



Exploring the Construction of International Communication Discourse System for University Students Based on the Theory of “Peace and Harmony”

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Abstract

Based on the theory of Peace and Harmony, this paper discusses and summarizes the exploration for the construction of discourse system of international communication for Chinese college students. We should actively mobilize the power of multiple subjects in international communication, give full play to the communication guidance function of folk opinion leaders and Internet celebrities among university students, adopt precise communication methods, and strengthen the dissemination of Chinese culture on social media platforms.

Subject Areas

Sociology

Keywords

Theory of Peace and Harmony, International Communication, Discourse System, China

1. The State of International Communication

The international communication discourse system was founded on the European Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution in Western countries. Western developed countries not only dominate global political and economic activities, but also are the core of international public opinion dissemination. The overall pattern of international communication is strong in the West and weak in the

East. The media in Western countries (e.g., world-renowned financial media: Forbes, Entrepreneur, Time, Barron's, Bloomberg Finance, Financial Times, Dow Jones Marketwatch, etc. Famous newspapers: The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Guardian, The Times, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, etc. Famous TV stations: CNN, NBC, BBC, German TV1, German TV2, French TV2, Al Jazeera, etc. Well-known news agencies: Associated Press, Agence France-Presse, Reuters, etc. Well-known social media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, etc.) They hold and manipulate the discourse of international public opinion, and most of the public opinion information flows from West to East. Most of these platforms adopt the strategy of homogenized information overload to "wrap" their users for the purpose of driving traffic and pursuing profits, solidifying rather than bridging the original conceptual differences, creating an information cocoon and polarization of public opinion, and benefiting from hate speech. Discourse and discourse power determine the primary and secondary positions of nation-states and regions in international communication activities. [1] Since China's reform and opening up, its economic strength and comprehensive national power have become increasingly powerful, and both civil society and officials are looking forward to concrete and feasible international communication strategy planning and action design to reshape the power pattern in the field of international communication. Therefore, there is a long way to go to identify the deep-rooted problems of China's current international communication pattern, to change the status quo of international communication as a whole, which is "strong in the West and weak in the East", and to build a Chinese discourse and communication system. The two worldviews of China and the West have given rise to two very different methodologies, which have led to public opinion disputes and unequal communication status in international communication practice. Therefore, it is of great significance to explore and build a strong Chinese discourse and communication system from the root of the problem, so as to deeply change the order and pattern of international culture and communication.

2. Western Discourse System

The Western discourse system is built on the basis of the great power game, national interest drive and capital expansion, and is rooted in the historical tradition, social system and religious complex of European and American countries. The Western discourse system not only protects the strategic interests of Western countries but also firmly upholds their values. Based on the theory of "Western-centrism", the communication discourse of Western countries often ignores the historical nature of cultural differences between different countries, and is characterized by de-contextualized and non-historical discourse. For example, the mainstream media and popular narratives in the West generally believe that the best social system must be one that respects the freedom and choice of the individual, and that the representative democracy, market econo-

my and civil society of Western countries represent the highest stage in the development of human political civilization. Western societies have created modern human progress, and the Western experience is the only criterion for defining social progress and backwardness, civilization and barbarism. Specifically, the financial globalization led by the United States has forced countries to open up their capital markets and deregulate their finances, leading to the creation of asset bubbles and financial crises by hot money in various countries; Western countries have pushed forward intellectual property rights protection agreements, defended the profiteering of multinational corporations and their monopoly of the market, impeded technological innovation and the sharing of knowledge, and put drug patents above the value of life; Western countries have adopted bullying tactics to engage in financial blockades, trade wars, and long-armed jurisdiction, etc. [2]

