Construction of a Chinese Micro-Promotion Platform for Cross-Language Communication on the Belt and Road Initiative

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Abstract:

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) necessitates cross-language communication. By developing a mobile app platform that leverages language talent on both sides of communication, especially those along the BRI route who are proficient in Chinese, the need for an English intermediary can be bypassed. This mobile platform allows free, unrestricted communication across time and place, establishing a new model for cross-language interaction under the BRI framework. Concurrently, it promotes Chinese language internationalization by providing BRI-aligned language services. To access free translation services or live Chinese-language practice and support, users earn points by engaging with Chinese language modules and "product introduction" videos in the app's backend. These points can then be exchanged for services, thereby incentivizing Chinese language promotion. Additionally, revenue generated from user interactions will fund translation fees and compensations for service personnel, creating a complete and sustainable cycle that addresses communication needs while advancing Chinese language outreach.

Keywords: *Belt and Road Initiative; International Chinese Education; Chinese Language Promotion*

1 Introduction:

As the official language of several countries, English's extensive use is not only a linguistic advantage but also closely tied to the influence of the United Kingdom and the United States within the modern international system. Since the colonial era, the British Empire disseminated English widely across Africa, Asia, and the Americas through military expansion and political control, thereby establishing English as the default international language. Following World War II, with the United States' rise in global economic, cultural, financial, trade, and technological domains, English further solidified its international status. Through Hollywood films, international trade, financial systems, and academic publications, the U.S. facilitated English's pervasiveness worldwide, permeating nearly every field and cementing its dominance on the international stage. Consequently, in international settings, official documents, and cross-language communications, many countries

have become accustomed to English's prevalence and convenience, making it the default language of intercultural exchange (Ren & Li, 2024).

In contrast, while Chinese is one of the five official languages of the United Nations, its international usage remains relatively limited. In the context of advancing the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which involves numerous multinational agreements and collaborative documents, these materials are often translated into English first to facilitate widespread understanding among BRI countries. This reliance on English as an intermediary language has been likened to "transporting goods via borrowed vehicles," symbolizing a temporary dependence on English for communication. While this approach may be convenient and necessary at the outset, it is not a sustainable long-term strategy. Prolonged reliance on English will hinder the elevation of Chinese within international exchanges, potentially relegating it to a subordinate role globally. As the saying "language is always coupled with power" suggests, the international promotion of any language depends on the comprehensive strength of the supporting nation (Haijing, 2012). With China's growing economic, military, and technological strength, Chinese is expected to gain a stronger global presence. The expanding use of the renminbi in international trade further supports the foundation for Chinese language internationalization.

Within this context, China has incorporated language service strategies into its national "13th Five-Year Plan" and broader strategic framework, aiming to promote Chinese under the BRI (Wang, 2018). In this process, countries along the BRI route increasingly need language services from China to meet cross-language communication demands across multiple levels and fields, thereby avoiding over-reliance on English intermediaries and gradually achieving "de-Englishization" in communication (Wang & Yu, 2021). Although Chinese is unlikely to dominate cross-linguistic international exchanges immediately or achieve notable short-term effects, pursuing linguistic independence and cultural autonomy is a necessary path. Without proactive measures, Chinese will continue to be constrained by other languages, preventing it from truly becoming the dominant language in BRI cross-cultural communication.

2 Current Challenges:

The *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI) spans Asia, Europe, and Africa, covering 65 countries and regions with approximately 2,488 languages, presenting a complex linguistic landscape and diverse intercultural communication needs (Wang, 2018). In these countries, English has become the predominant "intermediary language" in global cross-linguistic communication, especially for intergovernmental documents and academic exchanges, where English usage has become habitual. However, this dependence on English for communication brings about a certain risk of "cultural dependency" (Zhu, 2006; Li, 2015). While English offers considerable advantages in terms of convenience and universality in modern international exchanges, there is a growing demand for

