

# Cognitive Turn of International Communication Discourse of Chinese Culture in the Globalization Context

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## Abstract

The arrival of the digital communication era marks that human thought is gradually being regarded as a new field of contention. The “contention for concepts” has gradually evolved into the “contention for cognition” now. The contention for thinking patterns and codes of conduct enables communicators under all-media environment to participate in information processing and knowledge production by adjusting more cognitive resources. As the carrier of cultural communication, international discourse is the discourse used in China’s foreign exchanges, which aims to present the real China to foreign audiences and form their correct understanding of Chinese culture. In the globalization context, China is shaping the Chinese context globally, cultivating discourse subjects, producing Chinese international discourse in order to seek global discourse and emotional resonance on Chinese stories. This paper expounds the practical value of construction of cultural cognitive communication discourse in the globalization context, summarizes the characteristics of cognitive communication discourse, and discusses the communication requirements of cognitive discourse communication in Chinese culture, so as to enhance the appeal and acceptance of international discourse in cultural communication, and enhance the soft power of Chinese culture.

## Keywords

Chinese Culture, International Discourse, Cognitive Communication

## 1. Introduction

In the era of digital communication, the game of public opinion in international communication has gradually shifted from information intervention to cognitive intervention, and the main bodies of communication and reception have increa-

singly attached importance to the cognitive space. With the progress of communication technology and the influx of massive information on the Internet, the cognitive ability of individuals is not enough to ensure that they make reasonable and timely social judgments and social behaviors, which leads to the emergence of “cognitive competition”. Any country that gains the leading power in public opinion communication, as information competition and cognitive competition, will have a greater voice in the international public opinion field, can set the agenda for the international community, lead the reform of the global governance system, and achieve the goal of shaping the national image and safeguarding national interests. The commonality of human beings in the way of thinking and psychological structure determines that human beings with different cultural backgrounds have significant characteristics of a community of human destiny in their development. In the context of the multi-polarization pattern of global culture in the 21st century, China’s communicative subjects at all levels should establish “cultural consciousness” and “communication consciousness”, by absorbing its essence from traditional culture, revolutionary culture and institutional culture, and taking construction of a community of human destiny as its own responsibility, in order to promote the recognition of the international audience in mainstream culture, realize the global integration of Chinese culture, and finally construct the international discourse of Chinese culture.

This paper first discusses how developed countries such as Britain, France, Japan and South Korea, as well as developing countries such as China, India, Russia and Latin America, Arabian countries, have broken the cultural hegemony of US, followed the trend of global cultural communication, and drawn a multi-polarized world cultural map since the Cold War. Secondly, it analyzes the cognitive barriers to cross-cultural communication, and how US established a dominant international discourse through cultural communication to guide the international reception subjects to form cognitive bias against China’s rise. Finally, it discusses how China can build an international discourse system based on Chinese culture accepted internationally, break through the cognitive barriers of the discourse framework under American values, and develop with the peace-loving international community.

## **2. The Practical Value of International Communication Discourse in Culture**

### **2.1. Follow the Global Communication Trend**

With the rise of globalization, conflict and integration have become the new normal of human civilization. The commonality of human beings in the way of thinking and psychological structure determines that human civilization has the same or similar values, and different civilizations have obvious characteristics of a community with a shared future in historical conflicts and future development (Liu, 2019). The arrival of the era of globalization can be described as having a

