Pan (2014: 14) confirm this opinion, stating that, in its efforts to brand the nation and promote harmonious international relationships through the rapid expansion of its cultural (soft power) diplomacy via the Confucius Institute project, China has emphasized resource provision rather than creating appropriate, non-coercive and inter-culturally sensitive strategies to bring about the intended outcomes. It is obvious that the means (resources and strategies) tend to baffle the ends (intended outcomes). Lo Joe Tin-yau & Suyan Pan (2014: 7) have also stated, in a reasonable and objective point of view that,

Obviously, some of these criticisms might not be completely justified. First, it is not logical for a public diplomacy programme to provide a platform for opponents to attack the government that funds it. Second, if China only aims to promote its culture and language through Confucius Institutes, it can hardly be seen as enforcing ideo-cultural coercion through indoctrination. Despite this, the fears and suspicions, however ungrounded, might be a stumbling block in the development of China's cultural diplomacy.

Therese L. Lueck, Val S. Pippis & Yang Lin (2014) analyzed the coverage of the Confucius Institute in the *New York Times*, found that the *New York Times* feminized the Confucius Institute as the expression of China's soft power. Throughout its narrative of introduction, the *New York Times* defined the Confucius Institute as a tool that was being used by the Chinese government to favorably influence American perceptions of China's domestic policies and international actions. Ying Zhou & Sabrina Luk (2016) has further pointed out that Confucius Institute fails to increase the soft power of China because many countries regard Confucius Institute as a

propaganda tool and a threat to academic freedom and the local community. It shows that China's soft power is not so attractive in the eyes of receivers. In fact, China's aggressive cultural initiatives through the establishment of Confucius Institutes have triggered another version of the 'China threat'.

1.2 Academic freedom

Hanban is the organization that creates and supervises the Confucius Institute project. It comprises representatives from 12 state ministries and commissions, those entities are the General Office of the State Council, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the State Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Culture, the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television, the State Press and the Publications Administrations, the State council Information Office and State Language Committee (Ren, 2012: 3). Because of this peculiarity and the role that Hanban Leadership Council members play in the Chinese Government, a big issue arises concerning the real purpose of the project and if it has a negative influence on the academic freedom.

Hoare-Vance (2009: 87) analyzes the political influence of cultural programs and reminds us that none of the cultural diplomacy programmes of other countries are independent from political influence. They all have some form of political, administrative or financial ties which guide them in their country's interests. Britain for example, aims to improve its image in countries where it is not well trusted, while France aims to promote French influence by supporting French culture in the Francophone world. However, it seems that the Confucius Institute project, having been perceived as a real academic freedom threat, goes beyond a program politically influenced. The academic freedom threat is principally related to some themes defined as "no go-zones" topics that include what happened in Tiananmen Square in 1989, the Tibetan cause or the Dalai Lama figure. The critics have noted that "through the teaching material, Beijing propagates its ideology of patriotism for the Communist Party and China, autocratic culture, and nationalism" and thus "Beijing Chinese language schools brainwash students overseas" (Yuan, Liu and Kemker, 2009 cited in Hartig, 2011). Supporting this thesis, some facts have occurred in some universities that would confirm the activity of the Confucius Institute as an academic freedom threat. It happened in The North Carolina University, the Director of the Confucius Institute advised his colleagues that the funds would have been in danger if the Dalai Lama had been invited into the university campus to

hold a public conference (2014). The threat was so deep to force some University to decline the agreement and close the Confucius Institute such as in the University of Chicago in 2014 case or the Lyon Confucius Institute in 2013. Even, some scholars refused to establish a Confucius Institute, as explained by the professor of Sinology at the University of Oslo in 2007 “We don’t believe that establishing a Confucius Institute would be the best way to create good academic relations to Chinese institutions and lecturers” (Hartig, 2011: 65). From academic freedom threat, the disapproving sentiment towards the Confucius Institute activity has reached the higher level of being considered as a platform for industrial espionage and political surveillance. Stockholm University has claimed that the Chinese Embassy has been using Confucius Institute to carry out political surveillance, covert propaganda and inhibit research on sensitive areas such as Falun Gong and Tibetan independence (Hoare-Vance, 2009).

After the Second World War a new productive literature emerged, focusing on the importance that the culture has been assuming in the international public relations. It is through the culture, its control and the way to spread it that the government exercises his power, internally and abroad. Ding and Saunders (2006: 4) called it the

force majeure that supersedes diplomatic norms, realpolitik, and international choice. Culture is seen as analogous to a filter of knowledge, through which state leaders and their publics approach problems, make decisions, and exert influence.

Chinese government, well-aware of this, has chosen the Confucius Institutes to be the ambassador of this fundamental assignment. The outstanding necessity to encourage this project and its organizational structure may be considered to be quite a coercive and aggressive strategy. That’s why it is necessary to consider their foundation in the dynamic of promoting the Chinese soft power rather than only an academic threat. Dealing with this topic, apart from collocating the project under the soft power perspective, it is mandatory to remember the general principles that justify the Confucius Institute foundation:

Most CIs are primarily involved in community language tuition (while based in a learning institution) rather than academic social science research on China. The CIs constitution lists promoting Chinese language and culture

as their main aim (Constitution and By-laws of the Confucius Institutes cited in Hoare-Vance, 2009: 91).

Supporting the idea of academic independence still Hoare-Vance (2009: 91) claims that “most of the 19 CI Directors who replied to my questionnaire felt that they certainly had operational independence and stated that they as Director, had responsibility for programme planning, financing, and staffing.” Instead of provoking an academic freedom threat, the foundation of the Confucius Institute in the host university, would “creates a multi-dimensional, multi-layered global network structure” (Zaharna, 2014: 16) rendering the project a cultural bridge between the countries involved.

