

Language strategies along the One Belt One Road Initiative

*Language and International Trade with Emphasis on the
Chinese, English and Russian languages*

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Linguistics, the University of Auckland, 2022.

Abstract

At present, in the context of a volatile global economy, global trade flows faster and faster. It has become apparent that there is a need for a language that serves a transnational function. Such a language would bridge linguistic differences across international borders. While factors such as the price of goods and trade policies are important for international trade, the significance of the link between use of language and trade cannot be ignored. The kind of language policies in place in a specific country can have a consequential impact on that country's international competitiveness, and could potentially have an impact on its economic development.

China's One Belt One Road Initiative (OBORI) has attracted worldwide attention. The initiative expands trade relations along the historic Silk Road to Central Asia, Europe and Africa.

The OBORI is one of the world's largest economic development initiatives. The countries along the OBORI would benefit by establishing sound language strategies to facilitate and promote smoother international trade.

This massive interregional trading cooperation scheme began in 2015, and its impact is still being analyzed as it continues to develop. Consideration of factors relating to language is essential for understanding the full impact of this initiative. However, the work published thus far in this field must be supplemented by further analysis to better understand the effects as they are still developing. The present study has three main aims. The first is to analyze the perceived impact of the OBORI on key countries within the initiative - China, Russia and three Central Asian countries - from a linguistic point of view. The second aim is to explore the current status of language policy and language strategy of China, Russia and 3 Central Asian countries in the multilingual context of the OBORI. The final aim is to discuss the connection between language and international trade, largely through language strategies employed along the OBORI.

The goal is to identify current language strategies and policies that have the potential for enhancing the effectiveness of the OBORI while also taking into account how the key countries in Central Asia are affected by the policies enacted by the Chinese and Russian governments.

Acknowledgements

Time is like an old train, moving slowly and leisurely. Before I entered my PhD, I thought that I could enjoy the scenery along the way, but time began to move too quickly, and when I looked back, there was no trace of the years that had passed. Year after year, especially after multiple lockdowns, it feels like time has been standing still. In a blink of an eye, my time as a student will be coming to an end.

I have been thinking so hard about my experience over the last few years. I've been doing this for a long time, but I have been reluctant to start writing the most personal part of this thesis: acknowledgements. It's something I want to do from the heart. I feel that after writing this, my entire student life is truly ending. To be honest, in my heart, I feel anxious.

“Great teachers nurture the seeds of creativity in each of their students; and so, they receive the greatest appreciation once those seeds have grown”. I am most grateful to my supervisor: the Dean of Arts Professor Robert Greenberg. From my thesis topic selection, all the way to the final thesis submission, my supervisor Prof. Greenberg has been eager to help me while providing valuable guidance. I am thankful for my supervisor's willingness to sit down with me and discuss the details of my thesis. My supervisor's dedication to the pursuit of academia along with his strong responsibility have greatly benefitted me on my journey through life. Supervisor, thank you for your constant affirming words and encouragement. It has helped me to regain my confidence in a time when I was struggling to find a path forward. The fruits of your labor can be seen with every word I write in my thesis. Finally, I admire your responsible attitude in your work.

For so many years, my writing has not always been smooth. Lockdown has taken an enormous toll on my physical and psychological wellbeing, and I was deeply saddened by the endless cycle of writing over and over again. In those low moments, it was my supervisor Prof. Greenberg who steered me to find solutions and provided encouragement. At the beginning of Covid-19, I was stuck in China. It was my supervisor's continuous follow-up that gave me the support I needed. My supervisors' kindness is hard to repay, but I will always carry it with me in my heart.

I feel that every piece of advice and encouragement my supervisor gave me was invaluable, and will help me well into the future. Supervisor, you shine over me with the brightness of 10

suns, although I am now just a little star, I believe me as a little star will shine brighter under your guidance gradually. I also aspire to one day brighten someone else's life in the way that you did for me.

I would also like to thank Dr. Louisa Buckingham for providing guidance, imparting wisdom, and giving great encouragement to me in my academic career. I would like to express my sincere gratitude and wish Dr. Buckingham continued success in her work, and happiness in her life.

I would like to thank my home for the past four years, the University of Auckland, and all the department staff for continuously helping me. I would especially like to thank the School of Graduate Studies, scholarship office and international office staff for always making me feel protected and cared for. I'm very grateful for the awards, support and recognition I received from my university during my time here. I can only put into words a small fraction of the thoughts I wish to express. I will always remember my times here fondly, and I will always strive to be the best version of myself as a result.

I also would like to thank my parents, who are the most gentle, generous, kind, and sincere people I have ever met. I am truly fortunate to have been brought into this world by them. Coming from humble beginnings, they have managed to give me everything I could have possibly asked for. In all my life, I am very grateful to have only known warmth and affection from my parents. My parents have crafted what were once disjoint, individual pieces of a puzzle into a work of art; with perseverance and dedication my parents were able to shape my life into what it is today and I am forever grateful. My parents' love for me is a gift that shall accompany me through all the trials and tribulations that life has to offer.

When I was little and naive, it was my parents who helped me find a path in life. Whenever I ended up with a difficult choice or felt powerless in the face of uncertainty, it was my parents who helped me move forward. As I grew and left home, they still supported me through the occasional phone calls filled with love and affection. When I look back on the major decisions and moments of my life, I see my parents helping me at every step.

However, even more valuable than the guidance I received was the respect I was given. My parents never talked down to me, and always gave me a chance to speak and feel heard. I was able to grow up feeling truly valued, which helped me become the person I am today.

The longest period of time I have spent with my parents as an adult was during lockdown. During that time they made our home the best environment for me that they could: they were mindful to keep the television volume down, they cooked delicious meals every day at noon, and many more small things. But more importantly, we were able to spend a lot more time together. Every cloud has a silver lining, and while lockdown has certainly not been easy, I am very grateful for the time it has given me to be with my family. Their kindness and actions serve as a model I will aspire to emulate throughout my life. I hope they know that just as they support me, I will always be there to support them should they need it.

I am a first generation PhD graduate in my entire family, but I could not have possibly done this alone. I am the culmination of the hard work and sacrifices that my family has made over many generations, along with the dedication and patience that my teachers have given to me. While I have tried many times in this acknowledgements to express my gratitude, I don't think I will ever have enough words to express how I feel. Preparing for this was very emotional for me, but I sincerely hope that everyone in my life who has stayed with me on this journey understands how thankful I am to have you, and how much more beautiful my life is with you there.

Finally, if you will allow me, I would like to give a small thank you to myself. I will always be grateful for the reckless and carefree spirit I once was, just as I am grateful for the self-disciplined and cautious person I have become. To each and every one of our future selves, I know the road ahead is long and bright. As we navigate the peaks and valleys, the trees and rivers I hope that light shines upon our paths while pride burns inside our heart.

More than that, I wish only for peace and joy in my life.

Yue in Auckland, New Zealand

20.10.2022

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. The One Belt One Road Initiative

“In 2013, the President of the People’s Republic of China, Xi Jin Ping launched the One Belt One Road Initiative (OBORI) with the stated aim to connect major Eurasian economies through infrastructure, trade and investment” (Hofman, 2015). The original purpose of the OBORI was to connect Asia, Europe, Africa and adjacent areas in the Indian Ocean and Mediterranean basin in order to promote the orderly and free flow of goods among member nations, the efficient allocation of resources for the economic development of developing nations, and market integration of developing nations into the wider international market. The project has resulted in a massive infrastructure construction program complemented by transnational commitments covering trade and investment.

In addition, as Hofman (2015) pointed out: “The vision document for the OBORI goes well beyond infrastructure, envisioning closer coordination of economic development policies, harmonization of technical standards for infrastructure, removal of investment and trade barriers, establishment of free trade areas, financial cooperation and “people to people bonds” involving cultural and academic exchanges, personnel exchanges and cooperation, media cooperation, youth and women exchanges, and volunteer services”. This assessment reveals that the OBORI has an implication for the use of soft power. The notion of soft power is defined as the “...ability to achieve goals through attraction rather than coercion...” within the global arena (Keohane & Nye, 1998; 86).

This study is primarily about language usage and choices as one aspect of soft power that the proponents of the OBORI use and its effects on the countries participating in the OBORI. The OBORI provides participating countries the opportunity to reap benefits for its citizens through trade, and these benefits have had an effect on which languages the citizens of participating OBORI countries may wish to learn. In addition, through soft power, citizens the countries along the OBORI begin to adapt to the requirements of the OBORI and results in new language choices inspired by the OBORI. The OBORI in this way has an impact on languages spoken today in the countries along the OBORI.

This thesis is the first study that considers the OBORI, language choices, language policies, planning and strategies. It involves sociolinguistics and applied linguistics, language policies and language economics.

My study reveals contexts related to language and how different attitudes to language education within and among various countries in the OBORI, including China, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, are interrelated. Essential to this thesis is an explanation of choices for students of languages and cultures to be studied especially in relation to language use and future career prospects. My analysis also considers historical and current educational programs within universities and how those programs have been affected by changes in economic situations, in particular in the context of key trading partners within the OBORI.

Through extensive research on language choice and multilingualism, this thesis fills a gap in existing data on the status of Russian, Chinese and English in the context of international commerce, particularly among countries of differing cultures, histories, and traditions in the context of the OBORI.

1.1.1. Historical overview: From the Silk Road to the One Belt One Road Initiative

In the 2nd century BC, Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty sent Qian Zhang, Chinese explorer to visit the western region, which was the general term used for referring to the area west of Yumen Pass (Latsaphao, 2017). Qian Zhang took the capital Chang'an (now called Xi'an, located in Western China) as his starting point, then crossing the Hexi Corridor to Xinjiang. Thereafter, Qian went through Yumenguan and Yangguan, passed through Central Asia and Western Asia (in present-day terms) along the Oasis and Pamir Plateau, and finally arrived in Europe and then Africa (State Administration of Cultural Heritage, 2008). Although the original role of this road was to transport silk produced in ancient China, over time this road became a trade and cultural channel for China to communicate with other countries and regions of the world. For example, China used this road to transport its 'Four Great Inventions' - the compass, gunpowder, paper-making and printing – as well as many advanced scientific technologies (Hu, & Ma & Yan, 2014; Yang & Wang, 2014).

In 1877, the German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen first proposed the concept of the 'Silk Road' to define this trade corridor. This concept was further developed by German

historian Albert Herrmann, whose explanation of the concept of the Silk Road was generally accepted (Waugh, 2007). It was defined as the trade connection between the East and the West. Even now, the Silk Road still has significance for cooperation between the East and the West (Bai & Wang, 2014). The Silk Road was the inspiration for the One Belt One Road Initiative (OBORI). The OBORI is centered around building trade routes and relationships with its neighbours. Road and rail routes are also an alternative to shipping.

In September 2013, President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jin Ping first publicly proposed the OBORI when he gave a speech in Kazakhstan. Soon after, the Chinese government officially incorporated the OBORI into its national strategy. At the third Plenary Session of the 18th Communist Party Congress Central Committee held in November of 2013, the government adopted the "*Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Some Major Issues Concerning Comprehensively Deepening [economic] Reforms.*"¹ The decision was adopted with the aim of promoting the development of the OBORI, and in the hopes of creating a shift in world power (*People's Daily*, 2013).

In March 2015, the Chinese government authorized relevant departments to release the 'Vision and Actions on Jointly Building the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road.'² The document proposed the framework and prospects for actions of the OBORI (National Development and Reform Commission, 2015).

1.1.2. The scope of the OBORI and China's growing economic power

The notion of 'one Belt' refers to the 'Silk Road Economic Belt' from China through Central Asia to Europe, while the idea of 'one Road' refers to the connection being made between China and both Europe and Africa via the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road which traverses the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean (Figure 1 the "one Belt" and "one Road" parts) (Rolland, 2018). The initiative includes the development of six economic "corridors": (1) the China-Mongolia-Russia-corridor; (2) a new Eurasian "land bridge, which connects to areas such as Xinjiang, Kazakhstan, Central Asia, Western Asia, and Central and Eastern

¹ Translations from Chinese and Russian to English in this thesis are my own.

² National Development and Reform Commission. (2015). Vision and Actions on Jointly Building the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road. Retrieved from http://en.ndrc.gov.cn/newsrelease/201503/t20150330_669367.html [Accessed on 03.09.2019]

Europe; (3) a corridor from China to Central Asia and West Asia; (4) a China-Indochina peninsula corridor; (5) a China-Pakistan Economic Corridor; and (6) a China-India-Bangladesh-Myanmar Economic Corridor. The OBORI includes at least 65 countries (Jagadeesh, 2017). The territory of the OBORI contains 75% of the world's population, 60% of the total global wealth, and 75% of the energy from fossil fuels; it has two of the world's three major economic centers - the European Union and East Asia (Du & Ma, 2015).

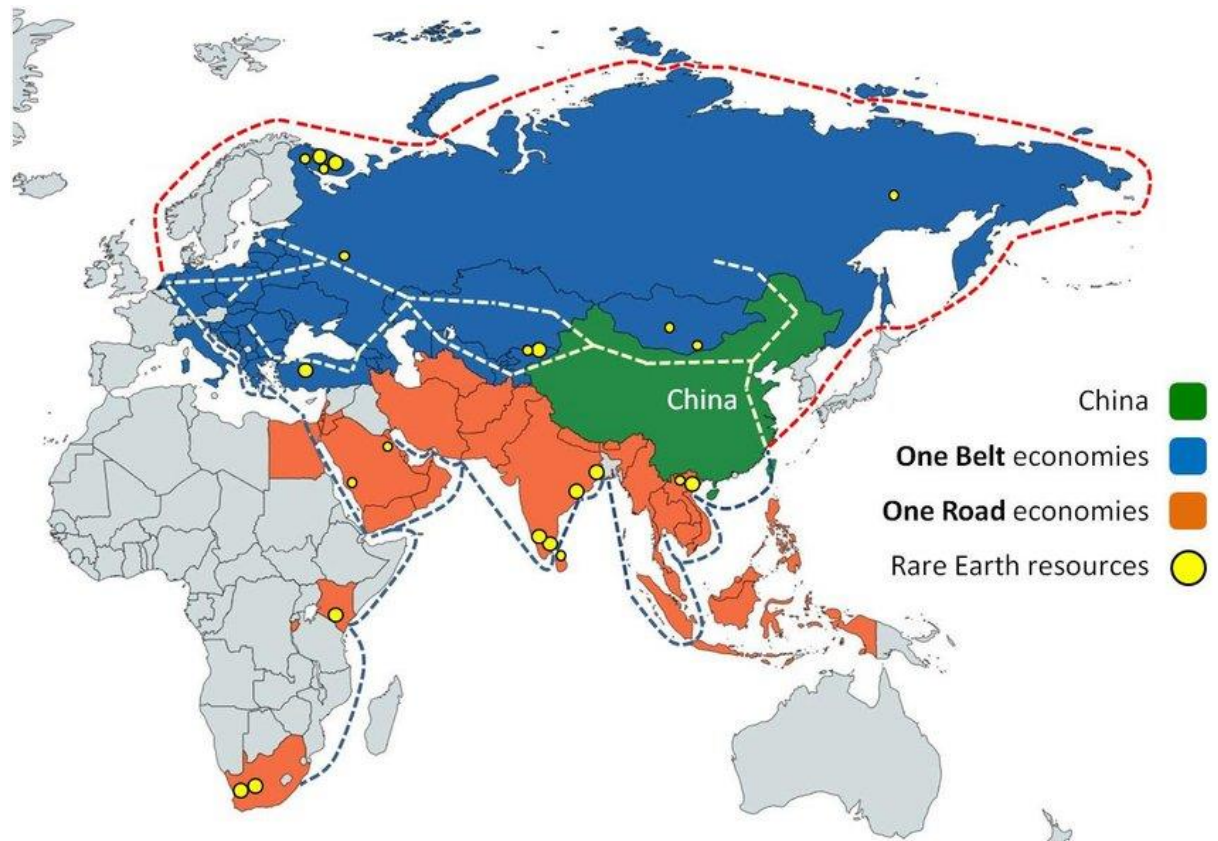


Figure 1. The One Belt One Road Initiative Roadmap (Barakos, 2018).

China's participation in the construction of railways, ports, roads, dams and industrial corridors in the countries of the OBORI has helped expand China's economic influence in Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and Africa (Belt and Road Portal, 2015). According to Kravchenko (2017), through the transport links with which the Chinese authorities have made their investments in the countries along the OBORI, it will be much easier for the Chinese authorities to supply Chinese goods to the markets along the OBORI, and transport natural resources from the countries of the OBORI to China.

One of China's key allies in implementing the OBORI is Russia. Since 2009, China has been Russia's top trading partner, with a two-way trade volume of \$95 billion (USD) in 2014 (Trenin, 2015; United Nations General Assembly, 2014). Given the influence of the sanctions imposed by Western countries (Official website of the European Union, 2014), the Russian authorities have been shifting their interests from the European Union (EU) in the West to China in the East (Kravchenko, 2017). As a key ally of the OBORI, more than half of the world's trade moves through Russia, which is considered a gateway country between the EU and Asia. Kravchenko (2017) provided the insight that, although in the beginning Russia and China were equal partners in the OBORI, Russia no longer enjoys that status. It is now a participant that needs China's support.

China's economy has benefited from the implementation of the OBORI. The OBORI has greatly helped with the scale of trade between China and the countries along the OBORI, multi-directional investment among countries has continued to thrive, and value and volume of trade have grown rapidly. The accumulated trade value from 2014 to 2019 exceeded 44 trillion yuan, equivalent to approximately \$6.37 trillion (USD) using the average exchange rate for 2019, with an average annual growth rate of 6.1% (Exchangerates.org.uk, 2019; Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, 2020). As of September 2019, Chinese companies have invested more than \$100 billion (USD) in the countries along the OBORI, and investment in China by the countries along the OBORI has reached \$48 billion (USD) (The State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2019). According to data from the Ministry of Commerce of China, in recent years China has shown an accelerated growth in contracting projects and labor dispatches to the countries along the OBORI. From January to October 2019, Chinese enterprises and the countries along the OBORI signed new foreign contracted projects worth \$112.17 billion (USD), accounting for 63.5% of China's newly signed foreign contracted projects in the same period (Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, 2019). The OBORI has also increased global interest in tourism. The number of tourists between China and the participating countries along the OBORI has exceeded 60 million people between 2013 and 2019 (The state council of the People's Republic of China, 2019).

The impact of the OBORI on the countries along the OBORI has been significant in recent years. For example, with the authorization of leadership from China and Russia, the Russian government began to supply natural gas to China through the 'Power of Siberia' pipeline from

December 2, 2019, as the result of a 30-year agreement signed by the two countries. In addition, the Chinese and Russian authorities decided to hold a ‘Year of Russian-Chinese Scientific, Technical and Innovation Cooperation’ in 2020 and 2021. The demand for individuals who can speak Chinese and Russian has increased dramatically (The state council of the People's Republic of China, 2021). China and Russia have worked for more than a year to mitigate the adverse impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The two countries have exchanged scientific and technological innovations in over 1,000 instances, resulting in not just first-class results in the field of epidemic prevention and control, but also in the aerospace, nuclear energy and digital economy fields (The state council of the People's Republic of China, 2021).

Soft power is defined as the “...ability to achieve goals through attraction rather than coercion...” within the global arena (Keohane & Nye, 1998; 86). Soft power therefore is found in culture, such as languages, institutions and shared values, and through trade and intercultural contact. In the present study, as the focus is on languages, I looked more at the use of languages as soft power and its relationship to international relations through institutions. More specifically, I considered the role of soft power through the function of trade, languages and the OBORI more generally.

President Xi, in a speech to the National Propaganda and Ideology Work Conference in 2018, was reported to have encouraged the listeners to go out into the world and to present China in a well-rounded, three-dimensional manner, and to tell the story of China well in order to improve the influence and spread of Chinese culture and soft power throughout the world (Xi, 2020).

Cultural centers such as the Confucius Institute, with offices in cities throughout the world, have drawn some suspicion from countries that are in competition with China. The cultural centers are claimed to be instruments of Chinese soft power, exerting influence beyond building Chinese cultural awareness and mutual understanding (Pan, 2013). Yet it may be that the Confucius Institute is simply responding to President Xi’s encouragement. Suspicions about China's motives for using soft power might be a consequence that comes with the use of that power.

However, with the increasing scrutiny the Confucius Institute is being put under, there has been concern among foreign governments that the Chinese government is a source of

material and personnel in order to give a particular spin on China and the Chinese government. It should be noted that China is not the only government to fund such institutes. For example, International House (<https://ihworld.com/>) and the British Council (<https://www.britishcouncil.org/>) are similarly funded and global organisations funded by the United Kingdom (UK) government. Government funded organisations from other countries do not appear to have been subjected to the same level of scrutiny. At the moment, however, across the US, Australia and other countries, there have been closures and removals of Confucius Institutes which are now being seen as sources of propaganda rather than as a source of language and culture training (The Washington Post, 2020).

1.2. The rationale and aims of the study

The OBORI provides a context for studying the connection between economic policy, language policies and language strategies. The large scale of this trade initiative has great potential for the economic growth of its member nations. However, this potential growth may be negatively affected by language barriers, given that there are in total more than 50 official languages in the countries along the OBORI. At the same time, language barriers also may hinder the governments of the countries along the OBORI from understanding market information in a timely manner. They also may prevent timely data updates and increase the difficulty of understanding detailed and updated information. In order to build a more effective trade partnership, the governments in the countries along the OBORI must employ one or more languages for successful broader communication.

The existing literature on the topic of language choices in the countries along the OBORI include such ideas as where language policy is being implemented and why multilingualism is important. However, what is left out is how exactly transnational linguistic communication is being conducted, and which specific languages are being used.

1.2.1. Perspectives of significant strategies from the present study

The present study analyzes the significance of language strategies from the following three perspectives:

(1) At an international level, the use of a common language can reduce communication costs. In the framework among China, Russia and Central Asia, where English, Chinese and

Russian are widely spoken, the choice of a widely spoken local language such as English or Chinese will be cheaper than communicating in English only.

(2) At a national level, in regard to maximizing national trade interests and international exchanges in China, Russia and Central Asia (in this thesis, mainly Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan), how should a country choose the language of foreign trade? What language strategy should be adopted to increase local capability in who understands a common foreign language?

(3) From the perspective of individuals, learning a foreign language is also an investment. In the context of a large-scale initiative like the OBORI, if an individual strives to be more competitive, what foreign language should they choose to learn? The choice of which foreign language to learn is largely determined by the country's language policy, language planning, and language strategy.

The objective of the present study is to analyze the language strategies in the key partner countries along the OBORI, especially Russia, China and three of the five Central Asian countries. This analysis was conducted through questionnaires of foreign language teaching and learning in universities of China and Russia, and analysis of the changes over time. As the questionnaire was anonymous, the universities' names were not collected. It also considered the language strategies which are being implemented to promote the Chinese and Russian languages in Central Asian countries. China and Russia have been chosen for the present study because of their positions of dominance in the OBORI and the frequency of their state languages being used by the countries along the OBORI. The key Central Asian countries were chosen because their locations as a means of commerce transit are valuable to international trade. As a result, they can serve as models for other countries to emulate throughout the OBORI.

The specific aspects that will be analyzed in the present study include the following:

- Language strategies in China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan between 2010 and 2020.

- Which foreign languages (Chinese, English and Russian) of the OBORI have been offered in the universities of China and Russia between 2010 and 2020 attended by the respondents of the questionnaires;
- The number of students in China and Russia who have been taking foreign language courses (Chinese, English and Russian) between 2010 and 2020;

These data are crucial because identifying the existing patterns of language offerings and interests reveals which languages might be prioritized as those used by the governments which are part of the OBORI. The preference of the language for English, Russian or Chinese within the OBORI maybe indicative of the future overall direction of decision-making for all governments along the OBORI, as it may indicate economic dominance of China, Russia or English-speaking countries.

China's economy has benefited the most from its membership compared to the other countries along the OBORI, with Russia becoming a close contender economically due to Russia's increased avenues of trade that have become available.

Since the founding of the OBORI, the economic and language activities, strategies and relations of China, Russia and the participating Central Asian countries have shaped language policy on the world stage.

The hypothesis of the present study is that after the implementation of the OBORI, the Chinese and Russian languages have grown in importance in the wider international business sphere, not just the OBORI, in the international business sphere as an increasing number of people learn these languages to increase their financial reach and influence. While Russian and Chinese are clear contenders for primary usage in activities of the OBORI, the present study also discussed the significance of the English language. English functions as a widely used global lingua franca, and its stronghold in the tertiary education sector and trade cannot be ignored. In addition, the present study also discussed the significance of the language strategies in Central Asia and their importance to the OBORI. Therefore, the three languages the present study focusses on are also likely to be the choices for the final trade languages of the OBORI.

Throughout the present study, I analyzed the language strategies being implemented in China, Russia and Central Asia. The conclusions suggested what future actions may be undertaken to determine the best design of future language programs.

1.2.2. Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the War in Ukraine on global trade

The Covid-19 pandemic affected the world's economy and certain parts of the OBORI negatively. Just as 2015 was an important time for the OBORI, the early 2020s, with Covid-19, describes the importance, urgency and economical efficiency of establishing a common language when facing major international emergencies. The ability to receive and understand important information in a timely manner helps save lives and enables people to get assistance.

The role of language and linguistic competency carries significant implications in economic strategies and relationships. Economic studies have shown that fluency in a dominant language is important to economic success and increases economic efficiency. However, maintaining linguistic diversity also has value since language is also an expression of people's culture. As a means of bridging the gap between the various members of the OBORI, the use of commonly spoken languages, such as English, Chinese and Russian, has allowed culturally dissimilar nations to cooperate and develop common goals. The Central Asian countries are one such example, securing Central Asian interests and holding significant influence in the OBORI. Their interaction with China, facilitated through mutual understanding, is vital for strong ties in Asian markets, where China is a major power. To enable cooperation on common economic goals between China and Central Asia, the introduction in education of significant other languages, such as English, may be of vital importance. As a result of the importance of languages in trade and diplomacy, in the present study, I have also examined three Central Asian countries as a parallel study.

Language may play into more than just business partnerships among different countries. The majority of the Central Asian countries, for example, are firmly alongside the Western democracies and members of the OBORI opposing the war in Ukraine, supporting sanctions and cutting ties to Russia. However, this war has severely impacted global trade, as both Russia and Ukraine have historically been significant exporters of valuable resources and commodities in the world economy, namely fertilizer, food and oil.

With the advent of the war, their trade with the international community has either stalled or been rerouted with uncertain terms. The implementation of sanctions on Russia has

obstructed the circulation and importation of natural resources and products from Russia to other major economies of the world.

Due to the shortage of goods as a result of these sanctions, prices have increased for those products and services that are available from other countries. This increase is being reflected in higher inflation and supply chain delays, due to the scarcity of raw materials and components.

Furthermore, sanctions have suspended most negotiations with Russian officials and could potentially lead to a long-term stalling of trade between Russia and other nations. The war has also caused a considerable strain on regional supply chains and infrastructure that extend beyond the Russian and Ukrainian borders, requiring longer, pricier alternatives for their implementation (*CNN*, 2022). These compounding factors have resulted in a substantial rise in global prices and threaten to destabilize the operation of the OBORI.

1.3. Research questions and methodologies

This project addresses three relevant questions, requiring several different methodologies. Through these questions, I analyze the popularity of Chinese, English and Russian language courses offered by universities in China and Russia and how they have been influenced by the introduction of the OBORI. Chapter 4 pertains to the first main set of questions, while Chapter 5 pertains to the second, and Chapter 6 to the third set of questions. These research questions serve to demonstrate the association between changes in foreign language teaching and learning in the OBORI and the current state of language policy and expectations in the OBORI.

In order to understand the language strategies employed by Russia, China and the three Central Asian countries under consideration here, it is advantageous to provide data that guide the context for language planners. These data include:

- The proportions of students studying major and minor foreign languages such as English, Russian and Chinese, in China and Russia;
- Relevant statistics such as the correlation between the geographical location of speakers and the languages they have expressed interest in learning. Further information on the data collection process and results are detailed in the Methodology section (Chapter 3) below.

As demonstrated in Section 2.3, the questions that arise from the research into language course offerings, students' enrollments in the OBORI as a whole include but are not limited to:

Research question 1. What impact has the OBORI had on the popularity of Chinese and English language courses in the universities of Russia between 2010-2014 and since 2015?

a. What changes can be observed in Chinese and English language courses offerings in the universities of Russia between 2010-2014 and since 2015?

b. What changes can be observed in students' enrollment in Chinese and English language courses in the universities of Russia between 2010-2014 and since 2015?

c. Is there a significant difference between (i) the number of students enrolled in Chinese and English programs and (ii) the number of Chinese and English language courses offered between 2010-2014 and since 2015 in the universities of Russia?

For example, if there is a high level of awareness of the language courses offered but there is a low enrollment rate, then the possible causes of the difference would be an area that could be explored in a future study. These questions aim to research priorities of the government and/or universities' related to foreign language learning and to what degree the level of students' interests in Chinese and English language courses align with government priorities based on an analysis of the results from the questionnaire conducted of university student respondents from Russia.

Since the OBORI was created in 2015, the data collected in the present study were from the five years prior to the launch of the OBORI and the 5 years after the OBORI was launched. Therefore, the starting date of utilized data was 2010, ensuring 10 years' worth of observations.

Research question 2. What impact has the OBORI had on the popularity of the Russian and English language courses in the universities of mainland China between 2010-2014 and since 2015?

a. What changes can be observed in Russian and English language courses offerings in the universities of mainland China between 2010-2014 and since 2015?

b. What changes can be observed in students' enrollment patterns in Russian and English language courses in the universities of mainland China between 2010-2014 and since 2015?

c. Is there a significant difference between (i) the number of students enrolled in foreign language programs and (ii) the number of Russian and English language courses offered between 2010-2014 and since 2015 in the universities of mainland China?

The answers to these questions are crucial because they reveal which languages the Chinese government is emphasizing, providing vital information regarding the importance of various languages, like English and Russian, in educational settings.

The focus of the research question centers on Chinese universities and the experiences of graduates who had been studying at those universities. As the questionnaire was anonymous, the individual universities were not disclosed. In particular, this research question is about language choices among Chinese students and the level of awareness of the teaching and learning in Chinese universities of more commonly used languages (such as English) versus less commonly taught languages (such as Russian) of the OBORI.

Research question 3. How may language policies/strategies and the OBORI in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan affect the future of the OBORI?

Relatively fixed language policies are likely to be influenced by flexible language strategies. In the context of international public emergencies, an analysis of the latest language strategies can provide better strategies for improving the language policy of the OBORI in the future. If only the major languages were supported, people who only speak less commonly used languages cannot access emergency information when needed, and not be able to understand instructions. There are other disadvantages to these people, as they may be excluded from everyday interactions and activities due to not being able to understand the world around them or be understood by others. Less commonly used languages and the culture and history may be lost.

Chapter 2. The theoretical context of languages and the OBORI:

A literature review

In a significant economic initiative such as the OBORI, the importance of language is undeniable. In the context of the OBORI, relevant language policies can contribute to a smoother operation of the OBORI. For instance, language policy along the OBORI could result in lower transaction costs. The main cost savings would be realized through a reduced need for interpreters and translation services, which will also reduce the time taken to have documents and spoken conversations translated. The likelihood of parties misunderstanding each other is also reduced, if all parties have an understanding of each other's language and culture.

2.1. Language and international trade

Economic activity among human beings cannot be achieved without language. There are many forms of languages that humans use, from spoken language, to written language, to language being expressed through gestures. So prevalent is language to people that we even think in a language as we express and visualize the options we are contemplating. For these reasons, language is an absolute necessity in order for human beings to effectively communicate about such things as economic activity. If we fail to effectively communicate, then we fail to progress in nearly any endeavor as a society, and economic systems would cease to be. Marschak (1965) argued that language is a tool with the same economic characteristics as physical capital, these characteristics include value, utility, cost, and benefit. The value of language includes social value and economic value. Language is not just a tool of communication, but also of persuasion, in order to influence the listener or reader. With the development of society and economic globalization, the economic value embodied in language is more prominent. With the development of society and economic globalization, the economic value embodied in language is more prominent. Along with a higher economic value, there is also a growing need for people to learn additional languages to provide a mutual understanding in order for this value to be achieved. Before globalization, people had little need to learn additional languages. With globalization of trade and affordable international travel, there is more exposure to people with other languages and cultures. For leisure travelers, being able to understand the language of your destination without the need for interpreters would enhance

their enjoyment of their trip. For business people, being able to communicate with your colleagues or trading partners helps to build rapport and trust.

Carr (1985) made an analogy between language and currency, proposing that the use of the same language for trade among countries can reduce trade costs if there is a unified currency. Having a common currency will eliminate the fluctuations in value from the time of agreement to the time the transaction occurs due to currency fluctuations, providing more certainty of value. Having a common language will help to minimize confusion and misunderstandings between trading partners. The cost of translation is also in time and friction. Sometimes, time is critical, and delays could mean transactions can't proceed. The need for translation adds cost of time and money, with potentially lost opportunities due to delays. Even with translation, there can be a barrier with cultural misunderstandings. A common language reduces that cost. A language barrier between the two parties where they cannot communicate directly, even with the help of translation, can easily lead to the loss of information and require more time and cost. Mere translation of words from one language to another is not enough. Care needs to be taken that the meaning and intent is retained, otherwise each party could have a different understanding. Some examples include where words have several different meanings, and where terms in one language are not present in another language. Anderson and Wincoop (2004) believed that the trade transaction costs caused by language interaction and communication problems are very close to the real tariff barriers. A language shared by trading partners can promote international trade flow and direct investment, while language barriers can reduce trade flow. Countries having the same official language are likely to develop stronger trade relations (Melitz, 2008). Frankel and Rose (2002) found that, under the assumption that all other conditions were similar, countries sharing a common language could reach a trade volume six times that of countries that did not share one. Sauter (2012) compared the trade situation among several provinces and regions in Canada and pointed out that trade flow increases with the increase in use of a common language.

Helliwell (1997) found that a common language can promote the development of a country's international trade in several ways. First, the use of a common language reduces the transaction costs of trade due to communication barriers; second, in international trade, a common language is more convenient for both trading parties in obtaining necessary information; third, the use of a common language reduces various risks and costs that may be

caused by different legal standards between the parties; and fourth, the use of a common language can make it easier for both parties to have similar values, which helps to increase the trust of both parties in the trade.

In 1994, linguistics theorist Ellis (1994) noted that a considerable physical distance between two regions could be reflected in how different the languages are. Breton (1998) pointed out that language differences or language barriers can be compared to the geographical distance between two trading countries. It is costly at times to overcome this distance and the existence of such costs often hinders international trade. Language barriers are significantly negatively correlated with bilateral trade, with a 10% increase in the language barrier index coinciding with a 7%-10% reduction in trade flow (Lohmann, 2011).

Su and Ge (2013) calculated the difficulty of learning English and Chinese for foreign students relative to their native language, and found that for every 10% increase in difficulty, trade flow decreased by 6.3% and 4.5%, respectively. If people find learning a new language too difficult, they will get frustrated and abandon their efforts. The result is that there are fewer people with the language skills to be able to effectively collaborate with trading partners. Linguistic distance has been calculated based on the difficulties Americans encounter when learning foreign languages, where a language with a higher linguistic distance is harder to learn than a language with a lower language distance (Chiswick & Miller, 2004). Assuming the context is Americans learning foreign languages might include Mandarin Chinese, Russian or other foreign languages with greater linguistic distance. These languages have different writing systems, phonetic structures, grammatical rules, and cultural contexts compared to English, making them potentially more challenging for English speakers to learn. Alternatively, languages with a lower linguistic distance, such as Spanish, may share more similarities with English in terms of vocabulary, alphabet, or grammatical structures. Ipsfording and Otten (2013) calculated that the linguistic difference between English and Russian is low, meaning English speakers will have an easier time learning Russian than some Asian language which has a high language difference. European languages have common origins and share words and sounds. The difference between European and Asian languages is greater as they do not share a common background. European languages use letters, with and without accents. Some European languages are derived from Latin, and others have Germanic origins; Asian languages use characters (logographic) that represent concepts. There is also more emphasis

on the use of tones in Asian languages. The differences between European and Asian languages makes it more difficult for English speaking learners to master Asian languages.

Hejazi and Ma (2011) also came to similar conclusions: English-speaking countries have more advantages in trade; the smaller the linguistic distance among non-English-speaking countries, the smoother the trade. My view of their conclusions is that the less linguistic distance between trading partners, the less friction or costs are incurred due to misunderstanding and translation costs, enabling trade to occur more easily. Some reasons for their conclusions are that due to English being the main language of business and diplomacy, more people have a basic understanding of English. There is less opportunity of unintentionally offending people due to a misunderstanding. English is also closely related to other European languages, due to common historical origins.

