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CHINESE LANGUAGE AS A MEANS OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA (PRC)

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Abstract

The paper is devoted to identifying the resources of the educational system that can function as a tool of public diplomacy. Using the example of teaching the Chinese language and related disciplines, those substantive elements of the educational system that can contribute to achieving the goals of public diplomacy are explicated.

Keywords: public diplomacy, soft power, Chinese language, education.

Introduction

Chinese (simplified Chinese: 汉语; traditional Chinese: 漢語; pinyin: Hànyǔ) is a group of languages¹ spoken natively by the ethnic Han Chinese majority and many minority ethnic groups in China. Approximately 1.35 billion people, or 17% of the global population, speak a variety of Chinese as their first language. (Ethnologue. 3 October 2018)

¹ Chinese" refers collectively to the various language varieties that have descended from Old Chinese: native speakers often consider these to be "dialects" of a single language—though the Chinese term 方言; fāngyán; 'dialect' does not carry the precise connotations of "dialect" in English—while linguists typically analyze them as separate languages. See Dialect continuum and Varieties of Chinese for details.

With the growing importance and influence of China's economy globally, Standard Chinese instruction has been gaining popularity in schools throughout East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Western world. (BBC News. 17 January 2006)

Besides Mandarin, Cantonese is the only other Chinese language that is widely taught as a foreign language, largely due to the economic and cultural influence of Hong Kong and its widespread usage among significant Overseas Chinese communities. (Wakefield, John C., 2019)

In 1991 there were 2,000 foreign learners taking China's official Chinese Proficiency Test, called Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (HSK), comparable to the English Cambridge Certificate, but by 2005 the number of candidates had risen sharply to 117,660 (Xinhua News

Agency, 16 January 2006) and in 2010 to 750,000 Liu lili (27 June 2011). With such a big number of foreigners who learn Chinese, it is undeniable that the Chinese language has become a tool of China's public diplomacy.

Therefore, along with increasing international competition, political, economic and cultural ties of China with other countries are actively developing. Public diplomacy, as an important way to enhance a country's soft power, has attracted much attention from countries around the world. In recent years, based on the need to strengthen soft power and improve the country's image, China has also been actively exploring its own model of public diplomacy—The Confucius Institute - which is responsible for teaching the Chinese language and disseminating culture, is one of the main instruments of China's foreign cultural policy.

1. Definition of public diplomacy

Public diplomacy, which is part of the impact of the “soft power” instrument, is a set of activities aimed at influencing the influence of one state on the society of another state. The term “public diplomacy” was first used in 1965 by the Dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, E. Gullian, who defined it as “influencing the public perception of other states about your country’s policies, shaping public opinion in foreign countries...”.

The concept of “public diplomacy” today turns out to be quite vague; it is interpreted differently by different authors. Thus, Jan Melissen in his work “New Public Diplomacy” provides over ten definitions of the term in question (Melissen J. 2005). In particular, G. Tuk believes that “public diplomacy is the process of communication with a foreign public in order to familiarize it with irrational ideas, ideals, policies and goals, and, as a result, eliminate misunderstandings in relations with a given country,” Zhao Chicheng, in turn, offers the following definition: “public diplomacy consists of conducting events that can form among the people of other countries a positive attitude towards the country that hosts these events and strengthen the cultural presence of the country” (Zhao Qizheng, 2012).

Jan Melissen himself defines public diplomacy as “the process of promoting interests and disseminating values in another country by establishing direct contacts with its population” (Melissen J. 2005). The terms “public diplomacy” and “public diplomacy” are often used as synonyms for the concept of “public diplomacy”. This approach excludes official channels for the implementation of public diplomacy.

A. Dolinsky writes that public diplomacy “has now acquired a second meaning of the term in Russian – diplomacy at the level of public organizations. This has given rise to dangerous confusion: even among experts there is a belief that public diplomacy is just a dialogue at the level of non-governmental organizations. Meanwhile, public diplomacy implies a wider range of activities...” (Dolinsky A. 2012).

The terms “public diplomacy”, “sports diplomacy”, “economic diplomacy”, etc., focused on certain areas of public diplomacy, are also used. It must be understood that these terms are not equivalent to the term “public diplomacy”. In light of the above, the most acceptable, in our opinion, is the point of view of the leading British specialist in the field of public diplomacy N. Calla, who believes that public diplomacy is one of the areas of public diplomacy and involves the establishment of relations between the state and foreign audiences specifically in the field of culture. N.

Kall identifies the following elements of public diplomacy: perception, implementation, public diplomacy, exchange, media, psychological warfare (this element is additional, it can be used in crisis situations) (Kall N.J. 2009). In practice, in the process of forming and implementing public diplomacy, states select several elements that are most suitable for them based on their specificity and capabilities.

