

Translating and Teaching Chinese Language in Serbia: Obstacles and Solutions

Dear professors, sinologists, students and friends,

Thank you for your participation at our first sinological roundtable. There were many excellent speakers before me. We heard many creative ideas how to improve the work of Chinese language translators in Serbia. My colleagues sinologists analyzed the position of Chinese language translators in Chinese companies and we heard many interesting stories and experiences.

From my point of view, being a Chinese language teacher and translator in Serbia is not easy at all. First of all, Chinese language is very difficult language, and it takes many, many years of studying, not only in Serbia, but also in China in order to achieve satisfying level of Chinese language knowledge. It is almost impossible to master Chinese language, if you don't spend few years in Chinese environment. If you don't have a chance to live in China for few years, I suggest you to try to find few Chinese friends here, and become very close with them, then try being with them as much as possible on a daily basis, marry a Chinese husband if needed, otherwise your Chinese will stay passive, undeveloped and poor. I have many classmates who unfortunately didn't have chance to study Chinese language in China, and that's why their Chinese never got mature. After graduation, they worked as translators of other languages, mostly English, German, French or Russian, which was their second language during the undergraduate studies.

Teaching Chinese language in Serbia is also not an easy job. First of all, you need some kind of special fortune to find this kind of job. I remember myself, when I was 22 years old, dreaming to have just a common life of Chinese language teacher, just like my mother had many years ago when she was a Russian language teacher in one high school. In my dreams, it should happen just after the bachelor's graduation. At that time, I've never believed that I would have to finish 2 specializations, 3 years of master studies and another 3 years of

PhD studies in China at the prestigious Beijing Normal University, which is altogether 8 years of studies in different scientific fields in China. You can say – I spent one significant period of life there, and all that was only to finally get the chance to be a common teacher of Chinese language here in Serbia. In other words, other linguists need 4 years of bachelor studies to get the chance to teach the language that they graduated from, and we, sinologists, sometimes need 12 years of the highest level studies to fulfill the most modest dreams.

Nowadays in Serbia, there are not many places where you can teach Chinese language. Primary and secondary schools are covered by native Chinese teachers, and Serbian teachers of Chinese language can't get the chance to work there. The salary is paid by Chinese government, and that's why there are no teachers who are Serbs. As far as I know, there are only two secondary schools in Serbia – Belgrade Philological Gymnasium and Gymnasium of Karlovci, where Chinese language is taught by Serbian teachers of Chinese language.

Speaking of the Universities, there are only few places where Serbian teachers of Chinese language can try to find a job, but the salaries are very modest, and most of the sinologists who sacrificed many years of their lives in China obtaining masters or doctoral degrees are not ready to work for such a modest sum of money. Unfortunately, our government doesn't value the knowledge of Chinese language, and the Chinese government is only interested to financially support native Chinese teachers, which is, of course, only natural and normal.

Since the environment and conditions for Serbian teachers of Chinese language are not so favorable, most of sinologists are focused on finding stable jobs in Chinese companies, which are, fortunately, due to the expansion of Chinese economical impact in central and south-eastern Europe, recently getting more and more present on Serbian business stage. Serbian sinologists turn towards Chinese projects and find temporary or permanent employment in Chinese companies. Some of the sinologists decide to be freelance interpreters, which is also well paid at the moment. Sinologists who have a gift of doing business, even establish their own companies and do import and export with the

manufacturers from China and make very beautiful sums of money in a short period of time. Other sinologists decide to be consultants and mediators between Chinese and Serbian companies, and earn a lot, by finding the partners or tender participants for both sides.

Since the Summit of China and 16 central and eastern European countries is approaching in the next month, and we have the luck that Belgrade will be the host city of this event, I suppose that Chinese translators will be more valued in the near future. Since many new projects will be set up, more job opportunities will be offered to our colleagues sinologists. We know how many hardships and troubles we overcome on our way of learning Chinese language, and for this reason, we should be more self-aware of our importance in the process of cooperation between Serbia and Peoples Republic of China. For this reason, we should more appreciate ourselves, so as to be more appreciated by our society and Chinese employers.

Our time has come! Just be wise, value our knowledge and cherish the chances we get now and will be given in the future! The more Chinese companies in Serbia, the bigger demand for Chinese language translators. The more Chinese businessmen in Serbia, the bigger demand for the teachers who will teach them Serbian language. Finally, the more Chinese companies in Serbia, the more students who want to learn Chinese language. Due to Chinese economic growth and Chinese commercial impact which spreads over the world, Europe and our country, I see only bright future for us, the sinologists. As our well-known writer and journalist Mr Dejan Lucic says in his book "The Chinese Revenge", which is also one of my favorite books, "always follow the trail of money". It seems to me that we, Chinese linguists, had a good premonition many years ago when we started our Chinese language destiny. Nowadays, China has already become the richest country in the world, China – which is our occupation and our professional goal. It seems to me right now we are standing at the entrance of a huge gold mine. Our time has come, so let it be!!!

Thanks for your attention!