1.3 Confucius Institute and the China's image

Some scholars explored the image of Confucius Institute around the world by studying the news reports in Britain, the USA. (Li Kaisheng & Dai Changzheng, 2011; Wu Ying, 2012; Wu Ying & Shi Lingling, 2014; Liu Cheng & An Ran, 2012; Liu Cheng & An Ran, 2014; Ye Ying, 2015; Danping Wang & Bob Adamson, 2015). Ye Ying (2015) through the study of foreign (especially American) media coverage of the Confucius Institute, found in foreign media reports there are more positive comments than criticism on the Confucius Institute. On the whole, Western society's certainty and welcome on Confucius Institute is over its doubts and distrust. Through the analysis of the reports in the western main stream media in adopting the method of critical discourse analysis, some Chinese researchers (Liu Cheng & An Ran, 2014) have pointed out British media's “selective mistakenly read” of Confucius Institute, has constructed news schema of British mainstream media reports on Confucius Institute. Meanwhile they also gave advice for the Confucius Institute under the different cultural backgrounds of intercultural communication and provided ideological resources and decision-making reference for Confucius Institute Headquarters and other relevant departments. Danping Wang & Bob Adamson (2015) drew on media reports related to significant milestones in the development of Confucius Institutes, showing that, in the USA, the institutes are viewed with a considerable degree of ambivalence. Some researchers analyzed and responded (Wu Ying & Shi Lingling, 2014) the doubts and misunderstandings on Confucius Institute by the international community, especially in the western academic journals and media, and proposed countermeasures in those misunderstanding.

In a sum, the researches domestically on Confucius Institutes are perceived as a way to soften China's international image and to promote the Chinese language and culture, emphasizing on the study of the Confucius Institute's own construction and internal development. The studies overseas focus on the political, economic and cultural impact, the external influence of the Confucius Institute. Both domestic and foreign researches need to strengthen rigor in research methods, domestic research need breakthrough in content and depth.

2. Data Collection and Assessment

The discourse on the image of Confucius Institute in Italian media can be built up only on the sources has been mentioned because the perception and the idea towards what Confucius Institutes are and what kind of activity they carry on is still an issue that receives a limited attention in the media world in Italy. The reason could be that, compared to the 109 Confucius Institutes built in USA, in Italy 11 Confucius Institutes have been established and their activities have not received wide attention on a national scale. However, China represents not only the future, but today's reality, a reality that in Italy is already well-established but has not been paid enough attention it deserves yet. The current study proposes a critical analysis on how the image of Confucius Institute is perceived in Italy through examining the discourse of the Italian press and the voices of the experts in the press. To build up the research, 32 articles published since 2010 on the Italian national newspapers *Corriere della Sera*, *Il sole 24 ore*, *Il Manifesto*, *La Repubblica*, periodicals *Internazionale*, *Mondo Cinese*, specialized website *Cinaforum.net*, *Agi china 24* and online channels, have been collected and examined. The national newspapers have been chosen since, dealing with national and international political, economic and social issues, they received the attention from the people who are not necessarily interested in China. *Internazionale* is a periodical that collects articles from the main international newspapers and *Mondo Cinese* is published by *Fondazione Italia Cina*. It deals with any aspect referred to China development and political, economic and social practice worldwide. *Cinaforum.net* deeply deals with the Confucius Institute project providing many interviews to Chinese Studies experts and Confucius Institutes directors. *Agi China 24* is an online portal that provides a constant upload regarding the Chinese world. How does the host country view the Confucius Institute in his national media? And how are the public opinions toward Confucius Institute in Italy? And what the impact of these images will have

on the development of Confucius Institutes? More researches have to be done in order to answer these questions in the international dimension. This paper will analyze the image appeared in Italian public media regarding the Confucius Institutes in Italy.

3. Topic Analysis

3.1. Foundation of Confucius Institute in Italy as a “partnering represents a relation model”

On September 2006 the project of Confucius Institute starts its activity in Italy with the first Institute founded at the Sapienza University of Rome. As Prof. Valentina Pedone on *Mondo Cinese* states, a solemn ceremony has been held for the inauguration of the first Confucius Institute in Rome with the participation of important institutional personalities:

[Example 1]

Lo scorso 29 settembre oltre trecento persone hanno partecipato all'inaugurazione del primo Istituto Confucio in Italia. La cerimonia ha avuto luogo presso la Facoltà di Studi Orientali dell'Università degli Studi di Roma, La Sapienza, dove l'Istituto ha sede.	Last September 29 more than 300 hundred people took part in the inauguration of the first Confucius Institute in Italy. The ceremony was held at Eastern Studies Department at Sapienza University of Rome, where the Institute is located.
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Being the first Confucius Institute founded in Italy, the second in Europe and the fourth in the world, from the beginning its activity has been particularly efficiently satisfying for the widespread interest in Chinese culture and the demand to study Chinese language at any level. Since Hanban launched the project with the first Institute founded in Seoul, Korea (2004), the spread of the Confucius Institute in the world has been quick and well-calculated; in less than ten years 11 Confucius Institutes started to operate in Italy located especially in the center and northern part of the country.

Despite of the increasing dialogue between Italy and China based on economic and diplomatic agreements, the distance between Italian culture and the Chinese one is still wide, due to the tradition, history and especially the language. Nowadays, the new vehicle to get two different societies closer is language. Confucius Institutes, offering the opportunity to study Chinese language at any level, involves people of any age and any kind, to have the chance to mind this gap. Being familiar with Chinese

language would be the first step for a deeper integration between the two societies, facilitating the relationship in many fields, from school, university to the company environment. Moreover, being an institute located in the host university and a non-stand-alone institutions “the partnering represents a relation model that is different from other cultural institutes” (Zaharna, 2014: 15).

