



中国传媒大学
COMMUNICATION UNIVERSITY OF CHINA

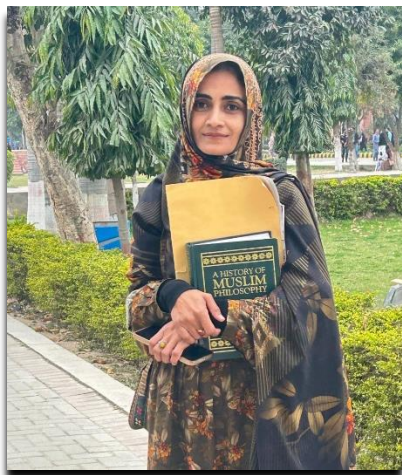


Institute for a Community
with Shared Future
人类命运共同体研究院



Learning Mandarin, Embracing Culture:

Confucius Institutes in Pakistan



By Ms. Noshaba kaunwel, a Participant of ICSF-UoS Fellowship Program 2025-26 at University of Sargodha

Published on 8th January 2026

Language learning in the modern globalized society has transcended the purpose of communication into an avenue of cross-cultural enlightenment and economic gain. Mandarin Chinese is one of the languages that has acquired significant significance in most parts of the world especially in Pakistan. Due to



the ever-growing presence of China as a major economic, political and cultural power in the global arena, the demand of Mandarin speakers has soared up. To meet this need, the introduction of Confucius Institutes (CIs) has emerged as one of the major measures to popularize the Chinese language and culture in the world. The Confucius Institutes are acquiring an increasing importance in terms of educating the populace on the Chinese language and customs, and at the same time, cultivating stronger cultural connections between the two countries in Pakistan, where the bilateral relationship with China is growing, including such initiatives as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Wang and Chen, 2022).

Confucius Institute program, which was initiated by the Chinese government in 2004, aims at educating Chinese in languages and culture across the world. After its inauguration, more than 500 Confucius Institutes have been set up in more than 140 countries, among them, in Pakistan. The first Confucius Institute in Pakistan was established in Islamabad in 2006 and with time other institutes have been established in

such big cities as Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar and Multan. They are established as non-profit educational centers, the main role of which is to study the Mandarin language, as well as take part in diverse cultural events (Liu & Zhang, 2021). The very essence of these institutes is to promote cultural interaction and linguistic competence, and they have now become a vital part of the overall scenario of Sino-Pakistani relations, especially in the context of the economic partnership within CPEC (Gao and Zhang, 2019).



The functions of Confucius Institutes in Pakistan have changed to provide language lessons to include the status of cultural centers where students, professional, and even the general population can learn about Chinese culture, arts, and modern values in the society. The institutes contribute to putting the learning of the Mandarin language into context with the larger cultural picture by encouraging the appreciation of the rich historical heritage and modern developments in China. Consequently, these institutes do not possess only the ability to increase linguistic proficiency, but also the ability to cultivate a greater understanding of Chinese customs and practices, both of traditional Chinese medicine and martial arts on the one hand; art exhibitions and film screenings on the other hand (Zhou and Li, 2018). These activities show the multidimensionality of the



influence of the Confucius Institutes on Pakistan, stating that both language and cultural knowledge are important.

The strengthening of the economic and political relationship between the two countries, especially with China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), is one of the most important factors that have led to the increasing interest in Mandarin Chinese in Pakistan. CPEC is a multibillion-dollar infrastructure initiative meant to establish a web of highway, rail and energy pipelines that will link Pakistan to China as well as other parts of Central Asia. With the initiative underway, the need to communicate effectively with the Chinese in business and the government continues to grow among the Pakistanis. The Mandarin language has thus been turned into a strategic asset, not just to people in the trade and commerce industries, but also to academia and diplomacy where one can play a role in developing CPEC and other bilateral projects (Wang and Chen, 2022).

In addition to language mastering, the Confucius institutes in Pakistan also focus on the culture. They also cover the whole spectrum of cultural events aimed at helping to understand the Chinese heritage better by the Pakistanis. Chinese calligraphy practices and music performances, Chinese New Year and Mid-Autumn Festival are some of these activities that help to emphasize the richness of



Chinese culture (Baker and Houghton, 2020). Students and visitors to these institutes are

able to see the art and literature and philosophy of centuries that have influenced the Chinese society.

Due to the further increase of the Chinese influence on the world, the role of Confucius Institutes in Pakistan will gain importance. Such institutes will probably enter deeper into the Pakistani educational environment, and more and more students will be interested in the Mandarin education in the context of career and self-development. Additionally, with the intensification of the economic relationship between China and Pakistan, more professionals skilled and well-prepared in Mandarin and knowledgeable about the Chinese culture will be required. The

Confucius Institutes have a chance to fulfill this demand and provide courses that are more specific to business Chinese, Chinese international



relations, and even Chinese technology and innovation, which will become more topical as the CPEC and other cooperation projects develop (Liu & Zhang, 2021).

The opening of Confucius Institutes in Pakistan is one of the steps to strengthening bilateral relations between China and Pakistan especially in education and cultural exchange. These institutes are the major intermediaries of learning of Mandarin language, cultural absorption, and understanding between each other. The role of the institutes will become even more significant as Pakistan increasingly becomes involved in China in the framework of CPEC and other projects. The Confucius Institutes in Pakistan despite the



中国传媒大学
COMMUNICATION UNIVERSITY OF CHINA



Institute for a Community
with Shared Future
人类命运共同体研究院

criticism about the possible political overtones of their establishment have, so far, provided a positive contribution to the development of education as well as to cultural diplomacy. They are contributing to the more integrated and cooperative future of both countries by encouraging Mandarin language knowledge as well as a better comprehension of the Chinese culture (Wang and Chen, 2022).