

The Development and Exchange of Russian under the "Belt and Road" Initiative

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Abstract: Since its inception, the "Belt and Road" initiative has strongly promoted close cooperation between China and nations along the route in the fields of economy, culture, and language. In the context of the initiative, Russian, being an important linguistic resource bridging China and Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), has attracted high-level attention towards its development and exchange. This article attempts to explore the impact of the "Belt and Road" initiative on Russian education, communication, and cultural exchange and analyze its current situation, challenges, and future trends. Research has indicated that the "Belt and Road" initiative not only has provided a broader platform for Russian learners and speakers but also encouraged China, Russia, and other Russian-speaking countries to cooperate more deeply in economy, education, and culture. It also points out existing issues in the field and makes comprehensive suggestions for future research and development in language teaching and cross-cultural communication.

Keywords: Belt and Road, Russian Development, Language Exchange

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

China initiated the "Belt and Road" in 2013 to promote global interconnectedness in the shape of multilateral coordination. Russian as a language of communication between China and Russia, and indeed other CIS nations, has increased its importance. The strengthening China-Russia relations and the increasing Belt and Road demand for languages in Belt and Road nations have made Russian an essential language for education, culture, and economy.

1.2. Literature Review

1.2.1. Domestic Research Status

In recent years, with the "Belt and Road" policy becoming deeper, Chinese studies on the Russian language have significantly increased. Most of the studies focus on the model of teaching the Russian language, language policy, and its implementation in economic and cultural exchange [1-3]. Literature indicates that the role of Russian becomes increasingly pertinent in Belt and Road nations, especially in fields of higher learning and economic language services. Yu suggested that cultivating compound Russian talents in colleges and universities is the secret to education reform in the new era, and new courses like Business Russian and Legal Russian are incorporated to meet the actual

demands [4]. In addition, Zhou also stressed the necessity of Sino-Russian joint training courses in her research on Sino-Russian educational exchanges, stating that the programs enhance the general level of Russian education by means of sharing resources [5]. Nevertheless, Ning encapsulated the 70-year process of the development of Russian education in China, emphasizing that underdeveloped teaching personnel and irregular resource allocation are still issues [6]. In general, domestic studies have a greater emphasis on the harmonization of Russian education and the Belt and Road initiative, yet more prudent observation of actual pragmatic cases and intercultural communication is needed.

1.2.2. International Research Status

Foreign researchers' analysis of Russian development within the "Belt and Road" initiative is usually focused on its usability in global interactions, language growth, and cross-cultural communications. For example, Klushina et al. investigated the usage of contemporary Russian language in global relations, emphasizing Russian's ability to serve as a global cooperation language under the Belt and Road initiative [7]. Gussakovskiy investigated the foreign students' communication cultural integration when learning Russian in the Asia-Pacific region, contributing to the advancement of Russian on a global level [8]. Dilshoda considered the development of Russian language abilities at the primary education level and had the assumption that elementary language study is a fundamental part of promoting Russian [9]. Furthermore, A.Y.R. and A.T.S. had an overview of the Russian involvement in cross-cultural communication in the process of educating international students and suggested that summer schools and similar schemes would enhance language skills as well as awareness among students. In general, foreign studies emphasize the central role of Russian in language diffusion and intercultural communication under the framework of the Belt and Road initiative, even though more in-depth investigations of individual teaching strategies and promotion actions are yet to be done [10].

Although recent studies have focused primarily on how the "Belt and Road" initiative impacts Russia, research about some education models, cross-cultural communication cases, and policy implementation efficiency is weak and needs further study.

1.3. Research Significance

Russian development research under the "Belt and Road" is very significant. Theoretically, this paper highlights the lack of research in certain aspects of certain education models, cross-cultural communication cases, and the effectiveness of policy implementation. It attempts to fill these theoretic research blanks and enrich the theoretic framework of language research in the "Belt and Road" initiative. According to the models of Russian communication and education, this paper offers practical references for reforming higher education, advocating languages, and optimizing policies to achieve cooperation and development among China, Russia, and other Russian-speaking countries.

2. The Importance and Issues of Current Russian Language Education Development

2.1. The Importance of Russian Language Education Development

2.1.1. Promoting Economic Cooperation and Connectivity

With the promotion of the "Belt and Road" strategy, economic cooperation between China, Russia, and Central Asian countries has been increasingly closer. Particularly in fields such as energy, commerce, and the development of infrastructure, Russian acts as an inevitable language of communication as a principal language of communication. By raising Russian-speaking talent, a more

effective communication platform can be established for economic cooperation between China, Russia, and Central Asia.