The table below shows the Confucius Institutes founded in Italy and how the partnership between Italian and Chinese universities has been developed through the years:

Confucius Institutes founded in Italy

Confucius Institute location	Foundation year	Chinese University partner
Confucius Institute at the University of Rome	2006	Beijing Foreign Studies University
Confucius Institute at the University of Naples	2007	Shanghai International Studies University
Confucius Institute of Pisa	2007	University of Chongqing
Confucius Institute at the University of Turin	2008	East China Normal University
Confucius Institute at Venice University	2008	Capital Normal University of Beijing
Confucius Institute at the UCSC Milan Campus	2009	Beijing Language and Culture University
Confucius Institute in Bologna	2009	Renmin University of China
Confucius Institute at the University of Padova	2009	University of Guangzhou
Confucius Institute at the University of Milan	2009	Liaoning Normal University
Confucius Institute at the University of Macerata	2011	Beijing Normal University
Confucius Institute at the University of Florence	2013	Tongji University

The Confucius Institute at La Sapienza University of Rome has been founded on the partnership with Beijing Foreign Studies University and the La Sapienza University of Rome. The deep collaboration allowed to improve the study of the Chinese language from the basic to the advanced level, as Prof. Federico Masini,⁶ Confucius Institute Director in 2015, on *Cinaforum.net* stresses:

[Example 2]

La presenza a Roma dei docenti dell'IC e dei volontari, tutti provenienti

The presence of the Confucius Institute teachers and the volunteers in Rome,

⁶ A. Cappelletti, 2015. “I Confucio modello di cooperazione.” *Cinaforum.net*, March 3. <http://www.cinaforum.net/dibattito-confucio-masini-406/>

dall'Università di Beiwai, ha permesso l'organizzazione di oltre venti classi di lingua cinese aperte al pubblico extra universitario, con corsi di ogni grado (elementare, intermedio, avanzato) e di ogni genere (cinese tecnico, dei giornali, corsi di traduzione, ecc.) con circa 250 studenti per ogni semestre, per un totale di circa 5.000 studenti.

who are all from Beiwai University, made the organization of more than 20 Chinese language classes open to the public outside university possible, with courses of any level (elementary, intermediate, advanced) and of any kind (business Chinese, Chinese in newspapers, translation courses, etc.) with about 250 students for each semester, for a total of 5000 students.

The data in Prof. Masini's statement has reflected a well-developed collaboration between the two institutions is going on. The situation involving students into different courses and levels is growing exponentially. It also suggests the relationship between the two countries could rely on these students with higher level of Chinese language.

So far we have discussed about how local people could have benefited from the Confucius Institute activity giving them a deeper knowledge about Chinese language and culture. In order to retain a collaboration effectively productive and definitely well-established is necessary that it furnishes mutual benefits. This is the point on which Prof. Alessandra Lavagnino⁷ focuses her attention on *Cinaforum.net*:

[Example 3]

Quando i nostri colleghi cinesi vengono a collaborare con noi nell'IC trovano nel confronto con i colleghi italiani nuovi stimoli e nuovi interessi di ricerca.

When our Chinese colleagues come to collaborate with us in the Confucius Institute, in the debate with Italian colleagues they find new incentives and research interests.

Besides the language and culture knowledge, what is basic to improve the mutual understanding is the interest in China in the past and at present. Establishing Confucius Institute in Italy represents a good start to facilitate this process, rendering Chinese language and culture closer and easier available for everybody.

⁷ A. Cappelletti, 2015. "Confucio, non solo caratteri e aquiloni." *Cinaforum.net*, February 16. <http://www.cinaforum.net/confucio-intervista-lavagnino-568/>

3.2 Mandarin: “the most desired language in companies”

Until only few years ago, the study of Chinese language and the knowledge about Chinese culture and history were limited to the university environment, involving people only at the academic and specialized level. Nowadays China is becoming a reality in everybody’s daily life: in the business sector, there are many companies investing in Italy and in Europe; in the school system, there are many Chinese children in Italian public school and many Chinese students enrolled in Italian Universities. Confucius Institute project offers a unique opportunity to facilitate the process of integration at any level giving the opportunity to study Chinese for those who are interested in, from the business man, to the students. As Roberto Grandi,⁸ ex-protector of Bologna University and now directly involved in the foundation of Confucius Institute at the University of Bologna, states on *Agi China 24*:

[Example 4]

Ci rivolgiamo a chiunque voglia conoscere il cinese, dal manager al professionista o allo studente che poi vuol perfezionare o specializzarsi in studi orientali.	We are addressing to everybody who is interested in studying Chinese language, from the manager to the expert or to the student who wants to improve or majored in Eastern Studies.
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The fact that China is growing fast and is becoming one of the most powerful economic partner in the world is no longer a secret to anyone. The number of non-native Chinese speakers all over the world, is increasing dramatically every day. These facts make the knowledge of Chinese language not only a useful tool to improve working skills but soon, a necessity to get involved in the international dialogue, assigning to the Confucius Institute the task to contribute in the diffusion of the language. As the *La Repubblica* correspondent Giampaolo Visetti states:

[Example 5]

Nel 2000 erano poco più di due milioni i non cinesi che tentavano di imparare gli ideogrammi del mandarino. Oggi (2011)	In 2000, more than 2 million non-native Chinese people were trying to learn Chinese ideograms. Today
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⁸ R. Fatiguso, 2010. “Confucio insegna cinese nel mondo.” *Agi China 24*, December 29. http://www.agichina.it/repository/canali/norme-e-tributi/notizie/201012270200-rt2-lu20101227013aaa-confucio_insegna_cinese_nel_mondo2.

sono 50 milioni. Un rapporto della Bce ha certificato che il mandarino è già la «lingua più ambita dalle imprese», che le multinazionali germaniche iniziano a inserire la conoscenza del cinese come pre-requisito per un colloquio di lavoro.

