

2012 Activity Report of the Confucius Institute at The University of Geneva

The Confucius Institute in Geneva University was inaugurated on November 8th 2011. It is the first Confucius Institute (CI) in Switzerland. The CI is based on a partnership between Geneva University and Renmin University of China. The Institute is located in a beautiful 19th century house by Lemane Lake. It has a nice name: Villa Rive-Belle. Director Basile Zimmermann, Chinese director Xiurong Zhao, Honghua Xie, Yunfeng Mu, a scientific collaborator and a part-time secretary now work in the CI. Although there is a few staff, we have achieved a lot within one year.

1. Chinese Language Classes and Chinese Culture classes

We organized Chinese classes and Chinese culture classes since we were founded. In order to guarantee the teaching quality, all classes are open to the students who are in second year of college and above. The Faculty and administrative staff of Geneva University can sit in the class, but they have to register for the class and finish homework and take tests as students do. If they can't catch up in the class, the teacher can ask them to leave at any time. The course is available to all of the University of Geneva and the partner institutions such as UNIL, EPFL, UNINE including all disciplines and faculties combined. We have classes as follow:

A) Contemporary Chinese Culture (3 credits, 2 hours per week)

With spectacular economic development in the People's Republic of China over the past thirty years, Sinology needs to answer questions from an audience on more and wider issues, moving away from its traditional area of expertise. This seminar offers a crash course on contemporary China, including basic training in "Chinese culture", as well as methodological tools in professionalizing perspective.

Prerequisites: none

Teacher: Basile Zimmermann

B) China today, analysis techniques (3 credits, 2 hours per week)

This seminar provides an introduction to research methods in social sciences applied to contemporary Chinese studies. Through practical exercises, students have the opportunity to choose and explore their own areas of research, and to try various methodologies, including comparative analysis.

Prerequisites: none

Teacher: Basile Zimmermann

C) Introduction to Modern Chinese I (6 credits, 4 hours per week)

Introduction to spoken and written modern Chinese language.(beginner 1)

Prerequisites: From the second year of BA

Teacher: Dr Poizat-Xie, Visiting Professor of Renmin University Mr. MU Yunfeng from November 2012 on.

D) Introduction to Chinese Language II (6 credits, 4 hours per week)

Introduction to modern Chinese language spoken and written (beginner 2)

Prerequisites: From the second year of BA, students must have taken the C (or equivalent) and passed the exam

Teacher: Visiting Professor of Renmin University, Mr. MU Yunfeng

E) Introduction to Chinese Language III (6 credits, 4 hours per week)

Introduction to spoken and written modern Chinese language (Intermediate 1)

Prerequisites: From the second year of BA, students must have taken the D (or equivalent) and passed the exam

Teacher: Visiting Professor of Renmin University, Ms ZHAO Xiurong, Mr. MU Yunfeng from November 2012 on.

F) Introduction to Chinese IV (6 credits, 4 hours per week)

Introduction to modern Chinese language spoken and written (Intermediate 2)

Prerequisites: From the second year of BA, students must have taken the E (or equivalent) and passed the exam

Teacher: Visiting Professor of Renmin University, Mr. MU Yunfeng

All classes that we offer at the CI provide ECTS credits at Geneva University, regardless of the faculty in which the students are registred. This is a great achievement that we have made in regards with Hanban's requirements.

2. Research Activities

Prof. Zimmermann has filed several application forms for research grants and funding. He has attended many meetings and reunions with a dozen of fellow professors in China, in the United States of America, in France, in Switzerland to set up future research projects. For instance, on September 9, he participated in the annual conference of the European Association of Chinese Studies in Paris and on October 18 in the annual conference of the Society for Social Studies of Science in Copenhagen. These projects are of interdisciplinary nature and touch upon the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, computer science, neurobiology and psychiatry. These projects will be presented in detail in a further report on the Institute's activities. Our main partners are the University of Geneva, the University of Lausanne, the EPFL (the Swiss Federal Polytechnic School, in Lausanne) and the University of Fribourg. The professors involved in these collaborations are thrilled by these projects and opportunities of collaboration and exchange with Chinese counterparts. Some of these efforts are intended to promote research activities between the two partner universities. For instance, we are currently working on the organization of a conference scheduled for January 2013, which will bring together the Universities of

Renmin, Harvard, Sydney and Geneva on the topic of property rights and protection. We also organized a participation of a professor in History of Religions from Geneva University to Renmin' summer school in 2013.

