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To the question of peculiarities of teaching East Asian language as a second language

Svetlana Yu. Fedorova

Associate Professor,
Department of Asia Pacific languages,
Institute of Oriental studies – School of Regional and International Studies,
Far Eastern Federal University,
10 Ayaks village, Campus of Far Eastern Federal University,
Russkii island, Vladivostok, Russian Federation;
e-mail: fedlana@yandex.ru

Nataliya V. Abramova

PhD in History,
Head of the Department of Asia Pacific languages,
Institute of Oriental studies – School of Regional and International Studies,
Far Eastern Federal University,
10 Ayaks village, Campus of Far Eastern Federal University,
Russkii island, Vladivostok, Russian Federation;
e-mail: abramova.nv@dvfu.ru

Yulia A. Kvashina

Senior Lecturer,
Department of Asia Pacific languages,
Institute of Oriental studies – School of Regional and International Studies,
Far Eastern Federal University,
10 Ayaks village, Campus of Far Eastern Federal University,
Russkii island, Vladivostok, Russian Federation;
e-mail: yuakvashina@gmail.com

Ekaterina V. Bakhtina

Senior Lecturer,
Department of Asia Pacific languages,
Institute of Oriental studies – School of Regional and International Studies,
Far Eastern Federal University,

10 Ayaks village, Campus of Far Eastern Federal University,
Russkii island, Vladivostok, Russian Federation;
e-mail: Bakhtina.ev@dvfu.ru

Ekaterina V. Kovshova

Senior Lecturer,
Department of Asia Pacific languages,
Institute of Oriental studies – School of Regional and International Studies,
Far Eastern Federal University,
10 Ayaks village, Campus of Far Eastern Federal University,
Russkii island, Vladivostok, Russian Federation;
e-mail: kovshova.ev@dvfu.ru

Abstract

The article deals with the problem of necessity to intensify studying oriental language if it is not major for students and it is taught as the second foreign language. Intensification is a problem, which many teachers are interested in. Many students are interested in studying Chinese. This article describes the process of teaching East Asian language in a short period of time. Methods of teaching Chinese language in limited time are described. The article is devoted to the problems of using modern methods of teaching second foreign language. The authors of this article examine objectives and difficulties of teaching a second foreign language, stages of teaching, cultural approach in teaching. In the process of learning East Asian language as a second language in limited time, it is necessary to pay attention to individual work. It is worth noting that, undoubtedly, learning a foreign language makes a beneficial impact on culture of communication and speech activity in the native language, and forms a broader mind of a learner. The dynamic development of modern language education makes teacher of Chinese as a second foreign language look for meeting new demands. Teacher should not only be aware of certain innovative technologies in teaching their subject but also should have a deep understanding of consistent patterns of their basis, their origin, and to foresee the perspectives for further development. A teacher should have skills that help model the educational process.

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Keywords

Hieroglyphics, listening skills, methods, second foreign language, peculiarities of teaching.

Introduction

Today there can be little doubt that social dynamics in Russia and directions of its transformations provoke public demand in a big number of professionals who have a practical command of one or several foreign languages.

Knowledge of languages, and especially of those of international importance, usually gives a person a chance to achieve prestigious social status. Today – at the dawn of globalization – knowledge of one or two foreign languages is not just an indicator of one's intellect and high-quality education but also is an attribute of vital necessity. Due to numerous personal, professional and social reasons, a good command of at least, one foreign language is necessary for everyone who aspires to move with the times.

It is impossible not to note the obvious advantage of those who have an advanced level of several foreign languages over those who do not speak any. Moreover, knowledge of a foreign language can provide a social advantage for a speaker when meeting foreigners (Native speakers are likely to be surprised to hear a foreigner speaking their language.)

Recently, apart from European languages, the oriental ones, especially Chinese, tend to arouse interest in learners.

