

# Advocate Chinese Teaching for Foreign Students and Enhance the International Appeal of Shanghai

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Attracting more foreign students to study in Shanghai is crucial to develop Shanghai into an international metropolis as well as an international competitive destination for overseas study (from the 12th Five-Year Plan of Shanghai). In the past decade, the number of foreign students in universities and colleges in Shanghai has been constantly on the rise and the number reached 56,033 in 2014. To further scale up overseas students, Shanghai has taken various measures. For instance, the municipal government has made full use of every cultural exchange opportunity, intensified the publicity of Shanghai's colleges and universities abroad, offered more government scholarship for foreign students, set courses and majors taught in English, to name just a few. Despite of all the efforts aforementioned, so far foreign students have merely accounted for 8.8% of students and faculty among colleges and universities in Shanghai, far below that in Australia (18.3%), UK(17.1%), Switzerland(16.5%), New Zealand(15.8%), etc. It is a far cry from the goal set by Shanghai municipal government, that is, by 2020 the percentage of foreign students in colleges and universities shall reach 15%. Shanghai is in desperate need of requiring the needs and experience of foreign students and accordingly formulates relative policies so as to improve their study and life in Shanghai, live up to their expectancy and in the end make Shanghai an international competitive destination for overseas study. Hence, under the leadership of the International Cooperation and Exchange Office of Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, we had 1892 foreign students from 26 colleges and universities in Shanghai participate in a questionnaire survey and interviewed with 40 foreign students of 13 colleges and universities who came from 22 countries.

First, To Learn Chinese Is The Primary Factor That Foreign Students Come To Shanghai.

According to our survey, to learn Chinese is the top-ranking one among all the factors that attract foreign students to study in Shanghai, which 82% of students consider to be very important or relatively important. Moreover, "Shanghai is an international metropolis" and "China's fast developing economy" rank second(74.2%) and forth(67.6%) respectively in the survey. As China's economic and political power continue to grow, other countries have realized the need to acquire more knowledge of

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China. In this respect, Shanghai, one of the most modernized financial center in China could serve as the ideal destination to observe China's contemporary economic development and cultural change and provide great opportunities to foreign students who aspire to engage in foreign trade with China in the future. For them, learning Chinese could help them understand China better, especially its enterprise culture and economic culture and it is a precondition to carry out their economic and trade cooperation with China in the future.

In the light of surveys conducted in other countries such as the UK, the USA, Germany, France and Australia, unanimous conclusion is drawn as follows: the quality of education is the primary factor that foreign students come to these countries, which is agreed by 90% of foreign students. The survey carried out in Shanghai, however, shows that factors regarding to the quality of education aren't all that important----- "there are good universities in Shanghai" and "there are majors and courses I'm interested in" only rank third and fifth respectively. The approval rating of both isn't exceed 70%, which demonstrates that on one hand, Shanghai's education quality hasn't obtained approval from other foreign students compared with other countries and its education capacity must be improved; on the other hand, foreign students who study in Shanghai have different motivation and expectation, compared with whom study in other country/region and those in other countries and regions in that foreign students come to Shanghai want to grasp Chinese and combine it with another professional knowledge if possible while foreign students go to other countries and regions aim to receive better education.

Second, Foreign Students' Satisfactory Degree of Chinese Teaching Is Not High.

According to survey, 75% of foreign students are taught in Chinese, 17.4% in English and the others in their mother tongues such as French, German or both languages (Chinese and English). While few students choose not to learn Chinese, most of them (including students who are not taught in Chinese) take course of Chinese.

Among students take courses of Chinese, only 62.7% feel very satisfied or relatively satisfied. While in other countries, the rate is much higher. In Australia, for instance, the number is 87% and Britain, 84%. According to the global survey, the average is 82%. As is mentioned, to learn Chinese is the primary factor that foreign students come to Shanghai. However, the data shows that the the quality of Chinese teaching in colleges and universities of Shanghai couldn't meet the needs of foreign students.

If subdivisions of Chinese teaching are investigated, it is obvious that

students have different evaluation on each section. Most students feel satisfactory towards faculty's mandarin, professional knowledge and professional ethics whose degree of satisfaction is around 70% while teaching methods and textbooks are the least satisfied. Most foreign students compliment teacher's professional ethics and their dedication to teaching Chinese knowledge but complain about the traditional teaching methods featuring lecturing and memorizing but neglecting interest and inspiration. It is universally acknowledged by them that practice and workshop should be ushered in in the class so that it could meet their need of daily life and professional work such as trade negotiation.

The least satisfied part in the teaching content lies in the outdated vocabulary and textbook, out of line with daily life. A fair number of foreign students point out that some vocabularies are impractical, especially in daily communication.

