

The Path and Orientations of Adult Foreign Language Education under the Perspective of the Belt and Road Initiative

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Abstract. Language ability has become the critical link and key aspect of The Belt and Road Construction. Language will by no means be the significant safeguard for The Belt and Road. Adult foreign language education possesses its own advantages in the Belt and Road construction. It proves to be the inevitable complements to campus foreign education. This paper analyzes the current situations and problems of adult foreign language education. This paper claims that adult foreign language education should be carried out under the macro language policies, following a two-way direction, with the demand of multi-lingual, integral talents as its orientation. The rules of adult language study should be followed and learners' cross-cultural awareness should be especially emphasized. Universities and companies could cooperate to provide various channels to train the desired talents. We should adopt two-way thinking and strive to promote Chinese and Chinese culture for the adults in countries along the Belt and Road. The relevant religions and cultures of the relevant countries should be respected in adult foreign language education so as to make China and surrounding countries to grow and prosper together.

Introduction

In September 2013, President Xi Jinping first proposed the concept of jointly building a "Silk Road Economic Belt" during his visit to Kazakhstan. In October, he also advocated the establishment of the "21st-Century Maritime Silk Road" on the visit to Indonesia. Then the two was integrated into the "Belt and Road" Initiative, whose goal is to achieve connectivity of policy, infrastructure, trade, finance and people with the countries along the route. After the concept was put forward, the international influence increased day by day and it received the support and response from more and more countries.

"The Belt and Road" requires language to pave". (Li Yuming 2015[1]) "Language interoperability" is the basis for realizing the "five links" mentioned above in "the Belt and Road". "The Belt and Road" construction is increasingly demanding compound language talents. In this context, the importance of adult foreign language education (abbreviated as AFLE in the following) is more prominent when we promote language education and strive to train multilevel language talents. Therefore, this paper intends to examine the problem of AFLE under the background of "the Belt and Road", emphasize the key position of language in the construction of "Belt and Road", and inspect the importance of AFLE. In addition, this paper dissects the current situation and existing problems, and puts forward the improvement ideas of the state and individual on AFLE. The theoretical innovation lies in the fact that the "AFLE" proposed in this paper is put forward from the perspective of two-way thinking, including the case of Chinese adults learning English other than Chinese and the minority languages of countries along "the Belt and Road". AFLE concerning foreign adults learn Chinese is also covered.

Language Paving the Way for "the Belt and Road"

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Language is the best key to understanding a country (Xi Jinping). According to statistics, the "Belt and Road" initiative covers 65 countries and regions along the route, containing 53 official

languages belonging to the nine major languages, in addition to regional ethnic or tribal languages. It uses a total of more than 2400 languages (Yang Yiming & Zhao Xiaoqun 2017), including English, Russian, Hindi, Arabic, Bengali and other major languages. In the "five links" envisaged by the "Belt and Road", people-to-people bonds is the basis and foundation of the other "four links", while the language interoperability is the fundamental guarantee of people-to-people bonds. The language ability of the country is closely related to the improvement of the country's soft and hard power and related to the national security. Language interoperability is one of the key factors affecting the success of the "Belt and Road". Therefore, the "Belt and Road" requires language paving. In the implementation of the Belt and Road, we should have language awareness and strengthen national foreign language capacity building.

Adult Language Education being a Guarantee for "Belt and Road" Construction

Under the background of Belt and Road construction, language education plays a more important role, and it needs high quality, complex language service talents. Language education is an important way to cultivate language service talents, realize language strategy and improve national language ability. And language education in school naturally has to assume the responsibility of cultivating language service talents. Adult language education also plays a key role in the cultivation of language talents in the "Belt and Road" construction. Compared with the former one, adult language education has its own advantages, which is a beneficial supplement to school language education and a significant guarantee for realizing the "Belt and Road".

AFLE has its practical necessity. In the course of contacting with the countries along the Belt and Road, it is impossible to get the help of language translation at any time, and it is inevitable to use a foreign language. When using the target language, both of the two can have a better communication and enhance identity. On the other hand, adults along the "Belt and Road" line will inevitably speak Chinese, therefore it is indispensable to develop adult Chinese education for the people in the target country.

AFLE is also an important way to cultivate compound talents. The "Belt and Road" construction involves not only many countries, but also many industries, most of which are professional fields. It requires foreign language talents with certain professional knowledge, as well as professionals with basic foreign language communication skills, so as to take it into consideration of both foreign languages and majors. Those who participate in the construction usually have expertise in related fields, and many of them are professional technicians or even experts in certain fields. After the corresponding language education, they are likely to be interdisciplinary talents with professional knowledge and language skills at the same time and thus they are able to meet the talent demand of the "Belt and Road".

