

The Development and Enlightenment of Foreign Language Education Policy of Early 16 Years After the Founding of the People's Republic of China

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Abstract. Since the founding of China in 1949, policies in foreign languages have undergone earth-shaking changes, as well as continuous innovation and development. Until the Cultural Revolution happened in 1966, foreign language education suffered a lot of trauma, and foreign language education policy also stopped. Based on the previous studies of foreign language education policies in this period, this paper expounds on the development and changes in foreign language education policies in the past 16 years through the historical context. It found that people also play an enlightening role in the formulation of foreign language education policies in terms of politics, compulsory education and the international environment. The change and improvement of foreign language education policy during this period can be divided into two stages: the period of 1949-1957 when Russian was the main language, supplemented by English, and the period of 1958-1965 when English was the main language, and the period of Russian development. People can have a clearer understanding of the changes in education in foreign language policies.

Keywords: Russian, English; foreign language education policy; change and development; enlightenment.

1. Introduction

Language education has always been a topic of high concern, and foreign language education policy is also the object of widespread concern and research by countries and scholars. The planning of foreign language education and the formulation of language policy has been important objects of concern since the early days of the establishment of the People's Republic of China. As the country launched language literacy in October 1949, it followed Wu Yuzhang's suggestion to establish the Chinese Character Reform Association to manage it. After the reorganization in 1954, it was officially subordinate to the State Council, and its internal personnel was continuously incorporated into the Ministry of Education and its relevant departments and bureaus in charge of China's foreign language education policy. This kind of education has always been a topic of high concern, and foreign language policy is also the formulation and planning that has been widely concerned and studied by the country and scholars [1]. China's foreign language education policy in the early days has also been affected by politics, economy, diplomacy and other aspects and changed accordingly. This stage is divided into two periods: 1949-1957, when Russian was the main language, supplemented by English, and 1958-1965, when English was the main language, with the development of Russian. Since there is not much research on foreign language education policy in China in the early days, people also know little about the changes in foreign language education policy during this period. Therefore, this article will describe the development and changes in foreign language education policy in this period through the historical context, so that the advancement of this policy can be fully understood by readers. In terms of politics, compulsory education and international surroundings, the role of this understanding will be played in the formulation of foreign language education policy.

2. Development Stage of Foreign Language Education Policy

2.1. The Period in Which Russian Is Dominant and English Is Supplementary

At the beginning of China's founding in 1949, because China is a socialist country, it has always been the target of suppression by western capitalist countries. Western countries have issued a series of bilateral and multilateral treaties to China's neighboring countries to curb the development of New China's diplomacy, economy and other aspects [2]. China's diplomacy was once blocked. Under the influence of this background, China can only choose to stand by the Soviet Union and implement a "one-sided" policy towards the Soviet Union. At this time, China's economy was very backward in the early days of its founding. The "First Five-Year Plan" issued by the state clearly pointed out that China should concentrate on developing heavy industry and the national economy. At this time, the Soviet Union, as an industrial power in the socialist camp, also provided a lot of help to the development of China's economy, industry and other aspects. So Russian had also become an important foreign language in this period. At this time, China's foreign language education policy had also changed to vigorously develop and train Russian talents and encourage all regions to learn Russian. The Ministry of Education issued the Draft Interim Education Plan for Middle Schools in August 1950 [3]. It is proposed that a foreign language should be set up in junior and senior high schools. If conditions permit, Russian should be set up, but English should continue to be taught in classes that have already been taught English. The document clearly emphasizes the importance of Russian to our country and encourages our schools to teach Russian in succession [1]. At this time, training Russian talents could help China build a bridge to communicate with the Soviet Union more conveniently, so as to learn the Soviet Union's industry, science and technology and other aspects of technology. In this way, China's hard power and soft power had been improved at the same time. In 1953, the Ministry of Education issued the Report of the Ministry of Higher Education on the Current Situation and Problems of Teaching Reform in Colleges and Universities, which pointed out that there was no translation of Soviet textbooks, and many teachers needed to learn while teaching. This reflected the importance of training Russian talents [3]. During this period, the development of Russian and the training of Russian talents became the primary goal of foreign language education policy. China also provided Soviet textbooks for teachers to teach and sent foreign students to the Soviet Union for further study. In order to guide citizens to learn Russian, China had also issued the "Decision of the Government Council on the National Russian Academy" and other policies [3]. In some places, students not only had their own Chinese names, but also got their Russian names given by teachers [1]. At this time, the whole country had set off an upsurge in learning Russian [4]. On the other hand, since English is the internationally recognized language at this time, although it could be taught, the priority was always below Russian and no scholars had conducted in-depth research on it. This had also laid a curse on the extreme lack of English talents in China after the reform and opening up in the future. It was not until 1956 that the Ministry of Education issued the "Notice of the Ministry of Education on Foreign Languages in Middle Schools" that it was proposed to improve Russian teaching, but also paid attention to improving English teaching [3]. It also stipulated that English subjects should be set up in senior one in areas with good English teachers, and English subjects in senior two and senior three should not be abandoned to continue teaching. In addition, the Ministry of Education planned to resume the foreign language discipline in junior high schools in 1957, stipulating that each school must open a foreign language discipline in the teaching of Russian and English branches. At this point, English began to recover slowly under the background of Russian for all and gradually began to compete with Russian for the position of the first foreign language.

