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War and peace: Views of Confucius Institutes in China and USA

As China's economy and exchanges with the rest of the world have undergone rapid growth in recent years, there has also been a sharp increase in international demands for learning Chinese (Everson & Xiao, 2009; McDonald, 2011; Tsung & Cruikshank, 2010). The *Report of the Language Situation in China*, released by the Chinese Ministry of Education, estimated that more than 30 million people around the world were learning Chinese as a foreign language in 2005 (Chinese Ministry of Education, 2006). The number had risen to 50 million by March 2012 (*People's Daily*, 2012). This process has been actively promoted by the Chinese government with the establishment of Confucius Institutes (CIs), using a similar concept to the one underpinning the UK's British Council, France's Alliance Française and Germany's Goethe Institute (*Hanban*, 2012).

All CIs around the world are coordinated through China's Confucius Institute Headquarters in Beijing, also known as *Hanban*, the Office of Chinese Language Council International. *Hanban* is composed of representatives from 12 ministries and commissions within the Chinese central government under the direct auspices of the Chinese Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. The Chinese government had spent more than \$500 million by 2011 on the CI project and has plans to expand it further in the near future (*Bloomberg*, 2011). One significant item of expenditure was the CI website, which cost nearly six million US dollars (35.2 million yuan), and earned notoriety domestically as "the most expensive website in history" amid challenges to its financial transparency (*Epochtimes*, 2010; *Southern Metropolis Weekly*, 2012). By the end of 2011, 861 CIs and their counterpart in secondary education, Confucius Classrooms, had been set up in 105 countries and regions in the world, with the USA hosting the largest number in a single country. In less than ten years of existence there were already more CIs than branches of the British Council, which was founded over 60 years ago. The Alliance Française has the biggest network, with 1,081 branches, but has been in existence for over 120 years.

The spread of CIs seems to indicate a degree of haste, which is perhaps one reason why they have proved controversial.

State councillor Chen Zhili proposed naming these new institutes after the most prominent representative figure of Chinese philosophy—Confucius—in March 2004. However, Confucianism has served different political and cultural purposes throughout China’s history. In linking the initiative with Confucius, the Chinese government chose to turn their back on decades of anti-Confucianism from the 1916 “New Culture Movement” to the 1972 “Criticise Lin Biao, Criticise Confucius” campaign” (Starr, 2009, p.68). *Hanban* averred that the name was chosen primarily as a branding rather than philosophical issue (Liu, 2007) as Confucius has positive associations with teaching and traditional culture (Bell, 2008; Wang, 2006). Its Chinese equivalent, *Kong Zi* is a widely respected name throughout the areas of Chinese cultural heritage, including Korea, Japan and many parts of South East Asia (Kim, 2009).

The CIs in the USA represent a new development in China’s relationship after President Richard Nixon's visit signalled a new era of *détente* in 1972. Previous initiatives included the gift of two giant pandas by China, Ling-Ling and Hsing-Hsing, and “ping-pong diplomacy” in the 1970s, and extensive economic and political engagement after China instituted an “Open Door” policy in 1978. Since the first CI was founded in the University of Maryland in November 2004, 75 more had been established in the USA by March 2012 (*People’s Daily*, 2012). Many CIs focus on a particular aspect of Chinese life, such as calligraphy or acupuncture. Unlike the British Council and other Western counterparts, the CIs are embedded in universities—each institute is set up through a partnership between a Chinese university and a university in the host country. The host universities are required to provide premises and a faculty member to serve as administrator. In return, the *Hanban* supplies books, multimedia materials, salaries and airfare for instructors. According to the *Hanban*, the establishment of the CI by partnering with academic institutes around the world “helps to increase academic collaborations, to boost their connection with China, enhance their own language and Chinese studies programmes” (*Hanban*, 2012).

