



RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGES OF THE “BELT AND ROAD” INITIATIVE: CURRENT SITUATION AND REFORM PATH OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION PLANNING¹

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ARTICLE INFO

Received: 26-Sep-25

Revised: 5-Nov-25

Accepted: 14-Jan-26

Keywords:

*Belt and Road Initiative;
foreign language education
planning;
non-common language;
intercultural competence;
curriculum reform;
teacher training*

ABSTRACT

The Belt and Road Initiative has created an urgent need for versatile multilingual professionals, exposing a misalignment between this strategic demand and the current foreign language education planning in Chinese universities. This gap presents a critical issue for national capacity building. This study aimed to diagnose the systemic deficiencies in foreign language education planning within the BRI context and to propose a coherent framework for reform, thereby addressing the disconnect between educational output and strategic national needs. A mixed-methods approach was employed, integrating a comprehensive analysis of relevant literature with field research including surveys and interviews conducted at several tertiary institutions. The investigation identified four core structural problems: inflexible student recruitment mechanisms, an overly narrow curriculum scope, a shortage of qualified instructors, and a significant disconnect of pedagogical content from practical application, collectively failing to meet BRI talent demands. The study concludes that synergistic reforms across policy, curriculum, teacher development, and pedagogy are essential. These reforms are vital to realigning educational outcomes with national strategic objectives and to cultivating a competent multilingual workforce for Belt and Road cooperation.

¹ This article is derived in part from the first author's ongoing doctoral dissertation research under the supervision of Associate Professor Suriyasai Katasila, Ph.D.

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1. Introduction

The “Belt and Road” Initiative was proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013, aiming to promote economic development and cultural exchanges among countries by building a trans-Eurasian economic cooperation network. The initiative consists of two major economic corridors - the land-based “Silk Road Economic Belt” and the sea-based “21st Century Maritime Silk Road”. The goal of the initiative is to strengthen the integration of national resources, promote interconnectivity among countries, and establish a diversified, autonomous, and sustainable cooperation framework, which includes five main aspects, namely, policy interoperability, trade facilitation, facility connectivity, financial integration, and people-to-people exchanges (Chen, 2020). With the advancement of the “Belt and Road” construction, China and the countries along the route have reached cooperation in infrastructure, energy, finance, science and technology and other fields, which has further enhanced China’s influence in international affairs and provided a new impetus for the development of the global economy.

Under the background of the Belt and Road Initiative, China’s foreign language education is also facing new opportunities and challenges. Traditionally, foreign language education focuses on English, but with the diversity and complexity of the languages of the countries along the route, the focus of foreign language education is gradually developing towards multilingualism and multilevel. The “Belt and Road” route involves 65 countries and regions as well as 53 official languages, belonging to nine major language families, with diverse languages and complex conditions (Gu & Chen, 2017), which requires Chinese universities to offer more non-common language courses in foreign language education, such as Arabic, Russian, Portuguese and so on. Colleges and universities not only need to improve students’ language ability-but also cultivate intercultural communication skills and global vision to meet the needs in the context of internationalization. However, at present, the structure of foreign language talents in China is relatively homogeneous, and there are fewer composite internationalized talents in line with the requirements of the national strategy (Fan & Dang, 2023). On the other hand, there is no macro planning for foreign language education at the national level in China, and there is no organization specializing in foreign language planning, and China also lacks reasonable planning and layout for the cultivation of foreign language talents and the setting of languages (Zhang, 2022).

At present, foreign language education in domestic colleges and universities is undergoing transformation. Many colleges and universities are adjusting their foreign language education strategies, increasing the proportion of non-common language teaching, and cultivating compound foreign language talents to meet the needs of the “Belt and Road”. However, the existing education model still has the problems of “homogenization” and “overcapacity”, and the supply of non-common language talents is seriously insufficient (Jiang & Yang, 2020). There is a certain disconnect between the foreign language curriculum of colleges and universities and the market demand, which affects the quality and effectiveness of foreign language education. Therefore, colleges and universities need to further reform the foreign language education system, strengthen the scientific and reasonableness of the curriculum, enhance the professional ability of teachers, and strengthen cooperation with international universities in order to cultivate internationalized foreign language talents that meet the needs of the “Belt and Road” initiative.

The purpose of this thesis is to discuss the current situation of foreign language education in Chinese colleges and universities under the “Belt and Road” Initiative and its problems, to analyze the gaps between the current foreign language education planning and the national strategic needs, and to put forward corresponding improvement strategies. By investigating the actual situation of foreign language education in colleges and universities, the study will provide colleges and universities with targeted educational planning strategies to better support national strategies and economic development needs. The study not only focuses on the practice of foreign language education in colleges and universities in terms of language curriculum and faculty strength but also looks at how to promote the effective interface between foreign language education and social needs through educational reform.

