



The notion of teaching Chinese to students of non-philological universities in Uzbekistan

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ABSTRACT

This article describes the difficulties faced by students learning Chinese as a foreign language. The study is based on scientific works and textbooks by leading linguists, methodologists, and teachers specializing in teaching Chinese as a foreign language. The paper identifies underexplored aspects of foreign language education for students. The lack of well-developed methods and techniques for recreating a natural language environment, as well as their limited application in lessons, reduces students' motivation. The contrastive-comparative method, which helps overcome interlingual interference and develop intercultural communicative competence, is insufficiently used in lessons. Issues related to the cultural connotation of Chinese vocabulary and the methodology for addressing grammatical, lexical, and speech errors are also often overlooked.

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O'zbekistonda nofilologik universitetlarda talabalariga xitoy tilini o'rgatish

ANNOTATSIYA

Kalit so'zlar:

fonetik ko'nikmalar,
logografik yozuv tizimi,
atamalar,
o'zlashma so'zlar,
o'quv bosqichlari,
autentik matnlar,
mamlakatga xos matnlar,
madaniyatlararo
kommunikativ
kompetentsiya.

Mazkur maqolada xitoy tilini chet tili sifatida o'rganayotgan talabalar duch keladigan qiyinchiliklar tasvirlangan. Tadqiqot xitoy tilini chet tili sifatida o'qitishga ixtisoslashgan yetakchi tilshunos olimlar, metodist va o'qituvchilarning ilmiy ishlari va darsliklari asosida tayyorlangan. Maqolada talabalarga chet tilini o'rgatishning kam o'rganilgan jihatlarini ochib berilgan. Tabiiy til muhitini qayta tiklash uchun ishlab chiqilgan usul va usullarning yo'qligi, shuningdek, darslarda ulardan cheklangan foydalanish o'quvchilarning motivatsiyasini pasaytiradi. Shuningdek,

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xitoycha lugʻatning madaniy konnotatsiyasi va grammatik, leksik va nutq xatolarini bartaraf etish metodologiyasi bilan bogʻliq masalalar ham koʻpincha eʼtibordan chetda qoladi.

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АННОТАЦИЯ

Ключевые слова:

фонетические навыки,
логографическая система
письма, терминология,
заимствования,
этапы обучения,
аутентичные тексты,
страноведческие тексты,
межкультурная
коммуникативная
компетенция.

В статье описываются трудности, с которыми сталкиваются студенты, изучающие китайский язык как иностранный. Исследование подготовлено на основе научных трудов и учебников ведущих лингвистов, методистов и преподавателей, специализирующихся на преподавании китайского языка как иностранного. В статье выявлены малоизученные аспекты обучения студентов иностранному языку. Отсутствие разработанных методов и приемов воссоздания естественной языковой среды, а также ограниченное их применение на уроках снижает мотивацию учащихся. Сопоставительно-сравнительный метод, способствующий преодолению межъязыковой интерференции и формированию межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции, недостаточно используется на уроках. Также часто упускаются из виду вопросы, связанные с культурной коннотацией китайской лексики и методологией устранения грамматических, лексических и речевых ошибок.

INTRODUCTION

The Chinese language differs significantly from Western European languages, primarily in its phonetic structure. The phonetics of Standard Chinese (Putonghua) is considered extremely difficult for Europeans to master. Phonetic skills are developed over several years of continuous practice in pronunciation. The syllable structure in Chinese is rigid, with a maximum of four sounds arranged in a strict sequence. Modern Standard Chinese (Putonghua) has slightly more than 400 syllables that differ in their sound composition. Most simple words representing basic concepts are monosyllabic, making Chinese one of the most homonymous languages in the world. Additionally, Chinese syllables are pronounced with fixed etymological tones (melodic pitch patterns characterized by changes in pitch), which also serve a meaning-distinguishing function. This is a unique aspect of the Chinese language that is not immediately grasped by foreign learners. These specific phonetic features of Chinese are the reason why students develop proper auditory skills much later than those studying European languages and require significantly more time to practice them. Another distinguishing feature of the Chinese language, even among other Eastern languages, is its logographic writing system. Chinese characters are based on the semantic representation of words – they convey meaning rather than pronunciation or phonetic representation. The number of Chinese characters far exceeds the standard 26–30 letters of European alphabets, with some characters consisting of 15–20 strokes or more.

MAIN PART

The first stage of learning is an adaptation period, during which students must develop visual and motor familiarity with handling Chinese characters. This stage presents significant challenges, especially until the correct stroke order of each character becomes a reflexive, automatic process. However, learning characters is an ongoing process throughout the entire language course – new vocabulary means learning new characters since each new word is typically a new character.

To read newspapers, a student needs to know approximately 3,000–4,000 characters, and for scientific literature, an even greater number is required. This makes learning Chinese considerably more labor-intensive than learning European languages.

The logographic system also poses challenges in developing reading and writing skills. The pace of acquiring new vocabulary – and thus new characters – is understandably slower compared to European languages. Memorizing 20 new alphabetic words is relatively easy, but learning 20 new Chinese characters (including their pronunciation and writing) takes significantly more time.

