

Whose Voice Counts As Standard? Toward An Inclusive Pedagogy For Non-Standard Accented And Disabled Speakers In Broadcasting Education

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Abstract

Broadcasting and hosting programs train students toward a single, narrow vocal ideal: fluent, regionally unmarked, and rhythmically uninterrupted. This paper argues that the pedagogical machinery producing that ideal — diction drills, fluency benchmarks, and "non-regional diction" targets — does more than teach a skill. It enforces a hierarchy in which regional accent, second-language phonology, and disability-linked speech difference are treated as errors to be corrected rather than variations to be accommodated. Drawing together standard language ideology, raciolinguistics, and disability studies — literatures that have developed largely in parallel — the paper proposes that broadcasting pedagogy be reconceived through the lens of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), shifting the object of instruction from accent elimination to communicative effectiveness. Four conceptual models are developed to illustrate the argument: a gatekeeping model of current practice, a three-axis map of vocal marginalization, a comparative curriculum design, and a proposed model of inclusive broadcasting pedagogy. The paper closes by considering what this reframing would concretely require of curriculum designers, assessment rubrics, and the broadcasting industry itself.

Keywords: broadcasting pedagogy, standard language ideology, disability studies, linguistic justice, Universal Design for Learning, inclusive education.

1. Introduction

Every broadcasting or hosting program teaches a version of the same lesson, whether the language of instruction is English or Chinese: speak so that no one can tell where you are from. One American broadcast anchor has described being taught in college that on-air speech should reveal nothing about where she was from, with heavy emphasis placed on removing any trace of her native Southern Louisiana dialect (Bell, 2023). A voice instructor in a major university broadcasting program states the underlying rule even more plainly: a broadcaster who wants steady, portable work has to sound as though they are from nowhere in particular, because regional markers are treated as a professional liability rather than a personal signature (Bell, 2023). In China, an equivalent logic operates through Putonghua promotion: a recent analysis of CCTV's National TV Host Competition shows that when a judge corrects a contestant's pronunciation on air, the correction functions as an exercise of the state's linguistic authority, and even a minor deviation from prescribed pronunciation is treated as a threat to that contestant's legitimacy as a future national broadcaster (Wang, 2026).

This is not a minor stylistic preference, and it is not confined to any one national broadcasting tradition. It is a curriculum, taught with syllabi, rubrics, and pass-fail consequences. And curricula, unlike passing habits, have students on the other side of them — students who arrive with an accent, a dialect, a stutter, or a hearing-linked speech pattern, and who are taught, implicitly or explicitly, that these features must be suppressed before they can be considered broadcast-ready. The literature on this suppression has so far developed in two largely separate channels. One, running through sociolinguistics, examines how "standard language ideology" ranks accents and dialects against an idealized, often unmarked norm, misleading listeners into treating some varieties as objectively superior to others even though no linguistic basis supports the ranking (University of Michigan LSA Linguistics, n.d.). The other, running through disability studies, examines how fluency itself has been constructed as a moral and communicative virtue, such that stuttering is read not merely as a speech pattern but as a performance jointly produced by the speaker and by a listener who judges them — placing the speaker's body, and not only their speech, under suspicion (St. Pierre, 2012).

These two literatures rarely speak to each other, and broadcasting pedagogy research speaks to neither. This paper argues that they describe the same underlying mechanism from two different vantage points, and that broadcasting education — because it is one of the few sites where vocal performance is directly, professionally, and

consequentially trained — is the place where this convergence becomes most visible and most correctable. A brief note on method is warranted before proceeding. This paper does not report new empirical data; no interviews, surveys, or classroom observations were conducted for it. Its contribution is instead conceptual and integrative: it synthesizes findings and theoretical frameworks from sociolinguistics, raciolinguistics, disability studies, and inclusive-education scholarship that have, to date, rarely been read against one another, and it applies the resulting synthesis to a specific pedagogical site — broadcasting and hosting education — that none of these literatures has directly addressed. This is a legitimate and common mode of scholarship in fields where a genuinely new empirical question first requires a theoretical apparatus capable of asking it properly; the absence of primary data here is a function of the paper's stage in a longer research program, not a substitute for the fieldwork that a fully realized version of this project would eventually require.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 develops the theoretical apparatus, integrating standard language ideology, raciolinguistics, and the disability-studies concept of the "normate" voice. Section 3 examines how this apparatus operates concretely inside broadcasting curricula, in both Anglophone and Chinese contexts. Section 4 turns to the disability dimension specifically, arguing that stuttering and other speech differences are excluded from broadcasting pedagogy by mechanisms structurally identical to those that exclude regional accents. Section 5 proposes a UDL-informed inclusive pedagogy, presented through two of the paper's four conceptual models. Section 6 considers the practical and institutional implications, including what industry partnership would require. Section 7 concludes.

