

## Study on the International Communication Path and Effect of Non-verbal Symbols of Rural Culture

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### Abstract

The international community, manipulated and blinded by the hegemony of western political discourse for a long time, has a deeply-rooted stereotype of rural China being backward and ignorant. This paper first analyzes the difficulties faced by China's current international communication, then discusses the necessity of rural culture international communication, and finally proposes that the use of non-verbal symbols to carry out the international communication of rural culture can reach three goals: be more vivid and intuitive, reduce the "cultural discount" in the process of coding/decoding, and provide an information dissemination breakthrough for overseas audiences to recognize and understand the real, objective and three-dimensional China.

### Keywords

Rural Culture; International Communication; Non-linguistic Symbols.

### 1. Introduction

Since the 18th Party Congress, strengthening and improving China's international communication work has been the direction of foreign communication work that the Party Central Committee, with Comrade Xi Jinping as the core, has repeatedly emphasized and made a series of major decisions. In recent years, the new epidemic, the stigmatization of China's image by some Western media, the banning of China's media technology and applications, and a series of unfavorable international opinion fields have also indicated that China's international communication is difficult and long.

In the thirtieth collective study session of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, the mission of international communication was defined: telling the Chinese story well, spreading the Chinese voice, showing the real, three-dimensional and comprehensive China, is an important task to strengthen China's international communication capacity building. Xi Jinping pointed out that storytelling is the best way of international communication. Telling the story of socialism with Chinese characteristics, the story of the Chinese dream, the story of the excellent Chinese traditional culture, and the story of China's peaceful development should not only focus on the cities, but also on the countryside.

As one of the main bodies of Chinese culture, rural culture is an integral part of Chinese culture. Rural culture is rooted in the countryside of Chinese society and is the essence of Chinese civilization that distinguishes it from other civilizations. Rural culture has been accumulated by the Chinese people for thousands of years, and the Chinese sons and daughters have taken root on the map of China, and farming has given birth to the countryside. While farming fixed human beings in a specific place, it also brought people together in the village as a community and developed a corresponding civilization from the needs of production and life. It can be said that Chinese culture originates from rural culture, and Chinese stories originate from rural stories. To make international audiences understand China more comprehensively and objectively, it is essential to do a good job of international communication of Chinese rural culture.

## 2. The Current Dilemma Facing China's International Communication

### 2.1. Lack of Active Language, Single Narrative Language for Foreign Communication

At present, China's international image is mainly "shaped by others" and "shaped by itself", which mostly follows the values and logical structure of the Western world in terms of position, material, selection angle and narrative structure. The shortcomings of international communication have become obvious. The Western media set the agenda with stereotypical bias and used a "double standardized" discourse system to capture the attention of overseas audiences in advance, portraying a biased image of China. China often defends itself only after being stigmatized, always playing the role of clarifier and refutator. Without corresponding and timely agenda-setting, China's explanation and response will be less effective based on the stereotypical bias of foreign audiences, and it will not only be difficult to correct the effect of Western media's erroneous reports, but also strengthen foreign audiences' stereotypes about Chinese media reports.

We should strengthen our daily international communication, export China's concept and true Chinese image in our daily content, strengthen positive cooperation with mature overseas media platforms, broaden cooperation channels, expand the voice of Chinese media in the new era, improve the energy efficiency of international communication, and at the same time lighten the color of propaganda to avoid the impression of reading from a book and covering up the facts. In the process of international communication, we also need to recognize the powerful advantages of private subjects such as officials, scholars, employees of foreign companies, scientists, artists, foreign students and individuals with communication skills. In the process of international communication, it is necessary to identify the preferences of the audience and tell the story in a way that everyone understands.

### 2.2. Export of Text or Language Forms Creates a Cultural Divide

Since the founding of our country, the successful practice of socialism with Chinese characteristics is evident to all. To refine and explain the successful ideas of our characteristic road, theoretical system and system, it is necessary to broaden the foreign communication platform and carrier, and to integrate contemporary Chinese values into international exchanges and communication in all aspects, but the path of communication by language and text may lead to misinterpretation of the original meaning due to cultural barriers.

For example, if "soft power" is translated as "soft power" in international communication, the Western international community will intentionally or unintentionally narrow the context of "power" to "power", which will make international audiences believe that China is using its influence in cultural education and information dissemination to carry out cultural and ideological infiltration of other countries.

