

Artículo de investigación

The study of the Chinese language by foreigners as part of linguistic tourism in the universities of China

El estudio del lenguaje chino por extranjeros como parte del turismo lingüístico en las universidades de China

O estudo da linguagem chinesa de estrangeiros como parte do turismo linguístico e nas universidades da China

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Abstract

In this article, the authors consider the problems of the growing popularity of learning the Chinese language which is nowadays becoming more and more demanded and actual in the spheres of world trading businesses, culture and science. For successful and effective mastering Chinese, it is recommended to learn it, as well as other foreign languages by using the method of immersion in the native speakers' country. Thus, for people willing to learn Chinese there are two alternative variants. In the first case, one studies it as a part of linguistic tourism combining recreation and education and this kind of programs is focused on tastes and financial possibilities of tourists. In the second case, the studies are organized in the state universities and colleges of PRC and considered as education. Even if the specialty chosen is not connected with linguistics, preparation for major subject studies is the Chinese language course lasting for 1-2 years. The authors point out that it is possible for state university and college students' to win scholarships and grants in case of a successful school performance which can cover partially or completely their education-related costs in PRC. For realizing these possibilities, the state organizations established by the Chinese government take such actions as founding the Confucius Institutes, intended for popularization of the Chinese language worldwide, and special information agencies and consortiums, providing guidance to high-school graduates in their choice

Resumen

En este artículo, los autores consideran los problemas de la creciente popularidad del aprendizaje del idioma chino, que cada vez es más demandado y real en las esferas de los negocios, la cultura y la ciencia a nivel mundial. Para obtener un dominio chino exitoso y eficaz, se recomienda aprenderlo, así como otros idiomas extranjeros, mediante el método de inmersión en el país de los hablantes nativos. Por lo tanto, para las personas dispuestas a aprender chino, existen dos variantes alternativas. En el primer caso, se estudia como parte del turismo lingüístico que combina recreación y educación, y este tipo de programas se centra en los gustos y las posibilidades financieras de los turistas. En el segundo caso, los estudios se organizan en las universidades y facultades estatales de la República Popular China y se consideran como educación. Incluso si la especialidad elegida no está relacionada con la lingüística, la preparación para los principales estudios de asignaturas es el curso de chino que dura de 1 a 2 años. Los autores señalan que es posible que los estudiantes universitarios y universitarios estatales ganen becas y subvenciones en caso de un rendimiento escolar exitoso que pueda cubrir parcial o totalmente sus costos relacionados con la educación en China. Para hacer realidad estas posibilidades, las organizaciones estatales establecidas por el gobierno chino toman medidas como fundar los Institutos Confucio, destinados a la popularización del idioma chino en todo el mundo, y agencias y consorcios de

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of Chinese universities and colleges for getting education.

Keywords: The Chinese language, linguistic tourism, education in state universities and colleges of China, the Confucius Institutes, scholarships and grants.

información especial, que proporcionan orientación a los graduados de secundaria en su elección de universidades chinas y universidades para obtener educación.

Palabras claves: Idioma chino, turismo lingüístico, educación en universidades estatales y colegios de China, Institutos Confucio, becas y subvenciones.

Resumo

Neste artigo, os autores consideram os problemas da crescente popularidade da aprendizagem da língua chinesa, que é cada vez mais exigida e real nas esferas de negócios, cultura e ciência em todo o mundo. Para obter um domínio chinês bem-sucedido e eficaz, recomenda-se aprendê-lo, assim como outras línguas estrangeiras, através do método de imersão em idioma nativo no país. Portanto, para pessoas dispostas a aprender chinês, existem duas variantes alternativas. No primeiro caso, ele é estudado como parte do turismo linguístico que combina recreação e educação, e esse tipo de programas se concentra nos gostos e possibilidades financeiras dos turistas. No segundo caso, os estudos são organizados nas universidades e faculdades estaduais da República Popular da China e são considerados como educação. Mesmo que a especialidade escolhida não esteja relacionada à lingüística, a preparação para os principais estudos temáticos é o curso de chinês que dura de 1 a 2 anos. Os autores observam que é possível para estudantes universitários e universitários estaduais ganhar bolsas de estudo e bolsas no caso de um desempenho escolar bem-sucedido que possa cobrir parcialmente ou totalmente seus custos relacionados à educação na China. Para tornar essas possibilidades realmente organizações estatais estabelecidas pelo governo chinês tome medidas como fundadores Institutos Confúcio, que visam popularizar a língua chinesa em todo o mundo, e agências e consórcios de informação especial, que fornecem orientação para os graduados do ensino médio na sua escolha de universidades chinesas. e universidades para obter educação.