The discourse of “universal values”, which is widely followed and disseminated by Western countries, promotes a series of concepts, ideals and values that are universally applicable to human society in form. The “Western-centered” discourse system often focuses on specific issues and demands and is accustomed to adopting straightforward and distinctive action programs and operational guidelines. For example, Western countries are good at utilizing Hollywood entertainment products, the unidirectional information flow of many powerful media platforms and other mass narrative discourse systems to instill Western universal values in the global audience with the help of a large number of stories. Western countries dominate international communication platforms and channels, vigorously erode public opinion in digital space, discredit and stigmatize Eastern countries, and promote China’s threat theory and the discourse of “de-risking, not de-coupling,” in order to achieve the real purpose of sanctioning, containing, suppressing, and rejecting dissidents. Western countries’ containment strategies against China are constantly upgrading and expanding, and their discourse systems for communicating with China are becoming more and more covert and sophisticated, with the habit of incorporating China’s risky topics into the Western discourse system and distorting and constructing them. With tinted glasses, the media in Western countries have been changing old bottles into new ones and fanning the flames of the “China threat theory” based on possible risks in the future, with ulterior motives, such as accusing China of practicing “neo-colonialism”, “war wolf diplomacy”, “vaccine diplomacy”, “China’s collapse theory” and so on. The Western media have focused on attacking China on specific economic and trade, scientific and technological, military, internal affairs, international relations and other topics, creating specious discourse and public opinion that spreads and disseminates globally, and gradually forming a “tacit agreement, recognition and consensus” in the international community. For example, U.S. Treasury Secretary Yellen accused China of “overcapacity” in the new energy industry, saying that “China’s overcapacity disrupts global prices and production patterns, and harms U.S.

businesses and workers”. U.S. Ambassador to China Burns also said that China has dramatically increased its manufacturing capacity, its electric vehicles, photovoltaic and other industries, “excess capacity”, will undermine the global trading system. “China’s overcapacity theory”, this argument violates the principle of comparative advantage in economics but also violates the principle of fair competition in the World Trade Organization. Electric vehicles, the new energy industry is a globalized industry, only the division of labor and cooperation can be mutually beneficial and win-win. Pan-politicization and pan-securitization of economic and trade issues, such as production capacity, are contrary to the laws of economics and are not conducive to national industry or to the stable development of the world economy. [3]

3. Chinese National Discourse System

The theory of “peace and harmony”, which is rooted in the value system of traditional Chinese culture, has had a profound and wide-ranging impact on traditional Chinese social structure, interpersonal relations and cultural identity. Chinese history and culture emphasize the harmony between man and nature (the unity of heaven and man), between man and man (peace must be valued, harmony without uniformity, benevolence and harmony), and between man and his heart (Never pleased by external gain, never saddened by personal losses). Among them, “As Heaven changes through movement, a gentleman makes unremitting efforts to perfect himself.”, “the terrain is vast, gentleman carries goods with great virtue”, “A public spirit will rule all under the sky when the great way prevails”, “Water can carry a boat, but it can also cover a boat”, “Do not do unto others what you do not want them to do unto you”, “The man of humanity wishing to be successful himself, seeks to help others to be successful”, “For I am abstracted from the world, the world from nature, nature from the way, and the way from what is beneath abstraction.” and other ideas. The ideas and concepts of “the unity of heaven and mankind” advocate dealing with disputes and conflicts in a harmonious and peaceful manner, putting aside disputes, dynamically adjusting the relationship between man and man, man and society, and the state and the country, maintaining a stable structure based on friendly consultation and established order, and pursuing the balance and unity of things as a whole as well as the smooth evolution of the society. The theory of “Peace and Harmony” is rich in philosophical thought, humanism, education and moral concepts, and provides useful inspiration for people to build a better world.

The development of China’s contemporary discourse system is in line with the main idea and logic of the theory of “Peace and Harmony”. Chinese leaders have successively put forward the concepts of the Community of Human Destinies, the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, the Global Civilization Initiative, etc., advocating the seeking of common ground while reserving differences and the seeking of common development, and opposing the isolation of problems in a static way, which is a breakthrough from the either/or

