

# Teaching of Russian Language in Chinese Universities

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## Abstract

China is constantly expanding cooperation in the field of education, including joint training. The interest to Russian language in China is increasing: more and more of the Chinese young people are seeking to explore it. In this article author is introducing a common fact of teaching Russian language in the universities in China, methods of teaching Russian language in the Chinese universities, analysis of the difficulties and the problems of teaching Russian language and methods, which will solve these problems.

**Keywords:** Teaching of Russian language, Methods of teaching, Difficulties and problems of teaching Russian language

## 1. Introduction

Foreign language is an important tool of international communication. It extends our knowledge in various areas of science and culture. The Russian language is not only the language of ethnic groups, but also the language of international communication and cooperations, plus it is also the official language of a large number of international organizations. Language of any country is a critical component of its culture and therefore the study of Russian language in China – is an acquaintance by means of language with Russian culture, with its moral principles and traditions, with its cultural and historical values.

First need to study Russian language in China began in the late XVII century, and since then the Russian language is quite popular and in demand in China. A discrete role in the spread of the Russian language and culture in China played by the representatives of the Russian intelligentsia, who had emigrated in the early twentieth century. Thanks to them, Russian language was all stronger taking up its position in the contiguous country. "To learn Russian language by the whole nation", "Russian and Chinese are brothers forever" – such slogans were proclaimed in 1949 after the Chinese People's Revolution. The 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s marked an unprecedented manifestation of interest in Russian language and culture in China (Emirziadi, L.V, 2013).

China has borders close to Russia and has relationships with the countries where the Russian language is the means of communication and therefore the Russian language is considered to be the main foreign language, learned at Chinese universities and secondary schools.

Nowadays, Chinese universities are using programs on Russian language, approved by the Division of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education of the PRC. In accordance with its decision, universities were issued a set of new textbooks and manuals on the Russian language. The specialty "Russian language" is taught in more than 120 Chinese universities and the number of students exceeds 25 thousands.

## Current Teaching Situation of Russian Language in Chinese Universities

Training of the Russian language in Chinese universities reaffirms the importance of the Russian language as the language of international communication, as well as the importance of the preparation of the highly educated and well-prepared professionals. Currently, in Chinese universities the process of teaching is divided into two stages. The first stage is called basic stage, which takes two years. The second stage, an advanced stage, lasts for two years.

### 1.1 Objectives of teaching Russian language at the basic stage

Students master their knowledge of the grammar, vocabulary and phonetics; basic skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing; they master the elementary language communication ability; also acquire knowledge in the field of regional studies as the basis for a more advanced stage of education.

In the process of teaching, students have high sustained interest in the study of Russian language and friendly attitude towards country's language and its people, the desire and ability to enter in the world of a different culture; the development of such abilities like perception, attention, language memory, imagination, intuitive, logical thinking and self-learning.

### 1.2 Educational Requirements at the basic stage

Firstly, there is the mastery of the basic knowledge of Russian phonetics, intonation and their proper usage in voice communication. In addition, mastering the basic knowledge of the morphology and syntax and their correct usage in the speech. In the basic stage learning minimum is 3300-3800(three thousand three hundred and three thousand eight hundred) new words, including 2200-2400(two thousand two hundred and two thousand

four hundred) active words.

Secondly, learning skills to understand Russian speech: speaking, reading and writing; the perception and understanding of listening speech. All the mentioned before skills and including understanding of the speeches delivered in Russian language on the familiar theme as well as the understanding of the audio with medium speed of speaking. As for reading, it's a reading of the articles on the similar already learned themes, more easy on the content or same to the learned one.

Thirdly, there is the mastery of general knowledge and terms of the regional studies and culture of Russia and their proper usage in the speech.

Fourthly, mastering the correct method of learning: inculcate in students with the habit of active participation in activities related to communication in Russian language; teach students to use the common reference books and dictionaries.

### *1.3 Objectives of Teaching Russian Language at the basis stage*

The consolidation of foundations of the language in students; optimize the structure of knowledge; the formation of the student's self-work ability, pay attention to the full increase of culture quality among students with the purpose of mastering and the use in the right conditions for their specialty.

### *1.4 Educational Requirements at an advanced stage*

Firstly, language skills:

*Reading:* to understand the current news in the Russian press, not complex scientific -popular articles, Artistic literature.

*Listening:* Understand the news about the policy, diplomacy, the economy and society in mass media like radio and television; understand the audio materials on the difficulties similar to the content of the textbook "Advanced Russian language", the third course.

*Speaking:* after preparation be able to retell the main content of read and heard materials. Talk at the familiar theme with the content of the match topic; clear and accurate language to express its point of view, with the correct flawless intonation and phonetics.

*Writing:* be able to write declarative statements and expressing micro texts on familiar topics, expressing in business writing with logically correct language and in accordance with the rules of punctuation.

