

Three Chains, Four Entities, Three Links: A Reform Model for National Common Language Education in Rural Primary and Secondary Schools

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Abstract: Strengthening national common language education is a core initiative to enhance the promotion of the national common language. By conducting an in-depth analysis of the problems existing in national common language education in rural primary and secondary schools, and based on theories such as the "Four Entities" in education, the theory of comprehensive human development, and sociolinguistics, this paper proposes a "Three Chains, Four Entities, Three Links" teaching reform model for national common language education in rural primary and secondary schools. This model includes the construction of a progressive growth chain, a "Four Entities" education chain, and a key language chain. It aims to provide a comprehensive and systematic reform framework for promoting the national common language in rural areas, and put forward specific and feasible suggestions for future optimization paths and strategies.

Keywords: National Common Language; Growth Chain; Education Chain; Language Chain

1. Introduction

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the Party Central Committee has valued language work, with General Secretary Xi Jinping noting "language is the best key to understanding a country" and "Chinese characters are an important symbol of Chinese civilization". Policies like the 18th, 19th (5th, 6th Plenums), and 20th CPC National Congress reports have emphasized promoting the national common language.

Recent research on this education has grown but focuses more on macro-policy interpretation and micro-practice summary, with weak theoretical study. It mainly targets young and middle-aged laborers, while preschool and basic education need strengthening. Thus, this study builds the

"Three Chains, Four Entities, Three Links" model based on relevant theories to offer references for rural promotion.

2. Existing Problems in National Common Language Education in Rural Primary and Secondary Schools

2.1 "Weak Awareness": Insufficient Recognition of the Importance of National Common Language Education in Rural Areas

In rural areas, some families and communities lack sufficient understanding of the profound significance of national common language education. In the daily life and learning of children, they still insist on using dialects. This inherent language habit has become a major obstacle affecting children's learning of Mandarin. Some families and communities fail to provide sufficient learning support and encouragement for children, which reduces students' initiative and enthusiasm in learning the national common language. The recognition of the importance of national common language education in rural areas needs to be further strengthened.

2.2 "Transition Challenges": Insufficient Quantity and Capacity of Rural Teachers

In 2021–2022 compulsory education, full-time teachers in urban primary and middle schools rose by 140,600 and 72,200 respectively. By contrast, those in rural areas fell by 120,900 (primary) and 22,300 (middle). Notably, full-time Chinese language teachers—core to school-based national common language education—saw a steeper rural decline: 9% (primary) and 5.5% (middle). This outpaced the overall rural full-time teacher decline of 7% (primary) and 4.2% (middle), which will inevitably undermine national common language education quality.

2.3 "Lack of Context": Insufficient

Application Environment for the National Common Language in Rural Areas

For students in rural areas, the lack of a practical application environment for the national common language is a major problem. Organized practical activities for students are an important way to strengthen the promotion of the national common language. A survey data shows that 60.42% of teachers have never organized students to participate in extracurricular activities to promote the national common language. The main channels for students to learn Mandarin are in-class learning at school, communication with classmates (colleagues, friends), and daily learning through media such as watching TV and listening to songs.

3. The "Three Chains, Four Entities, Three Links" Teaching Reform Model

Based on theories such as the "Four Entities" in education, the theory of comprehensive human development, and sociolinguistics, this paper constructs a integrated teaching reform model consisting of a progressive growth chain, a "subject, object, environment, medium" education chain, and an "input, internalization, output" language chain. This model provides a comprehensive and systematic reform framework for the education and teaching reform of the national common language in rural primary and secondary schools, and puts forward specific and feasible suggestions for future optimization paths and strategies.

3.1 Progressive Growth Chain

The "theory of comprehensive human development," a key part of Marxist theory, emphasizes improving individual quality and ability to unleash potential, thereby enhancing students' comprehensive literacy. It advocates that students deeply understand and integrate into the broader social and cultural environment to achieve balanced development in both social and personal dimensions. Education plays a crucial role: Marxism holds that education should comprehensively develop diverse abilities, including intelligence, physical strength, and aesthetics.

Additionally, Jean Piaget's cognitive development theory offers valuable support for educational practice. He identified stages of cognitive growth—sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational—which reflect age-related

differences in thinking, understanding, and learning abilities, laying a solid foundation for stepped educational design. Based on these theories, the language and character growth chain for primary and secondary students is divided into the following stages:

3.1.1 Grades 1-3: Basic Language Skills Training

In the initial stage, the core task is to solidify basic language skills. Students at this stage are in a critical language acquisition period with rapidly developing receptive and comprehension abilities, so education focuses on listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening and speaking skills are cultivated through daily dialogue, storytelling, and classroom interaction, with teachers encouraging more listening and speaking to improve oral expression via imitation. Reading and writing training uses age-appropriate, illustrated materials to guide students from character recognition to passage comprehension and simple writing, building foundational written expression skills.

3.1.2 Grades 4-6: Mastery of Core Knowledge

In the intermediate stage, with a solid language foundation, education integrates literary, historical, and cultural elements. Students' growing curiosity about the world is nurtured through reading literary works to enhance language literacy and aesthetics, while learning history and culture helps them understand language's context and development. Teachers can use historical stories and cultural traditions to stimulate interest, promoting in-depth language application. For reading and writing, students tackle more complex texts, with group discussions and writing competitions boosting expression and comprehension.

3.1.3 Grades 7-9: In-depth Learning and Critical Thinking

In the advanced stage, students' cognitive and thinking abilities improve significantly. Education deepens the integration of language and culture, focusing on critical thinking and innovative expression. Teachers guide students to read classics and watch cultural films to understand language-culture connections, encourage discussions to foster critical thinking for independent opinions, and use creative writing or drama to practice expression and innovation. Additionally, content on society, science, and global perspectives is introduced to broaden horizons.