This is why students learning European languages progress much faster in reading texts of various genres, while those studying Chinese lag behind – simply because they lack the necessary number of learned characters to read such texts fluently. It is well known that eight- or nine-year-old Chinese schoolchildren have significantly less knowledge in natural sciences compared to their European peers. Their school textbooks at this age are also simpler in content than those used by European children of the same age. The reason is simple: by this age, Chinese children have not yet learned a sufficient number of characters to read popular science texts.

For example, in elementary school, Russian children can already read aloud unadapted works of Russian classical literature, while Chinese children of the same age typically do not yet read literary works in their original form – again, due to their limited knowledge of characters. Thus, acquiring a sufficient number of characters to work with specialized texts takes significantly more time than learning to read European languages that use alphabetic writing systems.

Terminology as a Challenge in Professionally Oriented Chinese Language Learning.

Another major challenge in professionally oriented Chinese language learning is terminology. Professional language primarily involves the mastery of specialized terminology.

It is well known that many Uzbek terms in fields such as medicine, banking, chemistry, and IT are international words, often phonetic borrowings.

For example, words like virus, infection, pandemic, vaccine, clinic (medicine) or percent, traffic, tranche, operator, credit (banking) are easy for Uzbek-Russian-speaking students to remember when learning a European language because these terms sound similar in Russian.

However, due to the rigid structure of Chinese syllables, reproducing foreign pronunciation for such terms is impossible. As a result, borrowing in Chinese occurs mainly through calquing (word-for-word translation) or the creation of entirely new Chinese terms.

Additionally, learners must memorize the specific characters that represent these terms. In other words, learning specialized terminology in Chinese takes much longer and is significantly more difficult compared to European languages. All these factors make

learning Chinese a significantly longer process for students of non-linguistic faculties. At the same time, the number of hours allocated for foreign language study is much lower compared to the hours provided in educational programs for linguistics students. Moreover, it should be noted that non-linguistic students do not have courses in lexicology or stylistics – subjects that contribute to language competency development.

University graduates must meet the requirements of Federal State Educational Standards (FSES) for their respective specialties. According to these standards, graduates of non-linguistic specialties must be able to conduct business communication and professional interactions in a foreign language. This includes the ability to read specialized literature, draft relevant documents in a foreign language, and more.

This is an extremely difficult goal to achieve, as most students start learning Chinese from scratch at university, as previously mentioned. Even the introduction of the Unified State Exam (USE) in Chinese is unlikely to result in the formation of “continuing” groups in the near future for specialized fields such as “Legal Support for National Security”.

RESULTS

Methodological Approaches to Teaching Chinese at Non-Linguistic Faculties

To meet the FSES requirements for foreign language education, most Chinese language instructors at non-linguistic faculties have developed specialized teaching methods.

The training is conducted in stages, which are divided into:

1. *Initial (Basic) Stage*
2. *Main (Intermediate) Stage*
3. *Final (Advanced) Stage*

At the initial stage, students undergo an intensive introduction to basic phonetics and the fundamentals of Chinese characters. Due to the limited number of study hours, the phonetics course is significantly condensed:

Pinyin transcription (a system that records the approximate pronunciation of Chinese syllables using Latin letters) is taught in a shortened timeframe.

Overall, this introductory block is covered in half the time compared to linguistics students. At the initial stage of learning, it is also recommended to reduce the time spent on introducing new grammatical and lexical material. This is largely achieved by lowering the requirements for mastering grammar and Chinese characters.

For example, linguistics students complete significantly more written exercises and also memorize traditional Chinese characters (which are still used in Singapore and Taiwan, unlike in mainland China, where a simplified writing system has been adopted for especially complex characters).

It must be acknowledged that this approach affects the quality of material retention for most students. However, the most diligent and motivated learners already begin to stand out at this stage due to their higher level of proficiency in phonetics, character writing, vocabulary, and grammar.

After completing the basic grammar course, students studying European languages – whether linguistics or non-linguistics students – can already transition to reading simple authentic texts at home.

However, students learning Chinese at this stage can only speak on basic everyday topics such as family, studies, visiting a café, etc. This is due to the specific nature of the Chinese language – students must learn not only new words but also the corresponding Chinese characters, as well as memorize how they are pronounced.

As a result, the vocabulary of a student who has completed the initial Chinese course is still insufficient for reading professionally oriented texts.

Intermediate Stage of Learning. At the intermediate stage, students begin to work directly with professionally oriented texts in Chinese, with a focus on actively developing foreign language communication skills across all types of speech activity. The transition to authentic texts on socio-political and professional topics often becomes a kind of shock for students. They suddenly encounter a large number of words outside of everyday vocabulary, along with a huge number of new Chinese characters that must also be learned.