Objectives and difficulties of teaching a second foreign language

The Chinese language is considered the most widespread language in the world with about 1.3 billion speakers. The majority of speakers, of course, are Chinese, though the number of people learning Chinese as a second language is constantly growing. The key reason for the popularity and benefit of the Chinese language is the increasing role of China in the global community.

As the popularity of the Chinese language is growing around the world, the teaching methods of this language arise in the agenda.

Today despite the wide range of student books on Chinese language, the problem of studies in the teaching methods of Chinese as a second foreign language has not been solved.

The teacher of Chinese as a second foreign language takes big responsibility as each student who learns Chinese as a first foreign language is taught various separate academic aspects such as characters Chinese grammar, listening skills, the culture of China, etc. At the same time, the student who learns Chinese as a second foreign language has to acquire simultaneously hieroglyphics, phonetic transcription, the ability to listen, read, speak in Chinese and to translate from it. In other words, such a student is required to learn all the academic aspects in complex. Not every learner is likely to cope with such a huge amount of information.

The basic objective of teaching Chinese as a second foreign language is building fundamental knowledge and skills of the language, which are as following:

- acquisition of phonetic peculiarities and standard pronunciation of taught language;

- introduction to basic hieroglyphics;
- formation of grammar basis;
- skills formation of working with various types of dictionaries;
- raising awareness of traditions of the country of taught language, introduction to cultural progress in the country.

Teaching pronunciation while teaching Chinese as a second foreign language in limited time can be considered the most essential part of the teaching process as oral mistakes significantly complicate Chinese speech perception. Therefore, the main task here is to form the basic knowledge of the phonetic system and system of tones of Chinese language, in order to avoid and weed out typical pronunciation mistakes.

The learner is required:

- to achieve a full comprehension of a message given directly by a native speaker in typical communicative situations (meeting people, weather, information in the airport, at the railway station, in public transport, etc.).

- to achieve selective comprehension while asking questions for clarification and repetition of information given in typical communicative situations [Kochergin, 2010].

One of the most challenging skills for learners of Chinese is oral comprehension of a text with its further interpretation. Listening is a complex receptive intellectual and mnemonic process related to perception, comprehension and active processing of information provided in an oral message. The Chinese consonants and vowels are quite difficult for perception and the tones make it even more challenging. The Chinese language is a tonal language, which means that each syllable is characterized by a certain tone, which is known as an etymological tone of this syllable. Tone can be defined as a melodic pattern of voice, which is characterized by shift of pitch. The same character pronounced in different tones can have totally different meanings. Therefore, it is highly important to realize in the very beginning that learners should learn all the tones and pay more attention to working with audio – and video content presented by Chinese native speakers. The frequent listening to authentic materials can help learners memorize the pronunciation of various words.

Stages of teaching characters

At first, students usually work with phonetic notation and only then with hieroglyphs.

Having analyzed the Russian and foreign experience in teaching oriental languages, especially the aspect of hieroglyphics, from the point of successful perception of hieroglyphs, we can distinguish four basic approaches in the practical teaching of hieroglyphics. Further, we offer characteristics of these directions in the context of teaching methods:

1. The academic approach focuses on the sequent teaching and theoretical base. Traditionally the majority of Russian educational institutions chose this approach. In the Soviet academic litera-

ture this approach had been used up to 1960-s. Even with new communicative methods of mid-1960-s many aspects and dogmas of academic approach still were in focus while teaching foreign languages Russia [Kochergin, 2010, 102].

2. The second group of methods forms a so-called holistic approach to hieroglyph. As a result of this approach the skills of the perception of hieroglyphs are formed without analyzing its components. However, such an approach means that each hieroglyph involves a repetitive learning process. In other words, the perception of hieroglyphs as integral notions in the process of memorizing means usage of preserved associations of hieroglyphs offered by authors. This method is highly supported by the American linguist Kenneth Henshall G. [Henshall, 1988].