Public diplomacy, as already noted, is part of the implementation of the so-called “soft power” tool, and involves, first of all, creating attractiveness (Nye J.S. 2003). Attractiveness in this context means that foreign audiences make their choice voluntarily and consciously—this is what distinguishes public diplomacy from propaganda. The above, however, does not mean that public diplomacy cannot be implemented in the mainstream of propaganda. According to M.M. Lebedeva, “in some cases it (propaganda) can even be effective, if we talk about quick and short-term impact” (Lebedeva M.M. 2017). However, in this paper, public diplomacy is viewed specifically as a tool of “soft power”. It should be noted that the term “propaganda” (from the word propago - I spread) acquired a negative connotation during the Second World War, and a similar connotation, according to expert in the field of psychology of mass behavior A.P. Nazaretyan, became entrenched in the language of the countries of the Germanic language group (Germany, England, USA) (Krivohizh S.V. 2014).

In Chinese, the term propaganda has a neutral meaning (“to inform”, “to notify”). However, in 1998, China noticed that in English the word “propaganda” had negative connotations, and given the negative connotation of the word in English, the English name of the Propaganda Department of the CPC Central Committee, whose name in the official English translation contained the word “propaganda” was changed to “Department of Public Affairs”, while the Chinese name of this structure remained the same (Shambaugh D. 2007).

2. The Chinese language spread in the past

Historically, the Chinese language has spread to its neighbors through a variety of means. Northern Vietnam was incorporated into the Han empire in 111 BCE, marking the beginning of a period of Chinese control that ran almost continuously for a millennium. The Four Commanderies of Han were established in northern Korea in the first century BCE, but disintegrated in the following centuries. (Sohn & Lee 2003, p. 23) Chinese Buddhism spread over East Asia between the 2nd and 5th centuries CE, and with it the study of scriptures and literature in Literary Chinese. (Miller 1967, pp. 29–30.) Later, strong central governments modeled on Chinese institutions were established in Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, with Literary Chinese serving as the language of administration and scholarship, a position it would retain until the late 19th century in Korea and (to a lesser extent) Japan, and the early 20th century in Vietnam. (Kornicki 2011, pp. 75–77) Scholars from different lands could communicate, albeit only in writing, using Literary Chinese (Kornicki 2011, p. 67).

Although they used Chinese solely for written communication, each country had its own tradition of reading texts aloud, the so-called Sino-Xenic pronunciations. Chinese words with these pronunciations were also extensively imported into the Korean, Japanese and Vietnamese languages, and today comprise over half of their vocabularies. (Miyake 2004, pp. 98–99) This massive

influx led to changes in the phonological structure of the languages, contributing to the development of moraic structure in Japanese (Shibatani 1990, pp. 120–121) and the disruption of vowel harmony in Korean (Sohn 2001, p. 89).

Borrowed Chinese morphemes have been used extensively in all these languages to coin compound words for new concepts, in a similar way to the use of Latin and Ancient Greek roots in European languages. (Shibatani 1990, p. 146) Many new compounds, or new meanings for old phrases, were created in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to name Western concepts and artifacts. These coinages, written in shared Chinese characters, have then been borrowed freely between languages. They have even been accepted into Chinese, a language usually resistant to loanwords, because their foreign origin was hidden by their written form. Often different compounds for the same concept were in circulation for some time before a winner emerged, and sometimes the final choice differed between countries. (Wilkinson 2000, p. 43) The proportion of vocabulary of Chinese origin thus tends to be greater in technical, abstract, or formal language. For example, in Japan, Sino-Japanese words account for about 35% of the words in entertainment magazines, over half the words in newspapers, and 60% of the words in science magazines (Shibatani 1990, p. 143).

Vietnam, Korea, and Japan each developed writing systems for their own languages, initially based on Chinese characters, but later replaced with the hangul alphabet for Korean and supplemented with kana syllabaries for Japanese, while Vietnamese continued to be written with the complex chữ Nôm script. However, these were limited to popular literature until the late 19th century. Today Japanese is written with a composite script using both Chinese characters called kanji, and kana. Korean is written exclusively with hangul in North Korea (although knowledge of the supplementary Chinese characters (called hanja) is still required), and hanja are increasingly rarely used in South Korea. As a result of former French colonization, Vietnamese switched to a Latin-based alphabet.

