First, learn Chinese. Even if you read a lot about China or live in China, you won’t understand the society and the interaction around you because of the language barrier, and the language itself is part of the culture.

Second, it depends what area you most want to understand. So, pick a field and read related books. I am looking for students with a passion for Chinese studies. Only with passion will you overcome barriers, such as the language. I was older than 20 when I first tried to learn Chinese, but I liked it so much, I made it.

Guy S. Alitto, professor of history at the University of Chicago

How to become a China specialist

Some British children learn how to make paper cuts at a Chinese culture summer camp in Xiamen, the capital of Fujian province. How to become a China specialist?

First, you have to be interested in China and Chinese culture. And I really mean interested, not just because it will bring you business opportunities. All famous sinologists are obsessed with Chinese culture, such as the US sinologist Stephen Owen, who devoted his life to the study of ancient Chinese philosophy.

Second, live in China for a while, if possible. I re- searched US sinologists from the 1900s, including John King Fairbank. They all had one thing in common; they all lived in Beijing for a while. Some of them started the earliest Chinese study institutes in the United States when they returned. So, I would recommend people to live in China, live with Chinese people, enjoy Peking opera, and take classes at Chinese univer- sities. As for books, I recommend the works of Lu Xun and Chinese classics such as A Dream of Red Mansions if you are interested in Chinese literature.

The key to becoming a China specialist is to follow your passion; there’s plenty of room for people who want to study China.

Guy S. Alitto, professor of history at the University of Chicago

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Most students have become inter- ested in China 1 year or 2 years, he said. “If you put the number of students studying Chinese and Chinese GDP up on a graph, they match perfectly.”

Moreover, the field of China is large and is not limited to the world. As the saying goes, “The world is in your hands.” So let’s try our best to study the world and has also produced a new wave of growth in Chinese studies in the academic field.”

In the 1980s, only 20 people studied Chinese at the University of Chicago. In 2012, the number of Chinese students was 10 percent of the total number of students. The proportion of Chinese students has increased significantly in recent years. In 2010, the number of Chinese students in the United States was 50,000. In 2012, it increased to 100,000. In 2013, it is estimated to be more than 150,000. This trend is expected to continue in the future.

Some students think that learning Chinese means learning the language. However, learning Chinese means learning the culture. Without the language barrier, Chinese culture and Chinese people will be more easily accessible to the world. This is why so many Chinese students choose to study Chinese.

The increase in the number of students majoring in Chinese studies has accompanied the country’s economic rise, as Peng Ying reports from Beijing.

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