profound impact on the world cultural landscape. The dual standards of multiculturalism in US are widely questioned. The European traditional cultural powers such as Britain (Abravanel, 2016) (Geng, 2016) (Sanderson, 2018), France (Hagège, 2020) (Wang, 2012) (Deng & Li, 2015) and Germany (Zhang & Wang, 2006) (Wang, 2008a) (Zhang, 2016b) are committed to maintaining the independence of national culture and refuse to be fully Americanized. Russia (Cheng, 2013) (Liu & Kang, 2014) (Xu, 2014), which straddles the Eurasian continent, strongly advocates (new) Eurasianism. Japan (Martel, 2012) (Xie, 2015) and South Korea (Wang, 2011) (Jin & Wang, 2012) are trying to find their former national identity in their dependence on US. Emerging forces such as Latin America (Wang, 2008b) (Martel, 2012), Arab countries (Ding, 2005) (Xiao, 2016) and India (Zhou, Meng, & Zhu, 2015) (Tan, 2016) are also trying to find a place in the new world cultural map, while China (Du, 2011) (Chen, 2015) (Lv, 2015) has become the eastern coordinate of cultural rise. The global cultural war has started, the global cultural trade pattern in the 21st century is taking shape, and the new world cultural map is in the drawing stage. The leading European countries and the pattern that led to the increasingly asymmetric cultural trade between the North and the South may be annihilated. At the same time, a number of emerging countries such as China, India, Arabian countries are leading the cultural rise of emerging countries. The growing audio-visual and information industries in Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and Africa have questioned the old global discourse. With the success of the Bollywood model, India has built a competitive film and television creative industry and achieved global output; Arab countries have tried to build a strong creative industry to defend Islam and become a counterweight to the western culture.

In the era of globalization, every country is choosing the path suitable for its own development, especially those with a long history and splendid culture. China, India, Brazil, Russia and other emerging countries have an increasing impact on the cultural and creative industries. The diversity of the internal culture of US and the practice of foreign cultural hegemony have been resisted by other countries. The change of the global pattern of cultural communication and the formation of the multi-polar pattern provide an international communication platform for developing countries that have long been in a weak position, and create opportunities for countries to update, adjust and innovate their national culture. In the face of many problems in the global economy, political system, social governance and other aspects logically dominated by capital, China in the new era is contributing China's wisdom and solutions to the world with the remarkable achievements of its path to modernization road, which will help solve the "world's difficulties" and respond to the needs of the times. Achievements benefit from culture. The success of China's modernization path lies in absorbing the essence of traditional culture, revolutionary culture and institutional culture, and also borrowing much from foreign advanced culture to form the values with Chinese characteristics that integrate China and the rest of the world, guide the people to keep up and the society to make progress, and finally

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realize the great dream of national rise. Chinese culture and its cohesive values provide a strong spiritual driving force, development and innovation force for both domestic and international audiences, so China's cultural value system should be recognized and respected by all countries in the world.

## 2.2. Break the Dominant Cultural Hegemony

In history, the game between big powers has a long history. The comparison of national strength and the change of national image involve complicated strategic system disputes, among which the cultural grand strategy is the most common. On the one hand, the use of cultural strategy can shape their own image. On the other hand, building a good national image can enhance the international appeal and centripetal force, and highlight the national cultural soft power (Wang, 2012). Since the 20th century, Western culture has been the most powerful in the world culture, and American culture is undoubtedly the most influential in Western culture. American culture covers a large area of the international cultural territory. At the same time, with its strong economic strength and media advantages, it has established a new ruling order of the world's cultural media (communication). Through the mechanism of "cultural output" and "cultural infiltration", it has leapt into the world's cultural leader and set American standards for many fields in the world. However, the arrival of the era of globalization is doomed to cultural diversity, and the dual label of multiculturalism in the United States is also doomed to not always dominate the world. In Europe: First of all, in the face of the impact of Americanization, the United Kingdom has adopted the strategies of copinism and traditional reconstruction (Geng, 2016), by making use of English, the most influential language in the world as a link, so as to spread its traditional culture and modern ideas through linguistic and cultural education. Secondly, in the face of the rapid development of American mass culture, France had a quite rational cognition, rejected the American liberalism values, strengthened the national cohesiveness through establishing French alliances around the world and transmitting French culture to the international audience, in order to shape the national image. Thirdly, in the face of the comprehensive invasion of American culture into Europe, Germany openly opposed the cultural policy carried out by US on the grounds of protecting its cultural tradition and maintaining the German purity, vigorously promoted German through Goethe Institute, and adopted a steady and progressive cross-cultural communication strategy to display and improve the cultural image of Germany in an all-round way. Japan and South Korea: Japan had the reverse strategic awareness and cultural consciousness. In the face of the strong export of American culture, Japan chose the American culture as the reference frame, and selectively learned and absorbed from its own culture in the process of self-reflection, so as to maintain its own cultural tradition and comparative advantages over other countries. South Korea has never given up to recognize itself in the "unique relationship" about US. It didn't rigidly follow the traditional thinking framework, but embraced the eastern and western cultures. At the same

time, it attached great importance to its own unique cultural traditions by properly integrating foreign cultures into its own culture, and pays attention to showing the identity of its national culture in other countries (Xie, 2015).

