Professor Zu-yuan Chen

From Duality to Unity: Integrating Culture in Language Classes

Although language teaching has admittedly always contained a cultural dimension, language and culture often blend in relatively divergent ways. Culture in language learning is often seen as a bonus or hors d’oeuvre, an expendable fifth skill tacked on to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading and writing. This lecture attempts to present a new approach to cultural integration and immersion. Instead of taking culture as a set of behavioral practices or social conditions, this approach is intended to identify and gain insights into the very fabric of culture that governs personal behavior and directs social dynamics. In addition, this approach distinguishes itself by treating the exquisite connection between language and culture in a systematic and structured manner. Culture thus becomes the very core of language learning, transitioning its role from context to text, and its relation with language from duality to unity.

Biography

Zu-yuan Chen is Professor of Chinese Language and Literature and Director of the Confucius Institute of Chinese Opera at Binghamton University, State University of New York. He holds a PhD from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a Master’s degree from Fudan University in China. He is a recipient of SUNY Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching (2009) and the University Award for Excellence in International Education (2013). His research interests include pre-modern Chinese poetry and poetics, Chinese culture, Confucianism and language pedagogy. Chen is the author of seven books and many articles. Under his leadership, the Confucius Institute of Chinese Opera at Binghamton University, the only one of its kind in the world, has developed into a center that introduces Chinese language and culture, featuring Beijing opera, to colleges and communities nationwide.