3. The Mnemonic approach is based on associations that facilitate memorizing the hieroglyph in whole along with its components. This approach focuses on using natural memory mechanisms and helps gain full control of the processes of memorizing, storing and remembering information. The Mnemonic approach contributes to the formation of creative skills, helping to choose the most efficient associations for memorizing graphic signs on such conditions [Talyshkhanov, 2007; Terent'ev, Morgun, 2002].

4. The Structural approach as described by V. F. Rezanenko [Rezanenko, 1985, p. 10] and partially by A.F. Moushinski [Mushinskii, 2007, 46], focuses on knowledge of basic components of hieroglyphics. The principal task of this approach is to form skills of conscious separation of hieroglyph on components with the following analysis of their writing, reading and meaning.

As Chinese hieroglyphics have a range of certain peculiarities and are considered one of the most difficult aspects of learning Chinese, it is highly important to find an easier and more efficient way of succeeding in it [Kochergin, 2010].

We suppose that in the first stage the learners should acquire understanding of basic Chinese strokes, then of such notions as grapheme (by learning the most frequent graphemes) as a basic semantic unit of a writing system as they help distinguish semantic meanings of hieroglyphs and form the basis of classification of hieroglyphs. As this stage is the most important and challenging for the learners and as all learners develop different types of memory, it is essential to involve both visual and auditory mechanisms of conception memory.

At this stage, for the most efficient perception of hieroglyphs it can be helpful to use the principle of hieroglyphic semantization, which means to illustrate an origin of the grapheme from its simple form to the contemporary one [Terent'ev, Morgun, 2002]. For these purposes, it is desirable to use multimedia materials developed by Chinese professionals that contain information about the origin of graphemes and hieroglyphs along with hieroglyphic card with or without transcription. Moreover, teachers can use special games for visual and mechanical memorizing of hieroglyphs such as a set of basic strokes for making a hieroglyph or a set of graphemes for the same purpose. Including such interactive methods and tactics allows facilitating the language acquisition and makes the educational process more animated [Kochergin, 2010].

Lately interactive educational methods, such as discussions, business and role games, the project-based learning, have become an integral part of teaching. Interactive educational methods represent an approach that enriches the students' vision not only of their country but the country of the learned language. Thus, an efficient academic environment appears that allows learners to make non-standard decisions and to express their opinion on disputed and complicated questions – these factors motivate students to take an active role and to acquire knowledge more efficiently.

Interactive educational methods in teaching foreign languages stimulate a learner to take an active role in studying and help form certain personal features and values: flexibility (adaptability), patience, tolerance, sympathy, the ability to take risks, to make decisions and to find nonstandard solutions for various situations [Passov, 1991].

Hieroglyphs represent a very important part of the Chinese language and, therefore, learners should not only read them but write them as well.

In the process of learning Chinese as a second foreign language in limited time, it is necessary to pay attention to individual work. Thus, one of the tasks, besides the formation of knowledge of basic grammar, is studying the typical mistakes made by Russian learners of Chinese. The research has indicated that 52% of mistakes are made due to the influence of a native language and 44% are affected by the learned language [Mushinskii, 2007]. Therefore, it is relevant to organize the correction of mistakes by learners who act as experts while giving the explanation of the made errors.

Cultural approach in teaching

Often it is insufficient for learners to have a good command of lexical units and basic grammar of learned language, as they are required to know the literature, history and traditions of Chinese people.

Implementation of a culturological approach not only creates a positive psychological atmosphere in class and increases students' motivation but also contributes to forming various competences, which are key to success in all professional spheres.

Students who learn Chinese as a second foreign language do not have lectures of Chinese literature, history, etc. Therefore, in teaching Chinese as a second foreign language, one of the main educational tasks is to achieve organic compilation of linguistic and cultural knowledge. If in the text learners come across any cultural references, it is necessary to explain them to students.

For instance, when learners come across the word "Pekinese opera", almost always they wonder what kind of art it is. The teacher should provide students with brief information of the history, traditions and costumes of Pekinese opera, which is an invaluable national heritage of Chinese art, that it got its name as it had appeared as a form of art in Beijing (Peking). Only after a short lecture, the students can get an image of Pekinese opera.