and dichotomy mode of thinking. This breaks through the either/or and dichotomy mode of thinking, provides a brand-new perspective for thinking about human development issues, and highlights the spirit of commitment of Chinese leaders to take on the world as their own. Specific phrases include: “Standing together through thick and thin”, “speaking of faith, emphasizing love and righteousness, promoting justice, and establishing morality and righteousness”, “Being able to establish oneself, one should help others to do so”, “The world is equally shared by all”, “A world of universal harmony”, “value friendship and pursue shared interests”, “being kind to one’s neighbors, making peace with all nations”, and “while prosperity leads to the prosperity of the world”, “Seek common ground while reserving differences”, “Cooperation for a win-win situation”, “Multilateralism”, “Good-neighborliness, peace and prosperity”, “Keeping good relations with neighbors and keeping neighbors as companions”, and so on. For example, Chinese leaders have put forward the concept of a “community of human destiny”, which advocates the equality of all countries, regardless of size, strength or weakness, rich or poor, and the absence of ethnic and racial discrimination, as well as the non-imposition of one’s own will on others. These concepts provide Chinese experience and wisdom for the modernization of global governance, embodying the traditional Chinese culture of “sharing the same destiny” and “taking the world as one’s own responsibility”, and are conducive to the balanced and full development of the world’s political landscape and the improvement of global governance. It breaks the myth of the so-called “universal values” of the pan-religious logic dominated by Western countries and puts an end to the spells preset in the Western-centered discourse system, such as “Thucydides’ Trap”, “Clash of Civilizations”, “Clash of History”, and so on. The concept of “community of human destiny” unifies China’s dream with the world’s dream, and “the rule of China” with “the rule of the world”, providing the world with a new type of power, worldview, righteousness and benefit, civilization view, and a new way of life that is different from the past. China’s national discourse system based on the theory of “Peace and Harmony” opposes the “center-periphery” discourse order based on Western centrism, and although the theory of “peace and harmony” naturally has conceptual and moral advantages, it is a vast, abstract and obscure theory that is difficult for ordinary audiences to understand. In the future, we should try to enhance the effectiveness of its international dissemination, and highlight China’s concepts of win-win cooperation and universal commonwealth in the practice of international dissemination. We should transform the narrative discourse of China’s international communication into vivid, concrete, graphic and distinctive language, and transform it into Chinese stories that global audiences can understand, comprehend and empathize with. China’s international communication should not be carried out in a way that caters to the hegemony and interests of developed countries, but rather for the rights and interests of ordinary people around the world and their survival and development. China should actively ful-

fill its responsibilities as a great power, commit itself to promoting the international order and global governance in a more just and reasonable direction, advocate respect for the diversity of world civilizations, and pay attention to the special needs of the vast number of developing countries. To break through the discourse barriers of Western countries and establish a Chinese discourse system that integrates China and the rest of the world, it is necessary to follow the logic of history and reality, *i.e.*, the logic of civilization, the logic of great powers, the logic of system and the logic of human development. [4] We should be careful to identify and differentiate between the different perceptions of developing countries, pro-Western emerging countries, and “de-risking” countries while adhering to the common values of all mankind and China’s consistent stance of peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy, and freedom. We should formulate a targeted, country-specific, all-media discourse strategy, conduct constructive international exchanges, create a friendly international environment, and realize win-win development. We should overcome the Western dichotomous view of discourse power, mine discourse resources from the history and reality of China’s development, and carry out systematic construction and innovation. We should tap into China’s excellent traditional culture, integrate the excellent cultures of other nationalities, and put forward Chinese topics and Chinese programs at the right time. Internally, we should insist on doing a good job of developing the kernel of peace and equality, and externally, we should construct a mature and self-reliant Chinese discourse system based on the common values of mankind. We should make full use of the cutting-edge achievements of information and communication technology innovation to establish a preemptive discourse advantage under the trend of decentralization of the digital information ecology, establish a rational and constructive dialogue mechanism with the global media audience, and win respect in the true sense for China’s civilization, culture, and system.

Participants in China’s discourse system, in addition to government agencies and personnel in traditional diplomacy, various non-governmental organizations, enterprises, institutions and individuals, especially college students who can communicate in English, should actively participate in public diplomacy discourse activities, adopt an easy-to-understand, equal and interactive approach to subtle communication and explanations for the general public, and promote the main body of the discourse of international communication from the elite to the pluralistic discourse.

4. Individual Discourse System of University Students

1) China’s “Peace and Harmony” communication discourse system can take advantage of China’s relative first-mover technological advantage to realize organic integration with new international relations through networking. For example, TikTok is a data- and algorithm-driven change in the distribution of communication content, a large-scale real-time dynamic, big data-driven intel-

ligent communication that turns every Internet user in the world into a potential content producer and audience, and is a subversive change in the way human discourse is disseminated. the TikTok algorithm greatly improves the efficiency of distribution of communication content, and realizes an accurate match between information and users. With the help of big data, artificial intelligence and other technologies, TikTok has been able to “accurately profile” different audience groups, study the interests and concerns of foreign audiences, and accordingly push communication content in a targeted way to promote the precision of international communication.