*Translation:* Transfer from Russian to Chinese art literature on topics related to the social life on the difficulties related with the content of the textbook "Advanced Russian language» the third course.

Secondly, the language and cultural knowledge:

This is the possession of comprehensive knowledge of the Russian language and Russian literature and culture, cultural traditions, customs, the social situation and etc. Students will possess the knowledge of Russian regional studies: expansion of the dictionary of the stock up to 8000 words, including active 4000-5000 words.

*Thirdly,* the ability of independent work of students is the following:

Skills of analyzing public culture of Russia; the ability to use the basic dictionaries and directories during reading and scientific work; be able to use scientific and technical facilities such as computer; conduct basic scientific research and self-writing scientific articles; ability to innovative awareness and approaches; the development of communication abilities and skills to work with foreigners.

## **2. Methods of Teaching Russian Language in Chinese Universities**

With the development of the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and Russia on the background of the establishment of "one time zone, one path", "Cooperation between the countries of the brix", the importance of the relationship between China and Russia in the field of education is growing. Currently every day needs are increasing practical possession of Russian language, that is in the use of it as a means of communication and this radically is changing methods of teaching Russian language.

On the first plan clearly extends the practical teaching. In the process of teaching Russian language focus should be given to the oral practice. So, each activity, as a rule, is devoted to the development of speech skills and abilities. Language material is selected in the light of the age of the students and the level of command of Russian language. The courses should follow the principle "less explanations and more practices" and distribute the time between the oral and written speech in favor of the first. The time to oral practice should be up to 70 percent of the total number of hours of teaching ( Glukhov B. A, Shukin A. N. 1993).

Teaching of the Russian language in Chinese universities is outside the language environment; therefore the class teachers should speak Russian as much as possible. In the basic stage the contents of the teaching material has a specific nature that helps teachers using the tools of clarity, virtually not to use their mother tongue. With increase in the level of command of Russian language, teachers face a new challenge how to achieve understanding of a complicated language and the oral materials with using minimum of mother tongue. At this stage of teaching, in individual cases, teachers may specifically use a comparative analysis of the mother tongue

and Russian language, but too much comparison is not recommended.

According to interconnected teaching types of speech activity at the basic stage, the main role belongs to oral speech and at an advanced stage the role of the reading is significantly increasing. In the process of teaching in this period it is not only learning reading, but also familiarizing. Students with the self-read texts will increase not only active but passive vocabulary also, extends the knowledge of the culture, history and literature of the foreign country and language. Well-selected texts inform not only new information, but also it is a "food for thoughts", contributing to the development of student's thinking and to building up their personalities.

For students of the advanced stage, expansion of linguistic and cultural studies knowledge is increasingly important. Reading art and News style texts, through dialogs, students will learn Russian proverbs and sayings, will meet aphorisms, and will become familiar with formulas of the Russian etiquette. Linguistics and cultural studies helps students correctly understand the phrase of the situation of communication, properly understand and use in speech with phraseologisms. Linguistics and cultural studies knowledge expand the horizons of Chinese students in the area of Russian culture and history (Leontev A.A., 2005).

The great importance for the intensification of the teaching process is the use of the audio-visual media learning tools. Currently in the Chinese universities on Russian language classes, teachers use different audiovisual tools (objects, maps, images, tables, diagrams, video, tapes, TV, movies, computers, etc.) The great importance for increasing the interest to Russian language is the extra class activities. The Forms and types of structured extra class activities varied. Definitely, the instructor should spend a lot of time and energy for the well-organized extra class activities so results will be immediate. The implementation of the teaching task would not have been possible without the control. Currently in the Chinese universities, control is divided into the current, stage and the final examination. The current is monitored at each lesson in the process of assimilation of the students training material. Using this control the instructor may set the specific difficulties of students and to eliminate them in the process of further work.

Stage control is the definition of the level and quality of learning a specific part of the teaching program, which is the degree of, developed speaking skills and abilities, on which were put a lot of work during several series of lessons. The final examination has two parts: oral and written. Written exam includes materials and tasks, which are checking mainly knowledge of linguistic material. The oral examination is to check the speaking skills and abilities. According to tradition, the written exam is the main one.

### **3. The Difficulties and Problems of Teaching Russian Language in Chinese Universities**

The Chinese universities are following actual problems in teaching Russian language:

Currently, students in China are beginning to study Russian language, mainly at 18-19 years old. By this time they are integrating the complex of perception of their mother tongue, Chinese. The Chinese language applies to the Chinese - Tibetan language family with hieroglyphic alphabet. In relation to pronunciation, the phoneme system of Chinese language is very limited. In Chinese there are no person, time, gender, number or case forms and the word order plays a significant role. The absence of a case system may act as one of the main reasons. The Russian language applies to the Indo-European language family and it has alphabetical letters. It has 33 letters, which form countless syllables by the connections of the vowels and consonants (Donskaya, T.,1999).

