

Language Competence and language Planning in "The Belt and Road Initiative"

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Abstract

According to the requirements of language competence in "The Belt and Road Initiative", it is imperative to implement the strategy of language planning, which should be constructed from the perspectives of language functions, language security and language spread for the purpose of planning language competence construction along "The Belt and Road". The value of language planning lies in language functions which include making the masses of countries along the route to understand, respect and trust each other, as well building the community with shared future for mankind.

Keywords

The Belt and Road Initiative, Language Planning, Language issues

1. Introduction

The core of building "The Belt and Road" is connectivity of policy, infrastructure, trade, finance and people. The most foundational tool of conducting the five types of connectivity is language. However, China's language abilities among the initiative are facing lots of challenges, to deal with these challenges language planning should be put in advance. As a systematic planning is an effective way to express the value of language and to meet the countries' desire for more mutually beneficial cooperation and follows the open and inclusive principle of planning together, building together and benefiting together.

2. "The Belt and Road" language capacity building issues

There are 65 countries along "The Belt and Road" area, accounting for 29% of the world's 224 countries and regions. As an open system, its total is not limited to this. In this broad region, there are not only a wide range of international, cross-regional linguistics, such as English, French, Russian and Arabic, which are in a strong position in the world or across regions or regions, but more complex is that "the Belt and Road" contains more than 60 official and universal languages as well as thousands of non-official regional or national languages (Lian, 2016). At the same time, there are dozens of cross-border languages that characterize our country as the world's most land-based neighbor and a multi-ethnic country. However, according to the relevant research and statistics, China at this stage is relatively insufficient language ability, the number of foreign languages, language structure and language layout is relatively poor, unbalanced. From the above, "the Belt and Road" along the country and the surrounding language ecology is extremely complex, and we deal with the language ability is relatively insufficient, so "The Belt and Road Initiative" construction facing many language problems.

2.1 Lack of language ability, foreign language resources are relatively scarce

Since the founding of new China, the government has attached great importance to the construction of language ability. However, Li Yuming, former deputy director of the national language committee, pointed out that China's "language talent distribution is unreasonable, in addition to English, all languages talent are insufficient" (Li, 2015). At present, our country not only lack of language, language structural contradictions prominent, and language education is also very weak. There are more than 6,000 languages in the world today, there are only more than 100 languages in our country, and less than 70 in the undergraduate catalogue of the Ministry of education, many of which have only one university. Although the "National People learn foreign languages", almost 99% of people learning English, in the education system even appeared in the unique situation of English. The resulting shortage of language talent, talent structure is extremely unreasonable, which led to a serious lack of language service capabilities, far from meeting the needs of the situation. This situation not only slowed China's progress to the world, but also affected the current trend of China's transition to internationalization so that it cannot adapt to the "The Belt and Road" construction needs and language-based connectivity. At present, our country "The Belt and Road" along the more than 50 countries in more than 65 countries lingua common language that language shortage of talent, even extreme shortage, can grasp or know along the region thousands of local national language and vernacular dialect talent is extremely scarce.

2.2 Weak language skills at the international level

The ability of the language resources of some countries in the world, especially foreign language resources, has formed a clear contrast with our country. The United States government began to focus on language in the 1950s and introduced the Defense Education Act in 1958, with the aim of cultivating language talent, including non-linguistically speaking. In 1985, the U.S. Department of Education issued a catalog of 169 key languages. The amendments to the Defence Education Act of 1988 further emphasized the importance of foreign languages for national security, stability and economic prosperity (Edwards, 2004). After the 9.11 event, the United States officially promulgated the National Language Plan, which set out the national security objectives of Foreign Language Policy, and gradually launched a series of national security education projects, including the "national flagship language startup project", aiming to train more senior foreign language personnel and related teachers. Currently, such as the United States National Security Agency corpus has the ability to handle 500 languages (Zhao, 2015). The United States has the largest number of universities offering 276 non-universal language courses. The UK government introduced the national language strategy in the early 2000s and introduced the national language standard. The UK Language Centre for Foreign Affairs offers training in 84 languages and the University College London Language Centre offers 52 language courses per year.

The Russian government, in coordination with the Ministry of Defence, has identified the languages of key foreign languages and has retained 145 foreign language majors in universities, covering 9 major languages and covering all regions of the world's major languages. In addition, Southeast Asian countries such as the Philippines and Malaysia have adopted policies such as "mother-tongue-based multilingual education" (Nie, 2015).

The quality and quantity of a country's linguistic resources, in particular foreign languages, determine to a certain extent the ability of a country to access information, the Reserve and use of information resources, the ability to expand international space, the ability to create wealth and the ability to respond to emergencies. "The Belt and Road" is economically oriented to promote mutual political trust, mutual understanding of civilization and economic prosperity. It deals with a wide range of issues, including politics, economics, law, commerce, culture, education and even ethnicity, religion, history, science and Technology, Information, and international law, as well as international organizations (Zhao, 2015). And the common material carrier of this series of problems is the language, "The Belt and Road" construction will bring multi-level, diversity, multi-domain language

needs. Language planning along "The Belt and Road" is the basis for solving the problem of language ability.