Su & Ge (2018) elaborated that the language difference correlated to how convenient it is to travel in a given country. The more convenient the transportation among countries, the more frequent the language integration, and the lower the transaction cost, thus, the lower the language diversity index and the smaller the number of language types. For example, with convenient rail travel in Europe, even though there are a number of languages, it is generally not too difficult to travel among countries. For travelers and traders, there are usually enough people who can understand them, with multilingualism being prevalent enough among European people.

With the completion of the railway between China and Russia, there is scope for more tourist and trade traffic between China and Europe, and the potential for more language integration between these two countries (*Russia Briefing*, 2022).

The language diversity index is negatively correlated with bilateral trade flows. Trading partners should strive to reduce transaction costs and promote a win-win situation for all parties involved in the trading relationship. The value of costs that can be saved depends, to a large extent, on minimizing translation costs, minimizing lost time, and on all parties having a common understanding so that agreements are met.

Hutchinson in their article mentioned that in the context of economic globalization, language and culture differences have become an important factor restricting trade between countries, which has largely hindered the division of labor and resource allocation on a global

scale. For this reason, all countries have been taking active measures to strengthen foreign language education and improve foreign language capacity in their own countries. The English language proficiency of citizens of a given country can have a major impact on international trade. Countries in which English serves as a lingua franca and countries in which citizens display a higher level of English language proficiency tend to have greater competitive advantage in international trade (Hutchinson, 2002: 545).

The OBORI has benefited the member countries in trade. However, the problem in opening up overseas markets was an inability to find translation of speech and text into less commonly spoken languages. This inability is a hindrance to negotiations and creating contracts where all parties have a common understanding. If someone encountered a translation problem, they could only translate Chinese into English first, and then use translation software to translate into other languages. There are online tools that appear to be able to translate between less commonly used languages, however, due to the confidentiality of negotiations and agreements, using online tools is a security risk. If English is not the primary language of either party, translation first to English and then to the other party's language could introduce mistakes such as semantic errors in the process of machine translation of English into other languages. These errors could be undetected by both parties.

Determining a common language among countries with many diverse languages is important for maximizing the benefits of international trade. The benefits of a common language are less friction, less time and cost translating, resulting in reducing the risk of misunderstanding. Each time translation occurs, there is a chance that errors are introduced. Through the study of the economic effects of language policies and strategies, a contribution can be made to the understanding of how language policies and strategies may be improved in the future to promote economic growth and closer trade relations. Even though this is a goal of the OBORI, countries not involved with the OBORI can also benefit from this research.

2.2. Relevant sociolinguistic literature

The fundamental sociolinguistic literature for the present study is in the areas of language policy, language planning, language strategy and language economics. All these terms are related to one another, and their differences and uses will be explained below.

2.2.1. Language policy

Language policy can take the form of laws and regulations, and at a national level is authorized by those in charge of legislation in a nation. The purpose of a language policy is to plan language changes (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997), whether these be the addition of a newly adopted official language, new rules for conduct of foreign language education, or whatever other tasks must be undertaken in a country regarding language usage. The people most likely to participate in the formulation of language policy are politicians and officials of the education sector (Baldauf & Kaplan, 2003). Language policy must take into account the meaning of language for both individuals and countries as a whole. For individuals, language is part of their culture and identity. For nations, language is a tool for diplomacy and administration. Language policy can comprise guidelines or regulations for the implementation of language structures, uses and acquisitions by the state or institution, explicitly or implicitly. Tollefson (2011) believed that language policy can be governed by public institutions (such as government agencies, schools and courts) or by private institutions (such as companies or non-governmental organizations). The language policies and language plans formulated by the government or by the people can both have a significant effect on social structure and development and on people's lives.

As Spolsky (2004: 1) suggested, a language policy model is characterized by “its practices, its beliefs and any attempts to influence practices by any type of language intervention, planning or management”. Tollefson (1991: 16) further argued that language policy is “one mechanism for locating language within social structure so that language determines who has access to political power and economic resources”. However, it is challenging to estimate the effect of language policy before it is enacted and to evaluate the benefits and costs afterwards in order to revise language policy. It is difficult to measure the cost and benefit of a language policy because there are other variables at play besides the policy itself, such as time and respondents. Therefore, only an approximation of policy effects can be made, especially in countries with large populations and diverse languages. It is difficult to control the accuracy of survey data, as the quality is influenced by the willingness of respondents to provide accurate responses, and also in identifying a representative sample. Reliance on self-reporting can suffer from poor quality data that is difficult to validate. These

factors are issues that need to be overcome when researching future language policies (Zhang, 2008).

Despite this barrier, some scholars have done research on the relation between language policy and learning less commonly spoken languages. For example, Church and King (1993: 338) believed that language learning, as followed in language policy, has network externalities, where the more people that learn and use a language, the more people benefit from being able to communicate with each other. For example, if a population has one group who only speak Chinese and another group who only speak English, if an English-speaking person learns Chinese, they can then benefit by speaking to anyone who only speaks Chinese. If all the English-speaking people learn to speak Chinese, then none of the Chinese people need to learn English in that population, as everyone can communicate with each other (Church & King, 1993: 338, 340). Church and King further believed that the policy can be guided by the cost of learning one language over the other, combined with the desires of people to learn particular languages. Individuals make the choice to learn a different language based on their own circumstances, and do not consider the benefits others receive from being able to communicate with additional people (Church & King, 1993: 341).

Shapiro and Varian (1999) explained that products exhibit network externalities when the value of a product to one user depends on how many other users there are. As the number of people learning a certain language increases, people will gain more benefits by choosing to learn said language as opposed to another. However, when there are high costs to learn such a language, people opt not to learn, making the language an inefficient choice of focus. In short, a government's language policy can encourage the growth of the most commonly spoken language(s) (Church & King, 1993: 343). Church and King (1993: 343) also believed that governments can influence language policy by introducing measures that influence the cost. These measures include funding all or part of the costs for students, regulating the costs of language courses, encouraging supply to meet the demand through direct or indirect incentives for course providers, and requiring language studies in the school curriculum. When developing language policies, governments should consider the cultural and economic benefits for the country. Funding of courses for specific languages, even at a basic level, can provide strategic economic benefits in the future. If the costs of learning a new language are

approximately equal, encouraging learning for the most commonly spoken languages are likely to provide the most benefits (Church & King, 1993: 339).

Thus, language policy can clearly serve to facilitate the changes that are desired by governments. It is wise for governments to have well researched language policies in place, so that the desired language outcomes are achieved.

One significant global initiative in which language policy is currently absent is that of the OBORI. If each country develops their own language policies without considering the wider global trading environment, there may be inefficiencies as a result of the lack of complementary policies that would improve communication. Under this Chinese-led project, there has not yet been an accompanying official language policy. It would be desired as it would allow for a more open, cohesive form of common communication amongst various members. There has been no publicized strategy or direction on how speakers with expertise in economics and trade can also be fluent in more than one language. Each country along the OBORI has its own language policy, and the chance that language policies along the OBORI could become harmonized is small. Regarding literature on this matter, there is little scholarship produced by academics and officials in political circles, perhaps because the initiative is still too new and therefore tangible effects are not visible. For example, Banda (2016) discussed the harmonization of Bantu languages. Among these challenges were conflicting national language policies, competing priorities such as health and poverty, community leaders who want to preserve their culture, and disagreements among linguists. There is a sufficient amount of literature on Chinese language policy that is of great significance (Shen & Xia, 2014), but none of these works have cross-border relevance to the OBORI.

2.2.2. Language planning

Sociolinguists often mention language policy together with language planning. However, the two are not the same. Language planning is concerned with the process and details of implementing policies, and determining the success criteria on how the success of the policies are measured, based on the policy goals. More accurately, Poon (2004) indicated in his research that the major difference is that language planning is only a national and government macro sociological activity, whereas language policy can be a national and

government macro sociological activity, or an institutional one. Deumert (2009) indicated that language policy is a broader language, political and social goal, which is behind a specific language planning process.

Fishman (1974) believed that language planning is a component of social planning (including public policies such as housing policies, employment policies, and taxation policies) with clear objectives and implementation plans. Language policy refers to the implicit or explicit language planning implemented by official institutions and departments (such as the Ministry of Education, schools, and company leadership).

According to Deumert (2000), the term 'language planning' was introduced by Haugen in 1959 and refers to all conscious efforts that aim at changing the linguistic behavior of a speech community. Language planning is done in order to deal with problems arising from a lack of agreement in expected outcomes, as well as inadequate strategies to overcome barriers in implementation of the language policy (Zaidi, 2013). Having a wider context to work within has been refined over time. This wider context has been observed in more universities as they become more popular as a place to qualify in language learning fields.

As the depth of study has increased in the field of research in languages, researchers have gradually reached a consensus that the objects of language planning are the language situation and language itself (Li, 2008). As for the types of language planning, they are divided according to the characteristics of their content. It is generally maintained that these include language status planning, language corpus planning (Li, 2008), language spread planning (Guo, 2007) and language function planning, giving the umbrella term "language planning" much flexibility. More flexibility is allowed in using a multitude of facts of implementation of language planning and is a deliberate effort to influence the function, structure or acquisition of languages or language varieties within a speech community. Combining all of these facts and using a multitude of planning strategies allows for diversity in the delivery of language programs.

Chen, Zhang and Wang (2020: 29) explained that the choice people make of which foreign language to learn and the effects of learning are directly regulated and guided by their respective government's language planning. The effects of learning a foreign language also depend on the status and resource allocation of the foreign language in the industry and the

region. More people are interested in learning languages that have a higher reputation in society. This boosts the number of people teaching and draws in more funding. If a person chooses a foreign language with a perceived lower social standing (such as Arabic in Chen, Zhang and Wang's article), access to quality learning resources is more difficult to obtain which likely leads to a worse outcome.

Language planning plays an important role in society. Ruiz (1984) added a new perspective of "language as a resource" and further integrated it into the conceptual framework of language planning. He regarded language as a kind of right and resource. From this point of view, minor languages contain importance akin to that of major languages.

In the context of the OBORI, it is important to think of the planning of foreign language integration and dissemination. The acquisition of language can be initiated in different ways and different settings, such as through exchange programs, tourism and business encouraging demand for language courses, along with the policy of governments guiding the supply and demand of courses to meet national objectives. Tollefson (1981: 347) asserted that given the complexity of the processes and motives of acquiring second (or additional) languages, the duty of the researcher is to summarise the possible options for planning, the likely impacts of any decisions made under certain conditions, and any influence planned and unplanned variables could have on the desired outcomes. In the context of international trade, it is important to consider the varying language dynamics. The effective planning and delivery of language learning is as an important aim of the OBORI to facilitate global trade. In general cases, by analysing the purpose of language planning in the United States, Japan and Russia, Ma (2018) found that these countries have set up special agencies for language planning and policy mainly responsible for their national language planning and the promotion of official languages to the international arena. This level of planning can be found in the countries of the OBORI as well.

As one aspect of this thesis is focussed on language programs in Russia, the example of Russia, discussed by Li and Liu (2016), is relevant and valuable to consider, as they compared language planning in Russia to that in Japan and the USA. They argued the major concern of Russian policy-makers was to promote the Russian language and culture internationally. As a result, Russia has formulated a series of language planning initiatives. Li and Liu claimed the Russian government had integrated the promotion of the Russian language

and Russian culture into the main components of Russia's national foreign strategy, which was closely related to the national interests of Russia. For example, the Russian World Foundation (RWF) was established in 2007 and created more than 100 Russian language centers around the world in less than 10 years. Li and Liu maintained that the RWF has achieved remarkable results, which emphasizes the strategic importance and support of language planning by the Russian government.

In summary, language planning is done in order to deal with problems by means of developing clear courses of actions, which allows language planning to overlap with language policy, as it may include the implementation of language policy.

2.2.3. Language economics

As for the origin of the notion of language economics, language economists generally believe that the theory first originated from Marschak. When he devoted himself to the study of information economics in 1965, Marschak (1965) recognized the economic aspects of language. Later, Grin (1996: 18) gave the following definition of language economics: “the economics of language refers to the paradigm of theoretical economics and uses the concepts and tools of economics in the study of relationships featuring linguistic variables; it focusses principally, but not exclusively, on those relationships in which economic variables also play a part”. Grin (2003) concluded through statistics that the UK continues to benefit from other countries due to the widespread use of English.

There is a two-way relationship between language and social systems. Language has a connection to social systems and can be used to forecast the future of social development, and the development of social systems influences the changes to and replacement of languages. With language being a social system, of which economics plays a part, the costs and benefits of social system arrangements cannot be separated from the analysis and measurement of economic methods. Therefore, it is necessary to study language from the perspective of economics, such as whether the use of commonly spoken languages can reduce transaction costs, the costs and benefits to individuals and governments of foreign language investment, and what benefits and cultural values less commonly spoken languages have to society, in addition to just economic value. Assessing the cultural and economic value of less commonly

spoken languages is important. However, it is crucial to strike a balance and consider various factors beyond economic value in shaping the world.

The economic value of language is formed in a certain socio-economic environment. One of the specific manifestations is that language overcomes the barriers of cross-cultural economic communication and people complete certain tasks with the help of language (Duan & Lou, 2010). Economic activities and language development have always had a close relation. Mo, Zhang and Zhang believed that as an interactive behavior, economic activities cannot be carried out without language communication (Mo, Zhang & Zhang, 2006: 102). Mo, Zhang and Zhang also concluded that the economic value of a particular language depends on the degree of use in specific activities, and this degree of use is governed by the law of supply and demand for the language. The economic value is exhibited and demonstrated in many ways; people complete a certain job with the help of language to obtain economic benefits, or people use language to engage in a certain profession or participate in a certain activity, thereby again obtaining economic benefits. Mo, Zhang and Zhang (2016: 103-104) in their article, stated that their research was undertaken through established methods of quantitative research and qualitative analysis of many researchers. The research is performed to what, if any, economic benefits are realized. While language knowledge can certainly be regarded as a skill, it is important to recognize that it is not always the case. Some individuals may struggle to acquire language skills due to various factors such as learning disabilities or limited access to education. As a result, while it can be a skill for many, it is not a universal truth.

While learning one or more languages can indeed lead to economic benefits in certain situations, it is important to note that these benefits may not always occur naturally (Zhang, 2008; Zhang, 2011). Economic advantages from language knowledge often depend on other factors such as the job market, demand for specific languages, and personal circumstances. As a result, while there can be economic benefits, they may not always arise effortlessly or automatically.

While it is true that trade activities can contribute significantly to the demand for language, it is important to note that the demand for language is not exclusively reliant on trade. Language serves various purposes beyond trade, such as interpersonal communication, education, literature, and cultural exchange. These aspects generate a substantial demand for language that extends beyond the realm of trade activities. Therefore, it would be inaccurate to assert that the

demand for language is solely and always generated by trade. International trade is inseparable from cross-cultural communication and requires individuals who have a solid understanding to operate foreign languages, so that the number of people studying foreign languages will increase to meet a growth in demand. In fact, what the market needs is an increase in effective supply, that is, an increase in the supply of individuals who can practise foreign languages effectively.

Grin (2017: 117) found out that the economic value of language is determined by the market for language exchange. He introduced the notion of accounting of language, and of planning costs and benefits. To learn a foreign language, individuals need to invest time and money. To implement a language policy, the government also needs to invest in teaching Grin (2017: 113). This investment is the cost of language policy. Moreover, Grin put forward the model in Table 1 for calculating the total value of a language.

Table 1. Grin's model of language value (2003)

	Language value to individuals	Language value to society
Market value	Currency returns. For example: Tuition is paid for higher education, but it is expected that after graduation the investment will pay for itself.	Economic benefits to the state and the society.
Non-market value	Better integration into multiculturalism, broadening horizons and open thinking, and improving individual's sense of accomplishment.	The improvement of organizational image and national status, cultural prosperity and exchange, and promotion of equality and justice.

To sum up, language economic theory is similar to other economic theories in the ways of quantifying practical and social benefits. Language economics has practical and social benefits for society. As for foreign language learning and local language promotion, the approaches adopted by language economists are used by policymakers in different economies, the policy advisers, the economists' themselves, and focus primarily on cost-benefit analysis. They will need to evaluate various alternatives prior to making a decision that appears to be

the most appropriate for their policy objective. The basic reasoning behind studying language promotion is to figure out these benefits and costs of promotion in order to find practical uses for and outcomes of the measures (Su, 2011).

Since 1970, there have been many economic discussions (e.g. Carliner, 1981; Chiswick & Miller, 2007; Grenier, 1987; Huang, Zhang & Su, 2012) on bilingual education, language policy, language planning, and especially the relation between language and personal or business income. These discussions and research serve as just one of many reminders that the topic of language economics remains relevant for attempting to solve ongoing issues. As research has developed in the field of language economics, a gradual consensus has evolved in relation to different forms and structures of language acquisition. Combining all of these and using a multitude of planning strategies allows for diversity. Corporations which employ comprehensive foreign trade contracts urgently need individuals who can speak foreign languages.

2.2.4. Language strategy

According to the 2012 edition of *The Cambridge Handbook of Language Policy*, language strategy refers to: “Language policy or language management that is given an important value orientation, while at the same time being able to adapt to a series of sustainable language planning solutions based on specific changes”. As another take, Shen and Xia (2014) proposed that language strategy can be understood as macro language planning, which regards language as an important strategic element of a country and language activities as an important part of human social activities. Language strategy can therefore be used to solve the real language problems faced by a state and its society, and to plan for the basic goal of long-term development. In the context of the present study, language strategy serves as a framework for prioritizing language planning initiatives. In the context of international trade, by encouraging people to learn the languages of key trading partners, there will be more employment opportunities inside and outside of the country. There will be an increased demand for employees who can communicate in multiple languages. A side benefit is that there is also an increased number of people who can communicate with inbound tourists who may not know the local knowledge, further expanding employment opportunities.

For example, a language plan may be to promote the study of the Chinese language, and the corresponding language strategy would detail which sectors are the primary implementers, how much is to be spent on the initiative, where the plan will be most concentrated, and other relevant specifics. The main sectors to benefit from a language strategy are international trade, services and tourism. Language planners will need to decide where resources are to be allocated, based on their strategic objectives.

Li (2012) found that language can be viewed on three different levels: macro, meso, and micro levels: The macro level is involved mainly through the formulation of language policies and effective management measures. The meso level describes language use in various industries and geopolitical regions. It is governed by the local governments. Finally, the micro level is language used by individuals, where the individual accepts language norms and guidance. The national language policy at the macro level requires language planning at the meso level to ensure implementation, and language planning at the meso level needs to be implemented at the micro level.

The present study proposes that language strategy is in line with all the levels mentioned above. The main purpose of the government's influence on the investment in individual language skills capital is to try to make an individual master and use a certain language, or sometimes even steer learners away from a particular language. This strategic goal can be achieved by changing the investment decision-making processes of local residents or residents of other countries. Essentially, the government wishes to remain in control of which languages are being used in the country. By providing more favorable conditions for trade and increased employment opportunities, the standard of living for residents can be increased. For non-residents, language policies may influence them to migrate or visit, and also encourage international trade.

As an example, Luo (2010) noted that the curriculum of foreign language in Australian schools is relatively flexible and diverse with compulsory and optional courses. Under the direct impetus of the Australian government, the education sector has strengthened foreign language teaching, which has increased students' efforts in learning and investing in foreign languages.

2.3. Language choice and commerce in the countries of the OBORI

The OBORI is an example of the link between language choice and commerce. These two notions, along with the developing and monitoring rules of trade and facilitating negotiations, form the concepts of the OBORI. Regardless of the formulation of national language policies and planning mentioned above, which are at the macro level, or how individuals at the micro levels choose their preferred language to learn based on the economic value of the language, these decisions all involve language choice and commerce. This section discusses the existing research regarding language choice and commerce as it relates to the OBORI.

English already has the status of a global lingua franca (Jenkins, 2015). Therefore it could serve as the lingua franca for the developing OBORI. This strategy is not easily achieved, however; as Li (2015) pointed out, using the local language of each region is what people are most willing to do for commercial purposes. The OBORI builds upon the long-standing concept of the Silk Road to develop economic partnerships with countries along the OBORI today. Scholars such as Baker (2015), Kohler (2015), Liddicoat (2008), and Scarino (2013) all have supported the idea that language conveys, embodies and symbolizes culture as both a part of a group and of an individual. It also serves as a communication bridge among the countries along the OBORI.

Shen and Xia (2018) declared that so far researchers have not fully considered the issue of communication in the conception of the OBORI. As a result, many commercial enterprises and institutions have had difficulties conducting business communications due to language barriers which directly and indirectly affect trade exchanges. Issues that can arise include a lack of available translation options and the costs of translation services. These two authors further suggested that the English language currently plays an absolute dominant position in international trade, scientific research, and higher education. However, Chinese officials have not yet decided which official language(s) of the OBORI the Chinese government is willing to support. Shen and Xia (2018) contended that as the initiator and primary builder of the OBORI, the Chinese government should consider the merit of practical applications and statistical data on the relevance of having Chinese as an official language, and how this choice may benefit more countries and allow for broader acceptance of the OBORI.

In order to expand the dominant position of the Chinese language in governments and major construction fields along the OBORI, Shen and Xia (2018) believed that the Chinese language should play a role in key areas of trade and important projects. With China being an influential trading country, this viewpoint is consistent with China's aims to grow international trade.

Many languages can undoubtedly compete for the role of lingua franca within a given region. For example, the Russian language is widely used for governing trade relationships among Central Asian countries of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc (Britannica, 2023). As the primary language of the former Soviet Union, Russian language has a broad social foundation in these countries and remains one of the official or semi-official languages of some countries, such as Russia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, which will be mentioned in Chapter 6. Accordingly, the strategy of language promotion, including institutional support, financial resource provisions, and distribution of public resources, will have much less of a negative impact than the enforcement of a single common language.

Zhou (2018: 56) provided the following example of the reasons why there was an immediate need for foreign language proficiency and gave an example of how the method of meeting that need could be met. The Tajik-China Mining Co., Ltd. in Tajikistan generally employs 5,000-6,000 local employees, even reaching nearly 10,000 employees during peak operating times. A Chinese company which helps build the Tajikistan Dushanbe Capital Thermal Power Plant requires a large number of construction personnel, employees for long-term maintenance, and a large number of local employees who understand Chinese. PetroChina signed a Chinese language teaching agreement with the Confucius Institute to cultivate the Chinese language ability of Tajik employees and improve their Chinese proficiency.

These Chinese-funded enterprises establish themselves outside of China and invest in factories along the OBORI. As a result, a large demand arises for workers who have proficiency in Chinese. Xing and Liang (2016) provided statistics which demonstrate that among Chinese-funded enterprises in Central Asian countries, the ratio of Chinese employees to local employees was generally 2:8. In recent years, Tajikistan has operated at a ratio of 1:9, increasing the proportion of local employees. This proportion of recruitment has greatly stimulated the motivation and interest of local youth to learn Chinese. The significance of the findings of Xing and Liang (2016), and Zhou (2018), is that a local team that can effectively

communicate with both the company and the consumers is an essential component of the success of an international working endeavor. This conclusion about work communication can be applied to make diplomacy, trade and contract negotiations smoother.

This concept of mutual understanding can be implemented both inside and outside the realm of the OBORI. Xiao's analysis (2016) of how Chinese mobile phones are imported in India is helpful in understanding the challenges of language economics and how an effective language strategy can overcome the challenges. Xiao provided the example of how India imports more than 30 million mobile phones directly from China every year. Among major importing countries in the region, India imports the largest number of phones from China. There are many factors that explain why Chinese mobile phones have entered the Indian market so significantly. One of these factors includes the notion that the Product Development Executive of the Guangdong branch of the OPPO Mobile Phone Company is fluent in Chinese. For instance, Mr. Malik, born and raised in India, is currently the Product Development Executive of the Guangdong branch of the OPPO Mobile Phone Company. He has visited China more than 40 times. He often conducts research in the Indian market by listening to mobile phone users' recommendations and needs. The Product Development Executive Malik found that the majority of rural users in a small town in India like to use mobile phones to play music. He reported this information to Chinese manufacturers in their native language, and the manufacturers immediately replaced some of the hardware, such as the speakers, of the original mobile phone model, resulting in a 50% increase in sales. This finding demonstrates how potential economic gains through increased sales result from the knowledge of relevant languages. Moreover, while it may seem more advantageous for Malik to be a fluent speaker of Chinese, the importance of his example is that understanding through multilingualism, where people understand the languages and meanings of all sides of the interaction, has practical advantages over conducting business in the native languages and just using literal translation.

In 2016, the Ministry of Education of China issued a notice in title "Promoting the joint development of the action plan of the One Belt, One Road". The goals detailed in the notice included:

(1) Assist in cultivating a large number of individuals for the joint development of the OBORI, support fellow members of the OBORI to achieve policy interoperability, facility connectivity, unimpeded trade, and financing.

(2) Achieve symbiotic developmental results. Promote in-depth cooperation in education and mutual learning promoting the development of education in member countries, while comprehensively enhancing the influence of regional education.

The notice also emphasized that, *“Promoting language exchange among countries along the OBORI. To research and build a language exchange coordination curriculum to include language forums & open courses. Once established, a gradual insertion of various linguistic courses from participating countries will be to build a system of schools in various countries”*. Higher education institutions and vocational colleges should be based on their own developmental strategies for participation in the joint regional development of the OBORI. They should carry out various forms of cooperation and exchanges with the countries along the OBORI, and focus on the coordinated development of various tasks such as improving the modern university system and innovative training models (Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, 2016).

In response to Recommendation No. 2437 of the Ministry of Education's First Session of the 13th National People's Congress (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2018), in the context of the OBORI, with the comprehensive deepening of the strategic partnership between China and Russia, the value of training individuals who are competent in Russian has become increasingly prominent. The statement has also proposed a number of measures to accelerate the training of individuals who understand Russian to actively respond to the needs of China’s development strategy. In recent years, the number of Chinese and Russian students studying abroad has increased annually, and is expected that the number of overseas students from both nations will increase to 100,000 by 2020. In addition, there are more than 100 cooperative educational institutions and projects that aim to meet these statistics within Russia alone (Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, 2018).

The Chinese Ministry of Education has been continuously implementing and expanding the autonomy of the professional setting of colleges and universities. As a result, by assisting qualified universities in independently establishing Russian majors, the training of people

fluent in Russian can be expanded. Likewise the education of people fluent in Russian can be promoted by helping eligible institutions and universities independently develop Russian majors. At present, 166 colleges and universities across the country have opened Russian majors. The Ministry of Education claims that it will make timely and dynamic adjustments according to national strategic needs, promoting a gradual transition into developing Russian majors, disciplines and research bases (*People.cn, 2017*).

The Secretary-General of the Chinese Russian Teaching and Research Association, Ning, spoke about the development of the OBORI at the Fifth National Advanced Forum for Russian Departments of Colleges and Universities. Ning told the Forum that “since the implementation of the OBORI, Chinese academic institutions from secondary to tertiary levels have begun to build Russian language programs into their educational curricula (*People.cn, 2017*)”. According to Ning, some schools have even begun to teach Russian as the foreign language for the college entrance examinations, something which has ushering in greater enthusiasm for the learning of Russian at school level.

In September 2015, as a result of increasing demand for individuals who are competent in Russian, the administration at Lanzhou University of Technology responded to the growing demand for competent individuals who are competent in Russian by establishing a new Russian major. The initial goal was to recruit 30 Russian majors every year. By 2017, they surpassed this benchmark and were enrolling 33 students each year (*People.cn, 2017*).

According to another spokesperson, Wang, the Vice President of Tianjin Foreign Studies University, drew attention to the fact that Russian is a global language, stated that people interested in Russian education should seize the opportunity to learn it as it is prominent in Central Asia, and in 12 countries along the OBORI (*People.cn, 2017*).

Universities around the world are important drivers of economic growth and social development. Their importance stems from not only their educational function but also the social benefit of helping students enter the workforce at a higher professional level. However, universities are sometimes seen as an employment service provider as they ready young and old for professional work. Universities as service providers also have to frequently use feedback from businesses and economic needs in order to make choices based on financial or business considerations (and in turn, in order to manage their financial bottom lines). On one

hand, a call to support education and social development, but on the other hand to prosper financially by participating in the global educational marketplace. Often this economic prosperity is rationalized as a method to fund uneconomical university work, but at other times there is an element of pure profit motive. An example of their participation in the global marketplace is the OBORI University Strategic Alliance with universities in China.

The OBORI and Chinese universities partnership, known as the University Strategic Alliance of the OBORI, was created in 2015. The alliance is composed of the universities from countries and regions along the OBORI that are willing to cooperate and join the collective and contribute to the partnership. The purpose is to promote comprehensive exchanges and cooperation among regional universities in the fields of education, technology and culture (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2015). According to statistics from the Ministry of Education of China, by 2017, 126 universities and colleges had become members of the alliance (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2017). By September 2020, the number had increased to 148 universities worldwide (*HWW, 2017*).

In addition, according to the 2018 China Foreign Language Education Annual Report (2018), in 2015, the Beijing Slavic Research Center and Pushkin House Beijing Center were established at Capital Normal University. In addition, the Silk Road Research Institute of Beijing Foreign Studies University was established at Beijing Foreign Studies University, and China's "One Belt, One Road" strategic research institute was set up in Beijing International Studies University, and the National and Regional Research Institute of Anhui University was established.

In 2017, the Regional National Research Institute was established at the University of International Business and Economics, the Slavic National and Regional Research Center of Beijing Foreign Studies University was established, and the Slavic National Research Center was established in Harbin Normal University. In 2018, the Institute of Regional and National Studies at Peking University and the Shanghai Institute of Global Governance and Regional National Studies at Shanghai International Studies University were established. These regional country research institutions focus on the national, social and humanitarian conditions of the countries along the OBORI, actively carry out relevant academic research, and build high-end think-tanks and high-end talent training and reserve bases. As seen from these developments, the OBORI has had a profound impact on China's higher education in recent years.

2.4. The status of Chinese, Russian, English and other languages along the OBORI

Wang (2016) and Wen (2016) mentioned that there are more than 50 official languages in the 65 countries along the OBORI (Wang, 2016; Wen, 2016). Since the present study exclusively focusses on the Chinese, Russian and English languages, it is only these three languages that will be considered here.

2.4.1. “Learn Chinese, befriend the whole world”³

In 2013, the Communist Party of China stated that it was necessary to actively carry out foreign cultural exchanges, strengthen international communication capabilities and create systems of foreign discourse, and promote Chinese culture to the world (*Xinhua*, 2016). In order to promote the sustainable development of the Chinese language in international communication, the government announced the Outline of the National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020) and the Outline of the 13th Five-Year Plan for the National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China. The goal of these plans is to promote the Chinese language in the international arena by arranging various events to stimulate the spread of the Chinese language, to support international Chinese education, and to improve the quality of the Confucius Institutes (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2010).

In an effort to both help foreign students learn Chinese and spread the Chinese language and culture to the rest of the world, the first Confucius Institute agreement was signed in Uzbekistan in 2004 (Zhou, 2018). The purpose of the Confucius Institute has been not only to promote the Chinese language to the world, spread Chinese culture and enhance the world's understanding of China, but also to develop friendly relations between China and other countries. The Confucius Institute is mainly engaged in teaching Chinese, training Chinese teachers, administering Chinese language examinations, and conducting Chinese language and cultural exchange activities (Confucius Institute Headquarters and national Chinese language

³ China Civilization Network. (2010). Learn Chinese, Befriend the Whole World. [学好中国话，朋友遍天下]. Retrieved from http://archive.wenming.cn/sjwm/2010-02/05/content_18965345.htm [Accessed on 16.09.2020]

international promotion leading group office, 2007). The institutions themselves are funded by the Chinese government.

As of 2019, there were 173 Confucius Institutes in the countries along the OBORI, accounting for 32.3% of the total number of Confucius Institutes in the world. Among the top 18 countries ranked according to the number of Confucius Institutes in the world from 2015 to 2017, countries along the OBORI accounted for seven in 2015, five in 2018, and six in 2019 (Guo & Liu, 2019).

There were only 11 countries along the OBORI as of 2019 which had not yet established Confucius Institutes or Confucius classrooms⁴. As of September 2018, 53 of the 65 countries along the OBORI had collectively established 137 Confucius Institutes and 130 Confucius classrooms (Zhou, 2018). These data reveal that the Chinese government has invested significant time and resources for the purpose of teaching the Chinese language in other nations, with the goal to make Chinese one of the foreign languages of choice for non-Chinese speakers.

With such a focus on the spread of the Chinese language to other nations, it is also important to evaluate whether equal efforts have been made for Chinese students in China to learn other languages of the OBORI. However, in the Chinese tertiary education sector, there are relatively few programs for the teaching of the less commonly spoken languages representing the countries along the OBORI. Although there are about 50 official languages in the 65 countries along the OBORI, there are fewer than 30 foreign languages being offered at Chinese universities, with English and Russian the most popular foreign languages being learned (Wang, 2016; Wen, 2016).

According to China's *People's Daily* and Russia's *Russia Today*, the cooperation and exchange between the two countries in various fields has continued to deepen, with bilateral trade showing significant growth. The number of people studying Chinese in Russia has increased dramatically; in 1997 there were about 5,000 people, and in 2017 that number reached 56,000 (People's Daily Overseas Network, 2019; China Central Television, 2019).

⁴ There are 11 countries along the OBORI which have not yet established Confucius Institutes or Confucius Classrooms: Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Yemen, Papua New Guinea in Oceania, Turkmenistan, Libya and Tunisia in Africa (Guo & Liu, 2019).

At the same time, the number of Russian universities offering Chinese courses has increased dramatically. In 1997, 18 universities introduced Chinese-related disciplines, while in 2017, this number reached 179 (Yin, 2019).

In addition to the establishment of Confucius Institutes, since the implementation of the OBORI, the Russian media has begun broadcasting relevant Chinese programs to encourage more citizens to take an interest in the region. For example, the TV documentary *Follow Uncle Ye to China*, was broadcast on Channel One on Russian TV, introducing the development of China today. It has caused a strong response in Russia and China. Yevgeny Kolesov (Uncle Ye), who has lived in China for many years, has won the favor of a wide audience with his first-hand perspective on site visits and a deeper understanding of China (Xinhua News Agency, 2016). Another example is that the Chinese government has organized a number of Chinese language courses for government officials from countries along the OBORI. This example shows the determination of the Chinese government towards the promotion of Chinese in its fellow countries along the OBORI. At the same time, the Ministry of Education of China took the initiative to publish “Chinese Ideological and Cultural Terms”, covering 22 foreign languages (Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, 2019).

Chinese government authorities have used China's international economic status to promote the spread of Chinese, giving full play to the role of Confucius Institutes, and taking up the opportunities brought by the OBORI to maximize the number of Chinese language exchanges.

Some scholars believe that the main body of Chinese cultural dissemination is still Chinese language teaching. Therefore, Chinese language courses provide some concrete and feasible promotion strategies in China. For example, the Chinese authorities have strengthened the strategic awareness of the international promotion of Chinese (integrate the resources and disciplinary advantages of Chinese universities, break through interdisciplinary barriers) and expanded communication channels, including increasing Sino-Russian exchange programs and expanding the scale of Confucius Institutes. The demand for Chinese language courses in Russian universities is also an example of the increasing enthusiasm for learning Chinese in Russia (Li & Yu, 2019).

2.4.2. Russia's actions in promoting its national language internationally

In Russia, the foreign languages that are often spoken and studied are primarily the major western languages such as English, French and German (Wang, 2013). English language learning and usage has recently been given the highest priority by the Russian government. However, the Chinese language is increasing its importance, and 15% of Russian respondents in Sokolova and Shelepovas' research considered Chinese to be the most important foreign language to learn. The languages that students believed were the most useful were: English (92%), German (17%), Chinese (15%), and French (10%). Despite the focus on English in Russian schools, Russia remains behind other developed nations in the levels of English proficiency among its population (Sokolova & Shelepova, 2015).

The methods used by the Russian authorities to promote the use of the Russian language around the world have garnered much attention. Many publications have been devoted to an analysis of how the Russian language has been promoted internationally.

Li (2011) asserted that Russia's main motivation for promoting Russian has been to grow trade and economic relationships. Therefore, the opportunity for Russia to participate in the OBORI may create further possibilities for Russia to promote its language. Moreover, the OBORI has accelerated the process of global economic integration. Trade between China and Russia has increased greatly as a result of this initiative. Until recently, Russia's economic strength had been increasing, and its influence had been growing. The demand for learning Russian in the international community was also increasing (Axnazarovna, 2023). The recent dispute with Ukraine and international sanctions have threatened this progress (Khudaykulova & He & Khudaykulov, 2022). On this basis, the Russian government has chosen to support the study of Russian, and according to Li (2011), Russia was on track to see its goals for increased economic benefits come to fruition.