2. Theoretical Framework: Standard Language Ideology Meets the Normate Voice

2.1 The Manufactured Neutrality of "Standard" Speech

The starting premise of this paper is one that linguistics settled decades ago but that broadcasting pedagogy has yet to absorb: there is no such thing as an accentless voice. Every speaker has an accent; what varies is only whether a given accent is treated as marked or unmarked. Rosina Lippi-Green's foundational legal-linguistic analysis defines standard language ideology as a bias toward an idealized, homogeneous spoken form, imposed from above and modeled on written rather than spoken language — a bias that ordinary listeners act on just as readily as linguists recognize it, so that accent becomes simultaneously a manner of speaking and a means of exclusion (Lippi-Green, 1994). Crucially, Lippi-Green's analysis was built on courtroom discrimination cases, and her central finding was that when listeners reject an accent, they are rarely reacting to sound alone; they are reacting to the race, ethnicity, national origin, regional affiliation, or economic class that the accent is heard to signal (Lippi-Green, 1994). Broadcasting training does not invent this bias. It inherits it, formalizes it, and teaches students to enact it on themselves.

What makes broadcasting pedagogy distinctive — and distinctively worth studying — is that it converts an ambient social bias into an explicit technical curriculum. Where an employer's accent preference might operate as an unstated (if legally fraught) hiring criterion, a broadcasting program states the preference outright and trains toward it. Journalism training guides advise trainee radio presenters to master breath control, diction, modulation, and intonation, warning that habits that pass unnoticed in casual conversation — merged word endings, dropped consonants — are magnified by a microphone until they threaten listener comprehension (Journalism University, 2026). The rhetoric of "clarity" here quietly substitutes for the actual target, which is conformity: the same guide's working assumption is that a single trained delivery style, not a range of intelligible styles, is what "clarity" means in practice.

2.2 Raciolinguistics: Appropriateness as a Racialized Standard

Standard language ideology explains why a norm exists; raciolinguistic theory explains why that norm is never actually neutral, even when it is defended in neutral, "professional" terms. Nelson Flores and Jonathan Rosa's influential critique of appropriateness-based language education argues that frameworks which ask language-minoritized students to adjust their speech toward an "appropriate" academic or professional register end up reproducing racial normativity, because minoritized students are expected to model a white speaking subject even though listeners continue to perceive their speech through a racialized lens regardless of how closely they conform (Flores & Rosa, 2015). In other words, the problem is not solved by better assimilation, because the listener's judgment is doing at least as much interpretive work as the speaker's performance. April Baker-Bell's parallel formulation names the corrective directly, defining linguistic justice as an antiracist approach to language and

literacy education, built on the premise that so-called "standard English" is more accurately understood as White Mainstream English rather than a neutral baseline (Baker-Bell, 2020).

This matters for a Chinese broadcasting context in a way that is easy to overlook if the framework is imported uncritically. Putonghua promotion is not organized around race in the way Standard American English is, but it performs an analogous sorting function along regional and class lines. A study of "regional Putonghua" varieties circulating on Weibo finds that speakers with a marked regional accent are frequently silenced because listeners applying a standard-language ideology fail to recognize their linguistic resources as legitimate, and that regional varieties consistently score lower on measures of social status even when they score higher on measures of speaker warmth and likability (Tavella, 2020). The CCTV host-competition study extends this pattern into the specific institutional site this paper is concerned with, showing that state entertainment television selectively orchestrates linguistic diversity — making dialects and minority languages visible in affectively appealing but tightly bounded ways — while Hanzi and Putonghua remain the uncontested linguistic center of the program (Wang, 2026). Broadcasting training, in both contexts, is therefore not a politically neutral craft; it is one of the clearest sites where a society's language hierarchy is actively produced, generation after generation of trainees at a time.

2.3 The Normate Voice: Importing Disability Studies

The concept that lets this paper connect accent-based exclusion to disability-based exclusion is Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's "normate," originally developed to describe how literary and cultural representation constructs disability. The normate is the composite, unmarked identity position — unmarked by disability, race, or gender — that stands in for an imagined "everyman," whose presumed self-determination and physical sturdiness make the normate the implicit standard against which every marked body is measured (Garland-Thomson, 1997). Crucially, the normate is not a body at all; it is a position that specific bodies and voices are permitted to occupy, contingent on how closely they already resemble it. A regionally marked accent, a stutter, and a hearing-impairment-linked speech pattern are different in kind, but they are structurally equivalent in this respect: each marks its speaker as deviating from a voice that was never neutral to begin with, only unmarked because it was already dominant.