Chinese language and cultural understanding along the BRI. Overreliance on English not only limits the ability of BRI countries to gain deeper insight into Chinese cultural concepts but also restricts the internationalization of Chinese and China's autonomy in foreign communications. Although Chinese is an official language of the United Nations, its use remains infrequent in international settings, and most BRI documents and agreements still primarily rely on English versions for global dissemination. This indicates that the international applicability of Chinese requires further enhancement. Consequently, the question of how to replace the current English intermediary communication model with a Chinese-centered direct cross-language communication mode, thereby achieving "de-Englishization" in communication, has become a key goal of the national language service strategy (Wang & Yu, 2021).

Existing language service platforms along the BRI mainly focus on meeting basic cross-language communication needs but generally lack a systematic function for Chinese language promotion. Specifically, current platforms are limited by their support for a narrow range of languages, typically covering only major ones like English, Japanese, and Korean, making it challenging to meet the multilingual needs of BRI countries. Furthermore, these platforms primarily address routine communication or language translation, with limited support for Chinese language dissemination and learning (Wei, 2015). For instance, popular cross-language communication apps such as *Fanyi Jun* and *Waijiao Jun* offer extensive support for English learning but are relatively inadequate in promoting Chinese. The language functions of these apps are often limited to basic communication services or speaking practice and generally lack systematic language teaching features, which makes it difficult for users to deeply understand Chinese culture. More critically, the core design of such apps does not sufficiently consider the cultural transmission dimension of language but instead focuses on meeting immediate communication needs. While this design approach addresses users' basic linguistic requirements, it does not favor the global promotion of Chinese as a "symbol of language and culture." Given the deepening of the BRI, there is a need for a Chinese-centered language service platform that can facilitate cross-language communication while also enabling cross-cultural promotion of Chinese, thereby organically combining communication and language promotion (Wen, 2016).

With the rapid development of information technology, the demand for multilingual communication continues to rise, providing an important opportunity to establish new media for Chinese promotion. However, existing Chinese promotion models have yet to fully leverage these technological tools to advance the global spread of Chinese. In recent years, language-learning apps have become significant tools for language acquisition due to their fragmentary and portable nature (Wang, 2018). Yet, the absence of apps dedicated to Chinese promotion poses a significant challenge for advancing Chinese in this domain. Current app designs generally focus on user experience and

interactivity in language learning but have not yet placed sufficient emphasis on Chinese micro-promotion applications, making it difficult for Chinese promotion to keep pace with BRI development. Given the linguistic diversity of BRI countries and the urgent need to promote Chinese, it is essential to build a Chinese-led communication platform that encompasses multiple languages and cultures. Such a platform should not only meet cross-language communication needs but also effectively support the global dissemination and promotion of Chinese (Wang, 2018).

3 International Promotion of Chinese and Cross-Language Communication for the Belt and Road Initiative:

In order to facilitate a comprehensive approach to cross-language communication within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a systematic understanding of both current and emerging trends in language promotion is essential. As English continues to dominate as the intermediary language for BRI documentation and intercultural exchanges, the shift towards establishing Chinese as a direct medium of communication presents unique challenges and opportunities. In this context, the strategic promotion of Chinese, aligning with international Chinese education initiatives, is a pivotal step. Integrating these initiatives with BRI's multilingual and multicultural landscape can support China's long-term goals of achieving "de-Englishization" in global exchanges, thereby setting the foundation for a Chinese-centered international communication model. The following section delves into the institutional and historical efforts behind international Chinese education, shedding light on how they might be harnessed to support BRI's language and cultural objectives.

3.1 International Chinese Education:

The initial spread of English was driven by the objective needs of governance, colonial expansion, or trade communication. The "demand for language" catalyzed theories centered on second language acquisition and English learning, positioning English as the dominant medium in academia and as the language of science and technology. With English benefiting from both linguistic and strategic dividends, its promotion entered a conscious phase. Programs were established to train local English teachers (such as the *Fulbright Program*), using work opportunities, partnerships, support programs, sci-fi cinema, or advanced technologies as incentives. English proficiency exams (such as TOEFL, IELTS, GRE, TEF, DELE, DSH, and JLPT) expanded English's reach, complemented by immersive or pervasive dissemination techniques, with English learning apps serving as prominent tools.

