

Cross-Cultural Communication Practices for Chinese Films From *Speaking Into the Air*

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Abstract

By using the theory of communication philosophy, our paper excavates the “symbol-spread-dialogue” communication theory proposed by Peters in *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication* as the discursive logic, and through its research on the diachronic process of cross-cultural communication of contemporary Chinese films, in-depth content expression, communication paradigm and effect feedback, and explores the differences between communication theory and film cross-cultural practice. The study found that the practice of cross-cultural communication of Chinese films based on theory, based on the characteristics of films and modern technology, enriches the symbols of expression, and forms differences with dissemination in the way of communication, and the current Chinese film culture communication urgently needs to find more effective communication methods, to promote the plight of film customer service Speeding into the air, and then make the film transcend material attributes and achieve the purpose of cross-cultural communication effect.

Keywords: *Speaking Into the Air*, Chinese cinema, cross-cultural communication, communication

1. Introduction

Peters has been hailed as “one of the most innovative and non-existent thinkers in the field of communication and media studies in the United States”, who has studied communication for many years, published *Speaking into the Air*, which has been translated by Professor He Daokuan into Chinese in 1999. In 2017, Professor Deng Jianguo retranslated the book and polished it with media study, which plays an important position for Peters in the field of Chinese communication scope.

Through the collection of research data in this paper, it is found that there are detailed differences in the focus of Chinese and Western academic circles on *Speaking into the Air*: Chinese scholars are more enthusiastic about the study of the book than Western scholars, and many outstanding Chinese scholars interpret and study this book from the perspective of communication, philosophy, literature, psychology and other disciplines focusing on communication, media, technology, effects, channels, etc., clarifying the classic theory of communication in the era of public communication across disciplines, time and space, The concept of academic rationality formed by technology, these studies are of great significance for the further development of scholarship and the understanding of contemporary communication practice(Yan Bin, Chen Cheng, 2021). Whether it is *Speaking into the Air* or “the helplessness of communication”, it reflects the complex picture of culture (She Wenbin, 2009), and film, as an important carrier and medium for modern cultural dissemination, is also an important tool for telling Chinese stories. However, it is a pity that the current research on communication theory from the perspective of the practical dilemma of cross-cultural communication is still in the exploratory stage, and the research of finding the echo between the classical theory of communication and the practice of cultural exchange is still in the exploratory stage.

2. Literature Review of Communication and *Speaking Into the Air*

Focusing on the classic theory of communication in *Speaking into the Air*, scholars at home and abroad have carried out diversified discussions on the history of communication ideas and communication concepts contained in them (Wu Fei, 2019), elaborated on the academic theories and ideological values contained therein (JW

Murray, 2002; Deng Jianguo, 2017), and communicated with the author from psychological and visual themes, combined with texts, interviews and other forms (Chang Jiang, He Renyi, 2018; Carolyn L, 2010), and through the method of comparative research, combined with Laozi, Zhuangzi, Marx, Plato, Liezi and other subjects with similar specificities to carry out discussions, so as to expand the concept of “communication” based on historical knowledge (Xie Qingguo, Wang Jie, 2020), and reflect on the dilemma of cultural communication in modern society (Zeng Zhi, 2021), thus advocating a new approach and new perspective of media application (Peng Lan, 2021), advocates reforming the way of cultural communication, such as through the establishment of specific communication mechanisms (KB Jensen, R Helles, 2017) to lead cultural communication out of the dilemma of modern exchanges. However, the research on the effects of cross-cultural communication in the academic community is still relatively limited, and in the process of searching relevant literature, no research has been found to interpret the concept of communication from the perspective of cross-cultural communication in films. To make up for the shortcomings of the current research, this paper uses the cross-cultural communication of Chinese films to use specific film communication practice cases combined with the classic concepts of communication to conduct comparative thinking, aiming to find the combination of theoretical and practical significance for the cross-cultural communication of contemporary films, and better tell Chinese stories to promote the spread of Chinese culture to the outside world.

