

A Study on the Pathway of Chinese Culture Transmission by Digital Media Empowerment—Based on Hall's Media Culture Theory

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Abstract—American scholar Negroponte points out in “Digital Survival” that digital technology’s impact on our lives, work, education, and entertainment and its worth thinking about are the best guides to a new digital world. Nowadays, digital technology has accelerated the evolution and development of human society, and digitization is quietly integrating into all fields of production and life. Through combing the historical origin of Chinese culture and analyzing the practical difficulties faced by Chinese culture in digital age, exploring an effective way to enable Chinese culture to spread.

Keywords—digital media, Chinese culture, external communication

I. INTRODUCTION

At the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), Xi Jinping said, “We will stick to the position of Chinese culture, refine and display the spiritual symbols and essence of Chinese civilization.” [1]. New China’s achievements since the founding of the People’s Republic of China have made its image as a socialist and global power widely accepted and recognized. However, since 2020, the “China threat theory” is very popular, there are still hostile forces maliciously tarnishing and tarnishing China’s image, China’s image construction is faced with major challenges. “Cultural confidence is a more basic, broader, deeper confidence, a more fundamental, deeper and lasting force.” Culture, then the country, culture strong, then the country strong. The outstanding traditional culture of China is the root of Chinese image, is to tell Chinese stories and spread the soul of Chinese voice.

II. HISTORICAL RETROSPECT ON THE DISSEMINATION OF CHINESE CULTURE TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD

As the only four ancient civilizations that continue to this day, the Chinese nation has always stood in the forest of the world’s nationalities. “China’s fine traditional culture nurtured in the development of civilization for more than 5,000 years, the revolutionary culture nurtured in the great struggle between the Party and the people, and the advanced socialist culture.” [2]. Retrospecting the history of Chinese culture to the outside world will help us understand the history of Chinese culture for 5,000 years, grasp the historical context, and explore the reasons why Chinese culture has a long history.

A. The Dissemination of Chinese Culture before the Foundation of New China

The world was closed until 1500 years ago, when the West was in turmoil and war, China had a geographical

advantage in resisting invasion by foreign enemies and in a self-sufficient agricultural economy to feed its people. During the Western Han Dynasty, Zhang Qian went to the Western Regions and passed on silk tea, advanced production technology, and Chinese culture to Europe through the Silk Road. The West (European countries) began to yearn for the mysterious ancient East, and countries began to explore China. At the end of 1295, Marco Polo and his party finally returned to their twenty-four-year-old relatives. The news of their return from China spread quickly throughout Venice, and their knowledge aroused great interest. The innumerable treasures they brought back from the East made them the richest men in Venice overnight. His “Travels of Marco Polo” records the beauty and richness of this mysterious eastern power, and he shows the truth under the mystery of the ancient Oriental civilization from his personal perspective. For a while, how many people flock to have a glimpse of China? Later, Matteo Ricci, Tang Ruowan, Bai Jin, and others went to China as missionaries, many of whom eventually died on this fertile land.

After the seventeenth century, Britain and Germany successively completed the Industrial Revolution, greatly increased social productivity and promoted social development. But indigenous resources were no longer sufficient to support the continuation of the Industrial Revolution, and the British-led bourgeoisie began to turn its attention to the world, especially the untouched East. At the same time, the closed-door Qing Empire, self-styled “Heavenly Kingdom”. Qing Empire always insisted on self-sufficiency of natural economy, backward productivity, and production tools can not compete with the production of large machinery, and was eventually surpassed by other countries. The Opium War forced China to open its doors. During this period, the direction of Chinese and Western culture spread changed. The western modern scientific thought began to be introduced into China.

B. Dissemination of Chinese Culture after the Foundation of New China

“The continuous development of the Chinese nation, the frustration and the continuous rebirth of the Chinese nation cannot be separated from the strong support of Chinese culture. The unique concept, wisdom, demeanour and charm of Chinese culture add to the deep confidence and pride of the Chinese people and the Chinese nation.” [2]. In the early days of the founding of New China, the country was in a state of waste, and international resistance by Western

capitalist countries. After that, for a long period of time, China still focused on learning foreign culture, but then the spread of Chinese culture to the outside world has risen to the level of national importance.

In the 1950s, China and other socialist countries, led by the Soviet Union, conducted cultural exchanges and cooperation in science and technology, literature and art. After the 1970s, diplomatic relations between many western countries resumed and close cultural exchanges began. During this period, the promotion of cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries directly promoted China to promote the dissemination of Chinese culture to the status of national strategy.

After the reform and opening-up, China emphasized the study of Western culture before opening up to the outside world, and put more emphasis on promoting the spread of Chinese culture. After entering the 21st century, the Chinese culture has been “going out” as a strategic idea to deploy. Therefore, China should “expand the export of cultural products, strengthen the international promotion of the Chinese language, strengthen the construction of foreign media and network, promote the world outstanding Chinese culture” [3].