To firms, Russian proficiency means cutting through language barriers in negotiation and improving commercial efficiency. Russians living locally are better placed to understand domestic policy, regulation, and demand of the market, which is essential to facilitate free passage of Sino-Russian trade. For Chinese enterprises, Russia-skilled staff not only can operate more effectively domestically but also have good communication with the government ministries, enterprises, and chambers of commerce of Russia and Central Asian nations, making their market competitiveness stronger. Especially under the "Belt and Road" policy, Chinese companies have increased their presence in Russian and Central Asian markets, and Russia has become a critical driver to spur investment cooperation and business exchange.

2.1.2. Strengthening Political and Diplomatic Relations

Russian studies are also very beneficial to China's position in the global diplomatic community. When the "Belt and Road" strategy was expounded, not only did China deepen more cooperation with Russia, but China also deepened the political and economic relations that China had with the other countries in Central Asia. In the role as an official language in the multi-country cooperation, Russian, in this case*, plays the role of a bridge-of-communication between the states. By cultivating Russian-speaking skills, specifically diplomats, translators, and foreign affairs analysts, China is strategically placed to negotiate a more advantageous position in diplomatic negotiations with Russia and Central Asian countries.

Russian-speaking diplomatic personnel can help the Chinese government to gain the right perception of the political stances and diplomatic tactics of these countries, and thereby, a more robust voice for China in international negotiations. Moreover, these specialists can offer recommendations to multilateral institutions and international organizations, allowing China to gain more political backing and cooperation opportunities. The popularization of Russian language studies not only helps to support China's diplomatic structure but also helps China to become integrated into the international community more smoothly, further expanding China's growing influence in international politics. With the continued development of international relations, Russian language studies will have a greater role to play in China's participation in the international political community.

2.1.3. Promoting Cultural Exchange and People-to-People Friendship

Teaching the Russian language not only helps to promote economic cooperation between China, Russia, and Central Asia but also plays an important role in cultural exchange. As the "Belt and Road" initiative develops progressively, the cultural exchange between China, Russia, and Central Asian countries is increasing in terms of frequency. Language embodies culture, and learning Russian helps the Chinese understand more about the social background, history, and culture of Russia and Central Asia and sets the foundation for China, Russia, and Central Asian countries to learn from each other's cultures.

Through the study of Russian, students can read such literary masterpieces as works in Russian literature, art, philosophy, etc., and learn more about the social customs and traditions of the area. This is indispensable to establish mutual understanding and friendship among people of the two countries. In addition, the expanding cultural exchanges serve as a stronger social foundation for economic cooperation between the two countries. By the process of mutual language and cultural education, people-to-people friendship is strengthened, which can promote cooperation consolidation in the Sino-Russian and Central Asian regions and act as a powerful guarantee for the smooth development of the "Belt and Road" initiative.

2.2. Current Issues in the Development of Russian Language Education

2.2.1. Insufficient Teaching Staff

One of the greatest issues of teaching the Russian language in China is that there are too few qualified teachers. Although some universities have courses or programs teaching the Russian language, the quantity of qualified Russian language teachers is much smaller than the growing needs. Teacher shortages are common in the majority of schools, especially the grassroots schools and rural schools, and there are few qualified teaching staff of the Russian language. These teachers have limited experience and language capacity, and this restricts them from adequately developing students' language skills, resulting in irregular teaching quality.

Besides, some efforts are needed to enhance the cross-cultural teaching ability of Russian language teachers. Teaching Russian is not only a language transmission process but also a process of cultivating cross-cultural communication. Due to the lack of special training and teaching practice, many teachers are not able to fully grasp the cross-cultural teaching methods, which influences students' overall command of Russian and Russian culture. Therefore, the further professional growth of Russian teachers, the formation of their language proficiency, and the development of their cross-cultural teaching proficiency have become urgent issues to be resolved in Russian language teaching.

2.2.2. Outdated Textbooks and Teaching Resources

Despite the wide application of new textbooks to the majority of universities, modern textbooks and training materials lag. The majority of textbooks are outdated, unable to reflect real communication conditions, and missing Russian society shifts and trends in the application of contemporary language. Textbooks today depend too heavily on traditional language learning methods, with a great deal of focus placed on learning words and grammar but no thorough discussion of functional speaking, listening, and situational contexts. This has created a large gap in the application of language among learners, particularly speaking and listening.