(2011) they are 50 million. A Bce report states that mandarin is the “most desired language by the companies”, that the German multinational corporation are starting to require Chinese language knowledge as a prerequisite for a job interview.

3.3 The role CI played in developing Soft Power of China

[Example 6]

E' la forza delle *humanae litterae*, della arti, senza le quali nessuna civiltà è mai riuscita a progredire.

It is the strength of the *humanae litterae*, of arts, without which there is no society that has been able to develop.

With these words Luca Maria Scarantino on *Il Sole 24 Ore* stresses on the necessary role that culture plays in the development of any society. Progress is not possible without the power of arts and the knowledge of culture. It is from the ancient imperial history and during the first Republic of China (1912-1949) that China was a close and an almost unknown country for the rest of the world but with an ancient and precious history of culture. The People's Republic of China, dated 1949, collocated the country in the universe of the republic world but was still a mysterious nation. It was with the opening-up reform that China decided that was the right time to enter in the global system and the Confucius Institute project is the instrument that Government chose to be the component of the soft power to create cultural and language contacts with foreign countries. In an interview, Tu Weiming, a businessman from Hangzhou and Professor at Berkley, Princeton and Harvard University, suggests that a bigger effort is needed to let the world comprehend China and China comprehends the rest of the world. This mutual understanding could only be possible by taking part in the international cultural dialogue in which Hanban has collocated the Confucius Institutes. Confucius Institute is unfolding and spreading a picture what China was in history and what China is today, with the aim at being a platform to increase mutual dialogue.

What Chinese Government is trying to do is a direct consequence of the concern about “the role culture plays in enhancing the nation's ability to compete in the international arena and the need to promote external

harmony for national development” (Lo Tin-yau & Suyan Pan, 2014: 1). Chairman Xi Jinping’s visit to Qufu in 2013 demonstrated and confirmed how Confucius Institute project, as a soft power component, is important in China’s cultural diplomacy. Like Japan established Japanese Culture Institute after the disaster of the Second World War to restore its own national image all over the world, now is the moment for China to show its culture and its language to tear down the stereotypes that too often affect people’s opinion.

Nevertheless, the perception on the impact that the Hanban project has had on the Italy-China cultural dialogue and the way how the project itself is carried out has been heterogeneous and sometimes even conflicting. Paolo Borzatta in 2012 on *Agi China 24*, stating that the soft power has always existed and many countries through various activities have spread their own languages and their own cultural values, retains the Hanban project even more effective and its activity more penetrant:

[Example 7]

Oggi non solo la Germania si esercita nell'affermazione del soft-power. Lo fanno sicuramente la Francia con l'Institut Francais, il Regno Unito con il British Council, la Spagna con l'Istituto Cervantes e anche l'Italia con i propri Istituti di Cultura e anche con la benemerita Società Dante Alighieri. Il Confucius Institute centrale firma accordi con singole università straniere chiedendo la sede fisica, un co-direttore e alcune persone di staff in cambio del marchio, di un co-direttore cinese e alcune persone di staff cinese. E' evidente la migliore capacità penetrativa di un modello di questo tipo e anche la migliore capacità di governance dei singoli istituti più soggetti ad un controllo locale di "efficacia".

Today not only Germany is carrying on its soft power but also France with the Institut Francais, UK with the British Council, Spain with Instituto Cervantes and Italy with Società Dante Alighieri. The Confucius Institute headquarter signs agreement with the university abroad asking for the physical location, a co-director and some few teaching staff, in exchange for the original brand, one Chinese co-director and some Chinese staff. Models like these facilitate a better penetration and a better governance of each institute subjected to an efficient local control.

The establishment of the Confucius Institute in the host university as a no-stand-alone institute is what makes these institutes actually different from the traditional European Language institutes. It provides more flexibility and direct collaboration that distinguishes the Hanban project, an opportunity that many universities have understood and chosen.

Therefore, this aspect could be considered the added value or the reason to retain this component not that “soft”. As Maurizio Scarpari states on *Il Sole 24 ore*:

[Example 8]

La mancanza di autonomia politica e l'incardinamento all'interno delle università o dei centri di istruzione superiore hanno creato, fin dalla loro nascita, diffidenze, resistenze e non poche polemiche, anche in Cina. Le restrizioni imposte su temi delicati hanno alimentato i sospetti che siano centri di propaganda politica, organizzazioni per il controllo dei cinesi all'estero, agenzie di intelligence.

Since their birth, the lack of political independence and the establishment within the host universities or in higher education institutes, formed mistrusts, resistances and polemics, even in China. The imposed restrictions on sensitive topics have provided suspects to consider them as center for political propaganda, organizations for the control of Chinese people abroad and espionage.

3.4 Political propaganda tool and academic freedom threat?

There are three key points: reduction of corruption, economic reforms and social stability, dynamism in the foreign policy, since the election of 2012, when Chairman Xi Jinping has been selected as the Secretary General of the Chinese Communist Party. The foreign policy aspect of course deals with the image that China is struggling to show to the world. An image far from the agricultural country in the developing phase based on Mao Zedong idolatry showed in historical books, but as a modern, harmonious and peaceful country, a place where is possible to persecute and realize personal purposes. How the Confucius Institutes are involved in this discourse?

