Exploration on International Communication of Chinese Culture from the Perspective of Cultural Contexts: Taking Poland as an Example

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Abstract

International communication of Chinese culture is a crucial subject in the field of cultural studies and one of the hot issues that raised intercultural communication concerns. This paper conducts a questionnaire survey on Polish international students at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies to study the influence of Chinese culture in the international student group of target country, and analyses the current situation of Chinese culture's external communication based on the results of the survey. Overall, this paper dissects the dilemmas faced by Chinese cultural communication from the perspectives of physical, linguistic and intellectual contexts, and puts forward relevant countermeasures and suggestions in accordance with the cultural context theory.

Keywords: cultural context, Chinese culture, international communication, Poland

1. Introduction

Culture is "knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs and practices acquired by persons as members of a society as well as any other compound of talents and habits." Culture is embedded in specific human groups, forming shared ideas, values and beliefs and generating behavior (Taylor, 1992). The universally agreed upon, intrinsic national spirit, values, customs or ethical norms formed by the people of a particular nation constitute the cultural pattern of that nation and carry the kernel of that nation's cultural spirit and values. Chinese culture is centered on the traditional cultural thoughts of Confucianism, which embodies such outstanding qualities as loving others with kindness, convincing others with virtue, honesty and friendliness, and perseverance that constantly strive to be stronger, which have enabled the Chinese nation to shine throughout the development of world civilization and the alternation of cultural models (He, 2023).

In the construction of the "Belt and Road", the dissemination of Chinese culture to the international world plays an indispensable role in shaping China's national image, enhancing the country's cultural soft power and promoting economic development. General Secretary Xi Jinping attaches great importance to the dissemination of Chinese culture to the international world, pointing out that "we should promote the building of international communication capacity, tell Chinese stories, disseminate Chinese voices, and show the world that we have the ability to communicate with the outside world to present a real, three-dimensional and comprehensive China, and improve the national cultural soft power and Chinese cultural influence." (Xi, 2019). China-Poland friendship enjoyed a long and rich history. Poland was not only one of the first countries to recognize New China and establish diplomatic relations with China, but also one of the first countries to respond to the "Belt and Road" initiative. China has been Poland's second-largest trading partner for many years whereas Poland is also China's largest trading partner in Central and Eastern Europe (Yao, Xia & Yan, 2023). In terms of culture, there are close cultural exchanges between China and Poland, the development of Chinese language education in Poland is thriving, and Polish language education and research in China is flourishing as well (Li & Xu, 2024).

International students form a special group in universities whose thoughts and behaviors serve as a bridge between Chinese and foreign cultures to promote cross-cultural communication and build up cultural gap. Meanwhile, they serve as an important window for the dissemination of Chinese culture to the outside world. Based on this, this study selects Polish international students of Guangdong University of Foreign Studies as the research object to explore the influence of Chinese culture in target country students to dissect the influence of Chinese culture on international world. Throughout the survey, interviewees are asked to answer questions consisting of their cognition of Chinese culture, content preference and dissemination influence, in order to provide reference for the enhancement of China's cultural dissemination power and cultural soft power. The study adopts a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, combining literature analysis and questionnaire survey. In view of theories related to cultural context in the field of hermeneutics, the paper will analyze the current situation and difficulties of Chinese culture dissemination in Poland based on the results of the questionnaire survey, and explore the countermeasures and suggestions for the dissemination and promotion of Chinese culture in Poland from the perspectives of the physical context (channels of dissemination), the linguistic context (discourse power), and the intellectual context (symbols, heroes and values).

2. Analysis of Survey

2.1 Cultural Awareness

The first part of the questionnaire investigates the ways of disseminating Chinese culture among the Polish international student community, obstacles in dissemination process, and the public's overall perception of Chinese culture. The data collected shown that Polish students learn about Chinese culture mainly through the news media, books and newspapers, and generally display a greater interest in traditional Chinese culture, particularly from the ancient times to the Qin and Han Dynasties and the modern period. Among the many well-known Chinese cultural values, patriotism, collectivism and hard work are regarded as the core of the Chinese national spirit. However, language barriers and communication channels are still the main obstacles to cross-cultural communication between China and Poland, and the influence of Chinese culture in the international world still needs to be enhanced due to the "cultural gap".

2.2 Content Preference

Chinese culture is vast and profound with rich contents including folk customs, film and television works, literature and art, philosophical thoughts and so on in a broad sense. In terms of content preference and dissemination methods, Polish students are more interested in Chinese literature and arts such as poems and songs, national culture such as Taiji calligraphy and other traditional skills. The Mid-Autumn Festival, which symbolize reunion, falls into the preference of Polish students. In terms of forms and languages of communication, the respondents believe that multi-channel communication including text reading, film and television works, on-site experience and expert explanations should be adopted, and that English-based and multi-language representational symbols should be used as the medium of communication.