The written speech should be noted: although languages belong to different groups and mainly rely on the visual perception, they differ from each other in the recognition. The phonetic writing, which consists of letters, combines pronunciation, intonation and meaning of words. The basis for their identification is the entirety of perception. Although the recognition of Chinese characters also adheres to this framework, Chinese characters are more important their contoured design has stronger impact on the value of characters than the pronunciation.

The Russian language is very different from the Chinese language, both orally and in writing, since the Tibetan-Chinese language family and the Indo-European language family does not relate to each other. This certainly creates great difficulties for the Chinese students, including psychological barrier for perception of the Russian language (Frumkina R.M.,2004).

As it is well known, the Russian language applies to inflectional language, changes of suffixes in words are complex, grammatical structure is complicated as well. It is not easy for Chinese students to learn the complex system of Russian forms and types of change; the greatest difficulty for them is to represent aspect, time and polysemy of verbs. Therefore, in regard of learning Russian language, Chinese students must pay great attention to the training of basic knowledge in phonetics, vocabulary and grammar. The intensive training allows students to acquire and reinforce the basic knowledge and skills. This means that in the process of teaching Russian language, teachers have to give a lot of time for learning basic knowledge. Cognition of linguistic phenomena is not a training purpose. The main objective of the studying Russian language is to apply all knowledge for communication and self-expression. (Saporta S, 2004).

Chinese language, apart from Russian, has nominative structure and grammatically important word order, preposition of the attribute, agglutinative structure: no gender, person, case, number categories used with inflexions, no prepositions. The Chinese grammar system is "not opened" for the direct observation due to the

syllable-morpheme form of its main word unit and the absence of internal inflexion (Tan A., 1991).

Furthermore, the specific grammar connection means are used in Russian and Chinese word combinations. It is not a secret that “the knowledge of grammar connection means and grammar categories usage skills are all necessary for language proficiency” (Ostanenko, A., 1987). All this determines the complexity of studying Russian grammar by Chinese students and requires solutions to many questions on methodology leading to perfection of Russian-teaching technique in a Chinese audience.

In Chinese universities, the number of students in each group reaches 30 persons. Each student has an average of approximately one minute on one lesson for a separate training. It complicates teacher’s work on verification of knowledge and skills, particularly in relation to the oral speech.

The fact that foreign language speech activity is limited by classroom, outside of which students use their mother tongue, and a teacher is usually not a native speaker, do not provide proper conditions for language and speech skills automation, and seriously affect the formation of grammar skills.

Some of the teachers, unfortunately do not have high qualifications, and cannot speak Russian fluently. This is because the majority of teachers of the Russian language, after their graduation from universities and institutions immediately start to work in different departments of higher education where they have a lot of work and few opportunities to improve their qualification neither at home nor abroad. As a result, they are still using translating grammar method, which is clearly outdated and may not allow positive and effective results. In Chinese universities, in the fourth semester there is Unified State Exam of Russian language (Fourth level) which tests students philologists from Russian language department.

The biggest part of the exam is in written form. Knowledge of students and rise of teachers’ qualifications, all are closely linked to the students’ credits which they are going to receive on the exams. Due to this fact, the main efforts of teachers focused on the study of vocabulary and grammar, in so doing they do not give proper attention to the formation of students’ skills and abilities of oral speech and active oral practices. (Vigotskij L.S. 2005)

#### **4. Conclusion**

For the time being Russian language along with other foreign languages continues to be in demand in China, this is due to the close cooperation and partnership between the two countries. Thus, interest in the Russian language one day extinguishes and another day erupts with renewed vigor, so one of the major tasks today is to maintain this interest, stimulate the interest in the Russian language, its study and advancement.

All of foregoing adversely affects the teaching of the Russian language and has a negative impact on the effectiveness of teaching. The quality of teaching of the Russian language to Chinese students today is associated with the decision of many issues on the practical and theoretical level, and all these require time and consistent hard work of Chinese scientists and educators.

In accordance with the above problems, in order to improve the quality and efficiency of the education and training of multi skilled teachers, specialists of Russian philology in China made many efforts and have made a great contribution to the transformation of the system of teaching Russian language. They adopted such measures as the selection of the teaching manuals of the new generation, studying language and culture, the introduction in the teaching process of modern pedagogical tools, creating language environment for students, organization of structured activities, and improving the qualifications of teachers. Thanks to measures taken by specialists of Russian philology in China during the past few years they have achieved significant results in teaching, own system of the teaching of Russian language as a foreign was formed. The teaching of Russian language in Chinese universities is more than 60 years. For such a long period of time teachers have accumulated a large methodical experience. They are confident in success, despite the large number of difficulties in learning Russian language.

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