The Present Situations and Problems of Adult Language Education

Lack of Complex Professionals

The goal of "five links" proposed by Vision and Action needs to be implemented, but only language or professional proficiency is no longer satisfied to meet the needs of exchanges, cooperation and international business with countries along the route. At the moment, although the "Belt and Road" construction in China has a large demand for compound talents who must have professional knowledge, fluent foreign language, specialized skills and comprehensive literacy, it is difficult to cater for the market demand, and the training of such talents in colleges is seriously inadequate. Therefore, celebrity of all levels has proposed different types of talent gaps, such as leadership talents, technical talents, financial talents, trade talents, legal talents, etc., that is, international talents proficient in foreign languages. They are good at cooperating with relevant countries in policies, projects, finance, commerce and so on. (Chen Haiyan 2017: 53) [2] In the long run, it is the only way to adapt to the new round of reform and opening up by cultivating a large number of international talents. As they are familiar with international rules and understand international politics, economy and culture in the countries along the "Belt and Road".

Lack of Non-universal Languages Talents

At this moment, one of the problems existing in China's language work is the shortage of foreign

language strategic resources, lack of reasonable planning in foreign language education. And English is the only major language, while small language talents are severely scarce. (Zhang Junqiang, Zhang Junli 2017: 182)[3] For one thing, there is a surplus of English talents. The citizens' level of foreign language has greatly improved ever since the reform and opening up. However, the language is relatively simple, mainly concentrating in large languages such as English. The excessive English education results in ignoring the education of other languages. Almost all colleges in China have established English majors, and there is a serious surplus of English talents. For another, there are few non-universal language teaching and non-universal language talents in colleges. The official languages of countries and regions along the "Belt and Road" are more than 40 non-common languages, among which only 20 languages of foreign language major enrollment in colleges in China from 2010 to 2013 covered. (Wen Qiufang 2014) By 2013, Beijing Foreign Studies University, as a base for the training of important language talents, has set up 72 foreign language majors, of which only 29 non-common languages are used in countries along the "Belt and Road". The talents who can use non-universal language and "expression and communication" language in the "Belt and Road" construction is so deficient that cannot meet the diversified language environment and the demand for language talents.

Directions and Paths of AFLE under the "Belt and Road" Initiative

Language Awareness Enhancement and Top-level Design

The "Belt and Road" has a long way to go. The implementation of education in adult foreign languages requires a top-level design and make a good plan of language education and language acquisition plan in line with the actual needs at a macro level to avoid repetition and blindness. Some developed countries, such as the United States, have taken language issues from a strategic perspective. China should also strengthen the importance of its language policy and speed up the formulation of an overall language plan for the "Belt and Road", especially for the language talent training plan. (Lu Jianming 2016: 34[4]) Our language policy must conform to the national conditions and the trend of globalization, and be suitable for the specific reality, as well as respect the specific national conditions of the countries concerned.

To reverse the pattern, we need to fully consider the fact that we have an overabundance of English and a lack of foreign languages talents in small languages, and we have a strong macro policy to do a good job in the foreign language strategic resource reserve and the key language education so as to deal well with the relationship among international, regional and non-universal languages, and to change the English monopoly, neglect small language and insufficient key language reserve. (Zhang Junqiang, Zhang Junli 2017: 181)[3] The top-level design should be done precisely in terms of language selection and training methods, for example, for the badly needed non-common language, the flexible training mode can be adopted, and the students of English or other common languages in school can be directly selected to strengthen the training; For those who are not particularly urgent, it can be cultivated step by step in the relatively traditional way of training in China, and making a good strategic plan from a macro perspective can avoid an influx of domestic colleges, thereby avoiding the phenomenon of surplus talents after a few years. (Sun Jisheng 2016: 55)[5]

AFLE on the talent Demand of the "Belt and Road"

The demand of the "Belt and Road" compound language talents is the starting point, so language planning and talent demand prediction are particularly important. The language needs of the "Belt and Road" construction is disparate at different levels, in different sectors, different regions and different populations. Therefore, the state should vigorously promote the language planning research of foreign language education, so as to clarify the training objectives and direction of AFLE and provide some evidences for language selection. We need to analyze the different fields, types and levels of language needs in the construction of "Belt and Road", break the situation of single language planning, scientifically adjust the direction of language planning, and formulate reasonable language policies, standardize and guide the language of adult language education, so as to respond to the "Belt and Road". (Zhang Junqiang, Zhang Junli 2017: 182)[3] The relevant state

departments will lead the formulation of language construction plans as soon as possible, in order to coordinate relevant work, to fully push the development of language service capabilities, and provide practical and effective language guarantee for the implementation of the national "Belt and Road" strategy. (Zhao Shiju 2015) [6] The top-level design should be carried out in such aspects as language demand, foreign language selection, adult foreign language talent training objectives, training system construction, and education of the cultural and religious knowledge of the target country. Fortunately, the State Language Commission has established the Research Center for Foreign Language Strategies and National Research Center for State Language Capacity at Shanghai International Studies University and Beijing Foreign Studies University in 2011 and 2014, specializing in language research and other related research.