2.3 Evaluation of Cultural Dissemination

The evaluation of communication includes the overall effect of cultural communication, the sense of identification with Chinese culture, the influence of Chinese culture and the barriers to communication. China and Poland have maintained good relations of cooperation in political, economic and cultural fields since the founding of our country, and under the environment of increasing exchanges between the two countries and closer relations between the two countries, the spread of Chinese culture in Poland has been increasing day by day. According to the survey results, Polish students have a strong sense of identity and empathy towards Chinese culture, but the language barrier and content homogeneity are the main obstacles affecting the dissemination effect.

2.4 Recommendation on Cultural Dissemination

Based on the above questionnaire, the respondents put forward suggestions on strategies to improve the communication power of Chinese culture to the international world from different aspects. In terms of output content, the interest, diversity and interactivity of cultural content should be highlighted and the differences in cross-cultural backgrounds should be emphasized. In terms of communication channels, the advantages of multi-channels should be brought into play, and mainstream media, educational institutions, tourism projects and cultural and creative industries need to be used to promote cultural exchanges. Furthermore, the audience of cultural communication should not be limited to intellectual groups such as university, middle school and primary school students, but also include the role of tourists and cultural practitioners in cross-cultural communication and exchanges. With the rapid development of artificial intelligence, digital media and cross-border e-commerce, the development of cultural communication has shifted from traditional paper media to modern approaches such as short videos, live broadcasting platforms and social media. Hence, cross-cultural communication should follow the development trend of the times and give full play to the role of Internet technology in international environmental exchanges, so as to disseminate the influence of Chinese culture and demonstrate the Chinese culture soft power.

3. Major Dilemmas

3.1 Homogeneity of Communication Channels

Communication channels belong to the physical context elements in the cultural context, and their homogeneity is mainly reflected in the following three aspects. Firstly, the international dissemination approach of Chinese culture is single. In recent years, the rise of the media industry has made the media the major approach of international communication and dissemination. The development China's media industry is relatively late compared to the Western countries. Official media plays the key role in dissemination of Chinese culture and the approach, nevertheless, is rejected by the Western media. At present, the international economic, political and cultural state is dominated by western media and there is still a huge gap between Chinese media and authoritative one to enhance our international status and right of discourse. Secondly, the means of disseminating Chinese culture to the international world need to be strengthened. The Internet and its derivatives are becoming major communication channels. However, in the process of China's cultural dissemination process to the international world, the existing technical means and channel platforms still suffer from the problems such as relatively traditional means of dissemination, single form and backward technology. Under the traditional means of external communication, the relationship between the communicator and the communicated is more of a process in which the communicator acts as an authority to indoctrinate the communicated and the communicated passively accepts the culture as

an audience. Finally, the way Chinese culture is disseminated to the international world is in need of innovation. At present, the speed, depth and breadth of cultural dissemination have undergone profound changes, and the interactive and high-speed dissemination of massive information, the multi-centre radiation of public opinion, the diversification of audience groups and the diversification of ideologies have posed more challenges to the dissemination of Chinese culture to the international world (Xi, 2019). Consequently, Chinese culture should break through the traditional communication methods, make full use of Internet resources such as building a platform for Chinese language and cultural interests, updating the existing communication technology and applying appropriate communication strategies. They help facilitate the process of telling Chinese stories and disseminating Chinese voices in a more vivid way, enhancing the appeal and attractiveness of Chinese culture to the audience groups, and promoting the real "going out" of Chinese culture.

3.2 Barriers of Language Differences

Language is a "system of representation", the main tool for human beings to represent the world and to communicate (Chen, 2009). The practical activities of human society rely on language to represent or characterize what we want to say, to express or convey a certain idea, concept, concept or feeling (Hall, 2003). On account of the influence from enormous factors such as geographic environment and humanistic psychology, countries formed different referential systems represented by different linguistic symbols. Therefore, the obstacles to cross-cultural communication come directly from the barriers of linguistic communication in the first place. Language and culture are inseparable from each other as language is the path through which we can perceive human psychology, understand the psychological state, cognitive style and thinking pattern of a country. Chinese and Polish are two different types of languages, for example, Polish lacks a direct equivalent for the word "you". Unlike Chinese, Polish does not follow strict rules of syntactic order, and in many cases the order of Polish syntax depends on different factors such as the context or emotional mood of the message (Li, 2023). Poland is a typical low-context country whereas China is a high-context country. The understanding of discourse behavior and the interpretation of texts in high-context countries entails the search for elements of the textual context, which is often not limited to semantic meaning or surface meaning. In low-context communication, the listener knows little about what is being said, must be told everything explicitly, and his or her responses in communication are more outwardly orientated. Therefore, the differences in verbal behavior and the obstacles it brings are significant barriers to Sino-Polish cultural exchange. Besides verbal communication, non-verbal communication also serves as a crucial role in intercultural communication. Taking the classroom teaching of Chinese teachers to Polish students as an example, since Polish culture pays more attention to individualistic values and equality of power relations, most Polish students are inclined to keep a closer distance with their teachers and expect teachers to stimulate the classroom atmosphere with active body language. Rich explanatory and instructive movements and positive expressive movements which can enhance the harmony and activity of the classroom atmosphere are encouraged and popular among Polish students. The teacher's encouragement and infection will make students more actively involved in classroom learning, thus bringing about equal cultural communication (Hou, 2023).