The economic and diplomatic relations between China and Italy are increasing, leading every day to new contracts and new agreements; for businessman, for students and for the people interested to get in touch with the Chinese culture and Chinese language, enrolling in Confucius Institute courses represents the opportunity to realize that.

However, some of the Italian intellectuals are far from considering Confucius Institutes platforms for cultural international exchange and language institutes, but rather as a tool for political propaganda carried out by the Chinese Communist party. According to their opinions, Confucius Institute exhibits only a partial view of the Chinese world, the one that the Communist party desires to show. In the essay of *China Brief* translated by Yang Alan H. and Michael Hsiao appeared on *Asianews* in 2012:

[Example 9]

Se ammettiamo che gli Istituti sono irrilevanti per la comprensione del Confucianesimo, allora dobbiamo ammettere anche che le persone che li frequentano vengono educate e coltivate da una versione selettiva della cultura cinese, contornata di propaganda e controllata dal governo cinese. Le attività e gli eventi culturali attivati ed esibiti dagli IC sono facilitate in una maniera politicamente armoniosa, dato che intendono contribuire soltanto alla parte ideale dello sviluppo della Cina.

If we admit that the Institutes are irrelevant for the understanding Confucianism, we also have to admit that the people who attend courses and activities are taught by a selective version of Chinese culture, surrounded by propaganda and controlled by the Chinese government. The activities and the cultural events held by the Confucius Institutes are organized in a harmoniously political way, since they aim to contribute only to the ideal part of the China's development.

Some of the intellectuals blurred the image of Confucius Institute by mixing up the political discourse with the discourse concerning Confucius Institute in Italian press by questioning the freedom of talking about the politically controversial issues in Confucius Institute. For instance, Lawrence C. Reardon, a researcher at Harvard University's Fairbank Center, states on *Cinafoum.net* that this young generation grows up along with the Confucius Institute could not be well aware of historical events, such as the Tian'an Men affair happened in 1989, will misjudge the real political and economic situation and the relations that China maintains with Tibet, Taiwan or Xinjiang.

[Example 10]

I critici temono che questa nuova generazione di studenti sarà convinta che: 1) la crisi di Tiananmen del 4 Giugno sia stata una ribellione; 2) le forze delle nazioni unite coinvolte nelle azioni di pubblica sicurezza in Corea fossero forze imperialiste; 3) la Cina garantisce libertà religiosa a tutti i suoi cittadini e che; 4) i rapporti tra Cina e Tibet, Taiwan, Xinjiang, così come la sovranità sull'arcipelago delle Diaoyu e sulle isole Nansha e Xinsha, siano una questione interna cinese.

The critics are afraid that this new generation of students will be convinced that: 1) the June 4th Tiananmen affair was a rebellion; 2) the United Nation forces involved in the public security operations in Korea were imperialist forces; 3) China guarantees religion freedom to all his citizens and that; 4) the relations between China and Tibet, Taiwan, Xinjiang and the sovereignty on the archipelago of Diaoyu and on the Nansha and Xinsha islands, are internal Chinese issues.

This contradicts with the following expert's opinion. Mentioning the decision to suspend the agreement signed by the host University and the Confucius Institute due to academic freedom threat, there is no case of this type happened in Italy. This would suggest that the opinion towards Confucius Institute activities and aims should be positive because free of political manipulation. According to the Italian experts' voices, people directly involved in the Confucius Institute activity have never encountered any resistance from the Hanban on which topic should or should not be dealt with, neither received the order on how to set up the Chinese language courses. However the idea that Confucius Institute is a propaganda tool that compromises the academic freedom is shared among some experts of China Studies and Italian sinologists.

In regarding to courses that the Rome Confucius Institute offers and the freedom to debate, Prof. Federico Masini⁹ on *Cinaforum.net* states that:

[Example 11]

Il nostro IC si occupa soprattutto di lingua e cultura cinese, ma abbiamo anche organizzato eventi che includevano studiosi provenienti da Taiwan o abbiamo toccato tematiche relative al Tibet, ma in queste occasioni nessuno di Hanban o del nostro IC mi ha fatto pressioni o osservazioni. Nessuna delle nostre attività ha mai subito alcuna censura diretta da parte dei nostr partner o di Hanban.

Our Confucius Institute deals mainly with Chinese language and culture, but we have also organized events inviting people from Taiwan and talked about topics concerning Tibet. But in these occasions nobody from Hanban or our Confucius Institute have advanced any pressures or remarks. None of our activities have received any direct censure from our partners or Hanban.

Besides considering the dramatic cultural consequences that would arise providing only a partial truth about historical events and the effect they could provoke, Maurizio Scarpari, on *Il Sole 24 ore* in 2014, strongly criticizes the culture's manipulation:

[Example 12]

La cultura non è un bene esportabile come mille altre mercanzie, non può essere

Culture is not a resource could be exported like many other goods, it

⁹ A. Cappelletti, 2015. "I Confucio modello di cooperazione." *Cinaforum.net*, March 3. <http://www.cinaforum.net/dibattito-confucio-masini-406/>

imbrigliata. La libera circolazione delle idee, sosteneva Kant, è il fondamento della conoscenza, senza di essa non ci sarà mai emancipazione.

cannot be curbed. The free circulation of ideas, Kant said, is the base of knowledge, without which there won't be any emancipation.