3.1.4 Grades 10-12: Comprehensive Application

and Practical Exploration

In the final stage, students have solid language skills and knowledge reserves. Education emphasizes comprehensive language application in interdisciplinary learning and encourages social practice and international exchanges. Teachers organize interdisciplinary projects to integrate language with other subjects for problem-solving, and use school/community resources to provide practical opportunities (e.g., volunteering, surveys) to enhance language application and social responsibility. Additionally, global awareness and cross-cultural communication skills are fostered through engagement with international news. This growth chain promotes all-round development in language skills, cognition, emotional expression, and social participation, aligning with Marxist ideals of comprehensive human development.

3.2 The "Four Entities" Education Chain

The "Four Entities" theory in education emphasizes the interaction and influence among four elements: educators, educatees, educational content, and educational means, providing a robust framework for analyzing these elements and their relationships in the educational process. It focuses on three core aspects: first, the professional development of teachers (educational subjects), including improved national common language proficiency and innovative teaching methods; second, student-centered education that addresses individual differences and learning needs, promoting all-round development via a progressive growth chain; third, careful selection and design of educational content to ensure students learn not only language knowledge but also the cultural and social context behind it; fourth, updating educational technology and innovating methods to boost learning interest and efficiency. In national common language education, this theory ensures the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of the educational process.

3.2.1 Enhancing the Professional Quality and Initiative of Educational Subjects

In rural national common language education, teachers—core educational subjects—play a vital role. Improving their professional quality and teaching initiative is key to optimizing rural language education. Specific measures to boost teachers' professional capabilities and

enthusiasm include:1. Strengthening professional development training: Launch rural teacher capacity-building programs (covering professional skills and teaching method updates), develop special plans (e.g., on-the-job training, academic qualification upgrading), encourage participation in curriculum design and research, support domestic and international further study, and provide more learning opportunities via distance education.2. Establishing incentive mechanisms: Use teaching evaluation and reward systems to encourage teachers to explore and innovate in practice.3. Building online-offline teaching research communities: Share best practices and innovative strategies through joint lesson planning and regular seminars to improve teaching abilities.

3.2.2 Optimizing and Updating Educational Object Content

The educational object—i.e., teaching content—is the core of teaching reform. To ensure rural students receive high-quality language education, content must be carefully selected for timeliness and practicality. Specific measures include:1. Customizing content based on rural students' actual situations and needs, aligning with their cognitive levels and interests.2. Integrating rural cultural elements into teaching: Enhance motivation and a sense of belonging by teaching language knowledge related to rural life.3. Regularly updating content to reflect the latest language developments and social needs, e.g., using digital tools and online resources to provide personalized materials that adapt to different learning styles and progress.

3.2.3 Building a Supportive and Interactive Educational Environment

The educational environment (referred to as the "educational environment entity") is particularly important for rural students. Building a supportive and interactive environment is of great significance. Specific measures include:1. Increasing investment to improve rural school infrastructure (e.g., adding language labs, multimedia classrooms) and provide a sound learning environment.2. Creating a positive learning atmosphere: Enhance practical abilities and teamwork via language competitions, literary creation, and other activities.3. Strengthening home-school cooperation: Hold parent seminars to raise awareness of the national common language's importance, and develop family learning resources (e.g., homework guidance, online interactive

platforms).

3.2.4 Innovating and Expanding the Application of Educational Media

Educational media include teaching means and methods. Innovating their application is key to improving teaching effectiveness in rural language education. Specific measures include:1. Strengthening students' dominant role: Promote project-based and student-centered teaching methods; stimulate interest and initiative via project-based and inquiry-based learning to foster independent learning abilities.2. Exploring blended teaching models: Combine online and offline methods to improve learning efficiency and participation.3. Conducting interdisciplinary language teaching activities: Integrate language learning with subjects like history and culture to develop comprehensive literacy and innovation.

3.3 Constructing a Key Language Chain

Sociolinguistics is a discipline that studies the use and change of language in society. It emphasizes the interrelationship between language and society, the importance of the national common language in social communication, the improvement of students' language application abilities, and the relationship between language and culture. It enhances students' cultural awareness and cross-cultural communication abilities, enabling them to better integrate into society. By introducing the concepts and methods of sociolinguistics, this paper constructs key links of language input, internalization, and output, and creates a good language environment, so that students in rural primary and secondary schools can better understand and use the language, and improve their language communication abilities.

3.3.1 Language Input Link

Develop characteristic school-based teaching materials and personalized educational paths. Pilot the development of school-based teaching materials in some districts, counties, and schools, and develop and implement personalized learning plans to adapt to the abilities and interests of different students. Strengthen students' self-directed learning abilities, and encourage creative thinking and critical analysis. Deepen the "whole resource chain" integrated education, break the situation of insufficient mobilization of traditional language education resources, organically integrate in-class and after-class, on-campus and off-campus resources,

fully tap the content of resources, innovate the carriers of resource application, and improve the mechanism of resource application. Through diversified language input, students can be exposed to more language forms and expression methods, thereby broadening their language horizons.

3.3.2 Language Internalization Link

Students need to internalize the received language information and transform it into their own language abilities. In this process, teachers can help students understand and use the language through various teaching activities such as group discussions and role-playing, so as to promote the internalization of the language.

3.3.3 Language Output Link

At the end of the language chain, students need to test the effect of their language learning through language output. Teachers can encourage students to use the learned language for expression and communication through writing, oral expression, and other methods. Organize rural language activities, such as speech contests and cultural festivals, to provide opportunities for the practical use of the language. Establish partnerships between schools, district/county educational research institutes, and municipal educational research institutes to promote the application of the language in daily life.

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