2.2. English-based, Combined with Russian Development Period

With the disagreement between the leaders of China and the Soviet Union, the Sino-Soviet relationship gradually deteriorated and finally broke down from 1958 to the 1960s, and the popularity of the Russian language among the whole people also gradually declined. During this period, China's diplomacy also made breakthroughs, and the Chinese delegation also attended the Bandung

Conference. While English was recognized as the universal language in the country, the country also realized the importance of English at this time. Due to the failure of English talents due to the vigorous development of Russian, the country also began to adjust the foreign language education policy from blindly developing Russian to mainly developing English and Russian and other languages. At the same time, the foreign language discipline was also expanding the scope of objects. In 1958, the Ministry of Education issued the Supplementary Notice of the Ministry of Education on the Teaching Plan of Secondary Schools from 1958 to 1959, which indicated that schools in a few regions opened foreign language courses from the first year of junior high school last fall to the second year of junior high school this fall [3]. This reflects that the age conditions for learning foreign languages were shrinking. From college to high school to junior high school, more and more students began to learn foreign languages. This not only allowed students to contact foreign languages in advance, helped them form good language awareness, but also could explore more foreign language talents. In terms of language, the Ministry of Education issued the "On Foreign Language Curriculum in Colleges and Universities" in 1961, indicating that English and Russian were the first foreign languages in colleges and universities. This had made English, which had been at the bottom of Russian for a long time, equal to Russian. Since then, English had gradually replaced Russian as the first foreign language of Chinese college students [5]. In 1964, the Ministry of Education issued the Outline of the 7-Year Plan for Foreign Language Education, which proposed that English should be the first foreign language in the five languages of English, Russian, French, German and Japanese in the public foreign language classes in senior high school [3]. Since then, English had successfully replaced Russian as the first foreign language in China at the beginning.

3. Enlightenment

3.1. Political Aspects

In the early days, China was suppressed by the western countries led by the United States, and China's economy and industry were very backward due to the long war of resistance. At this time, China was eager to develop heavy industry. The introduction of the First Five-Year Plan and the one-sided approach to the Soviet Union reflected the importance that China attached to the development of the heavy industry. In order to better communicate with the Soviet Union, China's foreign language education policy at this time turned to vigorously developing Russian and training Russian talents. The foreign language education policy in this period was one-sided, and did not take into account the development of all languages. The priority of Russian was always higher than other languages. This also led to the rupture of Sino-Soviet relations in the later period, and a large number of Russian talents overflowed after the reform and opening up, and there were few English talents and even gaps. At the time of globalization, the world's economic and political patterns had undergone new changes. China had also entered a new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics [6]. As the progress of reform and opening up had deepened, China's economy had developed rapidly, and China's national strength had gradually become stronger. Nowadays, China's foreign language education policy should be in line with the background of economic and political globalization, and the policy formulation should be diversified and could accommodate the simultaneous development of multiple languages. At the same time, people also needed a more scientific and comprehensive foreign language education policy that was more appropriate to contemporary society. In this way, people could cultivate high-level and compound foreign language talents in line with the new era [7]. Since the 20th century, under the background of economic and political globalization, the number of economic trade and political and diplomatic exchanges between countries had greatly increased. With the increasing number of countries coming and going, a single language gradually could not meet China's political and diplomatic needs, so the country needed to formulate more scientific and comprehensive diversified foreign language education policies to cultivate high-level foreign language talents, to avoid the recurrence of the situation that the development of Russian language in the early days of China led to the breakdown of China's English talents in the reform and opening up period, so as to

improve China's soft power. In addition, in the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China, many political movements were carried out, such as "land reform", "three anti-and five anti-" and so on. This made the foreign language education policy in this period attached to the conditions of increasing political and practical content, emphasizing political and ideological nature, and gradually becoming highly politicized, which was extremely unfavorable to the development of foreign language education policy [6]. Because the role and purpose of foreign language education policy itself is to help the country train foreign language talents to develop the country's society and economy, over-politicized foreign language education policy will lead to the failure to train truly pure foreign language talents and scholars [2]. Because what people learn will be distorted by politics, and many useful parts will be covered up. This will not only lead to the reduction of talents, but also greatly reduce the economic and social development of our country. Nowadays, China's foreign language education policy should be developed in an all-round way, abandon politicization, and comply with the needs of foreign language education itself to formulate policies to cultivate talents. Only in this way can people ensure that the number of foreign language talents in China is stable and the national strength is gradually strong.