In 1987, China established the National Chinese International Promotion Leadership Office, known as Hanban, to provide teaching resources and services related to the Chinese language and culture globally. With Hanban's support, the Confucius Institute, a dedicated institution for international Chinese promotion, was founded. By the end of 2016, 511 Confucius Institutes and

1,073 Confucius Classrooms were established across 140 countries, with nine additional countries covered in 2017, moving towards complete coverage in BRI countries. By 2020, Hanban sought to standardize quality, examination certification, and the selection and training of teachers, completing the global network of Confucius Institutes (Wu, 2013).

Research on Chinese language promotion currently focuses on the following areas: strategies for promotion, studies on teaching materials, formats of promotion, investigations into practical challenges of Chinese promotion in specific countries, research on resources for Chinese language instructors abroad, and comparative studies of Chinese language promotion across countries. Accompanying the implementation of BRI-related projects, emerging research trends emphasize BRI-focused Chinese promotion planning, Chinese talent cultivation, Chinese education policies, language policies of BRI countries, and challenges and strategies for cross-language communication under the BRI (Shen, 2018). These studies provide valuable theoretical insights and practical references (Chen, 2024).

3.2 The Belt and Road Initiative's Need for Direct Multilingual Communication in Chinese:

On March 28, 2015, the National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Commerce jointly issued the *Vision and Actions on Jointly Building the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road*, abbreviated as the BRI. This initiative spans Asia, Europe, and Africa, connecting 18 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities in China, along with Mongolia, the 10 ASEAN nations, 18 West Asian countries, 8 South Asian countries, 5 Central Asian countries, 7 CIS countries, and 16 Central and Eastern European nations, totaling 65 countries and regions. This region represents over 4.4 billion people, or 63% of the world's population, with approximately 2,488 languages, creating a complex linguistic environment with significant communication challenges. According to the World Atlas of Language Structures (WALS), linguistic barrier indices between Chinese and languages of BRI countries range from 0.37 to 0.82, highlighting the challenges in providing language services across BRI countries (Wang, 2018). As the advocate for the BRI, China's outbound enterprises and cross-linguistic, cross-cultural exchanges along the BRI will undoubtedly require a vast stage for direct multilingual communication through Chinese (Li, Chen, Zhou, et al., 2023).

3.3 New Media for Cross-Language Communication:

The new information age has introduced innovative tools for cross-language communication and language learning. In 2015, the *Waijiao Jun* app, an intelligent foreign language speaking app, launched, providing different users with convenient, efficient, one-on-one online speaking lessons. Each session lasts 10-15 minutes, allowing users to connect with a teacher at any time with just one click, making rapid improvements in English speaking skills feasible within short timeframes. Although this app primarily supports English learners, its methods could inspire the development of

mobile platforms for micro-promotion of Chinese (Wu, 2023).

In 2016, Tencent introduced *Fanyi Jun*, a real-time conversation translation software with high translation accuracy, efficient voice input, accurate audio recognition, user-friendly operation, and streamlined tool experience. Suitable for various scenarios—such as travel, speaking practice, language learning, education, daily office communication, and social interactions—it currently supports only Chinese, English, Japanese, and Korean, limiting its applicability for the multilingual needs of BRI countries. Additionally, its focus remains on communication rather than systematic language instruction, with no particular emphasis on the promotion of Chinese (Du, 2024).

In early 2018, the *Translation Robot* debuted, capable of multilingual translation and suitable for BRI multilingual communication. However, there remains a need for tools on smartphone or mobile platforms specifically designed for accurate micro-promotion of Chinese.