3.3 Asymmetry of Cultural Context

Cultural context includes physical, linguistic and intellectual contexts. Cultural differences brought about by physical context refer to the differences in time and space, direction, geography, clothing, food and other physical elements. For example, Polish people might find it difficult in appreciating the significance of the word "panda" in symbolized in the mind of Chinese people. The elements of the physical context are included in the text in the form of linguistic symbols and ultimately integrate into cognitive context. However, as the differences of physical context can be eliminated by studying literal materials such as books, journals, parallel texts, etc. related to the text, the physical context doesn't constitute the most significant obstacle in cross-cultural communication (Chen, 2023). The impact of differences in linguistic context on cognitive styles and verbal communication behavior has already been discussed in previous paragraphs and will not be discussed in this paragraph.

Indeed, the most crucial source of textual meaning in cross-cultural communication is knowledge context that contains encyclopedic knowledge and the intention of the messenger, and the difference in cultural contexts formed by the knowledge context has become the biggest obstacle in cross-cultural communication. Knowledge accumulates into an all-encompassing cultural empire through symbolic representation and the content of which can be divided into four aspects: material, spiritual, institutional and methodological from a macro perspective. As the crystallization of human cognition and experience, knowledge formed and inherited by different cultures will inevitably carry the characteristics of the cultural system itself, forming a distinctive cultural model. Generally speaking, a cultural system contains common cultural phenomena, heroes and heroines, celebrations and rituals, and values etc. from the surface to the essence of the content. The different levels of a cultural system form an organic whole and guide people's life practices. However, the differences in cultural symbols, heroes, rituals and even values between different cultures constitute an asymmetry of cultural contexts, which should be paid attention to in cross-cultural communication. China has performed intercultural communication practices with Poland in cultural promotion in recent years. For example, female hero symbols representing Chinese culture, such as Hua Mulan, Mu Guiying, Liang Hongyu, have been created into the IP image of the game "Original God", whose appearance combines the images of

a number of well-known and valiant female heroes. The game focuses on combining with Chinese traditional culture in the promotion of Polish localities, which provides opportunities for overseas players to get in touch with China's excellent traditional culture and helps to enhance their curiosity and love. Such practice helps to enhance their curiosity and favourite degree, and strengthens the sense of identity of Chinese culture in Poland (Ma & Ge, 2023).

4. Responses and Recommendations

4.1 Enriching Communication Content and Broadening Communication Channels

Physical context is an important part of cultural context, including geography, food, clothing, architecture and so on. In cross-cultural communication, communication channels and modes of communication are important physical context elements that constitute cross-cultural communication. The mediated international social context has changed the way the world understands China, and the explosive development of digital video industry and Internet industry has led to the expansion of overseas communication channels.

Currently, the top five social media platforms in the world are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and Tiktok. At present, Youtube and Tiktok are the two main platforms for the dissemination of Chinese culture to the international world. Using "China" as the keyword to search on YouTube, the top 500 videos are screened by purposive sampling, with the number of viewings as the reference value, and the thematic contents are ranked in descending order as follows: music, sports, food and drink, film and animation, festivals, tourism, martial arts and acrobatics, life customs, crafts, games, dance, theatre, and history. Music topped the list with 30 per cent; sports and food with 15 per cent and 13 percent respectively. On TikTok, using "Chinese Culture" as the keyword to search, the top 500 videos were filtered out through purposive sampling, using the heat ranking as the reference value, and the theme contents were, in descending order, living customs, values, language and culture, costumes, Fine Arts, Performing Arts (Zheng, 2022).

Diversified communication channels have a strong impact on the development of China's cultural industry and foreign communication, among which IP operation is an important way for cultural exchanges between China and Poland. The term has been given a new connotation in China, referring to creative intellectual property that has strong attention, productivity and can be re-created. Currently, there are successful cases of cultural exchange between China and Poland such as Demon Hunter and Three Bodies. For example, the oriental philosophy in Three Bodies has attracted a large number of Polish readers, and the book is unique in the Western-dominated sci-fi literature world, providing Western readers with an oriental narrative model for sci-fi novels (Ma & Ge, 2023). We should continue to dig deeper in the areas of operation strategy, precise placement, content production, and training of professional talents to build a perfect operation system and promote the spread of Chinese culture.