3.2. Compulsory Education

Compulsory education is the most important part of the whole education sector. It can enable children of all levels with different status to enjoy a fair education, and also lay a foundation for the development of their personal learning ability. The compulsory education in most areas of China is a nine-year system, with six years of primary school and three years of junior high school. And foreign language as one of the main subjects is naturally very important. At the beginning of China's founding, the Ministry of Education proposed that the foreign language discipline should be set up in junior and senior high schools. At that time, when the war ended, the general education level of the people was not high, and the opening of foreign language discipline was more inclined to universities and senior high schools, which were not fully included in compulsory education. It was not until the rupture of Sino-Soviet relations that China's diplomacy, society and other aspects developed to a certain extent, and English as an international common language was valued by the country, and the English discipline was generally established in junior high schools. As for primary school, it was not until 2001 that the English discipline was opened in cities and towns across the country. It was not until the fall of 2002 that the third grade began to learn English [8]. However, due to the political and diplomatic environment in the early days of the founding, China's foreign language education policy vigorously developed Russian, English and other languages. This had led to the loss of many talents in English and other languages in our country, coupled with the breakdown of Sino-Soviet relations, and the useless and overflow of Russian talents had made our country repair the shortage of English teachers and textbooks for a long time. Therefore, the slow progress of opening English as a subject in China's compulsory education had also affected the development of China's diplomacy to a certain extent. At present, in the context of globalization, the exchanges between countries are becoming increasingly close, and foreign languages are naturally indispensable. Among these foreign languages, English is particularly important as the internationally recognized language. Now, in the new era of socialism with new Chinese characteristics, China also attaches great importance to the development of English in compulsory education. The English Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education was issued in 2022 after the "Experimental Program for Compulsory Education Curriculum" was issued in 2001 and the "Standards for Compulsory Education Courses" were issued in 2011. The course objectives, contents, teaching methods, etc. need to be determined around the core quality [9]. At the same time, the general objectives of the English curriculum for compulsory education in China for students are also divided into the following four points: (1) Develop students' language ability and conduct meaningful communication. (2) Raise cultural awareness of students, created an international viewpoint, and strengthen cultural self-confidence. (3) Improve the quality of thinking and improve thinking in language learning. (4) Improve learning ability and set correct English learning goals [9]. To sum up, China's foreign language education policy should also get rid of political constraints,

vigorously develop English and make the audience of English more extensive. At the same time, China should not neglect the development of other foreign languages, such as Russian, Japanese and so on, so as to avoid the situation that the development of a single language in the early days of the founding led to the fault of other language talents in the later period.

3.3. International Environment

In the early development of China, the camp that China chose to be a socialist country was naturally suppressed by the western capitalist countries led by the United States. Therefore, China could only develop its economy with the help of the socialist country, the Soviet Union. Therefore, the foreign language education policy at this time was naturally to develop Russian to better communicate with the Soviet Union. Now, in the era of globalization, with the trade exchanges between various countries, China has also proposed the "Belt and Road" strategic policy to guide the development of foreign language education policies. At this time, China has become increasingly powerful through reform and opening up, and has become one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. The purpose of the Belt and Road Initiative is to reach out to more surrounding countries, understand their social culture, and tap the market for economic docking, so as to enhance economic and cultural exchanges between countries along the route [10]. At this time, in order to meet the needs of the country, China's foreign language education policy should change from focusing on training Russian talents in the early stage of founding to training compound language talents and promoting the development and learning of multiple languages. Because the "Belt and Road" involves a large number of neighboring countries along the line, it is essential to master the local language in order to understand their social culture. At this time, it is very important for multilingual people to master multiple languages. They cannot only help promote the development of the "Belt and Road", but also enhance China's language strength.

4. Conclusion

At the established beginning of China, the development of China's foreign language education policy was affected by many political and diplomatic factors. In the first period, due to the "one-sided" reason, China began to vigorously develop Russian, which made the country cultivate many Russian talents. However, China had neglected the development of English, thus laying the groundwork for the overflow of Russian talents and the scarcity of English talents in the future. With the rupture of Sino-Soviet relations, China's foreign language education policy entered the second period. At this time, China began to pay attention to the development of English again. With the continuous change of policies, English had also replaced Russian as the first foreign language. In the context of globalization, China's foreign language education policy should develop multiple languages, cultivate compound language talents and get rid of high politicization, develop a more complete and forward-looking foreign language education policy. Only in this way can people avoid the overflow of individual language talents from other faults in the early days of the founding, which will affect economic and social development.

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