TENSIONS SURROUNDING CONFUCIUS INSTITUTES

The commitment to cultural exchanges implied by the establishment of CIs might be seen as a positive step towards achieving mutual understanding and harmony between two superpowers that have emerged from very different cultural traditions. However, the reactions of some stakeholders in the USA and in China to the growth of CIs in general were not always supportive of the official lines adopted by the respective governments. There has been wide scepticism and criticism in the English-language discourse (e.g., Hartig, 2012; Li, Mirmirani & Ilacqua, 2009; Kurlantzick, 2007; Nye, 2005; Paradise, 2009; Starr, 2009) of China's motives in establishing CIs. Domestic criticism, as noted above, has focused on the amount of resources committed to the project; some comments gathered from weblogs in China display critical opinions suggesting that China is taking a "Great Leap Forward" and spending China's taxpayers' money extravagantly (Cai, 2012; *Epochtimes*, 2012). They suggest, instead, that the Chinese government should adopt a strategy similar in spirit to the "ping-pong diplomacy" of the 1970s and promote Chinese language and culture through less confrontational means.

Tensions arising from the presence of CIs in the USA were revealed by an incident in 2012. An amendment of the working visa policy was issued by the US State Department on May 24 that year, stating that any faculty member working in a university through a college's J-1 exchange programme who teaches students of elementary or secondary school age is violating visa rules. If enacted, 51 Chinese language teachers in CIs would have had to return to China by June 30, 2012 to apply for an appropriate visa. In addition, CIs would also be required to obtain accreditation from the US State Department to continue accepting foreign scholars and professors as teachers (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2012). This directive created a media firestorm, straining relations between China and the USA (*China Daily*, 2012; *The Guardian*, 2012). Many Chinese media characterized the US directive as a "sudden attack" on CIs. A front-page review in the *People's Daily Overseas Edition* (translated and reported by *BBC*, 2012) criticized the directive as "irresponsible and absurd unilateral action". China's official media argued that there was a terrifying "restoration of McCarthyism" in the USA to frustrate China's deployment of soft power. The US State Department backtracked the next day, claiming the move was an administrative error and promising that no Chinese teacher would be forced to leave the country and no accreditation would be required for the CIs. The incident

illustrates that the CIs are, to some extent, a potential source of friction in the amelioration of US–China relations. Table 1 shows an example of multiple views of one particular event regarding CIs from China and USA in both Chinese and English discourse.

Table 1

Views from China and USA regarding the 2012 visa incident

The visa incident (May, 2012)			
		Chinese media	English media
Response from	Official Chinese media	Non-official Chinese media	USA home media
	“Isn’t this harming friendship between Chinese and American people?”	“The government should support more real non-government cultural organizations rather than having CIs directly engage in the course.”	“... was not intended to disrupt the activities of CIs” “This is just simply a regulatory matter”
	<i>China Daily</i> (25 May, 2012)	<i>Southern Metropolis Weekly</i> (1 June, 2012)	<i>The Chronicle of Higher Education</i> (22 May, 2012)

Table 1 showed the sensitivity of topics and issues regarding CI, in particular, the ambiguity of its legal status that confuses the two governments. However, including working visas, legal issues such as programme accreditation, teacher recruitment and their benefit packages, remain a relatedly new area for both sides to work out on the basis of mutual understanding.

Some of the previous studies on CIs are merely introductory works, documenting the growing number of new CIs built in different countries and varieties of cultural activities offered there, leaving little space for discussion of its complex role and ways of management. For example, in China, Zhang and Liu’s (2006; 2008) work focus on the national policy to promote the development of CI as a cultural institute, and in USA, Ding and Saunders’ (2006) study looks at the impact of the global spread of CIs as a project of Chinese soft power in the West. However, there has been little or no work comparing the views of CIs in the two countries. To this end, this paper analyses

media stories and compares the current views of CIs held by politicians, university academics and other interested parties both within and across the two countries.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Unit of analysis and data

