

ISCKMC 2020
International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»
SEMINARS FOR TEACHERS OF RUSSIAN STUDIES IN CHINA:
PECULARITIES OF DISTANCE LEARNING

Marina Igorevna Ivkina (a)*, Yuliya Mikhailovna Ryzhikh (b),
Valeriy Vladimirovich Chastnykh (c)
*Corresponding author

- (a) Institute of Russian Language and Culture Lomonosov Moscow State University, korp.1, 24/35, Krzhozhanovskogo str., Moscow, Russia, marina_poy@mail.ru,
(b) Institute of Russian Language and Culture Lomonosov Moscow State University, korp.1, 24/35, Krzhozhanovskogo str., Moscow, Russia, ryzhikh@mail.ru,
(c) Institute of Russian Language and Culture Lomonosov Moscow State University, korp.1, 24/35, Krzhozhanovskogo str., Moscow, Russia, tchastnykh@mail.ru

Abstract

The distance learning has unexpectedly become the only possible option for training, and its demand will increase for both students and teachers. Express training programs can be carried out quite often and have a specific methodological and practical focus. The number of Chinese students studying at Russian universities is increasing every year, which reflects the development of relations between the two countries and the growing need for specialists who are fluent in the two languages. At the same time, many teachers of Russian studies note significant difficulties in the study of the Russian language that arise specifically for this contingent of students. In this regard, a large-scale advanced training course for teachers of the Russian language in secondary schools in China was held, developed and conducted by the Joint Center for Advanced Training of Russian-Language Teachers at Beijing Pedagogical University and Lomonosov Moscow State University in April–May 2020. More than 500 teachers from various provinces and cities of China took part in the program, who noted the effectiveness, increased psychological motivation and professional skills. This project became one of the activities to create a unified educational and methodological environment for schoolteachers of Russian studies in China, where Russian has been taught relatively recently and many teachers feel disconnected from the general methodological process and are also not familiar with the basic principles of teaching Russian as a foreign language in Russia.

2357-1330 © 2021 Published by European Publisher.

Keywords: Distance learning, advanced training, professional retraining, Russian as a foreign language, online training, e-learning



This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported License, permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

1. Introduction

The modern education system requires a teacher to have such qualities as mobility, the ability to think quickly and outside the box, to respond professionally and quickly to any changes in the life of society, and, of course, skills in various technical means. In addition, the teachers of modern foreign languages need to monitor the changes in the languages taught, which – in our era of constant mixing and mutual influence of styles – occur with great intensity. These requirements must be taken into account when organizing and conducting various kinds of advanced training programs and courses.

2. Problem Statement

When developing professional development programs for teachers of foreign languages, their authors proceed from the fact that a certain systematic approach to teaching, which is reflected in these programs, will be perceived, used in work and disseminated by their participants. That is why attracting as many students as possible is one of the most important goals of any advanced training course. As for the content of these programs, it is due to the practical orientation of teaching and should maintain a balance between theoretical information on the methodology and recommendations for the preparation and delivery of language classes.

Teaching the Russian language to Chinese students is, perhaps, the main direction in the modern system of RFL (Russian as a Foreign Language). The flow of Chinese students studying at Russian universities is increasing every year, reflecting the development of relations between the two countries and the growing need for specialists who are fluent in the two languages. At the same time, many Russian teachers note significant difficulties in the study of the Russian language that arise specifically for this contingent of students. Those Chinese students who started studying Russian at school are achieving much greater success in their studies. In 2014, the Russian language in China became one of the foreign languages that can be taken during the Gaokao final exam (Yaskevich & Nefedova, 2016). Since that time, the number of schools in China has been constantly increasing the number of schools where Russian is taught as the main foreign language. At the moment, one of the most important tasks of humanitarian cooperation between Russia and China is to build a dialogue between specialists teaching Russian and Chinese languages in both countries, to develop, if not the same, then a close position in this area, to create a common approach to training and knowledge control.