Because of this, teachers must carefully select study materials, ensuring that the texts are both challenging and manageable for students. At this stage, it is recommended to start with authentic texts on country-specific topics. Familiarizing students with a certain amount of cultural and geographical information, as well as elements of the culture of native speakers, is essential for successful communication, including in professional contexts.

Why Country-Specific Texts?

1. Bridging the gap between general and specialized texts

These texts are no longer purely conversational, yet they are not highly technical or scientific either. They help students accumulate vocabulary and master Chinese characters related to socio-political and popular science concepts.

This prepares students for the next stage, where they will work with specialized terminology and read professional academic texts.

2. Cultural knowledge enhances language learning.

Understanding key aspects of Chinese culture, history, and society is crucial for any student learning Chinese language and characters. Among Sinologists, there is even a strong belief that without immersion in Chinese culture, mastering Chinese characters is impossible.

3. Supporting general educational and developmental goals

Exposure to cultural knowledge helps optimize learning by making the language more meaningful and engaging for students.

ANALYSIS

Insufficient Attention to Research on the Origins of Various Types of Errors and Ways to Correct Them. E.N. Solovova classifies potential difficulties and errors in teaching foreign languages based on interlingual and intralingual interference:

“The simultaneous study of the native and foreign language inevitably leads to a certain degree of interlingual interference, where rules from one language are mechanically transferred to another, resulting in errors”. [7, p. 107].

Unfortunately, teachers do not always take into account that when learning Chinese words, students extract them from an unfamiliar worldview and try to fit them into the Uzbek linguistic worldview. They perceive unfamiliar words and concepts through the lens of their native Uzbek cognition. According to many scholars, this is one of the main challenges in mastering a foreign language. In foreign language communication, both linguistic and cultural errors occur, with the latter being more serious. The Chinese linguist Liu Xun highlights this issue:

“In interactions with foreigners, native speakers can usually tolerate phonetic or grammatical mistakes. However, violating speech norms is often considered impolite, as native speakers do not acknowledge the relativity of sociolinguistics”.

Examining, analyzing, and correcting grammatical, lexical, and speech errors in foreign language learning can play a significant role in students' successful acquisition of the language. According to N.A. Demina, "Errors made by learners in any field are a valuable subject of research for developing teaching methodologies in Chinese, which can help prevent and minimize mistakes". [3, p. 35].

Unfortunately, only a few studies focus on the identification and classification of errors in students' oral and written Chinese, as well as on conflict situations. This is due to the specific nature of the Chinese language, where deviations from the norm often fall into the categories of character-based, lexical, or grammatical errors. According to I.V. Kocherghin, the teacher should continuously correct words pronounced by students with incorrect intonation, classifying this mistake in the learning process as a lexical (semantic) violation of the language norm.

Underexplored aspects of teaching Chinese as a foreign language to students at Uzbekistan higher educational institutions (HEIs) include the methods and techniques for recreating a natural language environment, the connection between modern teaching methods for Chinese language and theoretical-methodological developments in this field, the methodology for students to research the origins and ways of correcting various types of errors, the base of situational speech exercises, and tasks aimed at acquiring knowledge in linguocultural studies, Chinese speech etiquette, the cultural connotation of words, and the interpretation of non-verbal communication. It also includes comparative analysis of communication behavior between Chinese and Uzbek and the cultural specificity of Chinese and Uzbek languages. To address these issues, the authors of this article propose to rethink the methodology of teaching foreign languages to students and follow these recommendations: Conduct joint classes for Uzbek students studying Chinese and Chinese students mastering Uzbek, aiming to immerse students in the cultural and linguistic environment. Use the WeChat messenger to continue communication outside of class. Actively apply innovative technologies in teaching Chinese as a foreign language. Develop online lesson complexes in collaboration with Chinese teachers and students in China, i.e., actively use international cooperation for Chinese-Uzbek dialogue of languages and cultures. Apply a comparative method for forming intercultural communicative competence and cross-cultural education when creating teaching materials and during lessons. Overcome cultural stereotypes of students during foreign language learning, helping them to reject cultural discrimination. Create their own teaching materials based on the acquired experience of foreign language teaching. Pay close attention to analyzing errors in students' spoken and written speech, as well as intercultural and linguistic conflict situations, so that students can become full participants in international communication

CONCLUSION

Chinese language instructors who teach both linguistic and non-linguistic students within the same university acknowledge the significant challenges in learning Chinese, including:

- a) *The tonal nature of the language.*
- b) *The complexity of Chinese characters.*
- c) *The lack of international terminology.*
- d) *The limited number of study hours.*

These factors make teaching Chinese to non-linguistic students far more difficult and labor-intensive than teaching it to students in linguistic faculties. Nevertheless, a foreign language is an essential part of professional training for specialists in regional studies, international relations, law, cultural studies, hospitality, IT, and other fields. Today, proficiency in a foreign language is crucial for becoming a high-level professional in the international job market. Develop skills for professional communication in a foreign language. Meet the modern labor market demands in their specific fields. To achieve this goal, Chinese language instructors in non-linguistic faculties continuously work on improving teaching methodologies, considering the specific challenges of the language.

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