

Learning Chinese in Novosibirsk: Double Diploma Program at STU

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Abstract: The main purpose of the study was to present the benefits of learning Chinese as foreign language and to identify reasons for the currently growing demand for university graduates fluent both in English and Chinese. The study also includes a description of the “Double diploma” program implemented by the STU International Business and Law.

It is necessary to understand the reasons for learning any foreign languages. And here are some reasons for learning foreign languages:

Firstly, Mandarin Chinese is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world with more than a billion native speakers. Secondly, China has secured its position as a major player in the global economy, so the demand for employees able to use Chinese has risen sharply. Therefore, knowledge of Chinese language and culture is a chance to attract attention of potential employers. Another reason to learn Chinese is the rich history and culture of China. Travelling to China allows to visit highly developed modern cities as well as to view the most beautiful natural scenery places. Special attention should be paid to the fact that learning Chinese is a really good exercise for your brain.

As already mentioned, knowledge of the Chinese language is a significant advantage in employment, and the rest of the article will discuss where to learn this language in Novosibirsk. And further in the article we will discuss about where you can learn Chinese in Novosibirsk.

Key words: multilingualism, learning Chinese as a foreign language, “double diploma” program, STU international business and law faculty

1. Introduction

Here are some reasons that in my opinion people are guided when they want to start learning a foreign language

By studying and improving languages, we develop all our intellectual abilities. Only with the study of another language do we begin to pay attention to our native language. After all, while we are not in contact with a foreign one, there is no need for us to analyze our own, which means to delve into what we put in the words and phrases that we pronounce. With the study of a foreign language, one way or another we have to separate words and thoughts, pay attention to our native language, and re-learn how to express our thoughts in both our native and foreign languages.

Our city is an important transport hub, the flight from Novosibirsk to Moscow or from Novosibirsk to Beijing takes nearly equal time. Every year a large number of Chinese tourists make a stop in Novosibirsk on their way to

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Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Novosibirsk region is rapidly developing business cooperation with counterparts in China. As a result, there is big demand on the labour market for post-graduates in economics and business who are fluent both in English and Chinese. The characteristic feature of educational environment in Novosibirsk is a well-established practice of teaching and learning English at different levels from nursery school programs to various courses for adults. At the same time learning Chinese has become increasingly popular in the last decades. Thus, researchers identify the current development of multilingualism in the educational sphere.

At present, there is a considerable demand on the labour market for post-graduates in economics and business who are able to communicate in two languages – English and Chinese, so learning Chinese has become increasingly popular over last decades.

And for me as a student and future employee it is very important not to miss a chance to attract attention of potential employers. Currently there are several options through which a student can become multilingual while acquiring higher education. Having learnt English at secondary school, he/she can choose to learn Chinese at a specialized educational institution or to begin learning Chinese from their first year at university. There is also an opportunity to become a participant of several student exchange programs developed by Siberian universities in cooperation with Chinese universities.

The Siberian Transport University (STU) cooperates with institutes and industrial organizations of European and Asian countries, as well with Chinese institutions. STU has already signed University Cooperation Agreements “double diploma” program:

- 1) Changchun University;
- 2) Shenyang Polytechnic University;
- 3) Dalian Transport University;
- 4) Binhai University, Qingdao.

Within “double diploma” program, students who choose Chinese as their main foreign language can participate in the double diploma program and, after completing 4 years of study, receive a Russian and Chinese diploma. The Binhai University of Qingdao, in the province of Shandong, located on the picturesque coast of eastern China, became the partner of the faculty for the undergraduate program. Upon completion of the first two years of study at a university in Novosibirsk, with intensive study of the Chinese language, students continue to master the professional disciplines of the 3rd and 4th courses in Chinese in China, with close supervision by curators and teachers of Chinese students studying Russian language. Due to the fact that the university is located in the center of the Qingdao Economic Development Zone, Shandong Province, where the world’s largest industrial enterprises are located, students can gain practical experience in working with them and create the basis for the further development of profitable business relations, this is very important in the beginning of professional career.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Chinese Takes More Brainpower

Speaking Chinese may take more brainpower than speaking English.

There are specific difficulties in learning Chinese such as tones and characters, thus it stimulates different parts of a learner’s brain and improves their cognitive abilities.

People who speak Mandarin Chinese use both sides of their brain to understand the language, while people who speak English use only one side. Neuroscientist Sophie Scott and colleagues from at the Wellcome Trust

(research-charity) studied brain scans on a group of Mandarin and English speakers. They found out that the left temporal lobe becomes active when English speakers hear English.

It is believed that this area of the brain connect our speech sounds together to form individual words.

Researchers expected similar findings when they carried out scans on Mandarin speakers. Nonetheless, they found that both their left and right temporal lobes become active when they hear Mandarin.

Unlike English, Chinese speakers use tones intonation to differ between completely different meanings of particular words.

For instance, the word “zuo” can mean do, sit, write or left depending on pronunciation. The researchers believe that this need to interpret intonation is why Mandarin speakers need to use both sides of their brain.

