

Beyond "Voice": The Cultural Identity of Promoting Mandarin Language Work under Broadcasting and Hosting Arts

Yuhang Peng

China Women's University, Beijing, 100101, China

ABSTRACT

Currently, remote regions in China still face practical issues such as educational lag, communication barriers, and difficulties in poverty alleviation caused by dialectal obstacles. In response, the government actively promotes Mandarin, establishing a linguistic foundation for social development and national unity. Broadcasting and hosting arts, leveraging their professional advantages, can not only enhance the standardization of Mandarin promotion through normative voice demonstrations but also, with culture as the core, strengthen cultural identity among different ethnic groups. Based on the contemporary imperative of Mandarin promotion, this paper analyzes the specific roles and influence of broadcasting and hosting arts in this work, exploring how to construct deeper cultural identity beyond mere "voice," with the aim of providing theoretical and practical references for the high-quality development of Mandarin promotion initiatives.

KEYWORDS

Broadcasting and hosting arts; Mandarin promotion; Cultural identity; national unity

1 Introduction

Promoting Mandarin is one of the core tasks of the national language and character work. It refers to the promotion and standardized use of the modern common language of the Chinese nation (i.e., Mandarin), which is based on Beijing pronunciation as the standard sound, northern dialects as the foundational dialect, and exemplary modern vernacular literature as the grammatical norm. Aim at eliminating regional language communication barriers, promoting social interaction and cooperation, and strengthening cultural identity and national cohesion, various measures as systematic policy guidance, educational dissemination, and social advocacy would be employed.

On January 6, 1997, the 134th meeting of the State Council's Premier's Office decided to hold a "National Mandarin Promotion Week" each year during the third week of September. 2025 will mark the 28th National Mandarin Promotion Week, with the theme "Strengthening the Promotion of National Common Language and Script, and Promoting the Cementing of the Chinese National Community Consciousness." Compared to previous ones, this year's theme places greater emphasis on the integration of language promotion and national community consciousness, hoping to consistently promote the concept of the "Chinese National Community" through the orderly conduct of Mandarin promotion, thereby fostering national unity. Why does the government strongly support the promotion of Mandarin? How can broadcasting and hosting arts restrict the standardisation of Mandarin promotion? In the practice of promoting Mandarin, how can the dissemination and promotion of the idea of national unity be incorporated, strengthening cultural identity and emotional connection between various ethnic groups? The paper will explore these questions above.

2 Roots and context: the inevitable necessity of mandarin promotion

Language is not only the fundamental tool for human communication and the transmission of ideas, but also a key measure of a country's cultural soft power and social cohesion. China, with vast territory and a diverse ethnic and dialectal system, has made the promotion of Mandarin an essential issue for national development and a strategic choice for advancing the modernization of national governance. Therefore, the work of promoting Mandarin is of paramount importance.

2.1 Dialectal differences: the linguistic dilemma in remote areas

China's dialects are generally divided into seven major systems: Mandarin, Cantonese, Wu, Min, Xiang, Gan, and Hakka. Within some dialects, there are even more complex sub-dialectal differences, leading to the linguistic phenomenon of "different sounds every ten miles, different customs every hundred miles," which forms a harmonious but diverse regional culture. However, the linguistic differences pose multiple real-world challenges to the development of remote areas.

Language barriers are one of the key factors limiting the improvement of educational quality in remote areas. In dialect-rich regions such as the southwestern mountainous areas and the northwestern border, many rural teachers speak with strong local accents and find it difficult to teach in standard Mandarin. This results in students facing pronunciation

confusion and semantic misunderstandings in their Chinese language learning. For example, deeply in the mountains of Sichuan Province, due to the lack of distinction between flat and retroflex sounds in Sichuan dialect, students often inaccurately pronounce “Sishi” as “Sisi” when learning Chinese pinyin. The phonetic deviation not only affects students’ ability to recognize Chinese characters, but also makes it difficult for them to precisely understand knowledge when accessing nationally standardized textbooks and online courses. Consequently, an educational gap has formed, and some children even have developed a reluctance to speak due to their inability to understand or express themselves.

