

Strategies to Construct Contemporary International Discourse Power of Chinese Ceramic Culture

Jingyi Sun¹, Renqing Jiang², Lun Wang^{1,*}

¹Jingdezhen Ceramic University, Jingdezhen, Jiangxi, China

²Jingdezhen Changhe Experimental Primary School, Jingdezhen, Jiangxi, China
416745945@qq.com

*Corresponding author

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Abstract: China is the birthplace of ceramic. During the long history of ceramic making, China has developed profound ceramic culture. Before 20th century, Chinese ceramic making prevailed in the world and foreigners were proud to possess porcelains from China, so the discourse power of Chinese ceramic culture at that time was rather strong; in contemporary world, the influence and discourse power of Chinese ceramic culture declines compared to the past. In order to construct the contemporary international discourse power of Chinese ceramic culture, China needs to spare no efforts to achieve it. Guided by the theory of cross-culture communication, the essay studies the construction means of the contemporary international discourse power of Chinese ceramic culture in three aspects, namely, from the modes of dissemination, from the contents of dissemination, and from the disseminators. By taking advantage of the three means of constructing the contemporary international discourse power of Chinese ceramic culture, it is hoped that not only the ceramic culture but also the cultural soft power of China will be significantly elevated.

1. Introduction

Ceramics is one of China's great inventions, and Chinese ceramic culture has a long and rich history, which has had a profound and far-reaching influence on the world's civilization.[1] During the 15th to 19th centuries, ceramics are valued significantly by people of foreign countries, and foreigners were proud to have porcelains from China. As a result, Chinese ceramic culture was once a dominant language leading the world, possessing the most powerful discourse power of ceramic culture at that time. However, after the flourishing Kangxi and Qianlong reigns, the influence of Chinese ceramics was gradually weakened with the decline of feudal society in China.[2] Therefore, the construction of contemporary discourse power in Chinese ceramic culture has become an important task for the cross-cultural dissemination of Chinese ceramics.[3] Chinese ceramic culture should take the strategy of "Chinese Culture Going Global" as an opportunity, make full use of China's profound historical accumulation, and lay a solid foundation for the soft power of Chinese ceramic culture.

2. Discourse and Power

It is generally believed that discourse is speech act, which is the communicative behavior and behavior between people. In December 1970, when Foucault became an academician of the French Academy, he delivered a speech titled “The Order of Discourse”. In the speech, Foucault proposed that “discourse is the means and purpose of people’s struggle. Discourse is power, and people give themselves power through discourse.”[4]

Foucault further deepens the understanding of the essence of discourse. He believes that discourse has both linguistic and non-linguistic significance. Discourse is not only a thinking symbol or a tool for communication between people, but also a means and a purpose for communication. Foucault’s view on discourse power is quite similar to our general understanding of discourse power. We generally believe that discourse power is the power to speak, and whether or not the subject has discourse power, the size of discourse power depends on the subject’s wisdom, knowledge, and strength.

In Foucault’s view, all human knowledge is obtained through discourse as a tool, and the relationship between humans and the world is a discourse relationship, and nothing can exist without discourse.[5] Although Foucault believed that discourse is power and human knowledge acquisition is achieved through discourse, and that knowledge is always linked to power and knowledge generates power, he does not believe that knowledge and power are the same.[6]

Discourse includes not only written and oral texts, but also nonverbal forms such as architecture and the behavior of social institutions. Foucault further points out that the structure of discourse is an inherent set of rules that determine the form and content of cognitive behavior.[7] It can be seen that discourse is not only manifested in language, but is closely related to power. Speech itself is a form of power, that is, discourse power. Power is a core concept in many of Foucault’s works.[6] Power is omnipresent, manifested in the discipline of every individual.

The discourse power is an important proposition proposed by Foucault for the world, and in today’s world, the scope and research of discourse power are increasing day by day.

