

Innovation Strategies for Effectively Narrating China's Stories in English within a Cross-cultural Framework

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Abstract: This paper delves into the complexities of narrating China's Stories within a global context, emphasizing the importance of innovative strategies to enhance cross-cultural communication and understanding. It underscores the role of China's rich cultural heritage, including Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), in bolstering the nation's cultural confidence and its international image. The paper argues that by integrating Chinese narratives into a shared global story, leveraging soft power communication, and employing a multi-perspective approach, China can effectively bridge cultural divides and foster psychological identification among diverse audiences. It also highlights the significance of selecting outstanding topics that resonate with universal human values and emotions. The paper concludes by advocating for the continued exploration and application of these strategies to amplify China's voice on the global stage, contribute to a shared future for humanity, and enrich the global discourse with Chinese wisdom and perspectives.

Keywords: China's Stories; Cross-culture; Innovation Strategies

1. Introduction

In the era of globalization, the interconnectivity among nations has grown increasingly dense. However, cultural disparities, divergent value systems, and ideological differences persist in fostering misunderstandings and divisions. Within this intricate and dynamic international environment, it is essential for China to articulate its narratives to project an authentic, multifaceted, and holistic national image, thereby enhancing global comprehension. Since the initiation of reform and opening-up policies, China has accomplished developmental feats that are globally recognized, offering valuable insights to nations across the world^[1]. With its

profound historical legacy and vibrant cultural heritage, China can utilize the power of storytelling to elevate its cultural prominence on the world stage, thereby reinforcing cultural self-assurance.

The Chinese-proposed concept of a "community with a shared future for mankind" introduces groundbreaking approaches to global governance. The narration of China's stories is instrumental in propagating these concepts and nurturing international collaboration. Furthermore, such storytelling is capable of instilling a sense of national pride and solidarity among citizens, fortifying national cohesion and cultural self-confidence, and igniting patriotic sentiments. Diplomatic storytelling also aids in forging equitable and mutually advantageous international relationships, advocating for multilateralism and fostering international partnerships^[2]. In essence, the act of sharing China's Stories acts as a conduit between China and the global community, significantly contributing to the advancement of a shared future for mankind and the genesis of innovative human civilizations.

Acknowledging the heterogeneous cultural backgrounds, value systems, and interests of a global audience, the adoption of innovative strategies for narrating China's Stories is paramount. These strategies are capable of rendering the storytelling more varied and tailored, effectively addressing the diverse needs of various audiences. Despite the Western media's continued dominance in global discourse, which often sidelines or misrepresents Chinese perspectives, the advent of the information age has revolutionized communication channels, audience information consumption patterns, and the media landscape. Traditional communication paradigms are increasingly inadequate for the evolving demands of modern audiences^[3]. Consequently, the exploration of innovative strategies to narrate China's Stories in refreshing and unique ways, which highlight China's genuine image

and developmental milestones, is imperative. This approach is crucial for bolstering China's competitive edge in international discourse, amplifying China's communication capacity on the global stage, and facilitating a more objective and comprehensive global understanding of China.

2. The Content and Characteristics of China's Story

Culture operates as an interpretive framework for human existence, with its core components being traditional thoughts, concepts, and values, among which values hold the most sway. Edward T. Hall's dichotomy of high-context and low-context cultures posits that high-context cultures depend on shared understandings, where much of the information is internalized by both parties in communication, thus necessitating fewer explicit codes to convey messages^[4]. With a history spanning millennia and a predominantly Han ethnic demographic, Chinese civilization is classified as a high-context culture. In such cultures, information is embedded within the material environment and internalized through social consensus, rather than being superficially attached to text. This narrative style, which is characterized by "more implied than expressed", presents significant challenges to the external world in comprehending Chinese culture and its global dissemination.

Beyond the implicit nature of high-context communication, such as the use of phrases like "you know," the Chinese also exhibits fewer explicit logical relationships compared to English. Western languages prioritize the expression of semantic relationships through linguistic forms, whereas the high-context nature of Chinese allows for implicit communication without the need to explicitly state all logical connections. When narrating the "China's story," it is crucial to maintain audience awareness, issue awareness, and an international perspective. Narrating China's stories should craft stories about China that foreign audiences are eager to understand, willing to accept, and capable of comprehending; stories that depict a China dedicated to tackling both domestic and global issues; and stories that showcase a China actively engaged in global governance. By doing so, China not only tell the "Chinese story" but also contribute to the "universal human

story."

