

Minin Eugene Mikhailovich

*Honored Professor of Moscow State Linguistic University (MSLU),
Candidate of Historical Sciences*

On educating the Chinese specialists in regional studies within the master's degree program of the SCO University at Moscow State Linguistic University, through the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative

Abstract

This article analyzes the work of the Moscow State Linguistic University (MSLU) on the international project "SCO University" when it comes to training Chinese specialists for their participation in the "One Belt – One Road" initiative. MSLU has been involved in this project since 2009, when it won a national competition. It joined the SCO University's network through regional studies, together with Russian universities such as Lomonosov Moscow State University, MGIMO University and Ural State University.

After the development of this master's program and its approbation at partner universities, MSLU was the first to make a *pilot issuance* of these master's degrees and accept first foreign students for a semester. From 2009 up until 2019, 130 foreign students, including 75 from China and 55 from the countries of Central Asia, attended the master's program of the SCO MSLU University for one or two semesters. Foreign students received a certificate from the SCO University upon their graduation.

Currently, within the framework of the SCO University, MSLU cooperates with Chinese universities such as Beijing Foreign Studies University, Capital Normal University, Dalian University of Foreign Languages, and Lanzhou University. Chinese students improve their knowledge of Russian and English during study at MSLU, they study regional studies, develop their master's theses, and get acquainted with the cultural life of Moscow and other Russian cities. At this moment, the MSLU is addressing the following issues: work deployment in new areas of *pedagogy* and *economics*, transition to the system of obtaining *two diplomas* and development of studies within *the undergraduate program*.

Educating Chinese students for their master's degree at MSLU within the framework of the SCO University project, by also taking into account its linguistic-cultural direction, should contribute to their future practical activities, including their participation in the implementation of the Chinese innovation initiative the "One Belt – One Road".

Keywords:

Moscow State Linguistic University, SCO University, master's degree, bachelor's degree, Chinese universities, regional studies, pilot issuance, "One Belt – One Road".

In 2007 at the SCO summit the President of Russia put forward the idea of creating the University of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The University was established in 2009 as a network of existing universities in five Member States of the SCO: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Russia and Tajikistan. It was divided in five priority departments: regional studies, nanotechnology, IT-technology, ecology and energy. Three best universities, in each area and from each country, were to be part of the SCO University.

In May 2009, Moscow State Linguistic University participated in a national competition and was one of the winners. It joined the SCO University network, through regional studies, together with Russian universities such as Lomonosov Moscow State University, MGIMO University and Ural State University. Only 53 universities out of five SCO Member States, including 16 Russian universities, joined the SCO's network structure of at this stage.

Now the network of the SCO University is influential in seven areas of training (pedagogy and economics were added) and it includes *78 leading universities* from 5 Member States, including 19 Russian universities from cities such as Astrakhan, Barnaul, Belgorod, Yekaterinburg, Krasnoyarsk, Novosibirsk (two universities), Moscow (seven universities), St. Petersburg (two universities), Ufa, Khabarovsk and Chelyabinsk as well. All of them are main universities of the SCO University.

Thirty universities participate in the SCO University network, in the field of *regional studies*, including 4 universities from the Republic of Kazakhstan, 13 from the People's Republic of China, 2 from the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, 8 from the Russian Federation and 3 from the Republic of Tajikistan. One university from each country operates as a national coordinator for a specific area of training. Thus, the MSLU is a national coordinator for regional studies.

Practical activities of the SCO University began with the development of master's degree educational programs. The master's program of the MSLU named "Regional studies, linguistics and international communication in the SCO Member States" was developed in 2009-2010. It was tested, with the examination and coordination as well, in a number of linguistic universities

of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). These universities, most of which are also head universities of the SCO University's project, welcomed wholeheartedly the master's degree program of MSLU.

Subsequently, the MSLU signed the bilateral *Agreement on joint training of qualified personnel in the agreed education programs of master's degree in the field of "Regional studies" within the SCO University*, with a number of head (main) universities. Among them are:

- ❖ *From the Republic of Kazakhstan:*
 - Al-Farabi Kazakh National University;
 - Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages;
 - L. N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University.
- ❖ *From the Republic of Kyrgyzstan:*
 - Bishkek Humanities University,
 - Kyrgyz National University named after Jusup Balasagyn.
- ❖ *From the People's Republic of China:*
 - Beijing Foreign Studies University;
 - Capital Normal University;
 - Dalian University of Foreign Languages;
 - Lanzhou University.
- ❖ *From the Republic of Tajikistan:*
 - Russian-Tajik Slavonic University.