Regarding actions of the Russian authorities in promoting the Russian language, Li and Liu (2016) pointed to the unveiling in late 2015 by the Russian government of a new *Federal Program advancing language planning for the Russian language for the years of 2016 to 2020*. This language plan set the desired direction for the international use of the Russian language and culture from 2016 to 2020. The plan involved supporting teachers in Russian schools, providing learning materials and books, and encouraging foreign workers in Russia to learn

Russian. Tiido (2018) and Zhang (2015) further explained that this program's implementation was divided into two phases: the first phase was 2016-2018, and the second phase was 2019-2020. In the first phase, the strategy was to support Russian primary and secondary school teachers, by providing Russian textbooks, popular science books and magazines to those who needed them, and to create learning conditions for foreigners working in Russia. In the second phase the strategy was to cultivate proficiency and competency in the field of the Russian language, to increase the popularity and prestige of Russian, and to expand the international influence of the Russian language and culture.

Li and Liu (2016) further pointed out that, in addition to the language policies mentioned above and the specific language promotion centers, the Russian government regularly has been organizing various cultural exchange events, such as the Year of Russia, launched by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2007. Russia actively participated in the Year of Russia in China (2006), the Year of Russia in Spain (2011) and the year of Russia in France (2010). The Russian government hosted the Year of China (2007), the Year of Spain (2011) and the Year of France (2010) in Russia. These activities provided people with close contact with the Russian language and culture, promote mutual understanding between Russia and other countries, and expand the awareness of the Russian language and Russian culture around the world.

It is not only these activities that have been effective; mass media has been another important way of letting the outside world know about Russia. Liu (2015) took Russia's 'RT', which is a Russian international television station, as an example. According to Liu, it had more than 600 million viewers in more than 100 countries and regions around the world. In 2010, it became the most popular foreign TV channel in the US and the first TV news channel with over one million clicks in the history of YouTube. In addition, the Russian World Foundation also has its own official magazine which regularly updates information to the public so that people interested in Russia can pay attention to the latest news (Li & Liu, 2016). These initiatives are examples of the success Russia has had in making the presence of the Russian language strong globally.

The Russian government proposed a global education initiative called "Total Dictation" (Тотальный диктант) in 2004, which involved the form of voluntary dictation tests for a global audience. Respondents could test their Russian literacy and knowledge in this event. In 2019,

Total Dictation was held in 81 countries around the world and more than 236,000 respondents from 1,200 cities participated. In 2020, the President of Russia provided a grant to the Presidential Development Fund for civil society development. This grant was used for the purposes of promoting the Russian language for the Total Dictation event (*Total Dictation, 2020*).

TruD is a project of Total Dictation for those who are studying Russian as a foreign or non-native language and want to participate in the activity but are not sure if they can write the original text from a dictation (*Total Dictation, 2020*). In 2019, the country with the most people participating was Germany. The second was the US, and the third was China (Sputnik, 2019). Irina Cherepovskaya, organizer of the Total Dictation event, said that in 2018 the number of Chinese respondents who signed up for the TruD was the largest of any country. A total of 940 people from 16 different cities in China participated (Sputnik, 2019).

This approach to increase language learning participation has been very successful in encouraging people to learn a new language, and has been a very good way of motivating people to take the next step towards achieving their language goals. In this way, languages have been spreading globally with greater efficiency. The OBORI has been promoting language prosperity, as a way of making international trade easier, where all parties can understand each other culturally and linguistically, so misunderstandings and miscommunication are reduced. As trade between Russia and China has increased, there has been an increase in the number of Chinese university students interested in learning Russian, as it can be seen in Chapter 5 below.

Just as the Chinese government has been bolstering its soft power across the globe through cultural, educational, and business exchanges, the Russian government has also been attempting to extend its soft power through diplomacy, culture and language.

As Southeast Asia gradually becomes a more important part of the OBORI, the Russian government intends to enhance its position in the region through the application of foreign policy and soft power (Tsvetov, 2016). For example, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-Russia Plan of Action on Science, Technology and Innovation (2016-2020) demonstrates the Russian government's intention to cooperate with ASEAN in science, technology and education (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2020).

Russian institutions like the Russian Science and Culture Center, the Russian World Foundation and other institutions have been important in promoting Russian culture and disseminating information that benefits Russia. Some of these benefits have been promoting the Russian higher education sector to foreign students, fostering Russian technology and industry, and attracting foreign tourists to Russia. Cooperation with the Russian embassy in each local area has helped in organizing various activities that spread and bring the Russian language and culture into the local area. The Russian Science and Culture Center in the local area has served as a base for and symbol of Russia's cultural diplomacy. It is an effective means for spreading and promoting Russian language and culture to various countries. It is another form of soft power (Liu & Zhu, 2020).

The Russian authorities have engaged in many different activities in an attempt to promote the use of Russian language globally. These programs have received much attention from researchers across the world, and a comparatively large amount of literature has been published on the successes of these programs. They are listed and explained in Section 2.4.2.

Some of these programs have included cultural exchanges, such as the Year of Russia in China (2006), the Year of Russia in Spain (2011) and the Year of Russia in France (2010), which were mentioned above. For example, the Year of Russia in China (2006), encouraged by both Chinese and Russian governments, was designed to promote close contact between people from China, the Russian culture and the Russian language. It was also intended to promote intercultural understanding and expand the influence of Russian culture and language more generally. The Russian government carried out language and culture promotions with important trading and cultural partners including China, Spain, Germany, as well as other countries.

For Russia and Southeast Asian countries, cultural diplomacy is an investment with strong returns, having improved understanding of Russian language, historical traditions and cultural diversity amongst Southeast Asian countries (Bukh, 2016: 454). Russia's image has become more attractive and favorable to people who reside in the countries along the OBORI. This perception is due to promoting Russian language and equality at a national level, while also supporting local cultures and languages in the former Soviet bloc in Eastern and Central Europe (Krouglov, 2022: 421, 423, 426). The Director of the Russian Cultural Center in Vientiane

(Laos), emphasized that Russia's focus is “...presenting (Russian culture) as equal to other cultures rather than superior or universal” (Bukh, 2016: 457).

The above-mentioned facts, in turn, link to Russia's involvement in the OBORI. Russia's abundance of natural resources such as oil, gas and minerals make Russia appealing to other countries (Trading Economics, 2023). In addition, its rich culture and history make it a tourist destination. Russia's influence within the OBORI also allowed for the spread of the Russian language across the globe, through other countries that also participate in this global body. While many countries are now viewing China as their main global trading partner, the economic power and influence of Russia remain sound, even with the rise of China in world trade. This power and influence have also seen a continual increase in the influence of Russian as a trading language, the Russian language considered an important language for trade, international relations, and diplomacy. Thus, Russia has expanded the role of its outreach through language programs around the world.

Prior to the Russia-Ukraine conflict which dated back to 2014 and escalated in early 2022 (Ray, 2023), the above-mentioned facts on the increased demand for the Russian language may have been influenced negatively. Russia's influence allowed for the spread of the Russian language across the globe, through other countries' participation in this global body. Although sanctions against Russia have impacted its influence in recent months, Russia's economic power and influence remain robust. In a recent report from the Economics Observatory website stating: “With Russia continuing its offensive actions in Ukraine, commentators have started to question whether these economic sanctions have worked” (Disney, 2023). The ever-increasing need to focus on the weakness of the sanctions is a reflection on Russia's relative strength globally and its pre-existing trade relationships with countries that are not reliant on the OBORI. Indeed, the sanctions have had not nearly the expected effect on Russia's economic power. Before the escalation of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in 2022, Russia was on the brink of expanding its role and outreach through language programs around the world.

2.4.3. English as a potential lingua franca for the OBORI?

English has been serving as ‘lingua franca’ in the world, and is also functioning as such for the OBORI. The phrase ‘lingua franca’ originated in the medieval Mediterranean region (Kahane & Kahane, 1976: 25). A common language makes communication possible, enabling

trade and exchange of goods to flourish, along with the exchange of information. Paul De Grauwe (2006: 11) argued that “economic development is based on specialization and trade”. Capitalist expansionism means that more specialized production sites and markets are needed. Therefore, people engaged in production specialization and trade must develop a common communication method, which also promotes the emergence of a lingua franca. Firth (1996) stated that English in its function as a lingua franca is a communicative language used among people who do not have a common mother tongue or cultural background. For these communicators, English is the foreign language chosen for communication.

Jenkins (2009) asserted that English has long been used as the common language of choice for communicators from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and Fan added in 2015 that the language is widely used in a large range of fields such as international finance and trade, mass media, academic exchange, international education, international tourism, international conferences and foreign affairs (Fan, 2015).

Tian (2007) found out that the number of people who use English as a second or foreign language has increased dramatically, and non-native users of English have an increasingly high position in the English-speaking world, compared to non-native users who did not speak English. When communicating in English, especially among non-native speakers, the room for potential confusion is broad because of the differences in English competencies between speakers, coupled with the influence of non-linguistic factors such as culture and society. However, these limits on communication placed by varying language proficiency levels do not severely hinder outcomes. Especially in oral communication, the goal of each party involved is simply to achieve understanding, and so mistakes in English usage caused by influences of their native languages are typically forgiven. Tian (2007) argued that people tend to treat English in communication as a merely ‘understandable, acceptable’ principle, meaning its accuracy is not that important. Thus, in everyday life, it is possible for both parties to make mistakes when communicating with people in English when English is not their main language. Moreover, on the topic of communication, Tian asserted that since respondents understand the context of the exchange, the communication can still go successfully.

The above sections compared the language policies and language strategies of Russia and China regarding the foreign language promotion of their countries. What makes English as a lingua franca? Many of the world’s large economies, such as the USA, and Canada, were

British colonies (Ashkanasy, Trevor-Roberts, Earnshaw, 2002). The British Empire was also the largest empire in the world (Ferguson, 2012). The English language has also evolved and adapted over time, often borrowing words from other European languages (Haspelmath, 2009). For people that know more than one language, English is a common choice. If two people cannot speak each other's native languages, English is often a common language between them.

As mentioned above, the development of society, the expansion of capitalism and international trade have created a demand for international communication. Why do people choose to learn English? A common explanation is that English is helpful for careers and personal progression. Managements of international companies promote communication in English, as many of the world's large economies are natively English speaking or use English as a language of business and trade.

In order to establish adequate communication, Jin (2009) explained that the leaders of multinational corporations must be distributed throughout the world to manage subsidiaries. These leaders are required to know the needs of employees from the lowest levels of the corporations. At the same time, the bottom level of the staff also need to understand the leaders in order to fulfill the missions of their jobs. The majority of business contracts are written in English, and a large amount of negotiations are in English. When applying for jobs, most interviewers use English, and often make judgments based on the applicants' English skills (Pandey & Pandey, 2014: 93). Since employees must communicate around the world and conduct international business negotiations, there is always an urgent need for multinational corporations to have English language requirements for employees. Whether multinational corporations are based in English-speaking countries or non-English-speaking countries, they will still generally use English for the purpose of recruiting and interviewing (Jin, 2009). In addition, Jin proclaimed in order to take advantage of the cheap labor force in the host country, multinational corporations are required to recruit large numbers of skilled workers. To take advantage of new employment opportunities, new employees entering multinational corporations are required to learn how to use advanced technology and improve their skills, as well as to learn English in order to consult with their counterparts. Jin stated, therefore, that the operation of multinational corporations necessitates English as a common language in the world economy, trade, industry, energy, agriculture, transportation, and aerospace. The language is constantly expanding from being used only by the elite to being used popularly.

In addition to business contacts, Jin (2009) claimed that English has also played an important role in the field of education. A large number of non-English-speaking countries in the industrialized world, as well as developing countries, have been designating English as the foreign language being taught from primary through middle school to tertiary education. Jin (2009) also asserted that the students who already have a certain base level of English would have an easier time studying in both English-speaking countries and non-English-speaking countries, meaning those who want more academic options are incentivized to learn English. By introducing students to the language early on, their adjustment period to instruction given in English will be shorter than for those who do not possess prior English skills. Given the globalization of English and its significance in many fields, it is important for many countries in the world to emphasize English language education. Jin added that universities, secondary schools, and even primary schools in various countries have set up English language classes to attract international students.

McCormick of *Harvard Business Review* (2013) stated that a country's economic performance can be related to the level of English proficiency of a country's population. The increase in English proficiency has a positive impact on its GDP and personal per capita income. In McCormick's study of 60 countries, there was a high correlation between the level of English skills of the population and the per capita income of the country. This correlation led to higher reported income for people with excellent English skills compared to their peers. It can be inferred from this that a country can develop trade by focusing on the learning and use of lingua franca. In the area of international trade, the English language is lingua franca.

English has played a leading role in politics, culture and economics globally. In a majority of the countries that are along the OBORI, the authorities are focusing mostly on teaching English in foreign language education. For example, Wang's book *The Language Situation and Language Policy in the "Belt and Road" Countries Volume 1* considered 17 countries along the OBORI, and only five of them - Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Belarus, the Czech Republic, and Latvia - did not clearly mention the relevance of English education as a foreign language (Wang, 2015). His work also covers the popularity of other languages along the OBORI including the spread of Chinese in Southeast Asia. There are seven Southeast Asian countries mentioned in his study; apart from East Timor, the other six countries all have Chinese

language education as part of their foreign language teaching. The six countries mentioned in his books are the Philippines, Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, and Vietnam.

2.5. Recent developments

2.5.1. The impact of Covid-19 on the One Belt One Road Initiative

The present study was written when the world was facing the unprecedented challenges associated with the Coronavirus pandemic that began in 2020. As an international public health emergency, some aspects of Covid-19 have had an impact on language strategies which is discussed in the present study.

In early 2020, a sudden new outbreak of Covid-19 completely disrupted the rhythm of people's work and life. The outbreak spread quickly and widely to the whole world. The challenges and pressures facing the international community were unprecedented.

Very large numbers of people were suddenly confined to their homes, experiencing a range of feelings including panic and anxiety. On an international scale, international trade was not spared from this disaster. Countries around the world have ceased production and transportation on a large scale, and the supply chain and trade channels along the OBORI have been blocked. The World Bank predicted that the global economy would shrink by 5.2% in 2020 (*Belt and Road portal*, 2020). In order to reduce the cross-border spread of Covid-19, many countries have adopted prevention and control measures such as entry restrictions, flight suspension, suspension of international projects, and quarantine and isolation, which have led to a stagnation in economic and trade cooperation among the countries along the OBORI. As a result, numbers of projects could not be completed on time. The raw materials, mechanical equipment, and industrial components required for the projects in the OBORI were difficult to access in time. Cooperation in tourism and other service industries under the framework of the OBORI has also been greatly reduced.

Since the outbreak of Covid-19, the US stock market experienced four unprecedented meltdowns in a single month (*Global Times*, 2020). The US has taken a series of measures to stimulate its economy, the Covid-19 had led to a global economic crisis (*Center for American progress*, 2020). China had signed bilateral currency swap agreements with more than 30 countries (*Global Finance*, 2018). In the global turmoil, the exchange rates of currencies in

some countries along the OBORI have fluctuated greatly. In the years after the Covid-19 pandemic started, there were many risks such as exchange rate risks which have affected trade.

Although trade enterprises were facing the cancellation of orders and difficulties in logistics and transportation, according to the data released by the General Administration of Customs of China in April 2020: “In the first quarter of 2020, the trade value between China and the countries along the OBORI totalled 2.07 trillion RMB in imports and exports. It was 9.6% higher than the growth rate of China’s foreign trade, accounting for 31.4%” (General Administration of Customs, P. R. China, 2020). In the environment where international shipping and air transportation was reduced to minimal capacity due to the pandemic, the advantages of land transportation were manifested (CCTV, 2020). The China-Europe train is a good example. China-Europe trains are organized by China National Railway Group Co. Ltd., and operate according to fixed trains, routes, schedules, and full-time operation times. They ship containers and other equipment via international railways among the countries along the OBORI, which is a significant achievement of the OBORI (*China Economic Net*, 2020).

Compared with air transportation and sea transportation, China-Europe trains carry out fragmented transport, which does not involve quarantine of personnel and has unique advantages during the outbreak.

Between January 2020 and April 2020, after flights were grounded during the pandemic, the trips made by and the cargo volume of freight trains grew by 24% and 27% respectively compared to a year earlier, and the railway freight service has delivered nearly 8,000 tons of anti-pandemic cargo, which was also the actual impact of the ‘Healthy Silk Road’ initiative proposed by President Xi Jin Ping during a phone call with the Italian Prime Minister (The state council of the People's Republic of China, 2020).

2.5.2. Languages at times of crisis, Covid-19, and the OBORI

During the Covid-19 health emergency, the mechanism for communicating public health information experienced several challenges, which included providing information to a diverse population, such as indigenous people, migrants, and other people with special needs, and translating information between languages and lack of common terminology (Piller & Zhang & Li, 2020: 506). Zhang (2016) discussed how the establishment of a national language capability can benefit the population by providing the citizens with the information they need in a format and language they can understand. Xu and Hu (2018) discussed the importance and

need for foreign language skills in the interests of public safety, especially regarding public health and the OBORI. They believed that language skills and language resources can directly affect the controllable degree of risks of non-traditional protections and public safety measures. With a global health emergency, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, it is difficult to provide information in 8,324 languages of the world (UNESCO, 2023). By having a language strategy whereby the population can communicate in one of the more common languages, the risk of mis-translation and misunderstanding can be reduced.

A parallel example of a common language is in the aviation industry. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) stipulates that English is the language of land and air communications worldwide. The ICAO's general aviation English level ranges from Level 1 to Level 6. Since March 2008, the ICAO has required all pilots flying international routes as well as air traffic control personnel serving international airports and routes to be proficient in English at Level 4 or above (Federal Aviation Administration, 2020).

However, while flying, the characteristics of language and the way in which pilots process what they hear can cause communication errors. This situation is especially common among aviation staff whose native language is not English (Cushing, 1994). When communicating in areas of high air traffic, pilots and air traffic controllers can often speak fast, making it difficult for non-English speakers to fully comprehend communications (Wu & Molesworth & Estival, 2019: 53). The reasons for the errors included: different English pronunciation (for example, aviation staff may interpret 'hit the mitt' as 'heat the meat' (Ripley & Fitch, 2004), ambiguities in meaning/harmony, and word order; the communication problems of non-native English speakers in aviation can be related to the speed of talking; the rapid speech of non-native English speakers often causes problems for other non-native English speakers (Itokawa, 2000; Henley & Daly, 2004).

An example of a serious aviation incident caused by improper communication was the crash of the US American aircraft for American Airlines Flight 965 near Cali, Colombia in December 1995. The air traffic controller admitted that his English skills were too poor to understand complex messages from the flight crew. Tragically, the Boeing 757 crashed into a mountain, and 160 souls perished due to the miscommunication (McMillan, 1998).

During the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic, initially, English served as the main working language in international news and communication, along with other official languages of the World Health Organization (WHO) (*World Health Organization, 2020*). Later, as the pandemic spread rapidly to the whole world, many different languages other than English needed to be involved, and the range of languages was rapidly expanding. In transnational medical assistance, medical personnel had professional knowledge and skills, but the medical personnel did not understand the local languages of the people they were treating, this caused a language barrier in clinical communication between the doctors and patients to occur. Translating into the language of the local country in a short time was very difficult. The importance of a common language in daily life was not obvious; it seemed optional, because there were always alternative methods to try to understand each other, and people did not feel the urgency and necessity of a common language. However, once an international public emergency occurs, communication becomes extremely important. Because of the time and economic cost of translation, it is very important to determine a small set of common languages, so that the population can obtain important information in a timely manner. Moreover, residents in countries that do not speak English may not understand literal English translations. The health and safety of the population could be at risk occur if the meanings are not well understood.

According to the official website of the WHO, the timeline of naming Covid-19 in English was that on 10 January 2020, the WHO reported that they had identified a new virus as a new type of SARS virus (*World Health Organization, 2020*). On 24 January 2020, the WHO named the new virus ‘Covid-19: nCoV’ (*World Health Organization, 2020*), and on 11 February 2020 the WHO decided to finally name it ‘Covid-19’ (*World Health Organization, 2020*).

China's process of naming Covid-19 in Chinese occurred in 2020. Before 7 February 2020, major media reported Covid-19 as “new Covid-19-infected pneumonia” (The State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2020). On 7 February 2020, the People's Republic of China Health Committee decided to temporarily rename ‘new Covid-19-infected pneumonia’ to ‘new Covid-19 pneumonia’, or ‘new crown pneumonia’ for short (The state council of the People's Republic of China, 2020). On 21 February, the Chinese People's Health Commission decided to revise the English name of ‘new Covid-19 pneumonia’ to ‘Covid-19’,

which is consistent with the WHO practice, while the Chinese name remains unchanged (The state council of the People's Republic of China, 2020).

Since Covid-19 first appeared in Russia, the Russian media initially called it ‘new deadly virus’ (новый смертельный вирус). Later, according to the name change by the WHO, the Russian name also correspondingly changed to ‘Covid-19’ (*Lenta.ru*, 2020).

It can be seen from the above examples that the naming of Covid-19 took a long time and was revised several times in different countries. A pre-existing research and naming scheme can ensure quick and easy implementation of response strategies for naming, translating, and similar activities thereby minimizing misunderstandings due to errors in ad hoc translations and potentially discriminatory practices. In the past, some viruses were named after the geographic region where they were first found, for example the Zika virus was named after Ziika Forest in Uganda where it was first discovered (Mathis & Soulages & Le Masson & Vallat, 2021), and the Spanish Flu denoted Spain as the country of origin (Hoppe, 2018). The practice of naming diseases after regions can cause discrimination against people who come from those regions.

Referring back to the previous points discussed on Covid-19 and how people communicate, we stress the importance of language to disseminate accurate and timely health information to keep people safe.

The pandemic has had a big impact on supply chains, as measures to contain the spread of Covid-19 introduced delays and added costs. The restriction on the movement of people affected in both tourism and freight. This pressure required countries to seek alternative local supplies of essential goods if they could not source them from international trade. Tourists were also focussed on spending holidays in their own country due to border restrictions (Muley & Shahin & Dias & Abdullah, 2020). Although international travel is returning to pre-pandemic levels, there are continuing supply chain delays.

In the context of the OBORI and international public emergencies, the maintenance of easily understood strategies available in commonly understood languages will greatly assist the local population in the member countries of the OBORI.

A number of scholars have written articles on the use of language in crisis situations. These articles provide insights into how a common language strategy can facilitate effective communication, coordination, and understanding among different stakeholders during crisis situations, thereby enhancing the safety and security of individuals and assets.

Morrow (2013) described how, in 1992, Hurricane Andrew destroyed most of southern Miami-Dade County in Florida. The communities most affected were primarily Hispanic and Haitian. Response agencies such as FEMA and the American Red Cross were not initially equipped to communicate in Spanish and Haitian Creole. Most written information was only available in English. As a result, access to critical supplies, information, medical assistance, and even food was initially hindered for these vulnerable groups. Eventually, translations of critical information were distributed, and the recovery effort was supported by the coordination of multilingual resident volunteers. While a common language strategy may not have been mentioned, the presence of multilingual resident volunteers and the distribution of translated information can be seen as part of a broader strategy that involves leveraging multiple languages to facilitate effective communication and aid the recovery effort (Yelvington, 1997). Bell (2017) concluded that in the US hurricane disaster in 2017 affecting Miami-Dade County in Florida, the local emergency departments encountered significant language barriers given that the native language of 72.8% of the residents was not English. As a result, disaster warnings were not understood by many residents which made disaster communication more difficult. Cadwell (2015) demonstrated through the interviews with Japanese catastrophe survivors in the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011 that proper translation played an important role in conveying information about earthquake news, nuclear leaks, and government disaster emergency response procedures.

In addition to considering the need for common languages in countries along the OBORI, several questions have emerged. Is it necessary to have common languages in crisis situations for these countries? For instance, when the Chinese government exported new medicines and sent doctors to countries along the OBORI, translating the medicine names, treatment instructions, rescue vocabulary, and other related information into the various local languages of these countries would have been inefficient and time-consuming. Additionally, ensuring the accuracy of numerous translations can be challenging. Should universities along the OBORI establish programs focussed on language management, interpretation, written translation,

pandemic rescue language courses, aid coordination, multilingual information dissemination, and other aspects related to language in crisis situations?

Efforts have been made to provide important documents in different languages in healthcare settings. One issue faced by countries with a high number of migrants from diverse linguistic backgrounds is how to effectively present critical information to these migrant communities in a language they understand, ensuring accuracy and timeliness. The importance of clear communication in emergency situations has been demonstrated during the recent pandemic, as well as other natural disasters. An example of this is the US requirement under Executive Order 13166, *Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency* (US Department of Justice, 2022). These standards of treatment have been elevated to law in the United States where any agencies providing health care providing agencies must provide significant documents in the 15 most common languages other than English in the region they are working within. Further, and that patients and the public should also have the ability to access interpretation services and assistance in their own tongue. While governments around the world attempt to achieve this goal, they often face challenges (due to a range of technical or budgetary challenges). Issues that arise often include mistranslation.

A recent case of an unfortunate and serious mistranslation occurred in Virginia during the Covid-19 pandemic. In this particular case, a message was provided to the English-speaking public indicating that the Covid-19 vaccine would not be required for Virginians. However, when the text was automatically translated into Spanish using Google Translate, the message was rendered as the vaccine ‘no sera necesario,’ or ‘won't be necessary’. These incorrect translations served as a notable, yet not uncommon, example of the challenges faced in effectively informing the non-English speaking population about healthcare, particularly during the situation caused by the pandemic (Goodman, 2021). This situation could have been avoided if Spanish translators had been involved in checking the translation to ensure the message that was intended was sent.

As globalization takes stronger hold on the world, the major multinational corporations (many of which were founded in the Anglophone nations, or by people who are/were English speakers) have embraced English as their principal language of international communication. With the spread of Business English has come the spread of academic English. Since at least the beginning of the Internet, the vast majority of academic publication has increasingly and

now primarily been in English. The prevalence of English has resulted, in the present pandemic, in the majority of information and companies who produce and research the Covid-19 virus and its treatments working in English. The pandemic, therefore, rather than decreasing the importance of English as a language of importance in the world, has simply cemented it further at the top of the global language pile in terms of present importance to global trade, health, academic work, and general intercultural communication.

2.6. Summary

A significant amount of literature has been published regarding language policy and its potential implementation within the OBORI. In fundamental works by Spolsky (2004), Tollefson (1981 & 1991), and others, the model and use of language policy have been explained. While the existing literature has predominantly focussed on language policy implementation in various countries and the overarching influences of language policy, it is crucial to recognize that a mere understanding of language policy is insufficient to fully comprehend the intricacies of a multinational trading scheme like the OBORI. The complexities of the OBORI involve not only language considerations but also multifaceted economic, legal, and political dynamics that interact within its framework. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of the OBORI requires an interdisciplinary approach that goes beyond the scope of language policy alone. Church and King (1993) provided an applicable framework addressing the relation between major and less commonly spoken languages. However, the scope of their work lacked comparative analysis that processed geographical boundaries for situations that included multiple countries, such as the OBORI. As a result, there is a gap that needs to be filled relating to the major and less commonly spoken languages on a transnational level. In addition, Li and Ruiz (1984) provided context for the importance of the usage of less commonly spoken languages, which offers points to consider for language planning along the OBORI. However, their work lacked an in-depth analysis of how languages function in practice. Therefore, further study is necessary to thoroughly understand the role of less commonly spoken languages in planning before successful policy implementation can be achieved. Additionally, Grin (2003) and Su (2011) introduced the economic relevance and applications of language planning, which are useful for the present study due to the OBORI's concentration on trade. Furthermore, Xing and Liang (2016) pointed out the importance of local understanding of multiple languages to smooth business and economic transactions. The notions put forward by Xing and Liang

indicate that there is a need for further investigation of local multilingual activity in the countries along the OBORI. The literature that focusses on more specific factors impacting language issues along the OBORI should also include an analysis of various language policies, such as Chinese language policy, the use of English as a language of broader communication, and Russian language policy. Additionally, it is important to consider the language policies of other countries involved in the OBORI to gain a comprehensive understanding of the multilingual dynamics at play.

The literature on China includes the work of Shen and Xia (2018), who believed that China needs to be more assertive in its language program-related actions in order to promote Chinese along the countries of the OBORI. To achieve this outcome, they asserted that certain actions need to be taken, such as a stricter insistence on the importance of Chinese language classes for foreigners. Examples include such actions as enforcing stronger Chinese language competency for foreigners seeking education or employment in China, or a decrease in study abroad opportunities for students both entering and exiting China. However, this idea may be underestimating the strength of a lingua franca, such as English, throughout the regions of the OBORI. The effects of enforcing stronger Chinese language proficiency for foreigners or a decrease in study opportunities abroad for students entering and exiting China may not be easily mitigated.

Jenkins (2009) discussed the global dominance of English, and the studies by Jin (2009) and Tian (2007) confirmed the great frequency of the learning of English throughout the world. The strong presence of the English language in the fields of education, trade, energy, and transportation, among others, shows that the value of learning English is high in a wide array of disciplines. However, the regional competition English faces must be further considered. Dang (2018) found that 84.8% of the inhabitants in Kazakhstan speak Russian; 25% of school classes in Ukraine are also taught in Russian. These data reveal that the wide reach of the Russian language along the OBORI and knowledge of Russian in this region may be greater than that for English.

Overall, the literature provides language policies in major countries of the OBORI, yet it often overlooks how these policies function within the context of a fully connected transnational setting like the OBORI. While the literature provides great insight into its respective subjects, the missing details are crucial for the development of language policy,

planning, and strategy along the OBORI. Therefore, the current study will fill gaps found in the literature by analysing how institutions of higher education in Russian and China exhibit changes in foreign language teaching. It will also explore how varying prioritisation of languages manifests in Chinese and Russian universities.

The most influential and powerful members of the OBORI, such as Russia, Central Asian countries and China, play significant roles in shaping its policies and direction. Evidence of their influence can be seen through various indicators.

China and Russia are major economic powers globally. They have strong economies, large market sizes, and significant trade volumes, which gives them substantial leverage within the OBORI. China's trade policies and practices have a direct impact on the international trading system and the functioning of the OBORI.

Central Asia also serves as a crucial trading route bridging the east and west of the OBORI, with its member countries geographically connecting various regions. This geographical advantage makes Central Asia a pivotal player in global trade and a key driver of the agenda of the OBORI. Russia and China, as well as the collective voice of Central Asia, have political clout in international affairs. They actively engage in shaping global economic policies, including those related to trade and commerce. Their political influence extends to the OBORI, where they participate in negotiations and decision-making processes.

Considering the linguistic diversity within Central Asia, a language compromise is necessary to ensure effective global coordination. China's trade with the Central Asian nations has witnessed significant growth in recent years, resulting in increased demand for Chinese language proficiency among businesses and institutions in these regions. The details are mentioned in Chapter 6 below. This linguistic shift has enabled smoother communication, enhanced cultural understanding, and deeper economic cooperation.

It is important to recognize that while China and Russia hold significant economic power within the OBORI, a common language remains vital for bridging relations with other countries. For these reasons, a language compromise is essential for Central Asia to ensure effective global coordination. By adopting a common language and acknowledging the growing importance of languages like Chinese and Russian, the Central Asian countries can facilitate

better communication, strengthen relations, and achieve its shared goals within the OBORI and other international contexts.

In the present study, I also consider three key Central Asian countries to further explore the language strategies and how to integrate with the OBORI.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1. Overview

To provide a context and background for the current analysis, the previous chapter evaluated and explored language policy, its possible implementation as part of the OBORI, language planning, the economic relevance and applications of language planning and the global dominance of English, and recent developments. More importantly, based on the literature, the principles for theoretical materials needed for the development of research for the study were established and conceptualized.

This chapter provides details of the methodologies used. The current study aims to examine the significance of language strategies used by the key partner countries along the OBORI, with a focus on Russia, China and three of the five Central Asian countries.

This chapter begins with the overall research design and the context, sites and participants of the study. Further, I have provided information about how I recruited participants in this study and the methods I used to analyze the gathered data. Lastly, I explore the issues relating to the reliability of the research findings and examine some key ethical issues relevant to this research project. I also describe the rationale for my methodologies and for each research question.

3.2. Research design

As I stated in Chapter 1, the present study relates to language strategies, with a particular interest in language strategies of the key partner countries along the OBORI, especially Russia, China and three of the five Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan), by means of researching the trends in foreign language teaching and learning in some universities in China and Russia, as well as the overall trend in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. The research design applied in the present study was developed from theory and methods relevant to quantitative research in applied linguistics.

3.2.1. Research Design: Analysis of Language Choices of Students in Russian Universities

The following details the research design used to gather information to answer research question 1, described in Section 1.3.

Research question 1. What impact has the OBORI had on the popularity of Chinese and English language courses in the universities of Russia between 2010-2014 and since 2015?

a. What changes can be observed in Chinese and English language courses offerings in the universities of Russia between 2010-2014 and since 2015?

b. What changes can be observed in students' enrollment in Chinese and English language courses in the universities of Russia between 2010-2014 and since 2015?

c. Is there a significant difference between (i) the number of students enrolled in foreign language programs and (ii) the number of Chinese and English language courses offered between 2010-2014 and since 2015 in the universities of Russia?

3.2.1.1. Quantitative analysis

The design for the first research question is descriptive. The approach used was quantitative, and included the usage of longitudinal data. The approach is first described, followed by the design. A quantitative approach was taken because this research question used institutional data regarding student and program numbers rather than who the students are and what types of programs are available. In addition, using a quantitative approach provides confidence in being able to draw conclusions from the data as there is a sufficient data set from a large enough participant group. As for the data, institutional data spread out over the course of ten academic years is used to answer the first research question because it provides consistency for proposed trends. As a result, the approach included longitudinal data. The longitudinal study was necessary because I wanted to find out whether the implementation of the OBORI in 2015 had an impact on the data from 2015 to 2020. To apply the data into the larger context of the OBORI, the existence of this time span was the justification for using data that cover the years mentioned above. By comparing the data obtained from 2010 to 2020, it can be seen whether the changes in the data are correlated to the founding of the OBORI, as opposed to other factors.

In order to gain more insight into the attitudes of students to the language strategies employed by the Russian authorities, a questionnaire was deployed. A questionnaire was the source of the data. Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003) stated that the use of a questionnaire can quickly and cost-effectively collect a large amount of data. In this thesis, the questionnaire was web-based and no personal information was disclosed or recorded.

Survey respondents may or may not be completely honest in surveys. Dishonesty may occur if respondents perceive that the researcher has some specifically desired outcome or if respondents have a misguided wish to make themselves look better. Respondents seeking to undermine or confirm the researcher's objective or answer in a more favorable manner can skew the results (Burns, 2000). However, there exists no particular risk of bias within the context of the present study. As I was not representing any particular organization or authority, there were no vested interests in the outcomes of the questionnaire. Thus, the respondents were able to answer the questionnaire based on their personal preferences because there were no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. Given the desire to survey as many students as possible within time and cost constraints, combined with the number of questions to be answered, it was decided that web-based anonymous questionnaires would be administered, in order to maximise the effectiveness of investigating student attitudes.

The data that I sought to gather from the results of the questionnaire include:

- The numbers of the student populations studying Chinese and English in Russia based on my sampling;
- Relevant statistics from the questionnaire such as the association between the geographical location of speakers and the languages they have expressed interest in learning. Further analysis and results will be presented in Chapter 4 below.

As the OBORI was introduced in 2015, the data collection was split into two distinct time categories. The first category covered students who graduated in the pre-OBORI period, meaning the time period from 2010 to 2015. The second period of the study focussed on students who graduated during the post-launch period of the OBORI period, corresponding to data from 2015 to 2020.

The figures served as different variables such as gender, graduation year and regions to determine a potential trend in the sample population. The respondents provided answers based on their individual perceptions and choices, and as a consequence, were not necessarily representative of the broader population.

3.2.1.2. Respondents and data collection instruments

I made the questionnaire available online to the respondents, with the sole purpose of gathering genuine perspectives on foreign language study in Russia. For the present study, students and graduates from universities across Russia were surveyed. The respondents were found through snowballing.

My goal was to collect data from at least 100 respondents. The questionnaire took approximately 10 to 15 minutes for the respondents to complete; the brevity of the questionnaire ensured that respondents remained engaged and motivated to finish answering each question. These methods were reviewed and approved (Ref. UAHPEC20890) by the ethics board of the university of Auckland (See Appendix 2).

The questionnaire was anonymous. The reasoning for the use of anonymous collection method was also that this number is large enough to provide statistical validity in the given sample of universities.

This questionnaire consisted of 27 questions. All questions were multiple choice. Questions were divided into “YES; NO; N/A” and other multiple choice questions. In the questionnaire, I asked the following (The full details are in the Appendix 1).

The questionnaire consisted of four sections, seeking information about:

- (1) personal demographics;
- (2) students’ tertiary education, including the location and year(s) of completion to earn their highest degree, and the foreign language courses offered at their university;
- (3) students’ preferences and choices regarding university-level classes involving foreign language(s) learning;

(4) respondents' opinions about the value of the English and Chinese languages and the impact the OBORI may have had on the respondents' views.

The following items were asked in the questionnaire:

(1) General information:

- What is your gender?
- Which age group are you in?

(2) Regarding students' tertiary education:

- In what region of Russia did or will you complete your highest level of education?
- What year did/will you complete your highest level of education?
- What foreign language courses are/were available at the university of your highest level of education?