In the process of international communication, the communication path in Chinese is very limited in terms of the audience it can reach and must be transformed through translation. Quality discourse production and meaningful discourse translation require not only excellent translators, but also the alignment of cultural values and meanings, so that international audiences can understand and listen at the same time. However, in translation practice, the docking of cultural values and meanings is often neglected, and only the reciprocal language forms are emphasized. This results in mistranslation, miscommunication, misunderstanding, etc. Seriously improper translation of discourse may even produce great harm to national image and national relations.

### **3. The Need for Rural Culture to Take the International Communication Stage**

#### **3.1. Rural Cultural Communication Guards Cultural Positions**

Throughout the global culture, each nation has its own characteristics, and different nations distinguish themselves from others through different values, habits and customs, which are passed down from generation to generation in the rut of history, and eventually form their own unique national culture. Our culture has a long history, and the deep human history and cultural deposits make our nation have a sense of time accumulation.

There are many national intangible cultural heritages in the countryside, such as music or dance of various ethnic groups, various types of opera culture, knitted cloth, traditional festivals, ancient legends and other forms of culture, all of which are protected and inherited in the countryside, and are precious cultures that should be protected and developed by our nation.

With the acceleration of globalization and the rapid development of modern society, foreign cultures have invaded in various forms, causing a strong impact on the survival and development of our traditional culture, as evidenced by the prevalence of various foreign festivals in cities. As the birthplace of our culture, the countryside is an important place for us to hold on to our cultural heritage, and we can explore the microcosm of our national culture, find the essence of our nation nurtured in it, and enhance our national and cultural confidence. By presenting rural culture with Chinese characteristics in a way that integrates life and culture, presenting our unique national culture to the world, seeking common ground while reserving differences, and focusing on rural characteristics and modern changes, we will be able to keep our own distinctive culture while avoiding assimilation by other cultures.

#### **3.2. Rural Cultural Heritage Contains Chinese Wisdom**

Rural culture is a culture developed from the ideas and consciousness of the indigenous people living in the countryside through generations of inheritance and development. Its development and transmission make rural culture a dynamic culture that contains the traditional cultural core and at the same time constantly absorbs the new cultural styles that arise from the changes of the times. Rural culture is a unique cultural charm that combines traditional concepts and modern ideas.

In our international communication, it is important to disseminate the concept of the community of human destiny to the outside world. The concept of community of human destiny emphasizes the harmony and unity of human beings with human beings and human beings with nature. In agrarian civilization, people's production and life cannot be separated from the natural environment, and the unpredictability of nature makes people have a great respect for nature.

Under the strategy of rural revitalization, rural culture intersects with socialism with Chinese characteristics on the way of development. "Seeing and doing justice", "helping others", "dedication" and "respecting relatives and filial piety" are the inheritance and development of rural culture in the new era, and they present new characteristics of the times. We can use the small points of rural culture to map the big aspects of Chinese wisdom, tell the story of rural culture, and contribute Chinese wisdom to the world by using the grounded characters and scenes in rural culture to tell a good Chinese story.

#### **3.3. Rural Cultural Revitalization Helps National Rejuvenation**

The report of the 19th Party Congress clearly points out the urgent task of insisting on the priority development of agriculture and rural areas in this new era. Rural revitalization is a manifestation of the superiority of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics, especially the successful completion of comprehensive poverty eradication work, so that economic

revitalization leads to cultural prosperity. In addition, the revitalization of the countryside is rooted in the revitalization of rural culture, and the revitalization of rural culture is a strong guarantee for national rejuvenation.

With the rapid development of network media technology, the economic prosperity brought by rural revitalization and the national construction of infrastructure bring a lot of new network media technology to media users in rural areas, which promotes the deep integration of rural traditional culture and network media technology and further promotes the innovative development of rural cultural communication. A prosperous rural culture in China should go out of the country, so that the world can see the results of China's modernization, poverty alleviation work, a true, comprehensive, three-dimensional display of the real situation in China, to show the cultural strength to show economic strength, and further show the comprehensive national power.

Looking back on the past history of China's foreign cultural communication, we always focus on traditional Chinese culture such as qin, chess, calligraphy and painting, the four great inventions or Chinese martial arts, but do not introduce enough achievements of civilization and cultural innovation since the reform and opening up, and many international audiences still stamp China's label as conservative, poor and turbulent. By telling the story of rural transformation, we can take the grassroots of China as the base and visually show the local face of China to the international audience through non-verbal means such as video or image transmission, and update their perception of China's image.

