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BELARUSIAN AND CHINESE – FRIENDLY LANGUAGES

This paper focuses on the relationship between the Republic of Belarus and the People's Republic of China in the sphere of culture. China attracts students from around the world and our relations with China are strong and close, making us forget the thousands of kilometres that separate us, and the challenge of Chinese language is much more complicated than Belarusian. Of course, over a billion people worldwide speak Chinese and not all are native speakers. [1, p. 26]

As everything begins with language, the aim of the article is to show the importance of it and prove the thesis that Belarus and China are not only partners but also true friends. This paper presents four points under consideration:

- *Firstly, we emphasize the importance of language for the nation.*
- *Secondly, we give the description of Belarusian and Chinese languages.*
- *Thirdly, we talk a little about Belarusian-Russian-Chinese dictionary.*
- *Finally, we move on to the reciprocal visits.*

A famous American writer, activist and feminist Rita Mae Brown once said: “**Language** is the road map of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going”. It is undeniable that every nation is unique. Moreover, its uniqueness revolves around its customs and traditions, language and culture, which are the main keepers of people's history. That is to say language is a mirror which reflects national character, culture, indigenous heritage and mentality. Only speaking a native language you can penetrate into person's world, understand his or her personality. Every nation is incredibly sensitive about its native language.

This leads us to the next point, which is **Belarusian and Chinese languages**. The findings of our research, based on the percentage of people speaking Belarusian language, show that in everyday life, only 3 % of the population of Belarus speaks Belarusian. At the same time, 48 % of citizens consider Belarusian as native. And 43 % chose Russian as their native.

Regarding Chinese, this language is the most spoken in the world, about 1,197,000,000 people speak it. Thus, native speakers of China make up 14 % of all inhabitants of the planet. Chinese has more than 80,000 hieroglyphs, but only 3 000 of them are used in everyday life. To find out how Belarusians

manage to take on board Chinese culture, we visited the Confucius Institute at Minsk's State Linguistic University. Confucius institutes are a global network of cultural-educational centres, with some cities having several branches - including offices, classes and institutions. There are four centres in Minsk.

The first is the Republican Confucius Institute of Sinology, based at the Belarusian State University since 2006. The centre in MSLU was opened in September 2011 and, three years later, the Confucius Institute was established at the Belarusian National Technical University.

The Confucius Classroom at the Belarusian State Economic University was officially established in 2013 by the decision of the Office of Chinese Language Council International / Confucius Institute Headquarters (Hanban). The plaque with the appropriate name was solemnly presented at the European Forum of Confucius Institutes, held in Minsk on the basis of Belarusian State University on September 11–13, 2013.

The Confucius Classroom of BSU RISC at BSEU was established to improve the quality of educational services provided to university students in terms of learning Chinese language and culture, and performs the following tasks:

In 2015, the Confucius class began operation at the Belarusian State University of Physical Culture. There are also many branches at schools, gymnasiums and higher educational institutions across Belarus, each with their own institutes, classes and offices.

Regardless of their name, All cultural centres have a single goal: to promote Chinese language and culture. This is one of the mandatory conditions. However, the volume of funding varies, being greater at institutions.

The MSLU's assembly hall was crowded long before the opening ceremony, with young people gathering at presentation stands, carefully studying brochures and chatting with representatives of foreign universities, watching video clips and exchanging contacts. Undoubtedly, many wish to study Chinese. [2, p. 24]

In 2017, the Chinese Language Department opened at the Linguistic University, currently with three hundred students enrolled. In 2017, there were 40,000 students from 180 countries studying in the Jiangsu Province, which is one of the most successful in China, boasting a well-developed economy and a high level of education and culture.

Relations between Belarus and China are developing rapidly. A good example is the Great Stone Industrial Park, which is widely advertised in China. Investors are willing to invest in the development of Belarusian projects

and, according to Ms. Xiaojie, after studying in China, young Belarusians are more likely to work well at home. [2, p. 25]

The official part of the opening ceremony concluded with a small concert. Students performed famous English songs in Chinese and danced in Oriental national costumes. The final chord the most vivid and memorable – was a performance by Chinese delegation members. [2, p. 25]

Focusing on the next point, *Belarusian-Russian-Chinese dictionary*, it should be mentioned that the representatives of Beijing University of Foreign Languages is interested in creating educational materials in the Belarusian language and the Belarusian-Russian-Chinese dictionary. [3, p. 34]