In the process of breaking the cultural hegemony of US, in addition to the economically developed countries such as the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan and South Korea, the national cultures of many newly-emerging developing countries have also risen in groups. First of all, in the face of the massive invasion and infiltration of American culture, Russia, which spans the Eurasian continent and connects the Eurasian civilization, began to formulate an international cultural communication strategy to carry out public foreign policy by injecting huge amounts of money in many fields, including establishing media for international audiences, setting up a foundation to promote Russian and Russian culture, regularly holding major international forums and international conferences, and supporting non-governmental organizations to carry out activities to maintain and enhance their national image. Secondly, in the field of culture, India has been committed to building a strong creative industry for a long time. It had the film industry cluster next to Hollywood in US, and integrated the whole national resources to build the film industry structure and industry scale that ranks among the top in the world. In terms of seizing the share of the global cultural market, India strived to produce Hollywood-style films for the public, met the desire for globalization, and reflected the national complex. Then, the Arab countries that mainly believe in Islam are also important competitors to the western culture led by US. Egypt's Ramadan opera, Arab Satellite TV and Al-Jazeera TV have constantly tried to create a media industry with strong creativity that highlighted national or regional characteristics, so that the world could see the Arab world and its bright foreign culture more truly and positively. Finally, in order to break the cultural hegemony of the West led by US, China has clearly sought the international expression of China's cultural position. In the Omnimedia context, China has established 541 Confucius Institutes and 1170 Confucius Classrooms in primary and secondary schools in nearly 162 countries and regions around the world (Shen, 2021), constructed the "Belt and Road" cooperation initiative of "New Silk Road Economic Belt" and "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" by covering 131 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, Oceania, North America and South America, communicated with international audience through media as China Daily, People's Daily, Shanghai Daily, Shenzhen Daily, The Global Times and other newspapers, shared Chinese culture with international community, in order to promote the grand cultural strategy, and constantly seek global discourse and emotional resonance of Chinese stories.

### **3. Construction of Chinese Cultural Communication Discourse**

#### **3.1. Overcoming Human Cognitive Barriers**

The cognitive barriers to cross-cultural communication among countries are

mainly concentrated in three aspects: first, communication subjects and reception subjects belong to different cultural regions, have different cultural backgrounds, use different languages, hold different values, and make different judgments. If communication subjects are not clear about the needs of reception subjects, it will directly affect the choice and direction of communicative information; Second, in the process of communication, differences in political positions, ideologies, interest demands, communication preferences, rhetoric and expression styles may lead to subjective cognitive bias and affect the final effect of information dissemination; Third, the differences of reception subjects within a culture, such as social class, educational background, life experience, value judgment, and external influence, will also lead to the polysemy interpretation of the received information.

In order to break through the cognitive barriers of the western camp led by US, and guide the vast number of reception subjects who are deeply affected by the western discourse system to respect, recognize and accept Chinese culture and its values, and build a foreign discourse system that connects China and the world, China has to recognize the huge obstacles and severe challenges brought by the current western discourse. First of all, face the ideological cognitive bias of the western developed countries led by US. For a long time, US and the West have been expanding to other countries and regions by their strong economic, technological and military strength, which is naturally accompanied by the global diffusion of soft power such as western culture and its values, in order to make them accepted by the people of other countries, and finally remove the ideological barriers for the free flow of western capital and its goods in the world. With China's remarkable achievements in economy, trade, military, science and technology, the promotions, such as building "a community with a shared future for mankind", constructing "the Belt and Road" cooperative initiative, opening Confucius Institutes, enhancing cultural exchanges and so on, posed a challenge to the dominant position of the West. "China Threat Theory", "China Collapse Theory", "War Wolf Diplomacy" and other biased statements have been heard in the international public opinion. Based on the Eurocentrism theory, western developed countries concocted a series of myths about western ideology, firmly controlled the discourse of global public opinion, and often claimed the Western-style democratic slogans such as "democracy", "freedom", "equality", and "human rights" as "universal values", which occupied the highland of the international public opinion field, and directed the political ecology of other countries, in fact, aiming to export western values.

