

Foreign Language Education Practice in Hubei in Late Qing Dynasty and Its Implications¹

Huili Hou

School of Economics and Business English
Wuhan Technology and Business University
Wuhan, P. R. China

Abstract— Studying foreign language education in late Qing Dynasty in Hubei can be of reference significance for today's foreign language education as it has been in the lead in China since late Qing Dynasty. This paper, on the basis of Applied Linguistics, classifies foreign language education in this period into three types, namely, in schools set up by westernizationists, in church schools set up by missionaries, and in encouraging students to study abroad, and then discusses about the characteristics and some implications for the current foreign language education in Hubei. The findings show that language planning was reasonable and foreign language education in late Qing Dynasty in Hubei had cultivated a lot of practical talents who could meet the social, economic and diplomatic needs in Hubei.

Key words—foreign language education practice; in Hubei; in Late Qing Dynasty; classification; implications

I INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980s, studies about foreign language education in China have begun to catch increasing attention of experts and researchers. The findings show that greater importance has been attached to foreign language education in Late Qing Dynasty, even though the total number of relevant researches is relatively small. The researches show the following characteristics. First, about the foreign language education in church schools set up by missionaries from western countries [1-4]. Second, about foreign language education in schools officially set up by scholar-generals or westernizationists [5, 6]. The researches are mainly about places like Beijing in North China, Shanghai in East China, Guangzhou in South China, lacking the relevant studies in Central China. As is known to all, Hubei locates in central China, and its capital city Wuhan has been reputed as Oriental Chicago since the 19th century, and became the second largest industrial and commercial center only after Shanghai.

The previous studies can be helpful in catching the general situation in recent times. This paper is going to sum up the characteristics of foreign language education in this period in Hubei, an important representative place, aiming at the following two purposes from the perspectives of Applied Linguistics and Pedagogy. Theoretically, the paper is intended to represent the general scene of foreign language education in Hubei in late Qing Dynasty and lay a foundation for the

dynastic history study of regional foreign language education. Practically, based on the historic data, especially after the Opium War, the paper is intended to find the implications for regional foreign language education in modern times by presenting the historical background, principles, and practice from the recent times to the modern times. This study also aims at reinforcing the regional foreign language education planning and helping foster foreign language talents in Hubei Province, and even in other provinces in Central China.

II CLASSIFICATION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN HUBEI IN LATE QING DYNASTY

Late Qing Dynasty refers to the period from the Opium War till the collapse of Qing Dynasty. Therefore, the study covers the time span between 1840 and 1911. There is a long history of foreign language education, but the foreign language education in the modern sense started from the special foreign language schools established by the westernizationists. According to X. Xiong [7], among the 24 established schools since 1860 till 1894, when Sino-Japanese War started, there were 7 foreign language schools. This clearly shows that the late Qing Dynasty attached great importance to foreign language education. The most influential foreign language schools included Jingshi Tong Wen Guan (The Imperial College of Translators), Shanghai Guang Fangyan Guan, Guangzhou Guang Fangyan Guan, Ziqiang School in Hubei Province. Thus the setup of foreign language education has been quite influential and powerful in the four central cities in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Wuhan, which cultivated a large group of new talents who not only had a good command of a foreign language, but also had a sound knowledge of Chinese ancient civilization. Schools set up by westernizationists also attached great importance to foreign language education under the guidance of "Traditional Chinese Values Aided with Modern Western Ideology". They fostered a lot of practical talents, who could not only meet the national needs in dealing with foreign affairs, but also played an important role in developing local education, business, technology, etc. There is no exaggeration that these talents were the primary impetus in pushing China in its modernization process.

In terms of foreign language education development history, the foreign language education in Hubei started from the Boone Memorial School (also called Wenhua College, now

¹ This article is one of the studies of "Foreign Language Education in Hubei in Late Qing Dynasty", granted by Hubei Provincial Humanities and Social Science Project, No.17G089.

Central China Normal University) in 1871 by Episcopal Church of the USA. In terms of founders, the foreign language education in Hubei started from Hubei Ziqiang School initiated by Zhang Zhidong, a representative westernizationist in 1890. From late 1890s till early 1900s, going abroad to receive education in other countries became a trend. Hence, this article plans to discuss about it from three aspects, namely, the foreign language education in schools set up by the westernizationists, in schools set up by missionaries and in studying abroad.