3. The Contemporary International Status of Chinese Ceramics

Henry Kissinger writes in his book *On China*: “Until 1820, China’s proportion in the world’s gross domestic product was still greater than 30%, exceeding the combined gross domestic product of Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and the United States.”[8] However, looking at the current international ceramic consumption market, although China’s share of export tiles to Asia takes the major share(77% in 2022), Chinese share of ceramic tiles exported to European developed countries is not commensurate with its position as a major ceramic producing country. In 2022, although China’s ceramic tiles export takes the lead in the world, the percentage is not comparable to China’s status of ceramic birthland as is shown in Table 1. China needs to further develop its ceramic industry and further deepen its ceramic influence in the world.[9]

The contemporary status of Chinese ceramics is not commensurate with its glorious history, and the construction of the international discourse power of Chinese ceramic culture should become an important task for the external dissemination of Chinese ceramic culture.

In 1998, UNESCO stated in its *Action Plan on Cultural Policy for Development* that culture would become one of the core topics of the 21st century. In order for a country to stand out and gain cultural discourse power in the turbulent and cross-border international cultural competition, it must have a pivotal cultural aircraft carrier, which directly affects its position in world culture.

Although China has become the world’s second-largest economy, its cultural discourse power remains a weakness in the international community. The share of a country’s international discourse power is never automatically generated by its strong national strength, prosperous technology, and

high-level education, but requires the continuous dissemination and construction of the country's discourse power.[10]

Table 1: Major Ceramic Tiles Export Countries and Their Export Percentage in 2022

Countries	Percentages
China	20.9%
Spain	15.6%
India	15.2%
Italy	12.9%
Iran	7.0%
Turkey	4.6%
Brazil	4.1%
Poland	1.8%
The United Arab Emirates	1.6%
Mexico	1.5%

4. Strategies to Construct Contemporary International Discourse Power of Chinese Ceramic Culture

Ceramics is an important business card of Chinese civilization and an outstanding representative of China's excellent traditional culture. Jingdezhen is renowned as the millennium old porcelain capital and the main starting point city of the Maritime Silk Road. It is an important bridge for promoting exchanges, mutual learning, and continuous progress of world civilizations. Jingdezhen porcelain is an important cultural symbol for the world to understand China and for China to go global, as well as an important carrier for inheriting excellent Chinese culture. Therefore, it is essential that efforts should be made to revitalize Jingdezhen ceramic culture, that the contemporary international discourse power of Jingdezhen ceramic culture should be built up, that the dissemination power of Chinese ceramic culture and the soft power of Chinese culture should be significantly enhanced.

In the face of the complex and diverse domestic and international environment in the post pandemic era, strengthening the construction of international discourse power has shown theoretical and practical importance.

4.1 Construction from the Mode of Dissemination

4.1.1 The Belt-and-Road Initiative

With the promotion of the joint construction of "The Belt-and-Road Initiative", the continuous development of new ways for ceramics to go global has helped Chinese ceramic products to be exported. In September 2018, the "China-Europe Express" from Jingdezhen to Moscow departed for the first time, exporting a large number of daily porcelains, allowing Chinese ceramics to more conveniently enter the international market.

In the context of the joint construction of "The Belt and Road", Chinese foreign trade channels have been continuously expanded, and Jingdezhen ceramics export has become more convenient, and China's ceramics culture has been promoted in the world. The international discourse power of Chinese ceramic culture is therefore elevated.

4.1.2 Confucius Institutes

There are hundreds of Confucius institutes all over the world. These institutes have helped disseminate Chinese culture to the foreign people who wish to get some information about Chinese culture and desire to know more about China. Therefore, taking advantage of the Confucius institutes all over the world to disseminate Chinese ceramic culture is an efficient means to make the world familiar with Chinese ceramic culture. In Confucius institutes, some ceramic courses, practice of making ceramics, can be instructed and Chinese ceramics should be displayed to the foreigners. It is a good way to directly show Chinese ceramic culture to foreign people, without the trouble to make foreigners come to China to experience Chinese culture personally, it is a good medium to deepen the recognition of Chinese ceramic culture among countries around the world, and it is a convenient means to enhance the international discourse power of Chinese ceramic culture.

4.1.3 International Ceramic Exhibitions and Expos

In recent years, China's Jingdezhen has continuously held international conferences and exhibitions such as International Copyright Forum, International Ceramic Expo, and International Ceramic Biennial Exhibition. The city's reputation and external influence have rapidly increased in the new era.