(3) Questions for students regarding their chosen courses and their views on foreign language courses:

- While attending university, for your highest degree, did you enrol in any foreign language courses?
- While attending university, for your highest degree, what foreign language class(es) did you choose?
- Have you ever withdrawn from any English language courses before completing the course?

If so, why did you stop studying English?

- Have you ever withdrawn from any Chinese course before completing the course?

If so, why did you stop studying Chinese?

- Do your future career plans include the use of English and/or Chinese?

- Which of the following English and/or Chinese -related courses does/did your university offer for your highest degree?

- Why did you choose classes in English or Chinese?

- Up to which level did you attend English or Chinese class(es) at university?

- Were these classes available as elective classes for all students?

- How did your university promote enrollment in courses in less commonly spoken languages?

(4) In relation to the personal opinions of respondents about the importance of learning the English and Chinese languages in the context of the OBORI:

- With the development of the One Belt One Road initiative, are you optimistic about the prospects of learning English and Chinese?

I explain the reasoning behind each section below.

In the first section, the respondents were asked to provide their demographic details including whether their highest university degree was completed in Russia, their gender, and their age group. This information was necessary because individual differences among students in such categories as gender and age would be used later to examine possible relationships between these factors and students' preferences regarding foreign language learning, and because this research question examined the impact of the OBORI on English and Chinese in Russian universities. Ensuring eligibility to participate in the questionnaire presented a challenge in a web-based questionnaire that employed snowball sampling. To address this, respondents were required to indicate that they had already completed their degree or were in the process of completing it at a university in Russia.

For this study, adjacent districts (in the figure below known as “okrug”) were grouped into greater areas. Russia was divided into three areas (shown below in Figure 2).

(1) The western region, which includes the Central Federal District, the Northwestern Federal District, the Volga Federal District and the North Caucasian Federal District;

- (2) The southern region, which includes the Southern Federal District, the Ural Federal District, the Siberian Federal District;
- (3) The eastern region, which includes the Far Eastern Federal District.



Figure 2: Map of Russia (*Eurasian Geopolitics*, n.d)

In the second section, the respondents were asked to provide information regarding their university, such as the location of the university where they attained their highest degree, their year of graduation, and what foreign language classes are/were offered at their university. This information was collected in order to help determine the impact of the OBORI on the development of Chinese and English language courses in different locations over time. For example, do English and Chinese language courses rise and fall in popularity over time or according to the location of the university within Russia?

My aim was to use the raw data in order to see how many Chinese and English language courses have been offered over time. The design of the present study also included an associational element. Two sets of associational pairs were tested. The first two variables to be examined for potential association were time, measured in (university) years, and number of student enrollments in English and Chinese courses at Russian universities. The second set of

variables were graduation years and number of Chinese and English language courses programs offered at Russian universities.

One of the questions respondents were asked was their region. The clusters within the total participating students or graduates sampled also represented different geographical zones. Research respondents were therefore selected based on their geographical relevance to the research question. Since the subjects of the study could be easily separated by location, a cluster sampling strategy was used. The strategy allowed for differences inherited simply through geographic features to be recognized and controlled for.

The data spans the period 2010 to 2020, covering university students who had graduated each year pre-OBORI and post-OBORI implementation periods. Given the data comes from pools of different geographic regions, statistical analysis of the data's variance was needed to be conducted in order to determine if differences among clusters were genuinely due to location, or if they could be attributed to outside factors or omitted variable bias. Analysis also considered the level of foreign language class offerings and enrollment rates in universities for each academic year during the same time periods. Analysis of the statistical tests performed with the data as well as correlative relations between variables provides a quantifiable result of the effect of the implementation of the OBORI, regarding the popularity of foreign language programs in Russian universities.

3.2.2. Research Design: Analysis of Language Choices of Students in Chinese Universities

The following details the research design used to gather information to answer research question 2 presented in Section 1.3.

Research question 2. What impact has the OBORI had on the popularity of the Russian and English language courses in the universities of mainland China between 2010-2014 and since 2015?

a. What changes can be observed in Russian and English language courses offerings in the universities of mainland China between 2010-2014 and since 2015?

b. What changes can be observed in students' enrollment in Russian and English language courses in the universities of mainland China between 2010-2014 and since 2015?

c. Is there a significant difference between (i) the number of students enrolled in foreign language programs and (ii) the number of Russian and English language courses offered between 2010-2014 and since 2015 in the universities of mainland China?

3.2.2.1. Quantitative analysis

A descriptive questionnaire was used for the second research question. The format of the questionnaire for university students at Chinese universities was similar to the questionnaire for university students in Russia. The results of the two questionnaires were compared, and any similarities and differences between the experiences of students in China and Russia were identified.

The questionnaire served the purpose of gathering genuine perspectives on foreign language study in China (see Appendix 1 for the questionnaire). The respondents were found through snowballing. I managed to find as many respondents as I could. The questionnaire took approximately 10 to 15 minutes for the respondents to complete; the brevity of the questionnaire ensured that respondents remain engaged and motivated to finish answering each question.

What was achieved by conducting this questionnaire was the compilation of data that can be analyzed to dissect the opinions of citizens on foreign language education along the countries in the OBORI. The questionnaire procedure itself acted as a data compiler, as each completed questionnaire adds another set of data to a bank of descriptive statistics. After all questionnaires had been completed, summary statistics were produced. These statistics include such measures as the proportion of respondents who studied foreign languages, the distribution of each language studied, and geographic concentrations of universities requiring foreign language study. As a result of the analysis of questionnaire responses, a greater understanding of the modern foreign language learning system in Chinese universities was achieved.

3.2.2.2. Respondents and data collection instruments

The design and development of this questionnaire for the Chinese students and graduates was informed by the overall rationale (see 1.2.) and the research questions (see 1.3.). The aim of the questionnaire that was used during the main data-gathering stage aimed to analyze the strategies used by Chinese universities in planning how to meet the current and future supply

of and demand for the English and Russian language courses (see Appendix 1 for the design of the questionnaire).

The questionnaire consisted of four sections, seeking information about:

(1) personal demographics;

(2) students' tertiary education, including the location and year(s) of completion to earn their highest degree, and the foreign language courses offered at their university;

(3) students' preferences and choices regarding university-level classes involving foreign language(s) learning;

(4) respondents' opinions about the value of the English and Chinese languages and the impact the OBORI may have had on the respondents' views.

The following items were asked in the questionnaire:

(1) General information:

- What is your gender?
- Which age group are you in?

(2) Regarding students' tertiary education:

- In what region of China did or will you complete your highest level of education?
- What year did/will you complete your highest level of education?
- What foreign language courses are/were available at the university of your highest level of education?

(3) Questions for students regarding their chosen courses and their views on foreign language courses:

- While attending university, for your highest degree, did you enrol in any foreign language courses?

- While attending university, for your highest degree, what foreign language class(es) did you choose?

- Have you ever withdrawn from any English language courses before completing the course?

If so, why did you stop studying English?

- Have you ever withdrawn from any Russian course before completing the course?

If so, why did you stop studying Russian?

- Do your future career plans include the use of English and/or Russian?

- Which of the following English and/or Russian-related courses does/did your university offer for your highest degree?

- Why did you choose classes in English or Russian?

- Up to which level did you attend English or Russian class(es) at university?

- Were these classes available as elective classes for all students?

- How did your university promote enrollment in courses in less commonly spoken languages?

(4) In relation to the personal opinions of respondents about the importance of learning the English and Russian languages in the context of the OBORI:

- With the development of the One Belt One Road initiative, are you optimistic about the prospects of learning English and Russian?

I explain the reasoning behind each section below.

In the first section, the respondents were asked to provide their demographic details including whether their highest university degree was completed in mainland China, their gender, and their age range. This information was necessary because individual differences among students in such categories as gender and age are used later to examine possible relationships between these factors and students' preferences regarding foreign language(s)

learning, and because this research question examined the impact of the OBORI on English and Russian in mainland Chinese universities. In order to be eligible to take part in the survey, respondents had to have or will have completed their degree at a university in mainland China.

In the second section, the respondents were asked to provide information regarding their university, such as the location of the university where they attained their highest degree, their year of graduation, and what foreign language classes are/were offered at their university. This information was collected in order to help determine the impact of the OBORI on the development of Russian and English language courses in different locations over time. For example, do English and Russian language courses rise and fall in popularity over time or according to the location of the university within China?

In the questionnaire, the distribution areas of the universities with the highest academic qualifications of the students were divided into northern, southern, eastern, western and central regions. This classification method is based on information published by the National Bureau of Statistics of China on the “Methods for the Division of Eastern, Central and Northeastern Regions” (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2011):

In the report of the National Bureau of Statistics, it was pointed out:

“The eastern part includes: Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Shandong, Guangdong and Hainan.

The western part includes: Inner Mongolia, Guangxi, Chongqing, Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan, Tibet, Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia and Xinjiang.

The central part includes: Shanxi, Anhui, Jiangxi, Henan, Hubei and Hunan.

The northeast part includes: Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang”⁵.

The above classification is useful, but it has shortcomings. For example, this map does not include the southern region. Therefore, on the basis of this report, I simplified the classification to include the entire regions of mainland China, and marked them in the questionnaire options as shown below:

⁵ The regions were divided according to the pre-existing interprovincial boundaries from the National Bureau of Statistics.

The eastern region includes: Tianjin, Hebei, Jiangsu, Shandong

The western region includes: Inner Mongolia, Guangxi, Chongqing, Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan, Tibet, Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia and Xinjiang.

The central region includes: Shanxi, Anhui, Jiangxi, Henan, Hubei and Hunan.

The northern region includes: Beijing, Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang

The southern region includes: Shanghai, Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong and Hainan.

The third section contained 10 items. These were generated and developed from a number of sources.

The remaining questionnaire items of Section 3 were created in response to the research question. Regarding the subjects which were offered by the university, the subjects were found on various Chinese universities' websites.

In the fourth section, the respondents were asked to express their opinion on the impact of the OBORI on the popularity of English and Russian language courses. This information was necessary for finding out the implementation and direction of future language strategies. Gathering these opinions was essential to gain insights into the implementation and direction of future language strategies. By understanding the needs, evaluating the effectiveness, and considering stakeholder perspectives, policymakers can refine and adapt language learning strategies to better address the impact of the OBORI and ensure successful outcomes.

The questionnaire served the purpose of gathering genuine perspectives on foreign language study in China. The respondents were found through snowballing. The goal was at least 100 respondents.

The findings of the questionnaire were compiled into data that highlighted key trends. Upon analysis, the data also allowed for some key insights into the opinions held by the respondents regarding foreign language education. These statistics include such measures as a proportion of respondents who studied foreign languages, the distribution of each of the languages studied, the impact of geographic locations of universities on the kinds of foreign languages offered, and their opinions on English and Russian in the context of the OBORI. By

analyzing the responses in the questionnaire, I gained a greater understanding of situation of modern foreign language learning in Chinese universities.

By preserving the anonymous nature of the responses, the questionnaire was likely to prove more genuine. No personal information was recorded by the researcher. Respondents could withdraw from the research up until the point when they submit the questionnaire, but after this they were not able to withdraw any information because it was already recorded anonymously.

3.2.3. Research Design: Analysis of language policies/strategies and the OBORI in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan

The following details the research design used to gather information to answer research question 3, that was presented in Section 1.3.

Research question 3. How may language policies/strategies and the OBORI in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan affect the future of the OBORI?

In the present study, I used document analysis to analyze what government departments and agencies have published regarding language promotion, in this case, I was able to find the most up-to-date information about these 3 Central Asian countries. I also used online public sources in Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to determine where language strategies are implemented. In evaluating language strategies, document analysis was used to determine how much the Chinese, Russian, and key Central Asian governments spend on language strategies.

The systematic procedure of document analysis in qualitative research serves as an analytical method to examine both printed and digital material by examining data to extract meaning, acquire better understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Rapley, 2007; Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Records that are commonly used for systematic assessment as part of a study take an assortment of forms. They include advertisements, newspapers clippings and articles, media releases, program proposals, radio, television and podcast program scripts and transcripts, organisational or institutional reports and various public records. These records are usually

found in newspaper archives, podcasts, radio, TV, historical society offices, and organisational or institutional files (Bowen, 2009).

3.3. Ethical considerations

An application to undertake my questionnaires was submitted to the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee (UAHPEC) and approved in 2021 (Ref. UAHPEC20890). Participants were informed that by completing the questionnaire administered to them, consent would then be granted for the data they provided to be collected and used collectively to formulate conclusions on the topics discussed. Participants were assured that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time. Further, all data was anonymised to avoid revealing their identity (see Appendix 2).

Chapter 4. Language strategies and language preferences in the Russian tertiary sector

4.1. Analysis to be undertaken

Russia is one of China's key partners participating in the OBORI. Since 2015, the Russian government has considered China to be their top trading partner, with a staggering two-way trade volume of \$95 billion (USD) according to trade data collected in 2014 (United Nations General Assembly, 2014; Trenin, 2015).

Russia has a vast territory with rich and diverse landscapes and natural resources. The country is located in northeast Eurasia. It is bordered by the Arctic Ocean to the north, the Pacific Ocean to the east, and the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea to the south. The Ural Mountains, which stretch from north to south, traditionally represent a border between Europe and Asia (*World Regional Geography*, n.d.). The region of Siberia is located to the east of the Urals, sharing borders with Kazakhstan, China and Mongolia and stretching to the Arctic coast. It is sparsely populated and is covered in coniferous forests, marshes, tundra in the north, and mountainous terrain in the south (*Embassy of Russia*, n.d.). A map of Russia is provided in order to better understand its geography in Section 3.2.1.2. (*Eurasian Geopolitics*, n.d.).

Considering the geographic expanse and regional diversity of Russia, the country offers a rich assortment of tertiary education opportunities. Shifting from the natural landscapes to the academic terrain, this thesis explores the distinct offerings at Russian higher education institutions, specifically focusing on English and Chinese language courses. I have identified three major regions - the West, the South, and the East - as the regions considered here. The language programs and academic approaches differ between these regions, reflecting the cultural diversity and distinct academic traditions prevalent in each. The details can be seen below.

For the purposes of the present study, my division of Russia into 3 regions is shown below:

- (1) A western region to include the Central Federal District, the Northwestern Federal District, the Volga Federal District and the North Caucasian Federal District;

- (2) A southern region to include the Southern Federal District, the Ural Federal District, the Siberian Federal District;
- (3) An eastern region to include the Far Eastern Federal District.

Through an analysis of the data by region, we consider geographical and local influences in relation to the OBORI and their impact on the popularity of Chinese and English language programs in Russian universities.

This Chapter aims to explore the following research question, and in this section, I am addressing the results for research question 1, which is about the effect of the introduction of the OBORI on foreign language programs in Russian universities:

What impact has the OBORI had on the perceived popularity of foreign language programs in the universities of Russia?

To address this general question, three more specific questions were considered:

- a. What changes can be observed in Chinese and English language courses offerings in the universities of Russia between 2010-2014 and since 2015?
- b. What changes can be observed in students' enrollment in Chinese and English language courses in the universities of Russia between 2010-2014 and since 2015?
- c. Is there a significant difference between (i) the number of students enrolled in foreign language programs and (ii) the number of Chinese and English language courses offered between 2010-2014 and since 2015 in the universities of Russia?

The above research questions focus on the universities of Russia and the experiences of graduates who had been studying at those universities. Specifically, it is about language choices among students and the level of awareness of the teaching and learning of English and Chinese in Russian universities.

By exploring these questions, we gained insights into the extent to which students' interest in Chinese and English language courses aligns with the priorities of the Russian universities. Understanding students' language preferences and awareness provides valuable information for policymakers to evaluate the effectiveness of language strategies, identify potential areas of

alignment or divergence with governmental priorities, and make informed decisions regarding resource allocation and language policy development.

4.2. Data analysis

I used quantitative methods in my questionnaire to obtain answers for my first overarching research question: What impact has the OBORI had on the popularity of Chinese and English language courses in Russian universities? The quantitative data analysis involved several statistical procedures such as descriptive analysis.

These are the steps I conducted in my research. First, I shared a link of my online questionnaire to the respondents, who were either studying at Russian universities or were graduates from Russian universities. The questionnaire was translated into Russian then administered in such a way as to cater to the language preference of the participants. The questionnaire included questions such as whether they thought their university offered any English and Chinese language courses, whether they were/are enrolled in any English and Chinese language courses, and other similar questions regarding English and Chinese language courses. After receiving the data, I compiled the data onto an Excel spreadsheet. I sorted the responses out according to age, gender and district.

A total of 198 respondents filled out the questionnaire, from which only 163 questionnaires were deemed to be valid, representing 82.3% of all responses. Answers to the questionnaire were invalid and the responses were discarded where they included cases in which the respondents indicated that they did not graduate from a university in Russia and/or they were duplicates from the same IP address (more than one questionnaire was from the same IP address). In some districts the number of respondents was less than 10. As there were insufficient responses, the district responses were aggregated into larger regions to enable meaningful analysis to be undertaken. Analysis of the responses showed different trends, depending on which region the respondents undertook their study.

In Table 2, I present the detailed background information of the respondents. This information includes the respondents' demographic information (gender, age range), and university information (the Federal district⁶, where the respondents were studying).

Table 2. Background information of student respondents

Group	Category	No. of respondents	%
The student's university background	Graduates from Russian universities	106	65
	Still studying at Russian universities	57	35
Gender	Male	86	52.8
	Female	77	47.2
Age group	18-20	36	22.1
	21-30	63	38.7
	31-40	58	35.6
	41-50	6	3.7
Year of graduation with the highest degree	2000-2004	9	5.5
	2005-2009	14	8.6
	2010-2014	41	25.2
	2015-2019	34	20.9
	2020-2024	52	31.9
	After 2025	9	5.5
The university location with the highest degree	Central Federal District	46	28.2
	Northwestern Federal District	30	18.4
	Southern Federal District	19	11.7
	North Caucasian Federal District	6	3.7
	Volga Federal District	13	8.0
	Ural Federal District	9	5.5
	Siberian Federal District	28	17.2

⁶ US - Russia Business Council. The Russian Federation / Российская Федерация. Retrieved from <https://usrbc.org/site/resources/russianmap> [Accessed on 18.08.2021]

As seen in the table, the respondents from the study consisted of slightly more males (52.8%) than females (47.2%). The students (aged 21-30) made up a greater number of respondents, comprising 38.7% of all respondents. Over half of respondents completed their degree in 2010-2024. There were more graduated between 2010-2014 (25.2%) than between 2015-2019 (20.9%) comparatively speaking.

A breakdown of respondents showed that gender was almost equal between male and female. The data suggest that the gender of respondents was not a significant factor to indicate a difference in the responses based on gender. The answers did not seem to be different according to the gender, thus avoiding the potential bias. I utilized their responses to further investigate how the implementation of the OBORI impacted their English and Chinese language learning. However, the numbers of the students who graduated before 2010 and those who will graduate after 2025 was only 9 out of 163 (5.5% of the total number). Such a sample size is not large enough to provide meaningful or sufficient analysis. Since the number of respondents in the present study who graduated before 2010 was not significant, I did not include them in my analysis.

4.2.1. The distribution of Chinese and English language courses in Russian universities by region and over time

In this section, I considered the availability and popularity of foreign language courses that have been offered by universities in different regions of Russia before and after the implementation of the OBORI, in order to see the effect the OBORI has had, if any, on decisions by Russian universities on their Chinese and English language course offerings.

In the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to choose the year when they received their highest degree. The present study classified the respondents' year of graduation into their year of graduation. A comparison was made between the relative frequencies of offering English and Chinese language courses at different times and in different regions, using a parallel data set to analyze the trends. It was then considered whether the OBORI may have had any influence. Based on this present research, the conclusions corresponded with the findings as reported by the OBORI. My aim is to find the change in the perceived pervasiveness of foreign language courses, or classes, from before and after the implementation of the

OBORI. The findings can be drawn from answers regarding students' knowledge on their own courses, if they undertook any English or Chinese courses, or if not, their knowledge on whether or not the university in question offered foreign language courses. Where a university did or does offer foreign language courses, the number of classes run has also been drawn from the students' answers.

In order to demonstrate the influence of the formation of the OBORI on the frequency and availability of English and Chinese language course offerings, three factors were taken into account. The first two factors were the year of graduation of the individual respondent and region where each respondent was attending university, which served as independent variables. The third factor was the availability of the English and Chinese language course offerings at the universities in the questionnaire, which served as the dependent variable.

The following were looked at:

(1) The association between the frequency of the English language course offerings as opposed to Chinese language course offerings at the universities located in the Federal districts where the respondents came from, to determine the number and frequency of English and Russian language courses in each district.

(2) The association between the frequency of the English language course offerings as opposed to Chinese language course offerings at the universities and the year of graduation of the individual respondent, to determine if in some years before and after the formation of the OBORI, the course offerings have increased or decreased in response to the existence of the OBORI.

(3) The association between the frequency of the English language course offerings as opposed to Chinese language course offerings from which the university data have been received in each region, and the year of graduation of the individual respondent. I used the university data, based on the students' responses, to determine if the classes in the respective English and Chinese languages were more frequent before or after the formation of the OBORI.

The universities from which I collected data were located in the following districts: the Central Federal District, Northwestern Federal District, Southern Federal District, North

Caucasian Federal District, Volga Federal District, Ural Federal District, Siberian Federal District and Far Eastern Federal District of Russia.

The following table provides data on the percentage of universities according to the eight Russian Federal districts that offered English and Chinese language courses. The respondents were able to choose multiple options. The percentages in each district represent the proportion of universities the respondents indicated that offered English and Chinese language courses.

Table 3. English and Chinese language courses offered by universities in 8 Federal Districts

			English courses	Chinese courses	Total respondents
Federal District of highest degree achieved	Central Federal District	No.	43	19	46
		%	93%	41.3%	
	Northwestern Federal District	No.	21	10	30
		%	70%	33.3%	
	Southern Federal District	No.	17	4	19
		%	89.4%	21%	
	North Caucasian Federal District	No.	6	1	6
		%	100%	16.7%	
	Volga Federal District	No.	11	8	13
		%	84.6%	61.5%	
	Ural Federal District	No.	8	4	9
		%	88.9%	44.4%	
	Siberian Federal District	No.	23	15	28
		%	82.1%	53.6%	
	Far Eastern Federal District	No.	10	7	12
		%	83.9%	58.3%	
Total	No.	139	68	163	

The following patterns can be seen from the above table.

While English language courses were offered on average in a higher proportion compared to Chinese across Russia, the distribution of English language courses offered across Russia was not uniform. In the Northwestern Federal District of Russia, there were considerably fewer

English language courses being offered, with only 70% of participants reporting that their university offered English language courses. In all other Federal Districts, as reported by respondents, more than 80% of respondents reported that English language courses were offered by the universities attended by the respondents.

The next table shows an analysis of the graduation year of students with their highest degree compared with the spread of foreign language courses studied.

Table 4. Graduation year of students and the percentage of course offerings

			English classes	Chinese classes	Total
The graduation year of respondents with their highest degree	Before 2000	No.	2	1	4
		%	50%	25%	
	2000-2004	No.	9	0	9
		%	100%	0	
	2005-2009	No.	14	0	14
		%	100%	0	
	2010-2014	No.	39	12	41
		%	98%	29%	
	2015-2019	No.	24	18	34
		%	71%	53%	
	2020-2024	No.	44	34	52
		%	85%	65%	
	After 2025	No.	7	3	9
		%	78%	33%	
Total		No.	139	68	163

From the above table, the following observations can be made:

Comparing the data of university graduates and their year of graduation, 98% of respondents in the years 2010-2014 reported being aware of English language course offerings by their university. In the years 2015-2019 (after the introduction of the OBORI) across Russia, only 71% of graduates reported being aware of English language course offerings by their university, there was a decrease of 27%.

When comparing the same time periods for Chinese language courses, there was a corresponding 24% increase in the level of awareness of Chinese language courses. In the years 2010-2014, only 29% of university graduates were aware of Chinese language courses, whereas 53% of respondents indicated that Chinese language classes were offered at their universities between 2015 and 2019. There was insufficient data from the questionnaire to draw definite conclusions. Factors such as students' awareness and perception of the availability of English language and Chinese language classes may be influenced by personal interests. If the students did not have a need or desire to learn another language, they would not have sought information on language courses, or taken notice of any language promotions. Hypothetically speaking, after the introduction of the OBORI the drop in the percentage of students studying English courses may have been because students were less aware of the English courses than the Chinese language courses being offered at their universities.

In order to demonstrate the influence of the formation of the OBORI on the frequency and availability of English and Chinese language course offerings, three factors were taken into account. The first two factors were the year of graduation of the individual respondent and region where each respondent was attending university, used as independent variables. Due to the low numbers of responses at a district level, responses were aggregated at a regional level to enable meaningful analysis. The third factor was the percentages of the English and Chinese language course offerings at the universities in the questionnaire, which served as a dependent variable. The data are displayed in the following table.

Table 5. The year of graduation of students and the percentage of English and Chinese course offerings

			English language courses	Chinese language courses	Total
2010-2014	The Western region	No.	28	7	30
		%	93.3%	23.3%	
	The Southern region	No.	8	4	8
		%	100%	50%	
	The Eastern region	No.	3	1	3
		%	100%	33%	
2015-2019	The Western region	No.	14	10	19

		%	73.7%	52.6%	
	The Southern region	No.	8	6	11
		%	72.7%	54.5%	
	The Eastern region	No.	2	2	4
		%	50%	50%	
2020-2024	The Western region	No.	26	19	32
		%	81%	59.4%	
	The Southern region	No.	14	11	16
		%	87.5%	68.8%	
	The Eastern region	No.	4	4	4
		%	100%	100%	

Since the number of respondents in the present study who graduated before 2010 was not significant, I did not include them in this analysis. In this table, I see the proportion of respondents who indicated that the percentage of class offerings in English was greater than that in Chinese language courses. The above table also illustrates the frequency of English as opposed to course offerings in Chinese.

Within the 2010-2014 cohort, overall approximately 30% of respondents in all regions combined reported that Chinese language courses were offered at their university (12 from a total of 41 responses). However, from 2015 to 2019, this number increased significantly to a half of all respondents (18 from a total of 34 responses), while the number of students who reported that English classes were offered in their university decreased substantially in all the regions.

As seen in Section 1.2, my initial hypothesis was that the introduction of the OBORI has resulted in an increase in the number of Chinese language courses offered at universities in Russia. Based on the perception and experience of respondents over a 6-year period from 2015 to 2019, the data from the questionnaires supported that hypothesis.

The data from the questionnaire revealed that almost all the participants (93.3% of respondents from the western region, 100% of respondents from the southern and the eastern region) indicated that their universities offered English classes before 2015. From 2015, all of the universities of the participants offered fewer English classes. More than 50% of the total

respondents in each region reported that their university offered Chinese courses based on their recollection. Compared with the institutions before the introduction of the OBORI, the offering rate of Chinese language courses has increased the fastest in the western region (from 23.3% of the region's respondents to 52.6% of the region's respondents). The data suggest that students had more awareness to choose Chinese courses in this region. Reason for this increase in awareness could be as a result of an increase in offerings, an increase in promotion, or a combination of both offerings and promotion.

After reviewing the questionnaires for students across a variety of universities throughout Russia, it was found that overall, universities did increase the availability of Chinese language courses. Although the data obtained from the students were based on their individual experience and perception, the results showed that Chinese course offerings grew at a higher rate compared to the growth of English course offerings within Russia.

4.2.2. Students' preferences in Russian universities by region and over time

After having collected data on English and Chinese language course offerings at the universities involved in the present study, I analyzed the relationship between student course enrollment choices and total number of course options available to respondents. In this section, I used these data to explore student preferences for specific types of classes and analyze various factors contributing to these differences in preference for the Chinese language courses compared to the English language classes. Specifically, I focussed on how three factors - Russia's role in the OBORI, differences across regions in Russia, and differences across recent time periods - have affected students' preferences for these two areas of study.

I collected the data from the respondents regarding which foreign language courses they chose during their studies for their highest degree. Subsequently, I analyzed the student enrollment trends. Based on the data, I determined whether or not the OBORI may have had an impact on the numbers of enrollments in Chinese language classes based on the data from the questionnaire. The analysis of the data shows strong variation in university course offerings across the districts. This variation, in turn, affects the personal choices made by students enrolling in Chinese and English courses in these districts.

The following table reflects the figures obtain from the data of all the respondents who responded “I have foreign language classes in my university” and those who signed up for English and Chinese language classes across districts.

Table 6. Foreign language courses taken by Federal district of highest achieved degree

			English courses	Chinese courses	Total respondents	
Federal district of highest achieved degree	Central Federal District	No.	22	14	31	
		%	71%	45.2%		
	Northwestern Federal District	No.	8	6	16	
		%	50%	37.5%		
	Southern Federal District	No.	9	3	12	
		%	75%	25%		
	North Caucasian Federal District	No.	4	0	5	
		%	80%	0		
	Volga Federal District	No.	8	6	9	
		%	88.9%	66.7%		
	Ural Federal District	No.	3	3	4	
		%	75%	75%		
	Siberian Federal District	No.	15	4	17	
		%	88.2%	23.5%		
	Far Eastern Federal District	No.	2	3	4	
		%	50%	75%		
	Total		No.	71	39	98

The table shows that in all districts without regard to the year of graduation, the number of students who have enrolled in English language courses was greater than the number that enrolled in Chinese language courses.

In the Central Federal District, Northwestern Federal District, Southern Federal District, North Caucasian Federal District, and Siberian Federal District, the percentage of Chinese language course enrollments for students was under 50% of the total respondents. By contrast, in other districts, the percentage was more than 50% of the respondents. In summary, the

overall enrollment rate in English language courses was greater than the enrollment rate of Chinese language courses. However, in the Far Eastern Federal District, the percentage of Chinese language course enrollments for students was higher than that of English language course enrollments for students (75% of the total respondents v.s. 50% of the total respondents).

Moreover, in the Northwestern Federal District and Volga Federal District, the difference between the enrollments in English language courses and Chinese language courses was less than 25% of the total respondents, while in Ural Federal District, they were equal.

The following table represents the relation between the graduation year of the student's highest degree and the enrollment rate of students enrolling in English and Chinese language courses:

Table 7. The graduation year of students and the enrollment rates of foreign language courses

			English classes	Chinese classes	Total	
The graduation year of respondents with their highest degree	2000-2004	No.	3	0	3	
		%	100%	0		
	2005-2009	No.	7	0	7	
		%	100.0%	0		
	2010-2014	No.	16	7	22	
		%	72.8%	31.9%		
	2015-2019	No.	14	8	22	
		%	63.6%	36.3%		
	2020-2024	No.	27	24	38	
		%	71%	63.1%		
	After 2025	No.	3	0	4	
		%	75%	0		
	Total		No.	71	39	98

As can be seen in the table above, there was a downward trend in the enrollment rate for English language courses between 2015 and 2019. In comparing English language course enrollments among respondents in years 2010-2014 to those in 2015-2019, it was found an enrollment drop from 72.8% of the total respondents in 2010-2014 to 63.6% of the total respondents in 2015-2019. In contrast, from 2015 to 2019, there was a slight increase in the

percentage of Chinese language course enrollments compared to the period before the introduction of the OBORI in 2015. The enrollment rate for Chinese language courses was 31.9% of respondents in 2010-2014, but in 2015-2019, the enrollment rate increased to 36.3% of respondents.

In order to demonstrate the influence of the formation of the OBORI on the enrollment rate for foreign language classes, three factors were taken into account. The first two factors were the year of graduation of the individual respondent and region where each respondent was attending university, used as independent variables. Due to the low numbers of responses at a district level, responses were aggregated at a regional level to enable meaningful analysis where there was insufficient data at a district level to be useful. The third factor was the percentages of the English and Chinese language enrollment rate of the students at the universities in the questionnaire, which served as a dependent variable. The data are displayed in the following table.

Table 8. The year of graduation of students and the enrollment rate for foreign language classes

			English classes	Chinese classes	Total
2010-2014	The Western region	No.	9	5	13
		%	69.2%	38.5%	
	The southern region	No.	6	1	7
		%	85.7%	14.3%	
	The eastern region	No.	1	1	2
		%	50%	50%	
2015-2019	The Western region	No.	11	6	17
		%	64.7%	35.3%	
	The southern region	No.	3	1	4
		%	75%	25%	
	The eastern region	No.	0	1	1
		%	0	100%	
2020-2024	The Western region	No.	15	15	24
		%	62.5%	62.5%	
	The southern region	No.	11	8	13

region	%	84.6%	61.5%	
The eastern region	No.	1	1	1
region	%	100.0%	100.0%	

After the introduction of the OBORI in 2015, it can be seen from the table that from 2015 to 2019, there was a significant drop in the enrollment of students into English language courses in all the regions.

The percentage of students choosing Chinese language courses in some regions has increased, such as in the southern region and in the eastern region. However, in the western region, the percentage of students enrolling in Chinese language courses decreased between 2010-2014 and 2015-2019.

In summary, in the southern region and in the eastern region, more respondents focussed on the study of Chinese than the learning of English after the introduction of the OBORI, while in the western region, more respondents focussed on learning English than Chinese.

Modern relations between Russia and China can be described as dynamic and there are many facets in the relationships between these two countries. In recent years, a large number of projects have been implemented in the Ural region. The Russian authorities are actively participating in business with the Chinese, the number of people learning Chinese is also increasing (Potapova, 2018).

From 2015, interest in studying English for students increased only in the Central Federal District and Southern Federal District compared to students in other districts. However, there was a noticeable increase in interest in Chinese language courses among students. Within these increases, enrollment rates for Chinese language courses were highest in the Far Eastern Federal District, with the rate of student enrollment for these courses increasing faster than for English language courses.

In the previous section it was concluded that there is a difference in the enrollment in English and Chinese language courses by geographic location within Russia. In general, the enrollment in English courses was greater than the enrollment rate of Chinese language courses. However, in the Far Eastern Federal District, the percentage of Chinese language course

enrollments for students was higher than for English language course enrollments (75% of the total respondents versus 50% of the total respondents).

The Northwestern Federal District and Volga Federal District had modest differences of less than 25% of the total respondents in English language courses and Chinese language courses, while in the Ural Federal District enrollments were equal. Therefore, students from these districts can be provided with more options from which to choose Chinese courses.

4.2.3. The impact of the OBORI on student motivation to learn English and Chinese

In this section, I analyzed the initial motivation among respondents to learn the English and Chinese languages, and their views on the long-term views on the value of English and Chinese given their perceived impact of the OBORI in Russia. The goal is to provide data and analysis which helps us understand whether the OBORI has had an impact on the decisions to provide more English or Chinese courses in the tertiary sector. The data analysis can provide insights as to what new possible investments may be made to increase English and Chinese programs to accommodate the OBORI environment. Thus, this section focusses on the responses from the questionnaire regarding the motivations of students for studying English and/or Chinese together with their views on the long-term prospects for these disciplines, given the introduction of the OBORI. Students were given the option to choose as many responses as they wished.

In Table 9 below I summarized the responses of the students regarding their motivation to choose Chinese or English.

Table 9. The reasons students have selected English language courses

		No. of responses	%
The reasons for choosing English language courses	Purely liked English	25	16.4%
	To be able to communicate with English-speaking foreigners	13	8.6%
	To expand my career options	50	32.9%
	For passing exams	16	10.5%
	I liked the teacher(s)	1	0.6%

My family/relatives have connections with this language	4	2.6%
I wanted to go to English-speaking countries to work or live	26	17.1%
To get to know the culture of English-speaking countries better	17	11.2%
Total	152	100%

As seen in the above table, the three most frequent reasons for studying English were: 1. to expand career options (32.9% of responses); 2. the desire to go to English-speaking countries to work or live (17.1% of responses); and 3. the English language is appealing (16.4% of responses).

When comparing these results with the ones for students who chose to study Chinese, this study showed that the students' reasons for choosing their respective languages differed. Thus, the same number of respondents ticked the box indicating their motivation to study Chinese was to expand career options (24%) as the ones who ticked the box indicating their motivation was the desire to go to Chinese-speaking countries to work or live (24%). Additionally, 19% of responses indicated an interest in getting to know the culture of China better. The full breakdown for the motivations behind taking Chinese classes is shown in the table below.

Table 10. The reasons students have selected Chinese language courses

		No.	%
The reasons for choosing Chinese language courses	Purely liked Chinese	16	16%
	To be able to communicate with Chinese-speaking foreigners	10	10%
	To expand my career options	24	24%
	For passing exams	3	3%
	I liked the teacher(s)	3	3%
	My family/relatives have connections with this language	1	1%
	I wanted to go to Chinese-speaking countries to work or live	24	24%

	To get to know the culture of China better	19	19%
Total		100	100%

My tables suggest that the students pursuing the study of English and Chinese were motivated by the desire to enhance their careers (For English: 32.9% of respondents, for Chinese: 24% of respondents).