This paper's central theoretical claim is that broadcasting's "newscaster's voice" is a normate voice, and that the pedagogy built to produce it does the same sorting work — pulling regional-accent speakers, L2 speakers, and disabled speakers into a single filtered-out category — regardless of whether the pedagogical language used to justify the filtering names race, region, or disability. Figure 1 makes this convergence visually explicit as a gatekeeping funnel; Figure 2 maps it as three overlapping axes of exclusion that meet at one shared norm.

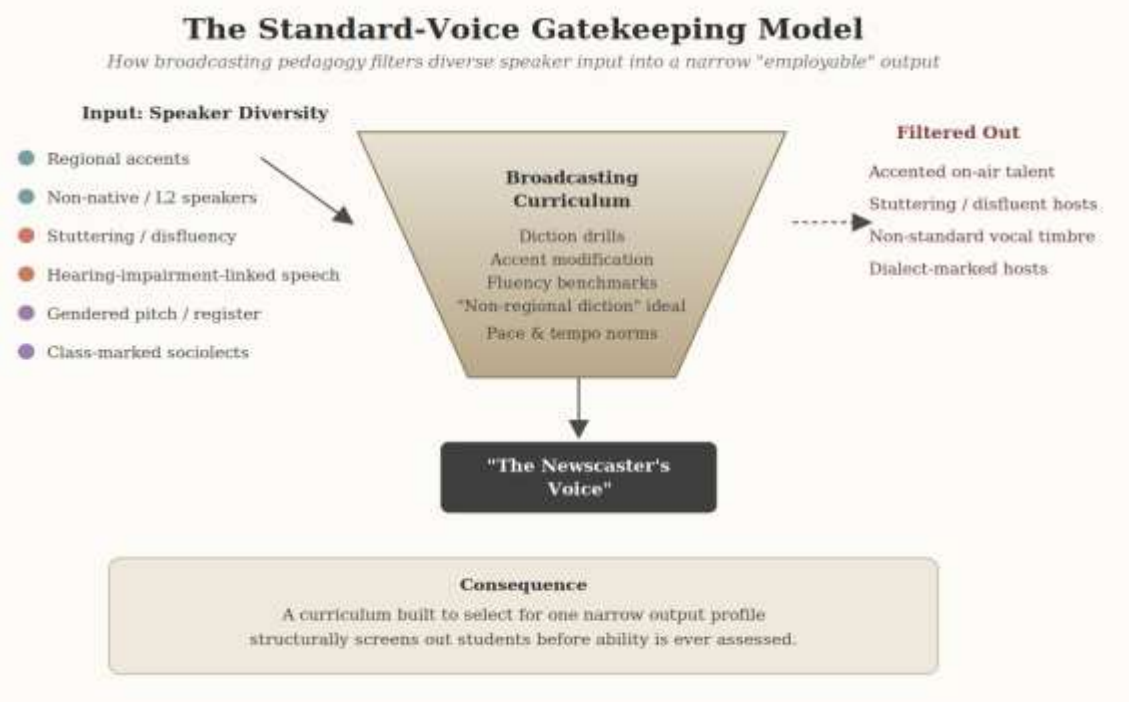


Figure 1. The standard-voice gatekeeping model. Broadcasting curricula are typically designed to select for one

narrow output profile — non-regional, fully fluent, rhythmically uninterrupted delivery — which structurally filters out accented, dialect-marked, and disfluent speakers before their communicative competence is ever separately assessed.



Figure 2. Three axes of vocal marginalization. Regional/linguistic difference, disability-linked speech difference, and social/identity-linked register difference are each studied within a separate scholarly literature, but all three converge on the same underlying gatekeeping norm inside broadcasting pedagogy. Because one mechanism produces all three exclusions, this paper argues for a single integrated pedagogical response rather than three parallel ones.

3. The Curriculum of Neutrality: How Broadcasting Programs Manufacture the Normate Voice

3.1 Anglophone Broadcasting Pedagogy

The mechanism by which broadcasting programs produce the normate voice is not subtle; it is often stated as an explicit learning objective. Historical accounts trace the origin of the American "newscaster's voice" to the early twentieth-century Mid-Atlantic accent — a mannered blend of British and East Coast American speech that early radio performers adopted before broadcaster training evolved into today's more thoroughly geographically neutral style (Bell, 2023). What survived that history was not the specific accent but the underlying logic: broadcasters should sound as though they belong to no particular place. A voice coach in a major university broadcasting program is explicit that this deracination is functional as much as aesthetic, since on-air careers require geographic mobility that a locally marked voice would complicate; to be hired anywhere, in her account, a broadcaster has to sound as though they are from nowhere at all (Bell, 2023).