C. The Dissemination of Chinese Culture in the New Era

Since entering a new era, China has always been active on the international stage as a responsible power. At this stage, in order to better disseminate Chinese excellent traditional culture, China on the one hand strengthens the international dissemination capacity. The state should “optimize the strategic layout, concentrate superior resources, and make efforts to create the flagship media with strong international influence. The major media of the central government should strengthen their foreign communication functions, accelerate the localization strategy, and become the main force of international communication.” [4].

On the other hand, the state disseminated China’s voice through non-governmental academic visits and study abroad activities, especially in other countries where Confucius Institutes were established. Language is a bridge of communication, so that people from different cultural backgrounds can learn Chinese and feel the charm of Chinese, and thus have a deeper understanding of Chinese history and culture. In addition, the construction of the Silk Road on land and at sea has brought Chinese wisdom and plans to various countries, which have also promoted the spread of Chinese culture.

III. THE REAL DILEMMA OF CHINESE CULTURE’S DISSEMINATION TO THE WORLD

“The outstanding traditional culture of China is the outstanding advantage of the Chinese nation and the foundation for us to stand firm in the turmoil of world culture” [5]. However, today’s world is in the midst of a century of unprecedented changes, and digital technology has become a double-edged sword to impact the real world. Under such circumstances, it is still a great test for China to see how to “go out” Chinese culture and how to make other countries hear the real voice of China.

A. Differences in Cultural Patterns Caused Generation Gap in Intercultural Communication

One of the important reasons why Chinese culture continues for thousands of years is the inheritance and development of Chinese. Language is the embodiment of a national culture, through which people can understand the history and culture behind language. But on the other hand, different language systems can form different cultural patterns. Consider the differences in cultural patterns between China and the United States.

First of all, collectivism is more important in China, “All the people gather firewood and flame high”, “Three Stooges are better than Zhuge Liang”, “Everyone picks up firewood and the flame is high”, and so on is the Chinese spirit of unity. Every independent individual is inseparable from the collective, everyone concentrates on doing great things can save more time and effort. On the other hand, the United States emphasizes individualism, and advocates the development of individual individuality and freedom without collective restriction.

Second, China pays more attention to family, “parents are not far away from travel” and it is the wish of every Chinese to return home during the Spring Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival. Americans, on the other hand, do the opposite. As children grow up, parents no longer raise their children, and children live alone from their native families, which makes Americans less aware of their families.

Third, in China, people tend to follow the principle of the majority, when interests conflict, people often sacrifice the interests of the minority in exchange for the interests of the majority. In the United States, people tend to take personal interests as the basic principle, when solving a problem, the first consideration will be whether personal interests will be damaged. Therefore, this difference in cultural patterns will lead to a generation gap in cultural communication, which will make Chinese culture shackled in the process of spreading abroad.

B. The Phenomenon of Aphasia Caused by High-Low Contextual Transformation

The theory of high- and low-context culture is put forward by Edward Hall, an American anthropologist, in his book *Beyond Culture*. According to the mainstream communication style of culture, Hall divides different cultures into high-context culture and low-context culture. The difference between high and low context directly influences the way of expression people take in communication. People in low-context cultures prefer to use more direct expressions, which represent countries such as the United States, France, Germany, and other European and American countries. People in these countries are accustomed to expressing their emotional needs directly, showing a positive attitude towards what they like and a negative attitude towards what they dislike. The communication mode of people in high-context culture is more euphemistic, and its representative countries include China, Japan, Vietnam, and so on. People in these countries don’t express themselves directly in communication, nor do they express their likes or dislikes for something. In contrast to low-context cultures, people in high-context cultures have

specific language expressions in a given context, and listeners infer what the speaker is trying to say.

Thus “high-context communication or information means that the vast majority of information exists in the physical context, internalized in the individual, and very few in the clear, transmitted coded information. The opposite is true in low-context, in which large amounts of information are clearly encoded.” [6]. China is in a high-context culture, and its language and culture are mostly indirect and introspective, while Europe and America are mostly low-context cultures.

C. The “Distortion” Phenomenon Caused by the Absence of Details in Grand Narrative

The German publishing industry has a phrase “story-driven country”, meaning that the wider a country’s story spreads, the better the world knows about it. In order to spread Chinese culture, it is ultimately necessary to tell a good Chinese story. A good story touches the reader not because of its grand narrative structure but because of its emotional details. If a story lacks real detail and has only an empty structure, it is difficult to achieve good communication.

In recent years, the mainstream media has been promoting China’s national image by using “super-flammable” and “image of a big country” as well. “But there are many people who reflect that some of the promotional films have regrets such as huge themes, accumulated concepts, one-way transmission, and lack of empathy” [7]. The grand narrative technique lacks the true feelings of the small characters, and the lack of detail makes the telling of the Chinese story lacking truthfulness. Therefore, people are often trapped in the framework of grand narration, not to form an understanding and identification of Chinese stories and identity. On the other hand, some media introduce Chinese traditional culture through their own experiences. They tell Chinese stories from a personal perspective, thus contrasting the differences between Chinese and foreign cultures.