As technology advances, mobile applications (apps) that integrate platform, resources, and social functions, offering free and offline use and prioritizing user experience, are garnering widespread attention. The traditional "classroom + teacher + multimedia" model has gaps, especially in addressing the needs of those who wish to learn Chinese using fragmented time. An online "Confucius Institute" via smartphone or other mobile platforms is urgently needed—a platform that provides a precise, micro-level promotion of Chinese to support the international micro-promotion of Chinese under the BRI.

4 Construction of a Chinese Micro-Promotion Platform:

The platform is built as a mobile app, designed to maximize the advantages of mobile micro-learning by making effective use of fragmented time. This platform simultaneously supports cross-language communication and promotes the Chinese language.

4.1 Personnel Structure:

To support cross-language communication within the *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI), many scholars advocate for enhanced "international Chinese education." However, training talent across over 60 lesser-spoken languages or establishing independent bases for Chinese international promotion (Zhu, 2006) is costly, especially in terms of time, which the BRI process cannot afford (Wei, 2015). Thus, leveraging and utilizing existing resources is the optimal solution. For instance, employing local talent proficient in Chinese (Wen, 2016), as well as utilizing Chinese-speaking students from BRI countries, constitutes the core resource for this platform's cross-language services. For clarity, five categories of personnel involved in supporting this platform's cross-language communication are labeled A, B, C, D, and E.

4.1.1 Personnel Types:

A. Foreign Language Specialists: This category includes international students from BRI countries studying in China, Chinese-speaking students from BRI nations, and China's minor language

specialists. They form the core talent pool for "de-Englishized" exchanges on this platform, providing essential cross-language communication services.

This flow of language talent not only fosters international collaboration but also promotes Chinese by providing direct incentives to foreign learners of the language, stimulating interest in Chinese. Additionally, it substantially reduces the cost of training linguistic talent domestically by fully leveraging "ready resources abroad," integrating them into BRI's language talent pool. B and C: These categories comprise BRI personnel from the relevant countries and Chinese nationals requiring cross-language communication services. They represent individuals encountering practical cross-language issues during BRI projects.

D. Chinese Language Experts: Domestic language teachers and in-service teachers at Confucius Institutes, all holding at least Class 2-A certificates in Mandarin. They are native Chinese speakers proficient in at least one BRI language, thus providing a valuable outlet for domestic language talent.

E. Industry Experts: These are certified professionals from various sectors relevant to BRI projects. The BRI encompasses ten primary sectors: infrastructure, energy, transportation and logistics, information technology, industrialization, trade cooperation, financial cooperation, cultural exchange, maritime development, and environmental protection. Correspondingly, this platform's specialists predominantly represent these ten fields.

4.1.2 Professional Technicians in Key BRI Sectors:

The platform's professionalism is supported by a robust group of industry specialists, with its focus spanning across ten key sectors central to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). These sectors include Infrastructure, which involves connectivity through construction (infrastructure engineering), equipment manufacturing (machinery and auxiliary equipment), and construction materials (steel, building materials, and non-ferrous metals). Energy is also crucial, covering industries related to oil and gas import pipelines, power station construction, and electrical equipment. Transportation and Logistics emphasize the creation of integrated regional transportation networks, incorporating transportation (ports, highways, railways, logistics), railway construction and associated equipment, as well as aviation services, equipment, and aircraft production. Information Technology aligns with global digital economic trends, accelerating the export of China's information products and services. Other sectors include Industrialization, Trade Cooperation, Financial Cooperation, Cultural Exchange, Maritime Development, and Environmental Protection. These fields represent the core areas of BRI's involvement, and as the platform develops, the range of specialists will expand, allowing for additional fields and refined expertise within these sectors.