Considered as a propaganda tool and an academic freedom threat, some American universities such as the University of Chicago and the University of Pennsylvania arrived to the extreme decision to cease their collaboration with Confucius Institutes. The issue has been raised in US with a strongly critic article published on *The Nation* by Marshall Sahlins in 2013 that defines Confucius Institutes as “Trojan horse”, being responsible to teach only the knowledge of China acceptable for the state. In few years the debate became global and it was developed and analyzed from different and opposite points of view.

The director of Milan Confucius Institute, Prof. Alessandra Lavagnino,¹⁰ sharing the similar opinions as Prof. Masini on the freedom to choose how to conduct Confucius Institute activity, focused her attention on the independence of the curriculum of the didactic project carried out by the University of Milan and the Confucius Institute. Even if they could act as a collaborating partner involving students in the activities and in the events held, they are still separated entities, proponing two different kinds of courses. On *Cinaforum.net* she states:

[Example 13]

Tengo anche a specificare che il progetto didattico curricolare dell'Università degli Studi di Milano non ha niente a che fare con l'IC. Nel quinquennio del nostro Corso di studi i temi, i materiali didattici, i docenti, gli esami, le attività, le iniziative e gli eventi non hanno niente a che vedere con l'Istituto Confucio, al 100%.

I would like to specify that the Chinese curriculum of the didactic programme in University of Milan has nothing to do with Confucius Institute. In the five-years-study course themes, didactic materials, teachers, exams, activities, initiatives and events have totally nothing to do with the Confucius Institute.

¹⁰ A. Cappelletti, 2015. “Confucio, non solo caratteri e aquiloni.” *Cinaforum.net*, February 16. <http://www.cinaforum.net/confucio-intervista-lavagnino-568/>

However, what Prof. Paolo De Troia,¹¹ Rome Confucius Institute director from 2011 to 2014, has suggested is that even if there has not been any case of direct censure from the Hanban or Chinese partners, a kind of self-censorship could be possible. On *Chinafiles* in 2014 he stated:

[Example 14]

Anche se non è una regola, è probabile che nessuno chieda fondi all'Hanban per trattare quelle che Pechino considera 'tematiche sensibili'. Inoltre gli Istituti Confucio sono strumenti di promozione culturale e non di approfondimento critico.

Even if is not a rule, is possible that no one would ask funds to the Hanban to deal with what Beijing considers "sensitive topics". Furthermore, Confucius Institutes are instruments for cultural promotion and not for critical in depth-analyses.

What gave a proof retained decisive to the academic freedom threat is what had happened during the July-August conference of European Association of Chinese Studies held in Braga in 2014. Xu Lin, the general director of the Hanban and Chief Executive of the Confucius Institute Headquarter was retained responsible for removal four pages from the Conference program and one page from the abstract which referred to Taiwan's Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange, a no-profit association that from 1989 promotes Chinese culture and exchange between intellectuals and academics. Roger Greatrex, president of the European Association of Chinese Studies, subsequently issued an official letter of protest, concluding that "Such interference in the internal organization of the international conference of an independent and democratically organized non-profitable academic organization is totally unacceptable." The event provoked many reactions worldwide, Maurizio Scarpari, on *Il Manifesto* in 2014 stated:

[Example 15]

Si è trattato di un incredibile passo falso da parte di un esponente di alto livello della diigenza cinese. Un duro colpo all'immagine *soft* della Cina, che sembra sempre più orientata a mostrare al mondo la sua vocazione per le coomponenti *hard*.

It was an incredible mistake by a high rank exponent of the Chinese leadership. A hard blow to the *soft* imagine of China, that seems to be more interested in showing to the world the vocation for *hard* components.

¹¹ C. A. Ghezzi, 2014. "10 anni di Istituto Confucio. Promozione o propaganda?" October 8. <http://www.china-files.com/it/link/42122/10-anni-di-istituti-confucio-promozione-o-propaganda>.

In December 2014, Xu Lin was interviewed by the BBC's Shanghai correspondent Jonh Sudworth. She had the opportunity to answer and to justify what happened in Braga few months before, but as Gary Rawnsley, Professor of Public Diplomacy at Aberystwyth University in Wales states, "Xu Lin not only refused to answer difficult questions, she also politicized the Confucius Institutes and reinforced the idea that they are led by dogmatists".

Undoubtedly, this event confirms that the way in which the cultural diplomacy has been carried out by the Chinese leadership is not that soft, but considering the Confucius Institute as a research or political debate center is not proper since Confucius Institute was born as a linguistic center that provides a linguistic knowledge. As Stan Rosen, the director of the University of Southern California's East Asian Studies Center stated, "They steer away from those kinds of political issues, just to teach straight language. Because they know this is exactly what critics of China might be looking for."¹² The repetition of political sensitive topics of China is another way of enlarging the difference of ideology between the west and China. Putting China-related-news in the political framework has long been found in western journalistic frame. However, it is very obvious that Confucius institute is not a right place to have various debates on political issues. And the people, both the governors and the teachers related to this institute are not committed to respond or talk about these issues.

3.5 Is it a right investment?

In the last 30 years, China has been under massive changes. The reforms produced a huge increase in the agricultural production and in the farmers' salary besides a considerable growth in the goods consumption and an evident enhancement in the quality of city life. Generally, the reforms provided enhancements for a big portion of Chinese population, from the most developed cities along the coast to the inner agricultural provinces. Through these years, the Government has made great efforts to mind the gap between the quality of life in the urban areas and the rural ones, but these efforts will not always lead to successful results. In rural areas only 40% of the young people are able to attend high school; the 84% of the students graduated in the high school in Shanghai decide to keep enrolling in universities programs, in rural area only the 3% does the same.