D. Ideological Barriers Lead to Cultural Misconceptions

“At present, all kinds of hostile forces have been attempting to create a ‘color revolution’ in our country and subvert the leadership of the Communist Party of China and the socialist system of our country...One of the breakthroughs they chose was in the ideological realm, trying to confuse people’s minds, and then muddling through and winning. Under the new situation, ideological struggles are complicated and acute”. Ideological barriers are the biggest obstacle to the spread of Chinese culture. This has not only affected the ideological system of Chinese culture, but also caused great cultural misunderstanding for the “others” to understand China, so many foreigners who do not understand China see China as a poor, backward, and ignorant feudal country.

IV. PRACTICE PATH OF CHINESE CULTURE COMMUNICATION IN DIGITAL AGE

The digital age brings people’s communication, especially cross-cultural communication, closer the distance

between time and space, and the application of digital media greatly improves people’s quality of life and level. Digitization brings convenience to people, but also causes new problems such as “digital divide” and “information cocoon house”. Facing this new situation, the practice path of Chinese culture dissemination can be used for reference and reflection from the following points:

A. Strengthening China’s Initiative in Foreign Discourse and Promoting Chinese Cultural Influence

Speech is power, and whoever has the right to speak takes the initiative in the international community. To have a place on the international stage, China must have an international voice.

On the one hand, the promotion of China’s international voice needs strong hard and soft power as support, which requires China’s comprehensive national strength to be greatly enhanced. In the aspect of hard power, strong national hard power is conducive to strengthening the confidence of the subject, attracting the audience to listen to and convince the content of the communication. In terms of soft power, international voice is not only an important embodiment of soft power, but also needs soft power to support. The soft power can exert a profound and lasting influence on the values and ways of thinking of the disseminated object in a more euphemistic way, which can enhance the influence of Chinese culture [8].

On the other hand, digital media has opened a new window for the spread of Chinese culture. People have the right to speak freely in virtual spaces based on digital technology, which provides a new platform for Chinese voice to spread abroad. Seeing is hearing, words, pictures, videos and other ways to show the real China to people around the world, tell them the true story of China.

B. Digital Communication Embedded Intelligent Technology to Expand New Spaces of International Communication

With the advent of digital age, the speed of updating iteration of digital technology has increased, and people’s communication time, degree, and effectiveness have been improved. “In early February 2023, China Daily’s digital staff, Yuanxi, interacted with ChatGPT to give advice on Chinese traditional culture, automatically create a video script about Chinese tea culture and translate the script into English” [9]. This shows that the application of generative AI in real life is no longer a dream.

In the digital age, social communication is gradually replaced by intelligent communication. Unlike the former, “intelligent communication transcends the bottleneck of human production and communication, directly driven by algorithms and data, so that content production efficiency and communication capabilities are greatly expanded” [10]. The application of generative artificial intelligence marks a subversive change in the paradigm of human communication, and people have entered the cognitive age. It provides convenient functions such as text translation and automatic generation of video scripts, improves the efficiency of “going out” of Chinese culture, and can get timely feedback and form effective propagation loop.

C. Building Digital Communication Carrier Platform to Enhance the Effectiveness of International Communication Discourse

With the advent of digital age, the speed of updating iteration of digital technology has increased, and people's communication time, degree, and effectiveness have been improved. Using digital media as a carrier, developing our own digital communication platform with subjective digital characteristics of diversified communicators, mass communication content, interactive channels, individualized communicators, and intelligent communications effects. It can effectively spread the excellent traditional Chinese culture, tell the Chinese story, and spread the Chinese voice, thus improving the effectiveness of international discourse communication.

D. Constructing "Ego" from the Perspective of "Others" and Condensing the Consensus of Human Values

Freud believed that "identification is the initial form of emotional connection with an object" and that the premise of identification with "self" is the identification of "others". Therefore, the construction of "self" is not an isolated process, but a process of establishing universal relationship with "others". "Culture is a bridge between the mind and the heart. Convinced by reason, convinced by literature, convinced by virtue, is the life endowment and survival patience of Chinese culture." Chinese culture embodies the national conditions of the family, the idea of harmony as a beauty, and the universal pursuit of truth and happiness. Therefore, in order to construct "self", "other" must be identified. In order for the country to tell the Chinese story well, it is necessary for the people of the world to identify with Chinese culture from four dimensions: knowledge, emotion, value, and behavior. These four levels are progressive in time relationship, synchronous in spatial relationship, intertwined and interacted with each other.

When "Others" spontaneously spread Chinese culture on the basis of knowledge, emotion, and value, tell Chinese stories from the perspective of "Others" and use the words of "Others" to spread Chinese voices, the effect may be deeper than that of Chinese.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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