We can make a conclusion that learning Chinese develops our brain much more efficiently than English. “We think that Mandarin speakers interpret intonation and melody in the right temporal lobe to give the correct meaning to the spoken words,” said Dr Scott.

“It seems that the structure of the language you learn as a child affects how the structure of your brain develops to decode speech. Native English speakers, for example, find it extraordinarily difficult to learn Mandarin.”

The Chinese researchers concluded that learning Chinese also affects math ability. The group of Chinese researchers found that “native Chinese and English speakers treat numbers with different cortical parts of the brain” and these results indicated that “different language systems, such as Chinese and English, can shape the way non-language-related content is processed”.

2.2 “How Hand Writing Trains the Brain”

A Wall Street Journal article reported on research from Indiana University which confirmed the importance of handwriting to cognitive development.

There were children who just looked at letters and children who were practicing in handwriting letters. The results of the research were as follows: neural activity in children who practiced printing by hand was more enhanced and “adult-like” than those who just looked at letters. Comparing English and Chinese, Chinese characters are much more complicated in structure and writing involves strokes in all four directions: up, down, left, and right. The sequential movement of the fingers and hand to form a character activates neural activity in the working, thinking, and spatial memory of the brain of the learners.

3. Research Method

To prove that Chinese has become very perspective and popular foreign language I have found HeadHunter’s research.

HeadHunter — the largest Russian Internet recruitment company conducted a study and found out how Chinese specialists are in demand at the Russian market. About 80 thousand people noted Chinese in their resume on hh.ru — for comparison, more than 12 million people know English.

HeadHunter Consulting Center interviewed 433 representatives of Russian companies and the results of the interview were not that optimistic as I had hoped.

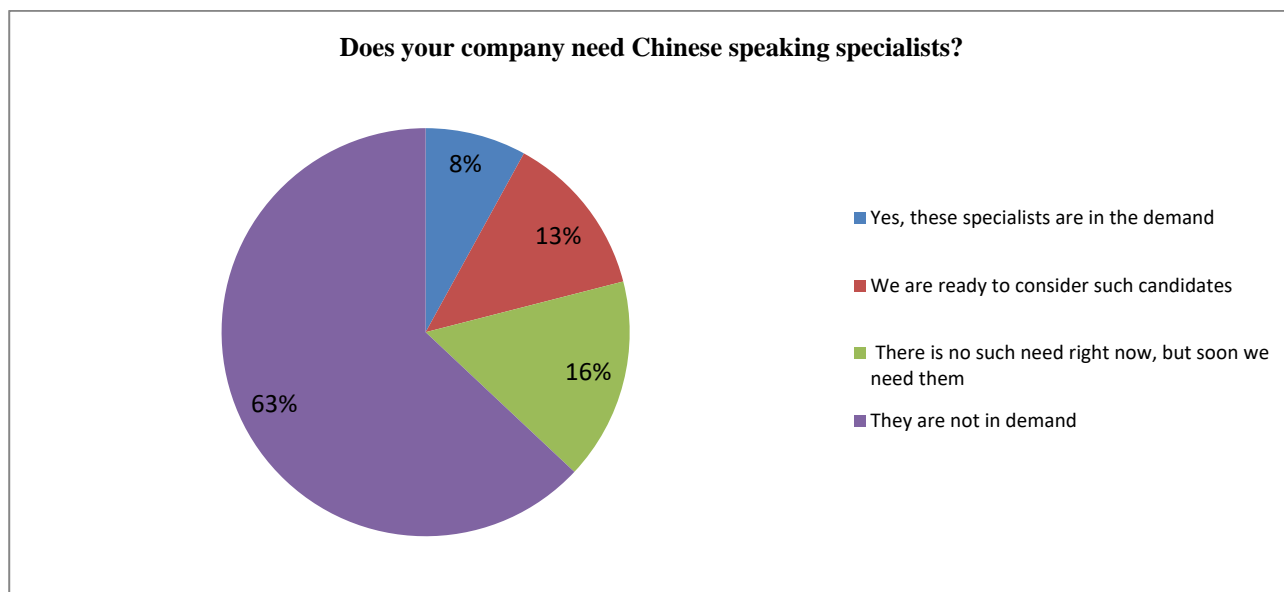


Figure 1 Does Your Company Need Chinese Speaking Specialists?