Even resources aimed at supporting broadcast trainees, rather than critiquing the norm, reveal how deeply the assumption of a single correct delivery style is embedded. A UK-focused broadcast journalism guide claims progress on this front, noting that UK broadcasting has moved substantially away from the received-pronunciation standard that dominated mid-twentieth-century BBC radio, and that a strong regional accent is no longer treated as an automatic barrier provided diction and projection remain sufficiently controlled (UK JournoHub, 2026). The concession is genuine, but the underlying structure is unchanged: accent is tolerated only insofar as it does not compromise a separately defined, universally applied standard of "control." The bar has moved from accent

elimination to accent management, but the assumption that there exists one correct threshold of vocal control that every speaker, regardless of starting point, must clear remains intact.

3.2 Putonghua Promotion and the Chinese Broadcasting Context

The Chinese case offers a structurally parallel but historically distinct version of the same pattern, and it is directly relevant to the training environment in which many 播音与主持艺术 (broadcasting and hosting arts) students are formed. Putonghua's promotion as a national standard was codified in the PRC government's 1956 definition of the standard as Beijing pronunciation, the Northern dialect group as its phonological base, and modern vernacular literature as its grammatical and lexical model (Tam, 2020). That standard now governs virtually the entire media landscape: Putonghua now dominates print, broadcast, and online media, the linguistic landscape, education at every level, government administration, and commerce (Saillard, 2004). What distinguishes broadcasting and hosting programs from ordinary Putonghua instruction is that they do not merely teach the standard; they certify it, using the national Putonghua Proficiency Test (普通话水平测试) as a professional gatekeeping instrument, and the CCTV host-competition analysis shows how thoroughly this certification logic pervades even entertainment programming, where the professional judge functions as the embodied authority of the state's linguistic regime, and even minimal pronunciation deviations are treated as threats to a candidate's legitimacy as a prospective national broadcaster (Wang, 2026).

This creates a specific pedagogical bind for bilingual hosting students, whose professional identity is built on moving fluidly between Putonghua and English (or another second language) for different audiences. Their training must simultaneously reward the flexibility that makes them valuable as bilingual communicators and penalize any trace of that flexibility bleeding into either language's "pure" delivery. Scholarship on Chinese dialect politics identifies the deeper logic sustaining this bind: it is not simply that Putonghua is promoted while dialects are neglected, but that the state pursues both goals — museum-style dialect preservation and Putonghua promotion — because both ultimately serve one underlying goal: establishing a stark hierarchy between a standardized national language and every regional variety beneath it (Tam, 2020). A bilingual hosting curriculum that trains for two "pure" targets, English and Putonghua, without ever validating the hybrid competence that bilingual hosting actually requires, imports this same hierarchy twice over rather than once.

3.3 What the Curriculum Selects For, and Against

Read together, the Anglophone and Chinese cases reveal that "neutral" broadcasting pedagogy is neutral only relative to whichever standard is locally dominant — American non-regional diction in one context, Beijing-based Putonghua in the other — and that both curricula perform the same three operations regardless of language: they define a single target register; they treat departure from that register as a defect requiring correction rather than a variation requiring accommodation; and they certify proximity to the target as a professional credential. None of the sources reviewed in this section frame disability as part of this same operation. That silence is itself informative, and it is the gap the next section addresses directly.

4. The Missing Half: Disability, Disfluency, and the Broadcasting Voice

4.1 Stuttering as a Constructed, Not Merely Biological, Disability

If regional accent has at least begun to receive scholarly and, in the UK case, some industry acknowledgment as a legitimate variation rather than a defect, disability-linked speech difference has received almost none. Joshua St. Pierre's foundational analysis of stuttering within disability studies begins from an observation that remains largely true more than a decade later: surprisingly little disability-studies scholarship has addressed communicative disabilities in their own right, even though "broken speech" is constructed jointly by the speaker and by the listener who judges them, and even though the stutterer's embodied vulnerability troubles the cultural fantasy that the body is merely an invisible medium through which communication passes (St. Pierre, 2012). This last point deserves particular emphasis for a broadcasting context specifically, because broadcasting pedagogy is built almost entirely on the fantasy St. Pierre names: that the trained voice becomes a transparent, effectively bodiless conduit for content, with the speaker's physical and neurological particularity ideally erased from the listener's attention altogether.

St. Pierre's analysis also identifies why stuttering occupies an unusually punishing position relative to other disabilities in professional contexts. Unlike disabilities more readily accommodated through structural adjustment, people who stutter are often expected to perform on the same terms as fluent speakers, such that disfluency

becomes legible not merely as a speech pattern but as a distinctly moral failure — read as evidence of insufficient will or self-discipline rather than as a neurological difference (St. Pierre, 2012). A broadcasting classroom that measures success by fluency counts and penalizes hesitation is, whether or not it intends to, operationalizing exactly this moral framing: a paused or repeated syllable reads not as a variation to be worked with but as a lapse in the speaker's control.

