

# Exploring the Development of Small Language Education in Universities in the Context of "One Belt, One Road"

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**Abstract:** In September 2013, China proposed the "One Belt, One Road" initiative, which has led to further economic and cultural development in countries along the route. This has led to a greater need for foreign language professionals, especially those who are proficient in smaller languages. Today, the lack of education in small languages in our universities does not fully meet the needs of today's society for small language talents. This article examines the development of small language education in many universities in this context.

**Keywords:** "One Belt, One Road"; small languages; educational issues

## 1. Introduction

The "One Belt, One Road" initiative has promoted the common development of the countries along the route and the economic take-off of the countries along the route, while at the same time increasing understanding and cultural communication between the countries. In order to better communicate with other countries, it is imperative to nurture professional small language talents. At present, the training of small language talents in Chinese universities has its share of drawbacks, which need to be addressed. Universities should respond positively to the country's 'One Belt, One Road' initiative and provide specialised training for small language students, as well as improving the teaching standards of small language teachers and formulating appropriate policies and measures to produce high quality small language talents for the country and to support economic development and cultural exchange between China and other countries along the route[1-2].

## 2. What kind of small language talent to train

The establishment and development of the "One Belt, One Road" concept involves a wide range of technical, economic and trade, political and humanistic areas, and the constant exchange of business between China's domestic and international markets requires a large number of small language talents to work in the areas of hospitality, communication and translation. This makes it imperative to develop complex and innovative small language talents. The cultivation of complex talents requires small language learners to be aware of the trends and dynamics of their subject areas and professions, to acquire as much expertise as possible, to develop their professional skills, to recognise and then develop their interests, and to be open-minded and capable. The education of creative people is characterised by the development of innovative skills, a strong will to innovate, a sensitive eye for technological innovation, creative thinking and a rational and innovative approach. According to the way in which small language professionals are trained, institutions should focus on the organic integration of theoretical knowledge and practical application, so as to cultivate comprehensive, high-level small language talents, so that students studying small languages are equipped with both innovative awareness and innovative skills, effectively promoting the development of small language talents in the context of the 'One Belt, One Road' construction. This will effectively promote the need for small language talents in the context of the development of the Belt and Road[3].

## 3. The need to develop small language talents

"The One Belt One Road initiative has strengthened exchanges and communication between regions

and has also led to further cooperation between countries and deepened international cooperation. The biggest barrier to communication between countries is the language barrier, and this is where the role of small language talents comes to the fore, making such barriers to communication less of a problem. Small languages can also facilitate communication and cooperation between countries.

In addition, the future of small languages is also very broad. With the further expansion of China's opening up to the outside world and the increasing exchanges and cooperation between regions, it is inevitable that there will be differences in language as they come from different countries and regions, and it is then that third parties who know several languages are needed to act as intermediaries and make introductions for both sides. Therefore, small languages need to be promoted to a greater extent, and its development prospects are very broad[4].

#### **4. Challenges in developing small language talents**

##### ***4.1 Lack of student motivation***

Many students' first contact with a foreign language is English and have been studying it for years, so their motivation for it is gradually smoothed out. When it comes time to fill out their college entrance exams, they think that all minor languages are the same as English and are reluctant to study a minor language. Even if they are admitted to a minor language course, they may submit an application for a change of major, not wanting to continue studying a minor language, which they consider to be boring and uninteresting.

##### ***4.2 Lack of certain practical opportunities for students***

Due to the traditional teaching philosophy, students studying small languages rarely get out of the classroom and into practice, and our universities are no exception. Many small language students are able to score well on special language tests, memorise phrases, vocabulary and sentence patterns, and are comfortable using them in writing, but they do not pay attention to pronunciation and intonation, and may not speak fluently. In practice, the students' ability to apply their knowledge is too low and their level of application in practice is poor, and they are often unable to communicate with foreign teachers. Students become little giants on the test-taking field, but big dwarfs in practical application. Some of the schools that offer small languages also have shortcomings in this area and do not provide students with good opportunities for practical training and internships. The education of students is limited to the classroom, and because of the lack of funding and staffing resources, students lack the opportunity to learn, while their internship companies do not pay enough attention to this and often find that students have too little time to learn during their internship. Instead, they often go to make up the numbers.

##### ***4.3 Lack of teacher resources***

Nowadays, many institutions have responded to the call of the Ministry of Education to add small language majors to their schools. The teaching level and teaching ability of teachers of small language majors have failed to keep pace with the times and are no longer able to meet the development needs of small language majors, which is a more serious problem. The level and number of teachers is also one of the important reasons that affects the training of professional small language talents. In many universities, due to the small number of teachers, many of those who teach minor languages, also teach other courses, which makes it impossible for teachers to devote themselves to teaching minor languages, which also has a certain impact and stifles minor language education in universities[5].

#### **5. How to develop small language talents**

##### ***5.1 Improving student motivation***

During the opening period, the employment prospects of small language majors can be actively promoted, the differences between small languages and English can be raised to motivate students, while trial classes can be carried out, the content of the classes can be as rich as possible to attract students' attention, and teachers can use different teaching methods to enhance students' interest in the classes. At the same time, the employment prospects of small languages can also be promoted. After 2016, the Ministry of Education also attaches great importance to the training of talents in small languages, and in

order to be able to better promote cooperation between countries, it cooperates with many countries along the route, and small language majors have been added to all major language colleges in China, which shows that the employment prospects of small language majors are also very promising. Our current minority language learning base is weak, which does not conform to the current market requirements. It cannot meet the strategic requirements of the Belt and Road Initiative. At present, there are many bilingual kindergartens and foreign language schools in China, which can be seen to cultivate children's English ability from an early age. However, the study of minority languages is only taught at the university level. Therefore, the author suggests that we can start from children, give full play to the role of the government and the education bureau, and set up minority language courses from kindergartens, primary schools and junior high schools. Build up the interest and learning ability of minority languages and cultivate minority language talents since childhood.

