

Intensive Chinese Language Program in Jilin University, China

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The vision and generosity of Dr. Polonsky enabled the Department of Asian Studies to open an intensive summer program in Chinese in China. This program offers BA students who have already undertaken two years of Chinese language courses the opportunity to dramatically improve their language skills, in a Chinese-speaking environment and through an intensive program at a leading Chinese university.

Dr. Polonsky was personally involved in the development of this program from its initial stages. His support has allowed us to build a unique program that does not exist in any other university in Israel. After the first year, when the program was held at Sichuan University, we approached several leading Chinese universities and received their proposals for programs designed according to our initial experience and unique needs. We selected Jilin University in Northeast China to host this program, because it became apparent that we can develop long-term cooperation with them. Lin Qian, our senior Chinese language teacher, together with the Chinese language program in Jilin University, worked to develop a program that catered to the needs of our students and included many extra-curricular activities and individual tutorials. Thanks to Dr. Polonsky's support, Lin Qian was able to accompany our students and coordinate the intensive language program as well as help the students adjust to life in China.

Through the generous support of Dr. Polonsky, we have been able to provide 10 scholarships to outstanding students to attend this program. During summer 2012 twenty more students elected to pay for their own expenses and join the scholarship-receiving students. Even more students, including students from other universities in Israel, have already registered for the 2013 course. This is the best testimony for the attractiveness of the program.

The 6 weeks intensive course held in July and August 2012 was a great success. The conditions provided by Jilin University, one of the biggest and leading universities in China, were of the highest quality. The best teachers of their program were assigned to teach our group, which was divided into two classes consisting of 10 to 15 students. The courses targeted the development of the students' vocabulary and grammar as well as their listening comprehension and spoken Chinese. The teachers set a very high bar, which required the students to spend much of their time after classes practicing and preparing for the next class. To help them with these tasks, our hosts provided us with a fully equipped study room, where the students could comfortably study, and offered individual tutoring for students. In addition, our hosts organized cultural activities, such as lectures on Chinese music, Chinese traditional painting and calligraphy, as well as trips in Changchun city and its surroundings.

The Israeli students, most of whom have never been to China before, were at first intimidated by the need to speak Chinese all the time, but after a few days started to practice their Chinese skills not only in the classroom but also on the streets, in shops and restaurants and with

Chinese students. Providing the students with a chance to use their Chinese in day-to-day situations, an opportunity lacking in Israel, was one of the most important elements in this program. By the end of the 6 weeks program all the students passed a very demanding examination. They all felt that the program had helped them to dramatically improve their language skills.

Learning Chinese is a never-ending process, but the students who took part in the Polonsky-sponsored intensive program in China gained an important advance: not only by way of knowledge, but also in their confidence, motivation and dedication to continue in this endeavor. This unique experience will undoubtedly influence the rest of their career in different China-related fields.