Palavras-chave: Língua chinesa, turismo linguístico, educação em universidades e faculdades estaduais na China, Institutos Confúcio, bolsas de estudos e bolsas.

Introduction

In the recent decades the dramatic rise of China's economy attracts the world's attention. The experts in the spheres of economics, politics and international relations explain it by the planned realization of the Chinese government policies, directed both towards the development at home and the collaboration and strengthening of contacts with the outside world. It is necessary to mention that remarkable industriousness and energy, characteristic of Chinese people devoted to the government's policies, make it possible to direct their workforce towards creation and prosperity in the country.

The newspaper article from "China Daily", published on September, 3 in 2004, mentioned in the research paper of Jeffrey Gil (PhD, Flinders University in Australia), states that thanks to a considerable role of PRC on the global political and economic arena in the nearest future there will be a growing necessity of the Chinese language for intercommunication, which is obvious nowadays regarding the English

language. The knowledge of Chinese will be obligatory for working in business, politics and culture. At the present moment the number of foreign students of higher education institutions of PRC has significantly increased. This fact confirms that positive changes have affected also the educational sphere of this country and the Chinese universities are becoming more competitive worldwide (Gil, 2011).

Methods

The following methods are applied for this scientific research:

- The statistical method is used here to illustrate how the Chinese language studied by foreigners in China is reflected in figures and statistic data. Since they are considerable, the phenomenon of learning is believed to be worth reviewing in all its aspects.

- The comparative method is also applied for this paper as there are two variants of learning Chinese by foreigners compared: studies and their specific features in private schools as opposed to those in the state universities and colleges.
- The indispensable method of analysis is applied in this research, as well as in any other scientific papers aiming at a close insight into different phenomena, to reveal the main features as items of the whole. Here this whole is the process of the Chinese language learning worldwide.
- The method of selecting and analysis of bibliographic resources make it possible to define in what state and what kind of information regarding this or that phenomenon is represented in scientific literature in home country and abroad.

The method on which contemporary scientific researchers rely on and which has become especially actual in recent time is the method of analyzing the internet resources relevant to the problem chosen. Using this method for this article provided up-to-date information on the object of research: targeted learning the Chinese language in PRC by foreigners.

Results and Discussion

According to the information on the web-portal "China Power" administered by CSIS (Center for Strategic and International Studies), studying the phenomena of economic boom in PRC, the main purpose of foreign students coming to China earlier was learning Chinese. Recently the flow of young people willing to study at technical colleges and schools has increased. The statistical data cited by the official web-site of CMA (China Ministry of Education) indicate that in 2016 in China there were over 440000 of international students, which is 35 % more than in 2012. Thus China has become the third among the countries providing higher education of a high quality (after the USA and the United Kingdom). For learning the Chinese language PRC receives visitors from the South Korea, the USA, Thailand, Pakistan, India and Russia (in descending order).

The Status of Chinese in the world's diversities of languages is significant: over one billion four hundred million people speak this language on the Earth. It is the official language of PRC, Taiwan and Singapore. It is one of the six official and working languages of the United Nations. Its share in teaching foreign languages worldwide is continuously increasing (Gil, 2011). The knowledge of Chinese opens the doors to the dramatically developing economics of PRC, as well as to its politics, culture and history. It is well-known that large companies prefer to employ persons speaking more than one foreign language. Since China is a tremendous market, international corporations hire those who speak Chinese and orientate confidently in the Chinese cultural background.