## **4. Explore the Superiority of Non-verbal Symbolic Communication**

### **4.1. Non-verbal Symbols Weaken Regional and National Identities**

The use of linguistic symbols, such as written and spoken language, can compress the space of common context in cross-cultural communication, and even after translation, semantic misunderstandings can occur.

In the process of communication, non-verbal symbols can weaken the contextualization, so that the creator and the audience do not need to have much common context, but only need to have a common space of meaning for the emotion they want to express, therefore, the national cultural image constructed through non-verbal symbols will be more easily understood and accepted by the international audience.

In the case of common images such as natural scenery, architecture, food and clothing, the communicator has already completed the first stage of encoding and decoding by giving these symbols meaning and coding them, and has placed the meaning they want to express in non-verbal symbols to show the abstract cultural meaning, which greatly reduces the communication barrier caused by the language barrier.

The use of behavioral symbols also has this effect. The expression of culture and values will be projected in people's behavior, and when communicators choose non-verbal symbols for message production, they will also choose those behavioral symbols that represent people's inner values to express the culture and emotions they want to communicate.

As a unique form of culture, Chinese rural culture is more suitable to use non-verbal symbols to break the cultural barriers in international communication. For example, in Li Ziqi's video, by arranging simple and elegant rural scenes in Chinese style, it shows humanistic propositions with cultural commonality, such as family care, cultural continuity and harmonious coexistence between human beings and nature, creating a common space of meaning and generating the possibility of discourse interaction.

#### **4.2. Non-verbal Symbols Reinforce the Audience's Unconscious Sharing**

Intuitiveness and clarity of visual reception are the greatest advantages of nonverbal symbols in the narrative process. Nonverbal symbols can be objective nonverbal symbols of the human body and the natural world in the physical sense, or artistic nonverbal symbols created by humans subjectively. As the first form of symbols that humans learned to use in their development, nonverbal symbols are a clearer, more intuitive and convenient way for humans to receive the world and express themselves. With the development of human history, the emergence of writing created cultural barriers and abstract communication of thought divided human cultural classes, but also promoted the development of nonverbal symbols, diversifying and complicating the derivative referentiality of nonverbal symbols. For example, in non-verbal symbolic narrative acts such as painting and sculpture, the expression of textual meaning is transformed into visual form by adding a visual process to visually display the perceptual content of psychological communication.

Non-verbal words do not represent concepts per se; they show physical objects, and non-verbal words require us to use our feelings to feel information rather than to analyze it with reason. Non-verbal symbols can transmit direct experience and instantaneous scenes, making the audience feel like they are happening in the present moment, regardless of when the scenes depicted by non-verbal symbols occur. This sense of involvement in the moment can actively engage the audience emotionally. The combination of image and sound can encode the emotions of the creator and decode them in an intuitive way, and the audience feels the emotions of the creator.

#### **4.3. Non-verbal Symbols Lower the Threshold of Audience Understanding**

Before the emergence of writing, human beings have been producing non-verbal symbols, communicating with each other through murals, carved symbols, and rhythmic percussion sounds. In modern society, the development of film, television and photography has made non-verbal symbols, such as images, one of the most common forms of information that people are exposed to. In social media, where images are the main form, the information reading method of "images first, then words" has been formed, and users rely more on the interpretation of non-verbal symbols such as images to obtain information, forming a strong visual-oriented culture. Non-verbal symbols such as images or videos are a kind of information in themselves, and this information mode is more vivid and intuitive to the interpretation of textual information without logical deep understanding and analysis, which is easier to be grasped and cognized by the audience and stays in the memory for a longer period of time, and in the background of the Internet, visual symbols also have a wider and more popular radiation range than textual or verbal symbols.

With the rapid development of media technology due to technological progress, Internet communication has become an important mode of international communication. We can apply a large number of visual non-verbal symbols in network communication, which can break the barrier of different national languages horizontally and the monopoly of words in the same country and society vertically, so that audiences who cannot read and write can obtain intuitive information through non-verbal symbols. In this era of unprecedented mass culture, non-verbal forms of communication, which have greatly weakened linguistic and cultural barriers, are more effectively and closely linked with the global economy, forming a community of human destiny.