This study adopts a qualitative approach to analyse data—media reports related to the development of CIs—with a view to identifying and comparing views in the USA and China of the role and functions of the institutes. Comparing views as the unit of analysis allows different understandings of a phenomenon to be revealed and demonstrates the complexities inherent in many cross-cultural policy initiatives. The use of secondary sources from the media serves as a proxy for primary sources, which, in this case, are difficult to access. The choice of media reports as data can be justified on the grounds that they usually arise from an event or incident that is sufficiently important to be deemed “newsworthy” by reporters, editors or webmasters. Interviews with various stakeholders—often from different standpoints so as to project a sense of balanced reporting—to elicit their reactions to and views of an event are typical features of the discourse of news reports. In some cases, a statement by a key stakeholder (such as a speech by a government official) is itself the news event. Media statements (especially those made by people acting in an official capacity) are generally formulated with care in order to place a particular viewpoint on the record. Therefore these statements can be treated as generally reliable, although one has to be wary of biased reporting if, for example, the media organisation has a strong ideological orientation, and of quotations being taken out of a full context.

Data collection

To gather data, we undertook an internet search using the key words “Confucius Institute” and its Chinese equivalent “孔子学院”. The search produced more than one hundred articles published in English and Chinese between 2004 (when CIs were first established in the USA) and 2012, when our study was conducted. Relevant stories about Confucius Institutes were mostly found from major international news media (e.g. *BBC*, *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *Bloomberg* and *The Economist*), national and regional newspapers and magazines (e.g. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *China Daily*, *People’s Daily* and *Epochtimes*). The number of articles to be analysed was whittled down by using the following criteria: the chosen article should be clearly related to policies concerning CIs in China; the event or incident reported should be connected with a milestone event in the development of CIs in the USA; and the report should contain quotations from stakeholders that reveal their views of

the CIs and the relevant policy. The quotations were submitted to discourse analysis by the researchers separately and then together in order to produce consensus.

Data analysis

Discourse analysis is used to identify key themes in a written or spoken text. In the present study, the quotations in the articles regarding CIs were analysed in a thematic analysis approach based on categories adapted from the Appraisal Framework conceived by Martin and White (2005). The Appraisal Framework consists of three major categories (i.e. Attitude, Graduation, and Engagement) and a few sub-categories in which textual features are classified according to overarching semantic categories (Martin & White, 2005, p. 34-38). The Appraisal Framework explores how writers pass judgements on readers, their choices of words, states of affairs, and thereby from alliances with those who share these views and distance themselves from those who do not. It also examines how attitudes, judgements and emotive responses are explicitly and implicitly presented in texts and how many be more indirectly implied or presupposed.

The Appraisal Framework provides a good analytical tool for us to better understand the issues that are associated with evaluative language and with the negotiation of inter-subjective positions. Many previous studies have used Martin and White's framework for the analysis of stance in media discourse. For instance, Martin (2004) used Appraisal Framework to investigate the ways that writers influenced readers to take a certain position in an editorial from a Hong Kong magazine. Yuan (2009) compared reporting on one particular natural disaster in China with one single article from China and one from New York Times. Similarly, in a comparative way, Zhu (2009) presented a lexical study on news reporting from China Daily and a number of American newspapers. In a recent article, Liu and Stevenson (2013) examined stance patterns in cross-cultural media discourse by comparing news reports in one Chinese, one Australian Chinese, and one Australian newspaper.

This paper adapted the analytical framework by using two main categories to encapsulate the views being expressed: the attitude of the speaker and the graduation (i.e, the strength) of opinion (Table 2). The category of engagement was eliminated after it was found to be less relevant or useful for the purposes of the study. The first category, attitude, was subdivided into two areas: the speaker's feeling (positive or negative) towards the CIs, and the judgement expressed by the speaker in relation to the incident or event that formed the basis of the news story. The second category, engagement, comprised a single area of focus, namely the force of opinion. In the analysis, statements were examined and key words and phrases identified according to the categories, and this process highlighted the orientation and force of each speaker's

views. The analysis was conducted by the two authors separately before we met to compare analyses and achieve consensus. The separate analyses allowed us to bring to bear our different cultural frames of reference, as one of us (Wang) is a native speaker of Chinese from China with competence in English, and the other (Adamson) is from an English-speaking Western background with competence in Chinese. In the event, consensus was established without any major disagreement.