3. Language planning for the construction of "The Belt and Road Initiative"

In terms of language planning, it refers to that people intend to make forward-looking adjustments to the form, function, related factors and relationships of the language to give full play to the function of language in a certain range of groups as well as time and space (Guo, 2008). Besides, the relevant language talents who serve the construction of "The Belt and Road Initiative" in our country are also very scarce. When it comes to the construction of "The Belt and Road Initiative" at present, it is facing the challenge of the shortage of language ability, especially the foreign language and the resources of language types. As a result, doing a good job of language planning is one of the main ways to deal with this challenge.

3.1 The construction of "The Belt and Road Initiative" as well as the national language and character cause planning

The government has launched a number of major language policies since the founding of the People's Republic of China, which have greatly improved the ability of the national language and character, and enriched the content of the language life of the country. Generally speaking, it has improved the language ecological environment of the country. At the same time, it has adopted various measures to expand the foreign language type and improve the language structure, so the foreign language ability is significantly improved. However, it also exists the problems of the single foreign language and language type structure. Nowadays, China is becoming increasingly internationalized. However, the imbalance of foreign language types is highlighted when the position and importance of non-English-speaking countries in China's foreign policy, foreign relations as well as economic and trade exchanges increases day by day. The problem for the shortage of language talents is becoming increasingly serious with the continuous development of the vision of "The Belt and Road Initiative" construction. As a result, the construction of "The Belt and Road Initiative" should proceed from the development prospect and overall layout of the national language and character cause, which should carry out proper adjustment and optimization to the language planning in the macro direction led by the state, as well as perfect the overall development planning of the language and character cause of the country, so as to enhance the national language possession ability in an all-round way.

3.2 The language function, language type and language education planning of "The Belt and Road Initiative"

First of all, it has dozens of official languages along the route of "The Belt and Road Initiative", while there are even more than 2,000 ethnic tribal languages or dialects (Lian, 2016). As a result, it requires that the key language, common language and cross-border language planning centered on the construction of "The Belt and Road Initiative" should be determined on the basis of fully investigating the current situation, distribution and vitality of all kinds of languages in the countries along the route, and the contents of language connectivity with the major countries and regions along the route should be clarified. Secondly, what should be done is to adjust the structural layout of the use of international common language and cross-regional common language in the countries along "The Belt and Road Initiative", increase the number of languages and protect the diversity of language ecology.

Due to the lack of language talents along the route of "The Belt and Road Initiative", it should set up a small language strengthening base, establish a special language fund for "The Belt and Road Initiative", reform the enrollment system as well as the training target and system, cultivate the compound language skill talents (Wen, 2012), "multilingual" talents who are proficient in many languages as well as "research-oriented talents" proficient in international regions and countries. At present, the state has made plans for the official languages along the route. Besides, courses about all the official languages of the countries along the route were offered in colleges and universities in our country in 2018. However, what is urgently needed to be solved at present is how to determine the

key languages at the level of mutual integration between countries, the applied language of "The Belt and Road Initiative", as well as its status and relationship with international common language (world common language), cross-regional common language, and so on. Under the influence of institution and institutional inertia factors, it is difficult for colleges and universities as well as other teaching units to train "compound", "colloquial" and "research-oriented" talents to meet the needs of the construction of "The Belt and Road Initiative" in a short period of time. In view of it, how to develop local language resources and allocate language talents is a problem needing to be studied.

3.3 The language security planning for the construction of "The Belt and Road Initiative"

As for the language security planning along "The Belt and Road Initiative", it is an important proposition of "The Belt and Road Initiative" language planning. In terms of the security value of "The Belt and Road Initiative" language planning, it is mainly reflected in how to safeguard China's national security, political stability as well as economic and social development in international exchanges along route of the "Belt and Road Initiative". First of all, the security risks caused by the lack of language ability have been highlighted due to the single foreign language, unreasonable language type structure and poor foreign language resources. In the economic field, there are many cases in which the investment as well as mergers and acquisitions of enterprises are affected by language barrier. According to statistics, the cultural risk closely related to language is as high as 71% in the risk assessment of overseas investment in our country (Wang & Su, 2011).

Because of the language barrier, the economic benefits of Chinese-owned enterprises in individual countries along the route of "The Belt and Road Initiative" have been lost. Secondly, there are many countries along the route of "The Belt and Road Initiative", in which the situation of nationalities, religions, cultures and regions is complex and changeable. Thus, it exists many non-traditional security risks, among which terrorism, extremism, separatists, drug trafficking, illegal immigration and other problems are prominent and frequent. However, such risk factors are often closely related to language. For example, it can be seen that most terrorists and extremists use local, ethnic and even dialects as language barriers to carry out activities, thus highlighting the security value of language in preventing such risks. At the same time, it is in urgent need of the foreign ability to deal with international or regional natural disaster relief, participation in United Nations peacekeeping and police forces, participation in international medical teams, international rescue, peacekeeping and so on in the field of public safety.

