

Competency Reconstruction of Chinese Characteristic Moderators in the Context of International Communication

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Abstract: *In international communication, having a distinct "Chinese character" indicates a presenter's success. This paper aims to reconfigure the competencies of facilitators with Chinese characteristics. Three dimensions are suggested, encompassing transitions from "domestic" to "foreign," from "stage" to "platform," and from "specialized" to "versatile." These dimensions, namely "identifying one's own value coordinates, establishing a multidimensional image of hosting, and cultivating unique core competencies," will be thoroughly discussed. The objective is to provide facilitators with insights into cultural communication strategies and develop international communication capacities.*

Keywords: *moderator; international communication; Chinese characteristics; empathic communication*

1. Introduction

The report of the 20th Party Congress highlighted the need to enhance the spreading power and influence of Chinese civilization. This involves adhering to the Chinese cultural stance and refining Chinese civilization's spiritual symbols and cultural essence. The construction of Chinese discourse and narrative system should be accelerated, aiming to tell China's story, spread China's voice, and present a credible, lovely, and respectable image of China. Moreover, capacity-building for international communication should be strengthened to enhance the effectiveness of international communication further. This includes forming an international discourse power that aligns with China's comprehensive national power and international status, as well as the deepening of civilizational exchanges and mutual understanding. Promoting Chinese culture to the world is also a key objective.

In the construction of the Chinese discourse and Chinese narrative system, moderators play a crucial role. Identifying one's own value coordinates, establishing a multi-dimensional hosting image, and cultivating unique core competencies are essential in telling China's story and spreading China's voice. These aspects have become paramount in reconstructing the competencies of hosts within the context of international communications.

2. From "Domestic" to "Foreign": Finding one's own value coordinates

2.1. The Narrator of China's Story

In international communication, being a proficient narrator of China's stories significantly reflects a host's values. Hosts should enhance their Chinese cultural literacy as a starting point to achieve this. The rich traditional Chinese culture is the "root" and "soul" of the Chinese nation, and hosts must interpret and convey its essence in a way that resonates with the current spirit of the times. This requires inheriting and carrying forward traditional culture and adapting it to modern contexts. For example, in the "Chinese Poetry Conference," Dong Qing used ancient poems to interpret traditional Chinese culture while incorporating modern individuals' spiritual pursuits and appreciation for beauty. Hosts should strive for a "belly filled with poetry from Hua," seeking profound understanding rather than relying on superficial appearances or short-term knowledge acquisition. Achieving such depth and charm requires long-term dedication and consistent effort.

Furthermore, facilitators need to select high-quality cultural resources. In Chinese Confucianism,

the cultural spirit of "putting people first" prevails, and hosts should be guided by presenting Chinese cultural resources that the audience will appreciate. They should explore cultural resources that intertwine with international cultures and reflect the realities of the audience's modern social life. For instance, Tang Xianzu's opera "The Peony Pavilion" and Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" depict people's aspirations for beautiful love. By emphasizing the commonalities between these two classics, hosts can convey cultural characteristics that facilitate cultural exchanges and mutual understanding between countries.

Finally, hosts should master the art of narrating in a way that balances "grand narratives" and "small narratives" and achieves a sense of "civilianization." For example, in the documentary series "Challenges Facing China" produced by Shanghai Radio and Television, host Robert Kuhn immersed himself in all aspects of the program's production, approaching it from the perspective of an ordinary person. By combining the story of China's fight against poverty and showcasing the lives of its people, he facilitated the international dissemination of China's story. This approach grounded the narrative in relatable experiences while highlighting the broader impact and significance of the topic.

2.2. Communicators of the national image

Building trustworthiness, lovability, and respectability are the three fundamental dimensions for constructing China's national image. China's featured hosts should strive to become ambassadors of the country's image.

First, presenters need to adapt to low-context communication. American anthropologist Edward Hall introduced the concept of "context" in 1976. He categorized contexts into low and high contexts and cultures into low and high context cultures. In low-context cultures, direct expression is often expected, whereas, in high-context cultures, people are encouraged to speak politely and avoid bluntness. Chinese culture is a high-context culture with nuanced semantics and numerous contextual cues. This results from the introspection and modesty deeply embedded in Chinese culture for thousands of years. Therefore, in disseminating the national image, hosts should consider the contextual culture of the audience in different countries. They should utilize language and voice generally accepted by the audience, catering to their differentiated and personalized needs to establish trust with the audience.