3. Innovation Strategies for Effectively Narrating China's Stories in English

3.1 Breaking Through Cultural Barriers

In the realm of global cultural dissemination, China has historically relied on its rich cultural heritage to narrate its stories to the world. However, cultural exchanges between different ethnicities and nations are often imbalanced. The cultural barriers between heterogeneous cultural circles, the chasm between Eastern and Western cultures, the 'rejection reactions' in different cultural contexts, and the cultural discount in cross-border communication constantly remind us of the challenges in spreading culture. Some Western developed countries, leveraging their dominant discourse power, have long constructed international opinion barriers that restrict the global spread of China's Stories. In this unequal international discourse structure, certain media even maliciously set China-related agendas, engaging in stigmatization, labeling, and politicization, distorting facts and covering up the truth in a "public opinion war" that misleads international public perception of China, severely damaging its international image. China often faces the issue of "having a reason but not being able to speak out, or not being able to spread the word," and the problem of "being silent and being scolded" is not fundamentally resolved. Therefore, it is urgent for us to tell the world a more authentic, multifaceted, and comprehensive story of China, allowing more people from various countries to understand and trust China.

Due to historical reasons, English has become the global lingua franca, and the international dissemination of China's Stories is also inseparable from English channels and platforms. Breaking through established barriers and boundaries is essential to effectively counter the control or manipulation of Western mainstream ideologies, and to break the monopoly of Western media hegemony where "one voice dominates" and "one hand covers the sky." The secret to Hollywood's success in winning the global market lies in its ability to "accommodate various texts, break down cultural barriers, and allow audiences from different cultures to project their own local values, beliefs, emotions, and meanings,

providing a rich array of projection objects and triggering resonance”.

3.2 Soft Spread in Cross-culture

Harold Lasswell, a highly influential scholar in the field of communication studies, proposed the “5W model”^[5] of communication in 2015: Who says what, in which channel, to whom, and with what effect. The act of telling “China’s stories” in English transcends mere narration; it aspires to facilitate the international community’s comprehension of these narratives.

Historically, news reporting, commentary, and interviews have been the primary conduits of international discourse, with the connection between films, TV shows, and global dialogue being less robust. However, international discourse is not limited to news programs alone. The competition in international content is intensifying, necessitating a focus on both traditional hard news and softer content such as film, television, and variety shows. Innovation in presentation and expression methods is essential. There should be a particular emphasis on the roles of movies, television, and short videos in international communication, value promotion, and ideological engagement.

In today’s age of short videos, Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) wield significant influence on a global scale. It is crucial to leverage KOLs effectively to narrate compelling China’s Stories and disseminate China’s voice. Non-material cultural heritage (ICH) short videos serve as emotional bridges, constructing an experiential framework that enables international viewers to traverse cultural boundaries within minutes, fostering cultural consensus and emotional resonance.

Li Ziqi, rooted in her homeland, has delved into the essence of local culture and, through modern new media production and distribution techniques, has brought it to prominence. Her success in cross-cultural communication can be attributed to her strong confidence in traditional Chinese culture and values, coupled with a keen market sense and precise positioning^[6]. Li Ziqi’s achievement highlights the importance of cultural confidence in cross-cultural communication. To effectively tell Chinese story, it is essential to deeply engage with local cultural resources while also considering the preferences and reception methods of mainstream platforms and overseas target

audiences. This involves integration and innovation, with a focus on emotional brand communication.

3.3 Diversity of Narrative Subjects

Cultural communication is fundamentally a dynamic process of human interaction, with both the communicators and recipients being vibrant individuals. In the current era of global communication, which is dominated by social media, there is a distinct trend towards individualization and populism. The focus of cultural and international communication is increasingly shifting towards personal narratives driven by individual participation^[7]. Narrative subjects in cross-cultural communication are not confined to the first-person perspective; instead, a multi-perspective approach can be effectively employed. This method allows for a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the stories being shared, as it encompasses various viewpoints and experiences. By adopting a multi-perspective narrative, it can better navigate the complexities of cross-cultural communication and create a more inclusive and engaging narrative that resonates with diverse audiences.