3. Dialogue in the Cloud: A Review and Prospect of Cross-Cultural Communication of Contemporary Chinese Films

3.1 Communication Content: The Dissolution and Enhancement of Symbols in the Cross-Cultural Dissemination of Films

Symbols flow during propagation. Peters used the examples of Socrates and Jesus to explain the definition of symbols, the fluidity of language, and the process by which language changes with the evolution of ideas. Just as people cannot step into the same river, the same sentence will be understood in different ways in different contexts (Shan Bo, 2011). Peters, therefore, emphasizes that attempts to pin the language and the ideas it represents in the eyes of the audience, regardless of the characteristics of the medium used in the process of communication, are futile.

To a certain extent, the film also reflects the freedom of the audience’s understanding relative to the definition of the communicator: the camera frame faithfully records everything that happens in front of the camera and plays it indiscriminately through various media. In the process of creating film content, although the creation processes and screens of the picture, and the language is also added to the production process of the content, the creator of the film leaves the right to interpret the content to the audience.

At the moment of release of the image and after that, the creator naturally withdraws from the scene, thus deconstructing the concept of “transmission-oriented” communication. Therefore, as long as the play button is pressed, the symbols contained in the image or the content of the film can be presented according to the wishes of the audience. Then, the encoding and decoding work of the film is completely handed over to the audience, and all the symbols contained in the film are detached from the possibility of being fixed, dissolving the worries expressed by Peters in the book: whether it is the tears on the lips of the flowers swallowed by the dance floor in *The Last Emperor*, the tears in the eyes of The Little Bean Singing “I was originally a female Jiao’e” in *Farewell to the Overlord*, the tears shed when Cheng Yong looked at the crowd in the prison car in the prison car, the same symbol “tears”, the similar behavior “crying”, The experience brought to the audience in different contexts is undoubtedly different; different behaviors and values can also bring the audience similar experiences and feelings, such as the Tendai trick in *Infernal Affairs* where the heart has the right way and the dilemma of love and righteousness, the feeling of home and country in *Ip Man* for martial arts and faith and righteousness, the courage to risk other people’s lives in *I Am Not a Medicine God*, even if these three actions are not represented by the unified pure goodness part of modern values. However, the image symbols composed of them can also bring similar shocks to the audience, so that the audience is touched by them.

3.2 Communication Paradigm: The Adaptation of Non-modernity Spread in the Cross-Cultural Communication of Film

In *Speaking into the Air*, Peters divides the history of human evolution into two parallel parts, on the one hand, the history of organic biological evolution, on the other hand, the history of inorganic technological evolution, and affirms the importance of the human body to communication by denying the view that organic history is useless in communication science, saying that the presence of the body increases the frequency and channel of interaction between the subject and others, so that the two evolutionary histories are intertwined and intertwined to promote the progress of humanity, society, and culture. Combined with the one-way spreading of Jesus’

sermon, that is, spreading as an example, it is said that evangelistic spreading expands the restrictions of the original communication channels and creates the dream of seamless communication, to conclude that the fundamental purpose of communication is to reach the goal of communication, that is, to find ways to establish partnerships with others, and argues in the book that spreading is more powerful and deep than modern communication methods.

Admittedly, Peters argues and affirms that the spreading communication paradigm, although to a certain extent, breaks through the limitations of mass communication. However, even if we ignore the religious characteristics of Jesus' miraculous method of communication, Socrates's teaching of communication has the help of historical inevitability, and Peters' idealized interpretation of the channels and scope of dissemination with *The Spread of Sowing* still has its limitations and cannot be applied to the cross-cultural dissemination of contemporary Chinese films.

(1) In the era of public communication, attention resources have become the main resources of competition among various media platforms, and it is impossible to rely on one-way, broad and open distribution methods to carry out cross-cultural dissemination of films, such as IMDB's film *Infernal Affairs* (8.0) and *Ip Man* (8.0) were produced before the 21st century, these two films can stand out and gain great influence and recognition in the foreign film market, obviously not relying on unilateral, Large-scale publicity to broaden its scope of dissemination, otherwise *I Am Not a Medicine God*, which once dominated the Chinese film box office market in 2018, should have a greater publicity scope and publicity, but it did not appear in the IMBD film list, and it also reflects the blind expansion of communication, not the main means to increase the effect of cross-cultural communication of movies.