Secondly, presenters should embrace the use of "cute communication." In his book "Moe Power: A Theory of Cute Communication," scholar Zhao Xinli proposes that "Cute communication is a form of communication that employs cute messages." Chinese characteristic hosts effectively employ cute communication to bridge the gap between themselves and the audience. This helps eliminate perceived differences and creates a sense of camaraderie between hosts and audience members. By utilizing the audience's preferred methods of "talking" and "chatting," hosts can provide a relaxing and enjoyable audio-visual experience. For example, CCTV host Wang Bing Bing exemplifies a youthful, lively, and lovely host image, and her infectious smile creates a sense of warmth and familiarity, making audiences feel as if they have a "good friend" by their side.

Lastly, facilitators should engage in "dialogical communication." Hosts should communicate with the audience in an egalitarian and respectful manner, continuously demonstrating their humanistic care. They should strive to broadcast information correctly while avoiding a sense of superiority. The sense of affinity and equality in communication serves as the foundation for gaining the respect and love of the audience.

2.3. A bridge-builder for World Civilization

"Civilizations are enriched by exchanges, and civilizations are enriched by mutual understanding." Moderators with Chinese characteristics should aspire to be bridge-builders for world civilization.

An excellent example of this role is seen at the opening ceremony of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, where thousands of red ribbons were transformed into "Chinese knots" on snowflakes. The host provided a cultural interpretation, emphasizing that these Chinese knots symbolize auspiciousness and unity. This craft is infused with profound Chinese philosophical ideas, where each ribbon can exist as an individual knot, showcasing its own unique beauty. Furthermore, many different ribbons can be woven together masterfully, just like building a community of human destiny, requiring collaboration among nations for a harmonious and amicable family of nations. This speech beautifully exemplifies the cultural appeal of Chinese facilitators as "bridge-builders" for the world's civilizations.

In the process of global civilization exchanges and the dissemination of Chinese culture, moderators should prioritize cultural adaptation and continuously explore the international value of Chinese culture within the realm of popular culture. As the Chinese saying goes, "It is not spring when one flower blooms alone, but when a hundred flowers bloom together, spring fills the garden." This signifies that civilizations know no borders. Only by maintaining an open and tolerant communication mindset can moderators create a vibrant garden of world civilizations, fostering mutual understanding and appreciation. By embracing this role as bridge-builders, moderators can significantly contribute to global cultural exchange and the harmonious coexistence of different civilizations.

3. From "stage" to "platform": building a multidimensional hosting image

3.1. Creating a Language Style with Chinese Characteristics

In the traditional TV program stage, the host's role image was often defined by a "dignified atmosphere" as the standard. However, in the current era of deep integration between television and online platforms, the host's hosting image has become multidimensional, and language styles have become more diversified.

Firstly, hosts should create an audible language style with Chinese characteristics. In traditional news programs, hosts primarily read out news content, creating a distance between the host and the audience. However, with programs like "Anchor Says Syndication" launched by CCTV, a conversational and interactive approach allows viewers to feel a greater affinity and communication with the host. Hosts often use first and second-person pronouns like "I (we)" and "you (we)," which are common in colloquial expressions. This approach, combined with the use of words that incorporate Chinese spiritual symbols, such as "the five-star red flag has 1.4 billion flag-bearers" and "the 'Chinese romance' in the Winter Olympic Games," highlight the unity of the Chinese people in pursuit of the Chinese dream under the guidance of the Party.^[1] This shift from a "stage" to a "platform" has captured more young people's attention and transformed viewers from passive consumers of news to active seekers of information. It also contributes to building the image of hosts with Chinese characteristics.

Secondly, hosts should create a sub-language style with Chinese characteristics. For instance, in the program "Voice of China," CCTV host Zou Yun interviewed Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in English during his visit to China. During the interview, Zou Yun maintained a dignified image, asked thought-provoking questions, and showcased the Chinese characteristics of an "Oriental beauty" with her appearance, speech, and demeanor.

