

Analysis of Linguistic Tourism Development in China

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Abstract: The travel to China with the Chinese language study aim which is the so-called language travel or linguistic tourism becomes a popular trend nowadays giving the tourists a combined opportunity of the Chinese language mastering and recreation. There are many language schools in China that provide the Mandarin study classes for foreign tourists. The analysis of the state and specificities of this actual touristic trend and effective organization will enable to attract more tourists from around the world and thus ensure a stable profit for tourist companies specializing in this segment of tourism and an economic contribution for the country, as a whole.

1. Introduction

The Chinese language study is a touristic trend becoming popular nowadays thanks to the economic boom in PRC and the growing worldwide interest to this country. Nowadays, it is a new touristic segment for China, but there many efforts made for it especially by the Chinese government, and the increasing inbound touristic flows prove it to be promising. According to the Chinese Ministry of Education (MOE), circa 40 % of the international students arrive at China for the Chinese language studies [2]. These data include both the overall number of the Mandarin studying persons both at the China's public educational institutions and private linguistic centers, many of which function on the basis of the state universities and colleges.

By attracting the interest of other countries to the Chinese language and its traditions and culture, the Government of China hopes to draw the worldwide attention and enhance its position in the global arena. Hu Jintao, China's ex-president, during the 17th Congress of the Communist Party of China, made statement on the necessity of the global Chinese language and culture promotion [1]. The specially designed Confucius institutes organized by the Hanban government body (Chinese Language International Council Office) effectively realize the China's "soft power" policy in terms of the worldwide dissemination and promotion of the Chinese language and culture. These institutes are mainly arranged under the large abroad state universities, including the following:

- Mandarin study courses, issuance of the teaching and learning materials and techniques;
- Mandarin study testing (with the help of such exams as HSK--Test of Chinese as a Foreign Language-, YCT--HSK for school students-, BCT--Chinese language business proficiency test-), language competency certificate issuance;
- Arrangement of different events (concerts, exhibitions, film festivals) for the popularization of the Chinese language and culture.

Immersion is indisputably the most effective way of a foreign language study. Many studies are devoted to the immersion method efficacy issue in the foreign language teaching. The foreign (M. Berlitz, O. Jespersen, F. Gouin, G. K. Lozanov) [5, p.39] and Russian (I. Y. Shechter, G. A. Kitaygorodskaya) linguists [6] were the immersion method supporters. The Chinese language and culture are quite distinctive for foreigners; therefore, immersion is believed to be the best way for the language learning. Such travels imply not only the language skill mastering, but also the country's culture and tradition perception. The Chinese people culture, history and tradition teaching is an integral component of the Mandarin teaching process according to Professor Sung Yang of the Institute of Pedagogy of Liaoning University of Science and Technology in China [8]. The language and culture indivisibility has been also emphasized in the well-reputed Godfrey Chisoni's article at the Faculty of Arts of Jilin University of China [4]. He maintains that the language is the bearer and "mirror" of the peoples' culture since the Chinese language is rich in all sorts of the expressive means, stable expressions and idioms carrying the connotations that are very difficult for understanding by the foreigners without the knowledge of the China's culture.

2. China's Private Language Schools

2.1. The main Features of Private Language Schools in China

China's private schools position themselves as the organizations aimed at meeting all needs of the clients with regard to the Mandarin learning. The duties of these linguistic schools include:

- Different organizational forms of classes: from small group classes to individual training classes with a qualified native speaker-teacher, 1-52 week training classes;
- Entertainment activities for the education process diversification (sightseeings, Chinese calligraphy classes, tea ceremonies, traditional Chinese Opera style performances, traditional Chinese cuisine and health practice classes, kung fu, wushu, qi gong);
- Accommodation facilities (host families, hostels, hotels) search;
- Visa, insurance obtainment assistance.

Some large language schools even open their branches in other countries since the increasing amount of the Chinese language study arriving foreigners, for instance, the Mandarin House Chinese Language Center founded in 2004 in Beijing opened their branches in London and New York in addition to 6 schools in China [7]. The advantages of studying in such schools in their country are convenience and efficiency, as well as the carefully selected qualified native speaker teachers and effective training programs.

Many private language schools in China cooperate with the major overseas associations offering foreign language courses around the world. Examples of such companies are Education First (EF) founded in 1965 and Language International established in 2000. The headquarters of these companies are located in the United States in Cambridge, Massachusetts. These companies began their activities as the worldwide English promotion study organizations with the gradual expansion of their activities and the other languages programs and courses. The local language schools in different parts of the world find it difficult to enter the world market and attract tourists to their own language courses. Therefore, language centers and schools enter into contracts with similar Western companies that have earned fame and popularity around the world.

2.2. The Main Programs of the Chinese Language Courses

The names of the courses are usually in the English language.