3. Confucius Institution and its role in spreading the Chinese culture and language

A fundamental element of the soft power of any country and one of the four basic areas of public diplomacy is education. The most effective tool in working with target groups of public diplomacy is language teaching, since it is language that is the mediator of the culture of a given country, a guide to the worldview reflected in a given culture. Interest in learning Chinese continues to grow in many countries. This interest is quite logical and corresponds to the trends of the times. Chinese is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world and is one of the six working languages of the UN. Today, many universities around the world have centers for Chinese studies. One of the reasons for the constantly growing interest in learning the Chinese language is the economic potential of China: it is one of the world leaders in the economic sphere. We consider another, no less important reason for the constantly growing interest in the Chinese language and Chinese culture to be the policy of the country's leadership, which actively promotes the development of Chinese educational programs in other countries. Thus, the main activity of the State Department of the Government of the People's Republic of China for the dissemination of the Chinese language abroad is the program to popularize the Chinese

language outside the country. The need for knowledge of Chinese is also explained by the fact that specialists with knowledge of Chinese are in demand in the labor market.

The dissemination of the Chinese language and culture, as an important foreign policy and geopolitical resource, the right to vote of the People's Republic of China in the international arena, has become one of the priority policy areas of the Ministry of Education of China. In 1987, the State Office for Promoting the Chinese Language Abroad (Hanban) was established. Due to the active growth of interest in studying the Chinese language abroad, China, taking advantage of the experience of Great Britain, France, Germany and Spain in promoting their national languages, began to create a non-profit government agency in 2004 with the aim of promoting the Chinese language and culture in foreign countries, which called the Confucius Institute. The world's first Confucius Institute, as a special cultural, educational and educational institution, was created in South Korea on November 21 of the same year. From this time on, China's linguistic and political activities abroad officially began.

In June 2020, the Chinese International Education Foundation, consisting of 27 universities and enterprises, was established, responsible for the operation of the Confucius Institute. The headquarters of the Confucius Institute has been renamed as a center for exchange and cooperation between Chinese and foreign languages. After this, the name Hanban went down in history. In nearly 16 years, Confucius Institutes have quickly spread throughout the world. According to 2020 statistics, China has already opened 541 Confucius Institutes and 1,170 specialized classes in 162 countries (Zhang Donghui. ZhengJia, p. 151).

Such a rapid expansion of the Confucius Institute network has attracted the attention of the whole world. Comments began to appear that Confucius Institutes were being exported faster than China's high-speed trains. LiuYandong, Vice Premier and Chairman of the Headquarters Council

Confucius Institutes, in the speech dedicated to the tenth anniversary of the Confucius Institute, called this educational institution "the high-speed train of the soul" (XinLiu).

On January 23, 2018, at the second meeting of the central leading group for comprehensively deepening reform, the "Guidelines for Promoting the Reform and Development of Confucius Institutes" was discussed and approved. The document emphasizes that in developing Confucius Institutes, it is necessary to focus on building a socialist culture with Chinese characteristics, serving great power diplomacy, deepening reform and innovation, improving the system and mechanism, optimizing the distribution structure, improving the quality of educational work, so that the Confucius Institute becomes an important force for cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries (Xi Jinping 2018).

In 2019, the Chinese Ministry of Education released the document "China's Education Modernization to 2035", which stated that the government should establish a high-level cultural exchange mechanism between China and foreign countries, expand international humanitarian exchanges, and make efforts to develop Confucius Institutes and classes so that the rapprochement of Chinese and foreign peoples and the promotion of exchanges between civilizations are realized (Modernization of China's Education 2035).

On December 15, 2020, at the Cooperation Forum of Asian Confucius Institutes, Liu Li, vice chairman of the China International Education Foundation, indicated that in the new era, Institutes should prioritize sustainable and high-quality development, actively implement the student-centered development concept, and constantly improve the management system and operating mechanism. According to him, the level of digitalization and intellectualization is gradually increasing to improve the quality of education in full-time and distance learning (*The 2020 Asian Confucius Institute Cooperation Forum was held in Beijing Language and Culture University*).

In recent years, in line with the increasing interest in the study of Chinese language and Chinese culture around the world, Confucius Institutes have been offering courses in literature, history and philosophy, as well as specialized courses such as tea culture, Taiji martial art, Lun Yu analysis. ("Conversations and Judgments of Confucius"), opera and paper cuttings. In addition, various cultural events are regularly held. For example, the Confucius Institute of the University of Göttingen in Germany organized an online exchange session on teaching Chinese as a foreign language, a lecture series on "Chinese Culture-Contemporary Theater Arts" and a lecture on teaching Chinese characters.