In terms of theoretical significance, this study enriches the existing theories on language education planning, especially in terms of the changes in the demand for foreign language education under the “Belt and Road” initiative and puts forward targeted strategies for foreign language education planning, which promotes an in-depth understanding of the combination of foreign language education and national strategies. At the same time, the study analyzes the demand for composite foreign language talents, further expanding the connotation of foreign language education theory and emphasizing the

cultivation of comprehensive ability. This perspective provides a new direction for the theoretical development of related fields.

At the practical level, this study reveals the deficiencies in the current foreign language education planning, provides specific directions and suggestions for colleges and universities in reforming and optimizing the foreign language education system, and helps colleges and universities better adapt to the national strategic needs in practice, improve the quality of education, and cultivate high-quality foreign language talents in line with the needs of society and the market. At the same time, the foreign language education planning strategies for colleges and universities proposed in this study are of guiding significance for practical application. Through systematic analysis and multi-faceted data support, it provides practical suggestions for the curriculum, talent cultivation mode, international exchange and cooperation of foreign language education in colleges and universities. These suggestions help colleges and universities optimize the allocation of educational resources, improve the quality of education, and provide specific practical paths and strategies for colleges and universities.

2. Research Objectives

Since the Belt and Road Initiative was put forward, language talents are urgently needed in various fields, especially interdisciplinary talents who are proficient in the languages of the Belt and Road countries, but at present there are not many colleges and universities that offer majors in foreign languages other than English, except for foreign language universities. In addition, the curricula of foreign language universities are also difficult to meet the needs of interdisciplinary talent training. Wen (2016) points out that this is mainly because we lack an effective mechanism for designing non-English foreign language teaching programs.

Therefore, this study raises the following two questions, aiming to understand the current situation of foreign language teaching and learning planning in schools under the Belt and Road Initiative, and then make constructive suggestions for improving current foreign language teaching and learning planning in schools:

1) What is the current situation of foreign language education planning in Chinese colleges and universities under the Belt and Road Initiative, and what are the problems?

2) How to develop foreign language education planning in colleges and universities in response to the “Belt and Road” initiative?

In the first question, the study will analyze in detail the current situation of foreign language education planning in Chinese universities and identify the advantages and shortcomings. In the second question, based on the analysis of the current situation, the study will put forward a series of specific suggestions for foreign language education planning in order to improve the effectiveness of foreign language education in colleges and universities, and enhance the marketability and international competitiveness of foreign language talents.

3. Research Methodology

The purpose of this section is to describe the research design and methodological framework adopted in this study to explore the current situation and countermeasures of foreign language education planning in colleges and universities in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative in a scientific and rigorous way. The study combines Kaplan and Baldauf’s theory of language education planning with literature review, qualitative interviews, and thematic analysis to construct a systematic research path.

This study focuses on four applied undergraduate colleges and universities in Jiangsu Province, mainly because Jiangsu is located at the intersection of the “Silk Road Economic Belt” and the “21st Century Maritime Silk Road” and is an important province to support the national “Belt and Road” strategy. It is an important province that is representative of the national “Belt and Road” strategy. Through in-depth interviews with participants from different backgrounds and roles, this study seeks to comprehensively understand the current situation of foreign language education in applied undergraduate colleges and universities in Jiangsu Province, as well as its challenges and opportunities in the context of “Belt and Road”, so as to provide a scientific basis and practical suggestions for optimizing the planning of foreign language education. The basic profile of the respondents is shown in Table 1, Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4 below respectively.

Table 1 Key Informants from University Policy Makers

Policy Makers	Gender	Years of Service	Academic Background	Main Responsibilities or Focus
Policy Maker A	Male	10	Head of Foreign Language Education	Foreign Language Education Planning
Policy Maker B	Male	15	Dean of Academic Affairs	Academic Management and Planning
Policy Maker C	Male	20	Director of Admissions	Admissions Planning
Policy Maker D	Male	25	Staff in the education department	Participating in the research and development of the province's student financial assistance policies and measures

Table 2 Key Informants from University Instructors

Instructors	Gender	Title/Position	Teaching Experience	Field of Expertise	Nationality
Instructor A	Female	Professor of Russian Department	35	Intercultural Communication Research	Chinese
Instructor B	Male	Professor of Korean Department	10	Language Education and Research	Chinese
Instructor C	Female	Professor of English Department	30	Language Teaching and Curriculum Development	Chinese
Instructor D	Male	Professor of Thai Department	7	Language Education and Research	Foreigner

Table 3 Key Informants from Students and International Exchange Students

Students	Gender	Major	Type of Student	Year of Study
Student A	Male	English Major	domestic student	1
Student B	Female	Russian Major	domestic student	2
Student C	Female	Thai Major	domestic student	3
Student D	Female	Korean Major	domestic student	4
Student E	Female	Chinese major	International Exchange Student	3

Table 4 Key Informants from Company Employees of Enterprises Participating in the “Belt and Road” Initiative

Employee	Gender	Position	Working Years	The business activities of the enterprise along the Belt and Road routes
Employee A	Male	Market Development Manager	15	Infrastructure Construction
Employee B	Male	HR Manager	12	Financial Services
Employee C	Female	Project Manager	8	Cultural Exchange

In terms of research design, a qualitative-based research method was adopted to collect first-hand information through in-depth interviews. The interview questions centered on the current status of the implementation of foreign language education policies in colleges and universities, existing problems and future prospects. To ensure research ethics, the information of the interviewees was anonymized.