In addition, the standardization of language and the improvement of language proficiency are crucial steps for families or individuals to transform from poverty to basic living standards, and even to prosperity ^[1]. Dialects cause marginalized difficulties for people from remote areas when they migrate for work or move across regions. According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics, in 2024, the total number of migrant workers in China reached 299.73 million. Among them, migrant workers from the central and western regions, where local dialects show a strong flavor, totaled 184.26 million, accounting for 61.4% of the total ^[2]. These workers, due to their non-standardized Mandarin, often have to choose physically demanding and low-skilled jobs during employment, making it difficult for them to enter industries with higher language demands, such as services, sales, and management. Furthermore, some migrant workers are unable to communicate with their children’s teachers in Mandarin, making it hard for them to understand their children’s academic progress, thus exacerbating the issue of educational supervision for left-behind children. The language barrier prevents them from truly integrating into urban life. Additionally, language shapes identity, and language differences bring no benefits for obtaining sense of belonging, leading to a embarrassment where physical integration is easy, but psychological integration is difficult ^[3].

2.2 The bridge of communication: the cornerstone of national development and social integration

The promotion of Mandarin, while preserving regional cultural characteristics, has established a nationwide language communication system, laying a solid foundation for national development and social integration. After years of effort, significant progress has been made in the promotion of Mandarin in China. Since 2012, there has been a leap in the development of language and character, with the national Mandarin penetration rate increasing from 70% to 80.72%. Behind this data is the comprehensive transformation brought by Mandarin promotion to underdeveloped regions.

With the advancement of Mandarin promotion, an increasing number of rural residents have mastered standardized Mandarin, enabling them to communicate directly with external merchants and e-commerce platforms, thus facilitating the connection between production and sales of local specialty industries. In the past, Longtangwan Village in Taoyang County, Hunan Province, its high-quality agricultural products was struck in sales because the villagers could not speak Mandarin and were unfamiliar with live-streaming scripts. Villager Li Jianguo once tried to sell tea through live-streaming, but due to his strong local accent, the live-stream only made one order. In 2025, the Yuanchen Volunteer Service Team from the School of Business Administration at Hunan University of Finance and Economics visited Longtangwan Village to conduct a summer social practice titled “Promoting Mandarin to Assist Rural Revitalization.” The team provided step-by-step guidance to the villagers, from pronunciation correction to writing product descriptions. After the training, the Deputy Secretary of the Party Committee of Longtangwan Village, Xie Dingqian, conducted a live-streamed sale of agricultural products in Mandarin, and the first live-streaming event earned over 8,000 yuan in sales. Mandarin has opened up a new path to prosperity for the local community, providing a boost to economic development.

Moreover, Mandarin serves as an important link for policy communication and public opinion exchange. A standardized language partly helps ensure that national policies are transmitted without deviation from the central government to local areas, allowing people in remote regions to accurately understand the Party’s policies and enhancing their sense of recognition towards national governance. More importantly, standardized language creates a bridge of emotional connection between the government and grassroots communities. When elderly people in remote areas can understand rural revitalization policies through news reports, when young people can participate in online policy hearings in Mandarin, and when children learn national history and culture in Mandarin at classrooms, this emotional resonance based on a common language further strengthens the cohesion of grassroots communities, ensuring that national governance is full of warmth and trust and proceeds smoothly.

3 A voice that touches the heart: the role of broadcasting and hosting arts in the promotion of mandarin

Broadcasting and hosting arts, as a voice-centered discipline aimed at communication, can not only tackle phonetic difficulties in Mandarin promotion through practical demonstrations, but also, by serving as a medium of cultural transmission, foster the cultural identity underlying Mandarin, thereby achieving a deeper and more enduring impact.

3.1 Vocal demonstration: promoting standard pronunciation and articulation

Accurate pronunciation and clear articulation are among the core professional skills in the art of broadcasting and hosting. In this discipline, pronunciation must adhere to principles of precision and expressiveness, requiring accurate initials, complete finals, and correct tones, while also emphasizing breath management and resonance modulation to ensure a clear and natural voice. This professional vocal system is particularly well suited to addressing the phonetic challenges faced by different regional groups in learning Mandarin, thereby contributing to the standardization of Mandarin promotion.

China is geographically vast and its regional dialectal phonetic systems differ markedly, resulting in region-specific challenges for learners of Mandarin. For example, many southern dialects lack retroflex consonants, some northern dialects exhibit substantial differences in tonal systems, and learners from parts of Shandong often have difficulty producing tones accurately. To address these issues, broadcasting and hosting professionals can draw on their expertise to model correct pronunciation and provide targeted instruction. Moreover, Mandarin phonetics frequently undergoes alternations in connected speech due to coarticulatory influences from adjacent syllables. Learners commonly overlook such coarticulatory variation in spontaneous speech, which leads to unnatural pronunciation. The art of broadcasting and hosting can introduce these natural speech variations into authentic communicative contexts, thereby facilitating learners' transition from reading aloud to producing Mandarin naturally in conversation.