2) In the practice of international communication, university students should find ways to transform the abstract theory of “Peace and Harmony”, which is rich in Orientalist mysticism, into vivid, concrete, imaginative and distinctive popular narrative discourses, so as to concretize the abstract concept of “Peace and Harmony”. To choose a good Chinese story, we should be good at discovering good story topics and digging out the common values of all mankind embedded in the topics themselves, transforming Chinese values and stories that are special and personalized into stories that are universal and have common values for all mankind, and highlighting the global significance of Chinese values in Chinese stories, tapping into empathy from daily life or personal life narratives to convince people with emotions. [5]

For example, Li Ziqi’s video works are full of traditional Chinese cultural elements and beautiful natural scenery in rural China, presenting the tranquility, nature and simplicity of rural life, letting people feel the beauty of nature and the power of life, and showing the beauty and charm of the Chinese countryside to the world. The commonality of the video works exudes a kind of pristine beauty, which inadvertently conveys traditional Chinese thoughts and values such as “the unity of heaven and mankind” and “the law of nature” to the international audience. Her videos also convey many positive values, such as respect for nature, hard work, honesty and friendliness, rural revitalization, environmental protection and cultural heritage. These values are not only the traditional virtues of our Chinese nation, but also values that should be carried forward in modern society. Practice has proved that folk communication is flexible in form, rich in content, with a wide range of subjects, more grounded, and more effective in international communication.

3) University students should make full use of the rapid upgrading of communication technologies, and utilize technological innovations in China’s communication-related fields to challenge the discourse advantages of Western media in international communication, and establish an independent discourse system with Chinese characteristics based on the theory of “Peace and Harmony”. The application of digital media and artificial intelligence in international communication has built a new type of social relationship. Artificial intelligence technology represented by ChatGPT has been used to improve the efficiency of international discourse dissemination, and the content of discourse dissemina-

tion is characterized by distribution, equality, multimodality, covertness and incitement. College students should scientifically recognize and correctly use ChatGPT technology to seize the opportunity of the new media revolution and follow the trend. They can also find another way to innovate communication methods and adopt various forms to spread Chinese culture and tell Chinese stories. For example, ChatGPT can profile users according to their search history and interests, and accurately recommend matching content for them, which theoretically can carry out one-to-one dissemination for global multilingual audience groups with low cost, high efficiency and good quality. Such dissemination is directly driven by algorithms and data, which greatly expands content production efficiency and dissemination capabilities.

4) In the process of international communication, the content of the discourse disseminated by individual university students and the self-published media should take full account of the characteristics of audiences in different countries and regions, and as far as possible, use the language they can understand and respect local values to tell China's story and disseminate China's voice. It should also take into account the actual situation and reasonable needs of the audiences, actively respond to the concerns of the international community, and make timely adjustments to the mode of communication on the basis of evaluating the effects of international communication. Innovative discourse logic is not a new "packaging" of discourse, but rather the realization of "empathy" of discourse. When we engage in discourse narratives, we need to identify the point of convergence with multiple civilizations to achieve empathy. What kind of discourse can attract the attention of global audiences, and what kind of narrative can win the resonance of multiple subjects. These are the two fundamental issues to be considered in the logic of innovative discourse, which is also an effective way to break through the packaging of Western discourse. [6] As in the case of the successful communication of the mascot of the Beijing Olympic Games, "Bing Dwen Dwen", "Bing" symbolizes purity and strength, which are the characteristics of the Winter Olympic Games. "Dwen Dwen" is a metaphor for thick, solid and lovely, which fits the overall image of the panda, symbolizing the strong and powerful body of the Winter Olympics athletes, the will of perseverance and the inspiring Olympic spirit. The combination of "Bing Dwen Dwen" image and the ice crystal shell will be an organic blend of Chinese cultural elements, modern international style, ice and snow sports characteristics, and the host city's characteristics. This not only highlights China's cultural soft power, but also shows the 1.4 billion Chinese people's generous invitation to friends all over the world, image interpretation of the Olympic spirit, but also enthusiastically expresses the promotion of the world's civilization exchanges and mutual understanding, and the construction of a community of human destiny of the beautiful vision. In cultural exchanges with the world, we should pay attention to developing our traditional cultural resources, developing cultural peripheral products with Chinese characteristics, making them form industries with special features, giving

them more characteristics and connotations, and enhancing the appeal and influence of Chinese culture in the world.