## **5. The Positive Effect of Presenting Rural Culture with Non-verbal Symbols in International Communication**

### **5.1. Visual Means to Create a New Atmosphere for the Dissemination of Rural Culture**

In the days before the Internet, audiences could learn about rural culture either by visiting the countryside, by listening to people who had been there, or by reading translations of literary books depicting Chinese rural life. Field trips are not available to all, and other people's accounts are inevitably subjective, and the more widely circulated rural literature in foreign countries is mostly about the chaotic, poor, backward and ignorant countryside of the last century. Thanks to the joint efforts of the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese people, China's countryside has changed dramatically, but there are still a large number of residents in China's cities who have stereotypical prejudices about the countryside, and overseas audiences have no way of knowing about these profound changes that have taken place in the fields.

With the development of Internet technology and the emergence of online media platforms, the innovative production of rural culture content using online platforms, the use of social media, short videos, Chinese videos, live broadcasts, documentaries and other visual means, and the use of appropriate communication strategies and techniques, not only highlight the fun of rural culture, but also ensure the timeliness, in line with the characteristics of the new era of rural culture communication, creating a new rural culture communication atmosphere. The use of AR and VR technologies to recreate rural scenes, historical scenes, and other cultural content not only expands the radiation and influence of excellent rural culture, but also enhances the nation's sense of identity with local culture. The visualization of rural culture can break the cultural barriers, and international audiences do not need to know Chinese language and writing to feel the charm of rural culture, which represents the important content of Chinese culture.

### **5.2. Focus on the Real Countryside to Present a Rich Image of China**

In the process of international communication, it is impossible to present all of China's images perfectly, and only by highlighting them selectively can we build a rich and complete image of China. Following the pace of China's political and economic development, we take rural culture as an opportunity to build a national image and present it in the form of non-verbal symbols, which is a record of China's continuous development process and a record of the road to socialism with Chinese characteristics. The combination of images and music in the selection of Chinese characteristics, which focuses on the integration of rural culture and rural life, can render emotions, drive the audience to understand the core of Chinese culture, and touch the real image of Chinese culture. The combination of modern culture and traditional culture can reflect a comprehensive three-dimensional and real image of Chinese culture, and focusing on rural culture is a powerful anchor point, which is not only the demand of the new era China to present itself in all aspects, but also the demand of international audiences to understand the real Chinese culture.

In the process of globalization where national boundaries are becoming blurred, national communities containing national feelings or values are also undergoing integration. The local cultural heritage is projected in the audience's mind, forming a clear association with the label. By focusing on local hot topics and appropriately disseminating the unique stories of China's rural culture, the world can see that China is not only an ancient civilization, but also a responsible country working together for the world and humanity.

### 5.3. Civilian Identity Narratives Break out of the Propaganda Didactic Framework

In foreign communication, media works need to avoid excessive didactic propaganda in order to see effective cross-cultural communication. Li Ziqi, who is a big hit on the Internet, builds a Chinese-style rural life scene in her video, taking the beautiful rural life as the material and creating an image of an independent and hardworking ordinary Chinese woman by presenting her daily life. This kind of commonplace narrative breaks through the traditional propaganda framework and avoids preachy intentions, while weakening the long-standing stereotypical prejudices and preconceived resistance of international audiences, and also facilitating the emotional resonance of the audience.

The specific images in rural culture can be directly presented in the form of images or videos and other non-verbal symbols. By selecting the art or life customs of rural culture, arranging the narrative rationally, integrating the picture structure, appropriate language, and matching sound background into the visual text, and using visual rhetoric flexibly, we can transform the rural culture with Chinese characteristics into a more easily understood and accepted concept by using civilian and grounded content with vivid and intuitive visual symbols, and further shorten the distance between us and the international audience.

This kind of real-life narration of the lives of ordinary people at the grassroots level enhances the attractiveness of China's story and makes our national image closer to the lives of the general public. and the spirit of Chinese culture of perseverance and self-improvement.

## 6. Conclusion

In the process of enhancing China's international communication power, the combination of official platforms and the civil discourse system can present a realistic and three-dimensional image of a great country to the world. In practice, influential international celebrities or internet celebrities can be used to explore China's countryside and show audiences the countryside culture from a first-person perspective to enhance their immersion experience; we can also cultivate ordinary people from the countryside who can represent China's cultural image and find common contents with cultural proximity from the perspective of ordinary people; in addition, we can improve the communication skills of grassroots officials rooted in the countryside and develop the ability to use non-verbal symbols to record Chinese culture. In addition, we can improve the communication quality of grassroots officials, develop the habit of recording stories of grassroots work with non-verbal symbols, present rural culture with the most realistic images, bring the humanistic atmosphere of China to international audiences, and use non-verbal symbols to bring international audiences closer to the image of China.

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