In summary, the professional nature of the art of broadcasting and hosting provides an important referential pathway for the promotion of mandarin. By employing its scientific vocal system as a tool, it precisely addresses phonetic challenges across different dialect regions; and by emphasizing instruction in connected speech that aligns with authentic communication, it offers learners a model for natural expression. In promoting the standardization of mandarin and enhancing communicative effectiveness at the societal level, the art of broadcasting and hosting functions as a solid bridge and an essential link between standardized pronunciation and mass cultural communication.

3.2 Cultural identity: conveying the concept of national community

Language functions not only as a tool of communication but also as a carrier of culture. As the national common language, mandarin embodies the cultural connotations of the Chinese national community and serves as a cultural symbol that unites regions and ethnic groups. The promotion, popularization, and application of mandarin nationwide reflect, to a significant extent, the cultural consciousness and confidence of the Chinese people^[4]. In this process, the art of broadcasting and hosting goes beyond teaching correct speech; it also conveys the cultural meanings and values underlying the language. This enables local communities not only to acquire proficiency in mandarin but also to cultivate a sense of cultural identity and belonging to the Chinese nation.

In promoting mandarin in ethnic minority regions, broadcasting and hosting professionals place the concept of the "Chinese national community" at the core of cultural transmission, thereby fostering integration and unity among diverse groups. For example, during a summer mandarin promotion practice in Xinjiang, the Pomegranate Seed "Joyful" Reading Team from China Women's University studied policy documents together with local residents. Through this activity, local ethnic minority residents not only made steady progress in their mandarin proficiency but also deepened their understanding of national policies and strengthened their sense of community. The cohesion of the community was thus enhanced, resembling tightly bound pomegranate seeds, and further consolidating awareness of the Chinese national community.

Moreover, a shared language enhances the cultural identity of people across regions and ethnic groups. When children in remote areas study nationally standardized textbooks in mandarin and exchange views on the same stories with peers from other regions, they come to realize that they share common cultural memories nationwide. Similarly, when ethnic minority individuals communicate in mandarin with Han Chinese, regional and ethnic barriers are diminished, enabling freer interaction. This emotional resonance grounded in shared language constitutes the most solid foundation of cultural identity and represents the deepest cultural value of mandarin promotion.

4 Extending influence: the role of broadcasting and hosting arts in mandarin promotion

The discipline of broadcasting and hosting arts is not limited to mandarin instruction in remote areas; it further extends mandarin promotion into the sphere of cultural exchange through active engagement in public communication and cultural initiatives. This generates a powerful ripple effect, providing sustained impetus for the long-term advancement of mandarin promotion.

4.1 Broadening communicative reach: enhancing the influence and coverage of mandarin promotion

Professionals in broadcasting and hosting constitute the central driving force of various mandarin promotion activities. The annual National Mandarin Promotion Week, held every September, is a key event in this endeavor, with students and faculty from broadcasting and hosting arts programs frequently serving as organizers and participants, thereby effectively disseminating mandarin knowledge to the wider public. Drawing on their professional language competence and event management skills, they design and implement a wide range of promotional initiatives. During the 26th Mandarin Promotion Week, China Women's University, in collaboration with the Xinjiang Women's Federation, launched a dedicated mandarin promotion campaign. Students of the Broadcasting and Hosting Arts program, together with renowned broadcaster Ge Lan, jointly recited Chinese Language, conveying the cultural identity embedded in mandarin through expressive performance. Meanwhile, members of the Daliangshan Summer Mandarin Promotion Team shared authentic stories from grassroots promotion efforts, thereby connecting promotion work with local livelihoods and national policy initiatives. These activities not only advanced mandarin promotion in ethnic minority regions toward practical outcomes but also established a cultural bridge, introducing the profound meaning of mandarin promotion as well as the vitality of minority cultures into university settings and economically developed regions. While facilitating linguistic communication, they also reinforced emotional resonance and cultural integration among ethnic groups, infusing new linguistic vitality into the cultivation of Chinese national community consciousness.

