

# Study on the Current Situation and Countermeasures of Multi-lingual Foreign Language Teaching in Shaanxi Independent Colleges Against the Background of "the Belt and Road"

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**Abstract**—In light of current regional economic integration, especially against the background of "the Belt and Road", foreign language teaching of western colleges in China, particularly Shaanxi independent colleges, can't fulfill the demand for cultivating foreign language talents, especially talents of minority languages. Thus, the reform on foreign language teaching is of urgent necessity. The paper analyzes the situation and shortcomings of current foreign language teaching in 12 Shaanxi independent colleges in Shaanxi Province and proposes to implement multi-lingual foreign language teaching.

**Keywords**—"the Belt and Road"; Shaanxi independent college; multi-lingual foreign language teaching

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, the trend of globalization and regionalization is constantly expanding and deepening. In such a context, Chinese President Xi Jinping twice proposed to jointly build the "Silk Road Economic Belt" and "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" (hereinafter referred to as the "the Belt and Road") in September and October 2013. "the Belt and Road" strategy aims to develop economic partnerships with countries along the line and work together to create a community of common interests, destiny and responsibility on the basis of mutual trust, economic integration and cultural inclusion. Its greatest charm lies not only in how much investment and profit one country can get, but more importantly, in that it can bring a new trend to the world. As a result, equal cooperation, cultural exchange and economic prosperity, rather than military hegemony, become the main axis of future world order. Therefore, it can be seen that the "the Belt and Road" strategy is not only concerned about the economy of each country, it is also a cultural exchange and integration. Cai Yongliang (2011: 8) believed that "the spread of language means the spread of culture, the exchange of language means the exchange of culture, and the convergence of language means the convergence of culture". Therefore, as a carrier of culture, language plays a very important role in the "the Belt and Road" construction.

Shaanxi Province, on the mid-line of the "the Belt and Road" must seize this rare historical opportunity, actively respond to the "the Belt and Road" construction, and deepen exchanges and cooperation with such countries in Central Asia, South Asia, and West Asia. And its most urgent need now is to remove barriers to communication with countries in the mid-line. The implementation of multi-lingual foreign language teaching, especially Kazakhstan's official language Kazakh, Kirghizstan's official language Kirghiz, Uzbekistan's official language Uzbek, Tajikistan's official language Tajiki/Farsi, Iran's official language Farsi, Turkey's official language Turkish, Dutch's official language Dutch, Italy's official language Italian, is a fast and effective way to solve this problem. This puts forward a higher requirement for foreign language teaching in Shaanxi Province. Whether it can meet the demand for foreign language talents, especially for minority language<sup>1</sup> talents against the background of "the Belt and Road" needs further investigation and analysis.

## II. CURRENT SITUATION AND NECESSITY OF IMPLEMENTING MULTI-LINGUAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN SHAANXI INDEPENDENT COLLEGES AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF "THE BELT AND ROAD"

Over the past 30 years of reform and opening up, college foreign language teaching in Shaanxi Province has developed rapidly, and achieved many remarkable achievements. However, various surveys show that foreign language teaching in Shaanxi universities and colleges basically focuses on one language-English. And the number of small languages these universities opened was relatively rare. The author surveyed the professional catalogues of 92 colleges and universities in Shaanxi Province in 2018 and found that these colleges except Xi'an International Studies University who opened Arabic, Persian, Korean, Indonesian, Urdu, etc. did not set up small language majors. Even though some universities offered a number of foreign language

<sup>1</sup> Minority language in this paper refers to languages rather than the United Nations' common language Chinese, English, French, Spanish, Russian and Arabic.

courses, their focuses were mostly on English, Japanese, French, and German. The author further investigated the 12 independent colleges in Shaanxi Province and found that the number of these colleges with a small language major was zero (see "Table I" for details).

TABLE I. CURRENT SITUATION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES OFFERED IN SHAANXI INDEPENDENT COLLEGES

College Name	Foreign Languages Offered
Chang'an University Xinghua College	English
Haojing College of Shaanxi University of Science and Technology	English
Xingzhi College of Xi'an University of Finance and Economics	English
Chang'an College of Xidian University	English
School of Northern Information Engineering, Xi'an Technological University	English, Japanese
Xi'an University of Architecture and Technology Huaqing College	English
Xi'an Jiaotong University City College	English, Japanese
Xi'an University of Science and Technology, Gaoxin College	English
The High-tech College of Xi'an University of Technology	English
Modern College of Northwestern University	English
Northwestern Polytechnical University, Mingde College	English, Japanese, German
Xi'an Innovation College of Yan'an University	English

