

# The Meaning and Strategy of Mandarin Promotion in the New Media Era

**Zuo Shanhe**

*School of Sports and Culture and Arts, Tianjin University of Sport, Tianjin, China*

**Abstract:** *Due to the complexity of China's multi-ethnic and multi-lingual nature, the popularisation of Mandarin throughout the country has yet to be fully realised. Especially in the new media era of voice intelligence, the popularization and promotion of Mandarin is even more urgent. Through the elaboration of the current situation of promoting Putonghua in China, this paper provides an in-depth exploration of the necessity and urgency of promoting Putonghua, its impact on the nation's economic development, helping the nation in its fight against poverty and facilitating daily life, as well as launching several strategies for promoting Putonghua in four major areas: schools, party and government organs, radio and television, and public service industries. It will provide some reference and help to promote the healthy development of language and writing in China.*

**Keywords:** *Mandarin Promotion; New Media; Promotion Strategies*

## 1. Introduction

From 12 to 18 September 2022, it is the 25th Mandarin Promotion Week in China. With the joint efforts of the whole country and the help of various digital new media, the popularity of Mandarin and the literacy rate of standard Chinese characters in China is increasing and the illiteracy rate is decreasing. However, there are still some problems in China, such as: language disorders and the proliferation of dialects are serious obstacles to the popularisation and promotion of Putonghua, so effective measures are needed to solve this problem, so as to promote the further development of Putonghua popularisation throughout the country.

## 2. China's special situation with many dialects determines the need to promote the popularization of Mandarin

With the country's vast territory, large population and fifty-six ethnic groups forming a large family, there are even more types of dialects, including fifty-five ethnic minorities, using dozens of minority languages and scripts, in which case the language must be unified for better communication. In the past, when Mandarin was not widely spoken, the language barrier (i) Necessary conditions for the promotion of national economic development affected the transmission of government regulations, trade and commerce, schooling and scientific research. Indeed, the ease of life today is largely due to the promotion and popularity of Mandarin. In contrast to some countries where the promotion of a common language is less urgent because of their small size, small population and small variety of dialects, our particular national situation has made the promotion of Mandarin an urgent educational and cultural issue for our country and has long been on the agenda of our government.

## 3. Significance of Mandarin Promotion

### 3.1. Necessary conditions for the promotion of national economic development

In recent years, e-commerce live with the rapid development of the industry, a Weifang e-commerce purchasing manager said: "because our customers from all over the country, at the beginning of live with the goods cannot speak Mandarin, can only speak dialect, customers do not understand, naturally will not place orders, and then after the company's Mandarin training, the order volume significantly increased." In fact, the identity of the anchor is like an online shopper, can when the field, quickly, detailed to answer the many consumer questions, and speak Mandarin, can fluently express is the anchor the most basic professional qualities, this is also a microcosm of the millions of e-commerce

anchor.

From the Mango TV hit programme "Pomegranate Blossom 2", we learn that Xun Zhiling, a young cadre from the Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture who was born and raised in the Yi ethnic group, has the bloodthirsty, spirited spirit that young people should have. The short videos and live broadcasts that are now on fire across the country and even the world can expand sales channels. This idea stimulated Xun Zhiling to bring his hometown's agricultural products on site, not only to help farmers solve their product sales problems, but also to practise Mandarin on the spot, and to be at the forefront of the new sales model, so it can be said to kill three birds with one stone. Through careful preparation, Xun Zhiling's first live e-commerce broadcast was successfully completed, and the sales volume in the background was many times greater than the usual ordinary sales channels. This result showed the importance of Mandarin, and more convincingly promoted other ethnic minority compatriots to join the era of live e-commerce, so that the farmers' quality agricultural products can go to the whole country, prompting the national economy to improve significantly and gradually approach the common wealth of the country.

### ***3.2. An important initiative to help ethnic areas escape poverty***

Reaching common prosperity is a desire that China has been pursuing for decades. In order to get rid of poverty, China will continue to vigorously promote Mandarin in ethnic areas, and although years of efforts have resulted in an increasing proportion of ethnic minority people speaking Mandarin, compared to the national penetration rate, there is still a certain distance to go, especially in the more remote areas, where young and middle-aged labourers, parents and children and other people are facing. In particular, in more remote areas, the young and middle-aged workforce, parents and children face difficulties in learning Mandarin. As a result, the lack of a Mandarin-speaking environment makes it difficult to improve the level of Mandarin, and it is even more difficult for ethnic minorities to access effective information, learn advanced technology, and better integrate into their work or start their own businesses. In this context, promoting the use of Mandarin in ethnic areas and helping them to gain access to employment and development opportunities is an important decision in the fight against poverty and wealth.