The teacher is to show high level of erudition as students can ask various questions during the class. Thus, it is the teacher's responsibility to provide all the necessary information.

To guide students in Chinese culture and the Chinese mentality it is better to deliver the cultural information in small parts to make the learning process more efficient as understanding the new culture is a constant and systematic process.

Frequently students who minor in Chinese want to learn it for communicative purposes. Therefore, it is highly important to emphasize the necessity of helping learners develop communicative competences (an ability to use a foreign language as a tool for exploring the world and developing communication). Teachers should recommend to students to learn standard phrases, which are frequently used in everyday speech. Moreover, it is necessary to model situations close to real life by choosing interesting topics for discussion.

Another challenge that teachers of foreign language face should be mentioned.

Teachers frequently use situative learning in the class (e.g., to make up a dialog with a peer learner on a given topic such as "My daily routine" or "My dream", etc). Here the communicative problems begin. Many students do not share enough experience of working together and, therefore, have problems with talking and listening to their peers. Their communicative experience is limited by dialogs with a teacher. Such lack of communicative skills results in various problems within learners' environment. Thus, the teacher's task is to teach the students the basic verbal communication, in other words, oral skills. It is advisable to use brief audio – and video materials (3-5 minutes) that meet the requirements of modern society and are not complicated for comprehension. The thoroughly selected materials can provide additional motivation for learning a foreign language [Demina, 2006].

In addition, in our opinion, the process of mastering a second foreign language of students of the University will proceed successfully, if it involves a personal approach to the student, the dialogical interrelation of the subjects of education, and support from the teacher.

At the same time the acquisition of new knowledge and skills is carried out in the process of dialogue and interaction with students. Learning content will be considered as a natural process of communication between teacher and students. The student is a full participant in the learning process.

Lessons based on dialogic interaction can be expressed in the following forms: a game-contest, dispute-discussion with questions, doubts, and the formation of their own vision of settling the problem, point of view.

In our opinion, it is better to build a learning process not on memorization of ready texts, but in the process of discussing actual life problems, which will affect the personal interests of the students. At the same time, students should get the opportunity to talk about their own deeds and actions, current events, learning to express their attitude to what is happening, to justify and defend their own opinions.

Traditional forms of work in the classroom are transformed. Teacher don't need to turn every lesson into a game or competition, it is important that it attended an emotional growth, the spirit

of competition, and involvement in the learning process, which will contribute to the students' motivation to improve the acquired language skills and an interest to further a deeper understanding of the peculiarities of history and culture of the country that speaks the second foreign language [Krylova, 2011].

Special attention should be paid to individual work. Effective organization of individual work in Chinese requires thorough planning, well-timed control and efficient managing – all these factors help form skills of autonomous knowledge acquisition. Such work should be based on well-known practical models and methods of working with texts. The individual work can be organized with the help of Internet resources and computer programs. Nowadays there are a large number of paid and free web materials. Interactive tasks, texts, educational sites and tests of various levels have also gained popularity.

Nevertheless, learners should not overuse Internet resources since such "lopsided" learning process can have a negative influence. For instance, in terms of hieroglyphics computer progress badly affects the process of writing hieroglyphs on paper. We believe that traditional writing and not typing the Chinese texts is a key aspect in further text composition.

Conclusion

Foreign languages, and especially oriental languages, illustrate to learners that, in comparison with their native language, other ways of expressing thoughts, other means of thinking and other connections of form and meaning exist. According to a number of scholars, in the process of foreign language acquisition the way of thinking is developed not only parallel with a learners' native language but mainly by coping with more and more complicated verbal and cognitive tasks that contain the elements of problematicity connected with semantic content of the educational process [Passov, 1991, 55]. Modeling real communicative situations with cultural content in class, participation in various types of interactive activities, including solving creative and problematic tasks enhance imagination and broaden learners' mind.