There are several ways in which language can build careers. One way is by building relationships with people from other cultures, which helps expand professional networks. In a world where global trade is increasing, learning another language can make more job opportunities available. Other benefits are that students can improve their listening, comprehension and negotiation skills. By also learning about the culture, students can also learn to be more understanding of others' points of view.

My further analysis was grouped into three themes to draw some over-arching conclusions about students' motivation for learning English and/or Chinese. These themes are:

1. Self-advancement: To expand career options; For passing exams, I wanted to go to Chinese/English-speaking countries to work or live;
2. Curiosity: The language is appealing to me, to be able to communicate with Chinese/English-speaking foreigners; I liked the teacher(s); to get to know the culture of China/English-speaking countries better;
3. Identity: My family/relatives have connections with this language.

In the table below, the percentages of responses according to these themes is given.

Table 11. Reasons for Selecting English and Chinese courses according to 3 broader themes

		% (English)	% (Chinese)
Reasons for Selecting English and Chinese courses by 3 themes	Self-advancement	60.6%	51%
	Curiosity	36.8%	48%
	Identity	2.6%	1%

From this table, it can be seen:

- (1) For the respondents learning English, self-advancement constitutes a much more frequent motivation than curiosity.
- (2) For the respondents learning Chinese, curiosity as a motivation is only 3% lower than the self-advancement reasons.
- (3) It can be concluded that there is a wider disparity between self-advancement and curiosity for the students who studied English, versus the smaller difference between the two reasons for the students who chose to study Chinese. For 60.6% of English language students and 51% of Chinese language students, self-advancement was one of the main reasons why students choose these individual subjects.

The following table outlines students' opinions on the prospects of studying English compared to studying Chinese. It provides a breakdown of how the respondents answered the question regarding their feelings about the prospects of English as opposed to Chinese after the introduction of the OBORI. In the questionnaire, I asked the respondents: "With the implementation of the OBORI, how do you feel about the prospects for English versus Chinese?" They were given response options such as: "English"; "Chinese"; "positive about both"; and "I do not know".

My hypothesis can be divided into two aspects:

(1) English has been popular since the 1970s, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It might not be affected by the OBORI. In spite of the introduction or the impact of the OBORI and trade emphasis, the interest in English, as measured by students' optimism about this language has remained the same.

(2) My second side of the hypothesis is that even if there was an increase in the interest of Chinese language study, the demand for English measured by students' preferences will not be reduced, but instead stay the same.

Table 12. The future value of English and Chinese with the development of the OBORI

	No.	%
With the implementation of the English	19	22%

OBORI, how do you feel about the prospects for English versus Chinese?	Chinese	13	15%
	Positive about both	53	61%
	I do not know	1	1%
	Total	86	100%

Data in the table above shows the collected opinions from my questionnaire, where the question “Considering the implementation of the OBORI, how do you feel about the prospects for English versus Chinese?” was asked. Specifically, respondents were asked whether or not they believed either that the number of Chinese or English language course offerings would increase, or that the number of both courses would increase. Additionally, respondents had an option of answering this question with “I do not know”.

The data indicate that the majority of respondents believed the introduction of the OBORI would lead to an increase in the number of English course offerings as opposed to Chinese course offerings. The data show that 22% of the total respondents were optimistic about the English language being the most likely to benefit from the OBORI. However, the difference between those who chose English and Chinese was still relatively small, with a 7% difference (15% of respondents believing that Chinese would be of greater importance after the formation of the OBORI).

In Russia, English has become the main foreign language of study since the 1970s (Alpatov, 2014). After World War II, Spanish became the fourth most popular foreign language taught in Soviet public schools (along with English, French and German). However, during the Cold War, all international contact was heavily restricted, leading to a sharp decline in opportunities for citizens to learn foreign languages (Ivanova & Tivyaeva, 2015). However, English quickly became popular and, as a result, institutions put more emphasis on English in education. In addition, English began appearing in all regions of the Soviet Union. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, English became a very popular language to study.

Although in this study a greater number of respondents were optimistic about English following the development of the OBORI, it was also found that a greater number of respondents were optimistic about Chinese. A main reason for this may be the expected growth in international trade as a result of China initiating the OBORI.

4.2.4. The relative proportion of Business English/Chinese language courses and the development of the OBORI

In this section, I analyzed the link between the introduction of the OBORI and the frequency of Business English and Business Chinese language courses. My hypothesis is that the introduction of the OBORI, with its focus on economic growth, has had an influence on the university students in Russia choosing to enrol in Business English or Business Chinese courses.

My hypothesis regarding Business English courses was supported by the following:

For non-native business professionals, Ellis and Johnson (1994) suggested some reasons they should learn Business English.

There are several reasons that could be applied to many Russian business professionals, for example:

- Employment in a multinational company, where the company requires knowledge of English, so employees have daily interactions with native speakers.
- The company owns various subsidiaries in Europe and uses the English language to communicate;
- The company is in the process of internationalization and has decided, based on the frequency of travel to the United States and other factors, to use English as the primary company language.

From the above-mentioned literature findings, along with this study focus on the OBORI, I could reasonably make the assumption that Business English is a popular course selection among students.

My hypothesis regarding Business Chinese courses was supported by the following:

According to the Rector of the Nizhny Novgorod State Linguistic University, Dobrolyubova Zhanna Nikonova, the students of the university's program called *Effective communication in foreign and Russian languages in professional activities* would be able to learn English, French, German and Chinese, in addition to improving their proficiency with the Russian language. When studying each of the foreign languages, the students needed to choose

the specific associated subjects - economics, management, law, technology, social science and medicine. The staff of the department responsible for putting the courses together agreed to teach all students to confidently conduct business negotiations in a foreign language, maintain a conversation on any everyday topics in a foreign language, masterfully conduct correspondence in Russian and foreign languages, competently draw up working documents, logically build speech, and form persuasive arguments (*NN-now*, 2020).

According to news (*Irkutsk State University, 2019*) from Irkutsk State University, the universities in Baikal, Irkutsk, Ulan-Ude and Vladivostok have organized competitions with regard to Business Chinese.

According to the competition recorded on Irkutsk University's website, students from Irkutsk University, Ulan-Ude University and Vladivostok University participated on 23 March 2019 (*Irkutsk State University, 2019*). They performed various written and verbal tasks. In the written portion, respondents demonstrated their skills in handling text and video materials in the fields of trade and economics, including business correspondence, correcting vocabulary and grammatical errors, and answering tests and open-ended questions.

The verbal part was divided into two phases - a pair conversation (phone conversation on a specific topic), and a personal conversation with the judges in the form of an interview. The final stage was to interview the finalists in the competition. The final stage was traditionally the most interesting part of the competition, because the entire dialogue was conducted in Chinese and was completely improvised. In addition to answering classic interview questions, contestants also demonstrated their knowledge in foreign economic activities. The issues discussed ranged from the details of certain stages of cargo delivery to the prospects for the further development of Russia-China economic and trade relations (*Irkutsk State University, 2019*).

As in the previous section, there is a generally positive attitude from the respondents from this present study towards English. Because of the prominent position of English in the world, my hypothesis in this section states that in general, universities in Russia offer more Business English courses than Business Chinese courses. Moreover, the respondents enrolled more in Business English courses than Business Chinese courses.

The analysis of the data from the questionnaire is provided to determine the trends in the number of Business English and Business Chinese language courses offered by tertiary institutions and student enrollment. The questionnaire data were analyzed from two different perspectives: (1) the respondents' views on the number of Business English and Business Chinese language courses offered; and (2) the number of respondents enrolling in Business English and Business Chinese language courses. I further analyzed Business English and Business Chinese language courses, and also all other English and Chinese related courses to see the associations.

Table 13. The popularity of English course offerings provided by Russian universities

		No.	%
Which of the following English-related courses does/did your university offer for your highest degree?	British and American Literature	15	5%
	Rhetoric	7	2.4%
	Interpretation	32	11.3%
	Translation	34	12%
	Basic English	42	14.9%
	Advanced English	35	12.4%
	Selected readings from newspapers	13	4.6%
	English writing	24	8.5%
	Introduction to Linguistics	19	6.7%
	National conditions of major English-speaking countries	12	4%
	Business English	38	13.5%
	Others	11	4%
	Total	282	100%

Table 14. The popularity of Chinese course offerings provided by Russian universities

		No.	%
Which of the following Chinese-related courses does/did your university offer for your highest degree?	Chinese literature	10	8%
	Rhetoric	3	2.4%
	Interpretation	2	1.6%

	Translation	15	12%
	Basic Chinese	28	22.4%
	Advanced Chinese	12	9.6%
	Selected readings from newspapers	2	1.6%
	Chinese writing	13	10.4%
	Introduction to Linguistics	11	8.8%
	Chinese poems	5	4%
	National conditions of China	8	6.4%
	Business Chinese	11	8.8%
	Others	5	4%
Total		125	100%

As can be seen from the tables above, the three English language courses described by the respondents as being the most frequently chosen included: Basic English (14.9% of responses); Business English (13.5% of responses); and Advanced English (12.4% of responses).

The three Chinese language courses described by the respondents as being the most frequently chosen included: Basic Chinese (22.4% of responses); Translation (12% of responses); and Advanced Chinese (9.6% of respondents). Business Chinese was ranked 4th, compared to other subjects.

The following table summarises students' subject enrollment preferences regarding English language courses. English and Chinese class offerings and class enrollment are indicators of student interest in English and Chinese courses. If students are interested, they will enrol in the classes offered. These courses will continue and more courses may be added.

Table 15. Summary of students subject enrollment preferences regarding English language courses

		No.	%
Which of the following English-related	British and American Literature	11	5.8%

courses does/did you choose for your highest degree?	Rhetoric	5	2.6%
	Interpretation	20	10.6%
	Translation	22	11.6%
	Basic English	28	14.8%
	Advanced English	29	15.3%
	Selected readings from newspapers	9	4.8%
	English writing	10	5.3%
	Introduction to Linguistics	12	6.3%
	National conditions of major English-speaking countries	8	4.2%
	Business English	30	15.9%
	Others	5	2.6%
Total	189	100%	

Table 16. Summary of students subject enrollment preferences regarding Chinese language courses

		No.	%
Which of the following Chinese-related courses does/did you choose for your highest degree?	Chinese literature	8	8.6%
	Rhetoric	3	3.2%
	Interpretation	2	2.1%
	Translation	17	18.3%
	Basic Chinese	22	23.7%
	Advanced Chinese	10	10.8%
	Selected readings from newspapers	2	2.2%
	Chinese writing	7	7.5%
	Introduction to Linguistics	6	6.5%
	Russian poems	2	2.2%
	National conditions of China	5	5.4%
	Business Chinese	8	8.6%
	Others	1	1.1%
Total	93	100%	

The three English language courses the respondents most commonly enrolled in were: Business English (15.9% of responses); Advanced English (15.3% of responses); and Translation (11.6% of responses).

The three Chinese language courses the respondents most commonly enrolled in were: Basic Chinese (23.7% of responses); Translation (18.3% of responses); and Advanced Chinese (10.8% of responses). The percentage of respondents who selected Business Chinese was 8.6% of respondents, ranking fourth.

In summary, Business English language courses were offered more frequently than Business Chinese language courses. The proportion of graduates who chose Business English courses was higher than those who choose Business Chinese. However, the percentage of students who took the Business-focussed courses in either English language or Chinese language was smaller for both English (15.9% of respondents) and Chinese (8.6% of respondents).

The demand for the proficiency in Russian among business professionals is increasing due to the expansion of trade in Russia and China. Students majoring in Chinese that focus on cultural and business interactions can serve a vital role in the trade development strategy in the development of the OBORI, compared with individuals who only know the Chinese language.

4.3. Summary of Findings

As seen above, a variety of data was collected, including gender (to determine if it is a contributing factor), highest level of education, and the motivation of respondents to learn foreign languages (in this chapter, English and Chinese). The individuals sampled were chosen via a random sampling of respondents at universities in Russia to conduct an analysis of the relationship between the OBORI and the students' perceptions and preferences for English and Chinese courses in the Russian tertiary sector. In the present study, I proposed language strategies for universities that seek to encourage a greater number of students from diverse backgrounds to enrol in Chinese and English language classes.

The data suggest that the gender of respondents was not a significant factor to indicate a difference in the responses based on gender.

I was able to effectively make a comparison of the data from 2010 to 2020 by dividing it into two groups: respondents who had graduated before 2015; and those who graduated from 2015. It was discovered that the differences on their perceptions of English and Chinese language classes and their enrollments could be anticipated.

A survey of 163 graduates and current students of universities in Russia showed that:

with regard to English and Chinese language course offerings:

(1) Although English courses were the most frequently offered university-level courses, their relative frequency differs throughout the country. The data suggest that respondents in the Northwestern Federal District of Russia reported a lower percentage of English language course offerings as compared to the rest of the country, which peaked at 93% of respondents in the Central Federal District.

(2) Respondents have reported a decrease in the number of English courses of 27% since the introduction of the OBORI in 2015, with an increase of 24% in the number of Chinese classes, based on their perceptions.

(3) I comprehensively examined these three factors: student's year of graduation (with their highest qualification), and foreign language courses as independent variables, and the offerings of English and Chinese language classes (in percentages) as dependent variables. I determined the following:

Before the implementation of the OBORI in 2015, English language courses were offered at nearly all of the respondents' universities. Chinese courses were offered to only 29% of respondents at their universities between 2010 and 2014. Since then, Chinese language courses have increased, such that more than half (53%) of all respondents reported that their universities offered Chinese.

With regard to English and Chinese student enrollment rates:

(1) The enrollment rates in English language courses were higher than those in Chinese language courses, except in the Far Eastern District of Russia. One reason for this difference may be correlated to the geographical location, because the Far Eastern District of Russia is closer to the Russian-Chinese border.

The enrollment rate of English language courses is generally high, with the weakest enrollments in the Northwestern Federal District and Far Eastern Federal District, with about half of those respondents being enrolled.

(2) A recent decrease in English language courses enrollments was reported by respondents, with a notable increase in Chinese language course enrollments being reported after the introduction of the OBORI.

(3) By integrating graduation year, and foreign language courses as independent variables, and the percentage of English and Chinese language classes enrollment rates as dependent variables, I reached the following conclusions: Before the OBORI was implemented, the enrollment rate of English language courses in all regions of Russia had remained high. However, after the implementation of the OBORI, in the eastern and central regions it remained high, while in other regions it dropped. The Chinese courses presented the opposite situation, the enrollment rate of Chinese language courses increased.

There may be many reasons for increased enrollments, including the motivations behind learning English and Chinese. In the above paragraphs I investigated the differences in enrollment and offerings. The motivations behind taking English and Chinese courses are key to understanding this difference.

With regard to the respondents' initial motivation to learn English and Chinese languages:

The most frequent reason for studying English was wanting to expand career options (32.9% of responses) and interest. In contrast, the main reasons the students selected the Chinese language were “I wanted to go to Chinese-speaking countries to work or live” and “to expand the career options” (24% of responses for both reasons).

The data indicate that the introduction of the OBORI has led to an increase in students taking Chinese courses, likely due to an increase in job opportunities and the potential for advancement. In contrast, the popularity of English has not been significantly impacted by the introduction of the OBORI, though its popularity has remained consistent.

Due to the introduction of the OBORI, increase in trade with China and growing career opportunities, it is anticipated that Chinese language will become an increasingly popular field of study. English language will remain popular but not see substantial growth.

In summary, 61% of respondents had high enthusiasm for learning both English and Chinese and believed that Chinese would have a bright future in the OBORI. Another 15% of respondents were positive about only learning Chinese. This significant enthusiasm for Chinese may assist institutional decision-makers in choosing which language(s) to promote in an evolving education marketplace.

The data indicate that Business English courses account for a greater percentage of course offerings compared to Business Chinese courses. The proportion of graduates who chose Business English was higher than that of graduates who chose Business Chinese. The development of the OBORI has enabled Russia to strengthen their economic and trade policies, and combined with increasing trade with China, is an indicator that the trend of increase in demand to learn Chinese has a high likelihood of continuing. When conducting business transactions or other types of economic exchanges, Chinese is used by China.

Because of the popularity of English and Chinese language courses among students and graduates, many students are good candidates for roles in international trade, where both language skills and nuanced understanding of domestic economies are necessary. The local economy needs to be studied in the country's language to be able to truly understand the market. For example, to have successful trading with China, in addition to knowing the Chinese language, being knowledgeable about Chinese customs will lead to a better shared understanding when negotiating trade deals.

Because of the need for rapid diversification of industries and development of new segments for imported products in the market of the countries along the OBORI, there is a growing need to study for the critical intersection of international trade knowledge and language skills. The Chinese demand for foreign manufactured products, where the design and usability is optimized for the domestic market, is a clear example.

In conclusion, this research has shown that both English and Chinese have a bright future in the context of the OBORI in Russia. As China becomes more committed in the OBORI, graduates with experience in Chinese language and culture will be increasingly in

demand, especially Russia. The questionnaire results indicate that the demand for Chinese language and culture courses has the potential to be deeply important to the Russian tertiary education sector well into the future.

Chapter 5. Language strategies and language preferences in the Chinese tertiary sector

5.1. Analysis to be undertaken

A key research question was: What impact has the OBORI had on the popularity of the Russian and English language courses in the universities of mainland China between 2010-2014 and since 2015?

This research question focusses on Chinese universities and the experiences of graduates or students who had been or are currently studying at those universities. In particular, this research question is about language choices among Chinese students and the level of awareness of the teaching and learning of major languages (focusing on English in the present study) compared with less commonly taught languages (focusing on Russian in the present study) of the OBORI in Chinese universities.

In order to encourage honest responses from students, the questionnaire was anonymous and did not ask for the university that they attend/attended. Anonymity also helped in promoting response rates.

A questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was used to conduct in-depth research. The detailed responses that the questionnaire encouraged provided some insight into what has been occurring in China.

5.2. Data analysis

Quantitative methods were used to seek answers for research question 2 (see Section 1.3.1). The quantitative data analysis involved several statistical procedures such as descriptive analysis using Excel.

Invitations to complete the questionnaire were posted to a forum for university graduates. Of the 188 responses received, a total of 158 respondents filled out the questionnaire with useful data, which represents an effective usable rate of 84% of the total invitations, and accounting for a total of 158 appropriately completed questionnaires. Answers to the questionnaire were invalidated and the responses were discarded if the respondents graduated

from a university which was not in mainland China. Moreover, the responses were discarded if there were logical inconsistencies. For example, in one case the same respondent selected the age range of 21-30, but their graduation year of their highest university degree was 2005-2009. Generally, in China, students go to university at the age of 17 or 18, and graduate from university at around age 22 (if they are finishing at Bachelor level). Thus, respondents who are 21-30 years old should have graduated after 2010.

In the questionnaire sent out, all the respondents were graduates or current students of universities in mainland China. Among them, 74 were male (46.8%), and 84 were female (53.2%); 17 students were between 18 and 20 years of age, 82 students were 21 to 30 years old, 55 students were 31 to 40 years old, and four students were over the age of 41.

Regarding the question on the year in which they received their highest qualification, students were given seven options: pre-2000, 2000-2004, 2005-2009, 2010-2014, 2015-2019, 2020-2024, and post-2025. Six students graduated from 2000-2004, four students graduated from 2005-2009, 51 students graduated between 2010-2014, 39 students graduated between 2015-2019, 56 students will graduate between 2020-2024, and two students will graduate after 2025.

The detailed background information, which was collected in the ‘Background Information’ section in the first section of the questionnaire is presented in Table 17. This information includes the respondents’ demographic information (gender, age range,) and university information (university location and year of graduation with the highest degree).

Table 17. Background information of student respondents

Group	Category	No. of respondents	%
The student's university background	Graduates from mainland Chinese universities	118	74.7
	Still studying at mainland Chinese universities	40	25.3
Gender	Male	74	46.8

	Female	84	53.2
Age group	18-20	17	10.8
	21-30	82	51.9
	31-40	55	34.8
	41-50	4	2.5
Year of graduation with the highest degree	2000-2004	6	3.8
	2005-2009	4	2.5
	2010-2014	51	32.3
	2015-2019	39	24.7
	2020-2024	56	35.4
	After 2025	2	1.3
The university location with the highest degree	Northern region	44	27.8
	Southern region	67	42.4
	Eastern region	19	12.0
	Western region	14	8.9
	Central region	14	8.9
	All	158	100.0

In order to seek a representative and statistically significant sample of graduates, I set an upper age limit of 50 because I wanted to get as many responses as possible. I then utilized their responses to further investigate how the implementation of the OBORI impacted their education. However, since the OBORI was begun in 2015, I focussed more on the respondents who graduated between the years 2010-2014 and 2015-2019, because these time periods were the most relevant to the changes caused by the implementation of the OBORI, and these graduates would be more likely to be aware of the changes to the OBORI. Moreover, as seen in the table above, the combined numbers of the students who graduated before 2010 and those who will graduate after 2025 was a small fraction of the total respondents. Such a sample does not provide sufficient data to influence the results.

5.2.1. University-level foreign language courses in mainland China according to region before and after the implementation of the OBORI

The foreign language courses that have been offered by universities in different regions of mainland China before and after the implementation of the OBORI were considered in order to see the changes which the OBORI has brought to English and Russian languages learning. Through the posting in a forum, university graduates from mainland China were sought from a variety of disciplines to participate in the questionnaire.

In the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to choose the year when they received their highest degree. The present study classified the respondents' year of graduation into either before or after 2015. A comparison was made of the relative frequencies of offering English and Russian language courses at different periods and in different regions, using a parallel data set. It was then considered whether the trends corresponded to the OBORI. The conclusions drawn from the analysis showed the difference in popularity between English and Russian language courses based on the number of courses available. The results from this study can be used by universities and other language course providers when designing and planning their future language course offerings.

Table 18 shows an analysis of the region where the student's highest degree was achieved and the percentage of universities in the area that offered foreign language courses.

Table 18. English and Russian language courses offered by region of highest achieved degree

			English classes	Russian classes	Total
Region of highest achieved degree	Northern region	No.	44	19	44
		%	100.0%	43.2%	
	Southern region	No.	66	33	67
		%	98.5%	49.3%	
	Eastern region	No.	19	5	19
		%	100.0%	26.3%	
	Western region	No.	10	6	14
		%	71.4%	42.9%	

	Central region	No.	14	6	14
		%	100.0%	42.9%	
Total	No.		153	69	158

While English language courses were offered on average in a higher proportion across China as compared to Russian language courses, the distribution of English language courses offered across China was not uniform. In many parts of the western region of China, fewer English language courses were offered: with only 71.4% of respondents reporting that their university offered English language courses.

In many parts of the western region of China, where the questionnaire results showed a much lower rate of language courses than the other regions of China, foreign language education has lagged behind that of the more developed areas of central and eastern China. This discrepancy may be caused by a number of factors, including geographical and economic constraints. For instance, in the western region of China, many universities are located in remote areas, far from large city-centers, or are located in relatively inaccessible mountainous areas, limiting accessibility of instructional materials and the available pool of teachers. This reduced accessibility is already having profound effects in some areas in the western region. Some towns are facing a shortage of modern teaching materials and facilities, often having to make use of obsolete technology or materials. These locations often attract lower-skilled foreign language teachers due to a lack of research funding and lower salaries. Additionally, there may be a general lack of motivation amongst the student population due to a lack of exposure to foreign languages in their daily lives. This situation creates an unfortunate negative cycle where reduced student exposure and interest in these languages forces universities to reduce course offerings, which further reduces the students' exposure to these subjects (Li, 2020).

Sixty point one five percent of China's language service companies (such as translation companies) are concentrated along the developed coastal areas such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong. The uneven distribution of these translation services negatively impacts on the western region, which is very far from China's commercial centers. Among the top 15 provinces (also autonomous regions and municipalities) in the "2016 China Language Service Industry Development Report" for the number of language service companies in China, the number of language service companies in the western region only accounted for 9% of all

language service companies in China (Belt and Road Portal, 2017). For instance, in regard to the reported offerings of language courses, the data show that English is the most commonly taught foreign language in the western region. As a result, the training of competent individuals in languages beyond English is actually hindered by the neglect of education in less commonly spoken languages. This disparity in resources can then negatively affect these regions' roles in global initiatives (such as the OBORI) that require a broad intermingling of language and culture.

The following table shows an analysis of the graduation year of students with their highest degree compared with the spread of foreign language courses studied.

Table 19. The graduation year of students and the percentage of foreign language course offerings

			English classes	Russian classes	Total	
The graduation year of respondents with their highest degree	2000-2004	No.	6	2	6	
		%	100.0%	33.3%		
	2005-2009	No.	4	4	4	
		%	100.0%	100.0%		
	2010-2014	No.	51	13	51	
		%	100.0%	25.5%		
	2015-2019	No.	37	29	39	
		%	94.9%	74.4%		
	2020-2024	No.	53	19	56	
		%	94.6%	33.9%		
	After 2025	No.	2	2	2	
		%	100.0%	100.0%		
	Total		No.	153	69	158

After the introduction of the OBORI in 2015, the average percentage of English language classes dropped by 5.1% (from 100% of respondents in 2010-2014 to 94.9% of respondents in 2015-2019) across China, while the average offering percentages for Russian language classes rose by 48.9% (from 25.5% of respondents in 2010-2014 to 74.4% of respondents in 2015-2019), with 74.4% of respondents indicating that Russian language classes were offered in their universities.

In order to demonstrate the influence of the formation of the OBORI on the frequency and availability of English and Russian language course offerings, three factors were taken into account: the year of graduation and region, which served as independent variables; and the percentages of English and Russian language course offerings as dependent variables. The data are displayed in the following table.

Table 20. The year of graduation of students and the percentage of English and Russian course offerings

		English language courses		Russian language courses	
		No.			
2000-2004	Northern region	No.	3	0	
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
	Southern region	No.	2	2	
		%	100.0%	100.0%	
	Eastern region	No.	1	0	
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
2005-2009	Northern region	No.	4	4	
		%	100.0%	100.0%	
2010-2014	Northern region	No.	15	4	
		%	100.0%	26.7%	
	Southern region	No.	22	5	
		%	100.0%	22.7%	
	Eastern region	No.	9	2	
		%	100.0%	22.2%	
	Central region	No.	5	2	
		%	100.0%	40.0%	
	2015-2019	Northern region	No.	9	7
			%	100.0%	77.8%
Southern region		No.	20	18	
		%	100.0%	90.0%	
Eastern region		No.	2	1	
		%	100.0%	50.0%	

	Western region	No.	1	0	
		%	33.3%	0.0%	
	Central region	No.	5	3	
		%	100.0%	60.0%	
2020-2024	Northern region	No.	12	3	
		%	100.0%	25.0%	
	Southern region	No.	21	7	
		%	95.5%	31.8%	
	Eastern region	No.	7	2	
		%	100.0%	28.6%	
	Western region	No.	9	6	
		%	81.8%	54.5%	
	Central region	No.	4	1	
		%	100.0%	25.0%	
	After 2025	Northern region	No.	1	1
			%	100.0%	100.0%
Southern region		No.	1	1	
		%	100.0%	100.0%	

As seen above, the greater proportion of respondents indicated that more English language classes were available than Russian language courses. The lowest percentage noted was 33.3% of respondents, who reported that their university offered English language classes in the western region for 2015-2019, while in other regions nearly 100% of respondents indicated that English language courses were offered in their universities, which remained the same high percentage as noted in 2010-2014.

By contrast, within the 2010-2014 cohort, less than half of respondents (26.7% of respondents in the Northern region, 22.7% of respondents in the Southern region, 22.2% of respondents in the Eastern region, and 40.0% of respondents in the Central region) in all regions reported that Russian language courses were offered at their university. However, from 2015 to 2019, this number increased significantly, with the highest increase being found in the southern region. The overall analysis reveals that 90% of respondents from the southern region reported that their universities offered Russian, followed by 77.8% of respondents in the

northern region, 60% of respondents in central regions, and 50% of the total respondents in the eastern region. These data suggest that the OBORI has played a significant role in the increase of the number of Russian language courses offered in the tertiary institutions throughout mainland China.

As seen in Section 1.2., the initial hypothesis was that: the introduction of the OBORI has had an impact on the number of Russian language courses offered at universities in mainland China over a six-year period from 2015 to the present. Specifically, this impact has led to greater enthusiasm amongst students for Russian language courses, which in turn has led to a greater number of course offerings and students' enrollments.

Because of the lack of educational development in the western region, the number of foreign language courses offered by universities in this region was lower than that of the other regions. This result indicates that the western region is lagging behind in terms of its educational resources for foreign language education, and requires additional financial and educational support from more developed regions in order to increase its educational standards. The conclusions from this section suggest that the more developed areas within each region should provide assistance and guidance to the respective lesser developed areas of those regions. As an example, these programs could take the form of financial assistance, teacher exchange, or student exchange programs.

The universities in the southern and northern regions offered the most Russian courses. Compared with prior to the introduction of the OBORI, the offering rate of Russian language courses has increased the fastest in the southern and northern regions. It can be seen that students would have greater opportunity to choose Russian courses in these two regions.

After reviewing the questionnaires for students across a variety of universities throughout mainland China, I found that overall, universities did increase the availability of Russian language courses. The results show that Russian course offerings grew at a higher rate than the growth of English course offerings within China.

5.2.2. Students' preferences regarding university-level foreign language courses in various regions before and after the implementation of the OBORI

After having collected data on English and Russian language course offerings at the universities involved in the present study, I collected data on student course enrollment choices compared to the total number of course options available. I used these data to explore student preferences for specific types of classes and analyze various factors contributing to these differences in preference for Russian language classes compared to English language classes. Specifically, I focussed on how three factors - China's role in the OBORI, differences across regions in China, and differences across recent time periods - have affected students' preferences for these languages.

In this study, I surveyed graduates about which foreign language courses they chose during their studies for their highest degree. Specifically, graduates were asked about which foreign language class(es) they took while completing that degree. Subsequently, I analyzed the rates of student enrollment. Based on the data, I analyzed whether or not the OBORI has had an impact on the numbers of enrollments in Russian language classes based on the data from the questionnaire. The analysis of the data showed strong variation in university course offerings across regions. This variation, in turn, affects the personal choices made by students enrolling in Russian and English courses in these regions.

Table 21 reflects an analysis of all the respondents who chose “I have foreign language classes in my university” and those who signed up for English and Russian language classes in different regions.

Table 21. Foreign language courses taken by region of highest achieved degree

			English classes	Russian classes	Total
Region of highest achieved degree	Northern region	No.	33	12	38
		%	86.8%	31.6%	
	Southern region	No.	51	20	59
		%	86.4%	33.9%	
	Eastern region	No.	18	2	18
		%	100.0%	11.1%	
	Western region	No.	7	4	11

	%	63.6%	36.4%	
Central region	No.	9	0	10
	%	90.0%	0.0%	
Total	No.	118	38	136

The table shows that in all regions, without regard to the year of graduation, the number of students who enrolled in English language courses was greater than the number that enrolled in Russian language courses. In the western region, only 63.6% of respondents reported that they had signed up for English language courses, while in other regions more than 85% of respondents (86.8% in the Northern region, 86.4% in Southern region, 100% in the Eastern region, and 90% in the Central region) reported that they had enrolled in English language courses.

In the central and eastern regions, the percentage of Russian language course enrollments for students was under 15% of the total respondents. By contrast, in other regions, the percentage was 31-40%. In summary, the overall enrollment rate in English language courses was greater than the enrollment rate of Russian language courses.

The following table represents the relation between the graduation year of the student's highest degree and the enrollment rate of students enrolling in English and Russian language courses.

Table 22. The graduation year of students with their highest degree and the enrollment rates (in percentages) of foreign language courses

			English classes	Russian classes	Total
The graduation year of respondents with their highest degree	2000-2004	No.	5	1	6
		%	83.3%	16.7%	
	2005-2009	No.	4	4	4
		%	100.0%	100.0%	
	2010-2014	No.	48	9	49
		%	98.0%	18.4%	
	2015-2019	No.	25	19	33
		%	75.8%	57.6%	
	2020-2024	No.	34	5	42

		%	81.0%	11.9%	
	After 2025	No.	2	0	2
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
Total		No.	118	38	136

As can be seen in the table above, there was a downward trend in the enrollment rate for English language courses between 2010-2014 and 2015-2019. In comparing English language course enrollments among respondents in years 2010-2014 to those in 2015-2019, there was a large decrease, from 98% of respondents enrolling in English courses in 2010-2014 to 75.8% of respondents enrolling in English courses in 2015-2019. By contrast, from 2015 to 2019, there was a significant increase in the percentage of Russian language course enrollments when comparing it to the period before the introduction of the OBORI in 2015. The enrollment rate for Russian language courses was 18.4% of respondents in 2010-2014, but in 2015-2019, the enrollment rate jumped to 57.6% of respondents, showing a significant increase.

I used three factors to conduct this analysis - graduation year, foreign language courses as independent variables, and the enrollment rates of English or Russian language courses as dependent variables. The findings are summarized in the following table.

Table 23. The year of graduation of students for their highest degree and the enrollment rate for foreign language classes

			English classes	Russian classes	Total
2000-2004	Northern region	No.	3	0	3
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
	Southern region	No.	1	1	2
		%	50.0%	50.0%	
	Eastern region	No.	1	0	1
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
2005-2009	Northern region	No.	4	4	4
		%	100.0%	100.0%	
2010-2014	Northern region	No.	14	4	14
		%	100.0%	28.6%	
	Southern region	No.	20	4	21
		%	95.2%	19.0%	

	Eastern region	No.	9	1	9
		%	100.0%	11.1%	
	Central region	No.	5	0	5
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
2015-2019	Northern region	No.	4	4	8
		%	50.0%	50.0%	
	Southern region	No.	16	14	20
		%	80.0%	70.0%	
	Eastern region	No.	2	1	2
		%	100.0%	50.0%	
	Central region	No.	3	0	3
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
2020-2024	Northern region	No.	7	0	8
		%	87.5%	0.0%	
	Southern region	No.	13	1	15
		%	86.7%	6.7%	
	Eastern region	No.	6	0	6
		%	100.0%	0.0%	
	Western region	No.	7	4	11
	%	63.6%	36.4%		
	Central region	No.	1	0	2
		%	50.0%	0.0%	
After 2025	Northern region	No.	1		1
		%	100.0%		
	Southern region	No.	1		1
		%	100.0%		

After the introduction of the OBORI in 2015, till 2019, there was a significant drop in the enrollment of students into English language courses in the northern and southern regions, while in other regions, the percentage of students enrolling in English language courses remained high.

The percentage of students choosing Russian language courses has increased significantly, especially in northern, southern and eastern regions. The highest of these was the Russian enrollment in the southern region where 70% of respondents reported that they enrolled in Russian language courses.

Recent media reports show that the OBORI has become a motivating factor on the number of applicants who have chosen to study Russian. For example, Shenzhen MSU-BIT University, located in southern China had plans to create 130 slots for domestic students to study Russian in 2018 as a part of a specially designed Russian language educational program. The design was chosen to ensure students would have a deep understanding of Russian and be proficient in subjects related to Russian, such as trade relations and knowledge of Russia (*Sohu.com*, 2018). Through the program, students can gain professional working knowledge that could be used in the implementation of the OBORI, and, moreover, some could have the opportunity to actually aid in this implementation. It was reported by the university that 850 applicants competed for 130 spaces. According to the university's website, the students have responded positively to the new Russian curriculum, given the newly-inspired motivation to find a job connected with the OBORI. As a secondary effect of the OBORI-oriented curriculum, students' interest in Sino-Russian relations has also significantly increased (*Sohu.com*, 2018). With this information and the data provided in previous sections, I can observe that the OBORI has impacted the curricular choices of students.

After reviewing the questionnaire for students across a variety of universities throughout Mainland China, I found that, without considering the overall influence of the various regions and the effect on students' universities in relation to the enrollment rate of English and Russian language courses, there was a statistically significant decrease in the number of students who enrolled in English language courses from 2015. This result contrasted with the statistics found in Russian language courses, with a significant increase being found during the same period. Enrollment for Russian language courses has increased at a much faster rate than that of English language courses over the given time period.

From 2015, interest in studying English for students in the northern region and southern regions declined compared to that of students in other regions. However, there was a marked increase in interest in Russian language courses among students. Within these increases,

enrollment rates for Russian language courses were highest in the south, with the rate of student enrollment for these courses increasing faster than that of English language courses.

In the previous section it was concluded that universities in the southern and northern regions offered the most Russian courses and, furthermore, that the percentage of Russian courses offered increased the fastest in the southern and northern regions. Therefore, students from these regions are afforded more options from which to choose Russian courses. From the research presented in this section, it can be seen that at universities in the southern region, a greater proportion of students chose to study the Russian language courses compared to other regions.

5.2.3. The impact of the OBORI on student motivation to learn English and Russian

In this section, I analyzed the initial motivations of respondents to learn the English and Russian languages, and their views on the long-term future value of English and Russian based on the impact of the OBORI in China. The goal is to provide data and analysis which helps inform the decision-making process for whether to provide English or Russian classes in an evolving educational marketplace. Furthermore, in this section I will be suggesting possible strategies that could influence a new flow of future students into the current English and Russian programs. To this end, this section focusses on the analysis of the initial motivations of students for studying English and Russian as well as their views on the long-term prospects for these disciplines given the introduction of the OBORI in China.