### ***5.2 Changing the concept of teaching and learning and increasing opportunities for practical training***

In the context of multicultural development, the teaching of a single small language can no longer meet the requirements of the current 'One Belt, One Road' policy, which requires university teachers to change their traditional teaching concepts, linking small language learning with cultural exchange, encouraging students to go beyond the classroom and innovating teaching methods in order to meet the current context. This requires teachers to change the traditional concept of teaching, linking small language learning to cultural exchange, encouraging students to go beyond the classroom, and innovating teaching methods in order to meet the current demand for professional small language talents. At the same time, it is important to increase the opportunities for practical training for small language students. In this regard, the government and universities need to take a two-pronged approach. The government should respond positively to the "One Belt, One Road" call and set up an education fund for the training of small language talents, and communicate with universities in a timely manner to meet some of their construction needs. At the same time, it is important to explain to the many companies in society that they will recruit small language students according to their needs and provide them with appropriate internship places. For their part, universities should strengthen their communication with other universities with strong small language majors to share resources. In addition, it is important to get students out of the classroom and to be able to apply what they are taught in the classroom to real-life situations and to learn more about 'local knowledge' in the local area.

### ***5.3 Improving the strength and standard of teachers***

It is important that universities provide uniform training for teachers of small languages to improve the level and quality of their teaching. This should be done in accordance with the students' profile, the current status of the language they are studying and the relevant specialisms of the teachers. At the same time, teachers should keep up with the times and learn about teaching methods that are acceptable to today's students. In addition, subject exchange meetings should be organised to exchange experiences with teachers of small languages in universities, and teachers of small languages should be sent to study at leading foreign universities to enhance their teaching. The head of the institution can also invite foreign teachers from countries along the "Belt and Road" to teach the spoken language of the students, so that the students are not limited to the rules and regulations taught in the classroom, but can also practise their spoken language and improve their skills in a comprehensive and systematic way. In today's society, language has become a resource that can be derived into wealth and belongs to an immaterial resource. In a sense, language is the symbol of a nation. Historical facts tell us that language problems at some levels will involve a country's politics, policies, economy, people's livelihood and other aspects. They will also affect the science and technology education, culture education and moral education of the country and the nation. In order to fully understand and learn a language, one must first understand the environment and soil in which the language exists, that is, the cultural domain of the country. Therefore, language learning is based on cultural learning.

First, improve the quality and teaching level of in-service teachers, encourage teachers to study abroad, optimize teaching methods. The most important thing is that the teachers of multilingual major have excellent professional quality. However, the multilingual major in domestic universities is still in the pilot stage, and there are few teachers with multilingual teaching experience. Therefore, it is advisable to hire teachers of two different foreign languages to teach. Second, it can temporarily solve the shortage of teachers in complex language. In the long run, multilingual major requires teachers to be more demanding, so teachers should keep learning to improve their knowledge and teaching level. The student-centered teaching method can be adopted to use the right ways and methods to inspire

students to think, stimulate their learning initiative and enthusiasm, encourage them and create opportunities for them to transform the language knowledge they have learned into the ability to actually use the language.

Secondly, foreign teachers and outstanding domestic scholars and doctoral students should be employed to regularly exchange teaching experience with foreign schools to keep the teaching frontier.

Third, change the traditional teaching concept, clear the teaching focus and goal, cultivate students' practical ability to use language, from exam-oriented education to quality-oriented education.

Obviously, there are new challenges and demands on the comprehensive quality of foreign language teachers in multilingual teaching. Teachers construction, implementation of teachers "bring in" and "go out" combination, innovation in teaching methods.

#### **5.4 Reasonable use of overseas students' platforms and resources**

Along with the continuous strengthening of China's comprehensive national strength, China's international competitiveness and influence have greatly improved. As a result, the number of foreign students coming to China is also increasing year by year. By 2015, China ranked third in the world in the number of international students. In language learning, speaking ability and listening and speaking ability are more difficult parts. The presence of foreign students can provide a mature environment for Chinese minority language students to hear and speak, and improve their listening and speaking ability. In addition, through the exchange with foreign students, they can understand the culture and local customs of different countries, which will add extra beautiful colors to the learning career of students of minor languages.

Under the background of "One Belt and One Road", compound language talents with higher comprehensive quality and ability are needed. We must transform traditional teaching methods, improve students' hands-on and practical abilities, and export more available minority language talents for the Belt and Road Initiative. Foreign language colleges and universities need to pay attention to the problem of major enrollment expansion, not blindly expand the enrollment of popular majors. We should increase the investment in minority language teaching and pay attention to the cultivation of students' comprehensive quality. At the same time, more language majors should be set up in countries along the "One Belt and One Road" to keep pace with The Times and train more minor language talents for the country.

### **6. Conclusion**

As mentioned above, while the Belt and Road project has boosted China's economic development, it has also posed certain challenges to the professionalism of our small language talents. Under these conditions, it is important for universities to enhance the training of professional small language talents in their universities, so that they can produce high level professionals who can make a great contribution to the further development of the Belt and Road. Professional small language talents will also contribute to the cultural exchange between China and other countries along the route, strengthening the communication and understanding between China and other countries in all aspects.

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