By utilizing international ceramic exhibitions and expos, it is aimed to enhance the international influence of Chinese ceramic culture. At the same time, Jingdezhen actively expands its ceramic trading platforms, and builds a never-ending porcelain expo that combines online and offline expos to normalize ceramic communication and trading. In 2021, the economic volume of Jingdezhen International Ceramic Expo exceeded 9 billion yuan.

At the end of 2022, the 5th Arabic Arts Festival was successfully held in Jingdezhen. Through a variety of activities, such as exhibitions and performances, forum exchanges, tourism promotion and art research, it has injected a vigorous force into China Arab cultural exchanges in the new era and has shown Jingdezhen's style to the world. Jingdezhen is conducting an in-depth research on the cultural and spiritual aspects of ceramics, elevating the discourse power of Chinese ceramic culture.

4.1.4 Various Media

In contemporary world, there are all kinds of media for communication. China should give full play to the advantages of the network, the live stream, the film and television, the official accounts and other media to improve the dissemination effect of Chinese ceramic culture. At present, the official flagship store of Jingdezhen ceramics has covered Tmall, JD, Tiktok, Kwai, WeChat official accounts and other Internet platforms. The Taoxichuan Live Streaming Base is actively building a ceramic e-commerce integrated center that includes six major areas: product design, production and manufacturing, warehousing and logistics, live streaming product selection, e-commerce operation, and product marketing. It has aroused the interest and attention home and abroad, and has promoted the influence of Chinese ceramic culture.

In summary, to construct contemporary international discourse power of Chinese ceramic culture from the aspect of dissemination modes can be achieved from the Belt-and-Road Initiative, the Confucius institutes, the international ceramic exhibitions and expos, and various media, as is depicted in Figure 1.

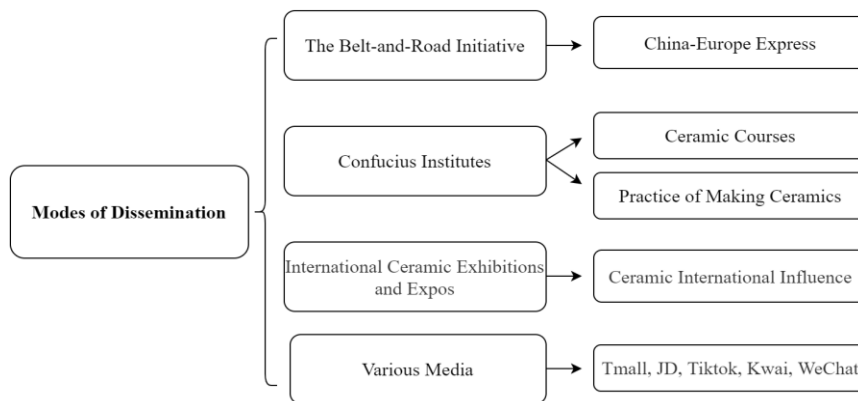


Figure 1: Modes of Ceramic Cultural Dissemination

4.2 Construction from the Content of Dissemination

4.2.1 Ceramic History

Throughout China’s ten-thousand-year history of pottery making and the changes in its history, ceramics contains the great wisdom and brilliant cultural connotations of the Chinese people, condenses the entire process of China’s historical development, and it is a long story of Chinese ceramics worth telling the world. Through telling the long ceramic history, the cultural soft power of China will gradually enhanced.

4.2.2 Ceramic Types

The development and dissemination process of ceramic types is in line with the material and spiritual civilization of Chinese society. It not only depicts the progress and improvement of ceramic craftsmanship, but also reflects the living conditions, ideological concepts, aesthetic characteristics, and spiritual pursuits of people for different times. Through the narration of the development history of ceramic types, it explains to people around the world the political, economic, and social development status of China in different historical periods.

4.2.3 Ceramic Painting

As an indispensable carrier, Ceramics has spread Chinese culture to the world, and it has also promoted the development and growth of ceramic painting art. Porcelains are widely accepted works of art by both the East and the West. Therefore, ceramic painting uses ceramics as a carrier to reflect the ideological and cultural characteristics of various historical periods in China, and is an important force in spreading Chinese culture.