Third, The Lack Of Chinese Support Service In Shanghai's Colleges And Universities.

In Shanghai, foreign students, especially those taught in Chinese meet even more severe language problem than foreign students in other countries. Only 29% of students in the UK admit that they cannot understand teachers out of language problem; while in Shanghai the number is up to 45.5%.

In other countries, except from language teaching, it is a commonplace for them to provide students with additional language support. Over 70% of colleges and universities in Britain offer addition English support and over 80% of foreign students in Australia have experienced such language support. There are all kinds of language support service. For instance, the cooperation between language-teaching teacher and major-teaching teacher offer extra academic reading and writing courses; academic proceedings are deliberately compiled for students with academic language; foreign students and local students in the same major work in pairs to improve their academic language; network resources are fully made use of to develop online language teaching package so that they could teach themselves or set message board and discussion board for foreign students to interact with other students and faculty.

Although some universities in Shanghai pair foreign students with Chinese students as language partner, for most of time, foreign students have to depending on themselves to overcome the language problem. According to the questionnaire survey, near half of foreign students (45.6%) have never received Chinese support service and only 22.2% students feel satisfied with it.

Forth, Foreign Students' Overall Feeling Of Studying In Shanghai Is Affected By The Quality of Chinese Teaching.

As aforementioned, to learn Chinese is the primary factor that foreign students come to Shanghai. Facts are that according to statistics, their Chinese is greatly improved during their stay in Shanghai. Albeit that, only half of students (54.0%) tick the option "I'm satisfied with my progress in Chinese" in the questionnaire. For the rest, the Chinese teaching and language support in Shanghai don't live up to their expectation.

Data shows that students' overall feeling of studying in Shanghai is greatly affected by the quality of Chinese teaching and language support service. Compared with students whose satisfaction degree of Chinese teaching and language support service is high, students whose satisfaction degree is low are not content with Shanghai and unwilling to recommend it to their relatives. In statistics, there is a huge gap between these two students.

Fifth, Measures To Enhance Chinese Teaching For Foreign Students.

To learn Chinese is the primary factor that foreign students come to Shanghai which Shanghai could take advantage of. That is, Shanghai should endeavor to construct courses and majors taught in English as well as develop a differentiated market so as to provide more competitive education service for foreign students over other countries and regions and attract more foreign students to Shanghai. However, by far Chinese teaching and complementary support service is not sufficient to meet the need of foreign students, causing negative impact to their overall feeling towards Shanghai. How to improve the quality of Chinese teaching and the Chinese support service would be an urgent problem for universities and government to solve. In this respect, there are some suggestions as follows:

1. Advance the publicity of Chinese teaching.

When promoting college education in Shanghai through channels such as Overseas Education Exhibition and education website ([www.shanghai-study.org](http://www.shanghai-study.org)), the municipal government should further highlight their advantage of Chinese teaching, complementary support service and opportunities for foreign students to be exposed to Chinese culture so as to attract more foreign students interested in China and Chinese to Shanghai.

2. Improve the quality of Chinese teaching

The government should organize experts in Chinese teaching from

different universities to compile a high-quality Chinese textbook for foreign students, the content of which should be close to daily life and the times so that it will be easier for foreign students to communicate with Chinese students and residents, get used to Chinese surroundings, learn more about Chinese culture and befriend local people.

Regular training for International Chinese teachers should also be introduced, encompassing problems that foreign students may encounter in Chinese learning, advanced teaching methods in the world and lively instructional modes such as group discussion, scenario imitation and so on.

### 3. Make use of different channels to provide Chinese support service.

Universities should provide additional professional Chinese courses for foreign students in need, especially those who are not majored in Chinese but require professional language support. Hence, students could master most terminology and academic expression before their professional learning starts.

The government could organize universities where Chinese is the proponent discipline to develop software package of Chinese learning, including both common expression and professional expression so that foreign students may teach themselves if needed.

As for relative departments or administrations in universities, they could pair foreign students with Chinese students in the same major. To encourage Chinese students to participate in this program, university can offer certificate as approve of their capability of cross cultural communication.

### 4. Promote experience sharing of Chinese teaching.

The International Cooperation and Exchange Office of Shanghai Municipal Education Commission could set International Chinese Teaching Alliance under Shanghai International Educational Research Association. This alliance would serve as a platform for foreign students and teachers to share experience deal with common problems in Chinese learning and carry out relative researches by means of regular seminars and site development.

International Chinese Teaching Alliance may also carry out regular research among foreign students by themselves or other research institution. Through longitudinal study, the alliance would notice the fluctuation of their study expectation and satisfaction degree and provide the improvements accordingly.

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