Secondly, face the cognitive bias brought about by the dominant position of western culture over the centuries. The industrial revolution in the 18th century gave birth to Eurocentrism, which occupied the political, economic and military centers in the world. The large-scale overseas colonization in the 19th century established its global cultural hegemony. Since the 20th century, US started the cultural cold war against the Soviet Union, the intellectual cold war against the European cultural series, and the psychological and realistic strategies against

Japan, which made it achieve the global cultural hegemony, and formed Americanism. And then, US occupied the center of the world stage for a long time by coercing a group of old western capitalist powers, they together formed a deep-rooted western cultural center. Western academic culture has dominated the international academia for a long time. Its academic ideas, concepts, standards, research methods, implementation paths, and values and ways of thinking have gradually formed a complete set of international discourse system, including the excellent achievements in human civilization, as well as the arrogant academic prejudice, which has been widely spread throughout the world through the media and occupied the mainstream public opinion field, exerting a far-reaching impact on the global academic community. With dissemination of western learning to the Asian countries in the late Qing Dynasty, western academic culture has been widely instilled in China, leading many Chinese scholars to unconsciously “imitate” its cultural tradition, and “create” from it, which is a typical performance of taking the West as the top priority (Wang, 2020). Different from popular culture, academic culture is the cohesion of values, exerting more far-reaching impact on the international reception subjects who tend to examine everything in China based on the framework of western values and form cognitive bias. How to break the cognitive bias of western discourse system full of the ideological values, win the understanding and acceptance of Chinese values by scholars and people around the world, and realize the value consensus of Chinese and foreign cultures is the main task we are facing in building the international discourse right.

### **3.2. Characteristics and Construction of Cognitive Communication Discourse**

In order to achieve cross-cultural communication, cognitive communication in globalization context can neither copy the model of domestic mainstream reports nor use the same pattern of reports to different countries. Instead, it is necessary to conduct solid research, accurately grasp the real needs of reception subjects, and tailor the content of communication. The attention should be given to the differences arising from the translation among different languages, and to timely use of transformative, interpretive, restorative and corrective words to correct them. More emphasis should be placed on accurately discovering the development direction and route of the target country in order to share national governance and other experiences, reduce and eliminate misunderstandings, and develop together in peace. In other words, the key for external discourse system of Chinese culture is to respect other countries' systems, cultures, customs, values and other practical elements, focus on the bilateral relations and interest demands between other countries and China, and pay attention to the pertinence and differentiation of content selection, expression methods and other aspects in the process of cognitive communication (Zhang, 2016a). Cognitive communication discourse should meet the following two requirements: first, differentiated communication domestically and internationally. Domestic and

international reports should differently treat reception subjects, communication purpose and report content, flexibly choose theme perspective, reporting skills and language style. Reports contents talk about achievements and problems, propaganda and communication, which otherwise violates the law of news, causing the audience to question and contradict, and finally leading to the failure of communication. Therefore, it is necessary to correctly handle the relationship between publicity and communication, both positive publicity and objective reporting, both focusing on national interests and showing concern on the reception subjects' demands, both firm stance and international expression, so as to tell Chinese stories truthfully, comprehensively and vividly. Secondly, differentiated communication among other countries. International reports should fully understand the differences of other countries and regions, such as US, European countries, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Asian and African countries. These countries and regions have their own different civilizations and are at different stages of development. Even in the same country and region, there are also different faith, class, and native and foreign nationalities. International communication should vary from person to person. In the face of a variety of reception subjects, cognitive communication discourse cannot be uniform. It is necessary to fully study the development dynamics and interest concerns of different countries and regions, choose proper communication points, meet their favors, eliminate cultural differences to the greatest extent, seek common ground while reserving differences, and develop harmoniously together. The choice of words should desalinate the ideological color and use mixing language style with official, folk and network utterances; the voice should be declarative rather than condescending by appropriate use of critical expression; the rhetoric should be simple and vivid by using more notional word and short sentences, and avoiding flashy rhetoric; the text should use multimodality such as audio, video, pictures, text and figure tables by adding the original and translated; the means of communication should adopt omnimedia.