Enhancement of Cross-cultural Awareness

The implementation of the "Belt and Road" strategy requires not only the talents who are familiar with the languages of countries along the route, but also those who are proficient in the local national language and culture, so as to tell our own stories while listening to the voices of other countries. (Zhang Junqiang, Zhang Junli 2017: 181)[3] In the training of AFLE, we must adhere to the principle of equal emphasis on language skills training, religious beliefs, and local culture education. Learners should not only be proficient in the target language, but also have a deep understanding of the social and cultural customs of the target language country, and can smoothly carry out cross-cultural communication. Language usage habits are important cultural habits. In AFLE, we should increase the training on language use habits to fully understand the relevant countries' language policies and language usage habits, and it works to know the language and culture, religious beliefs and customs of the host country so that the relevant people can abide by the policy and respect habits. It advocates equality and mutual benefit in the concept of language, and fully respects the language usage habits of various cultures in such aspects as the choice of language in different occasions, all kinds of Chinese and foreign translation, sensitive words and topic selection, etc.

Promotion of Chinese Language and Culture

We should adopt a two-way approach to examine the problems of AFLE and language talent training, and to strengthen the promotion and dissemination of Chinese as a foreign language with the help of the "Belt and Road" initiative. The construction of "Belt and Road" is the capital and enterprise going out of our country, which indicates that our country has transformed from "bringing in" to "going out" (Shen Qi 2015) [7] and from "native type" to "international type" country. (Li Yuming 2010) [8] Therefore, it is necessary to consider how to meet the demand for Chinese in countries along the route while doing a good job on the foreign language education. We will make great efforts to disseminate Chinese education and Chinese culture to adults. In the training of Chinese language talents, we should also consider providing learners with certain knowledge of business and finance, so as to meet the needs of interdisciplinary talents. Huawei Company has established Huawei University to provide cross-cultural training for host country employees and native talent, and has set up a large number of research institutes overseas to attract so many senior technicians from overseas.

In the process of promoting Chinese, we should be fully aware of the comprehensive information of the history, religion, culture, politics, economy, and law of the target country, and find out the differences between the target language and religion and Chinese and Chinese culture so as to search for the specific practical methods to Chinese dissemination and Chinese culture education. In line with the development of harmonious coexistence between Chinese and other non-lingua franca, we should take common prosperity as the development goal and avoid unilateral and extensive cultural input and language colonization. Considering the language talents needed for the "Belt and Road" construction from the two aspects of the investing country and the invested country, we can fully recognize the diversity of foreign language talents and find out the multiple ways to cultivate adult foreign language talents.

Cultivation of Interdisciplinary Talents by Multiple Measures

The "Belt and Road" construction involves a lot of professional fields. The "foreign language

plus professional” type of talents will be the hot spot for talent demand in the future. Vigorously developing AFLE will be one of the effective ways to solve the shortage of compound foreign language talents. In terms of measures to cultivate interdisciplinary talents, AFLE plays an important role and should be taken more open, more variety, more flexible way of teaching. In addition, we should adhere to a strategy of equal emphasis on language and professionalism in talent cultivation. On the one hand, we can organize professionals to learn language and cultural knowledge through various ways, and strengthen the training of language skills and cultural knowledge. On the other hand, we can strengthen the training of relevant professional knowledge in the process of cultivating language talents, so as to achieve the training goal of compound talents.

In strengthening the language skills training of professionals, we can choose the key training objects and provide conditions to encourage them to study abroad, so as to cultivate world-class talents in the field of professional disciplines. As a representative of "going out", Huawei has recruited senior talents in finance, taxation, project and financing in China and sent them abroad through training. Meanwhile, it has strengthened overseas training to accelerate the training of international talents of its own enterprises.