However, the language (foreign language) ability as well as the advantages and disadvantages of language resources, and its numbers will directly affect the degree of risk control in the field of non-traditional security and public safety along the route of "The Belt and Road Initiative". Moreover, it exists many cross-border ethnic groups in the "The Belt and Road Initiative" region and China, which thus exists many cross-border languages. Over the years, cross-border languages have attracted much attention in the academic circles. According to most researchers, they believe that the cross-border language in our country is facing a severe situation. Huang Xing (2014) believes that most of the cross-border languages in China and its surroundings are in the situation of "high outside and low inside" in terms of language identity, the creation and improvement of written language, and the level of vitality in the use of language in society, in which some overseas hostile forces use minority language and character media to propagate and infiltrate our country. While Guo (2008) believes that the asymmetry of language propaganda strength at home and abroad seriously threatens national security, national unity and economic development. Due to the fact that the route of "The Belt and Road Initiative" and the surrounding areas of our country have always been the areas with high incidence of non-traditional security risks, the language planning for the construction of "The Belt and Road Initiative" must pay close attention to the safety value of language planning.

3.4 The language communication planning along "The Belt and Road Initiative"

When it comes to Chinese, it is the language with the largest population to use in the world today, but it is not an international common language or an international intermediary language. With the development of Chinese international education program over the years, thousands of Confucius

Institutes and Confucius classes have been built all over the world. However, the real "Chinese popularity in the world" has not come yet. Compared with English, French, German, Russian, Spanish and so on, the proportion of people learning Chinese is limited. In this context, the construction of "The Belt and Road Initiative" has undoubtedly created conditions for the internationalization of Chinese, and the promotion of international Chinese education is of great significance and value to culture, economy and security. In the civilized communication along the route of "The Belt and Road Initiative", the cultural strategic significance is self-evident to realize the "connection between the hearts of the people" in Chinese with the Chinese "expression, connectivity".

As for its economic value, it lies in that "the host country has a greater attraction to the capital inflow of the investing country when it uses the language of the investing country as the language of foreign language education" (Shen, 2017). On the basis of cross-border language exchange, it not only enhances the popularization and promotion of national common language in cross-border language regions by actively promoting the spread of Chinese language abroad as well as promoting the exchange of language and culture at home and abroad, but also enhances the attraction of national languages in cross-border language regions. As a result, the language security value is self-evident. Some scholars have put forward that the initiator of "The Belt and Road Initiative" should make early language function planning, make the layout ahead of time, who should also determine Chinese as one of the common languages of "The Belt and Road Initiative" as soon as possible, so as to expand the influence of Chinese in the countries along its route, plan and establish the dominant position of Chinese in advance. As a matter of fact, the formation for the strong position of English is due to the great economic, scientific and technological progress of the United States in the 20th century as well as the large export of cultural and academic products, especially the leading position of its economy in the world. As for the popularity of English all over the world, it is more out of the practical and utilitarian purpose, in which the recognition or acceptance to its ideology and culture is not paid much attention. Therefore, it is necessary to "coordinate the planning contents of curriculum objects, teachers, curriculum policies, teaching materials and teaching methods, resource allocation, testing and evaluation, as well as social needs from the perspective of language planning to promote Chinese communication along the route of "The Belt and Road Initiative", so as to increase all-round support for the countries along the route and promote the construction of the educational community" (Shen, 2017).

As for the language planning of "The Belt and Road Initiative", it is an important subject to serve the construction of "The Belt and Road Initiative", realize interconnection and tell Chinese stories well. In addition to Confucius Institute, Confucius classes as well as other international language and culture promotion projects, the external planning of language projects in China has been in an insufficient state for a long time. In view of it, the language planning that serves the construction of "The Belt and Road Initiative" is the international language planning that takes the broad space along the route of "The Belt and Road Initiative" as the platform for the first in our country, which is a new challenge and a new subject.

4. Conclusion

As for the construction of "The Belt and Road Initiative", it needs language to pave the way. Due to the fact that the language ability of the country is relatively insufficient, the language type and foreign language resources are relatively scarce, it faces the bottleneck and challenge of the shortage of language possession ability and language resource. To deal with this challenge, it should start with language planning. Based on the actual situation, the language planning of the construction of "The Belt and Road Initiative" should be in line with the overall planning of the national language and characters, which should reconfigure the local language resources from three aspects of language type and function, language security and language dissemination, so as to improve the influence of Chinese in the international region. The function that benefits language is to make the masses of countries along the route understand each other, respect and trust each other, achieve win-win cooperation and

inclusive development. Thus, it can promote the construction of the community of human destiny while telling the Chinese story well.

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