In terms of data acquisition, the study lasted two months, the interviews lasted an average of 20-30 minutes, and the structured outline guided interviews were mainly used, and the language used was Mandarin. The interview process fully respected the wishes of the interviewees and abided by the principle of information confidentiality to ensure that the data was true and valid.

Data were analyzed using the thematic analysis method proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis was divided into five stages: data familiarization, preliminary coding, theme identification, theme review and naming, and result writing. During the coding process, special attention was paid to high-frequency themes such as “single teaching content”, “insufficient supply of languages”, “disconnection with enterprise demand”, in an attempt to extract from multidimensional data the structural problems and feasibility of foreign language education planning. The study strives to extract the structural problems and feasible suggestions of foreign language education planning from multidimensional data.

In order to enhance the theoretical support of the study, a systematic literature review was conducted to clarify the current status and theoretical gaps of related research locally and internationally. The reference databases include CNKI, Google Scholar, JSTOR, and the keywords include “language education planning”, “Belt and Road”, “cultivation of foreign language talents.”—The analysis of the literature shows that the current research is mostly focused on language education planning. Literature analysis has made clear that the current research focuses on the policy level, but less on the implementation level of universities and the details of curriculum teaching, which further highlights the space for theoretical contribution of this study.

4. Literature Review

Since the “Belt and Road” initiative was proposed, foreign language education, as an important part of supporting the country’s opening-up strategy, has received extensive attention in the research of language policy, talent cultivation, and curriculum system. In this study, the researchers will systematically sort out the relevant research results from four aspects, namely, the theory of language education planning, foreign language education policy under the “Belt and Road” Initiative, foreign language education planning research, and foreign language education planning research under the “Belt and Road” Initiative, in order to provide the following theoretical support and problematic entry points.

4.1 Theory of Language Education Planning

Language education planning is an important part of language planning, which mainly studies the language planning problems in education, including not only the planning work of language education in the traditional sense, but also the language planning problems in education, such as the teaching language planning of the school curriculum, the language planning of the teaching materials, and the language environment (Shen & Xia, 2018). Cooper (1989) points out that language planning must pay attention to the the planning of human language acquisition and educational activities, of which language education is a core goal that cannot be ignored. Kaplan & Baldauf constructed a systematic framework for language education planning, proposing that language education involves key components such as acquisition planning, curriculum development, teaching materials and methodology, teacher training, resource allocation, and evaluation mechanisms (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003). The model emphasizes the dual goals of education policy, for example, setting standards through policy and meeting diverse language needs through cultivation, reflecting the structural and systematic nature of language education planning (Shen, 2017).

4.2 Foreign Language Education Policy under the “Belt and Road” Initiative

Since its inception, the “Belt and Road” initiative, as an important strategy for China’s opening up and international cooperation, has had as one of its core objectives to strengthen cooperations and exchanges between China and the countries along the route at many levels, including the economy, culture,

and education. Language, as the foundation of cultural exchange, is particularly important in the Belt and Road Initiative. For this reason, the Chinese government has repeatedly emphasized the importance of language education in its policy documents, and has put forward a series of policies and measures for foreign language education to support the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative. For example, the Vision and Actions for Building a Belt and Road Initiative emphasizes that language interoperability and multilingual education are the basis for cultural exchanges; the Opinions of the Ministry of Education on Promoting Educational Actions for Building a Belt and Road Initiative make it clear that colleges and universities should increase the number of courses in non-generic languages and carry out international cooperation; The 14th Five-Year Plan for the Development of the National Language and Literature Program strengthens the role of language policy in supporting national strategies from a macro perspective. All these policies point out the fundamental role of language education in serving the construction of “Belt and Road”.

4.3 Research on Foreign Language Education Planning

Many scholars have paid attention to foreign language education planning. Diachronic descriptive studies were widely conducted in the field of Li (2015) and Hu (2011) conducted a retrospective study on the historical evolution of China’s foreign language education policy, pointing out that the policy is significantly affected by the country’s political economy and its content gradually tends to be scientific. Zhang (2022) combines the “Belt and Road” initiative with western experience and proposes that foreign language education in China’s colleges and universities should better serve the national strategy. Ning & Shen (2023) emphasize the significance of historical experience for the reform of foreign language education in contemporary times through the excavation of the The Communist Party of China’s (CPC) practice of foreign language education in the Yan’an period. In terms of comparative studies, Wei (2010) argues that planning objectives should be clarified more than simply increasing inputs. Cheng (2021) points out the need to strengthen empirical research at the micro level. Deng (2023) sums up the three-dimensional objectives of talent cultivation that integrates multilingual competence, civilization understanding, and professional knowledge through transnational case studies. Many studies are critical of the problems in foreign language education planning. Su (2015) points out that the lack of scientific planning leads to disordered development, and the problems of insufficient

foreign language curricula and imbalance of language structure are prominent. Xu (2022) emphasizes that the micro level of foreign language education has been neglected in terms of the cultivation of basic linguistic knowledge and comprehensive literacy. Lu (2006) suggests to establish specialized institutions, clarifying policy objectives, strengthening teacher training and reforming the curriculum system.