With the sudden development of information technology, teaching materials using the internet and multimedia have become increasingly abundant, but when teaching Russian, the application of new teaching methods is only beginning. Most schools do not have good online learning platforms, interactive learning software, and all-around resources like Russian movies, television shows, and radio for teaching. Therefore, how to revise and enrich Russian language textbooks and at the same time promote the use of modern information technology in learning has also become a question of priority for improving the quality of education in Russian languages.

2.2.3. Lack of Student Interest

Although Russian is an important foreign language with strong positioning in the "Belt and Road" initiative, there is insufficient enthusiasm among most students to study Russian, especially when studying the language in its initial stages. Other students find Russian boring, with a complicated grammatical system and intricate rules of pronunciation, thus being less willing and consistent to study it. English and other languages are, however, more attractive since they are applied across the globe, and Russian is sometimes not well-noticed.

In addition, although the "Belt and Road" policy has increased the demand for Russian-speaking talent, social demand for learning Russian is still not strong on the whole. The majority of students, when choosing a foreign language major, opt for English or Spanish, and Russian is not strong enough to stimulate interest, so there are few students in Russian language majors.

3. Strategies and Suggestions for Strengthening the Development and Exchange of Russian under the "Belt and Road" Initiative

3.1. Strengthening Teacher Training and Recruitment

The government can influence prospective students to learn in Russia or other Russian-speaking countries under scholarship or grant programs. These students can subsequently be employed in teaching the Russian language after they return to China. The universities can also offer teacher exchange programs with Chinese universities and Russian and other Russian-speaking countries' teaching institutions so that Chinese Russian teachers can improve their language skills, cultural sensitivity, and teaching methods. Such international collaboration not only enhances the linguistic ability of educators but also allows them to specialize in intercultural communication skills while carrying out their teaching process. Apart from that, training for existing teachers must be continued by organizing workshops or training sessions occasionally in a bid to improve their teaching methodology along with learning new teaching processes. This will serve to raise the overall level of teaching of the Russian language, improve the quality of instruction, and alleviate the shortage of teachers.

3.2. Updating Textbook Content and Enriching Teaching Resources

To strengthen the effectiveness of instruction, it is required to accelerate textbook revision so that they would be able to keep pace with the latest advancements in society and language. It is necessary that Russian language textbooks be developed to be more inclined to practicality and the internationalization process by colleges and educational institutions in collaboration with book publishers and the Russian education authorities. These textbooks must be focused on the use of language and include more subjects regarding modern society and culture, for example, daily communication, business English, and political economy. In this way, students can improve their language capacity in real life. Apart from the rewriting of textbooks, modern information technology must be leveraged to develop interactive learning websites, making use of distance learning courses, virtual laboratories, and other means of technology support to enrich teaching materials. Technology support can also open up the practical potential of the language, particularly in listening and speaking, to allow students to better grasp the demands of modern Russian communication. Besides strengthening students' overall ability, the instructors can be encouraged to use Russian films, radio programs, and other multimedia resources to promote students' language comprehension and cultural sensitivity.

3.3. Enhancing the Social Awareness and Appeal of Russian Language Learning

To resolve students' lack of interest in Russian studies, an attempt should be made to lift the social standing of Russian and motivate more students to learn Russian. Universities could make Russian study more culturally rewarding by organizing such events as Russian culture festivals and Russian speech competitions, stimulating interest in students. These activities not only increase students' interest in learning the Russian language but also enable them to have a better understanding of Russian society, history, and cultural background, which makes them study Russian. Additional Sino-Russian cultural exchange programs can also be established to allow students to carry out practical language practice and exchange. For example, exchange student programs, short-term internships, or language practice exercises can be created to enhance the language proficiency of students. For those students who wish to work in foreign economic or political fields, proficiency in Russian is a significant competitive advantage. To promote more students to study Russian, the endeavors of

enterprises and the government can be realized through providing more job opportunities and related reward policies.

4. Conclusion

The "Belt and Road" has heightened the position of the Russian language in education, culture, and economy. The Russian language has not only been used as a means for economic collaboration and cultural exchange among China, Russia, and Central Asia but has also deepened diplomatic relations. Russian language teaching is also afflicted with problems of a lack of teachers, old teaching contents, and a lack of interest from the students. Therefore, strengthening the training and recruitment of teachers, updating textbooks, and introducing modern information technology must be stressed to improve the quality of teaching. In addition, all possible channels must be used to promote the study of the Russian language and attract more students to learn Russian. All these will make learning the Russian language easier and promote cooperation and exchanges between China, Russia, and other Russian-speaking countries.

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