In the academic year of 2010/2011 the MSLU was the first of main universities to make a *pilot issuance* of MA degrees within the SCO University. Thirteen students from universities from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were educated for the master's degree in this academic year. Since 2013 students from *all the SCO Member States'* universities, which are included in the network, have been attending these MA programs of the SCO University at MSLU.

In just 9 academic years (since 2010/2011 to 2018/2019) a total of 135 *foreign students* have completed their master's programs at the SCO University at MSLU (either one to two semesters), among them there were:

- *From the Republic of Kazakhstan* – 16 people (ENU – 8, KAUIR & WL – 5, KazNU – 3);
- *From the Republic of Kyrgyzstan* – 23 people (BSU – 20, KNU – 3);
- *From the Republic of Tajikistan* – 20 people (all from RTSU);
- *From the People's Republic of China* – 76 people (DUFL – 27, CNU – 26, BFSU – 20, LU – 3).

Table 1 shows the numerical data about foreign students of the master's program within the SCO University who attended one or two semesters at MSLU.

Table 1. MA Students of the SCO University at MSLU

	China		Kazakhstan				Kyrgyzstan		Tajikistan		Total:
	BFSU	CNU	DUFL	LU	KazNU	KAUIR&WL	ENU	BSU	KNU	RTSU	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
2010-2011 (2)								5		8	13
2011-2012 (1)					1+1	2		1+3		4	12
2011-2012 (2)								1	2	5	8
2012-2013 (1)					1	2		3			6
2012-2013 (2)	1	2	1	+3							7
2013-2014 (1)			5				(2)	(2)			9
2013-2014 (2)		5									5
2014-2015 (1)			5				2	2	1		10
2014-2015 (2)	4		1				2			1	8
2015-2016	3	3	4			1	2	2		2	17
2016-2017	4	4	5								13
2017-2018	4	6	2					1			13
2018-2019	4	6	4								14
Total:	20	26	27	3	3	5	8	20	3	20	135

In the academic year of 2015/2016, we moved on to *two-semester education programs* for foreign students. To this date, the master's educational program of MSLU has finally established *two-semester modules* intended for educating foreign students from partner universities. These modules include the following subjects:

1st semester:

- A workshop on the culture of oral communication (second foreign language – English);
- The language of the member States of the SCO (Russian language) (a priority course in MSLU);
- Global integrated regional studies;
- Actual problems of regional studies;
- Ethno-psychology of the people of the region of specialization;
- Political decision-making in the region of specialization;
- Security issues and conflicts in the region of specialization;
- Political systems and different cultures in the region of specialization;
- Central Asia: possible problems and prospects.

2nd semester:

- Professionally oriented foreign language course of international communication (English);
- The language of the member States of the SCO (Russian language) (a priority course in MSLU);
- Actual problems of regional studies;
- Russia's policy towards the region of specialization;
- Integration processes in the region of specialization;
- Regional sub-systems of modern international relations in the region of specialization;
- The fundamentals of political science;
- Information support for analytical activities.

Each module is organized for one semester: it consists of 648 training hours (18 credits), with 26 hours of classes per week and 18 weeks in total. During the examination session (3 weeks), students take three exams, with three differentiated tests and three regular tests.

Apart from the compulsory subjects of these two modules, at students' request, they can attend some classes in other academic disciplines, within the module "Foreign regional studies", taught at the Department of Theory of Regional Studies.

All classes are held in the morning, at the most optimal time for studying, in the main building of the University, in a special modern auditorium

designed for the MA studies, equipped with the most modern information tools, including the equipment for electronic presentations.

In compliance to the dean's decision, all MA students have consultants from the Department of Theory of Regional Studies and other departments of the University which can *provide advice regarding the development of their MA thesis*. At the same time, because a number of Chinese universities gives priority to *Russian language* and related academic disciplines, teachers from other faculties of MSLU are also involved as consultants.