The Chinese tertiary sector places great importance on the College English Test (CET), which students are required to pass in order to receive their tertiary degree. Moreover, CET results are also an important prerequisite for job applications. This test is a large-scale national standardized test sponsored by the Ministry of Education of China. Its purpose is “to encourage universities to provide more English language classes and to objectively and accurately measure the English proficiency of university students” (National Education Examinations Authority, n.d.).

In Table 24 below the descriptive analysis of the reasons selected by the students for choosing English language courses is displayed.

Table 24. The reasons students have selected English language courses

		No.	%
The reasons for choosing English language courses	Purely liked English	54	45.8%
	Pressure from parents	15	12.7%
	To be able to communicate with English-speaking foreigners	34	28.8%
	To expand my career options	58	49.2%
	For passing exams	66	55.9%
	I liked the teacher(s)	8	6.8%
	My family/relatives have connections with this language	12	10.2%
	I wanted to go to English-speaking countries to work or live	25	21.2%
Total		272	230.5%

Some students are required to take the CET as part of their major, but for other students passing this exam is considered to be beneficial for career advancement. For yet another group, the reasons given to study English included personal interest.

In surveying students enrolled in English classes, the three most frequent reasons for studying English were: 1. the desire to pass exams (55.9% of respondents); 2. career options (49.2%); and 3. personal or academic interest ("Purely liked English" - 45.8%). Personal or academic interest could be for travel and leisure, an interest in languages, or other pursuits and hobbies where there is not a requirement to learn English.

In contrast, the results indicate that the motivations for students to study Russian differ significantly from the motivations for students to study English. Their top three reasons were: 1. Purely liked Russian (68.4% of respondents); 2. career ambition (55.3%); 3. My family/relatives have connections with this language (39.5%). The full breakdown for the motivations behind taking Russian classes is shown in the table below.

Table 25. The reasons students have selected Russian language courses

		No.	%
The reasons for choosing Russian language courses	Purely liked Russian	26	68.4%
	Pressure from parents	2	5.3%

To be able to communicate with Russian-speaking foreigners	12	31.6%
To expand my career options	21	55.3%
For passing exams	6	15.8%
I liked the teacher(s)	4	10.5%
My family/relatives have connections with this language	15	39.5%
I wanted to go to Russian-speaking countries to work or live	12	31.6%
Total	98	257.9%

As indicated in the above table, it was found that learning English to pass exams was not just a concern for individuals, but a common problem in the current exam-oriented education system in China. The culture of tertiary education in China is based primarily on students studying long hours in order to get high scores on their exams. As 55.9% of respondents noted: “I learn only for passing exams.” As such, the teaching methods often reflect this exam-oriented mindset. As a result, the study of English mostly requires rote memorization and is taught in a rigid fashion. The approach to teaching English could benefit from being more flexible for individual students and their learning styles. The more the teacher can understand the students’ viewpoints, the better they can convey information to them.

In terms of respondents who studied Russian at university, 55.3% of students chose the “career option” as the reason to learn Russian, compared with English (49.2%). Although this difference of 6.1% (55.3% - 49.2%) seems small, when considered in conjunction with the decrease in offerings for English language courses and increase in offerings for Russian language courses, this difference suggests a more career-oriented mindset among students pursuing the study of Russian as opposed to those pursuing the study of English, as more employment opportunities in trade-related fields requiring Russian are created. Regarding the interviewees' views on the future development of English and Russian in the context of the OBORI, the summary of responses in the following table can be viewed.

Table 26. The future value of English and Russian in the development of the OBORI

	No.	%
Considering the English	50	39.3

implementation of the OBORI,	Russian	40	31.5
how do you feel about the	Positive about both	34	26.8
prospects for English versus	I do not know	3	2.3
Russian?	Total	127	100.0

English courses have always been popular in China; however, due to the reliance of the OBORI on English as a major global language in its communications, there is likely to be an increased demand for Russian language proficiency in the workforce. This reliance by the OBORI has the potential to increase the demand for Russian language courses, with the potential that demand for English language courses could decrease. The failure on the part of students to take such courses would put the students at a disadvantage in an increasingly competitive job market. The table above shows the collected opinions from my questionnaire, where the question “Considering the implementation of the OBORI, how do you feel about the prospects for English versus Russian?” was asked. Specifically, respondents were asked whether or not they believed that: 1. the number of Russian or English language course offerings would increase; or, 2. the number of both courses would increase. Additionally, respondents had an option of answering this question with “I do not know”.

The data indicate that more of respondents thought that the introduction of the OBORI would cause an increase in the number of English course offerings as opposed to Russian ones. The data show 39.3% of the total respondents were optimistic about the English language being the most beneficial from the OBORI, while those students who were optimistic about Russian accounted for 31.5% of respondents believing Russian to be of greater importance following the formation of the OBORI, showing a 7.8% difference. Although comparatively more people were optimistic about English following the development of the OBORI, it was found that fewer people were optimistic about Russian than I expected. Therefore, I can reasonably conclude that the formation of the OBORI has had a significant impact on students' preference in Russian courses.

The motivations behind studying a topic are extremely important, both for students' long-term success and long-term improvement of society. If students are solely focussed on short term objectives such as passing exams without a combined interest about their role in society and how their education will affect it, then longer term objectives such as economic growth may not be achieved.

5.2.4. The enrollment in Business English/Russian language courses and the development of the OBORI

In this section, I analyzed the impact of the introduction of the OBORI on the frequency of Business English and Business Russian language courses. Language plays a fundamental role in the socio-economic system. English and Russian language education in China is essential for further growth of business culture and interactions with other countries involved in the OBORI. Therefore, it is useful to conduct an analysis of the enrollment trends for these foreign languages, to better understand the potential impact studying these subjects may have upon the greater population of China and the world. Moreover, it will help to gain a better understanding of the benefits of promoting the study of foreign languages within society (see section 2.2.3).

Below I provide an analysis of the data to determine trends in the number of Business English and Business Russian language courses offered by tertiary institutions and student enrollment. I analyzed how the number of these classes can influence the trade industry.

Table 27. The popularity of English course offerings provided by Chinese universities

		No.	%
Which of the following English-related courses does/did your university offer for your highest degree?	British and American Literature	74	62.7%
	Rhetoric	22	18.6%
	Interpretation	47	39.8%
	Translation	49	41.5%
	Basic English	90	76.3%
	Advanced English	62	52.5%
	Selected readings from newspapers	24	20.3%
	English writing	61	51.7%
	Introduction to Linguistics	17	14.4%
	National conditions of major English-speaking countries	16	13.6%
	Business English	48	40.7%
	Total	510	432.2%

Table 28. The popularity of Russian course offerings provided by Chinese universities

		No.	%
Which of the following Russian-related courses does/did your university offer for your highest degree?	Russian literature	31	81.6%
	Rhetoric	12	31.6%
	Interpretation	17	44.7%
	Translation	13	34.2%
	Basic Russian	27	71.1%
	Advanced Russian	18	47.4%
	Selected readings from newspapers	6	15.8%
	Russian writing	9	23.7%
	Introduction to Linguistics	5	13.2%
	Russian poems	9	23.7%
	National conditions of Russia	6	15.8%
	Business Russian	6	15.8%
	Total		159

As can be seen from the tables above, the three English language courses described by the respondents as being the most frequent included Basic English (76.3% of respondents), English and American Literature (62.7% of respondents), and Advanced English (52.5% of respondents). Business English was ranked sixth (40.7% of respondents) out of a total of 11 English courses.

The three Russian language courses described by the respondents as being the most frequent included Russian Literature (81.6% of respondents), Basic Russian (71.1% of respondents), and Advanced Russian (47.4% of respondents). Business Russian (15.8% of respondents) was ranked ninth.

The following table summarises students' subject enrollment preferences regarding English language courses.

Table 29. Summary of students subject enrollment preferences regarding English language courses

		No.	%
Which of the following English-related courses does/did you choose for your highest degree?	British and American Literature	46	39.0%
	Rhetoric	13	11.0%
	Interpretation	25	21.2%
	Translation	32	27.1%
	Basic English	73	61.9%
	Advanced English	35	29.7%
	Selected readings from newspapers	7	5.9%
	English writing	31	26.3%
	Introduction to Linguistics	3	2.5%
	National conditions of major English-speaking countries	4	3.4%
	Business English	25	21.2%
Total	294	249.2%	

Table 30. Summary of students subject enrollment preferences regarding Russian language courses

		No.	%
Which of the following Russian-related courses does/did you choose for your highest degree?	Russian literature	26	68.4%
	Rhetoric	9	23.7%
	Interpretation	9	23.7%
	Translation	9	23.7%
	Basic Russian	25	65.8%
	Advanced Russian	12	31.6%
	Selected readings from newspapers	3	7.9%
	Russian writing	4	10.5%
	Introduction to Linguistics	4	10.5%
	Russian poems	5	13.2%
	National conditions of Russia	2	5.3%

	Business Russian	3	7.9%
Total		111	292.1%

The three English language courses the respondents enrolled in most commonly were Basic English (61.9% of respondents), English and American Literature (39% of respondents), and Advanced English (29.7% of respondents). The percentage of respondents who chose Business English was 21.2% of respondents, ranking sixth.

The three Russian language courses the respondents most commonly enrolled in were Russian Literature (68.4% of respondents), Basic Russian (65.8% of respondents) and Advanced Russian (31.6% of respondents). The percentage of respondents who selected Business Russian was 7.9% of respondents, ranking tenth.

In summary, Business English language courses were offered more frequently than Business Russian language courses. The proportion of graduates who chose Business English courses was higher than those who choose Business Russian. However, the percentage of students who took the business-focussed courses in their respective fields was small within both groups. 21.2% of respondents reported that they enrolled in Business English courses, and 7.9% of respondents reported that they enrolled in Business Russian courses.

As the OBORI has grown and developed, there has been greater cooperation between companies in China and other countries. This cooperation has continued to increase, and cross-border E-commerce has become more common and important since the introduction of the OBORI. For E-commerce to succeed in the international market, there must be individuals who are capable of speaking foreign languages. The use of foreign languages to conduct full and effective business communication with companies in the countries along the OBORI and eliminate unnecessary cross-cultural communication barriers is particularly important for the implementation of the OBORI. As Yang (2017) stated, at present, nearly 70% of enterprises in China are in urgent need of individuals with strong practical abilities. Such individuals have been known to display strength in the ability to accomplish tasks and the ability to assist enterprises in solving many problems (Yang, 2017).

At present, the curriculum for the English and Russian language courses offered is primarily intended for students who wish to continue studying English and Russian by enrolling

in basic and more advanced English and Russian language courses. In the context of the OBORI, the data have indicated that Business Russian and Business English courses are not frequent among the course offerings in the Chinese tertiary sector, and few people chose those courses. I recommend universities encourage more students to enrol in business-focussed foreign language courses in the future. There is a demand for competent speakers. Chinese companies are struggling to hire individuals who have expertise in specialized business vocabulary and international trade (Li, 2015: 135). They seek individuals who understand the culture of business and are able to communicate effectively in the business world. One way universities are able to strengthen students' success in the labor market post-graduation is by adding more business-focussed language courses. These courses will help cultivate the students' practical application of foreign languages and strengthen their understanding of network platforms, platform rules, customer service, and operations.

Shang (2020) noted that in recent years, the field of E-commerce has shown us that the integration of multi-dimensional and multidisciplinary fields have made individuals with English skills more desirable. The practitioners of E-Commerce need to have proficient knowledge in international business and cross-border E-commerce, and they also need to be fluent in English, so that they may seamlessly negotiate and conduct business transactions. A practical ability training system is needed that adapts to regional economic development, pays attention to comprehensive professional quality education, stimulates students' entrepreneurial ability, and cultivates sustainable development individuals (Shang, 2020).

The development of the OBORI means that the government authorities in China will be able to strengthen economic and trade exchanges. Through the OBORI, China can cooperate with other countries for its needs and become an important economic and trade partner. In China there has been increased demand for international products which cater to the domestic market because of the OBORI (OECD, 2018). Students majoring in Russian with business interests can serve a vital role in the trade development strategy in the development of the OBORI, rather than individuals who only know ordinary Russian language, but not specific language for business.

5.3. Summary of Findings

The OBORI, a project, which was proposed by the Chinese government, has not only had an important impact on the world at an economic and social level, but it has also had an important impact on China's tertiary education sector. The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China promulgated a document entitled "Promoting the joint development of the action plan of the One Belt One Road". Subsequent to its publication, 148 universities from around the world came together in order to establish the "University Strategic Alliance of the OBORI", and encourage open collaboration among regional universities, as discussed in Section 2.3. This alliance provides great opportunities to investigate new initiatives for fostering cross-border training and cooperation (*HWW*, 2017).

Combining the above theoretical foundations, I prepared a questionnaire for Chinese university graduates or students to study the impact of the OBORI has had on the popularity of the Russian and English language courses in the universities of mainland China.

A questionnaire of 158 graduates and current students of universities in mainland China showed the results summarised below.

A. With regard to English and Russian language course offerings:

(1) Although English courses are the most frequently offered university-level foreign language courses, it is important to consider that their exact relative frequency differs throughout the country. As seen, in the western region of China, the percentage of the English language course offerings was as low as 78.6% of respondents in comparison to the rest of the country, which had the percentage of English language course offerings closer to 100% of respondents.

(2) Since the introduction of the OBORI in 2015, there has been a decrease in the percentages of the number of English courses offered, but an increase in the percentages of the number of Russian classes offered. In the period from 2010 to 2014, Russian was being offered in only 25.5% of respondents' universities, where all the respondents noted their university offered English classes. However, in the period 2015-2019, there was a fall of 5% in the number of English language programs in the respondents' universities, but a large increase of 48.9% in the number of Russian language courses.

(3) I comprehensively examined these three factors: student's year of graduation (with their highest qualification) and foreign language courses as independent variables, and the offerings of English and Russian language classes (in percent) as dependent variables. I determined the following:

Regarding English course offerings: Before the implementation of the OBORI in 2015, in all regions, English language courses were being offered at or near to 100% of respondents' universities. However, while the number of English course offerings remained high after the launch of the OBORI, there has been a large fall in English course offerings in the western region of China to 33.3% of universities noting their university offered English classes.

Regarding Russian course offerings: Before the implementation of the OBORI in 2015, in the central region, 40% of respondents reported that their universities offered Russian, whereas, in all other regions, this figure was 20%-30%. From 2015, the course offerings of Russian language courses have in general improved significantly to more than 50% (50% of respondents in the Eastern region, 60% of respondents in the Central region, 77.8% of respondents in the Northern region, and 90% of respondents in the Southern region) of respondents reporting that their universities offered Russian (except for in the western region).

B. With regard to English and Russian student enrollment rates:

(1) The enrollment rate in English language courses is higher than that of Russian language courses. One possible cause of the higher English language course enrollment rate is the ability for students to take the unified CET exam before graduation. There is no equivalent compulsory exam for Russian that students can take, and an exam is not required for other languages. The importance of good results in the CET exam is also an incentive for students to sign up for English language courses instead of other foreign language courses.

While the enrollment rate of English language courses in some of the other regions is high, in the western region of China, the enrollment rate of English language courses is the lowest, with only 63.6% of respondents reporting that they enrolled, and course offerings in English language in this region are also as similarly low as opposed to other regions. By consulting some literary resources such as in the research of Li (2020), I learned that due to the constraints of poor economic development and challenging physical environment, the development of foreign language education in some parts of the western region is relatively low in comparison

to other regions. The rate of enrollments for Russian language courses is the highest in the western region of China. Reasons for the difference include universities in the western region receive a great deal of financial support for Russian language courses, and the university that initiated the 'University Strategic Alliance of the OBORI', is in the western region of China.

(2) In the period 2005 to 2009, the enrollment rate in the English language courses increased from 83.3% (in 2000-2004) to 100% of respondents reporting that they enrolled in English classes. However, the rate fell to 75.8% of respondents from 2015-2019. In the period before the implementation of the OBORI in 2015, the enrollment rate for Russian language courses was only 18.4% of respondents in 2010-2014, but it jumped to 57.6% of respondents in 2015-2019, showing a notable increase.

(3) By integrating graduation year, and foreign language courses as independent variables, and the percentage of English and Russian language classes enrollment rates as dependent variables, the following conclusions were reached: Before the OBORI was implemented, the enrollment rate of English language courses in all regions of Mainland China had remained high. However, after the implementation of the OBORI, in the eastern and central regions it remained high, while in other regions it dropped. The Russian courses showed the opposite pattern.

C. With regard to the respondents' initial motivation to learn English and Russian languages:

The most frequent reason for studying English was wanting to pass exams (55.9% of respondents), career options, and interest. In contrast, the main reasons the students selected the Russian language were pure interest in the subject (68.4% of respondents), career ambition (55.3% of respondents), and "my family/relatives have connections with this language" (39.5% of respondents).

It was found by some researchers such as Heng (2018) that learning English for exams was not just a problem for individuals, but a common problem in the current exam-oriented education system as a whole. In China, the focus is on science and mathematics, 'linguistic elegance', avoiding risk and passing exams, whereas in the USA, the emphasis is on reasoning and innovative and creative ideas (Heng, 2018: 27).

For students undertaking Russian language courses, 55.3% chose ‘career option’ as the reason, 6.1% more than students undertaking English language courses. When comparing the participation in language courses, 39.3% of respondents chose English, while 31.5% of respondents chose Russian.

In summary, more respondents had interest in learning Russian and believed that Russian would have a bright future in the OBORI. This significant interest in Russian may assist institutional decision-makers in choosing which language(s) to promote in an evolving education marketplace. However, this evolving education system may still lack the capacity to address a fundamental issue, that students often focus on courses for the purpose of passing an exam. This scenario happens to be especially true for students studying English. For optimal benefit to the development of the OBORI, as well as other economics exchanges among China and other countries, an environment of pursuit of knowledge and practical know-how can be cultivated. Without knowledge and hard work, it would be difficult to maximize the benefits gained from these partnerships. The current focus on encouraging Russian language courses may divert resources away from English language courses. As English is still the primary language for international trade and diplomacy, if there is a shortage of people with English language skills, opportunities to effectively negotiate agreements will be affected.

The data indicate that Business English courses account for a greater percentage of course offerings than Business Russian courses. The proportion of graduates who chose Business English was higher than that of graduates who chose Business Russian. The development of the OBORI means that the authorities in Russia will be able to strengthen economic and trade exchanges, which means that this trend is likely to continue in the future, especially when conducting business transactions or other types of economic exchanges.

English and Russian language courses are popular among students and graduates. Graduates that have foreign language skills and a detailed understanding of business are good candidates for roles in international trade, where these traits are valued.

The popularity of English and Russian language courses among students and graduates can provide them with valuable skills and make them strong candidates for roles in international trade. Proficiency in these languages opens up opportunities for individuals to engage in global business interactions, where effective communication is crucial.

Language skills, especially in English, play a significant role in international trade due to the widespread use of English as a global business language. English serves as a lingua franca in many international business settings, facilitating communication between individuals from different countries and cultures. Fluency in English enables individuals to effectively negotiate contracts, participate in international meetings, and communicate with clients and business partners from around the world.

Russian, on the other hand, holds particular importance due to its widespread use in the OBORI and its status as an official language in several countries such as in Russia and in some key Central Asian countries, which are talked about in the next Chapter. Companies engaged in trade with Russian-speaking regions, often seek professionals who can communicate in Russian to facilitate business interactions.

Apart from language proficiency, a comprehensive understanding of business is essential for roles in international trade. This understanding encompasses knowledge of global markets, international business practices, cultural differences, and negotiation skills. Students and graduates who combine language skills with a solid understanding of business concepts can effectively navigate the complexities of international trade, develop meaningful relationships with clients and partners, and contribute to the success of their organizations.

Overall, individuals with strong language skills in English and Russian, coupled with a nuanced understanding of business, have a competitive edge in the field of international trade. These skills enable them to bridge cultural and linguistic gaps, foster effective communication, and navigate the intricacies of global business environments.

There is a growing need for a proper understanding of the intersection between international trade and language skills. This need comes from an increasingly connected global economy. The need for this increased understanding is demonstrated by the increased demand for imported products in the market of the countries along the OBORI. Another example of this is shown through increased demand in China for internationally imported products, especially for products where the user interface is optimized for the Chinese market in the context of the OBORI.

To summarize, the promotion and expansion of foreign language and cultural education will provide a nation's citizens with the valuable skills necessary for navigating complex global markets.

Chapter 6. An overview of language policies/strategies and the OBORI in Central Asia

6.1. The OBORI and Central Asia

The Central Asian countries extend from the Caspian Sea in the west to the border of Western China in the east. The region consists of the former Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan.

The current lingua franca of the world is English and has been so for a number of years. As mentioned before, Firth (1996) stated that English functions as a lingua franca among people who do not have a common native language or cultural background. In most cases, it is the language of trade and economics and science and technology in the world. In spite of this situation, there are countries which are making efforts to erode the status of English by promoting viable alternatives to English in an effort to promote usage of their language beyond their own borders, to gain influence on both a global and local scale. One such example is within the economic cooperative bloc of countries known as the countries of Central Asia. Policymakers and officials in each of the countries of Central Asia desire to promote their respective languages so that they can be more influential globally, locally, and in the OBORI. The reality is only a few languages are actually adopted by the global businesses and the OBORI. The important languages in trade are English, Chinese and Russian. English is the most common language used in international trade. With China's growing share of international trade, the Chinese language is becoming increasingly important. Simultaneously, Russian is used widely in Central Asia.

In the previous chapters it was suggested that, at an international level, common language(s) can increase the effectiveness of communications and decrease communication costs by reducing the need for translation services and reducing the risks of misunderstandings. With 65 countries comprising the OBORI, it is recommended that these countries seek to coordinate or harmonize their language strategies that, in theory, can help realize the benefits of trading within the framework of the OBORI. It would be beneficial for individual countries along the OBORI to coordinate their work towards a common language strategy, which would help all the countries along the OBORI by strengthening trade and diplomatic bonds. However

it is very unlikely such a development would occur and may only be successful at a national level for each country. In cases when soft power is applied, these situations need not lead to competing or conflicting language policies, rather they can promote preferred options in which both countries find benefits to their (harmonized) language strategies. Cooperation and harmonization of language strategies would lead to better trade outcomes and diplomatic relations among the countries. It is better to work together to come up with solutions that benefit everyone, than try to force another country to implement something that would only benefit one country (Keohane & Nye, 1998). Instances of the use of soft power therefore can be found in languages, culture, institutions, and through trade and intercultural contact via formal (government-sponsored) and informal exchanges (such as in tourism).

Helliwell (1997) believed that the use of a common language, such as Russian among Central Asian countries, can promote the development of a country's international trade in several ways. First, the harmonization of language strategies can help to reduce the costs of trade (Grin, 2017); second, in international trade, a common language can be more informative for the trading parties and reduce misunderstandings; third, a common language strategy can reduce legal risks and costs arising from different legal standards or systems between trading parties; fourth, common language strategies can reflect and promote common values, which helps to increase the trust of both trading parties.

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, when Kazakhstan (in 1936), Kyrgyzstan (in 1936) and Uzbekistan (in 1917) became Soviet republics, the dominant language in business communication, journalism, science and literature became Russian. As the Soviet Union and its trade relations expanded, Russian became the dominant language in these fields among the Central Asian countries and in relations with China. During the time of Central Asia's membership of the Soviet Union, Russian has been widely used to manage trade relations within Central Asian countries and between these countries and China, since the collapse of the Soviet Union. As the lingua franca of Central Asia, the Russian language has a strong presence in these countries, and it is still one of the most commonly used languages of some Central Asian countries such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

China and Russia are economically the most powerful countries in the OBORI and have the greatest influence in shaping the direction of the OBORI. However, the Central Asian countries are also important members of the OBORI that both China and Russia are trying to

grow further as trading partners because of their geographic location. These countries serve as avenues for transit and trade routes between China and Europe and between Russia and the Indian sub-continent. The Central Asian countries represent a formidable and developed economic bloc that pursues its own economic strategies within the OBORI. It is essential to consider the language strategies these countries are using are essential to consider as they impact upon the OBORI in ways that can complement, moderate or contradict those of Russia or China. In order to strengthen the economic relationships of countries within Central Asia, despite having multiple cultures, each country in Central Asia needs to compromise to achieve their individual national and collective Central Asian economic goals.

One important goal should be increased accessibility of English education materials. As a geographical bridge for land-based transport between trading partners, the Central Asian countries would be able to influence how countries communicate with each other.

Kyrgyzstan is another example of a Central Asian country with a low proficiency in English. As a direct result of the lack of suitable English education materials in Central Asian education systems, Kyrgyzstan has a very low language proficiency index for English (in the world ranking 100, ranking 99th). Asia's average score for English proficiency is 53 out of 100 points, putting Kyrgyzstan 11.49 points under the Asian benchmark. Kyrgyz women in the country fall behind men in proficiency creating a gender inequality in educational and economical opportunities⁷ (24.kg, 2019).

In other former Soviet republics, according to reports in 2019, the English rankings for English language skills in the world are very poor -: Kazakhstan (93rd), Uzbekistan (95th), Kyrgyzstan (99th) (First, 2019).

Below I considered the implementations of language strategies by Central Asian countries that have been substantial to the OBORI. The strategies that were considered were those of the biggest Central Asian countries, the most populous, most geographically strategic, most linguistically influential, and most contested between Russia and China.

⁷ In addition to Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Mongolia, and the United Arab Emirates are among the countries with “very low” English proficiency. Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Georgia were included in the group of countries with a “low” level of English language proficiency. EF SET. (n.d.). English levels. Retrieved from <https://www.efset.org/english-score/> [Accessed on 30.09.2022].



Figure 3. Map of Central Asia (*Nationonline*, n.d.).

China and the Central Asian countries have become major trading partners, through both direct trade between China and the Central Asian countries, and related trade between those member nations (e.g. Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan) and China. One goal for China to establish the OBORI was to build infrastructure, such as a natural gas pipeline and other connections directly between China and Central Asian countries, in order to vastly increase trade velocities and volumes between China and Central Asian countries. In 2013, China became the largest buyer of natural gas in Turkmenistan and the second largest export market for Kazakh oil. Over the years, the Chinese government has implemented an economic strategy in the OBORI to build up important influence and trade with Central Asian countries (*People.cn*, 2019).

On 25 January 2022, 30 years after establishing diplomatic relations between China and the five Central Asian countries, Chinese president Xi Jin Ping announced that over the past 30 years, trade and investment between China and the Central Asian countries have increased

a hundredfold. The major projects between China and Central Asia such as the Kazakhstan Crude Oil Pipeline, the China-Jiangsu-Ukraine Highway, and the China-Tajikistan Highway have been successfully completed, resulting in increased freight traffic on the China-Europe route passing through Central Asian countries.

Xi further indicated that, in the next five years, the Chinese government plans to provide 1,200 Chinese government scholarships to students from the five Central Asian countries, and give priority to the establishment of Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms in Central Asian countries. In the years 2022-2025, it was anticipated that the Chinese authorities would provide \$500 million (USD) in assistance to Central Asian countries for the construction of infrastructure projects to help with economic development. They also plan to provide 5,000 research and seminar places to help countries educate professionals in various fields such as health care, poverty alleviation and agriculture, connectivity, and information technology. President Xi Jin Ping's speech in the Virtual Summit to Commemorate the 30th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations Between China and Central Asian Countries highlighted the importance China places on its relationships with Central Asian countries (*Xinhua*, 2021).

Recent examples of economically strategic projects completed by China in Central Asian countries include the Anglian-Papu railway tunnel in Uzbekistan (the longest tunnel in the countries of Central Asia) (*World Today News*, 2022), the high-voltage power transmission and transformation projects in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (*Asia-Plus*, 2021), as well as the construction of roads, tunnels and bridges, jointly implemented and operated under the China-Kazakhstan (Lianyungang) logistics station project with Kazakhstan (*Lianyungang China*, 2018). Furthermore, the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan International Highway was completed in 2017.

For digital connectivity and their digital economies, the Chinese government has signed the Silk Road Optical Cable Cooperation Agreement with Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan, and this Silk Road Optical Cable Project has been effectively launched (*People.cn*, 2019).

Meanwhile, to create and sustain agglomeration effects from this new infrastructure, a number of cooperative business parks are being constructed, such as the China-Kazakhstan

Horgos International Border Cooperation Center, Zhongta Industrial Park, and the New Silk Road Agricultural Textile Industry Processing Park.

The Chinese government has also opened a 'green lane' for rapid customs clearance of agricultural products from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The transit time of agricultural products has been shortened by 90%, thereby improving quality while lowering costs. For payment clearances, currency swap agreements between China and Central Asian countries have been signed including Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan; in addition, a currency settlement agreement with Kyrgyzstan has also been concluded. A cooperation agreement has been signed between the Shanghai Stock Exchange and the Astana International Financial Center Authority allowing for joint investments in construction of the Astana International Exchange (*People.cn*, 2019).

Payment clearances and international exchange amongst the member countries of the OBORI are conducted in one or more major business languages such as English. Knowledge of and respecting the language and customs of trading partners can improve relationships among trading countries. The ability to communicate in multiple languages is becoming an increasingly important aspect of participating in the global economy (New American Economy, 2017).

Analysing the spread of the Russian language, Dang (2018) conducted research on the use of the Russian language in countries neighbouring Russia, identifying what proportions of the public and student populations use the language. He found that 84.8% of the inhabitants in Kazakhstan are fluent in Russian. In addition, in Kyrgyzstan, the language utilized in trade is Russian. Of the 65 countries along the OBORI, the Russian language is widely used in more than 40 countries. These findings illustrate the great frequency of both interest in learning the Russian language and the importance of being proficient in Russian.

The Central Asian states such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have bilateral and trade relationships with China that are considered to be strong and strategic for all parties.

I examined three influential Central Asian countries, to gain further insights into the implementation of language strategies within the OBORI. These countries must leverage geographical resources and other local advantages into connections and alliances that advance their economic goals, both as individual states and as members of a global trade organization.

In my research, I examined trade relations between China and Central Asia within the OBORI to show how language and soft power are utilized to advance their language strategies. The effects of language and soft power are also exhibited in other regional, bilateral, and multilateral trade relationships. In the three key Central Asian countries -- Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan -- I see the use of the Russian language as an influential tool in political and trade relationships within the context of the OBORI, with soft power arising in the language's use of diplomacy and cultural dissemination.

I used the data from the Central Asian countries as possible avenues for further research on how other countries of the OBORI could emulate their language strategies to promote stronger linkages within the OBORI. The findings from this research could also provide insights for other member countries of the OBORI in Central Asia, like Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, to consider and adopt when setting up programs to learn and teach foreign languages such as English or Chinese.

Since the Chinese language has been advancing in importance alongside China's economic growth, Chinese has become an important language for the implementation of economic strategies in the Central Asian countries and as a source of soft power in the OBORI.

This development can also indicate possible impacts that the cooperation of different nations can have on improving the overall quality of life for regular citizens. For example, the increased size and influence of the Chinese economy has prompted development of policies and trade agreements in both the Central Asian countries and OBORI to establish sustainable economic growth across the world. By deepening the sphere of the OBORI and of influence and Western economic ties, the use of the Chinese language has been beneficial in negotiating mutually beneficial trade and strategic investments, with major implications for the greater global community, as the reduction of barriers has resulted in an overall drop in consumer prices. Thus, Chinese language can be said to have had significant influence on the Central Asian countries and the OBORI as a whole, with the economic impact of the increase in trade contributing to cheaper goods for the citizens of the trading countries.

6.2. An overview of language policies/strategies and the OBORI in Kazakhstan

Our first case study is Kazakhstan, the biggest Central Asian country.

From the official website of the silk road, '*Silk road briefing*', it can be learned that Kazakhstan has a significant position in the OBORI. It has a 1,783 km border, which is shared in the east with China, Russia to the north and Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan to the south. There is a mountain range between China and Kazakhstan, with most of the country being undulating grasslands. It is considered one of the most accessible countries in Central Asia. As such, it is engaged in the OBORI and is given more consideration in terms of trade and economic opportunities, even more so than other Central Asian countries. In addition, it benefits from its abundant mineral and natural gas reserves (*Silk road briefing*, 2021).

Kazakhstan is a nation that covers a large amount of area but has low population density, with fewer than six people per square kilometre. With this low-density population, challenges to creating and sustaining high quality, stable jobs in fields other than agriculture can be observed (*Silk road briefing*, 2021). While there is plenty of space for expansive farmlands, traditional communal workspaces may be impractical without a robust and well-invested-in public transit system. Although agriculture is a protected industry in Kazakhstan, the number of people working in agriculture is decreasing worldwide due to the advances in agricultural technology eliminating jobs and a waning interest in farming as a career (Booth, 2021). One potential solution to this decrease in agricultural workers would be to establish an immigration policy that encourages employment in the agricultural sector. Some examples of this type of policy are Australia's special visas for working holiday makers and seasonal workers to fill job vacancies in occupations that the local workforce do not want to do (Australian government the department of home affairs, 2021; Australian government the department of home affairs, 2022). The Kazakh government could provide incentives for local employers to provide Kazakh language education to these immigrant workers.

The oil industry makes up much of the Kazakh economy. Oil and gas prices and production outputs can be influenced greatly by economic conditions, conflict and the political climate. This reliance on oil means that the health of the Kazakh economy can be greatly affected by any shocks in the energy markets. In the years following 2015, the price of oil in

the world decreased, which along with the decline in demand for exports resulted in a sharp economic slowdown in Kazakhstan. As a result, the government of Kazakhstan was incentivized to participate in the OBORI as a way to develop new infrastructure, and to support its ability to import and export goods. This situation puts Kazakhstan in a position to be a hub of transportation and economy, making it competitive in international trade (*Silk Road Briefing*, 2021).

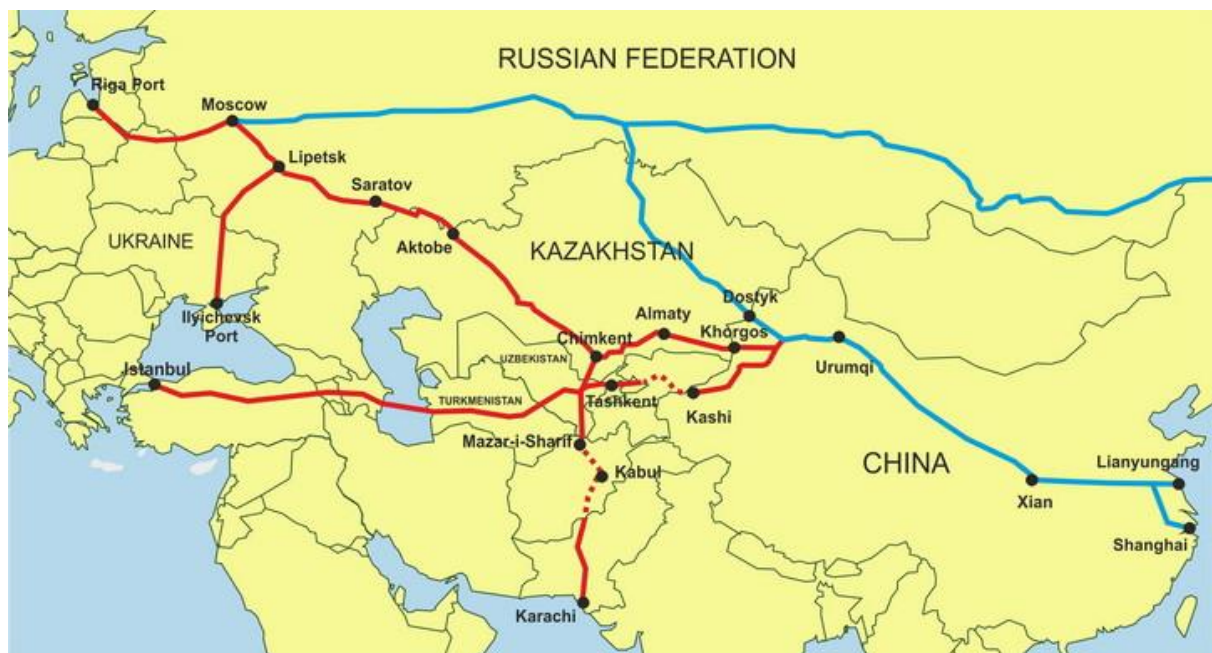


Figure 4. The railway routes (*Silk Road Briefing*, 2021).

It is essential that the Central Asian governments recognize the benefits of investing in language education in order to increase the number of multilingual individuals, with the aim to increase international commerce and address supply chain and labor problems.

As addressed in Chapter 1, Grin's idea was that language skills, like other skills, can be understood as some form of human capital. Grin (2008) found out that the economic value of language is determined by the market for language exchange. He then spread his ideas to economists through his own texts. Grin's findings suggested that governments invest in teaching and social development for an economic environment that promotes strong relationships. The government also needs to invest in teaching and creating a curriculum that teaches languages combined with culture. Grin, with the theory of language policy he

developed, played an influential role in the development of modern language strategies and trade agreements.

