

Research on Approaches to Telling China's Story to Foreign from Perspective of International Communication

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Abstract: *In the context of globalisation, with the continuous development of culture, more and more countries have begun to focus on foreign exchanges in the hope of improving their cultural "soft power". Telling Chinese stories to the world is an effective way to promote Chinese civilisation. This article mainly takes the value implication of telling Chinese stories to the outside world, the dilemma of telling Chinese stories to the outside world, and the improvement path of telling Chinese stories to the outside world as the three entry points to explore how to tell Chinese stories to the outside world and disseminate Chinese culture amidst all the dilemmas in the field of international communication, so as to realise the value of creating a good international public opinion environment, enhancing the influence of Chinese culture, and setting up a truthful, three-dimensional, and comprehensive image of China.*

Keywords: *Chinese stories; Chinese culture; International communication; Polyphonic communication; Empathic communication; Transcultural communication*

1. Introduction

Since the new era, the rise of China has been a great feat in human history, and it has the most wonderful Chinese stories in the world. However, some countries in the West have taken the initiative to build cultural imperialism and cultural hegemony on a global scale, which has resulted in the fact that many wonderful Chinese stories have not yet been transformed into cultural advantages in international communication. Therefore, it is of great significance to clarify the value and significance of telling China's stories to the outside world, analyse the problems in the process of telling China's stories to the outside world, and study feasible countermeasures in order to strengthen China's international cultural influence and accelerate the pace of China's excellent culture going out.

2. The value implications of telling China's stories to foreign countries

Telling China's story well to the outside world has a lot of significance, and this paragraph mainly discusses the significance from three perspectives: international public opinion environment, international cultural influence and national image.

2.1. Helping to create a favourable environment for international public opinion

In his book *The Order of Discourse*, Foucault put forward the idea that "discourse is power". In today's world, most of the major events in the world are controlled by the Western countries, and the coverage of these events is mostly dominated by the Western mainstream media. In recent years, along with the rapid development of China's economy and the continuous enhancement of its comprehensive national power, China's discourse in the international arena has been greatly enhanced^[1], however, the weak position of our country in the international discourse system has not fundamentally changed, and the power of international discourse and the right of discourse are still firmly grasped by the Western mainstream media, whose reports misinterpreted China, and "shrugged off" China, which has resulted in China's weak position in the international discourse system. Overall, it seems that the international public opinion environment is still unfavourable to China. Under the international public opinion environment in which the West continues to smear China and distort the facts, and in the face of the confusion created by those who have the intention to create confusion in the international public opinion

environment, China should turn passivity into initiative, and have the consciousness of telling China's story well to the outside world, and actively speak out and spread China's voice on international public opinion platforms, which is conducive to breaking China's situation of "having the reason but not being able to say it" and "having the words but not being able to speak it", and creating a favourable environment for international public opinion.

2.2. Helping to enhance the international influence of Chinese culture

China is a charismatic country with rich culture and symbols. Chinese culture is profound and has a long history, and is a gem in the history of human civilisation, and the vitality, creativity and cohesion of the Chinese nation is the soul of culture. However, most international audiences do not have a comprehensive enough understanding of Chinese outstanding culture. According to a survey by Newsweek, Europeans and Americans are most familiar with the symbols of Kung Fu, Confucius, the Great Wall of Beijing, the Terracotta Warriors, Hua Mulan, the Giant Panda and the Chinese language and so on, but this is still just the tip of the iceberg of Chinese culture. In this case, we should actively tell the Chinese story to the outside world, and promote Chinese culture "going out" to enhance the influence of Chinese culture.

In 2020, for example, in the face of the new normal of the epidemic seriously affecting people's travel, under the guidance of the Ministry of Culture, the cultural teams of 114 embassies and consulates, 43 Chinese cultural centres, and 24 travel agencies in foreign countries jointly held an online activity called "Cloud Travelling to China" through the Internet and various social media outside the country, which included the exhibition of photographs and videos of "Cloud Travelling to China", the exhibition of propaganda films and songs of "China's Fight Against Epidemic", and so on, allowing people all over the world to enjoy the beauty of China without leaving their homes. The online campaign, which included a photo and video exhibition of "Cloud Travelling to China", an exhibition of propaganda films and songs on China's fight against the epidemic, and online Chinese language and taijiquan lessons, allowed people from all over the world to enjoy the beautiful scenery of China and the flavour of Chinese culture without leaving their homes, and it has achieved very good results. Nowadays, we also need to move forward in the direction of digging deeper and spreading the excellent Chinese culture, actively telling the Chinese culture to the outside world, letting the world enjoy the elegance of Chinese culture, and enhancing the international influence of Chinese culture.