It is a systematic project to break through the cognitive barriers of the discourse framework under the western values and build an international discourse system of Chinese culture. In order to break the long-term fixed mode of thinking in the western world, especially in the academic world, and to welcome the mass of global reception subjects affected by it to recognize and understand China's international expressions, the key is to find a breakthrough and focus (Zhang, 2017). How to excavate the modern interpretive power of traditional culture, promote the popular recognition of mainstream culture, and finally realize the global integration of Chinese culture is of great importance to the construction of the international discourse system of Chinese culture with the joint participation of multiple discourse subjects and the integration of multiple discourse. The following three aspects should be paid attention to: the first is a focus on top-level design and systematic elaboration. The China' international discourse system is rooted in the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics which contain the policy of country governance, development



route, ideological wisdom, cultural traditions and values. It, based on the heritage of national culture and the struggle history of the Party and the people, reflects the Chinese spirit and value, and highlights China's concept and pursuit of national governance methods by taking traditional culture, revolutionary culture and institutional culture as the ideological source (Gu & Wu, 2021). The second is to focus on the reality and problem. The international discourse system needs to be based on the country's governance practices, such as China's embarking on the path of socialist modernization in all aspects in the new era, the prosperity of the socialist market economy under the guidance of the Party, the struggle of the Party to lead the people out of poverty and achieve prosperity, the formulation and decision-making of major international and domestic agendas, and the specific implementation path of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and so on. By summarizing China's experience, wisdom and developing path, it requires expressions that are easy for the international community to understand and accept, to share the Chinese stories well. The third is to focus on China's own characteristics and meanwhile absorb the essence of culture from other countries. Guided by the world outlook and methodology of Marxist dialectical materialism, China's international discourse system needs to properly treat all kinds of ideological resources at all times and in all countries, such as creatively modifying some concepts, categories and propositions in Chinese traditional culture to make it suitable for contemporary China, inclusively absorbing the common knowledge, experience as well as pursuit of mankind in the western discourse system by analyzing its underlying logic and reconstructing way of saying. To sum up, to construct international communication discourse of Chinese culture in the globalization context should take into account both domestic and international stylistic features, focus on the thinking mode of international reception subjects, and use commonly accepted words to express ideas and views.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In globalization context, China is actively looking for the convergence point suitable for the cognitive turn of global communication thinking, creating an international environment for China's peaceful rise, building a mainstream communication platform that integrates with the world, cultivating the communication subjects that meet the expectations of the reception subjects, building high-quality brands IP and content under omnimedia, building international communication discourse of Chinese culture, and then building China's international discourse power. The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) shows the determination and measures of the Party, which has gone through a hundred years of trials and tribulations in building a socialist modern country and promoting the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation in an all-round way. Faced with the international environment of turbulence and changes, the ideological bias of western developed countries led by US and the

cognitive bias brought by the dominant position of the western culture, China's modernization exploration over the past years has shown the international community that, as long as the goal is clear, leapfrog development can also be achieved through peaceful means, which provides a new choice and reference for the vast number of developing and undeveloped, and also a new model of comprehensive development for western countries with cognitive barriers to China. China's modern development model in the new era has effectively responded to hegemonism and power politics, contributing to safeguarding world peace, promoting common development and construction of a community with a shared future for mankind.

Based on the globalization era background, this paper discusses how developed countries such as Britain, France and Germany and developing countries such as China, India and Russia can break through the cognitive barriers formed by American cultural hegemony through cultural output, focuses on analyzing the obstacles and challenges faced by the international communication of Chinese culture, and how to achieve cross-cultural communication through constructing discourse system. At the same time, due to the limited space, it only discusses from the macro level, so more research is expected to explore the platform, media, subject of cultural communication, as well as the value system and expression mechanism of communication discourse from the micro level.

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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