4.2 Platform Construction:

The Chinese micro-promotion platform is primarily modeled on *Waijiao Jun*, an intelligent foreign language speaking app launched in December 2015. Users can download the app, register,

and, at any time and place, make a one-click "call" to the platform. Online translators (Chinese teachers, minor language specialists from BRI countries, and industry experts) can autonomously take on assignments, enabling a "three-to-one" model similar to Tencent Meeting. By avoiding English intermediaries, this setup offers a fast, 24/7 service that provides immediate solutions to communication issues. This innovative model both supports Chinese internationalization and expands the range of languages offered, reducing the risk of "de-Sinicization" by exclusively serving Chinese language promotion.

The platform serves as a language communication service while supporting the dual aims of facilitating BRI construction and promoting Chinese. It not only addresses practical issues encountered in BRI projects but also actively advances the reach of Chinese. The platform's offerings include Chinese language games, cultural videos, assessments, and instructional video courses. Users can earn points by browsing these modules based on the time spent and depth of engagement, redeemable for translation or language practice sessions. Additionally, the platform promotes BRI-related products and China's infrastructure products, fostering mutual exchange and expanding productive capacity, with part of the operational costs covered through these engagements, thereby supporting a sustainable operational model.

Designed for various mobile smart terminal systems, the platform increases the audience for Chinese, optimally utilizing fragmented time and enriching Chinese cultural input visually. Functioning as an online version of the Confucius Institute, the platform integrates Chinese resources and translation services, available for free and offline to enhance user experience. By filling gaps in traditional promotion models, the app delivers precise micro-promotion of Chinese through smartphones and other mobile devices, accommodating those with limited time. This organized Chinese promotion is integrated with the modern BRI, mutually reinforcing each other to foster a large-scale, "de-Englishized" cross-language communication model.

4.3 Platform Operation:

The platform aims to support cross-language communication for the BRI, with Chinese as the primary medium for international dialogue. By employing a combination of "Chinese teachers + minor language specialists from BRI countries + industry experts," it provides solutions for communication challenges while advancing micro-level Chinese promotion internationally, directly circumventing the need for an English intermediary.

Upon registering, users select their preferred language and enter the respective "room" where they are matched with native speakers (Party A: international students proficient in Chinese). Users (Party B, sharing a native language with Party A) can initiate conversations or communicate with Party C (Chinese nationals engaged in BRI activities) via the platform to address language needs. Industry experts (Party D: native Chinese speakers) and Party E join efforts to solve cross-language
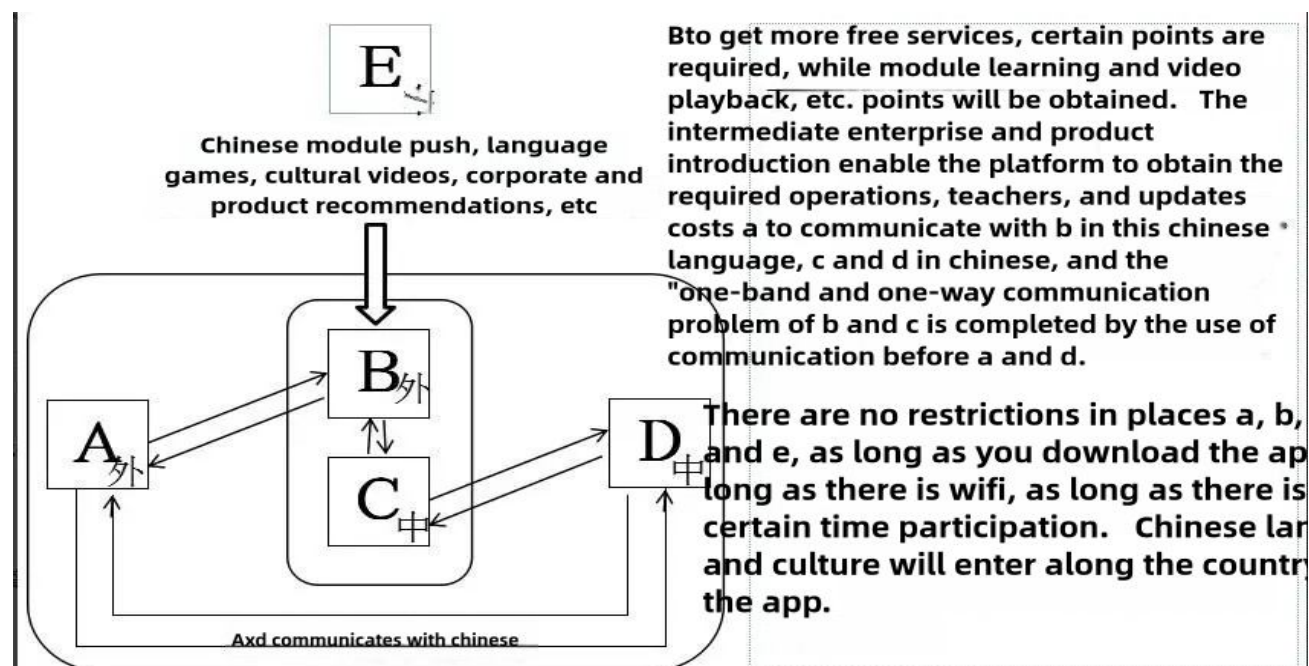
issues through the app.