¹² Randy Wyrick, "Mandarin Classes Coming to Local Schools", News, June 29, 2011. <http://www.vaildaily.com/news/mandarin-classes-coming-to-local-schools/>

This is the reason why in China, many people wonder if the Confucius Institute project, that consists in a large investment afforded by the Government, is a right one. Xie Mingguang, a Phd researcher at the Scuola Normale Superiore of Pisa, on *Cinaforum.net* states (2015):

[Example 16]

In Cina, i critici lamentano che ci sono ancora troppe province povere, che non dispongono dei fondi necessari per migliorare gli standard delle strutture e della qualità dell'educazione, e vorrebbero che il governo investisse di più a livello nazionale, piuttosto che finanziare all'estero iniziative come la creazione di Istituti Confucio.

In China, critics complain that there are still many poor provinces, which don't have enough funds to enhance education quality and school facilities, and they would prefer that the Government could invest more on a national level, rather than financing abroad project such as the Confucius Institute.

Worries and doubts on the utility of the project have also appeared online. An article by Lotus Ruan on *Internazionale* (2014), a magazine that collects articles published worldwide, mentioned a Weibo user's statement:

[Example 17]

Non solo non fanno pagare una tassa d'iscrizione, ma offrono addirittura dei sussidi. Da dove vengono questi soldi? Dalle tasche dei cittadini cinesi? Il miliardo e 300 milioni di cinesi che paga le tasse chiede una spiegazione.

Not only they don't ask for registration fee, but they even provide subventions. Where does the money come from? From Chinese citizens pockets? The billion and 300 million of Chinese ask for an explanation.

When Chairman Xi Jinping publicly thanked the Confucius Institutes for their "endless efforts to facilitate international cooperation",¹³ it underlines that the project's aim is considered as a bridge which plays an important role in the international cooperation. The costs are high, since according to *Internazionale*, often the annual spending for each institute could be around 100 or 200 thousand dollars, but it has to be viewed from different point of views, because beside of teaching Chinese language and Chinese culture, it represents an opportunity to improve mutual dialogue between cultures and a chance for many Chinese young people to find a job

¹³ From a letter that Chairman Xi Jinping wrote and Vice Prime-Minister Liu Yandong read in the ceremony of the 10th years of Confucius Institute held on September 27th 2014.

abroad and get in touch with foreigners, facilitating culture integration since they teach Chinese as a second language and learn English or the local language. An opportunity also for the local people to find a job in the Confucius Institutes and to discover a new culture getting involved in the events and activities held. On the other hand can we imagine the situation that a country tries to enhance her image and spread her language and culture only when all the people get rich and can afford to be well-educated? The question whether a nation's diplomatic and cultural spreading policy should be taken to the focal point deserves deep thinking. But when it is being discussed, the real development situation of the country has to be considered as a whole.

4. Rhetorical Analysis

4.1 Attitude

In the 32 articles analyzed, the comments and the attitude shown by the reporters comprehend positive and negative opinions. The 47% of articles showed a positive opinion, it deals mainly with the rapid development of the Confucius Institutes in Italy occurred in the last few years and in the positive feedback it received, clearly be seen by the people involved in the activity held. Two are the main voices that consider the project as useful platform for cultural dialogue and an efficient language Institute that provides a good level of teaching Chinese, from Prof. Masini's and Prof. Lavagnino. The other 53% of the articles criticizes Confucius Institute project, since it is considered to be surrounded by political propaganda and an academic freedom threat for student's education.

4.2 Headline

In constructing the image of Confucius Institute, the article headline used by Italian reporters and journalists often consist of metaphors and rhetorical questions to better show their attitude and opinion. The article written by Prof. Alessandra Cappelletti, appeared on *Cinaforum.net*, which well represents Prof Masini's idea and his opinion of retaining Confucius Institute's activity as a necessary need to improve mutual dialogue is:

[Example 18]

I Confucio come modelli di cooperazione.	Confucius Institutes as cooperative models.
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It suggests that Confucius Institute not only consists in an international platform to facilitate interracial exchange, but thanks to its structure, it also represents a model for other institutions to be referred to in developing the dialogue between the West and the East.

[Example 19]

Confucio, non solo caratteri e aquiloni	Confucius Institutes, not only characters and kites
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This article headline suggests that the project of Confucius Institutes is wide and differentiated. In the article, Prof. Lavagnino furnishes the details on the management of Milan Confucius Institute by stressing on the collaboration with university to involve people in events and activities and the independence of the Chinese courses held in the Institute from the ones provided by the university.

However, those negative opinions have also been indicated in headline to arouse readers' attention, as appeared on *Cinaforum.net*, in the article that Prof. Maurizio Scarpari wrote, by using a question, he stresses on a different perspective to consider the Confucius Institute activity:

[Example 20]

Istituti Confucio, promozione culturale o propaganda politica?	Confucius Institutes, cultural promotion or political propaganda?
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By questioning here, the author "advises" the reader that, considering and evaluating other aspects, besides the cultural promotion, the activity of Confucius Institute could be related to political propaganda.

Question could provoke on the reader a different approach of understanding the article, an approach that, basing on the information provided, implies a deeper understanding of the topic because the issue is analyzed from two different points of views.

By using metaphors, the author is also able to create an evoking image in the reader's mind. As Prof. Maurizio Scarpari writes in an article published on *Il Manifesto*, he provides the reader with a "dark" image related to Confucius ideology and how it has been used in the development of Confucius Institute project.

[Example 21]

L'ombra di Confucio si stende su
Pechino.

Confucius's shadow lies on Beijing.

