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The four year system of Chinese teaching in Institute of Asian and African Studies (IAAS) of Moscow State University

Panel: Chinese language learning and teaching in European countries: past and present

Institute of Asian and African Studies (IAAS) of Moscow State University along with the Oriental Faculty of St. Petersburg State University are the two main academic centers in Russia focusing on a wide scope of oriental studies. Both of them have a long tradition dating back to the mid of the XIXth century when the reaserch techniques and language teaching foundation was laid.

IAAS (established in 1972) – one of the higher educational establishment of Oriental studies in Russia – has gradually developed its own approach to students training in the required field, striking a balance between maintaining a sufficient emphasis on academic research and giving students practical tools to enter the world of an everyday conversational language.

The department of Chinese philological studies being the largest structural unit in IAAS welcomed new changes when Moscow State University entered the Bologna Process, the key point of the paper is to present the 4 year bachelor system in terms of Chinese language teaching, while here in the abstract the main idea of every academic year is outlined briefly.

The concept of “Chinese made easy” though is duly respected but not implemented at the department, the strategy of individual time and personal effort investment is at the core of the system. With 16 hours of Chinese lessons a week and two teachers – Russian and Chinese in close cooperation (this cooperation pattern is preserved until the 4th grade) – the effect of the language immersion is achieved. An analytical approach is in favour when grammar rules, syntactic structures are brought out and reinforced mostly through Russian/Chinese translation exercises throughout the first year.

The need to accelerate teaching Chinese process makes teachers put the language in a wider realm of cultural space. The 2nd year brings to light a vast amount of reading materials concerning Chinese culture and History (the main subjects are Translation techniques and Conversational Chinese making up 14 hours a week) and in terms of vocabulary idiomatic expressions are put into the foreground. This approach enables IAAS students to successfully take HSK 4 exams in the middle of the 2nd year.

The 3d and 4th grades (12 hours each) are designed to make students get acquainted with mass media rhetoric represented in Chinese news (for this purpose internet resources and print publications are used) and in general to make them feel at home linguistically in discussing socio-political topics. Bilingual translation still remains the focal point at this stage. Chinese and Russian teachers both work hand in hand to train linguistic intuition and analytical skills in students.