4.2 The Institutional Consequences of Treating Disfluency as Disqualifying

The consequences of this framing are not confined to the classroom. Contemporary research on stuttering in professional and institutional life documents how deeply the fluency norm is embedded in credibility judgments more broadly. A workplace-focused study of stuttering stigma finds that people who stutter face discrimination not only from the practical effects of disfluency but from co-workers' and managers' biases and assumptions about what disfluency signals, and that disabled workers overall remain significantly less likely to participate in the workforce than nondisabled peers because of persistently low rates of institutional accommodation (Seitz & Choo, 2022). Broadcasting is, if anything, an intensified version of this same institutional logic: it is a profession whose entire product is spoken credibility, delivered live, in real time, with essentially no room for the kind of accommodation — extra time, alternative formats, asynchronous delivery — that other professional fields have begun to normalize. Even in the technology sector, where disability accommodation has advanced furthest, speech-based systems continue to encode the fluency norm by default. Recent human-computer-interaction research on stuttering and speech AI observes that a "crip" theoretical perspective challenges the normative expectation that a "capable" speaker must be fluent, immediate, and efficient — an expectation that has historically produced captioning systems which strip out stuttered utterances by default, alongside therapy programs oriented toward correcting disfluency rather than accommodating it (Tang et al., 2026). If automatic captioning and speech recognition, systems built with none of broadcasting's historical baggage, still default to erasing disfluency, it should not be surprising that a broadcasting curriculum, built explicitly around a single vocal ideal, does the same thing more deliberately.

4.3 Locating the Shared Mechanism

The purpose of drawing these two literatures together is not to claim that a regional accent and a stutter are the same kind of difference, which they plainly are not. It is to show that broadcasting pedagogy sorts both through the same gatekeeping mechanism: a single, historically contingent norm, treated as though it were a neutral technical requirement rather than a constructed and exclusionary standard. Where standard language ideology names the mechanism when it operates on region, class, and ethnicity, and raciolinguistics names it when it operates through race, disability studies' normate concept names the same mechanism when it operates through embodiment and neurology. Figure 2, presented in Section 2, is the paper's attempt to hold all three operations in a single frame rather than three separate ones — which is the analytic move the rest of this paper builds on.

This convergence is not merely structural; the two literatures make almost identical moves at the level of argument, which is further evidence that they are describing one mechanism rather than two coincidentally similar ones. Flores and Rosa's critique of "appropriateness" rejects the premise that a minoritized student can simply assimilate their way out of linguistic discrimination, because the listener's racialized perception of the speech, not the speech itself, is doing the discriminating (Flores & Rosa, 2015). St. Pierre's account of stuttering makes the same move for disability: "broken speech" is not a property that resides in the stutterer's mouth; it is a joint production between a speaker and a listener who has already decided what fluent speech should sound like (St. Pierre, 2012). Both arguments displace the site of the problem from the marked speaker to the norm the listener is applying — which is precisely why neither problem can be solved by asking the individual student to simply try harder, whether the trying takes the form of accent-neutralization drills or fluency-shaping exercises. A pedagogy that has not absorbed this shared insight will keep offering the same remedy — more correction, more practice, more suppression of the marked feature — to two populations of students whose actual need is the opposite: recognition that the norm itself, not their speech, is where the adjustment belongs.

5. Toward an Inclusive Pedagogy: Applying Universal Design for Learning to Vocal Training

5.1 Why Universal Design for Learning Is the Right Framework

If the problem is a single-target curriculum that filters for one narrow vocal profile, the most theoretically coherent response is not to add a specialized accommodation track alongside the existing curriculum, but to redesign the

curriculum's default so that variation is planned for rather than retrofitted. This is precisely the logic of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), an instructional framework built on three core principles — multiple means of engagement, multiple means of representation, and multiple means of action and expression — applied from the outset of course design so that specialized accommodations need not be retrofitted after the fact (Dalton et al., 2019). A systematic review of UDL's effectiveness across educational settings finds that the framework plays an important role in promoting the social inclusion of all students, particularly students with disabilities, while also strengthening teacher-student interaction and instructional design more broadly (Almeqdad et al., 2023) — a dual benefit (helping disabled students without disadvantaging others) that is exactly the outcome broadcasting pedagogy would need if it is to become inclusive without becoming diluted.

It is worth being precise about what UDL is not, because broadcasting educators might reasonably worry that "inclusive" pedagogy means lowering professional standards. UDL explicitly rejects that framing. As one overview of its application in inclusive education puts it, UDL does not replace the need for individual accommodations and remains aspirational rather than a finished solution, since real-world learners sometimes carry competing access needs that call for creative, collaborative responses rather than one fixed design (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2026). Applied to broadcasting, this means the goal is not to abandon standards of clarity, credibility, and audience comprehension — the legitimate professional core of broadcasting training — but to stop conflating those standards with a single accent, a single pace, and a single fluency profile.

