

Learning English in China

RAMY INOCENCIO, *the.News* Correspondent

While you are sitting in English Class imagine this; half a world away millions of Chinese are doing the same thing – learning English. It's for business and for pleasure.

RAMY INOCENCIO

If you listen to rock and roll in Beijing, China, it's not unusual to hear English lyrics.

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Music is part of the growing influence of globalization on China. While some Chinese debate whether it is a good thing or not, international trade is bringing new products, new ways of doing business, and for millions of Chinese, and a new language

LIU DONGMEI, Student

We must learn each other, and understand each other. English is very important too, to communicate (with) each other.

RAMY INOCENCIO

Liu Dongmei attends the New Oriental School in Beijing. It is an elite school with only one course - English. In the past 12 years more than three million Chinese middle and high school students have attended, thousands more are waiting to get in.

But amazingly, that's just for the New Oriental School. Now the US Department of Education says the number of Chinese learning English here is close to two hundred million.

One driving force is the Olympics. Since Beijing was awarded the 2008 games, the government has been working feverishly to get ready. By the time the games end more than fifty billion dollars will have been spent to clean and repair the city's infrastructure, construct 22 new venues, refurbish 15 more, build four new subway lines, and change signs through the city to Chinese and English. Taxi drivers, police officers, hotel clerks and more than one million volunteer guides are studying English.

LIU DONGMEI

The Olympic Games come to Beijing and we have a lot of change. We can meet a lot of foreign friends.

RAMY INOCENCIO

More than half a million visitors from around the world are expected. It's hoped they will spend more than three quarters of a billion dollars. But students are looking beyond 2008.

NIU YUCHUN, English Teacher

I don't need to tell them how important English is because they know that speaking very good English can give them more opportunities in their jobs whether in China or abroad.

RAMY INOCENCIO

That's because English is the second most spoken language in the world. It's the primary language of the United States, Great Britain, Canada, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand.

And it is the unofficial language of India, Pakistan, and Kenya. Its global reach has helped English become the common language of technology, the Internet, tourism and business.

KEITH OSTERGARD, Toastmaster's

All these people that are working here are basically temporary employees. They will work through the time of the Olympic Games and then they all have to go back and find jobs elsewhere in the industries here in China.

RAMY INOCENCIO

Keith Ostergard runs the Toastmaster's school in Beijing. It's a private school hired by the Olympic committee to help advanced students work on everyday English.

But it's not a one way street. The most spoken language in the world is Chinese. Even with 200 million Chinese speaking English – there will still be one point one billion who don't.

KEITH OSTERGARD

China is a growing marketplace. And more and more companies in the future will be doing business in China// Even knowing a little bit about Chinese culture can significantly help one in securing better positions in companies as the years go by.

RAMY INOCENCIO

In Beijing I'm Ramy Inocencio for *the.News*.