Currently, Kazakhstan is promoting trilingualism, which provides for the study of the Kazakh state language, as well as the second language of Russian and the relative newcomer, the English language. Historically, Kazakh, the state language, has been the main language, with Russian comprising the next position of languages spoken in Kazakhstan. The Former Chair of the Senate of Kazakhstan, Nazarbayeva stated that the vast majority of the knowledge that appears in the world today is in English. “Educational literature, monographs, the entire internet is practically in English,” she said. “To advance today, to introduce some innovations at home, to start start-ups is unthinkable without the English language.” Thus, the Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan designated foreign languages such as Chinese that will help Kazakhstan in its economic development. Though foreign language study is important, prioritization of a foreign language can lead to issues of neglect for native languages and dialects (Narodsobor, 2016).

6.2.1. The importance of the state language Kazakh in Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan is an example of an OBORI member who, as part of its initiative to acquire more soft power and promote its own language strategy, it has the language goal of growing proficiency in its own language among its population. Chinese and Russian are used by the Chinese and Russian governments to promote their language strategies as soft power in the OBORI, while seemingly cooperating with each other. Kazakhstan does this with its language as well.

The promotion within Kazakhstan of its own language, Kazakh, helps solidify a more cohesive national identity that makes the country more united. On 29 June 2011, the Kazakh government approved the *National Outline of the Function and Development of Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2011-2020 (Electronic government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2021)*. This outline allowed politicians to develop a policy to promote the Kazakh language. This policy would also promote awareness among the population that a common language is a main element in national unity. Predictions show that by 2020, Kazakh, Russian, and English fluency will reach about 95%, 90% and 20% respectively. From this information it is shown that the Kazakh government instills greatly the importance of the Kazakh language.

However, different measures are put in place to make sure the promotion of Kazakh leaves room for Russian learners (Aubakirova, 2005; Li, 2016).

A law passed by the Republic of Kazakhstan dated 11 July 1997 No. 151-I on languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan (with amendments and additions as of 24 November 2021) sheds light on the country's language strategy in the context of the OBORI in response to the emerging global economy. This law reflects a policy regarding the use of the Kazakh language in official documents. In order to implement language strategies when communicating with Kazakh entities, it is critical to be observant of their laws and policies.

The government, other state and local representatives and executive bodies are obliged “to develop in every possible way the state language in the Republic of Kazakhstan, and to strengthen its international authority.”

The Kazakh language has historically been the language of diplomacy and this legacy, combined with the legal requirements for official Kazakh documents, contributes to the trade and economy of the country. The Kazakh government has been making concerted efforts to promote the country's mother tongue, Kazakh. An example of this is that the Kazakh government requires all official documents to be presented in Kazakh. By partnering with the OBORI, there are opportunities for the Kazakh government to develop its soft power and continue to promote the relevance of the Kazakh language on the global scene through cultural and trade interactions.

6.2.2. The importance of the Russian language in Kazakhstan

According to Article 15 of “On languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan entitled ‘Language of Transaction’” (Ministry of justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2006), all transactions made in writing in the Republic of Kazakhstan that involve individuals and/or legal entities are set out in both official languages, Kazakh and Russian, with translation into other languages if needed.

Transactions involving foreign individuals and legal entities involving writing, must be made in the state language, and in a language acceptable to the parties.

From the above-mentioned facts one can understand that Article 15 is designed so that there is no confusion on the part of consumers by ensuring that all parties understand the

transaction being made. The purpose of a rule such as Article 15 is to make sure that, in a specific location, the individuals and/or corporate entities of that location are able to fully understand any contracts made under the appropriate national legal system. Implementing rules such as these further improves negotiations and resolve contract disputes.

Support of the Kazakh government is influential in the demand for Russian language courses in Kazakhstan. The attitudes of Kazakh government language policymakers to the Russian language and how the Kazakh government views in practice the resolution, referenced above as Article 15, of making Russian an official language also needs to be considered.

6.2.3. The importance of the English language in Kazakhstan

International regulations help keep relationships between the countries along the OBORI mutually beneficial. In spite of the effort of the Kazakh government to promote the Kazakh and Russian languages, there is an acknowledgment of the importance of English being spoken by its citizens. As a result, English is also playing a significant role in Kazakhstan.

In 2019, the law known as “On approval of the State program for the implementation of language policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020-2025” was enacted. As such, the Kazakh government is increasing its focus on English learning. Several goals were set for a gradual increase in English competency per year, as below:

	Population using the Latin alphabet (for English) in written communication (%)	Population who speak the state language Kazakh (%)	The percentage of content in state media that is in Kazakh-language (%)	The percentage of the population who can speak all three of Kazakh, Russian and English (%)
2020		90.5%	74%	26%
2021		91%	75%	27%
2022	10%	92%	76%	28%
2023	20%	93%	77%	29%

2024	30%	94%	78%	30%
2025	50%	95%	79%	31%

According to EF English Proficiency Index 2019⁸, as a general background in Central Asia, the percentage of people proficient in English is significantly lower than in other regions. Low levels of English proficiency are also to be found in Kazakhstan. In 2019, the EF English Proficiency Index ranked Kazakhstan 93rd and in the moderate proficiency range. This low proficiency is in part because Russian is more commonly taught in schools as a second language (Forbes, 2017).

Due to a lack of English fluency among citizens, it has been challenging to jobs in tourism despite this sector accounting for at least 10 percent of the local economy. In order to create more jobs for those who want to work in the tourism industry, it was decided that schools should prioritize the teaching of English to students (Narodsobor, 2016). English is important for tourism since a majority of tourists from around the world rely on English to communicate. It is also important for trade because the preferred language with which global business is conducted is English. As a proportion of the population, there are more people in both China and Kazakhstan that can speak English, as compared to people that can speak Kazakh in China, or people that can speak Chinese in Kazakhstan. Even with the increasing use of other languages, English is still pivotal in trade and commerce, requiring investment to increase English language proficiency within Kazakhstan to take advantages of economic opportunities.

6.2.4. The importance of the Chinese language in Kazakhstan

Over the past 15 years, Chinese has become increasingly significant in Kazakhstan due in large part to the two countries developing stronger economic relations. The first decade of the 2000s saw the active expansion of Chinese business in Kazakhstan, which stimulated interest in learning the Chinese language for purposes of gaining employment. The two countries signed interstate and interdepartmental agreements on cooperation in the field of education, along with intensifying humanitarian contacts. Increasing trade and immigration have built stronger and deeper connections between Kazakhstan and China. These deeper connections

⁸ EF is the name of an English language school.

have been reflected in the greater interest in China and the Chinese language on the part of the Kazakh government and people.

In 2018, the president of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev announced that 51 project agreements between China and Kazakhstan had been signed and 1,200 joint ventures had been put into operation (Narodsobor, 2016).

According to Dariga Nazarbayeva⁹ at a meeting of the collegium of the Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan: “Today we must teach our children to acquire knowledge in at least three languages (Kazakh, Russian and English)” (Narodsobor, 2016). “At least, because in the very near future we will all need to also know Chinese” (Narodsobor, 2016). “China is our friend, a very important trading partner and the largest investor in the economy of our country” (Narodsobor, 2016). That is, the need to study the Chinese language is associated with the fact that the volume of economic cooperation with the Chinese government will increase even more in the near future, and it would be desirable for the residents of Kazakhstan to communicate with the Chinese speakers in Chinese.

As detailed in an article by the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Kazakhstan, recent years have brought a continuous increase in Chinese language learning in Kazakhstan. Currently, five Confucius Institutes in Kazakhstan provide Chinese language programs. Meanwhile, many cultural and language centers dedicated to the teaching and learning of Chinese have been established in Kazakhstan. As of 2018, about 14,000 Kazakh students were studying in China, and about 1,400 Chinese students have gone to Kazakhstan to study. In June 2017, Chinese President Xi Jin Ping promised to increase government subsidies for 200 Kazakh students over the ensuing five years (*Kazinform*, 2018).

As reported by the international news agency Kazinform, the achievements of China-Kazakhstan cooperation since the launch of the OBORI have been significant. The trade relationship between the two countries has seen China become one of Kazakhstan's principal trading partners. Furthermore, the cooperation between China and Kazakhstan, in terms of general international cooperation in assisting the creation of the OBORI, has proved to be useful beyond the successful relationship the two countries have. China's relationship with

⁹ Dariga Nazarbayeva, the Former Chair of the Senate of Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan has helped provide a template for international cooperation that has had positive outcomes for China and Kazakhstan to develop jointly (*Kazinform*, 2018).

While Kazakhstan has benefitted from going into the OBORI, a number of unexpected downsides can be detected.

As an example, Pantucci (2021) noted the monumental trade imbalance between Kazakhstan and China. He commented that the cooperation between China and Kazakhstan also has brought about some problems, several of which are long-standing. He cited water consumption from a lake in Kazakhstan. So much water is being taken for sale in China that the lake is beginning to run dry. Likewise, there have been falls in the importation of processed food goods from Kazakhstan to China, where food exports to China fell by 78% between January 2021 and September 2021. This reduction in food exports was likely caused by lockdowns, border closures and disruptions to freight and logistics networks across the world as a result of Covid-19.

While these are negative points relating to international trade, there are some bright spots. For instance, the banning of cryptocurrency mining in China has resulted in Chinese organisations relocating their rigs and operations to other countries, such as Kazakhstan, where power supplies are cheaper.

Having an official language represented in the OBORI positively influences a nation's soft power by creating an additional, concrete reason for non-native speakers to learn the language. Additionally, it makes the information coming out of the OBORI more accessible to a nation's people.

The expansion of the Chinese language within Kazakhstan contributes to the success of not only those two nations, but increased cooperation within the OBORI as this creates a model for additional cultural exchange. As the *Kazinform* reported, cooperation and trade between China and Kazakhstan have been boosted through these partnerships. These results speak to the need for even greater education in each other's languages and cultures. While the number of exchange students between both countries as well as the number of Confucius Institutes within Kazakhstan is impressive, an increase can only be beneficial to global economies through the OBORI. Pantucci also believed that it would be unfair to blame the OBORI for all these problems. Geography can often be seen as a fundamental problem. Similar issues are less

relevant in further countries of the OBORI. However, at the same time, it does show the dangers of over-reliance on China (Pantucci, 2021).

6.3. An overview of language policies/strategies and the OBORI in

Kyrgyzstan

The second case study is Kyrgyzstan. The official website of the Silk Road, '*Silk road briefing*' introduced Kyrgyzstan and its importance to the OBORI in the following way:

Kyrgyzstan is also one of China's main partners in the context of the OBORI, which involves the development of a railway line heading West over the Kyrgyz Tan Shan, to link up with connections in Kyrgyzstan and the International North-South Transportation Corridor (INSTC). This track will be the first trans-Central Asian railway from East to West to link up with Central Asian lines heading North-South. The proposed Trans-Afghan route would extend from Uzbekistan south to Pakistan and the Arabian Sea Ports at Gwadar and Karachi. It will have seaport access benefitting the countries like Kyrgyzstan that are completely landlocked (Devonshire-Ellis, 2021).

Kyrgyzstan has made significant contributions to the OBORI, and its cooperation with the Chinese government is also increasing year by year. These contributions can be seen in the OBORI Forum for International Cooperation hosted by the Chinese government, with Kyrgyzstan in attendance. From May 14th to 15th, 2017, China hosted the first OBORI Forum for International Cooperation in Beijing. The second session was held in 2019. During and on the eve of the summit forum, governments, and enterprises of various countries reached consensus on cooperation, listing cooperation outcomes of the summit forum. The list includes cooperation initiatives, multilateral and bilateral cooperation documents signed during or on the eve of the summit forum, and cooperation projects carried out by other nations and enterprises, including China (*Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, 2017; The Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, 2019*).

Kyrgyzstan both contributes to and gains opportunities from the OBORI. Kyrgyzstan's President, Soronbay Jeenbekov, said at the second Forum of the OBORI in 2019, "Kyrgyzstan is making its own contribution to building the OBORI. Now that the center of global economic activity shifts towards the center of the Asian continent. (...) Kyrgyzstan and China are the

nearest neighbors, and given the fact that Kyrgyzstan belongs to the Eurasian Economic Union, all this means we are ready to be a bridge between these two global economic zones” (*Azattyk Media*, 2019).

As China and Kyrgyzstan continue towards increasing trade partnerships, there will be an immediate need for technological cooperation in order to pursue economic and market expansion. Jeenbekov also said that Kyrgyzstan requires new technologies and international support to develop the digital infrastructure for the OBORI. The OBORI has helped member countries open up new opportunities and broaden prospects for Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstan’s active involvement with respect to the OBORI has in turn offered potential revenues from which the Kyrgyz government has been able to benefit. As Jeenbekov said, “The OBORI can expand the fiber optic transmission line network (FOCL) from China to Europe. If FOCL can make its way through Kyrgyzstan, this could mean that the data transmission rate would increase significantly. The second thing to do should be to build a high-tech logistics center and develop joint e-commerce. The Kyrgyz Republic can be the most favored nation for building a logistics center to speed up internet orders for consumers living in Eurasian countries” (*Azattyk Media*, 2019).

Given the above-mentioned facts and the importance of Kyrgyzstan to the OBORI and to China, it is worthwhile analysing the communication tools (i.e. the languages used to communicate internationally). Kyrgyz strategies regarding the Kyrgyz, Chinese, English and Russian languages will be analyzed in the following sections.

6.3.1. The importance of the state languages Kyrgyz and Russian in Kyrgyzstan

According to the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, the national languages of the country are Kyrgyz and Russian. Thus, Article 3 of the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic stipulates that “*as the national language, Kyrgyz is also considered to be the language of communication among the peoples of the Kyrgyz Republic* (Ministry of Justice of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2015).”

It is important to clarify what the official languages are using a formal legal reference (such as the Kyrgyz Constitution or other such legal documents). Formal legal references can help clarify which official languages are to be used. Additionally, legal codification can establish the authority of specific languages.

Although Kyrgyz is the official language in Kyrgyzstan, on becoming part of the Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan developed a reliance on the Russian language in international trade, business communication, journalism, science, literature, and in interactions with foreigners. Although Kyrgyz is more accepted and widely understood throughout Kyrgyzstan, it has become a highly-distributed language throughout the Central Asian countries and international community, being spoken by a significant number of individuals within Central Asia. Therefore, it is essential to use Kyrgyz when attempting to implement any economic trade strategy both internally and with Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia. Russian is also a common language in many Central Asian countries alongside Kyrgyz. Russian, along with Kyrgyz to a lesser degree, holds prominent status as an international lingua franca, being widely utilized in commerce, diplomacy, and social communications both online and in real life. Therefore, both Russian and the Kyrgyz languages are vital in accommodating trade within the Central Asian nations and the larger global community.

Although bilingualism in Kyrgyz and Russian is becoming increasingly desired among Kyrgyz citizens and encouraged by the Kyrgyz government due to globalization and the usage of Russian in international relations, few Kyrgyz citizens can be considered truly bilingual, as the majority remain monolingual (Ryskulova, 2021).

According to Article 10 of the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic Regarding the Official Language of the Kyrgyz Republic, it is stipulated that: “The language of negotiation with a foreign power shall be Kyrgyz, Russian, English or the language of the other party”. Russian has also maintained a level of importance as Kyrgyz in some areas of the Kyrgyz Republic. While Kyrgyz is the official language and significant for maintaining Kyrgyzstan's heritage and national identity, many languages have been incorporated into the daily life of Kyrgyz citizens, due to an increase in international business and as a result of globalization.

The incorporation of languages into Kyrgyz society as a result of international business and globalization is not without problems. While Kyrgyz remains the official and predominant language of Kyrgyzstan, Russian has become a prominent language as well. The popularity of Russian can be attributed to an increase in international usage, providing an ample incentive for Kyrgyzstan to learn the language of one of its most important trading partners: Russia. Despite the regional usefulness of Russian, Kyrgyzstan, and perhaps most other Central Asian countries, have yet to recognize the need to expand language courses in their educational

systems beyond the Central Asian scope. Although the Kyrgyz government has done its language promotion, the lack of versatility in education and foreign language courses is limiting. It prevents both non-Kyrgyz speaking students from accessing Kyrgyz-dominated higher education in Kyrgyzstan and native Kyrgyz speakers in navigating multilingual exchanges and environments. Perhaps most compelling is the lack of instruction in the Chinese language, which has been trending as a mainstream global language. This deficiency could hinder Central Asian developments with China and other Southeast Asian nations, especially if Chinese emerges as a significant language in global trade, perhaps even a lingua franca in future financial markets and interactions.

6.3.2. The importance of the English language in Kyrgyzstan

The importance given to English by the Kyrgyz government can be seen in the laws it has drafted and policies it has proposed and has already implemented.

“International treaties of the Kyrgyz Republic must be drafted in Kyrgyz, Russian or English, and the language of the other contracting party with whom the treaty is negotiated” (Ministry of Justice of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2015).

In Kyrgyzstan, English is compulsory in most schools. In addition, there are many English courses from which to choose. The fact that almost all of these English courses are taught partly in English and partly in Russian, in a non-immersive way, presents a barrier for Kyrgyz-speaking students (*Mediaplov*, 2021). Data from a survey suggested that, in several states with more schools that have materials in Russian and English, children scored better on English tests. Kyrgyz-speaking children were found to perform worse in English exams mainly due to the lack of suitable educational materials (*Mediaplov*, 2021). This lack of material is an issue which doesn't exist in other countries such as in Kazakhstan, due to Kyrgyzstan's unique language demographics.

As English is one of the primary languages of the OBORI, English is an essential language for implementation of economic strategy and soft power. The English language students prepare to face a world of instant and constant communication and connection, with most international trade being done in English. It is essential that language studies should begin early in the students' education and needs to be as immersive as possible. Whether the Kyrgyz government will go to the extent of using native English teachers to teach English rather than

their own home-grown teachers is something which is yet to be seen. However, the English language does not need be the primary focus despite its current international status. There are certainly openings which would allow the Kyrgyz republic and even private schooling system to employ native Chinese or other language teachers in a similar manner to any native English teacher program. While the English language is today's language of commerce, Chinese, and other non-European languages, have the potential to be the future of trade and the OBORI as those languages continue to rise in prominence.

One strategic economic industry - tourism - needs an increase in staff who demonstrate English proficiency. Because of this, improving English proficiency can be helpful for tourism and the implementation of other economic strategies within international initiatives such as the OBORI. As has been demonstrated, an increase in educational performance as it relates to English learning can be improved by greater access to learning materials within Kyrgyzstan. It would also be important for Kyrgyz officials to look outside of their traditional language models to other non-European languages, such as Chinese.

6.3.3. The importance of the Chinese language in Kyrgyzstan

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic, after the implementation of the OBORI, the Kyrgyz Republic's emphasis on China and Chinese can be seen in its laws and regulations. The Kyrgyz government ordered Chinese translations for 10 areas of legislation in 2019, including the Family Law of Kyrgyzstan, Foreign Immigration Law of Kyrgyzstan, Labor Law of Kyrgyzstan, Business Association and Social Law of Kyrgyzstan, and Investment Law of Kyrgyzstan.

It is true that bilingualism is not common in Kyrgyzstan due to the fact that people in many areas only speak one language. While language barriers exist between nations, within Kyrgyzstan there exists a disparity in language acquisition. Kyrgyzstan is one of the largest of China's trade partners in Central Asia. Moreover, since people in Kyrgyzstan are less proficient in English, and Chinese is gaining more importance in international trade, now is an opportune time to encourage people to become more familiar with the Chinese language and to improve these skills, perhaps resulting in more people becoming fluent in Chinese.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic, while Kyrgyzstan is not the only Central Asian country with translations of legislation into Chinese, Kyrgyzstan

was the first of the Central Asian nations to begin translation of key legislation into Chinese, and is leading in the effort to expand exchanges in the field of legislative management. The inclusion of Chinese in the legislative process shows the growing importance of China to Kyrgyzstan. The Kyrgyz government is also trying to secure cooperation among other countries in the OBORI in the area of legal affairs to minimize and resolve trade disputes (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2019).

In addition, academic “research centers” established in major universities in the country have help promote the learning and use of Chinese. Cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and China can be seen among the Shanghai Cooperation Organization member states. Shanghai Cooperation Organization, comprises China, Russia and some smaller countries. As these nations are also member states of the OBORI, they will be able to hold joint scientific conferences and symposia at a level not seen before. In this way, Kyrgyzstan is different from other Central Asian countries (*Siluxgc*, 2017).

Results from the Kyrgyz National University selection committee named after J. Balasagyn on *Siluxgc* show Chinese and English Linguistics majors in foreign language departments had the highest number of enrollees, which motivated universities to further advertise those majors.

The admissions office at Kyrgyz National University conducted a study of the highest-scoring departments in foreign languages and found Chinese and English Linguistics to be the most widely studied. Both interest and enthusiasm are very high; for example, the number of people wishing to apply for enrollment in such programs in 2017 exceeded the quota. The number of applicants wanting to declare “Linguistics” their major was 2.5 times more than what university officials had anticipated. The demand of the talent market underscored that universities have a current need for experts with Chinese knowledge in international law, economic relations and journalism, highlighting a move towards closing the nationwide English and Chinese proficiency gap among the Central Asian countries (*Siluxgc*, 2017). The graduates undertaking Chinese studies have had bright employment prospects upon graduation, such as finding work as translators in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia (*Siluxgc*, 2017).

In conclusion, the importance of Chinese to international communication in Kyrgyzstan, and therefore trade in Kyrgyzstan with China, cannot be understated. As a result there have

been moves to make Chinese an increasingly important language in Kyrgyzstan, with government departments providing translations of key documents in Chinese, schools offering Chinese as a foreign/second language course (encouraged through state regulation) and with cultural exchange programs which have spread Chinese and the culture of the Chinese language in Kyrgyzstan.

Like English, Chinese is quickly becoming an important commercial language in Kyrgyzstan. Both English and Chinese have been essential to trade and culture in various regions for a very long time. As English is being offered in Kyrgyz schools in response to its international prominence, the Chinese language is seeing an upsurge in interest. Chinese language course offerings within academic environments are expected to increase as a result of the expansion and respective value of Chinese markets.

Language has served as both a means of communication and the subject that is communicated. With an increasingly globalized society, prominent languages of strategic importance have formed the foundation for international interconnectedness. While English and Russian have both been dominant tongues in Central Asia, Chinese remains a possible voice for the East. Deepening the connections between the two nations, this prospect can bridge the cultural and linguistic gap between them, so that they may come together for future policies, economic action and the long-term stability of global society.

6.4. An overview of language policies/strategies and the OBORI in Uzbekistan

Our third case study is Uzbekistan. From the official website of the silk road, '*Silk road briefing*', it can be learned that Uzbekistan is one of the largest countries in Central Asia, and it also is engaged in a high level of cooperation with China. From the perspective of Uzbekistan, the OBORI expands commercial and trade routes for Uzbekistan. Through the OBORI, the export of Uzbek goods to more regions is an attractive incentive for Uzbekistan. Since the First Belt and Road Forum held in 2017, Uzbekistan and China have signed 115 agreements, valued at more than \$23 billion (USD), aimed at strengthening cooperation in the fields of power, oil production, chemicals, construction, textiles, pharmaceuticals, transportation, infrastructure, and agriculture (*Silk road briefing*, 2021).

A new government group responsible for integrating the development plans with China's OBORI was established in 2019 by the Uzbek government. China remains Uzbekistan's largest trading partner. There are more than 1,500 Chinese companies on Uzbek territory. The trade volume between China and Uzbekistan for 2018 was \$6.26 billion (USD), which was a year-on-year increase of 48.4%.

The railway line in Uzbekistan is strategically important because it does not require goods to flow through Russia and provides another route for the Chinese government to transport goods to the southern territory of Central Asia. Shipping by rail through Central Asia can also be faster than shipping by sea. A rail route for trade between Central Asia and China can be strategically and logistically advantageous, though the differences in language usage requires additional measures to be put in place to ensure smooth communication. For example, increased linguistic capabilities can lead to improved commercial and cultural exchange. This type of exchange can foster stronger ties through economic implementations such as possible railways and trade routes.

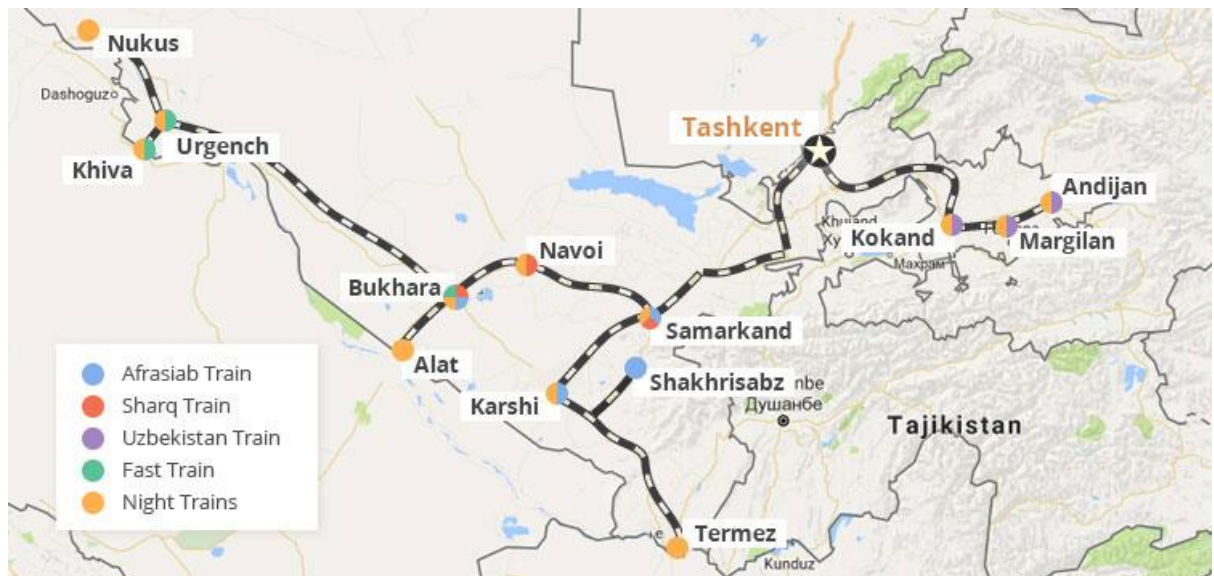


Figure 5. The railway routes of Uzbekistan (*Silk Road Briefing*, 2021).

The first article of the ‘Law on National Languages’ declares Uzbek as the national language of Uzbekistan and outlines several key provisions. Specifically Articles 3 and 12 require the use of the Uzbek language for notarization activities, but also make provisions for the citizens to request the text of the document to be published in Uzbek or, “where possible”

in another acceptable language (Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 1995).

As China's economy has grown along with the economic strategies that China promotes, as an instrument of strategy implementation and soft power, the importance of the Chinese language is likely to increase. In a similar way to that of the English language, cultural and linguistic exchanges will continue to be made between China and the world, thereby magnifying the significance of the Chinese language.

Through the increased need to immerse themselves in trade with the Chinese markets, the Uzbek government is recognizing that it needs to improve not only English proficiency but also Chinese proficiency, as China becomes ever more important as a trading partner to the Uzbek economy.

The strong relationship between Beijing and Tashkent has created a climate of fruitful cooperation between the two countries. This cooperation is a further reason why Uzbek students may feel drawn to studying Chinese. The two countries have coordinated to develop trade and investment opportunities, along with furthering cultural ties, especially in terms of language understanding (Podrobno, 2021).

The Republic of Uzbekistan has supported the OBORI since its inception. The OBORI has helped the Uzbek government achieve sustainable economic development, and helped implement the most important transport and infrastructure projects. The outcome is a comprehensive positive impact for the economies of the whole Central Asia (Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2019).

6.4.1. The importance of the English and Chinese languages in Uzbekistan

In Uzbekistan, the level of English proficiency among its people is generally very low, according to the Uzbek local news agency Ozodlik (2021). Even though an international rating found that Uzbekistan's ranking for knowledge of English had risen by 7 places, Uzbekistan is still considered overall to have “very low” English proficiency. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) system indicates that Uzbekistan’s level corresponds to the lower half of the B1 and A2 levels. There are 6 levels that classify a person's proficiency in a language. A1 and A2 are for basic users, B1 and B2 are for more independent

users, while C1 and C2 are for more advanced and proficient users (Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2022, n.d.)

Recently, the Chinese government has subsidized Uzbekistan's training in Chinese universities and has covered the cost of educational equipment for Uzbekistan's educational institutions (Podrobno, 2021).

The Uzbek government has actively considered the possible introduction of Chinese into kindergartens and increasing the number of schools that can teach Chinese. There are currently about 1,400 students who are learning Chinese in School No.59 in the capital. Given the expanding global market, it is likely that the number of Uzbek students learning Chinese will increase in the future in response to the recognized influence of the Chinese language. Other Central Asian nations such as Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have, likewise, also anticipated the demand for Chinese language courses in the near future. These countries are likely to implement similar programs, following Uzbekistan's example, as Chinese courses become more prevalent (Podrobno, 2021).

The Uzbek government is exploring the introduction of Chinese education spanning all educational levels from kindergarten through to university. Its significance is reflected in the fact that Chinese is used in business in the country. The close relationship between the Uzbek government and the Chinese government since the launch of the OBORI has placed great importance on learning it, with an obvious benefit being a strengthening of Uzbek-Chinese interactions in the international market.

According to the local news Podrobno (2021), there have been many training centers opened in Uzbekistan to develop language capacity in English, Russian and Chinese. In addition to the Uzbek government opening training centers, the private sector has also increased language offerings. There is significant interest among students in taking Chinese as a foreign language elective.

The Confucius Institute in Tashkent is the first Confucius Institute established by China overseas, and is known as the "World's No. 1 Confucius Institute". Additionally, Samarkand University of Foreign Studies maintains a Confucius Institute as well. These Confucius Institutes have promoted exchanges between the two nations (*Chinadaily*, 2016).

6.5. Summary of Findings

In the global sphere of science, technology, trade, and economics, English is currently the most commonly used language for international communication. Other major countries, however, continually seek to diminish the dominance of English in an effort to advance the global reach of their own languages on a worldwide scale, this is because if a nation's language is used internationally, it will be easier for people across the world to consume their culture, thereby increasing their soft power, as well as the potential to increase trade. Those within positions of leadership among the countries along the OBORI desire to stimulate interest in their country's native language in an attempt to replace English as the lingua franca of trade within the OBORI and global markets. Chinese and Russian are two languages being heavily promoted by their respective governments. For some smaller and less influential Central Asian countries, heavily promoting their language for the purpose of gaining influence will not yield the same results as there is not as great a demand for their languages. However, based on several of the common languages of Central Asia – such as Russian, and the language with increasing power - Chinese, several key countries of Central Asia can serve as models for increasing the desirability of their respective languages.

Learning a dominant language such as English or Chinese is beneficial to citizens of all trading nations, including the Central Asian countries. By having the power to communicate on an international level, and becoming a geographical link among trading partners, economic benefits will flow to these nations. The improvement of the accessibility of English educational resources also brings advantages for smaller countries.

According to the EF English Proficiency Index 2019, some Central Asian nations such as Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan all have very low English proficiency rankings. Kyrgyzstan's “extremely poor” language proficiency index for English stands at 41.51 (in the world ranking 100, ranking 99th) due to a dearth of appropriate English resources in Central Asian educational institutions (24.kg, 2019). The average level of English proficiency in Asia is 53 out of 100 points. There is also a gender gap in English skills between men and women in Kyrgyzstan, leading to a gap in educational and employment prospects. As a result, there is an opportunity in those countries to use Russian or Chinese as a common language especially if they are to have economic ties with China.

The use of Russian within the Central Asian countries is another example of Russia's attempt to infiltrate the political sphere of the OBORI by strengthening trade relations from within through cultural influence and diplomacy. Countries belonging to the OBORI, such as China and those within the Central Asia, profit from mutually beneficial opportunities such as language and cultural exchange. These arrangements advance the interests of each member nation in both domestic and global markets. Strong trade relationships provide an incentive for citizens of partnered nations to engage in cultural exchange. This increased cultural exchange is what leads to countries expanding their soft power through trade relationships.

Expanding on the previously discussed global economic strategies implemented by both China and Russia, the three most influential Central Asian countries were examined in greater detail to gain further insight regarding the nuances of economic policy within the OBORI. These Central Asian entities leverage geographical resources into domestic partnerships that seek to advance their economic influence by aligning the interests of the OBORI with what is beneficial to their individual countries. The language strategies of these Central Asian countries are examples that less influential countries like Turkmenistan and Tajikistan can emulate and promote their individual interests within the OBORI.

China's relevance has steadily increased in relation to Central Asia due to strengthened economic relations. There has become an increasing number of employment opportunities in Central Asian countries which necessitate the use of Chinese. On a similar note, due to China and Central Asia increasing their economic connections, the Chinese language has seen greater usage within and among those nations. These connections have allowed for greater interest in learning English, Chinese and Russian, and the use of these languages is increasing within the economic systems of these countries.

This development also displays how cooperation among differing nations can impact and improve the quality of life for citizens within their borders. As an example, Chinese policies and trade agreements with other countries have created sustainable economic growth regionally within Central Asia and globally within the OBORI.

There is a correlation between these ties with China, an increase in economic growth, and a sustainably secure future for citizens of western democracies and elsewhere both regionally and internationally within the sphere of Central Asia and the OBORI. The Kyrgyz government

has developed complementary legislation and economic policies that have strengthened their education sectors and created more impactful humanitarian programs. These legislative and economic strategies between Central Asia and China have made an impact on the growing interest in the Chinese language among the Central Asian governments and their peoples to keep up with expanding intercontinental trade.

From the aforementioned factors, it can be summarised that in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, the governments are developing English and Chinese language proficiency education within their educational systems. However, in the civil sphere in these nations, English proficiency remains below global averages. Because of the importance of common languages within the OBORI, Chinese has the potential to be one of the more commonly used modes of communication.

Chapter 7. Conclusions

This chapter first reviews the research objectives and research questions of this thesis, and then summarizes the main findings obtained. The first section is followed by a discussion of the opportunities for future research and future research questions (Section 7.2). Section 7.3 reflects on the limitations of this study and trends in language education and cultural exchange as a means to improve trade relations as the reflections.

7.1. The significance of the study

Foreign language learning and local language strategies have practical benefits for society, and have far-reaching advantages beyond just economic gain. The rationale for studying language strategies is to discover the benefits and costs of promotion for those practical uses and outcomes.

International and national trade interests and exchanges can certainly affect both domestic citizens and foreign nationals in China, Russia and Central Asia, as well as all other nations globally. When a national government decides on a language strategy, this inevitably influences the relationship that country has with other nations. The use of common languages leads to greater exchanges of cultures and ideas.

China's trade policies and agreements have been mutually beneficial for China and those who choose to engage in economic partnerships with China. Those positive economic relationships have in turn the strengthened cultural relationships between China and those nations. However, the great potential of the OBORI can be attenuated by language barriers, as there are currently more than 50 official languages in the countries along the OBORI. Market information and understanding can also be hindered by language barriers in the countries along the OBORI, such as with timely updates and forecasts. The benefits of using common languages have been demonstrated in realizing efficiencies and effectiveness to harness the scale of cooperation possible in the countries along the OBORI.

Like all fields of study, the learning of a foreign language is an investment by students, governments, universities and private sectors. In the context of the OBORI, the investment in language courses results in long-lasting, profitable relations with foreign nations. These courses are also largely determined by each country's policies as they seek to make investments.

Government influences are intended to advance the mastery and use of a preferred language for this purpose. The successful attainment of various language-learning strategies can be achieved by aiding the decision-making processes of students when an interest is expressed in a language course. By demonstrating the rewards of learning another language, there is motivation for future students to enroll in language courses.

The specific questions that were analyzed in the present study were:

- Language strategies in China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan between 2010 and 2020;
- Which foreign languages (Chinese, English and Russian) of the OBORI have been offered in the universities of China and Russia between 2010 and 2020 attended by the respondents of the questionnaires;
- The number of students in China and Russia who have been taking foreign language courses (Chinese, English and Russian) between 2010 and 2020.

As discussed in the previous chapters, the Chinese and Russian governments have been promoting their own languages in the world. Due to the Russian and Chinese governments continually competing for the top slot as most dominate global economic leader, the rest of the countries of the OBORI watch the direction of those two countries with great interest, to gauge their future market trends and the measures they take to form language strategies within the OBORI. This analysis of the countries' current policies seeks to assess the present situation, in order to gain clear insights to plan better strategies for the OBORI in the future.