5.2 What This Looks Like in Practice: Four Curricular Shifts

Translating UDL's three principles into broadcasting-specific practice suggests four concrete shifts, each addressed to a different point of failure identified in Sections 3 and 4.

From accent elimination to intelligibility assessment. Following the UK broadcast journalism guidance's own concession, assessment rubrics can be rewritten to measure whether a listener unfamiliar with the speaker can follow their meaning, rather than whether the speaker's accent has been eliminated. This does not mean abandoning diction training; it means diction training is justified by its contribution to comprehension, not by its contribution to regional erasure.

From fluency counts to communicative effectiveness. For students with stuttering or other disfluencies, rubrics built around raw fluency counts should be replaced with rubrics that assess whether the communicative content lands — whether the story is told clearly, whether the interview question is understood, whether the audience retains the key fact — independent of whether delivery includes disfluent moments. Speech-language pathology itself already draws this distinction: accent modification is understood within the field not as a means of suppressing an accent entirely or severing a speaker from their cultural-linguistic background, but as a way of improving intelligibility for unfamiliar listeners ("Accent Reduction," n.d.); broadcasting pedagogy can adopt the same intelligibility-first logic for disfluency that speech pathology already applies to accent.

From single delivery format to multiple accepted formats. UDL's principle of multiple means of representation and expression translates naturally into format plurality: not every broadcasting assessment needs to be live, real-time, and unedited. Recorded packages, captioned segments, and self-paced formats are not lesser substitutes for "real" broadcasting; they are formats the industry itself already uses extensively, and building them into assessment normalizes rather than marginalizes the students who benefit most from them.

From medical-model accommodation to structural redesign. Currently, a student with a stutter who enters a broadcasting program is typically referred outward, to a speech-language pathologist or a disability office, while the core curriculum remains unchanged. A UDL-informed redesign folds disability consideration into the curriculum's initial design rather than treating it as an external add-on triggered by disclosure — which matters enormously given how much documented reluctance exists around disclosure in professional communication fields (a point developed further in Section 6).

Each of these four shifts requires a corresponding change in how instructors are trained to assess student work, since a rubric that still privately rewards accent neutrality will undo a syllabus that officially disclaims it. Concretely, this means separating what has historically been bundled into a single "delivery" score into at least two distinguishable components: an intelligibility component, scored against whether a naive listener can follow the content, and a craft component, scored against pacing, structure, and use of the microphone or camera, neither of

which requires accent or fluency conformity to execute well. Disaggregating the rubric in this way does not soften the evaluation; if anything it sharpens it, because instructors are forced to specify exactly what a "good" delivery accomplishes rather than relying on an unexamined sense that a delivery simply "sounds professional," a phrase that, as Sections 3 and 4 have shown, tends to smuggle the normate voice back in under a different name.

Figure 3 presents these four shifts as a direct comparison against current practice, and Figure 4 synthesizes them into a single proposed model, organized as three sequential layers of commitment that build outward from the speaker's own voice as the starting point of instruction rather than the deviation to be corrected.