Figure 1: Platform Operation Framework

To access free translation or language practice, Party B must engage with modules regularly posted by Chinese teachers (Party E), which include a variety of content such as language and culture videos or games (covering topics like travel, cuisine, university life, daily life, exams, Chinese characters, architecture, agriculture, shopping, calligraphy, traditional instruments, accommodation, and more). This engagement rewards users with points, redeemable for services like translation or language practice, effectively linking cross-language services, practical Chinese use, and promotion, thereby directly boosting Chinese language and cultural outreach (as illustrated in Figure 1).

5 Feasibility of the Chinese Micro-Promotion Platform:

The success of the proposed Chinese micro-promotion platform hinges not only on its conceptual framework but also on the technical capabilities that underpin its operations. By leveraging advancements in digital communication and mobile technology, this platform aims to deliver seamless, real-time cross-language communication services that prioritize Chinese as the primary language medium. The incorporation of robust technical support is critical to ensure the platform's efficiency, reliability, and accessibility across various regions, particularly within the Belt and Road countries. The subsequent section outlines the technical infrastructure required for sustainable platform operations, highlighting how mobile, cloud, and digital resources will play a fundamental role in enhancing user experience and scalability across diverse linguistic environments.

5.1 Technical Support:

The global competitiveness of Chinese telecom equipment manufacturers has established a robust foundation for communication infrastructure in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) strategy. As

a pioneer in China's "going global" strategy, the telecommunications equipment industry occupies a significant position in the international market, with two Chinese companies among the world's top five telecom equipment providers. Huawei, in particular, has surpassed Ericsson in sales revenue, becoming the global leader. This reflects China's rapid rise in the information and communication technology (ICT) field, demonstrating that Chinese telecom equipment is now technically advanced and widely accepted in the global market. Leveraging this advantage, even in BRI countries with varied communication environments, users with smartphones can easily access mobile platform-based language communication services, significantly lowering the barriers to cross-cultural interaction. The platform's development will utilize a web architecture supported by Alibaba Cloud servers to ensure stable, secure, and cost-effective network service, providing efficient data transmission and storage at a reasonable cost (Wen, 2021).

Moreover, to enhance user experience, the platform's design draws inspiration from the *OMG* model by Jessica Bai Jie (http://weibo.com/omgmeiyu), presenting video content in fragmented, dynamic, and contextualized formats. Each video theme is carefully crafted to be concise yet meaningful, allowing users to absorb Chinese language knowledge efficiently within a short time. Content is developed by a team of Chinese language educators and professional animators, with particular emphasis on making modules social, gamified, intelligent, and personalized, to increase interactivity and engagement. The platform's Chinese promotion modules include software developed in collaboration between animators and programmers, as well as tools for speaking and writing practice, and instructional videos. It also utilizes cloud resources to offer a rich Chinese knowledge base to meet diverse user needs. Aligned with BRI's key sectors, the platform provides diversified content for Chinese promotion, highlighting the practical value of Chinese language and cultural depth, thus enhancing its image and international acceptance.