Table 2

The adapted Appraisal Analytical Framework

Categories	Subcategories	
Attitude (emotional reactions, judgements of behaviour and evaluation of things)	Affect/emotion towards CI	Positive and negative feelings, happy or sad, confident or anxious
	Judgement of policy / social valuation of CI	Attitudes towards behaviour, which we admire or criticise, praise or condemn
Graduation (gradability, adjusting the degree of an evaluation)	Force of opinion on CI	Intensification, comparative and superlative morphology, repetition, and various phonological features

All news reports and journal articles selected for analysis in this study were imported in *Evernote*, a digital information archiving system and coded by tagging the words, phrases and sentences in accordance with the taxonomy in Table 2. This archiving system helps users to store, identify, code and manage textual data with free access and easy tagging functions.

Nevertheless, this study is by no means a complete analysis of views on CI from the two sides. Limitations include the imperfection of the Appraisal Framework itself, as well as the impossibility of including all articles on CIs, and to be fully objective in attitudinal analysis. We leave interpretations to the readers as well by providing a general framework.

VIEWS OF CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE IN CHINA

A study of statements by leading politicians and academics in media stories reveals two different views of CIs within China.

View 1: Showcasing China's soft power for national and international prestige

In a landmark speech in 2006 that, for the first time, explicitly linked the development of China's soft power with language policy and the global spread of Chinese through CIs, Hu Youqin, a National People's Congress deputy and director of the National Advisory Committee for the *Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi* (HSK, the language test of

Chinese that is the equivalent of TOEFL or IELTS), argued that “promoting the use of Chinese among overseas people has gone beyond purely cultural issues, which can help build up our national strength and should be taken as a way to develop our country’s soft power” (*China Daily*, 2006). This statement demonstrates a positive, strongly exhortatory stance towards the potential of Chinese in helping the development of the nation's soft power (i.e., "promoting the use of Chinese", "build up national strength", "a way to develop our country’s soft power”) (see Table 3).

Table 3

Analysis of China View 1

Categories	Subcategories	China View 1
<i>Attitude</i>	Affect/emotion towards CI	Positivity: <i>can help; promoting</i>
	Judgement of policy / social valuation of CI	Highlighting potential political benefits: <i>goes beyond cultural issues; build up our national strength; develop our country’s soft power</i>
<i>Graduation</i>	Force of opinion on CI	Strongly exhortative: <i>should be</i>

The statement attracted attention from central government who then defined the development of CI as a national strategy. The Chinese leadership came to accept the mainstream academic view that the core of soft power is culture and recognized the importance of the connection between language education and soft power. If foreigners understand China better, the argument goes, they will be more accommodating to China’s interests (Starr, 2009). On April 2007, Li Changchun, a member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo in charge of ideology and propaganda visited *Hanban* and gave a keynote speech on the significance of CIs in forming part of China's foreign propaganda strategy (*The Economist*, 2009). After his visit, CIs became the primary project of Hanban, which was soon renamed as “Hanban/ Confucius Institute Headquarters” and a logo of CI was placed next to the original Hanban logo. Later that year, the then President Hu Jintao told the 17th Chinese Communist Party National Congress that “culture has increasingly become an important source of national cohesion and creativity and an important factor in the competition of overall national strength. China must enhance the country’s cultural soft power” (*Xinhua Net*, 2007).

Domestically, the Chinese government portrays the global spread of CIs as a national cause, designed to strengthen China’s sense of self-esteem (Jin, 2006). Empirical studies report that the primary motivation of young volunteers teaching

Chinese in CIs is to promote their language and culture for the country (Wu & Guo, 2007). China ranked 65th on the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index in 2011, a comprehensive system for measuring national reputation around the world, despite its status as the second largest economy. CIs form part of China’s strategy to soften its global image from threatening to benign (Hartig, 2012), from an aggressive “dragon” to a benevolent “panda”. The use of Confucius’ name in the title of the CIs can imply peaceful intentions to the international community because of its associations with the Confucian notion of “harmony” (Wang, 2008).