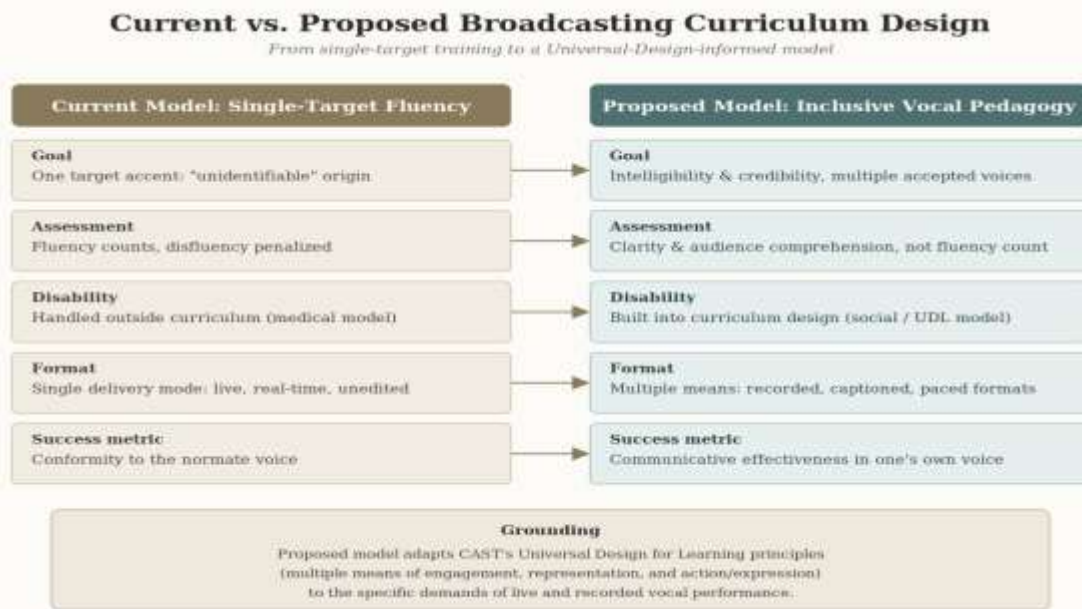


Figure 3. Current versus proposed broadcasting curriculum design. The proposed model does not abandon professional standards; it relocates them from accent conformity to communicative effectiveness, following Universal Design for Learning's core structure of multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression.

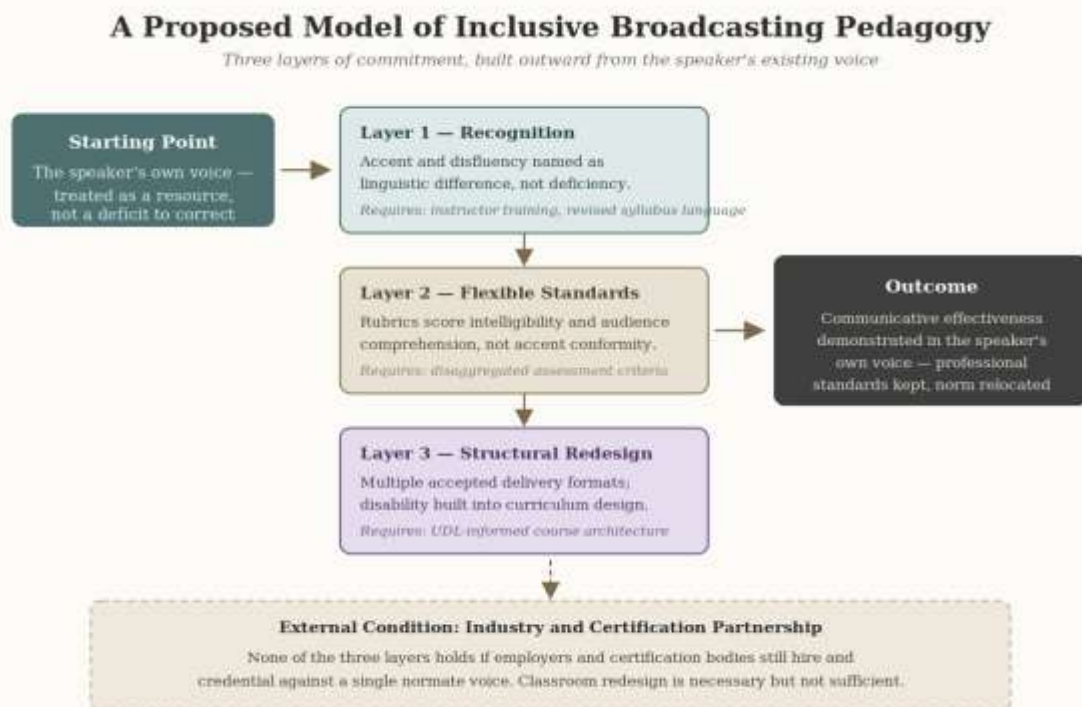


Figure 4. A proposed model of inclusive broadcasting pedagogy. The speaker's own voice enters as a resource rather than a deficit, and three layers — recognition, flexible standards, and structural redesign — build from it toward demonstrated communicative effectiveness. The dashed band indicates the external condition on which all three layers depend: without corresponding change in industry hiring and certification criteria, classroom redesign alone cannot deliver the outcome.

6. Institutional Implications: Curriculum Is Not Enough Without Industry Change

6.1 The Newsroom as the Destination Curriculum Is Training Toward

A redesigned curriculum cannot succeed in isolation if the profession it trains students for still hires against the old normate standard. This is not a hypothetical concern; it is the documented, current state of newsroom hiring and retention for disabled journalists. Research conducted through a Reuters Institute fellowship on disability inclusion in Indian and international newsrooms finds that disabled journalists face persistent uncertainty about which news outlets are genuinely open to hiring them, given the near-total absence of advertised opportunities seeking people with diverse abilities, and that many journalists remain reluctant to disclose a disability on their resume at all, for fear of the professional consequences of doing so (Lin, 2026). That same body of research draws the connection between hiring and retention explicitly, arguing that the underlying newsroom environment and workplace culture must change, not merely the raw number of disabled people hired, if progress toward inclusion is to be sustained rather than symbolic (Lin, 2026). A broadcasting program that redesigns its classroom but sends graduates into newsrooms still organized around the single-fluency norm is training students for a profession that does not yet exist.