It is worth noting that, undoubtedly, learning a foreign language makes a beneficial impact on culture of communication and speech activity in the native language, and forms a broader mind of a learner.

The dynamic development of modern language education makes teachers look for meeting new demands. Teacher should not only be aware of certain innovative technologies in teaching their subject but also should have a deep understanding of consistent patterns of their basis, their origin, and to foresee the perspectives for further development. A teacher should have skills that help model the educational process. With the help of thoroughly detailed methods implemented into the process of teaching a foreign language, a university professor who works in terms of limited time can make the educational process conscious and oriented on communication.

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К вопросу об особенностях преподавания восточноазиатского языка в качестве второго иностранного

Федорова Светлана Юрьевна

Доцент,
кафедра языков стран Азиатско-Тихоокеанского региона,
Восточный институт – Школа региональных и международных исследований
Дальневосточного федерального университета,
Российская Федерация, Владивосток, о. Русский, п. Аякс, 10,
кампус Дальневосточного федерального университета;
e-mail: fedlana@yandex.ru

Абрамова Наталия Викторовна

Кандидат исторических наук,
заведующий кафедрой языков стран Азиатско-Тихоокеанского региона,
Восточный институт – Школа региональных и международных исследований
Дальневосточного федерального университета,
Российская Федерация, Владивосток, о. Русский, п. Аякс, 10,
кампус Дальневосточного федерального университета;
e-mail: abramova.nv@dvfu.ru

Квашина Юлия Александровна

Старший преподаватель,
кафедра языков стран Азиатско-Тихоокеанского региона,
Восточный институт – Школа региональных и международных исследований
Дальневосточного федерального университета,
Российская Федерация, Владивосток, о. Русский, п. Аякс, 10,
кампус Дальневосточного федерального университета;
e-mail: yuakvashina@gmail.com

Бахтина Екатерина Валерьевна

Старший преподаватель,
кафедра языков стран Азиатско-Тихоокеанского региона,
Восточный институт – Школа региональных и международных исследований
Дальневосточного федерального университета,
Российская Федерация, Владивосток, о. Русский, п. Аякс, 10,

кампус Дальневосточного федерального университета;
e-mail: Bakhtina.ev@dvfu.ru

Ковшова Екатерина Васильевна

Старший преподаватель,
кафедра языков стран Азиатско-Тихоокеанского региона,
Восточный институт – Школа региональных и международных исследований
Дальневосточного федерального университета,
Российская Федерация, Владивосток, о. Русский, п. Аякс, 10,
кампус Дальневосточного федерального университета;
e-mail: kovshova.ev@dvfu.ru

Аннотация

В данной статье рассматривается проблема необходимости активизации изучения студентами восточного языка в качестве второго иностранного. В настоящее время данная проблема стоит остро перед многими преподавателями. Современная молодежь особенно заинтересована в изучении китайского языка. В статье описывается процесс обучения восточноазиатским языкам в короткий срок. Авторы упоминают трудности, которые возникают в процессе использования современных методов преподавания второго иностранного языка. Рассматриваются задачи преподавания второго иностранного языка, этапы обучения, культурный подход в обучении. В процессе обучения восточноазиатскому языку в качестве второго иностранного языка необходимо обращать особое внимание на индивидуальную работу. Стоит отметить, что, несомненно, изучение иностранного языка благотворно сказывается на культуре общения и речевой деятельности на родном языке и расширяет кругозор студента. Динамичное развитие современного языкового образования заставляет преподавателя китайского языка подстраиваться под новые требования. Он должен не только быть в курсе последних инновационных технологий в преподавании своего предмета, но также иметь глубокое понимание закономерностей функционирования данного языка, его происхождения, быть способным оценивать перспективы его дальнейшего развития.

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Ключевые слова

Иероглифы, навыки слушания, методы, второй иностранный язык, особенности преподавания.

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