View 2: Enhancing pride in the Chinese language

Since the People’s Republic China was founded, China’s internal propaganda has been focusing on boosting national pride, first through the promotion of Putonghua as a national official language across China (Lam, 2005), and now by teaching Chinese as a foreign language to speakers of other languages. Within China, the global spread of CIs and the worldwide appetite for Chinese language learning is projected in the mass media as a successful national cause and a significant achievement in winning hearts and minds in the global community. Youth Volunteers Chinese Teachers teaching Chinese abroad in CIs claim that their primary reason for working overseas is to “promote the great Chinese language and culture for the country” (Wu and Guo, 2007, p. 9). Moreover, as Erard (2006) reported, Zhang Xinseng, the then China’s Deputy of Ministry of Education, argued “China, as the mother country of Chinese language, shoulders the responsibility of promoting the Chinese language and helping other nations to learn it better and faster”. The statement ascribes a duty to CIs, as the major vehicle for teaching and promoting the Chinese language, so serve the nation (see Table 4).

Table 4

Analysis of China View 2

Categories	Subcategories	China View 2
<i>Attitude</i>	Affect/emotion towards CI	Language pride: <i>mother country</i> Raising concern: <i>stop the growth</i>
	Judgement of policy / social valuation of CI	Promote Chinese overseas: <i>responsibility, shoulders</i> Threat to Chinese from English: <i>mingling; Chinese will lose its role as an independent linguistic system; Chinese won't be a pure language</i>
<i>Graduation</i>	Force of opinion on CI	Mission: <i>promoting, helping, learn better and faster</i> Warning: <i>if we don't pay attention... don't take measures; won't be pure; will lose; harm the fate</i>

Meanwhile, language pride is also enhanced by appeals to resist the global spread of English, which is often considered to be a threat to the purity of the Chinese language and even harmful to national cohesion and pride in the Chinese language. At the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in 2010, Huang Youyi, the director of the China International Publishing Group, raised an alarm about the intrusion of English into the Chinese language. He proposed taking preventive measures to preserve the purity of Chinese. Huang argued “if we don’t pay attention and don’t take measures to stop the growth in the mingling of Chinese and English, Chinese won’t be a pure language in a couple of years. In the long run, Chinese will lose its role as an independent linguistic system for passing on information and expressing human feelings” (cited in Wang, J., 2010). The sentence is a negative social valuation judgement with strong emotional indicators, such as “if we don’t”, “won’t be”, and “will lose” (see Table 4). The expression not only raises the concern to the public about the “English invasion” (*The Economist*, 2010) but also serves as a justification for regulatory action—major national and regional broadcasters all received a directive from the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television that they must avoid using GDP, NBA, WTO, MP3 and many other frequently used English acronyms in Chinese-language programmes.

VIEWS OF CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE IN THE USA

The views of CIs in the USA need to be seen within the context of recent US history. The growth of the Chinese language in the USA is not a consequence simply of the efforts by China; in the aftermath of the attack on the World Trade Center buildings in 2001, Mandarin Chinese was listed as one of the “critical languages” in the National Security Language Initiative (NSLI) programme. Introduced by George W. Bush in 2006, the NSLI program aims at developing the language skills of American students in Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Hindi, and Persian. The Chinese language was also widely promoted within the Chinese communities in the USA before CIs reached the country (McGinnis, 2008; Wang, S.C. 2007; 2010; Xiao, 2006).