3. Research Questions

The spread of the coronavirus throughout the world and the isolation regime introduced in most countries have created a unique situation in education, when innovative forms of education from experimental have become the only possible ones. On the one hand, the need to study remotely caught the world off guard and negatively affected several educational areas, causing, for example, a significant decrease in the number of students in language courses. On the other hand, the remote format made it possible to implement many projects, which would have been impossible or difficult to carry out in a different situation. Such projects undoubtedly include a large-scale advanced training course for Russian

teachers in secondary schools in China, developed and conducted by the Joint Center for Advanced Training of the Russian Language Teachers at Beijing Pedagogical University and Lomonosov Moscow State University in April–May 2020. The goal of the project was to implement a training program for all Russian language teachers working in high school (the last 3 years of study). More than 500 teachers from various provinces and cities in China took part in the program. The use of the distance learning format ensured the simultaneous participation of a large number of Chinese teachers in the seminar and made it possible to attract leading specialists from China and Russia to its conduct. In total, 6 seminars were organized, each of which was held for 70–80 participants on weekends (the only possible option for a Chinese teacher), lasted 2 days and had a volume of 26 academic hours. This project became one of the activities to create a unified educational and methodological environment for schoolteachers of Russian studies in China, where Russian is taught relatively recently and many teachers feel disconnected from the general methodological process and are also not familiar with the basic principles of teaching Russian as a foreign language in Russia.

When creating the concept and content of the program, the needs of the Chinese side and the modern approach to organizing advanced training courses were taken into account, as described, in particular, in the works of Gargai (2004), who identifies three most effective models of advanced training: personality-oriented, professionally oriented and problem-oriented. The program of the Joint Russian-Chinese Center made it possible to implement all three of these models. When choosing the main topics of the seminar, the problems were taken into account, on the one hand, that are of interest to teachers, and on the other hand, that are necessary for the effective organization of their activities. Thus, the personality-oriented and problem-oriented models were realized. The structure of the advanced training seminar was built in such a way that in the morning, Chinese teachers listened to lectures by their compatriots from the Beijing Pedagogical University on the methodology of teaching various aspects of RFL at school and the requirements of the state educational standard of China; and in the second half, Russian teachers from the Moscow State University lectured on the topics proposed by the teachers themselves, such as: "Educational, cultural-enlightening and reference-informational internet resources in the practice of teaching Russian as a foreign language", "Open Internet resources for teaching Russian as a foreign language: review, content analysis and practice of use". In addition, the teachers were offered practical classes in the Russian language, in which they could improve their language competence and at the same time get acquainted with the ideas of their Russian colleagues on how to plan and conduct a lesson. Such a program, which takes into account different aspects of the professional activity of a modern teacher, is based on a professionally oriented model of professional development.

The need to include practical language classes in the professional development program for Chinese teachers of the Russian language is determined by several factors. First, they are corrective. The fact is that the level of language training of a schoolteacher is not always high enough. At the same time, few teachers, for various reasons, can afford to take part in special courses in order to improve their language competence. The inclusion of practical training in the structure of the advanced training course allows partially solving this problem. Secondly, these classes have an important psychological effect: the teacher, participating in them, is forced to play the role of a student, that is, to observe the learning process from a fundamentally different point of view. This enables better understanding of the

psychology of student behavior, evaluation of the effectiveness of different tasks and teaching techniques, the motivational component of the lesson. Thirdly, it was during practical sessions that Russian specialists were able to share with their Chinese colleagues their ideas about what a modern Russian lesson should be for foreign students, what types of assignments and for what purpose are they offered in the lesson, what types of activities are most in demand in the classroom, and which ones are preferable to be used for independent work, how the teacher behaves during the lesson and how do they build relationship with the group. Fourthly, it was very important to demonstrate to Chinese teachers the techniques of conducting distance lessons for a large audience, since the current situation presupposes such an educational format, and most school teachers in China teach classes in classes where 50–60 students are engaged (RG, 2020a).