4.4 Research on Foreign Language Education Planning under the “Belt and Road” Initiative

Aiming at the new demands for foreign language education put forward by the “Belt and Road” Initiative, scholars have explored the aspects of language planning, complex talent cultivation, curriculum reform, and regional studies. Wen (2016) suggests the establishment of intensive training bases for non-generic languages. Gao (2014) proposes a medium- and long-term planning for the setting of foreign language courses in primary and secondary schools and colleges and universities based on the languages of the countries along the route. Shen (2023) emphasizes the economic and strategic value of language services. Zhao (2016) points out that the construction of the “Belt and Road” requires composite talents with research, initiative and execution capabilities. Shen (2016) proposes a curriculum model of “non-common language + English + professional skills”. Wang (2020) further put forward the concept of “multilingualism+” to respond to the demand for talents in the context of globalization. In terms of regional studies, scholars mostly focus on frontier regions such as Xinjiang, Yunnan, and Guangxi, exploring how to carry out targeted language education planning based on the local economy, ethno-linguistic structure, and geographic location Pan (2024). Although the eastern coastal regions, such as Jiangsu, have an important hub position in the “Belt and Road”, the research on language education is still insufficient, and the regional planning has not yet been closely aligned with the actual industrial needs.

To summarize, the current research has constructed a relatively complete theoretical system of language education planning and discussed the development path of foreign language education in the context of “Belt and Road” in depth from the aspects of policy, language and talent cultivation, there are still obvious deficiencies in micro-implementation, which are reflected in the lack of systematic research on the curricula, teaching methodologies and the construction of teaching staffs. However, there are still obvious deficiencies at

the micro level of implementation, which are reflected in the lack of systematic research on curriculum, teaching methods and teachers.

5. Research Findings and Discussion

5.1 Lack of Dynamism in Education Policy

Currently, there is still a significant static tendency in the top-level policy design of foreign language education planning in Jiangsu universities, which lacks the support of the mechanism of synchronous iteration with the “Belt and Road” initiative. Policy Maker A pointed out, “Our current curriculum basically follows the traditional framework, lacks research on the language needs of the countries along the ‘Belt and Road’ and fails to update the teaching content with market dynamics.” Although the Ministry of Education and local governments have clearly pointed out in the relevant policies to “strengthen the layout of non-common languages” and “support the opening of diversified language courses”, in practice, most colleges and universities are still absolutely dominated by the English language, and the updating of the curriculum system is lagging behind, which lacks real-time linkage with the language needs of the regional economy.

The college entrance examination system, as the “only entrance” for students, has a direct impact on the selection of foreign language professionals due to the uniqueness of its evaluation system. Instructor A stated in the interview, “Although we have adopted a comprehensive evaluation admissions approach in the admission of Russian majors, which takes into account a number of dimensions such as students’ high school grades, interview performance, in general, we are still more concerned about the overall scores of the students, and lack in-depth assessment of students’ linguistic strengths or cross-cultural potential.” Under the current model, language learning potential, cross-cultural background and multilingual acquisition experience are marginalized in the admission evaluation, which limits the accurate identification and absorption of linguistically diverse talents. Many students with small language learning experience miss the opportunity to enter foreign language majors because their total scores are not up to standard. This “score-centrism” ignores the long-term and professional needs of foreign language learning, and weakens the foundation building of students of non-mainstream languages.

In addition, the demand for language services brought about by the “Belt and Road” initiative is highly dynamic, but the updating cycle of relevant policies in universities is long and the procedures are rigid, making it difficult to respond in time. Policy Maker A mentioned in the interview: “Our teacher training is focused on updating English language teaching methodologies and there are few resources related to teaching methodologies and intercultural competence enhancement in non-generic languages. Given the importance of English as an international language in education, we are more inclined to invest significant resources in optimizing the teaching of English and ensuring that teachers are equipped with the latest teaching techniques and methodologies to respond to the increasingly diverse needs of students. However, there is a lack of systematic planning for teacher training in non-general-purpose languages such as Korean, Thai, Arabic, and Russian, and few opportunities to participate in cross-cultural communication competence enhancement programs.” For example, with the accelerated trade frequency in Central Asia and the new southward countries, the enterprises’ demand for talents in Russian, Thai, Vietnamese, Malay and other languages has been rising, but most universities have not yet set up relevant language modules in their teaching structure, and lack a systematic channel for the rapid introduction of language teachers and curricula, which has resulted in the education services lagging seriously behind the strategic demand.