6.2 Evidence That Format Innovation Is Already Commercially Viable

The good news for this paper's argument is that industry practice has not stood entirely still, and existing pilots demonstrate that inclusive formats are not merely aspirational but already operating at scale in public broadcasting. Reporting from the Reuters Institute on accessible news formats documents that public broadcasters in Germany and Austria now offer daily television news written in plain language and delivered more slowly, integrated into mainstream news operations rather than treated as a marginal or optional offering, while a Norwegian non-profit channel, TV Bra, employs reporters with learning disabilities and autism to produce a weekly news program covering everything from local stories to national politics (Kelly, 2026). These are not accent- or disfluency-specific interventions, but they establish the more general and directly relevant point: format plurality in professional broadcasting is achievable without abandoning journalistic seriousness, and audiences that were previously excluded from news access are being actively served rather than merely tolerated by these models.

Parallel guidance aimed directly at working journalists reinforces that accessible practice is increasingly treated as core professional competence rather than specialized add-on. A UNESCO-produced manual for the media industry frames disability-inclusive practice as spanning both content and workplace, offering practical recommendations for building an inclusive media workplace alongside guidance on making operational and management practices more inclusive for media professionals who themselves have disabilities (UNESCO, 2022). If national and international broadcasting institutions are producing this guidance for working professionals, broadcasting education has a corresponding obligation — and a corresponding opportunity — to prepare students for exactly this version of the industry rather than the narrower one their training currently assumes.

6.3 A Note on the Chinese Context Specifically

Because the Putonghua standard is administered through a formal national certification (普通话水平测试) rather than through the more diffuse, employer-by-employer standard operating in Anglophone broadcasting, structural change in the Chinese context arguably has a clearer institutional lever available to it: certification criteria themselves. Where the CCTV competition study documents pronunciation correction functioning as an act of state linguistic authority, reaffirming that "correct" Putonghua pronunciation is both normatively prescribed and institutionally policed (Wang, 2026), any serious movement toward inclusive Chinese broadcasting pedagogy would eventually need to engage this certification apparatus directly, rather than treating classroom-level curriculum reform as sufficient on its own. That engagement lies beyond this paper's scope, but naming it matters: a purely classroom-level intervention, however well designed, cannot fully resolve a gatekeeping structure that is partly external to the classroom.

There is, however, a more immediately available lever inside the Chinese context specifically: the bilingual hosting curriculum's own dual mandate. Because programs training students in 双语主持 (bilingual hosting) already certify

competence in two languages rather than one, they have an existing institutional precedent for treating linguistic range as a professional asset rather than a liability — the opposite of the single-target logic this paper has critiqued in Sections 3 and 4. Extending that same logic inward, so that regional Putonghua variation and disability-linked speech difference are treated with the same professional respect currently extended to bilingual competence, would not require inventing a new institutional value from nothing; it would require applying a value the bilingual hosting curriculum already holds more consistently across the full range of vocal difference its students bring into the classroom.

7. Conclusion

This paper has argued that broadcasting and hosting pedagogy, in both Anglophone and Chinese contexts, is organized around a single vocal ideal — variously called the "newscaster's voice" or standard Putonghua pronunciation — that functions as Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's "normate": an unmarked position that was never actually neutral, only dominant enough to appear so. Standard language ideology and raciolinguistic theory explain how this norm operates against regional accent and race; disability studies, and Joshua St. Pierre's analysis of stuttering specifically, explain how the identical mechanism operates against disability-linked speech difference, often through the same instruments — fluency counts, diction benchmarks, live-and-unedited assessment formats — that broadcasting programs already use as a matter of routine. Because these literatures have developed largely without reference to one another, broadcasting pedagogy has had no integrated theoretical resource for recognizing that its accent policy and its disability policy are, underneath their different vocabularies, the same policy.

Universal Design for Learning offers a workable path out of this bind, not because it lowers professional standards but because it relocates them: from conformity to a single vocal profile toward demonstrated communicative effectiveness, assessed through multiple accepted formats rather than one. The four models developed in this paper — the gatekeeping funnel, the three-axis map of marginalization, the comparative curriculum design, and the proposed layered model of inclusive pedagogy — are offered as a starting theoretical scaffold, not a finished implementation plan. As Section 6 makes clear, classroom redesign alone cannot complete this work; it requires a broadcasting industry, and in the Chinese context a certification system, willing to hire and credential the wider range of voices that an inclusive curriculum would finally be permitted to train. The question this paper's title poses — whose voice counts as standard — has, at present, a narrow and largely unexamined answer. Broadcasting education is one of the few institutions positioned to widen it.

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