To accommodate the diverse needs of learners, the platform incorporates various Chinese language use scenarios, such as exam preparation and comprehensive applications, with tailored syllabi and language maps for each. Users can select modules according to their interests and needs, offering a flexible learning experience. This approach not only personalizes Chinese language learning but also aligns the process with modern users' fragmented learning habits. By functioning as a "virtual Confucius Institute," the platform expands the channels for promoting Chinese internationally and provides a wide range of resources for BRI countries. This mobile smart terminal-based learning model not only addresses the shortcomings of traditional promotion methods but also enhances the user experience, further advancing the internationalization of Chinese language.

5.2 Feasibility of Personnel Structure:

The platform's D-category personnel include in-service teachers at Confucius Institutes

involved in teaching Chinese as a foreign language, as well as teachers from domestic universities who specialize in international Chinese education. Native Chinese speakers with a Mandarin Proficiency Level 2 or higher, they serve as the core personnel responsible for the creation and distribution of Chinese language modules. They are available online during work hours to provide language support.

Additionally, the platform will recruit students proficient in Chinese from BRI countries and minor language specialists from China, as these individuals represent key talent resources for "de-Englishized" cross-language communication. This approach not only supports international cooperation and exchange but also promotes Chinese language learning among foreigners in a practical way. China has already developed a substantial pool of minor language specialists and has enrolled a significant number of international students from BRI countries. In 2017, the country expanded its enrollment by over 10,000 students from these regions, making them suitable as A-category personnel on the platform.

The participation of A- and D-category personnel is not constrained by their profession, occupation, or geographic location, allowing them to contribute to the platform's cross-language services without affecting their other social responsibilities. Therefore, the platform's requirements for cross-language communication services and Chinese language teaching personnel are fully achievable.

6 Conclusion:

Driven by the *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI), the integration of Chinese promotion with cross-language communication services provides an unprecedented opportunity for the internationalization of Chinese. By creating a language service platform with Chinese at its core, the platform addresses the pressing need for cross-language communication in BRI countries, while facilitating Chinese cultural dissemination and practical application in international exchanges. However, Chinese internationalization is not an overnight process. Effective promotion requires a careful balance between language promotion and cultural transmission, avoiding excessive reliance on external factors or the perception of "cultural intrusion" or "political propaganda." Instead, a high-quality, professional, and widely applicable language service platform should integrate Chinese promotion naturally into cross-cultural communication (Wang, Wang, & Wu, 2024). This approach not only expands the audience for Chinese but gradually reduces biases against Chinese culture, fostering a more natural acceptance of the Chinese language and culture in BRI countries, thereby achieving "de-Englishized" communication and enhancing bidirectional language and cultural interaction.

In the long run, combining Chinese promotion with BRI development can establish a sustainable model for Chinese internationalization within a global context, creating a language and

cultural dissemination ecosystem centered on Chinese. This model will effectively enhance China's soft power and deepen partnerships with BRI countries, strengthening China's position in international affairs. At the same time, the state should focus on integrating language resources and developing talent during the promotion process. With the support of strategic policies and resources, China can ensure high-quality language promotion. Supported by the national language service strategy, mobilizing both domestic and international Chinese education resources, and establishing a cross-cultural communication team of "Chinese teachers + minor language specialists from BRI countries + industry professionals," the platform can achieve global promotion and application of Chinese within the BRI framework (Yu, 2023). As China's overall national strength continues to grow, the global process of Chinese internationalization will accelerate, with Chinese playing an increasingly important role in future international exchanges, serving as a vital bridge between China and the world.

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