In recent years, CIs have sprouted in many locations in North America, Europe, Asia, Oceania and Africa. In terms of continent, by the end of 2011, North America had the largest number of CIs (51.0%), followed by Europe (26.0%), Asia (14.3%), Oceania (5.2%) and Africa (3.5%). Four major English-speaking countries, USA (377), Britain (77), Australia (33) and Canada (28), accommodate 59.8% of all CIs. The proliferation of CI illustrates the growing appetite for engagement at US

universities. The USA has four times the number of any other country. Views of CI in the USA have focused, on the one hand, on opportunities to engage with China and, on the other, on a growing fear of China’s soft power and its political ideology, of cultural hegemony, and of a threat to academic freedom posed by the presence of CIs on university campuses.

View 1: Opportunities for engagement with China

In May 2006, the College Board of the USA signed an agreement with the *Hanban* to engage the two countries in a variety of activities in order to build capacity for and promote Chinese programmes at both school and college level (Wang, 2007, p.37). The College Board President, Gaston Caperton, commented on Chinese language learning initiatives under the agreement that “Learning about Chinese culture and studying Chinese ... is an excellent way to promote international exchange and understanding between our countries” (College Board, 2011). The statement shows direct positivity in terms of attitude (i.e. “excellent” and “promote”) and also demonstrates USA’s expectation to have opportunities for engage with China (i.e. “international exchange and understanding) (see Table 5). The effect of such close collaborations and connections between China and the USA has expanded, and the influence of CIs is felt in diverse dimensions in US society. The University of Maryland, the University of Chicago, Columbia University and Stanford University are among the leading US colleges that have opened a CI. Each institute has a partner university in China: for example, Stanford’s is Peking University (Paradise, 2009).

Table 5

Analysis of US View 1

Categories	Subcategories	US View 1
<i>Attitude</i>	Affect/emotion towards CI	Positivity: <i>excellent</i>
	Judgement of policy / social valuation of CI	Opportunities for engagement: <i>way to promote international exchange and understanding</i>
<i>Graduation</i>	Force of opinion on CI	Strong value judgement: <i>an excellent way</i>

View 2: Fear of China’s soft power and ideology

While many of today’s popular cultural institutes are stand-alone organizations operating out of their own premises, the CIs are being embedded in university

campuses. The ambiguity of their role and presence causes some US academics considerable anxiety. The economic benefits on the one hand are mitigated by potential limits on academic freedom, which is one reason why some elite universities in the USA have decided against establishing a CI on their campuses. “Once you have a Confucius Institute on campus, you have a second source of opinions and authority that is ultimately answerable to the Chinese Communist Party and which is not subject to scholarly review,” said Arthur Waldron, a professor of international relations at the University of Pennsylvania (*The New York Times*, 2012). The sentence demonstrates an explicit negative stance towards having a CI on campus (“second source” and “not subject to”) and raises an ideological concern that CI is a political tool influenced by CCP (“ultimately answerable to”)

Widespread concerns on CIs focus on their controversial role and ideological identity. There is a fear that the global spread of CIs would inevitably bring in China’s political propaganda and authoritarianism, as the Chinese government may attempt to exert a coercive influence through its CIs and their politics-laden operation and teaching approach (Hartig, 2012). As an ideological extension of the Chinese government, CIs in the USA have inevitably encountered doubts and resistance, and some universities, such as Cornell University, have refused to accept them as part of their educational programmes. The antipathy generated in the USA reveals a tension between the USA’s “hegemonic status in world politics and the ideological incompatibility of China with the Western value system” (*The New York Times*, 2006). In a similar vein, this statement explicitly expresses the reason why China’s CCP-owned CI is fundamentally a misfit in the western education system (“ideological incompatibility”).

