

Foreign Language Teaching at College Level in China Under the Background of the Belt and Road Initiative

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ABSTRACT

As the global economy gradually integrates, China has put forward the Belt and Road Initiative. Based on this initiative, foreign language teaching in China at college level is faced with opportunities and challenges. Currently, there is an increasing demand for minor language talents and cross-cultural talents. It will discuss some challenges foreign language teaching has been faced with and corresponding measures taken by governments, colleges and universities and teachers based on the Belt and Road Initiative. Foreign language teaching should go with the present national development and create a promising future.

Keywords: *the Belt and Road Initiative, Foreign Language Teaching, college level*

1. INTRODUCTION OF THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

The Belt and Road Initiative, namely “The Silk Road Economic Belt” and “The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road”, [1] was first put forward by President Xi Jinping in 2013 and further promoted by Premier Li Keqiang. It has become China’s economic Initiative. It fully relies on the existing bilateral and multilateral mechanisms between China and other countries concerned. With the help of established and effective regional cooperation platforms, we should hold highly the banner of peaceful development, pass the spirit of Silk Road and develop actively economic cooperation partnership with the countries along the route, and jointly build community of shared interests, community of shared responsibility and community with a shared destiny in order to achieve politically mutual trust, economic integration, cultural inclusion.

The core contents of the Belt and Road Initiative are policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and people-to-people bond [2]. At the same time, they strive to build the peace road, the prosperity road, the opening-up road, the innovation and civilization road. The Initiative involves more than 60 countries, which means more than 60 national and official languages, as well as other unofficial, local and minority languages. Language is a tool for transmitting information and expressing ideas. Therefore, in the developmental process of the Belt and Road Initiative, the importance of foreign language teaching in our country is becoming increasingly prominent, thus promoting the humanistic exchange within countries along the route and enhancing international cooperation.

2. CURRENT SITUATION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AT COLLEGE LEVEL BASED ON THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

With the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative, we gradually realize that all kinds of social needs have also been increased.

First, the demand for minor language talents has been increased [3]. At present, English is the main part of foreign language teaching in China, and students need to know more about English countries. However, it is a pity that we know very little about minority language countries. For the countries along the route of Belt and Road, there are many countries whose languages are mainly minor languages. For example, India and Pakistan, if they do not know the local language, how can we talk about economic and trade exchanges?

Second, the increasing number of cross-cultural talents has become a demand. The construction of human destiny community under the Belt and Road Initiative requires us to carry out deep interaction with countries along the route in politics, economy, diplomacy, culture and so on. In this interaction, foreign language talents in cross-cultural communication are indispensable. At the same time, each country is unique in the historical background, language and culture, political system, religious beliefs and other aspects. In order to understand these differences well, the Belt and Road Initiative advocating humanism needs a large number of cross-cultural talents.

Third, talent diversification has become a kind of teaching feature at college level [4]. The promotion of the Belt and Road Initiative urges our country to cultivate a large number of language talents and researchers in relevant fields and countries, on the one hand, to serve the country

Initiative; on the other hand, to deepen researches on education, language, politics, economy, law, social culture, policies and so on. This puts forward new requirements for the quantity and quality of foreign language education, especially for high-quality training for foreign language talents.

3. CHALLENGES FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AT COLLEGE LEVEL BASED ON THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

The Belt and Road Initiative has a great effect on foreign language teaching, especially at college level. Therefore, foreign language teaching should take following challenge, mainly in teaching material, talent training plan, teaching methods and teaching quality.

3.1. Insufficient Understanding for the Importance of Foreign Language Teaching at College level

The reform of foreign language teaching at college level plays a key role in the Belt and Road Initiative and it is also an important factor to ensure the sustainable development of colleges and universities. Therefore, we must pay more attention to the reform of foreign language teaching at college level. At present, some colleges and universities have been carrying out corresponding reform measures step by step to optimize the quality of foreign language teaching at college level. However, it should also be noted that there are still many deficiencies in the understanding of foreign language teaching at college level for some university leaders or decision makers. They do not realize the importance of foreign language teaching in colleges or universities. However, in the actual work, there is no scientific planning of college foreign languages. The reform measures, being blindly carried out the related constructional work, seriously hinder the progress of foreign language teaching reform at college level, and are out of step with the pace of the Belt and Road Initiative in our country.

3.2. Irrelevant Compilation of Foreign Language Teaching Materials

An excellent foreign language teaching material can make teachers play a double role in teaching process, and can effectively improve students' enthusiasm and initiative in learning. These countries concerned are mostly minor language countries, and people in Central Asia mainly speak Kazak, Uzbekistan and other languages. Since the Belt and Road Initiative was proposed in 2013, it has been difficult in a short period to compile a foreign language textbook covering the whole country along the routine.

Therefore, in the process of serving the Belt and Road Initiative, foreign language teaching, colleges and universities are short of relevant teaching materials.