III CHARACTERISTICS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN HUBEI

A. *The Foreign Language Education in Schools Set up by the Westernizationists*

In terms of objectives and teaching emphasis, there might be three types of schools set up by westernizationists: foreign language and literature schools, vocational schools of science and military technique schools [8]. In Hubei, Zhang Zhidong initiated the setup of Hubei Ziqiang School in spring of 1890, after which the other two types of schools were set up. Thus, the founding of foreign language and literature school was the earliest. It was not only the pioneer of foreign language education in Hubei, but also an example for the other two types to learn from. Its students mainly came from Hubei, Hunan, Jiangsu, Sichuan, Fujian, Zhejiang, Shandong, Henan, Anhui and Guizhou [9]. In the light of nature, foreign language education can be grouped into two, that is, the foreign language as a professional education and as a non-professional education.

1) *The Foreign Language as a Professional Education*

Hubei Ziqiang School (now Wuhan University) was the first new school of higher education set up and managed only by Chinese [9], according to some experts, and the only one foreign language and literature school. It lasted for 22 years (1890-1911), which can represent the foreign language education as a profession in Hubei [8]. Its history, objectives of education, teaching facilities, demands on applicants, teaching management, study length, course design, teaching content and examinations, etc. show clearly that in this period, foreign language education in Hubei had already formed the talent fostering concept, that is, from professionals to expertise, and then to liberal education.

2) *The Foreign Language as a Non-professional Education*

In late Qing Dynasty, academies of classical learning and colleges mushroomed in Hubei. The number of schools, colleges and academies of classical learning reached 46 [7]. These schools of new type became important places in spreading new knowledge and new thoughts and carry forward the traditional Chinese culture. They also helped students in becoming active influential figures in politics and in literature. They coexisted with Hubei Ziqiang School with some similarities and kept their own characteristics. For example, they focused on western language, social science and natural science.

3) *A Summary of the Characteristics of the Foreign*

Language Education in Schools Set up by Westernizationists

First, in terms of the time foreign language education started, Hubei obviously drew lessons from other three Tong Wen Guans and formed correct guiding principles and a diversity of cultivation objectives. The foreign language education in Hubei had not only provided diplomatic and translating talents for Hubei in urgent need, but also trained many foreign language talents for other places in China, which made Hubei soon take the lead in foreign language education in China. At this time, foreign language education mainly centered in the capital city, Wuhan, and then began to radiate and spread to other places in Hubei.

In terms of faculty force, many teachers were experienced in teaching foreign languages as they graduated from schools set up by westernizationists in China or from schools in foreign countries. Hubei authorities not only invited talents of foreign languages, but also insisted on the use of Chinese teachers aided by foreign teachers. This practice can be helpful in achieving the practical value of foreign language education, and save a large amount of money to pay the foreign teachers.

In terms of course design and examining methods, foreign languages had been in the consistent core, which could train students' language skills and help develop their humanities quality [10]. Small-class teaching, common entrance examination, stage test, fixed duration length, closed-door enrolling and graduating policy in these schools show that foreign language education had enjoyed some characteristics of western education, which made Hubei precede other provinces and become a good example to be learned from [11].

In terms of textbooks and teaching methodologies, education in this period in nature belonged to secondary education as students were aged at 15-24 first, then changed to 15-18. Students had a very good Chinese basis and a solid foundation of traditional Chinese culture. In the initial period, the way Chinese teachers taught foreign languages might help students learn and communicate effectively. At the higher level, foreign teachers might help students have more practice and learn the way native speakers use to express [12]. To help students proceed in due order in foreign language education accords with the language acquisition law. Using translated textbooks, focusing on students' communicative competence from easy to difficult, applying the knowledge learned from textbooks to real life, etc. were in accordance with students' acceptance capability, helpful in training students to master the language tool and lay a solid foundation for them to study "western technology".

In terms of languages students learned, the number was adequate for graduates to meet the economic and diplomatic needs. In late Qing Dynasty, Wuhan was a very important tea harbor in China. Russia, America and European countries became the main destination for Hubei and Hunan tea. Therefore, Hubei foreign language education first attached great importance to the teaching of English, French, German and Russian [8]. After Sino-Japanese War, Japanese was introduced by the government. Thus, a multi-lingual education framework had been formed, promoting the

transformation of Hubei modern education from learning western languages to learning western technology.