(2) The uncertainty of the meaning of the spread, while giving birth to rich interpretation, will also cause modern audiences to misunderstand, evade, and even refuse to watch the content, which in turn will cause the inversion of the purpose of cross-cultural communication of the film. This contradiction can also be seen in the case of cross-cultural communication of films selected in this article, *Farewell to the King* and *The Last Emperor*, which have repeatedly achieved rich results in international film festivals, because of the number of readers in the IMBD has not reached the requirements of the list indicators, it can be seen that even with excellent artistic attainments and in-circle evaluations if the cross-cultural communication process of the film faces the absence of the audience, its dissemination may be able to complete the expectations of the spread that Peters said. However, it is not possible to achieve the desired effect of cross-cultural communication through film. Unilateral dissemination without considering the recipients of the information cannot get the expected recognition and feedback, so it is difficult to help Chinese culture go global.

3.3 Communication Effect

Starting from the image alone, we talk about the breakthrough between the cross-cultural dissemination of modern films and the "dialogue" that Peters said. Different from Peters' point of view, this paper believes that image communication does not have the purpose of real-time calls and the anonymity problems brought about by network communication, in addition, the effect of cross-cultural communication in the influence of communication comes from the resonance of vision and imagination: that is, the audience does not need to have a better understanding of the background of the film, only by watching the film and getting resonance with the image after the recall and association of the image, can produce the film itself and the culture, values and other content of the identity. In this process, the audience understands the content of the film according to their own experience, and has a deep impression of some fragments and plots, such as in *The Last Emperor*, Puyi bought a ticket to enter the Forbidden City in his old age and was kindly and carefully said "I used to live here" when stopped by the child of the administrator in front of the dragon chair. In *Farewell to the Overlord*, The Qinglou Kiln Sister played by Jiang Wenli sends her son into the drama class, turned around and immediately cut off six fingers and looked back at the determination and temptation of the class owner, Liu Jianming said in *Infernal Affairs* "Give me a chance, I also want to be a good person", *I Am Not a Medicine God* Huang Mao drove to lead the police to check, and finally he caused a car accident when he fell to the ground orange, in *Ip Man* in front of the Japanese officer *Ip Man* shouted "I want to fight ten" in anger, Even with the help of words, the audience's feelings and associations with the film can be evoked. Therefore, even if there is no material medium, the audience can relate to the plot and content of the film and trigger its thinking and imagination, and in this process, the interaction and exchange between the recipient and the transmitter, that is, the film content, have been completed, forming a complete dialogue, to achieve the ideal effect of cross-cultural communication of the film. At this time, the brain replaces the inorganic material medium and can use its playback effect function to review and interpret the film. Therefore, if the cross-cultural communication of the image can experience a complete dialogue, it has broken away from the material shackles of dialogue in Peters' eyes, and completed the mutual

speech between the subjects, thus maximizing the communication effect.

4. Conclusion

In the era of public communication, with the development of modern technology, communication and communication are more frequent than in any historical period, and film as a tool for cultural communication is becoming more and more important in cross-cultural communication. When telling Chinese stories well becomes a strategic policy and is given more and more attention and attention, the role of film in the external dissemination of Chinese culture will become more and more important and will enhance the scope and depth of cross-cultural dissemination of Chinese culture. This paper focuses on the perspective of communication, combines the classical communication theory proposed in *Speaking into the Air* with the cross-cultural communication practice of contemporary Chinese films, and analyzes the similarities and differences between this theoretical idea and the cross-cultural communication practice of contemporary films through specific film cases, which can better combine film science and communication science, and also provide a useful reference for future film cross-cultural communication research.

Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on Contributors

Yujie Lu is a Ph.D. candidate student from University of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences who majored in cultural communication.

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