It should be noted that the types of Confucius Institutes are gradually increasing. Currently, there is a Confucius Institute for Science and Technology in Belarus, a Confucius Institute for Music in Ukraine, a Confucius Institute for Traditional Chinese Medicine in the UK, a Confucius Institute for Business in France, and an academic Confucius Institute in Germany. These are all specialized Confucius Institutes, most of whose work is focused on certain areas and related activities.

However, not all representatives of the scientific community evaluate the activities of the Confucius Institute positively. For example, according to A. Crisma, a professor at the University of Bologna, Confucius Institutes conduct "propaganda" in order to introduce a positive image of China by excluding controversial and problematic issues from discussions, in particular, censoring the discussion of sensitive issues for China. The goal of the Institute is to disseminate exclusively positive information about the history of the PRC, its traditions, state power and foreign policy (E. V. Romanova. K. G. Muratshina 2023). Experts conducted a study of reports from 2000 to October 2013 about Confucius Institutes in The New York Times and found that 35.3% of them were negative, 31.4% were neutral and 27.5% were positive. The Confucius Institute is critically characterized as a tool that is used by the Chinese government to influence Americans' perception of China's domestic policies and the country's international actions (E. V. Romanova. K. G. Muratshina.). The Confucius Institute is designated as a Chinese spy agency and institution that poses a serious threat to the academic freedom of foreign partner universities.

In addition, there is a requirement from the US administration for the American Center of the Confucius Institute to register as a foreign representative office. Chinese politician Zhao Lijian noted at a regular press conference on August 14, 2020 that the Confucius Institute in the United States operates openly and transparently, strictly adheres to local laws, and makes positive contributions to the development of cultural exchanges between China and the United States of America. His activities are widely welcomed by universities and all sectors of society. Official

representatives of China express dissatisfaction and seek to counter the accusations of the American side (Xinhua News Agency).

The activities of the Confucius Institute find a positive response in Asia, where the name of Confucius is associated primarily with culture. The main objective of the Institutes in Asian countries is language teaching, while in Western countries the Chinese government hopes to overcome misunderstandings about China with the help of Confucius Institutes (Xin Liu). As J. Nowak, President of the Jagiellonian University, stated, "The Confucius Institute has been developing in Europe for more than ten years, and has already formed a good brand. It not only contributed to the teaching of Chinese to talented young people, but more importantly, it allowed them to better understand the current situation in China." (People's Daily News. 2019 In Africa, Confucius Institutes are actively developing and attracting more and more Africans who want to learn Chinese. An African news website points out that for many Africans, China has become synonymous with economic success. The ability to speak Chinese is seen as a necessary skill for obtaining high-quality jobs. Clearly, Chinese language learning has a strong community and social basis in Africa (*Chinese language penetrates into Africa—continuously but cultivating new forces for friendship in the China-Africa era*).

The Confucius Institute Scholarship is one of the brand's important projects, in which more than 200 Chinese universities have participated, admitting and training more than 48,000 students from 166 countries and regions in China. Some of these students returned to their homeland to become Chinese language teachers and cultural ambassadors to promote exchange between countries (*Headquarters Confucius Institute held Open Day 2019*). This is an important achievement in the cultural communication work of the Confucius Institute.

Chinese President Xi Jinping emphasizes that the Chinese government needs to promote the development of international communication potential, correctly tell the history of China, and show the true and comprehensive image of the country (People's Daily News 2020).

As noted in their paper by V.V. Kabernik and O.A. Timofeeva, "the choice of a person for the name of the organization is successful from the point of view of forming a "brand of the state." Indeed, even a superficial knowledge of Chinese culture and history in general terms gives an understanding of who Confucius is. This ensures the stability and brand recognition of the entire network of institutions: in the Eastern world, the personality of Confucius is known and respected, and in the Western world, there is a stable directed associative connection with the PRC, but at the same time it is quite politically neutral" (Kabernik V.V., Timofeeva O.A. 2017, pp. 144–176). In addition to spreading the Chinese language and culture, Confucius Institutes provide communication with foreign universities, providing opportunities for training, the formation of scientific cooperation, and various student exchange programs between countries.

Conclusion

Culture as a special thing, its expansion abroad is of great importance in increasing soft power and improving the image of the country. As one of the Four Ancient Civilization Countries, China, although it has rich history and culture, does not have enough experience in spreading culture. The Confucius Institute is the Chinese government's first channel to actively promote Chinese culture to the global level. Despite the fact that the main instrument

of China's foreign cultural policy, the Confucius Institute, faces trials and difficulties in the process of its work, it offers new opportunities for cooperation in the humanitarian field with other states. In accordance with the educational policy, the Confucius Institute is constantly improving the level and quality of teaching in order to meet the increased demand of foreigners to learn Chinese.

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