Studying the Chinese Language by Foreigners in China

Nowadays the method of immersion in language learning is highly effective. In the article on modern teaching techniques in linguistics it is stated that: "one of the main effective means of learning the language and culture is travelling abroad. In this case the foreign language is a means of teaching and establishing contacts with representatives of the other nation's society" (Dudin, 2015).

One more argument for studying the Chinese language in China is that it is rather difficult for learning: peculiarities of its pronunciation (tones) and hieroglyphic script (each hieroglyph representing an independent lexical element) are not typical for European languages and can discourage learners at the very beginning. Nevertheless, the immersion into the chosen language environment, this communicative environment itself and the necessity to interact with other people on routine issues by means of this language help to master it.

Sometimes it happens to teachers of Chinese who got their education in their home country and didn't have any chance to practice their speaking skills in China that they don't understand Chinese people's speech. But the primary goal of foreign language learning must be and is its usage as a means of communication (Rybnikar, 2014).

In order to compare the process of learning the Chinese language in private schools in PRC and that of the students of state higher education institutions it is necessary to point out the term "linguistic tourism", which is one of the main

kinds of educational tourism. In Russian bibliographic sources educational tourism is interpreted as tours, including studies or internship in some sphere at the place different from home lasting not more than one year. International specialists consider educational tourism as “activity of visitors in which is the main or secondary purpose of their tour” “a program, the participants of which go on a tour with the purpose of getting education connected with the area of their destination” (Brent et al, 2003; Smith, 2013). Linguistic tourism is such a kind of tourism when a tourist combines recreation and language learning (Klyap, 2011). As a rule, the studies of universities and college students abroad whose main purpose is getting education and academic degrees for a few years are not considered as educational tourism, because they are long-lasting and they are designed mainly for young people.

According to the data of the above mentioned China Ministry of Education, 40 % of international students come to PRC with a purpose learning Chinese. This number includes only those students who study at the linguistic departments of higher education institutions for more than 6 months. The large number of students of private language schools, unfortunately, isn't counted statistically. These private schools in most cases function on the basis of state colleges and universities, using their educational resources and teaching techniques and members of the pedagogical staff of these state institutions work for private schools as well. On the other hand, thanks to booming inbound tourism in China, which according to the data provided by CTSA (China Tourism Statistic Agency) only in the first half of 2017 reached 14 250 000 visitors. This number is 5,8 % more than in the same period of 2016. Nowadays such touristic product is highly popular as combination of seaside recreation or cultural-historical heritage tours and attending language courses in private schools. A big share of touristic offers is special language programs for children and young people during their holidays in children and youth camps. Thus there are two variants for foreigners to master Chinese abroad. In the first case, it is attending a preliminary language course lasting 1-2 years before studying their major subject or getting a linguistic education with the Chinese language as their major within PRC's state universities and colleges teaching young students from 18 to 30. The second variant represents private language courses for children, young people from 18 to 30 and for older

persons. In this case the specific character of teaching process, intensity of lessons, subjects depend on the needs of clients. Often these courses last not more than 6 months and most popular among them is a spoken language course, implying acquiring such skills as: discussing, expressing one's opinion, being able to speak on different topics and situations. In the first variant of the Chinese language learning for students with a successful school performance, who get good grade for exams, scientific work, PRC government provides grants and scholarships. Those who attend private language courses bear expenses for education, accommodation, flights, excursions and entertainment program themselves because no scholarships or grants are possible for them.

The Confucius Institutes and HSK Exam

The establishment of the Confucius Institutes aims at promoting the Chinese language and culture worldwide. These institutes are cultural and education centers, functioning on the basis of large universities and colleges in different countries. They are founded and supervised by Hanban – the PRC's State office the main function of which is to spread Chinese as a foreign language abroad.

