

# **The study of Chinese at a regional university (on the example of Nizhny Novgorod State University)**

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**Annotation.** *The article examines and describes the main stages of training humanities specialists at the Lobachevsky State University of Nizhny Novgorod (UNN), a systematic growth of students' interest in the study of the Chinese language was revealed. As a result of the study, the authors come to the conclusion that the current situation in the world, the orientation of ancient cities towards the development of the tourism business, the values of the modern generation of students, the accumulated experience of UNN make it possible to expand and improve the system of training graduates with knowledge of the Chinese language in regional universities. The authors believe that the methodology of interviewing students contributes to the rapid identification of students' interests in new variable and optional disciplines (for example, to the Chinese language) and the use of the obtained data in the educational process in order to improve it.*

**Keywords:** *Russian oriental studies, linguistic training of students, Chinese language.*

Over the past decades, the pace of global integration has become much higher thanks to unprecedented advances in technology, communications, science, transport, and industry. An increasingly important role in this process is played by the People's Republic of China, which has managed to integrate a lot of the experience of Western civilization into the national culture and at the same time has retained the view of the world tested over the centuries, its system of principles and priorities [12]. In addition, there is no dialogue of cultures without a language of communication [9], and knowledge of the Chinese language - one of the most ancient living languages on the planet - opens up wide opportunities for immersion in the world of the mysterious and unique culture of the Far Eastern civilization, for opening new ways of mutual understanding

and communication. Knowledge of the language is necessary for businessmen to be able to negotiate with partners directly without intermediaries, to understand them better, and to find mutually acceptable solutions faster. Secondly, more and more guests from the PRC come to our country, so qualified guides, tourism managers, tour guides are in demand. Foreign tourists visit many Russian cities with an ancient history, including Nizhny Novgorod. The reverse process is also gaining momentum. Residents of the Russian Federation are showing greater interest in the PRC, its history, culture, and language. Therefore, the question of the need to expand the system of linguistic training, especially in regional universities, remains controversial and is of great interest to both teachers and students. [2, 4].

The beginning of the purposeful process of training orientalists in Russia was laid by the decrees of Peter the Great of June 18, 1700 and April 16, 1702 [8, p. 42]. The first decree dealt with issues of caravan trade and missionary activities of the Orthodox clergy in Siberia and the Qing Empire [13], which was impossible without high-quality language training. Therefore, the consequence of this act was the appointment of Metropolitan Dmitry to Tobolsk, and in 1702 - Filofei Leshchinsky (in the monasticism of Theodore), who sent students from Tobolsk to Urga from Tobolsk to prepare the ground for missionary activity in Mongolia to study the basics of the Mongolian language [1, p. 115]. The second decree, the original of which has not survived, but its content is given in another later document, concerned the creation of a school for teaching the Japanese language [6, p. 4-5]. Thus, it was precisely with the study of the Far Eastern languages during the time of Peter the Great that the purposeful training of orientalists began in Russia.

During the XVIII-XIX centuries. members of the Russian Spiritual Orthodox Mission in Beijing made a huge contribution to the study of the Chinese and Manchu languages and to Russian Sinology. The teaching of the Chinese language in Russia is also associated with their names. The first department of the Chinese language and Chinese literature in the Russian Empire was established in 1837 at Kazan University. Subsequently, the Chinese language could be taught primarily in the capital's universities. They also retained the privileges of teaching oriental languages in Soviet times. However, with the development of the Russian education system, the expansion of ties with the countries and peoples of Asia, such an opportunity in the twentieth century. received and regional universities, in particular the Lobachevsky State University of Nizhny Novgorod (UNN; until 1991 - Gorkovsky).

Two stages can be distinguished in the history of training specialists who speak Chinese at UNN. First - 1990s - 2008

Until the 1990s. the language training of GSU students, who specialized in studying the problems of countries and Asia and Africa, was not carried out, which was explained both by the shortage of oriental specialists in the provincial city, and by the fact that the opportunities to get

them were limited. The country needed school teachers: under the conditions of the Iron Curtain, there were enough Orientalists who were trained in the capital's universities. The memoirs of graduates contain interesting information that the head of the Department of General History, Doctor of Historical Sciences N.P. Sokolov did not very much welcome the students' enthusiasm for the history of Asian and African high-quality graduation work [7, c. 92].

Only in the 1990s, when the city of Gorky was opened, the restrictions on travel abroad were lifted, the Nizhny Novgorod students had opportunities for language internships, there was a qualitative breakthrough in the study of the Chinese language in the Nizhny Novgorod region..

One of the first to realize the importance of studying oriental languages in a regional university was O. Kolobov [10, p. 173], who strongly supported the opening of paid two-year Chinese language courses for students in 1988–1990, through which 69 people passed.