The Latest computer game “Black Myth: Wukong” is an accurate example. Drawing from the classical Chinese epic “Journey to the West,” the game revitalizes traditional elements with modern creativity and high-definition graphics. “Black Myth: Wukong” has become a pivotal force in the global narrative of Chinese culture. This fusion not only reinvigorates the original stories and characters but also extends them with bold innovation, capturing a global audience and amplifying the international reach of Chinese culture. The game has bridged cultural divides, engaging both domestic and international players. This cross-cultural engagement fosters mutual understanding and respect, promoting an environment conducive to cultural exchange and learning, engaging both domestic and international players. This cross-cultural engagement fosters mutual understanding and respect, promoting an environment conducive to cultural exchange and learning^[8]. The effective narration of China’s stories necessitates innovative and multifaceted approaches. “Black Myth: Wukong” exemplifies the potential of breaking down cultural barriers, employing soft communication,

diversifying narrative voices, leveraging global elements, and highlighting intangible cultural heritage. As China progresses in research and practice, it is imperative to further explore and implement these strategies to bolster the international communicative influence of China's stories, thereby contributing to the collective intelligence and strength required for building a community with a shared future for humanity.

From a cross-cultural perspective, the art of narrating China's stories in a manner that resonates across cultures involves skillfully integrating narratives rich in "Chinese characteristics" into the broader "common story" that China shares with the world. This approach not only bridges the gap between regional culture and global concerns but also achieves effective cross-cultural communication^[9]. The themes within China's stories that demonstrate "multicultural adaptability" must be crafted in a way that allows audiences to perceive their inherent human emotions, ethics, morals, values, insights, and imagination. It is through this depth of storytelling that cultural divides can be bridged, and a sense of psychological identification can be fostered among diverse audiences.

3.4 Selecting Outstanding Topics

Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) is an integral and precious component of Chinese culture, playing a significant role in enhancing the cultural confidence of the nation. The protection and inheritance of ICH are crucial for preserving the rich tapestry of Chinese cultural identity. ICH, leveraging the power of short videos, exhibits a certain "deterritorialization" characteristic, achieving a virtual "presence" across different times and spaces for ICH subjects and enhancing the efficacy of emotional communication^[6,10]. By utilizing "re-embedding," it constructs a cross-cultural community, achieving cultural identification goals that transcend ideological barriers through multiple narrative representations. Examples of ICH include the Twenty-Four Solar Terms, the Chinese Zodiac, embroidery, iron flower craft, face-changing, Five Animal Frolics, and Tai Chi Push Hands, among others.

Another example is blogger Jiang Xunqian, who learned the craft of making iron flowers with the help of an ICH inheritor and became "the first woman" to create such art. The spirit

of facing fears and overcoming obstacles conveyed in her short videos resonates strongly with international viewers, fostering empathy across cultures.

4. Conclusion

In the realm of cross-cultural communication, the challenge of narrating China's stories is multifaceted. However, by employing a suite of innovative strategies, it can effectively surmount cultural barriers and amplify the global communicative impact of these stories. To begin with, dismantling cultural barriers is essential for cross-cultural dialogue. It is imperative to acknowledge and respect the diversity of cultures, adopting an open and inclusive approach to multiculturalism. This can be achieved by fostering language learning and engaging in cultural exchanges to enhance mutual comprehension and affinity.

Secondly, soft power communication emerges as a potent vehicle for sharing narratives. Through mediums such as cinema, music, and the arts, it can convey China's Stories to the global community in a more engaging and relatable manner, thereby deepening international understanding and appreciation of China. Furthermore, broadening the spectrum of narrative voices is crucial for effectively telling China's stories. Encouraging a diverse array of individuals, organizations, and societal groups to partake in the dissemination of these stories can establish an all-encompassing, multi-tiered, and dynamic communication framework.

Simultaneously, incorporating global elements into our storytelling can render our narratives more universally appealing, facilitating acceptance and comprehension by a wider international audience. Lastly, focusing on compelling themes such as intangible cultural heritage can imbue our stories with greater depth and significance, more vividly highlighting the allure and worth of Chinese culture.

To encapsulate, the art of narrating China's Stories necessitates innovation and exploration across various dimensions. Dismantling cultural barriers, leveraging soft power communication, diversifying narrative voices, integrating global elements, and spotlighting themes like intangible cultural heritage are all promising avenues for exploration. As China advances in research and practice, it is imperative to further the discourse and implementation of these

innovative strategies. This will not only bolster the international communicative influence of China's Stories but also contribute to the collective endeavor of building a community with a shared future for humanity, infusing it with Chinese wisdom and vigor.

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