The duties of the Confucius Institutes include:

- The Chinese language teaching (realized through opening linguistic courses and schools;
- Issuing programs, training materials, teaching techniques and software for the Chinese language teachers and learners;
- Organizing and performing different events dedicated to PRC;
- Organizing internships for students and teachers in China, consulting on the education in PRC for international students, on questions concerning grants and scholarships of Chinese government;
- Examination, issuing certificates of the language proficiency with the help of the HSK test.

The HSK test (Hànyǔ Shuǐpíng Kǎoshì) is a standard qualification exam for testing those who are not native speakers of Chinese. This exam, designed in 1990 in PRC and spread in many countries of the world by 2010, is an analogue of the well-known TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language). The results of HSK are acknowledged worldwide. The HSK certificates

are official documents of education, issued by Hanban and they are awarded in certified linguistic centers.

In private linguistic schools the HSK test can also be held to determine the level of mastering the Chinese language but this is not an obligatory condition for such schools.

How to Learn the Chinese Language

How do people willing to learn Chinese make a choice between studies in the higher education institutions and private schools in China? For the choice of private linguistic courses lasting not more than 6 months it is convenient to address the experts in touristic agencies specializing in this sphere. They offer a lot of programs in which prices vary depending on the qualification level of private linguistic centers, intensity of studies, accommodation. The agents are expected to ensure convenient flight dates, the length of courses and many other aspects important for clients. As a rule, these touristic agencies work closely with similar firms in China, which in their turn make contracts with local linguistic centers and are responsible for all matters connected with education, accommodation, excursions and entertainment events.

Choosing the PRC state higher education institutions international students should get acquainted with the Chinese education market long before the date of the planned enrolment. They should also consider different departments within their sphere of interest and possibility to get grants and scholarships from China Ministry of Education, because most of the grants and scholarships are awarded for the linguistic sphere of education. It is part of the PRC government policy to spread the Chinese language and culture worldwide by taking such actions.

There are information portals and consortiums functioning for orientating future students going to study in China. Their specialists orientate young people through the Internet on universities and colleges; answer all kinds of questions about higher education in China, available for international students. It is important to point out that the knowledge of English is recommended to make a process of mastering the Chinese language in universities and private schools of PRC as well. Knowing English considerably fastens the educational process and makes it easier to solve different routine problems, especially right after coming to China. For the enrolment into those institutions

where it is necessary to speak English this condition is specified beforehand to escape many further problems. But there are also education programs for beginners who don't know English. For example, the big consortium CCN (China Campus Network) with the headquarters in Shanghai offers the program IFP – International Foundation Program. It is established and financed by the universities - members of this consortium. IFP provides preliminary course of Chinese for future students. CCN's internet portal lists all Chinese universities and colleges available for international students, gives information about their rating in PRC and worldwide, consults on the issues connected with education expenses and costs, grants and scholarships awarded by the Chinese government.

One more big organization – China Admissions helps future students to choose higher education institutions in China and provides its services from the moment of writing an application up to overcoming different organization matters while entering universities and colleges. China Admissions also gives information about possibilities to win over 50 000 scholarships awarded by the Chinese government for international students every year. These scholarships can cover the expenses for education, accommodation, student books. The services of China Admissions are free for applicants as this organization is also financed by universities and colleges of PRC. Besides their internet site contains web links to forums and blogs of those who entered Chinese higher education institutions and study there [11].

Conclusión

To sum up the information above it should be pointed out that the Chinese language nowadays is becoming more demanded and doesn't seem so "faraway" and specific as it was 40-50 years ago. The Chinese language proficiency offers big opportunities for widening the sphere of work for specialists in economic, financial, technical, cultural and many other areas in terms of establishing contacts and collaboration with different companies in PRC.

As far as the share of Chinese market in touristic sphere is increasing globally, linguistic tourism acquires a special prominence as a convenient and profitable combination of learning the Chinese language and recreation. It should be mentioned that China nowadays has all necessary

touristic infrastructure and resources for successful recreation. For selection and organizations of this kind of tours it is better to apply for the services of touristic agencies specializing at this destination. And for the purpose of getting higher education for international applicants there are many possibilities to make the right choice of the university or college and to apply for scholarships and grants for well-studying students.

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