The Chinese colleagues were shown educational editions of Narodnaya asveta, books by Nikolay Malyavko “Inheritance, to not become Mankurt”, and Anatoly Titov “Roads of Francysk Skaryna” in Belarusian, Russian and English. The representatives of the Beijing publishing house were particularly interested in the Belarusian folk fairy tale “How a chicken saved a rooster.” A round table on the subject “Belarus - China: Book publishing as a form of cultures dialogue” was held in the press center of the publishing house the next day after the meeting, as well as press presentation of the series “The key concepts of Chinese thought and culture”, “Light signs: Chinese poetry”, “Lotus petals and chrysanthemums” and “Light hymn”. [3, p. 35]

In addition to the above-mentioned facts are *Reciprocal visits*. China attracts students from around the world, with those from the Minsk State Linguistic University. Every year, the Confucius Institute organises trips for students to train in China for up to a year. Immersion into the culture of the country and its language is useful and exciting. Of course, many are keen to stay longer, as the Jiangsu Province, where the Southeast University is located, is famous for the quality of its education, attracting students from all over the world. Internships pay for food, insurance, accommodation and training (all fully paid by the Chinese). Students need only pass the selection round, in Belarus, featuring oral and written exams, and then apply for a scholarship. [1, p. 27]

Of course, students return from China as different people. Students come back with not only excellent knowledge of the language and rare souvenirs – such as Cheongsam and traditional costumes, red lanterns and umbrellas – but with their own love of certain customs.

Life is busy at the Confucius Institute; every summer, its students leave for two weeks to camp in Nanjing, the capital of the Jiangsu Province. There, they practice Chinese, and attend master classes on such cultural pastimes as

paper cutting, weaving decorative knots, and calligraphy, as well as tasting national cuisine, touring the capital and its surroundings, and going to Shanghai.

A delegation from the Southeast University often comes to the MSLU. The Chinese are interested in opening centres of Belarusian language and culture, and a couple such have already been launched.

The “*Bridge*” national competition, organised by the Chinese Embassy, is a multi-stage competition in Chinese language, launched seventeen years ago, at the MSLU.

There is a qualifying round to select 10–13 semi-finalists, who then spend 3–4 hours competing for the right to represent their country in Beijing, where the final of the international competition is held. Another contest is specifically for poetry, song and performance in Chinese. The Legends of China jury comprises representatives of such well-known companies as Huawei, and Medea, and features those from the Great Stone Park. [1, p. 28]

On September 30, 2019, a Quiz was held at the School of International Business Communications, dedicated to the celebration of the People’s Republic of China 70th anniversary. It was attended by 3–5-year students from the School of International Business Communications studying Chinese, Chinese students from Hexi University studying at BSEU under the exchange program, as well as 4th grade pupils from school No. 131.

Senior student of the SIBC Andrey Kuyavsky together with the teacher of the Department of English and Oriental Languages Chang Hui prepared an informative presentation for the audience about the history of modern China, after which a quiz on the culture, language and history of the People’s Republic of China was held.

Teachers of the Department of English and Oriental Languages E. I. Ly-saya, A. Belitsky, and S. V. Novash prepared the quiz, which was a list of questions for the participants from three teams. Winners who overtook rivals by an impressive margin were awarded prizes.

After the quiz, participants and numerous spectators joined such workshops as calligraphy (by Wu Yue, a volunteer teacher from China), paper cutting (by S. V. Novash, trainee teacher), Chinese chess (by V. F. Ikonnikov, doctor of technical sciences, professor of the department of information technologies of BSEU). With the 4th year student of the School of International Economic Relations at BSEU Elizaveta Lapitskaya, the participants got to taste the original Chinese tea during her tea ceremony. [4]

On November 19, 2019 at the Faculty of International Business Communications, a traditional event dedicated to literature, “*Poetry Evening*”, was

held. The purpose of this event is to introduce those present with poetic works in three languages: Chinese, Belarusian and Russian. Knowledge of the literary traditions of the country is an integral part of learning a foreign language, since literature reflects the most important features of the culture, worldview and traditions of various nations.

“Poetry Evening” included two sections: the first was devoted to Chinese poetry, while the second was devoted to Russian and Belarusian. In the first part of the event, 4-year students of the FIBC gave presentations on the most important periods of Chinese literature, the key features of these periods and most outstanding representatives.

The event was attended by 4-year students studying Chinese at the faculties of international business communications and international economic relations, as well as Chinese students from Hexi University. Among the guests of this event were Li Wenhua, First Secretary on Education of the Chinese Embassy in Belarus, as well as teachers and students of the secondary school No. 131 of Minsk and the gymnasium No. 23 of Minsk.

So, it is possible to conclude that nowadays international cooperation is the basis for ensuring growth of the country. Countries unite in search of collective solutions and achieving common goals. One of the common goals for Republic of Belarus and the People’s Republic of China is the effectiveness of education and its quality.

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