- General Mandarin or Standard Mandarin is a 1 week-1 year Chinese language course with weekly 45-minute 15-20 classes. The course classes are aimed at free common and particular issue

communication ability development.

- Intensive Mandarin is an intensive 1-52 week Chinese language course with the 20-30 hour week class amount, more intense program course, faster language skill development for the homework performance. If desired, this course can be supplemented by the individual one-on-one classes.

- Junior Chinese (Mandarin) Courses designed for young 6-17 year old tourists are not only a popular form of children's recreation - children and youth camps, vacation and 15-30 academic hour weekly classes. The language camps and schools in China with the educational programs for children are mainly located in the urban area, unlike traditional children's recreation camps in the resort areas with the children placement in host families and residences under the supervision of teachers and counselors. The classes are held from Monday to Friday at the weekend teachers' excursions and entertainment activities and family, children and adult level and age course programs and post-class joint free time.

- HSK Preparation Courses are designed to prepare you for the HSK exam. The program includes: the development of the necessary volume of lexical units, the development of speaking, reading and writing skills corresponding to different levels of the HSK test. Some language schools also offer courses in preparation for YCT and BCT [3].

3. SWOT Analysis of the Development of China's Linguistic Tourism

It is possible to characterize the state of this segment of tourism in China from the position of strengths and weaknesses, development prospects and threats by using the method of SWOT analysis.

Strong Points:

1. Comprehensive state support of private Chinese language learning centers for foreigners;
2. Availability of effective Chinese study programs and methods, scratch courses included;
3. Simple tourist (L) or student (X1/X2) visas for language courses in China;
4. Ability to choose their own training programs, intensity of classes and duration of Mandarin courses, as well as accommodation facilities at the discretion of language tourists (accommodation in the host family, residences, hotels);
5. Ample opportunities to diversify training courses in the Chinese language with excursions, entertainment.

Weak Points:

1. High language course cost (due to expensive long-haul flights to China);
2. Location of language schools in major cities and weekday classes only;
3. Chinese language complexity not allowing for a short time learning;
4. Need for English language proficiency at the initial stage of Chinese language courses in many language schools in China.

Opportunities, Prospects:

1. According to experts, this segment development is quite possible in China firstly thanks to the government support and the increasing Chinese language study demand in various fields: economy, technology, business and others.

2. New language centers for foreign language tourists in the coastal areas of China can be very effective for the inbound tourism development. The combination of sea holidays and Chinese classes would definitely attract more tourists. Children and youth camps located in the coastal areas of countries with coastlines are very popular and, also, there is a satisfaction of human needs for recreation, recovery and hardening of the body with the help of natural factors.

3. Chinese language study promotion by international tourists in China, private schools and

linguistic centers of China can take steps such as participation in congresses, exhibitions and other events in the field of linguistic business, to disseminate advertising information about their activities in educational institutions with in-depth study of the Chinese language. After all, students of such educational institutions in order to improve their level of knowledge of the Chinese language, often take such measures for additional language practice, as classes with Tutors, trips abroad in the framework of educational tourism. One can use this method of attracting customers: it is announced that when you recruit a group of tourists for linguistic tours abroad, for every 5 or 10 people 1 place in the training courses is provided free of charge (only air tickets, insurance, visa fees are subject to payment). Such special offers are often used by schools with in-depth study of foreign languages. In this case, school teachers themselves provide clients to travel agencies for the conclusion of contracts for the sale of linguistic tours and the subsequent sending of students to language courses or children's language camps abroad. Prices for training in this case are lower than usual, and accompanying students on a language tour becomes a good offer for their teachers.

4. Creation of Mandarin teaching associations of organizations would be an effective solution for good coordination of private Mandarin language schools and perfect competition in this market. The private language centers could be accredited, trained and upgraded within the framework of such associations where, in their turn, such associations can keep, post statistical records of language tourists and information on language schools on web portals for everyone.

Threats:

1. Decrease in the share of linguistic tourism in China can be due to the worldwide Chinese language popularization, new language schools in different countries, since the language courses in one's home country prove to be more convenient and efficient upon the teaching by native speakers and qualified professionals.

2. The current negative consequences of some political processes may negatively affect international relations and reduce the share of inbound tourism to China. This development is unlikely given the Chinese government's soft power and non-interference policy.

4. Conclusions

The issue of the linguistic tourism development in China is very relevant nowadays. With the effective organization of this segment of tourism, cooperation with the Hanban and the government of China, relevant private language schools and travel companies can attract large flows of worldwide tourists and, thus, profit both private organizations and the Chinese economy as a whole. After all, a foreign tourist who comes to the country to study Mandarin, stays in it for more than a week, and therefore leaves money in it for various goods and services.

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