What's more, we should strengthen the training of foreign language talents. The training mode of compound talents requires us to focus on language skills as well as language management and comprehensive quality. We should fully absorb international talents who are proficient in the languages of countries along the route and familiar with the culture and religion of the host countries, and then increase specialized knowledge training accordingly. For instance, the "International Talent Training Project" implemented by State Grid carries out the training of international talents of different specialties. China National Petroleum Corporation requires all foreign language majors to become familiar with one business within five years and become a business backbone. Otherwise, they will be dismissed. (Zhou Qingsheng 2018: 57) [9] China Railway Construction Group also requires foreign language professionals to be familiar with businesses such as bridge tunnels and engineering management.

Respecting Rules of Adult Foreign Language Learning

Adults have their own characteristics in language learning. Therefore, based on the laws of language education and adult foreign language learning, and according to the various needs of language, we need to determine the training goal and direction from a strategic perspective, and construct a compound language talent training system. There are many factors restricting the effectiveness of language learning, such as the cognitive structure, intelligence and non-intelligence of learners. As a special learning group, adult learners have special cognitive level, psychological characteristics and personality differences, and have their uniqueness in language learning. Adults have diminished abilities in memory, creative thinking, reaction, sight, hearing, but enhanced in terms of understanding, reasoning, analysis, and solving problems. Adult foreign language learning has a strong utilitarian, self-oriented component, emphasizes the practicability of learning, and pays attention to constantly improving cognitive strategies. It is necessary to increase the training of practical use of foreign languages in adult language training, especially the basic communicative competence of adults, so as to make use of foreign languages into the whole professional learning process and then remove barriers to foreign language communication for adult learners.

College Resources Advantages and School-enterprise Cooperation

In the face of the urgent demand of the "Belt and Road" construction for interdisciplinary foreign language talents, it is quite possible to face such defects as long cycle and slow effect by simply relying on the establishment of foreign languages in colleges. Colleges usually have a strong faculty, excellent school conditions and rich managerial experience in running schools. Therefore, it is also an effective way to train talents through flexible and open cooperation in school-enterprise cooperation. "Going out" enterprises can cooperate with colleges to train compound talents according to their own needs. Relevant enterprises can also choose some professional technicians to attend intensive language training courses, and accept further education in language, history and culture, so as to raise the foreign language level of relevant personnel in a short time. For example, CNPC cooperates with relevant institutions to organize overseas management talents conducting

“511” training programs through full-time foreign language training and professional knowledge training, and cultivate nearly 1000 project management talents, technical backbone, financial personnel, human resource management personnel, overseas legal personnel and other management personnel. Relevant colleges have also begun to actively explore how to meet the talent needs of the “Belt and Road” strategy, such as undertaking enterprise training projects, setting up talent training programs for countries along the route, launching themed courses, inviting experts to give lectures on topics, setting up students' overseas practice projects, etc. These measures have provided an emergency plan for solving the talent gap and promoting the implementation of the project as soon as possible, and then the “Belt and Road” has also been brought into the field of talent training in colleges. (Chen Haiyan 2017: 56) [2]

Tailoring AFLE Curriculum for “Belt and Road” Construction

The “Belt and Road” initiative poses new challenges and requirements for AFLE. Relevant organizations and individuals should also take the initiative to adjust to the situation and cater to the needs of the “Belt and Road” construction in the course setting. The traditional curriculum setting mode of language training cannot meet the needs of talents. Therefore, in the course setting, we should attach equal importance to foreign language courses and Chinese language courses, language courses and skills courses, and then combine foreign language with other disciplines such as diplomacy, law, economy and trade, so as to cultivate interdisciplinary talents; Second, open more elective courses. Courses in engineering, public relations, marketing, management, business, trade and computer are offered in the language major. In addition, we can promote the language courses and enhance the language application ability of professionals. Third, strengthen the cultivation of the second foreign language. Native language of the countries along the “Belt and Road” should be set as the second foreign language. In general, the curriculum of AFLE should not only focus on the imparting of knowledge, but also contribute to the cultivation of students' practical ability, appreciation and analytical ability and innovative ability. In addition, the teaching content should be more practical and targeted to meet the needs of the “Belt and Road” construction.

Summary

The “Belt and Road” construction is an important strategy for China to actively integrate into the globalization trend. AFLE plays an important role in the national language strategy and in the construction of the “Belt and Road”. Starting from the basic role of language in the construction of the “Belt and Road”, this dissertation expounds the necessity and urgency of establishing language awareness and promoting the adult language education. In addition, based on discussion the present situation and deficiency of adult language education, this dissertation puts forward some personal ideas on the future development of adult language education from a macro perspective. Despite that individual behavior is one of the key factors affecting the success or failure of adult language education, due to space constraints, this dissertation has not carried out an analysis of individual factors, which needs to be further explored in academic circles.

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