In the 1990s, O. Kolobov set the task of expanding the range of specialties and areas of training, involving deeper and more diverse linguistic training. Since 1995, at the Faculty of History, which became known as the Faculty of History, Social Sciences and International Relations, and then the Faculty of International Relations, the training of international specialists, political scientists, and somewhat later - regional studies began, whose educational programs included the Chinese language.

The beginning of the second modern stage in the history of training specialists with knowledge of oriental languages at UNN is associated with the opening in January 2008 of the Department of Oriental Languages and Cultural Linguistics. Despite the difficulties encountered in teaching the Chinese language [3, p. 90–91], UNN provides an in-depth course, its study for four years and allows you to ensure a decent level of language training for graduates, master the skills of speech activity in everyday, professional, socio-political, administrative, legal, socio-cultural spheres of communication, learn the linguistic situation and peculiarities of linguistic processes in the studied region, master the skills of oral and written speech [14, p. 156]. Language training is supported by regional studies and a block of disciplines aimed at a deep and comprehensive study of the PRC.

Currently, opportunities for studying the Chinese language are provided to students in the bachelor's programs "International Relations", "Foreign Regional Studies" and the master's programs "Foreign Regional Studies" (master's program "Studies of Regions and Countries of Asia and Africa"). Students have the opportunity to test their knowledge during language internships, as the department actively cooperates with Beijing (PRC), Kainan and Tomkan (Taiwan) and other universities.

In recent years, Chinese has been in first place in popularity among the oriental languages studied at the university, ahead of Arabic, Korean, Turkish and Armenian. In the 2021-2022

academic year, 71 students or 23.5% of the total number of 2-4 year undergraduate students in the areas of International Relations and Foreign Regional Studies are studying Chinese as a second foreign language at UNN, and 6 or 12% of these undergraduates the same areas of training.

Thus, the Chinese language has firmly entered the curriculum of a number of training areas. However, our survey of students of 1-3 courses in the direction of training "History", whose curriculum includes only European languages, showed that the time has come for the introduction of the Chinese language into their curricula.

In order to find out the interest of modern youth in the study of oriental languages, we conducted a survey in which 94 people took part. Among the proposed options were European and Oriental languages. The leaders were English and Chinese.

Students associate the need for knowledge of the Chinese language (Figure 1) primarily with study and work. More than a third of the respondents spoke in favor of the need to raise their cultural level.

Для чего вы хотели бы изучить выбранные языки?  
94 ответа



Figure 1.

Answers to the last question - "Where and how, in your opinion, should the teaching of oriental languages be organized?" - showed that the majority of students are not ready to study them at a serious level. The overwhelming majority supported the study of oriental languages at the university as an elective (Figure 2).

Где и как, на ваш взгляд, должно быть организовано обучение восточным языкам?  
94 ответа

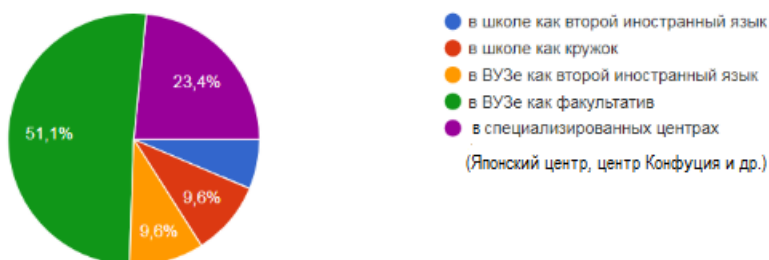


Figure 2.

The preferences of students in favor of such a form of education as an elective is associated both with the practical application of these languages, and with the common values of the modern generation of students. On the one hand, graduates of the humanitarian areas of universities are increasingly forced to work outside their specialty, therefore they do not see the need for deep mastering of a number of disciplines. On the other hand, one should not forget about the peculiarities of this generation of students: they are consumers of information culture [5], ie. have the ability to quickly process visual rather than verbal information, are absent-minded and hyperactive, while their active vocabulary is often limited. Today's young people understand that the demand for specialists with knowledge of the Chinese language has increased these days, therefore they are showing an interest in learning it. However, they are aware of the peculiarities and complexities of Chinese phonetics, grammar, vocabulary, spelling, understand that Chinese is not at all similar to European languages [11], therefore they choose electives that allow them to get some idea of this language, to try their hand and abilities. open the mind.

Thus, the objective processes of social development and the peculiarities of the historical path of Russia require further expansion of the range of areas of training, educational programs of which would provide for the study of the Chinese language. This will allow graduates not only to become more erudite, to significantly expand the field of activity by attracting historical sources in the original languages, scientific literature, the development of communicative competencies, but also to become more in demand in the labor market.

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