At the same time, the institutional support and resources for non-common language teaching are significantly insufficient. Although there are directional advocates in the policy, there is a lack of special budget allocations and specialized construction plans. For example, even if many colleges and universities have the will to offer Arabic or Thai courses, they are unable to implement them due to the limitations of teachers, teaching materials, and teaching environment, and the curriculum often stays in the “pilot stage”, making it difficult to form a system.

In terms of evaluation policy, student D also said, “Our assessment approach is too theoretical and lacks scenario-specific assessment of language use, such as how to solve practical problems in a multilingual environment.” Most universities still rely on traditional language tests (e.g., the College English Test (CET), which is divided into the CET-4 and CET-6, as well as the Test for English Majors (TEM), with specific levels such as TEM-4., etc.) to measure students’ foreign language proficiency, and this kind of static evaluation tool focusing on grammar and vocabulary ignores the students’

linguistic organization and cross-cultural communication skills in real contexts. For example, the language practice ability in real-life scenarios such as business negotiation, internship abroad, and international videoconferencing is not included in the mainstream evaluation system, which in turn affects the feedback mechanism for updating the course content and teaching methods.

The lagging response of colleges and universities to the language needs along the Belt and Road reflects the “misalignment” between the top-level system and the implementation mechanism. The lack of an effective “intermediary conversion” mechanism between policy slogans and local practices is especially obvious in the adjustment of talent cultivation types, curriculum modes and the docking of enterprise demands. Therefore, Jiangsu colleges and universities need to establish a dynamic adjustment of the education policy feedback system as soon as possible, to realize the rapid cycle between policy and industrial demand.

5.2 Limitations of College Planning

The foreign language education planning of applied undergraduate colleges and universities in Jiangsu Province is generally “English-centered” in terms of content structure and cultivation goals, and lacks the overall consideration of the strategic layout of multilingualism. At present, most of the schools still take English as the only compulsory foreign language, and some of them have set Japanese and French as the second foreign language, but there are almost no key languages along the “Belt and Road” (such as Arabic, Vietnamese, Russian, Thai, etc.), and it is even difficult to find relevant teaching materials and teachers in the teaching resource library.

Policy Maker B said, “Although the school has invested some resources in teaching Arabic, the curriculum still focuses on basic language proficiency training, and there are almost no business Arabic courses related to the ‘Belt and Road’.” Instructor B also mentioned, “Although Thai language courses are offered, the elective and specialty-oriented curriculum is weakly linked to the regional economy, such as insufficient content coverage in the tourism Thai language and Thai culture courses.” Even if some colleges and universities offer majors in Russian or Arabic, the depth and breadth of teaching is far from the level to support professional development, and the courses are mostly focused on basic language training and lack of industry-oriented content. For example, practical language courses such as “Engineering Arabic” and “Logistics

Vietnamese” have not yet been introduced into the teaching program, and expansion modules such as intercultural communication and regional awareness have not yet been formed, resulting in students not being able to perform the comprehensive tasks of international projects even though they have a basic knowledge of the language.

Insufficient interdisciplinary integration is also a major shortcoming in current educational planning. Colleges and universities still continue the traditional three-part path of “language teaching - literature and culture - translation training” in the curriculum, which fails to effectively integrate the professional content related to the “Belt and Road”. Most of the curricula are unable to dock with the contents of international trade, engineering projects, energy cooperation and other fields, resulting in the phenomenon of “language idle”. For example, many foreign language majors lack the ability to handle foreign trade documents and understand cross-border legal texts, and after graduation, they have a long adaptation period and a low conversion rate in international positions, reflecting the mismatch between the education system and real-life applications.

In addition, the lack of regional cultural dimensions in foreign language programs in Jiangsu Province is also more prominent. Student B further noted, “The textbook has more coverage of Russian culture, but less coverage of the language needs and cultural backgrounds of Central Asian countries, which makes us feel overwhelmed when responding to relevant language tasks.” Such as Central Asia, the Middle East, Southeast Asian countries in the customs and etiquette, negotiation culture, religious background and other aspects of knowledge did not enter the classroom systematic teaching, the teacher teaching content is still mostly focused on the European and American context of the norms of international communication. Due to this limitation, even if students’ language ability meets the standard, they are still prone to communication barriers due to cultural misinterpretation in the real cross-cultural environment.

In terms of the dynamic adjustment of the curriculum system, most universities have not established a mechanism for periodic evaluation of the curriculum and feedback on the needs of enterprises. Once the language courses are set up, they are slow to be updated and lack the ability to make flexible adjustments according to policy guidance and market trends. The direction of students’ training is fixed, and it is difficult to select horizontal modules and

expand vertical abilities according to job requirements, so the adaptability of the training process is weak.

All of the above problems ultimately point to a core contradiction: that is, the planning of foreign language education in colleges and universities fails to effectively respond to the real demand for “language + profession + culture” integrated talents. If language teaching cannot be embedded in the professional chain and industry ecology, its value will be greatly reduced. Therefore, in the future, Jiangsu universities must break through the traditional logic of language teaching in education planning, and reshape the cultivation mode of composite talents from multiple dimensions, such as curriculum design, professional co-construction and resource linkage.