3.3. Fuzzy Orientation for Foreign Language Talents Training Goals

Under the economic and cultural globalization, the goal orientation for cultivating integrated language talents has become a consensus in the field of global education, such as "General Education" at Harvard University, "Comprehensive Education" of Cambridge University and "Interdisciplinary Education" of Tokyo University, which are the representative models of foreign language talents training [5]. But in our country, although some colleges and universities have begun to adopt "wide-caliber, thick foundation, strict requirements" teaching exploration and practice, but generally speaking, the goal of foreign language talents training in China at college level is to develop morality, intelligence and physical ability in an all-round way. At the same time, it is in some certain lack of a broad and solid local language and foreign language talents with theoretical foundation and language specialized knowledge. The vague orientation of talent training can hardly meet the actual needs of foreign language talents in the modern export-oriented economy, let alone meet the requirements of new development Initiative based on the Belt and Road Initiative.

3.4 Backward Teaching Methods and Teaching Means

At present, with the development of higher education reform, foreign language teachers have started the reform and exploration for the traditional teaching methods and teaching means. The application of "situational teaching method" and "flipped classroom" have also achieved certain result. But on the whole, English teaching at college level in our country is still in the period of "cramming education", especially a series of practical courses such as foreign trade, foreign law and intercultural communication which are still the core of theory teaching [5]. It is difficult for foreign language majors to carry out practical training and to transform language theoretical knowledge and other professional skills into productivity. At the same time, the foreign language teaching methods in many colleges and universities still have not realized the application of network and multimedia, thus, the teaching effect is still far from satisfaction.

3.5. Low-quality Faculty

At present, the problem of faculty is one of the most common problems in colleges and universities. To a great extent, it restricts the goal realization of integrated foreign language talents training and the development of talent

quality. The vast majority of foreign language teachers at college level have graduated from normal colleges. Most of them have majored in English Education and British and American literature. Although their theoretical knowledge is solid, their interdisciplinary and practical abilities are weak, especially, they have no adequate professional knowledge involving foreign trade, foreign law and foreign finance. At the same time, they have also little work experience in foreign trade enterprises. Therefore, many foreign language teachers at college level are generally short of the “double-qualified”(One student has two mentors in college or university and workplace.) quality and aptitude, and they couldn’t be qualified for modern foreign language teaching and modern foreign language talents training requirements.

3.6. Unsound Training Mechanism of Integrated Talents

On the one hand, it has a small number of foreign language courses offered. At present, for college language teaching, “Second Foreign Language” generally offers English, French and Japanese courses, but it seldom offers language courses of neighboring countries closing to trade and cultural ties with China, such as Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Kazakh, etc. Although all of these languages are minor languages, they have a strong practical meaning. English, French and Japanese talents at college level are unable to meet the needs of minor language talents in the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative. To a certain extent, it has affected on further development, exchange, and cooperation with these countries. And it directly has influenced the implementation effect of the Belt and Road Initiative.

On the other hand, the talent training does not match with its demand. As the Belt and Road Initiative implements, cooperation between the countries along the route is getting closer and closer. Therefore, a large number of talents proficient in the languages of the countries along the route are needed. Our colleges and universities have been training English, French and Japanese talents for a long time, and they have not paid enough attention to languages of other countries. There is a serious shortage of related language talents, and talents cultivated at college level do not match the actual needs in their workplace.

4. THE MEASURES OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AT COLLEGE LEVEL UNDER THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

People involved in foreign language teaching can see challenges above as opportunities going upward excellence in education. Governments, colleges and universities and teachers should make every effort to take steps.

4.1. Enhancing the Consciousness of Foreign Language Teaching at College Level

The role of university leaders or decision makers at college level is very significant, which has a direct impact on the formulation and development of foreign language teaching at college level. Therefore, under the Belt and Road Initiative, it is necessary to increase the attention to foreign language teaching at college level for university leaders or decision makers, and to constantly enhance their cognition of foreign language teaching construction at college level. Under the reasonable and scientific implementation scheme, we should combine foreign language teaching at college level with the Belt and Road Initiative in our country. On the basis of ensuring the feasibility of the implementation plan, we should vigorously develop and promote the reform scheme of foreign language teaching at college level, and then enhance foreign language teaching quality at college level as well as the Belt and Road Initiative of development process.

4.2. Combining Foreign Language Teaching with Related Professional Background

The reform of foreign language teaching at college level should first closely combine with related majors. Under the background of the Belt and Road Initiative, students' future career planning should be integrated with their current majors and face internationalization. With the continuous promotion of the Belt and Road initiative, the development of countries and regions along the route will be greatly promoted, generating many job opportunities, and enabling many foreign language talents to engage in work, study or live in the western part of China. Take the three-year college students as an example, foreign language teaching is divided into two parts: the first year is focus on the basic theoretical teaching of foreign language to consolidate the students' foreign language foundation and improve their language abilities; for the second year, colleges and universities offer some courses for practical purposes, all of which can combine students' majors and foreign language teaching. At the same time, some foreign-related jobs should be investigated and the curriculum system needs to be reconstructed.