4. Purpose of the Study

The main goal of the joint Russian-Chinese project is to train a professional teacher of Russian as a foreign language, working in modern realities, aimed at conducting highly qualified pedagogical activities, including the distance format. The modern teacher is constantly in the process of acquiring new knowledge, thus, the paradigm of life-long learning is satisfied. This poses certain tasks for the system of advanced training of the teaching staff at educational institutions, the main of which is to create conditions for the full-fledged self-development of the teacher, receive methodological, didactic and organizational practices, including from foreign specialists, which, in turn, will allow a teacher to create an environment that provides high educational motivation and communicative and practical orientation of training. The new type of teacher presupposes a model of professional development, which Vershlovsky (2007) calls innovative, since it “becomes a way of life, contributing to the development of professional competence and general culture of a specialist throughout his life. Thus, it ensures the formation of a new quality of pedagogical and social reality” (p. 111). Another equally important goal of the project was to develop common approaches to teaching the Russian language in China and in Russia, which will increase the effectiveness of the educational process in both countries and, ultimately, will lead to the creation of a model for training highly qualified specialists.

5. Research Methods

Modern methods distinguish three approaches to the formation of the content of advanced training. The first assumes that the content is completely shaped by the organizers. When implementing the second approach, the content is formed by teachers who are trained in the advanced training system. The third approach is the most universal, when the content of the advanced training program is determined by trainers and students together. This approach formed the basis for a joint Russian-Chinese project (see Figure 1), which resulted in a professional development program based on the following principles:

- interactivity;
- mobility;
- integrability;

- the activity and independence of the training participants;
- innovativeness;
- taking into account the national specifics of the educational process;

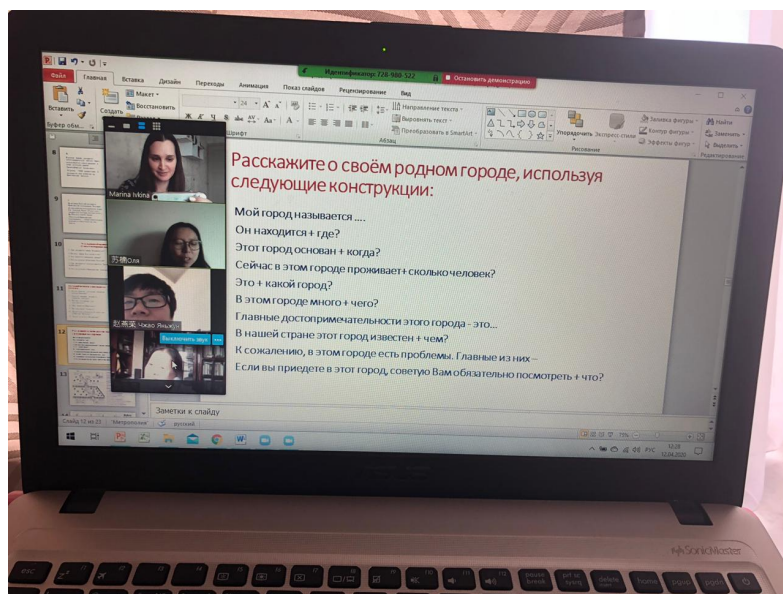


Figure 1. Image of a seminar on the topic “City. Golden ring of Russia”

The professional development program for Chinese teachers of the Russian language was carried out on the distance educational platform Zoom, which allows integrating an individual approach to teaching and work with a large group of students (up to 100 people). This educational platform ensured the communicativeness of learning due to various kinds of feedback, actualization and visualization of educational material. Each lecture and workshop took place in a virtual classroom and lasted 120 minutes. After a two-day session, students, teachers and project organizers were meeting in a virtual conference to discuss its results.

The project consisted of six two-day sessions, which included lectures by Chinese specialists on the methodology of teaching the Russian language, state standards for RFL and forms of control of students' knowledge, lectures by Russian specialists on the introduction of modern information and communication technologies, methods and functional possibilities of their use in Russian lessons. language in Chinese schools, as well as practical classes by Russian teachers on the topics: “City. The Golden Ring of Russia”, “Holidays”, “Speech Etiquette”, “Man. Character. Appearance”, “Learning is always useful”, “Food, national cuisine” (RG, 2020b). Each thematic seminar lesson included tasks for the development of receptive and productive types of speech activity. Thus, the students had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the new text in audio, video and writing, to share their personal material during a conversation with a teacher or with other project participants.

The project uses pedagogical technologies that help to increase the motivation of students, activate attention on obtaining material and stimulate the use of the information received in Russian language lessons independently.