5.3 Optimization Strategy of Foreign Language Education Planning

In view of the rigidity of policies, imbalance of languages, shortage of resources, fragmentation of courses, and other problems exposed in the foreign language education planning of applied undergraduate colleges and universities in Jiangsu Province under the background of the “Belt and Road” initiative, the overall planning of foreign language education needs to be systematically optimized at the levels of macroscopic policy guidance and microscopic teaching and learning implementation. From the strategic top-level design to the transformation of teaching practice, it is necessary to build a top-down, hierarchical linkage of the overall promotion system to ensure that the restructuring and quality improvement of foreign language education can accurately serve the needs of regional development and the direction of national strategy.

At the macro level, the government needs to clarify the strategic orientation of foreign language education in colleges and universities, and promote the transformation from “single-language-led” to “multilingual synergistic development” mode. Jiangsu Province, as a gateway to international cooperation by sea and land, should be based on the pattern of economic and trade cooperation with Central Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia and other regions, and formulate a clear roadmap for the development of languages, prioritizing the development of Russian, Thai, Arabic, Vietnamese and other high-frequency interactive languages of the Belt and Road. The development of “Belt and Road” high-frequency interactive languages should be prioritized, and the differentiation and complementarity of language layouts should be realized

by relying on universities in different regions. Compared with the “one-size-fits-all” popularization mode of traditional English education, foreign language education in the new era should reflect the strategic control of language structure, which is not only reflected in the breadth of language courses, but also should be implemented in the faculty structure, depth of the curriculum, and cultural content of the whole chain of reconstruction.

To strengthen the implementation pathway for synergistic multilingual development, it is essential to actively promote the establishment of in-depth educational cooperation mechanisms with countries along the Belt and Road Initiative. Firstly, the collaborative models between Chinese universities and Confucius Institutes in Thailand should be expanded beyond traditional Chinese language teaching functions, transforming them into comprehensive platforms integrating language training, cultural exchange, and professional competency development. For instance, specialized courses such as “Chinese + Tourism Management” and “Chinese + Cross-border E-commerce” could be jointly developed to precisely address local industrial needs in Thailand, while simultaneously creating channels for Chinese students to engage in internships and practical training in Thailand. Secondly, systematic design of Sino-Thai student exchange programs should be implemented through the establishment of a “Sino-Thai Youth Language Talent Two-way Mobility Program”, encouraging institutions in Jiangsu Province to collaborate with Thai vocational colleges and applied universities in conducting semester exchanges, winter/summer study tours, and enterprise internships. Such initiatives would not only effectively alleviate the shortage of practical scenarios for non-common languages in China but also provide Thai students with opportunities to gain exposure to China’s mature experience in multilingual education planning and digital teaching methodologies, thereby achieving mutual empowerment and resource complementarity.

Furthermore, it is essential to fully recognize the mutual empowerment value inherent in Sino-Thai educational cooperation. For China’s foreign language education system, Thailand, as a key ASEAN member, offers a natural testing ground for diversifying non-universal language programs through its rich linguistic ecology, including expertise in teaching Thai and neighboring languages like Malay and Burmese. By jointly establishing “Multilingual Resource Centers” with Thai institutions, China can effectively leverage Thailand’s mature practices in regional language curriculum development and localized teacher training. This collaboration would accelerate the breakdown of

China’s long-standing “monolingual dependency”, facilitating a diversified transformation of teaching materials, curricula, and evaluation standards.

On the other hand, Thailand can substantially benefit from China’s experience in large-scale multilingual education planning. China has accumulated systematic expertise in national language strategy formulation, multilingual curriculum standard systems, and innovative “Internet+” language education models—precisely the capabilities Thailand needs to address its own regional language talent shortages and enhance the overall effectiveness of its language education. Through the joint establishment of a “Sino-Thai Multilingual Education Research Center”, the two sides could collaborate on developing shared standards for Southeast Asian language talents and co-creating digital teaching resources. This would enable Thailand to leverage Chinese experience to more effectively meet its growing domestic demand for T-shaped professionals with proficiency in Chinese and other key regional languages such as Vietnamese and Lao.

Financial support system is the core guarantee mechanism for the implementation of language education strategy. In view of the problems of “difficult start, high cost and scarce talents” in the development of non-common languages, provincial governments should set up special funds for language course construction, teaching team formation, introduction of overseas resources, digital teaching platform construction and other aspects, so as to provide long-term and stable financial support for the construction of multilingual system in colleges and universities. In addition, schools and enterprises are encouraged to cooperate to build “language training bases” and “international language experimental platforms”, relying on the real projects of enterprises to conduct language training, so that language education is embedded in the context of the industry, forming an integrated “curriculum-practice-employment” program. The language education is embedded in the industry context, forming an integrated education path of “curriculum-practice-employment”, which strengthens the application-oriented and market feedback mechanism of language education.