4.2 Constructing Chinese Discourse and Enhancing Cultural Confidence

People live in the world of language and symbols, and Heidegger once said that "Things fail to appear when words fail to express", which means that people cannot clearly express their meaning and understand the world, nor can they communicate effectively without language. The use of language creates discourse, and discourse in turn embodies the characteristics of human behavior, which is purposeful, relevant and comprehensive. The use of discourse by communicators to achieve their goals leads to the creation of discourse which falls into the core topic of contemporary cultural studies (Chen, 2009). On 22 June, 2024, Polish President Andrzej Duda arrived in Beijing together with his wife and began a five-day state visit to China. President Xi Jinping held talks with President Duda to draw a blueprint for the future development of China-Poland relations. Both leaders of the two countries had an in-depth exchange of views on issues of concern and attended the signing ceremony of cooperation documents together (Yu, Ma & Zhao, 2024). The elevated co-operative relationship between China and Poland reflects China's rising discourse and international status.

At present, the international environment facing Chinese culture is still occupied by dominant Western cultures, we must establish a correct concept of self-awareness, identify our own cultural positioning and set up correct cultural mentality (Tong, 2014). The core values we advocate embody the connotations of "wealth, strength, democracy, civilization and harmony" and the bright vision of "patriotism, dedication, honesty and friendliness", which not only conveys the positive discourse of the Chinese nation's amity, harmony and mutual benefit, but also lays the foundation for our people's cultural self-confidence. In addition to maintaining a profound understanding and full confidence in our own culture, we should also be adept at actively learning from the outstanding cultural achievements of other nations and build up a discourse system that embodies Chinese characteristics and unites the world's consensus. It helps truly realize the harmonious coexistence of Chinese and foreign cultures in the blending of water and milk. The construction of a foreign discourse system is not only reflected in the formal level, but also in the ideological level, which is the core content of the discourse system and the essence of cultural exchanges.

4.3 Creating Chinese Cultural Symbols and Promoting Cultural Coexistence and Co-prosperity

Cultural contexts are shaped by symbolic representations, condensed into all-encompassing cultural empires and embodied in cultural models or systems, which are material, spiritual, institutional and methodological in terms of content. According

to Hofstede's onion diagram of the elements of culture, the different layers of culture include symbols, heroes, rituals and values, which guide people's lives through practice (Chen, 2023). Cultural communication should start with the brand image of China's core culture, and create product symbols and signs that embody the spirit, culture, sentiment, and temperament of the Chinese nation. Just as the Hollywood film brand is the most intuitive elaboration of the American spirit of freedom, the German industrial manufacturing brand is the clearest expression of the German tradition of rigor and meticulousness, and the French clothing and luxury goods brand is the most direct demonstration of the French elegance and romantic sentiment, the cultural traits of the Chinese are also in dire need of interpretation by symbols formed by Chinese brands with international influence. As the most vivid carrier of culture, the words and deeds of Chinese people are always interpreting the connotation of Chinese culture and showing the charm of Chinese culture, which is the most convincing display of Chinese culture (Wen, 2023). It can be said that the positive outlook and good image of the Chinese people is the most crucial brand to optimize the overall image of Chinese culture and is the most iconic sign and symbol to show the excellent culture of the Chinese nation.

At present, the mode of international cultural exchange is dominated by the West and traditional cross-cultural communication is centered on Western civilization, mainly serving the global expansion of Western culture. With the rise of China's international status and discourse power as well as the construction of "Belt and Road" Initiative, cultural exchanges should gradually migrate in the direction of "two-way interaction, symbiosis and co-prosperity". The current cross-cultural communication is different from the traditional cross-cultural communication in that the focus of the communication is to find the point of convergence between Chinese and foreign cultures, and to find the key to the value kernel that can inspire human empathy, bringing about a two-way interaction in cultural communication. For example, the overseas name of Jiyin is Tiktok, and Alipay is called Ascend in Thailand; these cultural symbols are converted to match the local people's user habits and cultural needs (Wen, 2023).

5. Conclusion

The heterogeneity of different cultures brought asymmetries on symbols, heroes, rituals, and values, which in turn bring about barriers to cultural communication from perspective of cultural context. In this paper, we conducted a questionnaire survey on Polish students, investigated in communication awareness, content preference, communication evaluation and communication suggestions. Countermeasures in terms of broadening communication channels, constructing the Chinese discourse system and creating Chinese cultural symbols are put forward to actively promote the dissemination of Chinese culture to the international world and eventually reach cultural identity.

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