Beyond the concentrated efforts of Mandarin Promotion Week, broadcasting and hosting practitioners have actively embraced emerging trends in media communication, overcoming temporal and spatial constraints by initiating border-free mandarin instruction through online platforms. By leveraging their professional expertise, they have produced short promotional videos for WeChat Channels, Douyin, and Kuaishou, as well as live-streamed teaching sessions. Shakra Aiskar, captain of the "I Teach You" National Common Language and Writing Training Team in ethnic minority regions, has accumulated 38 million video views and over 100 million clicks through short video and live-stream teaching, exemplifying the effectiveness of this approach. By integrating emerging media trends with professional strengths, mandarin promotion has become more adaptive and sustainable, thereby injecting enduring vitality into the national campaign.

From focused initiatives such as Mandarin Promotion Week to the long-term application of new media, and from offline cultural exchanges to boundary-free online classes, broadcasting and hosting arts have developed an inclusive and multifunctional mandarin promotion system. This system not only overcomes regional and demographic barriers to disseminating mandarin knowledge but also integrates promotion efforts with cultural heritage, livelihood development, and national unity. In doing so, it continuously advances the widespread adoption of mandarin, laying a solid foundation for the high-quality development of the national common language and writing.

4.2 Deepening cultural integration: facilitating mutual learning among diverse cultures

Dialects are living fossils of regional cultures, preserving unique folklore, historical memories, and cognitive patterns. In China, ethnic languages play a crucial role in inheriting and developing ethnic cultures and enhancing national cohesion. Therefore, Mandarin promotion must not only expand the number of Mandarin users but also protect ethnic minority languages and preserve linguistic diversity^[5]. Promoting Mandarin is not about advocating a single language but about supporting a culturally diverse landscape. An important challenge in Mandarin promotion is how to protect and inherit dialect and ethnic minority cultures while avoiding cultural loss from linguistic homogenization. With its professional advantages in cultural communication, broadcasting and hosting arts can simultaneously promote Mandarin and highlight the unique cultures of remote regions, achieving synergistic development of language promotion and cultural preservation, and laying a foundation for cultural identity and national integration.

In Mandarin promotion activities, interactions with ethnic minority communities often take the form of two-way cultural exchange. It is not only the process of teaching Mandarin but also an opportunity to learn local languages and experience multiculturalism. Many broadcasting and hosting professionals prepare for their fieldwork by learning basic vocabulary, greetings, and daily expressions in the local language. During Mandarin classes, they skillfully incorporate these elements, greeting students with local expressions at the beginning of class and providing equivalent local terms when explaining Mandarin vocabulary. This approach fosters closer connections with the community, makes classes more engaging, and demonstrates respect for local speech, encouraging active participation in cultural exchange.

Broadcasting and hosting professionals also integrate cultural symbols such as traditional clothing, local specialties, and other elements into Mandarin promotion activities. These symbols transform promotional events into platforms for showcasing ethnic minority lifestyles, enhancing cultural pride and national confidence among participants. By promoting Mandarin in conjunction with cultural elements, they create an environment where "each culture enhances the other," facilitating mutual understanding and integration. This two-way learning model and the use of cultural symbols enrich broadcasting and hosting arts, making Mandarin promotion more than language transmission. Through

language learning, cultural performance, and local specialties, these events serve as bridges for ethnic minority cultures to reach broader audiences. Citizens from diverse ethnic backgrounds can experience the charm of local cultures while learning Mandarin, achieving the dual outcome of “spreading Mandarin in one place and transmitting culture in another.” As communities interact linguistically, share cultural identity, and collaborate in development, national cohesion becomes a tangible practice rather than an abstract concept. Ultimately, this process cultivates a shared national consciousness and contributes to the realization of the Chinese Dream.

5 Conclusion

The promotion of Mandarin is a long-term and systematic undertaking. It concerns not only the unification of language and the facilitation of smooth communication, but also the construction of cultural identity, the advancement of ethnic integration, and the development of the nation. From addressing linguistic challenges in remote regions to supporting national development and social cohesion, the contemporary necessity of Mandarin promotion has become increasingly evident. Broadcasting and hosting arts, as a professional force in Mandarin promotion, contribute unique vitality through practical voice demonstrations, the transmission of cultural identity, and wide-ranging influence. In this way, Mandarin is transformed from a mere spoken language into a cultural vehicle, achieving resonance through vocal expression and fostering cultural empathy, ultimately serving as a bridge that connects people, strengthens national cohesion, and cultivates a shared cultural vision.

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