B. Foreign Language Education in Church Schools

Since 1861, missionaries came to establish missionary bases after Hankou and Yichang were opened. In opposition to the missionaries' will to spread Christianity, the schools they set up brought new knowledge and new technology to Hubei which enlightened the authorities to make reforms in education.

Statistics show that the number of primary church schools reached 346, that of secondary church schools reached 17, among which 12 were in Wuhan [7]. Colleges were mostly upgraded from secondary schools, with Wenhua College as the representative and the first independent college. In this period, the importance was attached to primary education, but the most influential achievement was in secondary education and higher education. Free Day School, the first primary school set up by missionaries, invited Chinese teachers to teach children San Zi Jing (Three Character Classic) in Chinese and foreign teachers to teach San Zi Jing of Christianity in both Chinese and English. Children would be familiar with both Chinese culture and religious belief from stories of the Bible as well. Wuchang Bowen Middle School was the most prestigious school in that period when it achieved the most fame and the greatest influence upon other middle schools. Its study length and course design were also typical of British education as the textbooks were imported from London, teachers were from Britain and the management rules were strict. The Founding of Wenhua College signaled the equal pace of church-funded higher education in Hubei with the whole nation, and the new stage of higher education in Hubei also provided reference for colleges founded by the government in the new education system. Thus, the coordinated sequence from primary education to higher education had been formed in Hubei, which went tide with the national modern education, provided outer assistance to the modern education in Hubei, and enhanced the modernization process of foreign language education in Hubei objectively.

C. Studying Abroad

Governor Zhang Zhidong's thoughts about studying abroad were a good guidance to study foreign language education in Hubei in late Qing Dynasty. His hope to train practical talents for the Westernization Movement was dashed to the ground as it was difficult to train new practical talents out of Chinese traditions, and it took a long time and a high cost to train practical talents who were not practical enough in real work, and there was also a lack of faculty force of the new type. He pointed out that studying abroad for only one year might be better than just reading books about technology of western countries for five years at home. He also pointed out that Japan was much better than any other destination countries. Therefore, the trend of studying abroad in Hubei started from after the Sino-Japanese War, and soon many people had developed a great enthusiasm for studying abroad, which made Hubei precede other provinces in this aspect.

In terms of destination countries, Hubei mainly exported students to Japan and European countries and America. In terms of funds, Hubei mainly had two ways, that is, education

funded by the government and education funded by students themselves. For example, Luo Zhenyu, together with other five teachers of Ziqiang School went to Japan to learn their teaching arrangement; a great number of students went to Japan, European countries and America, got influenced by their new concept, advanced science and technology, and finally became revolutionaries to overturn the Qing Dynasty.

In the practical values of foreign language education, studying abroad not only provided a convenient channel for Hubei to learn western language and advanced science and technology, but also introduced advanced textbooks, teaching methodologies, management experience, and became an important way to train foreign language teachers as well. On the institutional level, officials visiting and studying in Japan and other European countries guaranteed the issuing and implementing the new educational system, the setup of government-sent students management rules. On thought, those who studied in Japan chose to stay in Japan to support the 1911 Revolution or came back to China to be the backbone of the 1911 Revolution.

IV COMMENTS AND IMPLICATIONS

It is not difficult to find the characteristics of foreign language education in Hubei in late Qing Dynasty, for example, spreading from the capital city to other places, providing many foreign languages at the same time, having formed the education system, having cultivated practical foreign language talents, having successfully pushed the 1911 Revolution, having been an example for other provinces to learn from, having been an impetus during the education modernization, and so on.

Historical comments. In undertaking the transformation of traditional foreign language education to the modern education, foreign language education in Hubei objectively encouraged and increased the national influence of foreign language education. The new educational thoughts of Governor Zhang Zhidong originated from Hubei, were applied in Hubei and benefited Hubei a lot. It is no exaggeration that Zhang Zhidong epitomized the foreign language education thoughts and was the pioneer of foreign language education in Hubei. The education authorities borrowed and learned from other countries to design the foreign languages needed to teach and the scale of education of each foreign language from a strategic height and a long-term perspective of preserving talents for diplomatic purposes. The fact is that graduates were mainly employed in important departments like Communications, Postal Corporations; National Banks show that the cultivation of foreign language talents and their way out designed by the education authorities were effective. These people's thoughts not only pushed the development of history, but also achieved the practical values of foreign languages.