2.3. Contribute to the creation of a true, three-dimensional and comprehensive image of the country

The concept of "country image" was first proposed by the American economist Boulding, who argued that "the interconnections between a country and the international relations in which it operates are shaped by a series of inputs and outputs". Although this definition is relatively brief, in the Western context it captures the most basic meaning of the word "image", that is, the reflection, idea or concept that people form in their minds. China's stories cover a wide range of fields, including politics, economics and culture. Telling these Chinese stories well to the outside world can help shape a true, three-dimensional and comprehensive image of China.

For example, on 16 April 2021, 15 wild Asian elephants originally inhabiting Xishuangbanna, Yunnan Province, suddenly began migrating north.^[2] This attracted worldwide attention. The "travelling" of these 15 elephants in Yunnan triggered a great deal of attention from all sectors of society, with domestic media launching a large number of related reports in a timely manner. Western mainstream media have also tracked the report, the relevant topics have triggered a wide range of discussions around the world. According to incomplete statistics, at that time, more than 500,000 foreign netizens had become "elephant chasers".

This incident can be said to be a vivid display of a real, three-dimensional and comprehensive image of China. According to the British "Guardian", the United States, CNN and other Western mainstream media reports: the Chinese government set up an emergency rescue team, the use of drones, infrared cameras to track the movement of elephants, and quickly evacuate the local people, to deal with the seemingly cute but dangerous elephant migration, to ensure the safety of their homes. Because of this, foreign netizens have come to know more about China. The image of China's cities, the attitude of the Chinese people towards animal protection, and the work of the Chinese government in protecting animals, all these are simple and natural manifestations of the fact that China is a civilised, friendly, progressive, strong and respectable country. Many foreign netizens also expressed their gratitude to the Chinese government and people from the bottom of their hearts. This wild elephant migration event has achieved

good international communication effects and shaped a real, three-dimensional and comprehensive China to the outside world.

3. The dilemma of telling China's story externally

It is undeniable that while there are many benefits to telling China's story well to the outside world, there are also many difficulties in the process. If you want to tell China's story well, you need to analyse yourself and recognise your own shortcomings before you can make progress. This paragraph analyses the main difficulties in terms of the Subject of dissemination, the form of dissemination and the content of dissemination.

3.1. Subject of dissemination: a single subject of discourse dissemination

China's international communication is still dominated by official mainstream media, which is too homogeneous and is a form of self-modelling. Generally speaking, there are two dimensions in international communication: one is self-modelling, that is, actively shaping and disseminating one's own image in front of foreign audiences; and the other is other-modelling, that is, communicating with the help of the "other". According to the "cause-based theory", since the communicator's communication behaviour inevitably carries the intention of persuasion, the audience will explore their own intention in the communication, thus giving rise to "otherness". The theory of "otherness" states that "a third person or intermediary who is unrelated to or distant from one's own interests is most likely to be recognised by the audience".^[3]

From the perspective of international communication, the "other" communication of China's image can be transformed from a single "self-representation" to an "other narrative", The "others" share their own stories about China from a neutral standpoint, making it easier for foreign audiences to understand and accept, and playing a positive role in communication.

This shows that if we want to break the dilemma of telling China's story to the outside world, from this we can see that if we want to break the dilemma of telling China's story to the outside world, we should avoid the communication dilemma of self-entertainment and self-talking in the propaganda of traditional media with the official background, and learn to achieve good communication effects by borrowing mouths to speak and borrowing barrels to convey voices. With the emergence of emerging media, although multinational enterprises, civil society, digital platforms and vegetarian netizens have begun to move towards the international communication arena, these are only a very small number, and because they are unofficial communication subjects, they have not yet been taken seriously, and their potential for development has not yet been tapped in depth. At present, China's foreign communication is still dominated by the official mainstream media, with a single communication subject and average communication effects.

3.2. Forms of dissemination: lack of appropriate discourse modalities

On the one hand, the current discourse of China's international communication is based on the logical reasoning mode, which is mainly deductive, i.e., "reasoning first, then presenting the facts". Such a didactic discourse is difficult to be accepted by foreign audiences, and may even stimulate their rebelliousness.

On the other hand, China's narrative logic is accustomed to adopting grand narratives, especially some mainstream media, which are used to constructing mainstream values in the way of grand narratives, and the subjects of China's stories are often related to heroes and heroines, the state system, and grandiose scenes. Liotta, a famous French postmodernist writer, believes that grand narratives are characterised by "great protagonists, thrilling characters, magnificent voyages, and grandiose goals". He emphasises that in the context of postmodernism, grand narratives have declined and subtle narratives have risen. His point of view is debatable, but it does reflect that grand narratives are being challenged in the Internet era, which is characterised by postmodernism. The communication mode dominated by "grand narratives" is facing difficulties in the new media environment.