These changes in language style help hosts connect with a larger audience, particularly among younger viewers, and contribute to the perception of hosts with distinct Chinese characteristics. By adapting their approach to language and communication, hosts can enhance the impact of their hosting, fostering a more engaging and inclusive environment for viewers.

3.2. Presenting the individuality of Chinese characteristics

In international communication, presenters should strive to "customize" their personalities with Chinese characteristics to enhance the audience's memory and connection to them. A great example of this can be seen with mascots, such as the "Fuwa" and "Bing Dwen Dwen," which have played important roles in Olympic Games communication. These mascots embody Chinese characteristics and have captured the attention and love of people worldwide. Similarly, Chinese hosts should combine their unique characteristics and strengths to become symbols and storytellers of Chinese culture.

In the program "China in the Canon," host Sabine engages in humorous conversations with sages, discussing remarkable Chinese literature. This approach personalized the program and allowed it to stand out. Another example is Dong Qing, the host of "The Reader," who has earned praise from countless viewers for her elegant and intellectual persona. Additionally, in the program "Central Young Summer," host Wang Bingbing has won the hearts of netizens with her youthful and lively personality.

Hosts need to identify and cultivate their distinct personalized characteristics to effectively spread Chinese culture and leave a lasting impression on the audience. By doing so, they can contribute to showcasing Chinese culture's diverse and captivating aspects on the global stage.

3.3. Strengthening technical support with Chinese characteristics.

In the meta-universe international communication, the discourse system represents an expansion of the Chinese discourse system into the digital space. While the core content of the narrative remains essential in hosting communications, the way the story is presented should be noticed.

The traditional approach of a single and monotonous discourse narrative often fails to spark the audience's interest in the content. The advancement of technology and the emphasis on Chinese characteristics have brought forth new requirements for hosts. They should proactively learn new technologies and adapt the form of content dissemination from the "stage" to the "platform" and from the "big screen" to the "multi-screen" environment. This calls for continuous exploration of new communication channels like microblogging, short video platforms like TikTok, and platforms like Little Red Book.

Furthermore, Chinese hosts should collaborate synergistically with AI anchors. For instance, in the CCTV 2019 Host Competition, contestant Guoxinyu skillfully hosted alongside the AI anchor "Xiaoguoguo," successfully delivering a narrative of the new era through a man-machine dialogue.^[2] Therefore, hosts should strive to master "4R" technology in their respective fields. Hosts can incorporate new technological highlights into their programs by working alongside AI anchors, employing holographic simulations of real AI anchors, leveraging their strengths, and collaborating with intelligent assistants.

4. From "specialization" to "versatility": developing distinctive core competencies

4.1. Deep plumbing of specialized areas

In international communication, presenters must focus on developing unique core competencies, which involve building a solid professional foundation and deeply cultivating the field of broadcasting and hosting arts.

Firstly, Chinese hosts should strive to improve their professionalism continuously. This entails the consistent practice of voice pronunciation in daily life, enhancing skills in modulation and delivery, and cultivating a versatile intonation style. It is also important to study foreign languages to solidify the basic skills required for international communication.

Secondly, hosts with Chinese characteristics should constantly enhance their cultural literacy to promote China to the international community, presenting a "real, three-dimensional, and comprehensive" image of the country. This involves delving deeper into the contemporary and global values within traditional Chinese culture, extracting its cultural essence, and keeping it in mind. For instance, the slogan "Together towards the future" chanted by the hosts of the Beijing Winter Olympics embodies the idea of "one world, one family" from Chinese civilization. It is a Chinese interpretation of the Olympic spirit, encapsulating the "community of human destiny" concept and establishing a spiritual and cultural connection among people of different nations.