Modern implications. Great importance was attached to foreign language education both as a profession and as a Non-profession. This "specialty+foreign language" model provides us precious experiences to reform the current foreign language education. In foreign language education, the traditional Chinese culture had always been the basis for learning a foreign language. That could explain why a large

number of talents who had a good command of a foreign language were also good at studies of Chinese ancient civilization in late Qing Dynasty. The current foreign language education attaches importance to language skills training, but neglects the study of traditional Chinese culture, which has caused the lack of skillful foreign language talents. The current foreign language education focuses too much on English as English has become a global language, while neglects the other foreign languages, which have caused the lack of other foreign language talents except English on the one hand, and the current excess of English talents on the other. Therefore, anyone, whether a foreign language designer or a learner, should always bear in mind that to take principle of “Chinese as the basis and foreign languages for use”. In addition, the balanced development of many different foreign languages in education also provided precious reference for Hubei authorities in the current language planning. Language planning should meet the economic needs, and diversified communication needs.

V CONCLUSION

This study makes an attempt to study the foreign language education in Hubei in late Qing Dynasty. By summing up the three different types of foreign language education, the article discusses about the characteristics of each type and also explores the implications for current foreign language education under the guidance of Applied Linguistics. The following conclusion can be made based on the above.

First, in terms of development, foreign language education in Hubei developed better after it started in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. It started later than those cities, but it became more influential as its radiative force could be spread to all directions from central China. Soon many other provinces began to learn from Hubei.

Second, in terms of language planning, right decisions had been made by authorities to foster foreign language talents. Therefore, English, Japanese, Russian were taught in schools of different types, which prepared well for the modernization for central China, especially for Hubei.

Third, in terms of functions, translating talents and business talents out of the foreign language education practice in Hubei

helped Hubei meet diplomatic and business needs.

This article is one of the studies of “Foreign Language Education in Hubei in Late Qing Dynasty”, granted by Hubei Provincial Humanities and Social Science Project, No.17G089.

REFERENCES

- [1] L.Hu. Missionaries’historical contributions and problems in English education in late Qing Dynasty[J]. *Overseas English*, 2011(11), pp.80-81. (in Chinese)
- [2] C. Xiao & L. Xia. Missionaries’historical contributions and problems in English education in late Qing Dynasty [J]. *Lantai World*, 2015(4), pp.59-60.(in Chinese)
- [3] B. Xu. English Teaching Methodologies in Late Qing Dynasty and their Implications for English Teaching in Universities[J]. *Lantai World*, 2016(9), pp99-101. (in Chinese)
- [4] F. Chen & M. Chen. Missionaries’Influences on Educational Reforms in Hubei[J]. *Journal of Hanjiang Normal University*, 2017(6), pp.79-83. (in Chinese)
- [5] Z. Mo & Q. Ou. A Historical Study of Business English Courses in Late Qing Dynasty[J]. *Shandong Foreign Language Teaching*, 2015(6), pp.36-41. (in Chinese)
- [6] H. Shen. Business English Teaching in Government-funded English Education in Late Qing Dynasty[J]. *Lantai World*, 2015(4), pp.97-98. (in Chinese)
- [7] X. Xiong. Educational History of Hubei (Vol.I)[M]. Wuhan: Hubei Education Press, 1999. pp.165-262.(in Chinese)
- [8] X. Gao. A Study of Foreign Language Education in Schools Set up by Westernizationists[M]. Beijing: Commerical Press. 2007, pp.61-242. (in Chinese)
- [9] M. Zhang. Studies on Foreign Language Education in Late Qing Dynasty[M]. Beijing: China Social Science Press. 2011, pp.99-138. (in Chinese)
- [10] S. K. W. Chu, J. Wu, C. W. S. Kwan and J. H. Y. Lai. Wiki-based collaborative writing: a comparative study on first and second language writing among Chinese secondary students[J]. *International Journal of Modern Education and Computer Science*, 2019, 11(2):1-10.
- [11] A. P. Gilakjani, L.M. Leong and N. B. Sabouri, “A study on the role of motivation in foreign language learning and teaching[J]. *International Journal of Modern Education and Computer Science*, vol.7, pp. 9-16, July 2012.
- [12] Y. Wang. The effect of connecting reading and writing in foreign language teaching in the computer mediated communication environment[J].*International Journal of Education and Management Engineering*, 2012, 2(10):25-29.