Many experts and scholars demonstrated the necessity and feasibility of implementing multi-lingual foreign language teaching either from the theoretical or practical level. Fu Rong and Wang Kefei (2008) analyzed the diversified policy on languages and the internal and external factors of the policy formation based on the overview of the EU language current situation. Li Lisheng (2011) discussed the necessity of implementing regional diversified foreign language education policies in the context of economic globalization. Liu Yan (2012) conducted an empirical study on the college foreign language teaching mode. He believed that related regions and universities should encourage non-linguistic students to choose small language instead of English. Cai Zhiquan and Zhao Hongxia (2015) believed that China's existing foreign language education policy could no longer meet the actual needs for foreign language talents training, and it was particularly necessary to formulate and implement a regionally diversified foreign language education policy. Wang Li (2016), based on the demand for English professional talents against the background of "the Belt and Road", and combined with the current actual situation of talent training in Yunnan Province, proposed the training of English + small language compound applied English professionals.

It can be seen from the above that the current college English teaching in Shaanxi independent colleges cannot meet the needs for foreign language talents, especially for the small language talents of the countries along the line. It is of great importance and necessity for Shaanxi independent colleges to focus on the actual needs of students and society and adopt multi-lingual college foreign language teaching, in

order to cultivate the talents that meet the needs of global and regional economic integration and development.

### III. SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING MULTI-LINGUAL COLLEGE FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN SHAANXI INDEPENDENT COLLEGES AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF "THE BELT AND ROAD"

It is believed that against the background of "the Belt and Road", the following aspects should be paid special attention to for college foreign language teaching of Shaanxi independent colleges to meet the needs of regional economic development for foreign language talents, and really serve the development of regional economy.

#### A. Strengthening the Training of Teachers in Minority Languages

In the context of "the Belt and Road", the biggest problem for Shaanxi independent colleges to carry out minority language teaching is the lack of teachers in small languages. How can excellent talents in a small language be trained in a relatively short period of time? One of the quickest and most effective ways is to vigorously introduce native speakers who meet the basic conditions of being college teachers and have rich practical experience to serve as full-time teachers. However, in the long run, it is suggested that the government or colleges provide conditions for current young and middle-aged teachers to make continuous progress in teaching and research. For instance, they can adopt a "going out" talent resource training model to encourage teachers to go abroad to pursue their master's, doctoral degrees or short-term study visits. They can also provide support for discipline construction and for the training of small language teachers in colleges and universities in Shaanxi Province by using the National Student Abroad Fund, the Shaanxi Provincial Scholarship Fund, and the Western Special Talents Training Program.

#### B. Increasing the Teaching of Minority Languages

The strategy of "the Belt and Road" has brought a lot of opportunities for exchanges with countries along the route in the western provinces and autonomous regions. If there is not enough talent reserve in related languages, it will inevitably pose obstacles to the exchanges between countries. Therefore, besides English, Shaanxi independent colleges can set up languages commonly used in central and western Asia along the Road, so that in the future, when graduates communicate with people from these countries, they can communicate smoothly without language barriers. Compared with students from first tier or second-tier universities, the independent students' learning foundation is relatively poor. In order to change the situation, colleges can encourage non-language major students with low English scores in college entrance examinations and students who lose interest and confidence in English learning to learn small languages first; it can solve the problem of students' hopelessness in English learning. Second, it opens up a new road for students in future study and employment. Finally, it also provides a large platform for the development of the region's economic development and international exchanges.

### C. Increasing Cross-cultural Communication Courses

The proposal of "the Belt and Road" is not about simple economic cooperation, but comprehensive cooperation in the fields of energy, economy, trade, science and technology, and ecology. "Vision and Action" points out that "the cultural festivals, art festivals, TV weeks and book fairs between the countries along the line will be held together; cooperation in the creation and translation of radio and film dramas will be carried out to jointly protect world heritage; and tourism cooperation will be strengthened, activities such as tourism promotion week and publicity month will be held in turn; sports exchange activities will be actively carried out and countries along the route to bid for major international sports events will be supported. This puts higher requirements for the comprehensive quality of talents: they should not only have excellent professional ability, but also a solid language foundation and a high degree of exotic cultural sensitivity, understanding and respecting each other's thinking habits, customs, etc. Therefore, in the actual teaching, the cultural background courses on Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East and other countries can be added, so that students have a comprehensive understanding of the economic, political and cultural background of the target countries and enhance their communication skills and their ability to effectively deal with cultural differences in the workplace.

## IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the strategic decision of "the Belt and Road" has brought unprecedented opportunities for the all-round development of Shaanxi Province, but it has also brought many challenges, especially the challenge of training minority language talents for Shaanxi independent colleges. It should not be limited to English teaching, but focus on the actual needs and actual conditions of students and social needs, and implement new and diverse foreign language teaching. This paper proposes to implement multi-lingual foreign language teaching. These suggestions include:

- Strengthening the training of teachers in small languages;
- Increasing the teaching of small languages;
- Increasing cross-cultural communication courses.

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