4.3. Making the Goal of Training Integrated Talents Clear

The integrated language talents are foreign language talents with comprehensive quality. The author thinks that the training goal is to cultivate qualified people with physically and psychologically health, good social morality and professional ethics, professional foreign language level and ability, cross-cultural and international vision. At the same time, they can master at least one second foreign language and knowledge which can meet the needs of the Belt and Road Initiative. There are two

characteristics of this type of talents: one is that they have solid knowledge system of language theory and integrated knowledge system. Another one is that they have open cultural thinking and spiritual quality [5]. The Target orientation requirement of talent training of foreign language teachers at college level should help students master foreign language basic skills in accordance with training standards of integrated language talents through foreign language teaching. Meanwhile, they can master cultural knowledge related to Chinese and foreign languages, and students' ability would be cultivated to apply foreign language knowledge as well as to deal with practical problems in foreign-related activities.

4.4. Reforming the Traditional Teaching Mode

Under the Belt and Road Initiative, colleges and universities should keep pace with the age, reform the traditional teaching mode in combination with their actual development, and establish a modern teaching model in order to adapt to the present development. For example, while paying attention to students' language knowledge teaching, we should strengthen the training and promotion of students' practical abilities by increasing teaching proportion of practical courses or holding related competition activities. In the process of teaching, we should clarify the roles of teachers and students, and increase students' participation in foreign language teaching. We need to adhere to "going out" Initiative, and actively cooperate with foreign colleges and universities, absorb exchange students in order to promote the exchange and integration of domestic and foreign academic and to train more high-quality comprehensive talents for our country's the Belt and Road Initiative [6].

Colleges and universities should actively promote the reform of student-centered teaching mode, improve students' ability to learn independently, and realize the reform of foreign language teaching concepts and teaching methods. Colleges and universities should actively develop the foreign language network teaching and practical teaching platform, and make use of the rich foreign language teaching resources to carry out individual and interactive teaching activities. Compared with the traditional and fixed foreign language learning forms, the platform of foreign language teaching online is not limited by time and space. Foreign language learners can arrange their learning time independently. Where to learn, how to learn, what to learn and when to learn depend on the students' wishes. According to the characteristics of students at college level and the requirements of learning content, foreign language teachers should use the network reservation interactive environment and collaborative learning resources to help students carry out online learning and develop their independence, autonomous learning habits and abilities.

4.5. Improving the Abilities of Foreign Language Teachers at College Level

The development of the Belt and Road Initiative puts higher requirements for the teaching ability and abilities of foreign language teachers at college level. Foreign language teachers at college level should not only have teaching ability, but also have a broad international vision to understand and master international advanced knowledge and culture, as well as an opportunity of participating in international education and exchange activities. Firstly, colleges and universities can introduce foreign excellent teachers and improve the ability of foreign language teaching team. Secondly, colleges and universities can create more learning and training opportunities for their staff, for example, visiting overseas universities to broaden their horizons and improve their abilities. They can also cooperate with college and universities abroad to establish overseas teacher training bases.

The premise of cultivating integrated foreign language talents in higher education institutions is to build a teacher team with high quality and outstanding professional abilities. For one thing, teachers should have a certain sense of innovation and adopt modern and scientific foreign language teaching methods in foreign language teaching activities. Only in this way can they have the opportunity to cultivate new foreign language professionals who meet the needs of the Belt and Road Initiative. For another, teachers should not only have a view of foreign language field, but also have a cross-disciplinary knowledge background, such as international trade, marketing, law and other majors [5]. Teachers should develop these qualities through professional learning, training, self-study, further education as well as scientific research to ensure their knowledge to meet the requirements of modern foreign language teaching. At the same time, the colleges should introduce the mechanism of competition for teachers, and open education and open teaching management should be carried out simultaneously. The introduction and utilization of external teacher resources should be increased, especially the introduction of "double-qualified" teacher (One student has two mentors in college or university and workplace.) which can expand the structure of foreign language teachers in schools.

4.6. Establishing the Training Mechanism of Integrated Foreign Language Talents

The cultivation of integrated foreign language professionals requires to establish a new mechanism of cooperative education between colleges and universities [5]. Universities should realize that the cooperative education mechanism is a process of continuous and deepened exploration, which requires universities, foreign language research institutions, enterprises and educational management departments to explore and improve together.

Take the cooperation between colleges and enterprises as an example, universities should establish long-term cooperative relations with export-oriented enterprises, and jointly pay more attention to changes in the actual demand for foreign language talents in the export-oriented economy. college and universities should support teachers to go into enterprises, support foreign language teachers to undertake various foreign language projects or enterprise projects, realize the seamless connection between teaching, scientific research and enterprises' projects.

5. CONCLUSION

The Belt and Road Initiative is an important development Initiative for our party and country and a critical arrangement to promote the outward communication of economy and culture [7]. As one of the most important strategic resources, foreign language professionals have a direct impact on the future implementation of the Initiative [8]. Colleges and universities should seize the developmental opportunity from the Belt and Road Initiative, revise the training target, curriculum system, teaching model and training mechanism of foreign language talents, so as to improve the ability of foreign language talents. More and more integrated foreign language talents with high professional quality and comprehensive quality would be trained for the development of our country's export-oriented economy.

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