Why Learn Chinese?

**Overview**

The world is changing fast...and China is taking the lead. Not only does China house nearly 1/4 of the world’s population, it also boasts the world’s fastest-growing economy and is widely regarded as the potentially biggest global market of the 21st century.

*USA Today* asked a handful of famous CEOs: “What do you want our kids' skills to be?”

Their answers were identical: “Computers and Chinese.”

**EDUCATION**

**Elementary - High School**

Experts estimate that about 50,000 students are studying Chinese in elementary and secondary schools in the US. In a nation-wide survey by the College Board, 2400 high schools expressed an interest in offering AP Chinese courses. In 2006, the College Board decided to add AP Chinese to the curriculum, bringing AP Chinese classes to high schools all over the country.

To those who have yet to recognize the importance of Chinese classes, Charles Kolb (President of the Committee for Economic Development) says, “Our nation's schools are locked in a time warp. By ignoring critical languages such as Chinese and the essential cultural knowledge needed to succeed, our school systems are out of step with new global realities.”

**College**

Of all foreign language programs at US colleges and universities, Chinese shows the highest increase in enrollment. Many agree that it has become the 3rd most popular foreign language, right behind English and Spanish. According to the *New York Times*, the number of Chinese programs in the US has tripled over the past ten years. The Modern Language Association reported a 20% increase in enrollment of 2 and 4-year college Chinese courses between1998 and 2002. A lot of students said they chose Chinese because it catches the eyes of people skimming through college and job applications.

**CAREER**

**Resume-builder**

China is, and will continue to be a major player in the business world and future world affairs. The demand for business people with knowledge of Mandarin is sky-rocketing, so Chinese skills will give students the competitive edge needed to succeed in the global economy.

**Business Relations**

China is one of America’s top trading partners. Many US companies are trying to expand in China while working with Chinese companies, since they seem to be the only ones not hard-hit by the economic recession. No wonder various state departments have designated Chinese as a “critical language”. Even if you only speak a little, it will still greatly enhance your international business relations. It also gives you a huge advantage when tapping into the vast and promising Chinese market.

Although English is the primary business language of Asia, this is changing as China replaces the US as main trading partners of all major East and Southeast Asian countries. Especially in countries like Japan, Korea, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Malaysia, Chinese is dominating the business world.

**Politics**

**In May 2005,** Senator Joe Lieberman and Lamar Alexander introduced the “US-China Cultural Engagement Act”.

According to *Asia Society News*, as China rushes toward superpower status, American schools and government officials are growing increasingly concerned by the lack of expertise in a language considered crucial to national prosperity and security.

**CULTURE**

Learning Chinese is a rewarding experience, through which you can immerse yourself in the culture of one of the world's oldest civilizations. Traditional Chinese culture—including Confucianism, Laozi, Yinyang, Fengshui, Buddhism, kungfu, and Chinese cuisine—has left a profound impact on both Eastern and Western nations.

Just like any other language, many Chinese words and expressions reflect timeless customs, values, and philosophies that have been passed on from generation to generation.

**THE SPEAKERS**

Chinese is the #1 spoken language in the world. 1 out of 5 people in the world speaks Chinese, so there are more people speaking Chinese than English!

**MISCELLANEOUS**

Chinese has a very unique writing system. Characters are artistically formed by a combination of meanings, ex) bent (歪) = not (不) + straight (正).

You’ve probably heard that there are more than 2,000 Chinese characters out there. But before you panic, here’s some good news—if you know 1,000 commonly used ones, you’ll be able to recognize 90% of the characters on Chinese newspapers.

Taking Chinese can actually improve students’mental power, since it is training their minds to arrange thoughts into an alternative pattern.

Chinese is really not as hard as it seems. Check this out:

* No subject/verb agreement
* No tenses
* No plurals
* No conjugations
* Simple conditional sentences and prepositions

**Ultimately, learning Chinese is the gateway to understanding a fascinating ancient culture, future job opportunities, great international/business relations, security, and earning potential. So students should have the opportunity to learn Chinese at school, starting NOW.**

**SOURCES**

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