3. Organization HSK Test and Participation in the ‘Chinese Bridge’

The CI organized the HSK test in March 2012. There were 121 participants in this test. We had the most students this year since 2004, when the HSK test was first organized in Geneva.

We are also involved in the Chinese Bridge competition organized by the Chinese Embassy. Our Chinese teacher Honghua Xie was the chief of the judges. She also published several textbooks about the HSK test.

4. Literary Translation Workshop and Visiting Researchers in

Translation Studies

The Institute has set up a monthly workshop of literary translation from Chinese to the major European languages (English, French, Italian, Russian, and German). A dozen people including six professional translators from the United Nations have taken part in this monthly workshop.

We have also hosted during four months two Chinese translation researchers from the CIPG (China International Publishing Group). They took part as part of our classes on culture, the workshop on translation and a part of some of the classes of the FTI (Department of Translation and Interpretation of the University of Geneva).

On May 25th, we have organized a round table discussion titled “On the Challenge of Translating Mandarin Typical Expressions in the Media”, dedicated to the difficulties met in the translation of expression that are particular to Mandarin.

5. Seminar on the Teaching of Mandarin

On the 9th of June of this year, we organized the first seminar in French Speaking Switzerland on the teaching of Mandarin. This seminar was entitled “Gaps and Synergies in the Teaching of Written and of Spoken Mandarin”.

A second seminar followed on the 1st of December, entitled "Difficulties related to the terminology used in Chinese grammar". On average, more than fifty teachers have taken part to this seminar, including the sixteen speakers.

Dr. Poizat-Xie has also taken part to a conference titled “The Teaching of Mandarin to French Speakers”, organized by the INALCO (the National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations, Paris France) and the University of Languages of Beijing.

6. Applications for Research Funding

Prof. Zimmermann has worked intensively on raising research funding. He submitted an application for a fellowship from the European Research Council (ERC), called 'ERC Starting Grant' and endowed with EUR 1.5 million. This project is centred on a theoretical analysis of the notion of culture. Prof. Zimmermann will submit applications for the Swiss National Science Foundation as well, including one in January 2013 and one in April 2013. We will give up the chance in January because of the Property law, but we will apply in April.

Last April, Prof. Zimmermann had submitted to the Swiss National Science Foundation a project to finance a research on material culture that would have enabled the institute to open a 'grant-holder professorship' position as well as two research assistant' positions. This grant was submitted in collaboration with a researcher from Cornell University and would have been endowed with CHF 1.3 million. Unfortunately this application was rejected in the very last round of evaluation. The competition for this particular grant is very fierce. This year only forty projects out of 284 were accepted.

7. Contribution to Society

Prof. Zimmermann regularly assists the University of Zürich and the University of Basel in the creation of their Confucius Institutes. As a matter of fact, their projects have met with many difficulties. This support continues to this day.

Prof. Zimmermann has also taken part in bimonthly meetings with the State of Geneva to set up a partnership with the municipality of Beijing.

8. Alumni Visiting

On June 25th, the Institute hosted nine professors from various Chinese Universities, all alumni of Swiss Universities. In the morning they have met with our staff and with students interested in China to discuss the benefits and also challenges of studying abroad. Upon arrival, the delegation visited the main building of the Confucius Institute. The director, Prof. Basile Zimmermann joined the reception and introduced the establishment and the main concepts for the development of the Confucius Institute. He emphasized that considering the unique status of Geneva and the fact that UNIGE has a lot of cooperation with China in the social sciences, the Confucius Institute in Geneva has an aim of enhancing the cooperation with China in fields of social sciences and humanities, but also international relations, law studies, and economics. Dr. Xie's presentation focused on the teaching and studying of Chinese language.

9. Criminal Justice and Economic and Financial Crimes in China and in Switzerland

On August 23rd and 24th we have organized a workshop entitled “Criminal Justice and Economic and Financial Crimes in China and in Switzerland” during which professors and deans of the Universities of Renmin and Geneva as well as one of the prosecutor of the State of Geneva discussed the differences and similarities of Swiss and Chinese systems with respect to the repression of economic and financial criminality.

Professor Xiao Zhonghua presented *Criminal law Legislation Reform and Justice Status on Financial Crimes in China*; Professor Ursula CASSANI presented *Criminal Law Reform and Trends in the Fight against Economic and Financial Crimes in Switzerland: New Challenges*; Ms. XU Fans’ topic was *The Characteristics and Development Trend of Financial Crime in China*; Ms. Martina KUNZ presented *A comparative perspective on financial crime law*; Dr. WANG Haiqiao talked about *Chinese Information and Financial Crime Control*; Professor Christian BOVET presented *Electronic communications and surveillance in Switzerland: judicial and regulatory aspects*. Then there was a round table discussion, every one participated in the discussion, all participants really enjoyed this conference.