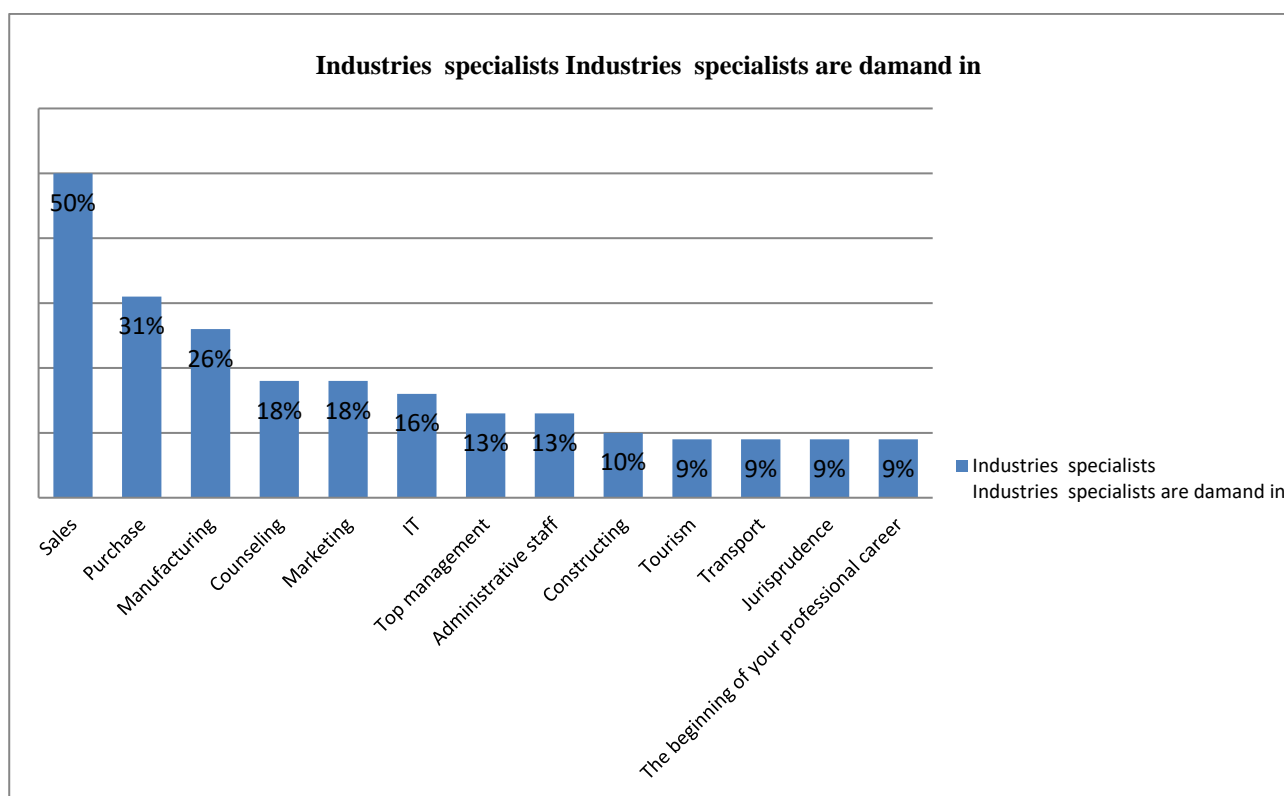


Figure 2 Industries Specialists Are Demand in

Most Russian students in China study in such specialties as international economics, translation, IT and computer technology, logistics.

4. Results

According to the results of the study, 33% of respondents said that they regularly interact with China. But only 8% of employers purposefully search for candidates with knowledge of this language.

For 5 years on hh.ru the number of vacancies with compulsory knowledge of Chinese has grown almost 4 times: from 826 advertisements in 2012 to 3047 in 2016. Most of all, specialists are looking for purchases and sales: in order to produce goods in China and supply them to the Russian market, business needs specialists with knowledge of the language.

Employees with good knowledge of Chinese language are mainly required in such sectors as sales, purchase, production, consulting, marketing, tourism, etc. Over 5 years the number of vacancies asking for fluency in Chinese increased four times.

According to the survey, not all companies that work with partners and suppliers from Asia need specialists with knowledge of Chinese. 49% of employers communicate with Chinese companies, and only 37% of respondents are ready to consider candidates with knowledge of the language.

Chinese speaking specialists are in demand in such industry as sales, purchase, manufacturing and counseling.

I also have conducted survey to understand how and where I can learn Chinese in Novosibirsk. And here are some language centers where you can learn Chinese:

Many Chinese language learning centers have been opened recently which also shows that this language has become more popular and interesting for study.

1) Confucius Institute. It is the first place I am telling you about, because I (particularly) study language here. This institute provides native speakers as teachers, easy to understand classbooks and opportunity to pass Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (HSK) in Novosibirsk with graduation.

2) Language Training Center FrEnD at the STU. Besides Chinese, this center also teaches English, German, Japanese, Italian, French.

Of course there are more than 2 language centers in Novosibirsk, but I have decided to tell you about these ones because I am a student of the STU and I also learn Chinese at Confucius Institute.

I, as a person who is studying Chinese, would like to talk about some requirements for choosing a center for learning Chinese:

Firstly, choose those centers where native speakers conduct lessons. In Chinese, as in no other language, it is important to pronounce the words properly, as the meaning of the word is extremely dependent on the pronunciation. Let us remember “zuo”. Secondly, it is significant for a student to clearly understand textbooks and wordbooks. So pick educational literature which is easy to understand. Thirdly, it is not always enough to just know the language and speak it, many employers will need proof of your knowledge of language, so the big advantage for the center will be preparation for passing and passing (HSK) — the Chinese Proficiency Test for non-native speakers.

Talking about Novosibirsk, I can say that the educational environment in Novosibirsk creates various opportunities for learning two and more foreign languages and achieving the levels of fluency appropriate for developing a successful career.

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