6. Findings

In the course of the development and implementation of the project, an optimal form was found for distance learning programs for teachers of foreign languages. The intensive nature of the program allows it to be carried out in a short time (in this case, in two days). This period suits teachers, since training can take place on weekends when they are not busy at school (RG, 2020c).

The capabilities of the distance educational platform Zoom, which is widespread both in Russia and in China, makes it possible to make advanced training programs diverse in content, as well as train a large number of participants at the same time located in different places and even cities of the country.

The combination of lecture and seminar forms of presentation of material within the framework of the professional development program makes it more interesting, professionally in demand and personally oriented.

Using Power Point to present materials both during lectures and in practical exercises allows students to better perceive and understand the material in the context of distance learning and possible communication interference.

7. Conclusion

One of the main results of the project was the integration of the activities of Russian teachers in Chinese secondary schools into the general process of teaching Russian as a foreign language in China and Russia. The demand for this program – taking into account that more than 500 Russian teachers from different provinces of China took part in it – shows the desire of Chinese teachers to expand their knowledge and improve their professional level in projects with the participation of Russian specialists.

The distance learning format showed that in certain cases it is the only possible option for training and will be in demand in the post-quarantine educational space. Express training programs can be carried out quite often and have a specific methodological and practical focus.

The project of the Joint Russian-Chinese Center for Advanced Studies received a lot of feedback from the participants. The success of the project can be recognized that all reviews give a positive assessment of the work of Russian and Chinese specialists, recognizing the need for such unifying events that increase the psychological and professional motivation of teachers.

Acknowledgments

The project was widely covered in the Russian and Chinese press. Both "Rossiyskaya Gazeta" and the main newspaper of China "Rénmín Ribào" wrote about it. The program was discussed in the Chinese scientific journal Science of China.

Here are the links to the publications about the project:

- <https://rg.ru/2020/05/18/rossiia-i-kitaj-sozdali-za-vremia-pandemii-novoe-obrazovatelnoe-prostranstvo.html>
- <https://rg.ru/2020/04/14/reg-cfo/v-usloviiah-pandemii-kitajskie-studenty-prodolzhaiut-uchit-russkij-iazuk.html>

- <https://rg.ru/2020/04/27/kak-vo-vremia-pandemii-v-mire-vozros-interes-k-russkomu-iazyku.html>
- http://www.stdaily.com/index/kejixinwen/2020-05/21/content_944917.shtml?from=groupmessage&isappinstalled=0#10006-weixin-1-52626-6b3bffd01fdde4900130bc5a2751b6d1
- https://m.haiwainet.cn/middle/3541089/2020/0608/content_31808806_1.html

References

- Gargai, V. B. (2004). Levels of teacher's professional skills and methods of teaching in the course of advanced training of educational workers in the West (based on the material of the USA). *Methodist*, 6, 11–13.
- RG (2020a). Russia and China created a new educational space during the pandemic. <https://rg.ru/2020/05/18/rossiia-i-kitaj-sozdali-za-vremia-pandemii-novoe-obrazovatelnoe-prostranstvo.html>
- RG (2020b). In the pandemic, Chinese students continue to learn Russian. <https://rg.ru/2020/04/14/reg-cfo/v-usloviiah-pandemii-kitajskie-studenty-prodolzhaiut-uchit-russkij-iazyk.html>
- RG (2020c). How the world has increased interest in the Russian language during the pandemic. <https://rg.ru/2020/04/27/kak-vo-vremia-pandemii-v-mire-vozros-interes-k-russkomu-iazyku.html>
- Vershlovsky, S. G. (2007). From advanced training to postgraduate pedagogical education. In S. G. Vershlovsky & G. S. Sukhobskaya (Eds.), *Andragogy of postgraduate pedagogical education*. Scientific and methodological manual. SPbAPP.
- Yaskevich, M. I., & Nefedova, I. K. (2016). Implementation of additional professional programs in the field of teaching Russian as a foreign language in the distance learning system on the portal "Education in Russian". *Bull. of NVSU*, 4. <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/realizatsiya-dopolnitelnyh-professionalnyh-programm-v-oblasti-prepodavaniya-russkogo-yazyka-kak-inostrannogo-v-sisteme>