Concerns over the threat to academic standards of freedom of speech in US universities were raised when Chinese officials requested no talk about Tibet as a premise to financing the CI at Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, Massachusetts. CI director Li Bailian told North Carolina State provost Warwick Arden that a visit by the Dalai Lama could disrupt “some of the strong relationships we were developing with China” (*Bloomberg*, 2011), including the work of the CI, joint programmes, student exchanges, summer research and faculty collaboration. Indeed, discussions about the Dalai Lama, Tibet independence, the Falun Gong, or the Tiananmen Square massacre are highly sensitive for the Chinese government, but

establishing no-go zones in universities have made top universities in the USA very cautious in their decisions to have a CI on their campuses. For instance, the University of Chicago encountered a petition signed by more than 170 faculty members protesting the establishment of a CI but the university accepted funding from *Hanban* eventually (*Bloomberg*, 2011). In another case, Stanford University rejected a 4 million US dollar sponsorship for a CI professorship in Sinology. Responding to concerns expressed by a *Hanban* official during preparatory discussions for the gift that the endowed professor might discuss politically sensitive issues such as Tibet, Richard Saller, Dean of the School of Humanities and Sciences, commented that “This is something that comes up in other discussions with other donors of endowed chairs, and I said what I always say, which is we don’t restrict the freedom of speech of our faculty, and that was the end of the discussion” (*Bloomberg*, 2011). The statement demonstrates a clear force of opinion on CI from the US side (i.e. “don’t restrict the speech of freedom” and “end of the discussion”). As *Hanban* cherished the Stanford relationship too much to jeopardize it by interfering with academic freedom, the money was used for a professorship in classical Chinese poetry (*Bloomberg* 2011). Columbia University rejected *Hanban*’s offer of creating a CI in 2003 but reconsidered and finally accepted the proposal in 2010, thus hosting the first CI operating in an Ivy League university. However, the director of Columbia’s CI, Liu Lening, stated that “Columbia’s CI is committed to academic integrity and that it would reject any attempt by *Hanban* to censor its research. The CI will review all research proposals, including those that mention Tibet” (*Columbia Spector*, 2011).

Table 6

Analysis of US View 2

Categories	Subcategories	US View 2
<i>Attitude</i>	Affect/emotion towards CI	Raising concern: <i>second source of opinions and authority; not subject to</i>
	Judgement of policy / social valuation of CI	Objection to CCP influence: <i>ultimately answerable to the Chinese Communist Party; ideological incompatibility of China</i>
<i>Graduation</i>	Force of opinion on CI	Strong warning of non-negotiable stance: <i>we don't restrict the freedom of speech; end of the discussion; committed to academic integrity; reject any attempt by Hanban to censor its research</i>

View 3: Creating a new lingua franca

As Zhao and Huang (2010) noted, CIs “around the world are now expected to function as the base supplying CFL curriculum resources, both human and material, and most importantly to provide a network for CFL teachers for better practice and peer support” (p. 138). Through the global spread of CIs, and thereby the Chinese language, China is gradually creating a significant discursive power to challenge the globally dominant English language (Ding & Saunders, 2006; Gil, 2011; Jin, 2006; Zhao & Huang, 2010). Lo Bianco (2007, p.6) describes Chinese as potentially a “new English”. In one of the first detailed media reports on the rising global interest in learning Chinese as a foreign language, *Time* magazine reported that an increasing number of “business leaders and students are tackling the toughest language on earth” in Japan, South Korea and USA, and predicted that the “rest of the world isn't going to wait for people ... to catch up in the race to learn Chinese” (*Time*, 2006). The magazine also quoted from British linguist David Graddol: “If you want to get ahead, learn Mandarin”. Graddol pointed out “in many Asian countries, in Europe and USA, Mandarin has emerged as a new must-have language”. The article expresses a sense that Chinese is becoming a bandwagon to be ignored at one’s own risk (e.g. a “must-have” language).