4.2.4 Ceramic Folk Stories

Chinese folk stories and legends related to ceramics are also an important part of the development of Chinese ceramic culture. These folk stories are mostly based on certain historical figures, events, social customs, local characteristics, etc., and they are formed through people’s imagination. These folk stories have been continuously added and reduced in content over several generations, and are constantly rendered and processed to become their current form. Although many folk stories are fictional, they reflect the heroic spirit of ancient Chinese porcelain workers who were indomitable, fearless of violence, and full of sacrifice spirit. At the same time, they also

express people’s aspirations for beauty and the pursuit of ideals.

4.3 Construction by the Disseminators

4.3.1 Cultivating “Ceramic+Foreign Language” Talents

On the one hand, currently, there is a shortage of specialized talents who are both familiar with ceramic knowledge and proficient in foreign languages. Many practitioners in the ceramic industry lack foreign language skills and are unable to spread ceramic culture in foreign languages, while foreign language professionals lack knowledge related to ceramics. To deal with the shortage of talents in the field of “ceramic+foreign language”, ceramic universities and institutions should focus on cultivating talents in this area. It is possible to offer a dual degree program where students acquire foreign language knowledge in the first two college years and ceramic knowledge in the following two years. Therefore, efforts should be made to cultivate “ceramic+foreign language” talents to accelerate the international dissemination of Chinese ceramic culture and ceramic discourse power.

4.3.2 Training Ceramic Translators

Translation is an important bridge for cultural dissemination.[11] The construction and growth of ceramic translators are of great significance for the dissemination of Chinese ceramic culture and the establishment of the international discourse power of Chinese ceramic culture. It is needed to gradually expand the team of ceramic translators, to exploit Chinese ceramic classics, ceramic terminology, ceramic stories, ceramic works, ceramic spirit, and ceramic art to promote Chinese ceramic culture to go abroad. With the help of ceramic translators, Chinese characteristic ceramic culture can be accurately spread to the world, and it serves the construction of the discourse power for Chinese ceramic culture.

The profound Chinese ceramic contents needs the disseminators to spread it to the world, and the ceramic translation talents are of great significance. The combination of ceramic dissemination contents and effective ceramic disseminators can be illustrated in Figure 2.

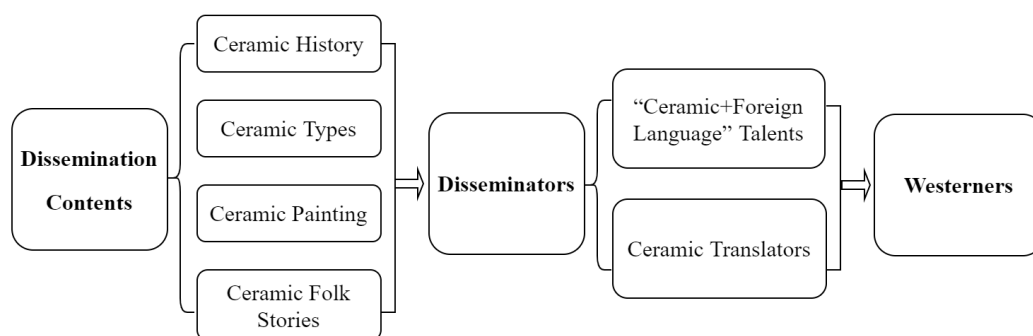


Figure 2: Combination of Dissemination Contents and Disseminators

5. Conclusion

As the birthplace of ceramics, China has accumulated profound ceramic culture, which is one of the most distinctive cultures of China. Guided by cross-cultural communication theory, this essay studies how to construct the contemporary international discourse power of Chinese ceramic culture from three aspects: dissemination modes, dissemination contents, and disseminators. On the one

hand, it can promote the international dissemination and discourse power of Chinese ceramic culture; on the other hand, it can enable more Chinese ceramic stories, ceramic products, ceramic cultural concepts, ceramic cultural classics, ceramic talents, etc. to go abroad, enhancing the international recognition of Chinese ceramic culture and providing valuable reference for Chinese culture to go global.

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