Thirdly, hosts with Chinese characteristics should learn from the advantages of international culture and presenters. They need to not only master local Chinese culture but also have an understanding of the politics, civilizations, and customs of different countries and regions in the international arena. This continuous learning process helps enhance cross-cultural knowledge and literacy. Studying and drawing inspiration from audiovisual program production and radio and television hosts in developed countries, particularly in Europe and the United States, is also important. Hosts from famous TV stations like NBC and BBC possess the professional and rigorous qualities required for international communication. Therefore, learning from their hosting skills, fostering exchanges and learning with international counterparts, and improving broadcasting and hosting skills and international communication abilities will be valuable. This process can be likened to "borrowing a boat to go out to sea," as it involves leveraging external expertise to enhance one's abilities.^[3]

4.2. Enhancement of presentation skills

In international communication, good expression skills can be the "icing on the cake" for delivering content effectively.

First and foremost, hosts should strive for "grounded" language expression. By "grounded," it

means that facilitators should have a deep understanding of the concept of "transcultural communication," which is an evolution of "intercultural communication." This form of communication emphasizes a complete understanding of and respect for the audience. During cultural exchanges, hosts should use an equal and calm tone of voice to express their content. This approach creates a sense of familiarity for the audience, bridging cultural gaps and resulting in effective communication.

Secondly, hosts should improve their improvisation skills to remain calm and composed in unpredictable situations. Many programs, particularly live ones, require hosts to navigate uncertainties, testing their improvisation ability. Successful improvisation relies on the host's ability to express reasoning, rules, relaxation, planning, and execution. Therefore, hosts should continuously accumulate experiences, reflect on them daily, and work to deliver high-quality improvisation.

Lastly, hosts must clarify the techniques of expression in different settings. They should focus on maintaining a dignified and commanding atmosphere on the stage. They should demonstrate a clear sense of freedom in manipulating objects in the studio. On platforms, they should adopt a friendly and relatable communication style. Hosts can capture the audience's attention and ensure a fluid expression technique by seamlessly transitioning between these roles based on the scene's requirements.

4.3. Developing empathy

In international communication, presenters should prioritize empathic communication and develop their empathic abilities during the hosting process. Empathic communication involves transferring and evoking common or similar emotions and feelings.^[4] By utilizing empathic communication, hosts can bridge the cultural gaps caused by political, social, and historical traditions among audiences from various races and cultural backgrounds. This leads to a more effective and impactful international communication experience.

To begin with, hosts should discover narrative texts that can elicit empathy and establish an emotional connection with the audience. For instance, stories about China's fight against poverty often feature "everyday people" as the protagonists, leaving a lasting impact on the audience. CGTN, a subsidiary of China Central Radio and Television (CCTV), introduced the original micro-video series "There is a Foreign Commissioner for Poverty Alleviation in the Village." In this series, foreign editors and journalists act as hosts, immersing themselves in rural life to tell heartfelt stories about poverty alleviation. Through these narratives, viewers can genuinely feel the warmth of people's sentiments and the resilience of communities. Similarly, the Sino-British co-produced documentary "Walking China" has captivated numerous foreign audiences with its vivid character-driven stories.

Additionally, hosts should explore expressive methods that allow the audience to empathize. By using accessible means of expression, hosts can innovatively convey emotions, adhering to common aesthetic standards shared by Chinese and foreign audiences. This approach caters to the segmented, differentiated, and personalized needs of audiences in different countries and regions. By mastering both these points, hosts can establish their core competitive advantage and effectively fulfill the role of emotional anchors.

5. Conclusions

In the context of international communication, China's international discourse is still weak, facing complex forms of international communication and external communication challenges. However, a global economic and cultural force is quietly rising. "A good plan is a good way to become a man." Hosts with Chinese characteristics should find their value coordinates, serving as narrators of China's story, disseminators of the country's image, and bridge-builders of global civilization. To establish a multidimensional hosting image, it is important to create a language style with Chinese characteristics, highlighting personality traits unique to China and strengthening technical support with Chinese elements. Furthermore, Chinese specialty presenters should strive to develop their unique core competencies by deepening their expertise, improving their presentation skills, and cultivating empathy. In international communication, Chinese hosts with distinct characteristics should become a driving force in China's globalization and foreign communication efforts. They should pay attention to the laws of international communication, improve the quality of international communication, and ensure that China's voice is heard globally.^[3]

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