

# “Belt and Road” Strategy and Foreign Language Teaching in Colleges and Universities

Xinchun Wang

Shandong Huayu University of Technology

**Abstract:** With the development trend of world economic integration, China has put forward “Belt and Road” strategy. Based on this strategy, foreign language teaching in colleges and universities is faced with opportunities and challenges. Through a lot of papers collected, it can show us that there are currently many problems in foreign language teaching in colleges and universities, such as insufficient understanding to the importance of foreign language teaching in colleges and universities, irrelevant compilation of foreign language teaching materials, fuzzy orientation of foreign language talent training goal, backward teaching methods and teaching means. Meanwhile, suggestive developmental measures also are involved, such as enhancing the importance of foreign language teaching in colleges and universities, combining foreign language teaching with related professional settings, making the goal of training compound talents clear, and reforming the traditional teaching mode. Foreign language teaching in colleges and universities can make the most use of “Belt and Road” strategy, be faced with the challenges and quest for a well-developed future.

**Keywords:** “Belt and Road” Strategy; Foreign Language Teaching; Colleges and Universities

## 1. Introduction of “Belt and Road” Strategy

“Belt and Road” Strategy, namely “Silk Road Economic Belt” and “the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road”, was first put forward in 2013 and further promoted later<sup>[1]</sup>, which has become China’s economic strategy. It fully relies on the existing bilateral and multi-lateral mechanisms between China and the countries concerned, with the help of established and effective regional cooperation platforms, holding highly the banner of peaceful development, developing actively economic cooperation partnership with the countries along the route, and jointly building interests community, destiny community and responsibility community of political mutual trust, economic integration, cultural inclusion.

The core contents of “Belt and Road” Strategic construction are policy communication, facilities connection, unimpeded trade, funding channels and people’s hearts in a connection<sup>[2]</sup>. At the same time, they strive to build the road of peace, the road of prosperity, the road of opening up, the road of innovation and the road of civilization. The strategy 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 process of “Belt and Road”, 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 in Colleges and Universities Based on “Belt and Road” Strategy

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

First, the demand for minor language talent has increased. At present, English is the main part of foreign language teaching in China, and students 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 demand for cross-cultural talents has increased. The construction of human destiny community under “Belt and Road” 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 differences. In order to better understand these differences, the strategy of “Belt and Road” which advocates humanism needs a large number of cross-cultural talents.

Third, the demand for talent diversification has increased. The promotion of “Belt and Road” Strategy urges the country to need a large number of language talents and researchers from relevant fields and countries, on the one hand, to serve the country strategy; on the other hand, to deeply research 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 the training of high quality foreign language talents.

### **3. Challenges for Foreign Language Teaching in Colleges and Universities Based on “Belt and Road” Strategy**

#### **3.1 Insufficient Understanding to the Importance of Foreign Language Teaching in Colleges and Universities**

The reform of foreign language teaching in colleges and universities plays a key role in Belt and Road and 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 in colleges and universities<sup>[3]</sup>. At present, some colleges and universities have been carrying out corresponding reform measures step by step to optimize the quality of foreign language teaching in colleges and universities. However, it should also be noted that there are still many deficiencies in the understanding of foreign language teaching in colleges and universities by 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 construction work, seriously hinder the progress of foreign language teaching reform in colleges and universities, and are out of step with the pace of “Belt and Road” 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 involved to “Belt and Road” are mostly minor language countries, and people in Central Asia mainly speak Russian. Since “Belt and Road” Strategy was proposed in 2013, it has been difficult in a short period of time to compile a foreign language textbook covering the whole country along the routine. Therefore, in the process of serving “Belt and Road” foreign language teaching, colleges and universities are short of relevant teaching materials.

#### **3.3 Fuzzy Orientation of Foreign Language Talent Training Goal**

Under the economic and cultural globalization, the goal orientation of the cultivation of compound 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. But in our country, although some colleges and universities have begun to “stop, turn, combine, reform” and “wide-caliber, thick foundation, strict requirements” teaching exploration and practice, but generally speaking, the goal of foreign language talents training in China’s colleges and universities is to develop morality, intelligence and physical ability in an all-round way, at the same time, it has a broad and solid 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 strategy based on “Belt and Road”.

#### **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 “flipping classroom” have also achieved certain results. But on the whole, English teaching in colleges and universities in our country is still in the teaching mode 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. 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, and the teaching effect is still far from satisfaction.

## **4. The Developmental Measures of Foreign Language Teaching in Colleges and Universities under “Belt and Road” Strategy**

### **4.1 Enhancing the Importance of Foreign Language Teaching in Colleges and Universities**

The role of university leaders or decision makers in colleges and universities is very significant, which has a direct impact on the formulation and development of foreign language teaching in colleges and universities. Therefore, under “Belt and Road” Strategy, it is necessary to increase the attention to foreign language teaching in colleges and universities for university leaders or decision makers, and to constantly enhance their cognition of foreign language teaching construction in colleges and universities. Under the reasonable and scientific implementation scheme, we should combine the foreign language teaching of colleges and universities with “Belt and Road” Strategy 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 in colleges and universities, and then improve the level of foreign language teaching in colleges and universities as well as China’s “Belt and Road” strategy of the development process.

### **4.2 Combining Foreign Language Teaching with Related Professional Settings**

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

### **4.3 Making the Goal of Training Compound Talents Clear**

The compound 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 healthy quality, 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 of the subject which can meet the needs of “Belt and Road” Initiative<sup>[4]</sup>. There are two characteristics of this type of talents: one is that they have solid knowledge system of language theory and compound knowledge system, and can be good at learning and drawing lessons from the achievements of the subject. Another one is that they have open cultural thinking and spiritual quality. The Target orientation requirement of talent training of foreign language teachers in colleges and universities should help students master solid foreign language basic skills in accordance with the training standards of compound language talents through the process of foreign language teaching, and at the same time master the cultural knowledge related to Chinese and foreign languages, and cultivate students’ ability to use foreign language knowledge as well as to deal with practical problems in foreign-related activities.

### **4.4 Reforming the Traditional Teaching Mode**

Under “Belt and Road” Initiative, colleges and universities should keep pace with the times, 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 the teaching of students’ learned language knowledge, we should strengthen the training and promotion of students’ practical ability by strengthening the teaching proportion of practical courses or holding related competition activities. In the process of teaching, the roles of teachers and students should be clarified, and the participation of students in foreign language teaching should be enhanced. On the basis of recognizing the importance of foreign language teaching in colleges and universities, university leaders or decision makers should keep pace with the times, adhering to the “going out” strategy, and actively cooperating with foreign colleges and universities, adopting the mode of exchange students to promote

the exchange and integration of domestic and foreign academic and to train more high-quality comprehensive talents for our country's "Belt and Road" Strategy.

## **5. Conclusion**

"Belt and Road" Strategy is an important development strategy of the country, and an important arrangement to promote the outward communication of economy and culture. As one of the most important strategic resources, the foreign language professionals have a direct impact on the future implementation of the strategy. Colleges and universities should seize the development opportunity by "Belt and Road", reform the training target, curriculum system, teaching model and training mechanism of foreign language talents, so as to improve the ability of foreign language talents training. More and more foreign language talents with high professional quality and comprehensive quality are trained for the development of our country's export-oriented economy.

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