

孔子  
学院

CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE



石库门：承载上海历史与文化的符号

STONE-FRAMED GATE HOUSES: A UNIQUE SYMBOL OF SHANGHAI'S CULTURAL HERITAGE

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# How a Confucius Institute Director Started to Learn Chinese as a Beginner

## 从无到有： 一位孔院院长学习中文的故事



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在希腊亚里士多德大学有这样一位教授，他不会说中文，但她的办公室里有几本中文书。她在国际语言会议上买了一些书，这些书对她很有吸引力。有时她会打开书看看，然后久把书放回书架。那位教授不是别人，就是我！

2018年12月，亚里士多德大学和上海外国语大学签订了合作协议，一所新孔院成立了。亚里士多德大学校长让我当孔院院长。校长问我是否愿意，我的第一反应是“……但我不会说中文”。校长却说：“可是没有其他会说中文的教授了。”我回答说：“我来试试吧！”我在心里想：现在我必须要学中文了，这样就合理了！

孔院的成立不是一个简单的过程。2019年底，我们的孔院刚刚准备好，上海外国语大学派的陈老师就到了希腊。

2020年2月，我们汉语课开始了。当时招到109名学生，把他们分成了九个组。他们有大学生和上班族，年龄从18到60多岁不等，都非常渴望进入中文世界。

对我来说，2020年2月25日是一个非常重要的日子，这是我第一次参加汉语课。我还记得第一次上汉语课的情景。陈老师邀请为什么汉语中声调这么重要，我看到了学生幸福的笑。我那时就想：“他是一个非常特别的老师，汉语是一种特别的语言，我要努力学习，天天夸，夸夸他！”但是，大家都知道，后来由于疫情，我们都转向在线教学，同时我们必须帮助学生适应新情况。陈老师和我们必须继续鼓励、激励学生来学习汉语。

从那时起，我便开始了汉语学习的旅程。我学汉语缘分也深出了水雷。作为一名语言学者，我知道所有语言都同样重要和特殊。这是语言学的基本原理。但作为孔院外方院长，我学习汉语，进入汉语世界，我个人和学术的身份也有了一些不同。换句话说，我从“Tsokalidou教授”成为了“罗老师”——一位非常开心学汉语的院长。学习和推广中文，成了我主要的学术和个人目标。现在，我完全专注于中文而不是其他任何语言。

对西方人来说，中文是一门具有挑战性的语言，主要是因为在中国我们使用的是汉字而不是字母，这使得中文更加特别，且更有吸引力。此外，我认为汉字让中文有一种特殊的表达力，学习中文让人更愿意去思考一些哲理性的问题，思考不同概念之间的关系。

另外，对我来说，现在学习中文是生活中的一部分。汉语像一位非常严肃的“情人”一样，它要求我每天花的时间都必须和它在一起。我已经沉迷于中文，连睡在中文词汇里，越学越着迷。这就是为什么我敢说，我不知道如何感谢我的第一位中文老师，他为我打开了中文的大门。英语中有句话说“The Greeks must have a word for it”，我觉得中国人应该也有一种特殊的表达方式。当然，现在我知道在汉语里可以这样说：一日为师，终生为父。

如今我的梦想是有一天能再回到中国，在中国大学做关于中文教材的研究，多学习汉语，体验地道的中国文化，也许这不是不可能的！

几个月前，我学了几句孔子的话：“吾十有五而志于学，三十而立，四十而不惑，五十而知天命，六十而耳顺，七十而从心所欲，不逾矩”。我现在五十多岁了，我已经准备好了去接受自己和中文的“天命”了。

（罗兰系希腊亚里士多德大学孔子学院院长）

At Aristotle University of Thessaloniki Greece, there is a professor who has a habit of keeping a few Chinese books in her office, although she could not speak any Chinese. She bought these books at the international language conferences she attended, for they looked so fun and interesting. From time to time, she would take these books out for a read, before carefully putting them back on the shelf.

In December 2018, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki entered into agreement with Shanghai International Studies University to jointly set up a Confucius Institute. Who would have thought that the Rector of Aristotle University wanted to appoint that professor as its Greek Director! As you might have guessed, that professor was me. When asked if I was interested, my first reaction was “... I'm afraid I can't speak any Chinese”. “There is no other professor who can,” came the Rector's reassuring words. I made up my mind at that moment: “Now the time has come for me to learn Chinese, for real! Let me give it a try!”

As it turned out, it was not easy to build a Confucius Institute from scratch. The institute was finally up and running at the end of 2019, and before long, Shanghai International Studies University

sent Mr. Chen Sen, the institute's first Chinese teacher, to campus.

Our Chinese class started in February 2020. Altogether, 109 students signed up as our first students, whom we put into nine groups. They were a divergent group of people, ranging from 18 to 60 years in age. Some were college students, while others already started work, but all of them were excited to enter the world of Chinese learning.

For me personally, February 25, 2020, became a day to remember because I had my first Chinese class on that day. I still remember how it went on and how Mr. Chen stressed the importance of tones in pronunciation in class. I saw happiness on the face of my classmates. All I could think of was: "Mr. Chen must be a special teacher. Chinese is such a special language. I must use all the time I could to learn it well!" Unfortunately, due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, we were soon forced to switch to online teaching. We must concentrate our efforts on helping the students adapt to this new change. Mr. Chen and I must do all we could to keep them interested and motivated as before.

This is how I started my journey of Chinese learning and how my fate with this language was sealed. As a linguist by training, I know that one basic principle of linguistics is all languages hold equal importance and significance. But by serving as the Greek Director of the Confucius Institute, I also became a learner and explorer of the Chinese language. It gave new meaning to my personal and academic identities. I used to be called "Professor Tsokolidou", but now I became known as "Ms. Luo" — a director who is an avid Chinese language learner. Learning Chinese and promoting Chinese have now become my academic and personal mission. Out of all languages, I discover my life's calling in Chinese.

For most Westerners, Chinese is a challenging language, probably because it uses characters rather than letters, but characters also make Chinese unique and magical. Additionally, I believe characters give Chinese a special power of expression. Learning Chinese makes people more willing to ponder the philosophical questions and the relationship between different concepts.

Learning Chinese has now become part of my life. Chinese is like a demanding "lover", who asks for every minute of my free time. I'm addicted to Chinese and its vocabularies. The more I learn,

the more I fall under its spell.

This is why I often say that I don't know how to properly thank my first Chinese teacher for taking me into this wonderland. In English, we say "The Greeks must have a word for it", but I believe "Chinese people must have a similar way of expression". I'm glad that I now know of a Chinese saying which can describe my gratitude to Mr. Chen, "a teacher for one day, and a father for life".

If given the chance, I wish to go back to China one day, do research on Chinese textbooks at a Chinese university, learn more Chinese, and experience more authentic Chinese culture. I'm convinced this dream will not be beyond my reach!

A few months ago, I picked up a new saying made by the great sage Confucius: "At fifteen, I had my mind bent on learning. At thirty, I stood firm. At forty, I had no doubts. At fifty, I knew the decrees of Heaven. At sixty, my ear was an obedient organ for the reception of truth. At seventy, I could follow what my heart desired, without transgressing what was right." I am now well in my fifties, and I am ready to accept my "destiny" of learning the Chinese language.