10. Exporing the opportunities of Teaching Chinese in Middle School

In March of this year, Dr. Poizat-Xie set up a meeting with the various institutions teaching Mandarin in the French speaking part of Switzerland to discuss their needs and expectations with regards to the Institute. Dr Poizat-Xie, in accordance with the objectives of the CI, is working on the implementation of a program of supervision of Chinese language teaching in the French part of Switzerland.

Last September 29th, Dr. Poizat took part in a meeting, organized by the Swiss Association for the Teaching of Mandarin in Secondary Schools, which took place in Neuchâtel, to discuss the integration of Mandarin as an optional, specific or complementary course in Swiss secondary schools.

11. Conference and Workshop with Professor Howard S. Becker

We invited the famous American sociologist Howard S. Becker come to Geneva University to a conference on 15th–16th, November. The topic of this conference was *Reasoning from Cases—Some Uses of Comparison*. Professor Becker is 84 years old, and he is a major figure in contemporary sociology. He has published many books, for instance: *Outsiders* (1963); *Art Worlds* (1982); *Tricks of the Trade* (1998); *Telling about Society* (2007); *Writing for Social Scientists* (1986). He has lots of experience in scientific research, field survey and academic training in sociology. For more than half a century, the work of Becker influences all social

sciences including the study of deviance, organizations, labor, medicine, or arts and culture.

We invited him to advise us on how to develop our program in New Sinology. Traditional sinology need to be reformed - but how to reform it? We need to solve problems of methodology. Professor Becker put forward the problems of comparison, and paved the way for comparison studies in the CI. In the future we will organize many academic conferences related to New Sinology. This conference turned out to be a great success. There were over 200 people in the audience including professors from sociology department and students from Geneva University. Many of them sat on the floor of corridor and some students couldn't find a place to squeeze in.

We organized a workshop titled *Comparing Everyday Objects from China and the West* in the CI on 16th November. All staff of the CI joined the workshop. They all presented their research results. Basile Zimmermann introduced the New Sinology program from Hanban, explaining how we will try to combine these projects with our studies at the Institute. He presented his research involving a comparison between the Google and Baidu (the famous Chinese search engine); Manon Widmer compared the website of Xinhua News Agency and Reuters' website; Nadia Sartoretti compared Chinese TV series and Indian Bollywood movies. Professor Becker gave comments on contents and methods. All participants were heavily involved in the discussion and asked many interesting questions. We had to shorten their talks in order ensure it finished on time. They all are looking forward to the next workshop like this.

12. Popularized Chinese and Chinese Culture

The Institute participated in the Cite des métiers in Geneva. This exhibition is organized for teenagers to explore the different kinds of jobs they can do in the future. They can interact with professionals, refine their search through seven poles : applied arts, commerce, construction, nature and environment, health and social services, hotel catering, engineering. The CI had one exhibition table, shared with the Department of Chinese studies, where the teenagers practiced Chinese calligraphy, listened to Chinese music and watched Chinese movies. They were especially curious with Chinese characters and calligraphy. This activity aroused Swiss young adults' interests in Chinese culture.

13. Hanban Scholarships

The Institute has received the first scholarships granted by the Hanban: several students from the language classes of the Institute and who took part in the HSK examination have had the opportunity to study in China. The Chinese Embassy has also awarded 15 summer scholarships to our students as well as to those of the Chinese Studies Unit of the University of Geneva. We have preselected the candidates and helped them to prepare their applications.

14. Website Design

We paid much attention to the design of our website which created at the very beginning with the founding of the CI. We have our own blog and mailing list now. There are 210 people on our mailing list; they get regular emails about the activities of the CI. We are also a paperless office. All staff use Google calendar to organise their work schedules. We use Dropbox as archive for administrative documents, and we assign tasks using Evernote.

15. Achievements and challenges

It is less than one year since we established the CI. We have organized many activities and conferences in such short period with the efforts that all the staff have put in. The CI is a window where Swiss people learn about China. Our activities are well reported in the media in Geneva. But we all know that we have lot of work to do, we are still growing up, and there is a long way to go. We will meet obstacles and difficulties, but we will work together to overcome these problems, and we believe we will achieve more next year.

The main challenge we face now is that we don't have enough administrative staff; the director and Chinese director have to do lots of secretarial work. We hope Hanban will help us to solve this problem in future in order to make sure the CI can work more efficiently.