In terms of evaluation system, the current test-oriented single written assessment method can hardly meet the needs of selection and training of complex foreign language talents. Colleges and universities should actively explore diversified, multi-scenario, multi-task language proficiency evaluation

mechanisms, and incorporate students' performance in real-life situations such as cross-cultural communication, industry task completion, and language project planning into the comprehensive assessment category. In Jiangsu Province, language proficiency assessment can be introduced through the platforms of "Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition for College Students" and "Challenge of Simulated Business Negotiation", so that the results of foreign language teaching can be tested and feedback in practice. Only by establishing an evaluation system that can truly map "language proficiency+industrial literacy+cultural cognition" can foreign language education get rid of the predicament of "paper fluency" and move towards the goal of "effective application".

Macro-level policy support, language guidance, funding and evaluation reform constitute the upper skeleton of the foreign language education planning system, while micro-level curriculum optimization, teaching method innovation, textbook content reconstruction and teacher competence building are the key texture to support the implementation of foreign language education. As the direct subjects of teaching practice, colleges and universities need to closely integrate the national strategy with the positioning of the institution, and realize the fine transformation of foreign language education through the in-depth adjustment of teaching content and structure.

Curriculum design should be close to the needs of the industrial development of the "Belt and Road", and gradually build a composite curriculum system of "language + profession + culture". Under the background that most college courses still remain at the level of language knowledge and lack of professional docking, there is an urgent need to promote the embedding of foreign language courses in core industries such as economy, law, engineering, science and technology, and to open "English for Engineering Project Management", "Arabic Practice for Cross-border E-commerce", "Thai for Negotiation in Southeast Asian Market", and "Thai for Negotiation in Southeast Asian Market". "Thai for Southeast Asian Market Negotiation" and other cross-fertilization courses to realize the precise matching between language ability and job requirements. At the same time, the university curriculum system should have a flexible modular structure, allowing students to combine foreign language courses with industry attributes according to their professional backgrounds and employment intentions, so as to realize the natural transition from general education to career-oriented teaching. In addition, considering the complexity and plurality of the cultural structures of

the countries involved in the Belt and Road, the content of the courses should systematically introduce regional cultures, religious etiquette, social psychology, so as to improve students' cultural sensitivity and adaptability to international communication.

In terms of teaching methodology, it is necessary to shift to the ability cultivation path centered on contextual experience and problem orientation. The traditional teacher-led teaching mode is difficult to stimulate students' application potential, so it is recommended to introduce case study teaching method, task-based teaching method, project-based teaching method and other means to build real-life language use scenarios, so that students can improve their language thinking and practical application ability in role-playing, simulated negotiation, cross-cultural project design and other activities. At the same time, modern technology should be the catalyst for teaching innovation. With the help of Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR), a cross-country remote collaboration platform, intelligent language analysis tools, the curriculum can build an immersive, multilingual and cross-cultural comprehensive language environment, break the classroom boundaries, and realize the teaching effect of “learning by using and practicing in the real world”.

The textbook system should get rid of the traditional compilation idea of “translation + cultural introduction” and shift to the integrated structure of “language-scene-profession”. The content of the teaching materials should fully absorb the actual materials in the “Belt and Road” cooperation, such as enterprise business letters, international logistics agreements, overseas project plans, so as to strengthen the docking efficiency between language knowledge and job tasks. At the same time, teachers are guided to participate in the development of teaching materials together with enterprises and industry associations to enhance the practicality and professional depth of the content of the teaching materials, and realize the dynamic updating and interactive expansion of the content of the teaching materials through the digital platform, so as to make the teaching resources have the ability to iterate flexibly.

The construction of teachers is the foundation of quality assurance of foreign language education in colleges and universities. At present, there is a serious shortage of non-general language teachers, and most of them lack cross-cultural teaching experience and industry background knowledge, which makes it difficult for them to be competent in teaching multilingual composite courses.

Colleges and universities should establish a “language+culture+industry” trinity of teacher development mechanism on the basis of both introduction and training. On the one hand, increase the introduction and treatment incentives for excellent non-general language teachers overseas, and on the other hand, promote the participation of existing teachers in “going out” type of training programs, such as visiting countries along the “Belt and Road”, participating in enterprise language service projects, undertaking multilingual scientific research projects, so as to improve the quality of teaching, their cross-cultural perception, and language teaching integration ability through practice.