3.3. Content of dissemination: limited acceptance due to strong cultural conflicts

Telling China's story abroad is not only a cross-linguistic communication, but also a cross-cultural one, and the complexity and diversity of cultural forms is another major dilemma. Especially in

international communication, the audience is a special group of people who are interested in foreign politics, society and culture and have the need for in-depth understanding, but sometimes, due to the differences in political concepts, social experience and cultural accumulation, they cannot understand the information and viewpoints conveyed by the video, and may even have cognitive bias and be repulsed by the communicated cultural content, which makes the communication unable to achieve the expected results. The effect of dissemination will not be as expected.

For example, the main audience of the Internet celebrity "Li Ziqi" is Chinese and foreign netizens who aspire to an idyllic pastoral life and are eager to get away from the hustle and bustle of the city, but some of the overseas audience, who have long been subjected to propaganda by the Western media, have from time to time questioned that his videos are "fake", which hides the true face of the Chinese countryside. Some domestic viewers even think, based on the tendency of Internet nationalism, that the videos reproduce old-time farming life, but instead spread a backward image of China to the outside world, which is a negative cultural export. There is also an Internet celebrity called "My name is Jerry Guo", who shows a lot of Chinese and Western ideas and habits in his cross-cultural short films, but due to the political and cultural differences and conflicts between the East and the West, some of the videos have been criticised and discredited by both Chinese and foreign audiences. Limited acceptance due to cultural conflicts is another major dilemma to be overcome in telling China's story to the outside world.

4. The Path to Enhancement of Telling China's Stories Externally

Based on the perspective of international communication, this paragraph proposes solutions to the above mentioned problems arising from the dissemination of China's stories to foreign countries, and introduces some highly effective communication methods in international communication. A common problem in the foreign communication of Chinese stories is the single subject of communication, then there is a polyphonic communication against the single subject of communication. Also, in foreign reporting, China often uses the expression "empathy". However, if this expression is actually used in international communication, it will make the audience feel a strong sense of empathy, thus triggering resonance, which will have a positive communication effect. Empathic communication can be used to address the problem of inappropriate discourse styles that lead to unreceptive audiences and ineffective communication. There is also the culture clash caused by the big difference in culture. This kind of cultural conflict mainly manifests itself as a cultural conflict caused by the great difference in values between China and the West. To solve this problem, the main method used is transcultural communication.

4.1. Polyphonic communication: the subject of communication should be diversified

Chinese scholar Shi Anbin puts forward the "polyphonic communication", in which local media and domestic and foreign publics should be fully mobilised in the practice of foreign communication, giving full play to the advantages of multi-party participation. In the context of the new era, telling China's story to the outside world can no longer be a single mainstream media communication, but a multi-party body consisting of the government, mainstream media, professional media and platform media, etc., which is no longer overly concerned about the mainstream media's self-modelling, and learning to use other bodies to do other modelling is the key. Only in this way can the advantages of international communication be brought into full play.

For example, the "reaction video fever" that has arisen on social media and short video platforms in recent years further shows us the great potential of communication brought about by otherness. Foreign video bloggers such as "British Jack" from the UK and "Korean Dongdong" from South Korea, who often have their own accounts on different platforms, watch videos from China as a kind of cross-cultural other and make real-time reactions along with the videos. The reaction videos produced by these "foreign netizens" have been widely discussed abroad and have attracted the interest of many foreign viewers in China.

For example, when telling the Chinese story of poverty alleviation, foreign viewers may not be able to understand the historical achievements of poverty alleviation if they are simply told about them. Therefore, CCTV CGTN launched a short film called "There's a foreign commissioner for poverty alleviation in the village."^[4] which, by means of "foreign mouths" and "foreign eyes", enabled foreign media to have an in-depth understanding of the most characteristic and typical poverty-alleviation projects in China, and to show China's poverty-alleviation achievements through different poverty-alleviation stories in China, which has gained a good international response. From this, we can see that continuously expanding the scope of the main body of international communication and forming a

"polyphonic communication" with multiple values, diversity and perspectives are conducive to effectively improving the efficiency of international communication and better telling China's story to the outside world.

4.2. Empathic communication: discourse expression should be grounded in the local context

Empathic communication refers to the process by which common or similar human emotions and sentiments are formed and spread and diffused in human societies. This kind of communication that stimulates empathy helps audiences of different races and cultural backgrounds to bridge cultural divides caused by political, social and historical traditions on the basis of sharing basic human emotions. Most obviously, empathy has been proven to deepen the brain's memory and change people's attitudes and behaviours by influencing long-term memory. In the past, China's international communication was mostly grandiose, propaganda-heavy and didactic, making it difficult for overseas audiences to empathise with it, and no longer adapting to the international communication landscape in the new media era. It is obvious that empathic communication can avoid the shortcomings of the past didactic discourse, thus enhancing the effectiveness of international communication.