The village under the jurisdiction of Hongdu Township in Xincheng County, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, was awarded the title of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region's Poverty Alleviation and Pioneering Collective in 2021, and over 90% of the people in the village are of Zhuang ethnicity. Naturally, Zhuang is the main language of the villagers. The geographical location makes it inconvenient to go out and the lack of communication with the outside world for a long time has to some extent affected their ability to work outside and their source of income." Prior to the 13th Five-Year Plan, the incidence of poverty in the village was 34.24%. Since the implementation of the poverty eradication campaign, the lives and living environment of the locals have undergone fundamental changes. In the past few years, after training in Mandarin, a large number of ethnic people have been able to leave the mountains and find stable jobs in the county, allowing for a certain degree of change in the quality of life.

### ***3.3. A secret tool to facilitate people's daily lives***

Nowadays, our lives are becoming more and more intelligent, and the more popular intelligent voice "Xiao Ai" and "Xiaodu" have greatly facilitated our entertainment life, when you want to do something, you can directly tell your side "Intelligent partners". For example, if you want to listen to music, understand the weather forecast, listen to a story, etc., the voice recognition technology will broadcast through your voice instructions, which is not only convenient and interesting for young people, but also a kind of comfort for the elderly, especially the empty nesters. Jia Lei, head of Baidu's voice technology department, explained that in a quiet environment, the recognition rate of Mandarin Chinese voice recognition is close to 97%. <sup>[1]</sup> If the Mandarin language is not standard, or if local dialects are used, the accuracy of speech recognition will be greatly reduced. The biggest difficulty is that there are many different dialects in China, so each dialect requires a different recognition model, and there is not enough corpus and training for each dialect, so the accuracy of recognition is very low. On a larger scale, speech recognition technology will also be used in medical, military, industrial control and other fields. With the continuous development of intelligent speech, speech recognition technology will be widely used in the future, making our lives more and more intelligent. With this trend, the promotion of Mandarin is a matter of urgency.

#### **4. Strategies for the Promotion of Mandarin**

##### **4.1. School-based Putonghua popularisation**

###### **4.1.1. The general examination for teachers is "both formal and practical"**

Since the implementation of our Constitution, which provides for the promotion of Putonghua, the Putonghua Proficiency Test has complemented this broad objective. There are no three or six levels of human beings, but there are three or six levels of Putonghua testing, the highest of which is Level 1 A, with a score of 97-100, like TV presenters who are generally at Level 1 A, followed by Level 1 B, with a score of 92-96.99. In fact, speaking Putonghua is not only the task of language teachers, but also the duty of all teachers. Education is a fundamental undertaking, and its origins and development are relevant to every sector of the country. The promotion of Putonghua is therefore a top priority for schools, not only for teachers in large and medium-sized cities, but also for teachers in rural areas where educational resources are relatively weak. However, in recent years, with the boom in teacher qualification examinations, it is still common for many people to speak in dialect during lessons, focusing on the content of the lesson to the exclusion of the use of Mandarin. In this regard, schools should also take measures to strengthen the practice and assessment of teachers' spoken language.

###### **4.1.2. Keeping a firm grip on the "phonetic literacy body, reading and writing in advance" for EYFS students**

According to the official website of the Ministry of Education, compulsory primary school students at grade 5 and above will also be required to take the Mandarin proficiency test, which will be introduced on a trial basis from 15 December 2022.

However, for students below grade 5, including those in early childhood, they should also be able to 'read and write in advance through the use of phonetic script'. Chinese language education has always focused only on the teaching of reading and writing in the written language, and has not yet been fully organised to teach speaking and listening in the teaching process. This is a fundamental flaw. Although many children are familiar with Mandarin before they reach school age and are exposed to it in their lives, this naturally acquired oral Mandarin is far from adequate. This results in many who can read and even write not being able to speak Mandarin well. The secret of 'Phonetic Literacy Body, Advance Reading and Writing' is to know what the word reads and how to spell it through pinyin, while also paying attention to the normality of the pronunciation of the word and the position of the vowel. The mouth shape of the rhymes and the tonal value of the vowels are standardised. Some parents look at the pinyin and write the Chinese characters when they help their children with their homework, but they only focus on whether they are written in a standard way and often ignore the correct pronunciation. However, this phenomenon is not conducive to the development of good pronunciation habits at the best possible time for children to learn a language.

##### **4.2. Popularisation of Putonghua with party and government organs as leaders**

###### **4.2.1. Intensify Mandarin training for civil servants**

In recent years, with the public examination fever, knowledge points related to the national common language Mandarin have also been included in the written examinations of the public examinations, of which the interview session, the level of your candidates' ability to use Mandarin also accounts for a relative number of points examined. Of course for civil servants who are already in post, it is important to draw up implementation rules, stipulate rewards and punishments, establish a daily management and supervision mechanism, and do orientation training. As a qualified civil servant, apart from having solid professional knowledge and good professionalism, one should also have certain oral expression skills to be able to accurately express the meaning of what one is saying when facing the examiners, and later, when walking into the workplace, one can also communicate better with the masses and better serve the people, making speaking Putonghua a habit and truly playing a leading role in promoting Putonghua.