5) We should improve college students' ability to set issues in international communication occasions and encourage them to transform their original discourses into popularization so that they can adhere to their own subjectivity in the international arena as well as transmit their concepts, propositions and theories smoothly, and have them recognized and accepted by the people of the world. For example, General Secretary Xi Jinping put forward the concept of "green mountains are golden mountains", which is a spatial pattern, industrial structure, mode of production and way of life that not only saves resources but also protects the environment. University students in international communication occasions for mass communication, to spread the concept of environmental protection, low carbon around the world, in-depth and implicitly, to establish the concept of ecological civilization of harmonious coexistence of man and nature, the awareness of ecological civilization throughout the daily habits and everyone's actions, to be a positive disseminator of the concept of green mountains is golden mountains and exemplary practitioners, and to physically carry out the work. They will also be active communicators and model practitioners of the above concept, and make greater contributions to building a clean and beautiful world by practicing what they preach.

6) In storytelling on international communication occasions, university students should take traditional China, modern China and global China as their narrative objects, and tell China's classic story, development story and openness story well, so as to enhance the appeal, creativity and credibility of foreign discourse. For example, in the successful case of Yunnan's wild elephant migration, the cumulative number of hits on the topic of Yunnan's wild elephant migration has exceeded 11 billion, and more than 3000 media outlets at home and abroad have reported on the story, covering more than 190 countries and regions around the world. The global audience was able to see China's protection of wildlife, which also triggered empathy for environmental and ecological protection among the world's population. Telling a story through facts, stimulating emotions and generating empathy can make China's voice heard. This incident has become a window for the international community to understand China, allowing more people to see China's real actions in wildlife protection and environmental protection, and the Chinese people's view of civilization, nature, values and development has become clearer and more widely disseminated.

In the practice of international discourse dissemination, online literature, online games and other multifaceted narrative forms popular among young college students rely on the flourishing development of all-media and cross-media, and maximize the effectiveness of international dissemination through intellectual property brand promotion, thus constructing a foreign dissemination discourse system with a complete industrial chain, strong influence and strong adhesion. For example, as of June 2023, Qidian Literature (International) has launched

about 3200 translated works of Chinese online literature, cultivated about 380,000 overseas online writers, launched about 560,000 overseas original works, and has a cumulative total of more than 200 million users, covering more than 200 countries and regions around the world. [7] Genshin impact, an open-world adventure game developed by graduates of Shanghai Jiaotong University, has consistently topped the global handheld game bestseller list since its launch in September 2020. The story background of Genshin impact is based on seven “countries”, each of which is designed to incorporate cultural elements and civilization symbols from different regions of the world, and has successfully attracted players from different cultural backgrounds globally. The unique content mechanism and creative system of the game build a bridge and platform to connect people from different countries and regions, so that the excellent cultures of different countries and regions can converge and communicate with each other, breaking down the cultural barriers, and truly treasure our own distinct heritages, appreciate other cultures and promote shared prosperity.

5. Summary

The discourse of international communication is a set of narrative logic constructed by the nation-state for the dissemination of its own values, political standpoints and civilization beliefs. Reconstructing the discourse system of China’s international communication is to compete for all-round discourse power in the international public opinion field by innovating the discourse paradigm of China’s international communication. [6] Individual college students, as an important part of international communication, play an icing on the cake of China’s national communication discourse system. Self-media operated by college students is characterized by decentralization, diversification, plurality and diversity, which can enhance the equality, immediacy, experience and authenticity of China’s international communication discourse, effectively eliminate prejudice, misunderstanding and mistrust, enhance the credibility and explanatory power of the communication content, transcend the barriers of ideology, enhance the individual experience of the audience, and enhance the interaction of the system, which can truly tell a good story of China and spread the voice of China. China’s voice can really be told well. Therefore, we should actively mobilize the power of diversified subjects in international communication, give full play to the communication guidance function of folk opinion leaders and internet celebrities, adopt precise communication methods, and strengthen the dissemination of Chinese culture on social media platforms. Of course, to tell the Chinese story well in foreign languages, college students must have the ability to understand the Chinese story, an advanced level of foreign language, cross-cultural communication ability and international communication ability. Colleges and universities should effectively improve college students’ ability to tell China’s stories well in foreign languages through teaching and cultivation of curriculum ideology, foreign language courses, general education courses and international exchange

programs.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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