So how do you achieve empathic communication? The answer is to communicate through the subtle narratives of the common people. International communication is still essentially the communication of ordinary individuals with common emotions, therefore, the general public is an important cross-cultural differences in the intersection, from the civilian, living, nuanced, interactive perspective into the exploration of cultural intersection perspective, to intuitive, superficial way of narrating the content of the communication, can effectively avoid thinking and language differences caused by the difficulty of receiving video information. For example, nowadays, many emerging media, especially the self media on the fire to a large number of short videos abroad, mostly from the folk, choose a small perspective, small stories, small characters, short videos of many netroots, Such as Sichuan's Li Ziqi, Guangxi's Kangzai Farmer, Yunnan's Baoshan's Dianxi Xiaoge and so on, make use of very different styles of countryside sounds, folklore, countryside scenery and other elements, and then through the way of the small characters "show", make the rich Chinese landmark cultural elements and localised local characteristics more and more prominent, so that domestic and foreign audiences are immersed in and even intoxicated by the enjoyment of the beauty of China's culture and art.

In the process of communication, the Chinese media should give full consideration to diversified forms of communication, change the previous propagandistic and didactic mode of international communication, pay attention to grasping the relationship between grand narratives and subtle narratives, avoid the inertia of focusing on grand narratives, start from the perspective of the ordinary people, and tell the story of China in subtle narratives. In the process of communication, we should pay attention to grasping the public's emotional response and adopt targeted emotional strategies, so as to achieve the success of telling China's stories abroad.

4.3. Transcultural communication: overcoming cultural discounts in communication content

Professor Shi Anbin of Tsinghua University in China has proposed the concept of "transcultural communication", which is to promote equal exchanges and mutual learning among different cultures on the basis of the establishment of a "community of human destiny". This is a kind of "transcultural communication". Compared with "intercultural communication", it is gentler and less aggressive, and is better able to demonstrate equal exchange and mutual appreciation among different cultures. It aspires to equal communication rather than the annexation of one culture by another. The theory of transcultural communication stresses full understanding of and respect for the target audience, and targeted "transformation" of cultural content and communication modes and other communication dimensions, in an attempt to mingle, integrate, dialogue and interact with local cultures, and to turn cultural barriers and discounts into cultural identities.

In telling China's stories abroad, it is important to respect the cultural differences and value differences of audiences from different cultures, look for points of cultural convergence and commonality, and reduce cultural discounts. For example, each episode of China's online variety show "Informal Talks" raises a topic of common concern among the world's youth, and representatives from various countries discuss it in the form of debates, thus arriving at a more diversified understanding. Chinese stories can learn from its topic selection strategy, and through the commonality of its content, it can bring its foreign audience closer to its psychological distance. For example, the mascot of the "2022" Beijing Winter Olympic Games, "Bing Dun Dun", whose English name was originally "Bing Dun Dun", due to the

fact that European and American audiences could easily turn the Chinese pinyin for "Dun" into the word "Dan", making it difficult to accurately express its meaning, so the English name of "Bing Dun Dun" was changed to "Bing Dwen Dwen". This not only has the characteristics of Chinese pronunciation, but also more in line with the phonological rules of Europe and the United States, which can effectively reduce the communication barriers caused by language and cultural differences, and at the same time, it is also a kind of respect and tolerance for other cultures, which is more conducive to promoting the spread of the giant panda as a symbol of Chinese culture in the world.

In order to tell a good Chinese story, we need to strengthen cultural transformation, look for the commonalities between Chinese and overseas cultures, express cultural individuality in the cultural commonalities, and be firm in cultural self-confidence, create works with distinctive national characteristics, and create an "oriental mirror image" of China with the help of cultural symbols with strong local characteristics, so as to better promote Chinese culture to the world.

5. Conclusions

Telling China's story well to the outside world is of great value, and is of great significance in creating a favourable international public opinion environment, allowing the world to change its cognitive bias towards China; enhancing the influence of Chinese culture, allowing the world to appreciate the beauty of Chinese culture; and setting up a true, three-dimensional and comprehensive image of China, so that the world can better understand China, and so on.

When facing the problem of a single subject of discourse dissemination in telling China's story to the outside world, it is necessary to carry out polyphonic dissemination to promote the concerted participation of multiple subjects in dissemination and to expand the dissemination effect. When confronted with the problem of inappropriate modes of communication discourse. Empathy dissemination is needed to stimulate common human emotions and convey the universal human values in the Chinese story. When faced with the problem of poor communication effects due to the conflict of cultural contents, it is necessary to carry out transcultural communication to find cultural commonalities and reduce cultural discounts, so as to avoid cultural differences that bring bad experiences to the communication between the transmitter and the receiver.

Solving these communication dilemmas through the above measures will further advance the pace of telling China's story to the outside world, and will be conducive to increasing the influence of Chinese culture in international communication and enhancing the effectiveness of international communication.

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