Table 7

Analysis of US View 3

Categories	Subcategories	US View 3
<i>Attitude</i>	Affect/emotion towards CI	Positivity: <i>recognized the popularity</i>
	Judgement of policy / social valuation of CI	Opportunity for Chinese to become a lingua franca: <i>new English</i> ;
<i>Graduation</i>	Force of opinion on CI	Imperative: <i>must-have language</i>

However, even enthusiastic proponents of Chinese do not predict that it will overtake English as the world’s most commonly used language in the near future (Wang, 2013a). Linguistically, the tonal and the logographic writing systems are challenging for many learners of Chinese as a foreign language (Kane, 2006; Walton, 1989; Xing, 2006). Kane (2006: 11) describes the sound and form of the Chinese language: “Spoken Chinese sounds like a rapid series of almost identical monosyllables with rising and falling intonations. Written Chinese looks like a random set of stokes, dots and dashes. In its handwritten form it looks like a series of undifferentiated squiggles.” Acquiring these two features of the Chinese language can

only be accomplished by dedicated learners. With a tonal phonetic system and a logographic script system, and the independence of the written script from the spoken language makes Chinese learning a painstaking task for students from western countries using alphabets as the script system. To achieve basic proficiency, at least 3,500 different characters are considered to be needed in terms of daily reading in accordance with the “Table of the Most Commonly Used Chinese Characters in China” (State Language Commission, 1988), which requires foreign students to learn about 35 words a day to achieve basic literacy in Chinese.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study explains how disputes and confusion surrounding CIs have arisen from the complicated and diverse view of the institutes in China and the West. Analysis of the Chinese views shows that CIs could represent its peaceful rise strategy and improve its national image abroad, while, at the same time, justifying authoritarianism and boosting nationalism and linguistic pride at home. Views of the CIs in the USA show, on the one hand, fear of cultural and political hegemony and, on the other, an appreciation of the economic advantages they might offer. The ambiguous nature of CIs, their embedding within US university campuses and the fact that the CIs can be seen as representative of China’s rising power at a time of economic stagnation in the USA may explain why the institutes provoke sensitive feelings in both countries.

The CIs face two major challenges. They have spread in the USA despite some resistance because the learning of Chinese is riding a wave of popularity. This popularity is due largely to its great commercial potential (Gil, 2008; Lo Bianco, 2007) rather than enthusiasm for Chinese culture. If China were to lose its economic or political strength for any reason, there would probably be a significant decrease in the desire to learn Chinese. Another challenge to CIs stems from the lack of a comprehensive and coherent strategy for CIs to promote the notion of China’s peaceful rise in a way that mollifies the host countries of the institutes. Chinese officials and leaders in the CIs need to learn how to deal with their international partners in difficult situations and to seek solutions from practical rather than ideological perspectives. China's ambassador to Britain, Liu Xiaoming, has accused critics of its overseas language and culture training centres of “cold war thinking” arguing that “They criticize Confucius Institutes for being a tool of China's “national propaganda”. They label teaching Mandarin as “ideological infiltration”, so they have from time to time made irresponsible remarks in western media.” Liu’s comments reveal the gulf in mutual comprehension that needs to be overcome. For the time being, though, the CIs, with their unique mode of operation and potential global

impact, will remain ill-defined in both China and the USA. As Paradise (2009) pointed out “only time will tell whether the Confucius Institute can help spark a more sympathetic understanding of China and usher in a more benign view of it.” The CI project is indeed a work in progress and this process will take China and the host countries of the CIs a long time to figure out an optimal approach for operation.

With regard to future studies, the complexity and controversy surrounding CIs could provide scholars with a rich research agenda. As Yang (2010) pointed out, most theorists have borrowed the concept of soft power to analyse the CIs (Ding & Saunders, 2008; Gil, 2008; Kurlantzick, 2007; Starr, 2009), but failed to link them to China’s global engagement and internationalization in higher education and its impact on China’s national strategy, foreign policy, national identity and language policy. As China re-emerges as an economic force, it seeks to achieve recognition on the international stage through establishing plausible state authority and a change in global imageries and recognition (Park, 2013). In the short run, China’s soft power policy will likely remain largely *ad hoc* and reactive. But in the long run, if China hopes to see CIs achieve what other international cultural institutes have achieved, comparative studies of these cultural institutes are necessary. Interactions between China and the USA in China’s pursuit of internationalization deserve focused attention so that the strategy can lead to fewer tensions and therefore become more sustainable.

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