It should be mentioned that a significant number of students of the master's program manage not only to move forward with the development of their MA thesis, but also manage *to get published in the Bulletin of MSLU* (which is included in the list of High Attestation Commission). This would include the articles on the topic of dissertations in co-authorship with the teachers of MSLU – their scientific consultants.

An electronic database of dissertation subjects regarding relevant contemporary problems, integrated in regional studies, has been created in the MSLU. This gives us an opportunity to identify promising areas of scientific knowledge and specialty which could be developed in the future.

Foreign students' study within the framework of the SCO University program in MSLU is not limited to classes held in regular classrooms and offices of the University. The University gives great importance to students' *extracurricular work*. They take tours of Moscow and the region near Moscow, with visits to the well-known sites related to the life and work of famous Russian writers, poets and other figures important for Russian culture and art (Pushkin, Tolstoy, Turgenev, etc.). We attach great importance to Russian language improvement and value the study of Russian culture in the MA program for Chinese students within the framework of the SCO University project.

The MA students of the SCO University have been on study trips to *the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation*, where they have been introduced to the peculiarities of all the practical activities of this Russian government's legislative body.

Chinese students have repeatedly, on the recommendation of their teachers and with the permission of the MSLU dean, went on self-standing study trips to Moscow's suburbs and even visited other cities of Russia (for example, St. Petersburg, Suzdal, Vladimir, etc.) on holidays and weekends. In addition, some University students were encouraged to conduct a series of activities in Russia. Thus, two Chinese students of the SCO University MA program took part in the Third SCO Universities Youth Forum (2018), held in May 2018 from 22nd to 25th, which was organized based on the Belgorod state National Research University (NRU "BelSU"). A large

number of foreign students was also involved as interpreters for their national delegations which have participated in these events, through some conferences, symposiums and seminars held in Russia.

Since the academic year of 2016/2017 our university sends students *to study in foreign universities-partners*. Since then, seven of our students have completed a semester of their studies at Chinese universities as part of the SCO University project. In the next academic year, we plan to send five students to Chinese universities for one semester.

It should be noted that a special section, dedicated to the implementation of the SCO University project, has been displayed *on the MSLU website*, which regularly provides up-to-date information on various activities of the SCO University regarding the MA program in MSLU.

We can see the following *prospects* of the MSLU's development in the international project "The SCO University":

- deployment of work in new areas of *pedagogy* and *economics*;
- transition to the *two diplomas* system;
- studies within *the undergraduate program*;

Taking into account the set linguistic-cultural direction and the emphasis on Russian language improvement, we believe that the education of Chinese MA students at MSLU, within the framework of the SCO University project, will contribute to their future practical activities, including their participation in the implementation of the Chinese innovation, the "One Belt – One Road" initiative.

REFERENCES

1. *K. M. Barsky* Central Asia under the "waterproof umbrella" of the SCO. Info-SCO. No. 4. June 2012 – M., 2012. – p. 74.
2. Materials of the meeting of representatives of the national councils of rectors of the main (basic) universities of the SCO University. Moscow, March 21, 2013 – Moscow, 2013. p. 102.
3. *E.M. Minin* Moscow State Linguistic University as the head (basic) University of the Shanghai cooperation organization. Monograph. M.: FSEI HPE MSLU, 2019. p. 232.
4. *E.M. Minin* "Weeks of formation of the SCO Member States" as a new form of interaction in the educational space of the Shanghai cooperation organization. Bulletin of Moscow State Linguistic University, issue 8 (694). Pedagogical science. – M. REMA, 2014.

5. *E.M. Minin* On the implementation of the project “University of Shanghai cooperation organization” by the Moscow State Linguistic University. Bulletin of Moscow State Linguistic University, issue 20 (653). Pedagogical science. – M.: REMA, 2012.
6. MSLU report on the execution of the contract for the execution of works on the project “SCO University”, № 0912 dated 28.09.2009 (II stage). – M: MSLU, 2010. p. 138.
7. The program of the VIII Week of education of the SCO Member States “Education without borders”. [Electronic resource]. – URL: www.asu.ru/files/documents/00010507.pdf
8. SCO University as an integration tool. [Electronic resource]. – URL: www.asu.ru/files/documents/00009828.pdf