To sum up, the optimization of foreign language education planning must break the structural barriers between university education and social demand, and be promoted with systematic strategic thinking and practical orientation. From language coordination, policy incentives, evaluation mechanism to curriculum reform, teaching innovation, textbook reconstruction and teacher development, a multi-dimensional and coherent mechanism system will be the key support to enhance the foreign language education capacity of Jiangsu universities in the context of “Belt and Road”. Only in this way can the system realizes the fundamental leap from “language education” to “international talent cultivation”, and provide a solid intellectual foundation and human resource guarantee for the construction of the national language service system and the high-quality development of regional economy.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study finds that there are several problems in the current planning of foreign language education in Chinese colleges and universities. First, the enrollment policy is not flexible enough, relying on the results of the college entrance examination and ignoring students’ language skills and interests, which leads to the limitation of cultivating multilingual talents, especially the demand for languages related to the “Belt and Road” has not been adequately responded to. Secondly, the curriculum is single, the education of non-common languages is lagging behind, and many colleges and universities have not adjusted their curriculum in time to meet the market demand. In addition, there is a serious shortage of teachers, especially of non-general-purpose languages, and teachers lack cross-cultural competence and industry knowledge. Teaching methods and teaching materials are not practical enough to reflect the needs of the countries

along the Belt and Road. Finally, the evaluation system is single and lacks an effective connection with the feedback mechanism of enterprises.

Based on the two levels of macro (government level) and micro (curriculum reform), this study proposes corresponding strategies for foreign language education planning. The government needs to strengthen foreign language education policy and resource allocation, promote the connection with the “Belt and Road” strategy, optimize language courses and professional settings in colleges and universities, and especially support non-general-purpose languages. Colleges and universities should promote interdisciplinary curriculum construction and teacher training, improve the curriculum system and textbook design, and enhance students’ practical ability and intercultural communication skills. At the same time, innovative teaching modes, such as flipped classroom and project-based teaching, enhance students’ practical application ability.

To deepen Sino-Thai educational cooperation, we propose the following actionable recommendations:

First, promote joint Sino-Thai curriculum development. Chinese universities should be encouraged to establish a “Sino-Thai Joint Curriculum Committee” with partner institutions in Thailand, focusing on developing modular “Chinese + Vocational Skills” courses such as “Chinese + Cross-border Logistics Management” and “Chinese + International Tourism Services.” Course content should integrate authentic industry cases and elements from both cultures, while establishing a credit transfer system to ensure bidirectional applicability and academic mobility.

Second, systematically design bilingual education programs. We recommend launching “Sino-Thai Bilingual Talent Experimental Classes” adopting dual-campus cultivation models like “1.5+1.5” or “2+2”. The curriculum framework should integrate core language and cultural courses from both countries with specialized disciplinary courses (international trade, digital marketing), while incorporating real enterprise projects as capstone design requirements to achieve three-dimensional integration of language proficiency, professional knowledge, and industry practice.

Third, jointly establish cross-border teacher training platforms. Led by educational authorities from both sides, we propose creating a “Sino-Thai Teacher Development Collaborative Innovation Center” that regularly organizes

faculty exchange lectures and multilingual teaching methodology workshops. The platform should develop shared digital training resources, focusing on enhancing teachers' core competencies in less-commonly-taught language instruction, cross-cultural communication, and blended online teaching, thereby establishing sustainable mechanisms for collaborative faculty development.

Fourth, comprehensively enhance international cooperation. We propose establishing a "Sino-Thai Higher Education Alliance" led by top universities from both countries, with a standing secretariat to coordinate institutionalized exchanges including annual presidential forums and joint academic conferences. The alliance should prioritize developing joint research projects focusing on cross-cultural language acquisition processes to investigate cognitive patterns in dual-language learning environments. Simultaneously, it should create a shared bilingual curriculum framework for vocational education that unifies core competency standards and develops joint teaching resource databases, ensuring cultivated talents can directly serve key cooperative industries between both nations.

In this study, the implementation of foreign language education policies is complex and is affected by multiple factors such as system, resources, teachers' ability, and students' motivation. There are delays and deviations in the policies from formulation to implementation, leading to a gap between the actual results and the expected goals. Resource-rich colleges and universities are able to promote the transformation of the policy faster, while ordinary colleges and universities have difficulties in meeting the policy requirements due to the limitation of funds and manpower, which leads to the uneven results of education. In addition, the synergistic difficulties in the multi-stakeholder participation mechanism are also apparent, with different goals of the government, universities, teachers and students affecting the effectiveness of policy implementation. The study did not deeply analyze the interaction of stakeholders and the policy effect, so it is necessary to construct a multi-stakeholder governance model of "co-construction, co-rule, and sharing", and improve the coordination and feedback mechanism in the future. In the future, the study can be deepened in the following directions: first, expanding the scope of the study to cover more regions and colleges and universities, identifying the challenges of resources, curricula, and faculty in different colleges and universities, and refining the regional characteristics and common problems. Second, paying attention to the dynamic feedback mechanism to ensure that the needs of all parties are incorporated into the policy adjustments in time, so as to

enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the policy implementation. Third, introducing diversified research methodologies and cross-disciplinary case studies, and referring to international experiences and the “Belt and Road” model. The introduction of diversified research methods and cross-disciplinary case studies, with reference to international experiences and language policies of the “Belt and Road” countries, to provide reference for the optimization of policies in Chinese universities. Fourth, the construction of multi-party synergistic governance models to enhance the cooperation and effectiveness of policy implementation. Fifth, the focus on the accurate matching of policies with the needs of universities, and the use of surveys and interviews to understand the specific situation and ensure that the policies actually solve the actual problems.

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