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Chinese Educational Traditions and their Impact on the Process of Learning Russian

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Abstract

This article analyzes the problems which are faced by university teachers of Russian as a foreign language, as well as the experts who train Chinese students on technical disciplines in Russian language. Recently there has been an increase in number of those students who learn Russian in order to continue education in Russia on technical specialties. However the level of preparation of Chinese students in their country is rather low. This problem is acknowledged both by Russian and Chinese teachers. The authors of the article analyze the reasons of the arising difficulties. The article compares modern Chinese and Russian approaches to training of Russian as a foreign language. Basing on the empirical data and the published Chinese sources the authors explain the difficulties in training Chinese students. In the conclusion there are given recommendations both for teachers of Russian and for teachers of technical disciplines, which present a more effective way of training Chinese students in a foreign language. At the same time the authors take into consideration the features of the teaching technique that has been historically developed in the People's Republic of China, as well as the specifics of interpersonal communications in Chinese higher educational institutions.

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1. Introduction

The teachers working with Chinese students usually notice that the students develop a number of qualities, such as diligence and the ability to memorize a large volume of information. They also mention that students have a good perception of structural organization — educational learning materials in the form of tables, dichotomies. However it takes Chinese students a much longer time and much many efforts to acquire Russian than it happens with European students. The Russian and Chinese languages differ significantly at the phonetic level, which does not allow Chinese students to hear and distinguish some Russian sounds. There are also distinctions in a grammatical system. As well as there are certain cultural behavioral models that limit the possibility of fast acquisition of the material.

What are the reasons for such difficult perception and acquisition of the new training material? Is there any difference in a teaching technique? What are the differences in goals and objectives of teaching? First of all, for this purpose it is necessary to understand that educational process in China differs from the process accepted and widespread in Russia.

2. Peculiarities of the training process organization

It is necessary to remember that the essential part of a lecture is given to students in the form of textbooks or disks. All training materials are coordinated with the teaching department that controls teachers with the help of video cameras. Improvising and deviations from the coordinated training materials are not encouraged in teachers. There is a constant supervising of how well the classes coordinate with the approved plan. What are the reasons for such control? First of all, that is tradition. Second, it concerns the ideological control. Third, handing out the unified printed materials to all students solves the problem of strong dialect distinctions of residents of the different provinces of China. Southerners do not understand northerners in a large number of cases, but they all have the same hieroglyphs. If the teachers are advised to follow manuals and plans strictly, it is clear they do not require from students to develop critical judgment, have discussions and to be able to compare various sources of information. Information is given in order to be learned automatically.

The methodology of providing with the material does not change from 1 to 4 grades. Usual classroom hours consist of 95% of the teacher's monologue. The exception only concerns listening and speaking which are carried out unusually for the Russian students as well.

Listening is the test that students complete independently using earphones. Questions of tests represent short situations with 2-4 choices of answer.

Speaking takes an insignificant part in the curriculum — no more than 10% of the total amount of lessons. Usually educational group includes at least 20 people (sometimes much many).

Therefore the average student can say at most 2-3 phrases in Russian in a week. Even students of older grades experience big difficulties with a spontaneous understanding of the speech.

At best the student learns cliché phrases from the textbook from which he, or she, builds the text like a construction. Skill of speaking is not considered to be significant in the Chinese system of language training.

Not only does such manner of conducting lessons develop very few skills of informal conversation, but it also differs significantly from rather spontaneous and free manner of conducting lessons in Russia. The Russian teacher can ask questions about the weather, news, upcoming movies, etc. within the given topic of the lesson. He/She has almost no limitations in the selection of training material. Final control, questions, structure of examination is usually organized by the teacher himself. In the People's Republic of China the system of final control is much stricter and there is a unification at all levels of training beginning from school.

3. Peculiarities of the goal-setting process in studying the language

Leaving school all pupils pass the so-called ‘Gaokao’ (高考), which is the unified state examination for all school students in China. It is carried out in spring, within three days, for graduates of schools of all country. Examination takes place in writing, in the form of filling of tests. The results of examination have a direct influence on the students' acceptance into the universities. The teachers (from middle to high school) spend all the classroom time working at the skills necessary for examination. Three subjects are obligatory: Chinese, mathematics and a

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