In this study, I analyzed the language strategies of the largest two countries in the OBORI, Russia and China, and also looked at three Central Asian republics, because they are the key countries of Central Asia who also have close contact with China and Russia. This analysis identified patterns of teaching and learning of the Chinese, English and Russian languages in Chinese and Russian universities. What I also considered was implementation of language strategies that promote Chinese and Russian languages in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. China and Russia have been chosen for the present study due to the dominance of their languages. China and Russia are economically the most powerful and influential countries in the context of the OBORI. The Central Asian countries are important in that both

China and Russia are making a strong push to make Central Asia its trading partner because of the geographic location of many Central Asian member states. These Central Asian countries serve as important trade routes between China and Europe and between Russia and the Indian sub-continent. Central Asian countries are a well-developed economic bloc that pursues its own economic strategies and priorities within the OBORI. To this end, the language strategies these countries are using are essential for us to consider, as they impact upon the OBORI in ways that can complement, moderate or contradict those of Russia and China.

The overall significance of this research lies in the way China, Russia and 3 Central Asian countries implement the competitive language strategy found within the OBORI. The existing literature on the topic of language strategy selection in the countries along the OBORI includes ideas such as where the language strategies and policies are implemented and why the use of multiple language strategies is important. However, what remains to be determined are which specific language strategies are to be used and an efficient means of establishing international multi-lingual communication. Throughout this research process, the language strategies being implemented in Russia, China and in several Central Asian countries were analyzed. The conclusion provides options for future actions in regard to the developments of the language strategies within the relevant areas. This deeper understanding of language strategy is important, as it will help policy-makers and experts determine future language strategies for successfully integrating within the OBORI.

The Covid-19 pandemic that began in 2019 and reached its height in 2020 has had negative effects on the world's economy and including member countries of the OBORI. This pandemic period exemplifies the importance, urgency and economic efficiency of language strategies to aid in the response to international emergencies. The Covid-19 pandemic weakened the OBORI for numerous reasons, including the lockdown of various countries, the halting of international goods and services being distributed, and travel restrictions for tourists and various business personnel. With most of the communication being done online during the early phases of the pandemic, businesses attempted to increase their reach to other countries, which exemplified a need to adopt common languages to continue to trade and support their consumer bases.

7.1.1. Results of the Analysis of Language Choices of Students in Russian Universities

The results of the research targeted towards the respondents from Russian universities showed a number of impacts the OBORI has had on the popularity of Chinese and English language courses for the periods 2010-2014 and since 2015.

Although English courses are the most frequently offered university-level courses in Russia, English language courses have decreased, while Chinese language courses have increased, both by around one-fifth (a decrease of 27% for English, an increase of 24% for Chinese).

The enrollments for English language courses are higher than for Chinese language courses, but this differs by geographical location, with the proximity to continental Europe a contributing factor, where other European languages, are more prevalent.

Recently there has been a decrease in reported enrollments for English language courses in Russia, with an increase in Chinese language course enrollments being reported after the introduction of the OBORI.

Students' motivation to choose Chinese language courses rather than English language courses is due to the likelihood that Chinese will play a larger role in foreign trade with the implementation of the OBORI, with an expected outcome being an increase in employment opportunities. An increasing use of Chinese for trade with China has also had an impact. This is not reflected in Business English course offerings, as more students are choosing Business English courses than Business Chinese courses.

While English is still a dominant language in trade, since the introduction of the OBORI, and the increasing importance of China in world trade, the use of Chinese is increasing in importance and use, especially regarding trade with China. The era of influence of English as the language of world trade may be lessening. The emergence of Asian economies and their increasing share of world trade, along with their trade relationships with non-English speaking countries, means other languages such as Chinese and Russian are becoming more influential. Russia has been able to strengthen both its economic and trade policies due to the establishment and development of the OBORI. Russia's success in global trade, especially with its entrance into Western markets, is a good indicator that non-English speaking nations will continue

fruitful engagement in commerce with nations who have been dominantly English speaking. The current situation between Ukraine and Russia, however, has already had short-term economic consequences, and these are likely to continue into the near future. It is unknown how the Russo-Ukrainian War will end, but there will likely be repercussions for some time. However, unless there are severe disruptions to trade, long-term Russian success in global economics has a very high likelihood to continue.

The observed trends in offerings and enrollments of language courses indicate that the introduction of the OBORI has resulted in a decrease in popularity, offerings and enrollments of English language courses, while correspondingly increasing the popularity and offerings of Chinese language courses.

7.1.2. Results of the Analysis of Language Choices of Students in Chinese Universities

The results of the research showed that, in a number of universities of Mainland China, the OBORI has had a number of impacts on the popularity of Russian and English language courses for the periods 2010-2014 and after 2015.

English courses are the most frequently offered university-level courses in Mainland China, but the number of courses offered have been decreasing slightly, while Russian language courses have correspondingly increased.

The enrollments for English language courses are higher than for Russian language courses, with a significant factor being the results of the unified exam CET, which students need to take before their graduation. For the unified exam CET, students take English to get an easy pass on the exam even though there is no demonstrated difference in the difficulty of learning either language. In western China, the rate of enrollment in English languages courses is lower, and for Russian language courses it is higher. The level of economic development compared to other parts of China, and financial support for universities in western China, have an impact on the number of enrollments.

Although Chinese students were optimistic with learning both English and Russian, there was a perception that Russian may be more beneficial in communication among nations within the OBORI. An overlooked fact is that some students take courses just to pass exams. The enthusiasm for taking Russian language courses may lend itself to the promotion of certain

languages by educational institutions. However, a substantial promotion of Russian may lead to fewer students learning English.

In summary, trends indicate that more university students have an interest in learning Russian. To these students, Russian is seen as more beneficial in the long run due to the perceived increase in employment opportunities where Russian is needed. Within Russian educational systems, there was also a trend away from English language courses within business-related studies. Instead, Chinese was the preferred language of study. Conversely in China, Russian was the preferred language of study.

The shift in language course offerings is evident. Within nations of the OBORI, there has been a downward trend in popularity of English learning courses, resulting in less offerings and enrollments of those courses at universities, and a similar upward trend for Russian language courses. While this shift may not be enough to change English's position as the dominant language, it does show the impact that the OBORI can have on language around the globe. The optimal scenario is to find a balance between what languages an institution supports and what students wish to learn.

7.1.3. Results of the Analysis of language policies/strategies and the OBORI in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan

My analysis to research question 3 covered the language policies/strategies of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Although Russian has historically been the language most frequently used by Central Asian countries for trade partnerships with Russia, as found in the present study, learning English or a language of increasing power such as Chinese, would provide individuals with an equally, if not more, useful means of communication on the global scale.

If such efforts were to improve educational resources and accessibility to the English language among all Central Asian nations, all countries in Central Asia from the smallest to the largest would have the power to communicate more effectively globally and form better links between trading partners, leading to them becoming bigger geographical hubs of commerce.

It can be observed from the previously discussed points that the importance of Chinese has been expanding in Central Asia as the economic connections between both China and Central Asia grow stronger and many Central Asian countries have begun to pursue learning the Chinese language to improve employment prospects. Moreover, the majority of Central Asian nations with a low proficiency in English, such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, may realize a benefit in investing future resources into increasing proficiency in Chinese due to China's ever increasing importance in global trade.

China's economic growth has led to the Chinese language's increased use on the global stage. Chinese is gaining ground as an influential language of communication within Central Asia and the OBORI. As the respective nation's languages co-mingle and their cultures integrate, trade between China and Central Asia have increased, resulting in business ties between China and other Central Asian nations becoming stronger and more extensive. As is evidenced by China's growing share of world trade, by increasing access and resources to education in the languages and cultures of major trading partners, global commerce will benefit greatly.

As the economic connections between nations grow stronger, there is an incentive to maintain and enhance cooperation between nations, this is because cooperation between nations is often mutually beneficial and leads to increased prosperity. An example of this can be seen in the effects of China's relationships with other members along the OBORI. It has been shown that being able to understand each other both linguistically and culturally benefits all parties in Central Asia in the context of the OBORI, with trading partners being repaid many times the initial investment with increasing trade among countries. Strong economic relationships among countries can lead to an increase not just in trade, but also in the exertion of soft power. Any nation sharing its culture and language with other countries provides the opportunity for those foreign nations and their citizens to view this nation favorably, encourages the general population to enjoy the experiences that each nation has to offer, and makes the general population more willing to accept cultural and language exchange. The influence of this type of soft power creates an environment where the language and culture of one nation can be desired or viewed in a positive light.

7.2. Opportunities for future research, and future research questions

Based on the analyzes and investigations presented in this study, recommendations for future research are made in several aspects.

Firstly, this thesis was written during the Covid-19 pandemic. During this time, a number of historical events occurred, affecting international trade and cultural exchange, such as international border closures, and travel and transport restrictions. These events also delayed the plans of a Chinese university to open a campus in Hungary, which could reflect a bigger issue for future studies.

In June 2021, several news agencies reported that Hungarians protested against the plans of a Chinese university to open a campus in Budapest, the capital city of Hungary. They reported fears that the campus could undermine higher education quality while increasing Chinese government interference in the region. If built, it would be the first Chinese university campus in the European Union (EU). The opening of the university campus arose from an agreement with Fudan University two months earlier, to build the only foreign campus of the university. The costs have a reported estimate of \$1.8 billion (USD), with \$1.5 billion (USD) provided by a loan from a Chinese bank (*BBC, 2021*). Construction will use mostly Chinese materials and labor. The Fudan University campus is seen to be part of China's efforts to exert soft power and influence through language, education programs and investments (*ABC, 2021*). The government of Hungary emphasized the world-class institutional standing of Fudan as an assurance of education quality (*Reuters, 2021*). This is one example of the increasing importance of the Chinese trade and language in the EU.

China's soft power campaign via developing and encouraging cross-cultural exchanges, and strengthening the economic ties it has with other countries, has been largely successful and beneficial to China's growth economically and on the international scene. There is uncertainty about what measures various countries may take, but the Chinese government will continue with its strategy of employing 'soft power' through language strategies in the context of the OBORI. As other countries also continue to exert their own soft power through cultural and language exchange, it would be worthwhile to revisit this study in another five years and re-evaluate China's soft power campaign through languages, whether in the EU, in Russia, in Central Asia, or in broader places for future research. Further studies could also involve

analysis of economic and trade data, as well as the languages used in trade transactions, to determine the ongoing effectiveness of this language and cultural campaign in the context of the OBORI. As in the example with the protests against building a campus of Fudan University in Hungary, the Chinese government will need to be careful to not be seen to be having too much influence, to avoid negative sentiment towards China, undoing the progress that has currently been made with trade and cross-cultural opportunities, which can also be discussed in the future studies.

Secondly, further investigation can also be conducted on the impact that disruptions in travel and trade have had on the popularity of languages in different regions. The impacts to focus on are the increasing popularity of Chinese language courses in Russia and Central Asia after Covid-19, and the continuing popularity of English language courses in China, Russia and Central Asia after Covid-19. As the world recovers from the pandemic, there is an expectation that international travel and trade will increase, but the unanswered question is, will they return to pre-pandemic levels, or has there been a lasting change?

Thirdly, it would also be worthwhile to research the effectiveness of language policies/strategies of other nations, the responses of other nations to China's campaign of language and cultural exchange, and whether those policies diminish the effectiveness of China's efforts.

Fourthly, research would be worthwhile on the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions placed on travel as they relate to global commerce, in general, and specifically as to how the pandemic affected cultural exchange and language acquisition. This pandemic inhibited the chances for students and tourists to immerse themselves in different cultures and practice their foreign language skills. There were also disruptions in trade due to bottlenecks in freight as a result of border restrictions and illness. These disruptions are still being felt around the world. Further research is needed to address the question of whether these effects are only temporary, or if they have caused long-term damage to the relationships between China and other nations.

When considering the Chinese and Russian language strategies from the introduction of the OBORI through 2019, in addition to the world-changing events of the recent global health crisis, it would be necessary to make modifications to these strategies so that they would remain

of vital importance, especially when considering their ability to expand current economic trends and strength international ties.

In addition, my analysis has provided a good ground work for future studies. The future studies could consider the number of hours per week foreign language classes would meet before and after the implementation of the OBORI, which potentially vary from university to university. The reason for this is to find, after the implementation of the OBORI, whether or not more students have been receiving and using opportunities to foster their foreign language skills. These studies would also look at the efficacy of these language learning classes to determine if they are as robust as more well-established English courses.

Lastly, at the time the study was conducted, the variety of restrictions in place due to Covid-19 made it difficult to travel or get in contact with a larger group of people. Due to the size of the OBORI, it is not feasible to examine every country (given the time and length of this project). As a result, the analysis was limited to the effects of Covid-19 effects to China, Russia and three Central Asian countries. They were chosen in order to provide a relatively unbiased assessment of their different strategies and practices with regard to global trade. I chose Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in Central Asia to explore their language strategies, and also the attitudes of people towards the respective state language in those countries, Russian, English and Chinese. In the future, studies can be performed with a larger group of respondents and can be a field study. Increasing the sample size will allow for the study to have a broader data set that will yield more concrete conclusions.

The questions and information in the context of Covid-19 raised above are potential topics for future research. While many questions remain to be explored, I hope that the analysis made in this study will be a step forward towards a better understanding.

7.3. Final reflections

This research has shown a correlation between investing in language courses and cultural exchanges, and an increase in trade across economies. China has benefited from its efforts to date with stronger business ties with Russia and Central Asia through the implementation of the OBORI. An increase in enrollments for Chinese language courses demonstrates a perception that, by learning Chinese, employment prospects are improved in trade-related occupations among Russia, Central Asia and China.

While there were disruptions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the present study found an increase in the number of people who want to learn Chinese and Russian, in Russia and China, and on a global level. The results show a marked shift in the global economy which has generally centered around the United States and Western Europe. It also shows that some nations, such as Russia, are willing to invest in language resources in China to secure a stable foothold in the Chinese economy. While the dominance of English as a global language remains, Chinese may soon become another language of international importance.

Russian is one of the key working languages of Central Asia and the key language in Russia. With the tighter trade relations with China, English does not have the same level of influence within Central Asia and in Russia as it once had, leaving Chinese as an influential language within continental Central Asia. An increase in enrollments for Russian language courses by Chinese students demonstrates a corresponding belief in better trade-related employment opportunities by learning Russian, and a comparable belief in better employment opportunities for Russian students by learning Chinese.

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Appendix 1: the Questionnaires

List of questions in the questionnaire to Chinese respondents

● Did you graduate from a university in mainland China? \ 请问您是否是中国大陆大学的毕业生?

Yes \ 是.

No \ 否.

I'm still studying at university in mainland China. \ 我现在还在中国内地的大学读书。

● What is your gender? / 请问您的性别是?

○Male / 男

○Female / 女

● What age range are you in? / 您的年龄区间是?

○18-20

○21-30

○31-40

○41-50

○51 and older / 51 岁及以上

● What year did/will you complete your highest level of education? / 您最高学历的毕业年份是?

○Before 2000 / 000 年以前

○2000-2004 / 2000-2004 年

○2005-2009 / 2005 年-2009 年

2010-2014 / 2010年-2014年

2015-2019 / 2015年-2019年

2020-2024 / 2020年-2024年

After 2025 / 2025年以后

●In what region of China did or will you complete your highest level of education? / 您最高学历的大学在中国的哪个地区?

Northern region / 北方地区 (内蒙古、辽宁、吉林和黑龙江)

Southern region / 南方地区 (云南、广西、福建、广东和海南)

Eastern region / 东部地区 (北京、天津、河北、上海、江苏、浙江、山东)

Western region / 西部地区 (重庆、四川、贵州、西藏、陕西、甘肃、青海、宁夏和新疆)

Central region / 中部地区 (山西、安徽、江西、河南、湖北和湖南)

● What foreign language courses are/were available at the university of your highest level of education? / 据您所知, 您最高学历的大学都有什么外语课程?

English / 英语

Japanese / 日语

Korean / 韩语

Thai / 泰语

French / 法语

German / 德语

Russian / 俄语

Kazakh / 哈萨克语

Kyrgyz / 吉尔吉斯语

I don't know / 我不知道

Other languages / 其他语言

● While attending university, for your highest degree, did you enroll in any foreign language courses? / 在校期间（最高学历），您是否参加了大学的外语课程学习？

Yes / 是

No / 否

● While attending university, for your highest degree, what foreign language class(es) did you choose? / 在校期间（最高学历），您选了哪门外语课？

English / 英语

Japanese / 日语

Korean / 韩语

Thai / 泰语

French / 法语

German / 德语

Russian / 俄语

Kazakh / 哈萨克语

Kyrgyz / 吉尔吉斯语

I didn't choose any / 我都没选

Other languages / 其他语言

● Why did you choose English courses? / 您为什么要选英语?

- Purely liked English. / 纯粹喜欢
- Pressure from parents. / 父母的压力
- To be able to communicate with English-speaking foreigners. / 可以跟当地人互动交流
- To expand my career options. / 对职业的愿景
- For passing exams. / 为了通过考试而学习
- I liked the teacher(s). / 喜欢教这门课的老师
- My family or relatives have connections with this language. / 父母或亲人跟这门语言有联系
- I wanted to go to English speaking countries to work or live. / 想去英语国家工作或生活
- To better know the culture of English speaking countries. / 更多了解这门语言或英语国家的文化

● Why did you choose Russian courses? / 您为什么要选俄语?

- Purely liked Russian. / 纯粹喜欢
- Pressure from parents. / 父母的压力
- To be able to communicate with Russian-speaking foreigners / 可以跟当地人互动交流
- To expand my career options. / 对职业的愿景
- For passing exams. / 为了通过考试而学习
- I liked the teacher(s). / 喜欢教这门课的老师
- My family or relatives have connections with this language. / 父母或亲人跟这门语言有联系

I wanted to go to Russian-speaking countries to work or live. / 想去俄语国家工作或生活

To better know the culture of Russian-speaking countries. / 更多了解这门语言或俄语国家的文化

● Up to which level did you attend English class(es) at university? / 您的英语最高学到了几级?

A1

A2

B1

B2

C1

C2

● Up to which level did you attend Russian class(es) at university? / 您的俄语最高学到了几级?

A1

A2

B1

B2

C1

C2

● Which of the following English-related courses does/did your university offer for your highest degree? / 您最高学历的大学开设了以下哪些英语相关的课程?

British and American Literature / 英美文学

Rhetoric / 修辞学

Interpretation / 口译

Translation / 笔译

Basic English / 基础英语

Advanced English / 高级英语

Selected readings from newspapers / 英文报刊选读

English writing / 英语写作

Introduction to Linguistics / 语言学概论

National conditions of major English-speaking countries / 主要英语国家国情

Business English / 商务英语

Others / 其他

● Which of the following English-related courses does/did you choose for your highest degree?

/ 您报名了哪些英语相关的课程? (最高学历)

British and American Literature / 英美文学

Rhetoric / 修辞学

Interpretation / 口译

Translation / 笔译

Basic English / 基础英语

Advanced English / 高级英语

Selected readings from newspapers / 英文报刊选读

English writing / 英语写作

Introduction to Linguistics / 语言学概论

National conditions of major English-speaking countries / 主要英语国家国情

Business English / 商务英语

Others / 其他

● Which of the following Russian-related courses does/did your university offer for your highest degree? / 您最高学历的大学开设了以下哪些俄语相关的课程?

Russian literature / 俄罗斯文学

Rhetoric / 修辞学

Interpretation / 口译

Translation / 笔译

Basic Russian / 基础俄语

Advanced Russian / 高级俄语

Selected readings from newspapers / 报刊选读

Russian writing / 俄语写作

Introduction to Linguistics / 语言学概论

Russian poems / 俄罗斯诗歌

National conditions of Russia / 俄罗斯国情

Business Russian / 商务俄语

Others / 其他

● Which of the following English-related courses does/did you choose for your highest degree?

/ 您报名了哪些俄语相关的课程? (最高学历)

Russian literature / 俄罗斯文学

Rhetoric / 修辞学

Interpretation / 口译

Translation / 笔译

Basic Russian / 基础俄语

Advanced Russian / 高级俄语

Selected readings from newspapers / 报刊选读

Russian writing / 俄语写作

Introduction to Linguistics / 语言学概论

Russian poems / 俄罗斯诗歌

National conditions of Russia/ 俄罗斯国情

Business Russian / 商务俄语

Others / 其他

● Have you ever withdrawn from any English language courses before completing the course?

/ 您是否有中途放弃学习英语的情况?

○ Yes / 是

○ No / 否

● Have you ever withdrawn from any Russian course before completing the course? / 您是否有中途放弃学习俄语的情况?

○Yes / 是

○No / 否

● Why did you stop studying English? / 您为什么不学习英语了?

□ Lack of the enjoyment of language learning / 缺乏语言学习的享受

□ The language is too difficult / 语言太难了

□ Took up too much of my time / 耽误时间

□ this foreign language is not related to future career/learning path / 认为这门外语与未来的职业/学习道路不相关

□ Poor test results, lower than expected results / 考试考得不好，成绩比预期低

□ Lack of language environment / 缺乏语言环境

□ Lack of learning funds / 缺少学习资金

□ Unable to persist in learning/ 没办法坚持

□ Did not like the teacher (such as no foreign teacher or limited teacher level, etc.) / 不喜欢老师（如没有外教老师或老师水平有限等）

● Why did you stop studying Russian? / 您为什么不学习俄语了?

□ Lack of the enjoyment of language learning / 缺乏语言学习的享受

□ The language is too difficult / 语言太难了

□ Took up too much of my time / 耽误时间

this foreign language is not related to future career/learning path / 认为这门外语与未来的职业/学习道路不相关

Poor test results, lower than expected results / 考试考得不好，成绩比预期低

Lack of language environment / 缺乏语言环境

Lack of learning funds / 缺少学习资金

Unable to persist learning/ 没办法坚持

Did not like the teacher (such as no foreign teacher or limited teacher level, etc.) / 不喜欢老师（如没有外教老师或老师水平有限等）

● With the development of the One Belt One Road initiative, are you optimistic about the prospects of learning English and Russian? / 随着一带一路的发展，您看好英语还是俄语的学习前景？

○English / 英语

○Russian / 俄语

○I'm optimistic about both / 都看好

○I'm not optimistic about both / 都不看好

○I don't know / 我不知道

● Were courses in English required or elective classes at your university? / 英语课程在您最高学历的大学是必修课还是选修课？

○ Required / 必修课

○ Elective / 选修课

○ I don't know. / 我不知道

○ There were no English classes. / 没有英语课

● To what extent were you encouraged by your university to enrol in courses in English classes? / 您最高学历的大学是如何鼓励学生报名英语课程的?

The opportunity to live in the country / 有机会去对方国家生活

Broad career prospects / 有广阔的职业前景

Provided scholarships / 提供奖学金

There will be more choices in life 在生活中有更多选择的机会

More credits / 有更高的学分

Will be able to communicate better with foreigners and improve social circle / 能和外国人有更好的交流，提升自己的交际圈

Others / 其他

● Were courses in Russian required or elective classes at your university? / 俄语课程在您最高学历的大学是必修课还是选修课?

Required / 必修课

Elective / 选修课

I don't know. / 我不知道

There were no Russian classes. / 没有俄语课

● To what extent were you encouraged by your university to enrol in courses in Russian classes? / 您最高学历的大学是如何鼓励学生报名俄语课程的?

The opportunity to live in the country / 有机会去对方国家生活

Broad career prospects / 有广阔的职业前景

Provided scholarships / 提供奖学金

There will be more choices in life 在生活中有更多选择的机会

More credits / 有更高的学分

Will be able to communicate better with foreigners and improve social circle / 能和外国人有更好的交流，提升自己的交际圈

Others / 其他

● Do your future career plans include the use of English? / 学习英语之后，您是否会考虑或考虑过选择英语相关的工作岗位？

Yes / 是

No / 否

I don't know / 我不知道

● Do your future career plans include the use of Russian? / 学习俄语之后，您是否会考虑或考虑过选择俄语该语言相关的工作岗位？

Yes / 是

No / 否

I don't know / 我不知道

List of questions in the questionnaire to Russian respondents

- Вы закончили университет в России? / Did you graduate from a university in Russia?
 - Да / Yes
 - Нет / No
 - Я ещё учусь в университете в России. / I'm still studying at university in Russia.
- Какой у Вас пол? / What is your gender?
 - Мужской / Male
 - Женский / Female
- Укажите Ваш возраст пожалуйста: / What age range are you in?
 - 18-20
 - 21-30
 - 31-40
 - 41-50
 - 51 и старше / Older than 51
- В каком году вы окончили / окончите университет? / What year did/will you complete your highest level of education?
 - До 2000 / Before 2000
 - 2000-2004
 - 2005-2009
 - 2010-2014
 - 2015-2019
 - 2020-2024

○ После 2025 / After 2025

● В каком федеральном округе России находится ваш университет (университет с последней степенью обучения, в котором обучались или ещё обучаетесь)? / ● In what region of Russia did or will you complete your highest level of education?

○ Центральный федеральный округ / Central Federal District

○ Северо-Западный федеральный округ / Northwestern Federal District

○ Южный федеральный округ / Southern Federal District

○ Северо-Кавказский федеральный округ / North Caucasian Federal District

○ Приволжский федеральный округ / Volga Federal District

○ Уральский федеральный округ / Ural Federal District

○ Сибирский федеральный округ / Siberian Federal District

○ Дальневосточный федеральный округ / Far Eastern Federal District

● Какие курсы иностранных языков ваш университет с последней степенью обучения предоставляет /предоставлял? / What foreign language courses are/were available at the university of your highest level of education?

Английский / English

Японский / Japanese

Корейский / Korean

Тайский / Thai

Французский / French

Немецкий / German

Китайский (упрощённый) / Simplified Chinese

Казахский / Khazakh

Киргизский / Kyrgyz

Я не знаю / I don't know.

Другие языки / Other languages

● Во время прохождения обучения вашей итоговой ступени высшего образования, посещали ли вы какие-либо дисциплины по изучению иностранных языков? / While attending university, for your highest degree, did you participate in any foreign language courses?

Да / Yes

Нет / No

● Какие курсы иностранных языков вы посещали во время вашей итоговой ступени высшего образования? / While attending university, for your highest degree, what foreign language class(es) did you choose?

Английский / English

Японский / Japanese

Корейский / Korean

Тайский / Thai

Французский / French

Немецкий / German

Китайский (упрощённый) / Mandarin Chinese

Казахский / Khazakh

Киргизский / Kyrgyz

Я не знаю / I don't know.

Другие языки / Other languages

● Почему вы выбирали английские учебные дисциплины? \ Why did you choose English courses?

Чисто понравился английский. / Purely liked English.

Давление со стороны родителей. / Pressure from parents.

Чтобы иметь возможность общаться с местными жителями. / To be able to communicate with English-speaking foreigners.

Чтобы расширить возможности моей карьеры. / To expand my career options.

Для сдачи экзаменов. / For passing exams.

Мне понравился учитель (и). / I liked the teacher(s).

Моя семья или родственники связаны с этим языком. / My family or relatives have connections with this language.

Я хотел поехать в англоязычные страны, чтобы работать или жить. / I wanted to go to English speaking countries to work or live.

Чтобы лучше узнать культуру англоязычных стран. / To better know the culture of English-speaking countries.

● Почему вы выбрали упрощённые китайские учебные дисциплины? / Why did you choose Mandarin Chinese courses?

Просто понравился упрощённый китайский. / Purely liked Mandarin Chinese.

Давление со стороны родителей. / Pressure from parents.

Чтобы иметь возможность общаться с местными жителями. / To be able to communicate with Chinese speakers.

Чтобы расширить возможности моей карьеры. / To expand my career options.

Для сдачи экзаменов. / For passing exams.

Мне понравился учитель (и). / I liked the teacher(s).

Моя семья или родственники связаны с этим языком. / My family or relatives have connections with this language.

Я хотел поехать в Китай поработать или жить. / I wanted to go to China to work or live.

Чтобы лучше узнать культуру Китая. / To better know the culture of China.

● Какой ваш уровень английского языка после обучения в университете? / Up to which level did you attend English class(es) at university?

A1

A2

B1

B2

C1

C2

● Каков ваш уровень китайского языка после обучения в университете? / Up to which level did you attend Mandarin Chinese class(es) at university?

A1

A2

B1

B2

C1

C2

● Какие из следующих курсов английского языка предлагал / предлагает ваш университет во время вашей итоговой ступени высшего образования? / Which of the following English-related courses does/did your university offer for your highest degree?

- Британская и американская литература / British and American Literature
- Риторика / Rhetoric
- Устный перевод / Interpretation
- Перевод / Translation
- Базовый английский / Basic English
- Продвинутый английский / Advanced English
- Газеты и журналы на английском языке / Selected readings from newspapers
- Английское письмо / English writing
- Введение в лингвистику / Introduction to Linguistics
- Общество и образ жизни основных англоязычных стран / National conditions of major English-speaking countries
- Деловой английский / Business English
- Другое / Others
- Какие из следующих курсов английского языка вы выбрали во время вашей итоговой ступени высшего образования? / Which of the following English-related courses does/did you choose for your highest degree?
 - Британская и американская литература / British and American Literature
 - Риторика / Rhetoric
 - Устный перевод / Interpretation
 - Перевод / Translation
 - Базовый английский / Basic English
 - Продвинутый английский / Advanced English

- Газеты и журналы на английском языке / Selected readings from newspapers
- Английское письмо / English writing
- Введение в лингвистику / Introduction to Linguistics
- Общество и образ жизни основных англоязычных стран / National conditions of major English-speaking countries
- Деловой английский / Business English
- Другое / Others
- Какие из следующих курсов китайского языка предлагал / предлагает ваш университет во время вашей итоговой ступени высшего образования? / Which of the following Mandarin Chinese -related courses does/did your university offer for your highest degree?
- Китайская литература / Chinese Literature
- Риторика / Rhetoric
- Устный перевод / Interpretation
- Перевод / Translation
- Базовый китайский / Basic Chinese
- Продвинутый китайский / Advanced Chinese
- Избранные чтения из газет / Selected readings from newspapers
- Китайское письмо / Chinese writing
- Введение в лингвистику / Introduction to Linguistics
- Китайские стихи / Chinese poems
- Национальные условия Китая / National conditions of China
- Деловой китайский / Business Chinese
- Другие / Others

● Какие из следующих курсов китайского языка вы выбирали во время вашей итоговой ступени высшего образования? / Which of the following Mandarin Chinese -related courses does/did you choose for your highest degree?

- Китайская литература / Chinese Literature
- Риторика / Rhetoric
- Устный перевод / Interpretation
- Перевод / Translation
- Базовый китайский / Basic Chinese
- Продвинутый китайский / Advanced Chinese
- Избранные чтения из газет / Selected readings from newspapers
- Китайское письмо / Chinese writing
- Введение в лингвистику / Introduction to Linguistics
- Китайские стихи / Chinese poems
- Национальные условия Китая / National conditions of China
- Деловой китайский / Business Chinese
- Другие / Others

● Вы когда-нибудь бросали какой-либо курс английского языка до его завершения? / Have you ever withdrawn from any English language courses before completing the course?

- Да / Yes
- Нет / No

● Вы когда-нибудь бросали какой-либо курс китайского языка до его завершения? / Have you ever withdrawn from any Mandarin Chinese course before completing the course?

- Да / Yes

○ Нет / No

● Почему вы перестали изучать английский язык? / Why did you stop studying English?

□ Отсутствие удовольствия от изучения языка / Lack of the enjoyment of language learning

□ Язык слишком сложный / The language is too difficult.

□ Занимало слишком много времени / Took up too much of my time.

□ Этот иностранный язык не имел отношения к будущей карьере / обучению / This foreign language is not related to future career/learning path.

□ Плохие результаты тестирования, результаты ниже ожидаемых. / Poor test results, lower than expected results.

□ Отсутствие языковой среды. / Lack of language environment.

□ Недостаток средств на обучение. / Lack of learning funds.

□ Невозможность продолжать обучение. / Unable to persist in learning.

□ Не понравился учитель (например, отсутствие иностранного учителя или низкая квалификация учителя и т. д). / Did not like the teacher (such as no foreign teacher or limited teacher level, etc.).

● Почему вы перестали изучать упрощённый китайский язык? / Why did you stop studying Mandarin Chinese?

□ Отсутствие удовольствия от изучения языка / Lack of the enjoyment of language learning

□ Язык слишком сложный / The language is too difficult.

□ Занимало слишком много времени / Took up too much of my time.

□ Этот иностранный язык не имел отношения к будущей карьере / обучению / This foreign language is not related to future career/learning path.

□ Плохие результаты тестирования, результаты ниже ожидаемых. / Poor test results, lower than expected results.

- Отсутствие языковой среды. / Lack of language environment.
 - Недостаток средств на обучение. / Lack of learning funds.
 - Невозможность продолжать обучение. / Unable to persist in learning.
 - Не понравился учитель (например, отсутствие иностранного учителя или низкая квалификация учителя и т. д.). / Did not like the teacher (such as no foreign teacher or limited teacher level, etc.).
- С оптимизмом ли вы смотрите на перспективы изучения английского или китайского языка? / With the development of the One Belt One Road initiative, are you optimistic about the prospects of learning English and Mandarin Chinese?
- Английский / English
 - Упрощённый китайский / Mandarin Chinese
 - Оба / Both
 - Оба нет / Both not
 - Я не знаю / I don't know.
- Были ли курсы английского языка в вашем университете обязательными или факультативными? / Were courses in English required or elective classes at your university?
- Обязательными / Required
 - факультативными / Elective
 - Я не знаю / I don't know.
 - Нет / не было английского языка / There were no English classes.
- Каким образом ваш университет мотивировал вас посещать курсы английского языка? / To what extent were you encouraged by your university to enrol in courses in English classes?
- Возможность жить зарубежом / The opportunity to live in the country
 - Возможности для карьерного роста / Broad career prospects

- Предоставляемые стипендии / Provided scholarships
- Больше выбора в жизни / There will be more choices in life
- Больше кредитов / More credits
- Можете общаться с иностранцами, увеличить/разобраться круг общения / Will be able to communicate better with foreigners and improve social circle
- Другое / Others
- Были ли курсы китайского языка в вашем университете обязательными или факультативными? / Were courses in Mandarin Chinese required or elective classes at your university?
 - Обязательными / Required
 - факультативными / Elective
 - Я не знаю / I don't know.
 - Нет / не было китайского языка / There were no Chinese classes.
- Каким образом ваш университет мотивировал вас посещать курсы китайского языка? / To what extent were you encouraged by your university to enroll in courses in Mandarin Chinese classes?
 - Возможность жить зарубежом / The opportunity to live in the country
 - Возможности для карьерного роста / Broad career prospects
 - Предоставляемые стипендии / Provided scholarships
 - Больше выбора в жизни / There will be more choices in life
 - Больше кредитов / More credits
 - Можете общаться с иностранцами, увеличить/разобраться круг общения / Will be able to communicate better with foreigners and improve social circle
 - Другое / Others

● Есть ли в ваших планах в дальнейшем использовать знания английского языка для карьерного роста? / Do your future career plans include the use of English?

Да / Yes

Нет / No

Я не знаю / I don't know.

● Есть ли в ваших планах в дальнейшем использовать знания китайского языка для карьерного роста? / Do your future career plans include the use of Mandarin Chinese?

Да / Yes

Нет / No

Я не знаю / I don't know.

Appendix 2: the Ethics Approval

The University of Auckland

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UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN RESPONDENTS ETHICS COMMITTEE
(UAHPEC)

10/05/2021

Prof Robert Greenberg

Re: Request for Amendment of Ethics Approval (Our Ref. UAHPEC20890): Amendment(s)

Approved

The Committee considered the amendment request for this study entitled “Language strategies in the One Belt One Road Initiative: Language and International Trade with Emphasis on the Chinese, English and Russian languages”.

Approval was granted for the following amendment(s):

1. To extend the study to respondents currently based in China.
2. To conduct a parallel study for respondents based in Russia. To add a new questionnaire for respondents in Russia.
3. Advertisement

To amend ad to read: Are you a native of China or Russia? Did you graduate from a Chinese or Russian university?.

4. Platform for Chinese respondents changed from Google forms to the largest online survey platform available in China. The ethics approval for this project expires on 10/10/2022.

Completion of the project: In order that up-to-date records are maintained, you must notify the Committee once your project is completed.

Further amendments to the approved project: Should you need to make any further changes to the approved project, please follow the steps below:

Send a request to the UAHPEC Administrators to unlock the application form (using the Notification Tab in the Ethics RM form).

Make all changes to the relevant sections of the application form and attach revised documents (as appropriate).

Change the Application Type to “Amendment request” in Section 13 Add a summary of the changes requested in the text box.

Submit the amendment request (PI/Supervisors only to submit the form).

If the project changes significantly, you are required to submit a new application.

The Chair and the members of UAHPEC would be happy to discuss general matters relating to ethics approvals. If you wish to do so, please contact the UAHPEC Ethics Administrators at humanethics@auckland.ac.nz in the first instance.

Additional information:

Do not forget to fill in the 'approval wording' on the Participant Information Sheets, Consent Forms and/or advertisements, giving the dates of the initial approval and the reference number before you use them or send them out to the respondents.

All communications with the UAHPEC regarding this application should indicate this reference number: UAHPEC20890.

UAHPEC Administrators

University of Auckland Human Respondents Ethics Committee

c.c., Miss Yue Zhao