4.3 Narrative introduction

In dealing with the main issue related to the Confucius Institute image, reporters and journalists, before focusing the attention on the interview or on the article topic, usually provide a brief introduction regarding to the previous statements and opinions about Hanban, the responsibility for setting up the Confucius Institute project, the critics that Confucius Institute received in the U. S., and in which socio-cultural context the project has been created. Since is not a topic commonly known, the introduction is always useful or even necessary to help the reader to better understand motifs and reasons of author's statement.

Conclusion

The development of Chinese economy and Chinese society occurred in the last thirty years has been impressive. It provoked massive changes in people's life assigning to China a primary role in the international political and economic debate. For China, Confucius Institute not only serves as a reliable alternative to the world and promotion of Chinese language, but also a diplomatic strategy that promotes China image globally. The spreading of Confucius Institute in the whole world is the reflection of both China's hard power and soft power. In regarding to being a member of the international community, China had to develop its cultural diplomacy (soft power) entrusting the Confucius Institute project to spread Chinese language and Chinese culture. As the Confucius Institute project has grown very fast, since 2004, 500 Confucius Institute have been founded in the 5 continents giving the opportunity to millions of people to get in touch with its courses and its activities. Learning a language generally retained as very complicated because Chinese is considered "far" from the languages in letters, even though, this difficulty has not become a hinder for people around world to learn it. On the other hand, the non-independent structure explains the reason why, in USA, Confucius Institute has been considered so much dangerous to the academic freedom to close few of them. American media described activities in Confucius Institutes as invasive, coercive and politically oriented. There is no cultural diplomacy program independent from political influence. Britain and France, through their programs, aim to enlarge their influence where they are not well-trusted. Rather than to be

considered as a threat, the uniqueness of the project, as described in main national Italian media, surely guarantees the opportunity to found direct contacts and collaboration with the host university and its students facilitating mutual understandings. The fact is that China is running fast, as western countries ran during the industrial revolution, experimenting in only a few years what western countries went through in over a century at social, economic and political level. The challenges that China has to be faced with are still many, the cultural diplomacy still has to adapt to the global rules but as Barr (cited in Lo, J. T.Y. & Suyan Pan, 2014: 16) suggests

if we examine each of the ‘threatening’ scenarios in context, we find that the cause of the fear is because China desires the same thing, competes for influence in the same international political arena, and beat ‘us’ in the same game. In other words, it is not so much that China is vastly ‘different’ from the West that causes the emotion; rather, it is because China’s rise creates a critical distance which enables the West to reflect on its own position.

Around 47% reports collected, to some extent, showed the Italian press’ positive attitude toward Confucius Institute. In these reports, Italian media has demonstrated the usefulness of learning Chinese without any objection, the contributions of the Confucius Institute to Italian’s knowledge of Chinese language and culture were reported. In national Italian media, the activity of the Confucius Institute has generally been described as essential for the improvement of the mutual dialogue and necessary to help people to get closer to the China world. The increase of the students enrolling in courses of Chinese language every year demonstrates that the perception of the opportunity to learn this language, as a useful tool in professional career is spreading, hoping that in few years it won’t be considered that far from us anymore. The cooperative model between a Chinese university and a local university has been proved to be more effective. 53% negative reports were found in the data collection, covering the following topics: first, soft power defined by Nye (2004) in opposite to military might, that has been applied to the U.S. and European countries how far they have achieved in reach of it compared with the developing countries, were identified to Confucius Institute as “hard power” that could have strong influence on the generation learning Chinese as foreign language in Italy. Soft power is understood as a tool for political propaganda of China. Nevertheless, the lack of academic freedom is

frequently mixed up with the political controversy, like Tian'an Men Affair, Tibet, Taiwan, and Diaoyu Island and so on to indicate how the teaching content is constrained in Confucius Institute. The topic of Chinese linguistic institute is tightly linked with political issues is how Confucius Institute occurs in European media, which is in coincidental accordance with the situation as in U.S. (Therese, Pippis & Yang, 2014). Meanwhile, it is also clear that the people who took part in the discourse about Confucius Institutes activity in Italy are still too few, in this sense, the establishment of Confucius Institute in Italy has not been analyzed deeply enough or well-developed. Only giving the attention on the public media that the project deserves as it represents a cultural bridge that is spreading its activity in this country could make the discourse more developed. Concerning the discourse strategies in the press, the narrative introduction is frequently used in relation to the social-cultural background of the development of China in the past 30 years, the critical voices from the U.S., and the comparison between the establishment of Confucius Institute and other linguistic institutes in the world, such as British Council, Goethe Institute, Cervantes Institute in order to tell China story to the readers, are introduced before they try to lead in this fairly new project in Italy. Meanwhile, metaphors, interrogative questions are used in headlines to arouse readers' attention and indicate the reporters' attitude.

Apart from the images presented by Italian press, more studies on how Confucius Institute could better integrate with local community have to be investigated. Confucius Institute, as non-government, non-political institute has to be clearly identified after the initial foundation with the help of Chinese government. A cooperative model between the university in China and host country is to be highly evaluated and long-term continued. This enables Confucius Institutes to differ from other countries, like Germany, France, UK and Spain, but also build a long-term academic and diplomatic relationship with other nations. In addition, as Prof. Lavagnino (2015), the director the Confucius Institute, University of Milan, has suggested, the traditional Chinese culture, to what extent to be integrated with contemporary Chinese social practice has to be taken into consideration by most of the culture promoter, namely, the teaching staff in Confucius Institute. It is the core concept and value rooted in Chinese traditional culture in combination with the Chinese language, to great extent, that China would like and have to promote and demonstrate to the world. Therefore, more public lectures, academic exchanges upon the dialogue in the field of politics, society and life, between the west and east could better help the other nation understand this mysterious country.

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