###### **4.2.2. Leaders lead by example**

According to a survey conducted by authoritative institutions, less than 50% of grassroots cadres at the county level and below use Putonghua in their work. [2]As the party's cadre, the civil servants have a stake in the party's ability to govern, its foundation and status. Although the national average Mandarin prevalence rate is over 80% compared to the last decade or so, the majority of the language used is

'local Mandarin'. The lack of efficiency in communication has undermined confidence in speaking Mandarin, especially as most ordinary cadres in party and government offices and institutions at the county level and below are not used to speaking Mandarin and have not played a leading role in the promotion of Mandarin in party and government offices. Language is a habit that must be practised over a long period of time and there is a gradual process of recognising the importance of speaking Mandarin well from an ideological point of view. For this reason, it is imperative to increase Mandarin training.

2021 September 26 mammoth news release, the Sichuan Provincial Language Commission requires that public officials at all levels of party and government organs and institutions must use Putonghua in public venues, and that public officials in the province ensure that they reach a level of Putonghua level three A or above within three years. And arrange special funding for civil servants to improve their Mandarin application skills for training and passing tests, thus improving the coverage of using Mandarin.<sup>[3]</sup>

### ***4.3. Popularisation of Putonghua using radio and television and other news media as role models***

#### ***4.3.1. Radio and television is an important way to learn Mandarin***

The Party has always attached great importance to journalism and has always believed that the press, radio and television in every country are important mouthpieces for the Party, government agencies and the people. It is an indication of the nature of our work and of its importance in the minds of the Party and the State, many of whose leaders and staff are fans of news broadcasting. People listen to news broadcasts every day to find out how government policies are being publicised and implemented, and to keep abreast of policy trends in all areas of government. In addition to the Party and the State, the general public also needs the news programmes on radio and television. The CCTV news bulletins, as well as local news bulletins across the country, are remarkable for their high viewership and the number of viewers they attract. Every morning, in many households, on their way to work, or beside retired elderly people taking a walk or working out, one can often find them listening to news broadcasts. This vividly demonstrates how deeply radio news programmes and our newscasts reach people's hearts and minds, and how radio and television are an important way for people to learn Mandarin.

#### ***4.3.2. Strictly control the misuse of dialects in TV programmes and other productions***

There are still many dialect news programmes in China, and as an announcer and presenter, the mouthpiece of the party and government, the most basic requirement is to consciously uphold the purity of the national language and script, and to adhere to the use of Mandarin while acting as a role model. However, in recent years, with the fever for Cantonese, there has been a surge in the learning of Cantonese. Of course, Mandarin being the lingua franca of China does not mean that dialects should be completely abandoned, but the broadcasting of many dialect news programmes has indeed caused a certain impact on the linguistic environment of the media, and the unsatisfactory linguistic environment of the local media has been a great disappointment to students, and has also caused many foreign workers to be at their wits' end.

### ***4.4. Popularization of Putonghua in the public service sector as a window***

Railway and civil aviation, tourist attractions, major shopping malls and hotels are precisely the gathering places where there are many people and many types of dialects, especially nowadays when China's economy is developing rapidly and its international status is getting higher and higher, which attracts a large number of foreigners to learn Mandarin and come to China for tourism and work. Against this backdrop, the use of Mandarin by those in the public sector has become a social consensus and a universal demand, and the degree of Mandarin prevalence in the public service sector is an important indicator of the level of civilisation and the degree of social development and progress in a country or locality. However, in many areas of the public service sector, the lack of a sound training system, the lack of government attention and the lack of focus have made many public service workers very passive, with an urgent need to train in Mandarin but no awareness of the need to train in it. This is why the need for every staff member engaged in public service to be licensed and to attend regular training and learning is a matter of concern.

## 5. Conclusions

What is beyond doubt is that mastering and acquiring a good command of the national language is a personal competence that develops as society and the country evolves. In the future, it will be inevitable that Mandarin will become universal throughout the country, but it will require the concerted efforts of society as a whole. Everyone has to change their mindset first. Although dialects are unique signs of local characteristics and carry multiple values such as history and culture, national spirit and traditional morality, learning Mandarin does not mean rejecting them. We need to make the promotion of Mandarin a long-term endeavour, so that the language environment can be improved and people can develop the ability to communicate and converse in Mandarin, thus facilitating the adaptation of the common language to the lifestyle of the local people.

## References

- [1] Ma Li, Zhao Zhuqing. *Mandarin has an accent No problem [N]. People's Daily, 2015-12-14 (18)*
- [2] Yu Jinghan. *How civil servants can speak Mandarin well [J]. Integrity Watch, 2021, No. 543(04): 52-53.*
- [3] Yu Qingyan. *Sichuan issues new rule: official staff of party and government organs and institutions at all levels must speak Mandarin in official situations [N]. Surfing News, 2015-12-14*