

Original Article



Perception and Interpretation: Chinese Proverbs in Russian Media Discourse and Their Implications for Cross-Cultural Communication

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Abstract:

This paper endeavors to investigate the utilization of Chinese proverbs within Russian media discourse and their pivotal role in facilitating cross-cultural communication. In an era marked by accelerating globalization, the frequency of cross-cultural interactions has surged, with Russian media demonstrating an augmented focus on Chinese cultural elements, notably the deployment of Chinese proverbs. Employing qualitative analytical methodologies, this study scrutinizes the application of proverbs by Russian media in the context of China-centric reportage, alongside the resultant cultural portrayal of China. By conducting a comparative analysis of the perception and interpretation of these proverbs within the Western framework, the paper elucidates challenges such as cross-cultural misinterpretations, cultural adaptation issues, and the prospects for enhanced cross-cultural comprehension. The findings reveal that Russian media often misinterpret or generate ambiguities in their handling of Chinese proverbs, predominantly due to inherent cultural disparities. However, the research suggests that with meticulous elucidation and the incorporation of appropriate cultural contexts, a more precise and effective cross-cultural communication can be achieved.

Key words: Russian media, proverbs, cross-cultural communication, cultural misreading, intercultural communication.

Introduction

With the continuous advancement of globalization, cross-cultural communication has become increasingly prevalent. As a primary conduit for information dissemination, the media plays an integral role in facilitating cultural exchange. The media significantly influences the shaping of international cultural perceptions (Zou, 2009; Zhang, 2010; Ociepka, 2019; Sawyer, 2012). When reporting on China, Russian media frequently incorporate Chinese proverbs (Nikolaeva, 2017, 2018a, 2018b; Гавриленко, 2013; Lyu, 2018). This practice not only exemplifies the transmission of cultural elements but also introduces challenges related to cultural misinterpretation and cross-cultural comprehension. Consequently, investigating the

utilization of Chinese proverbs in Russian media and their impact on cross-cultural communication holds substantial scholarly significance.

Against this background, cross-cultural communication faces numerous challenges, particularly in how Chinese culture is presented in Russian media. Chinese proverbs, as cultural symbols, may be misinterpreted or distorted when used in Russian media discourse, affecting cross-cultural understanding and communication. Although existing research has explored the citation and dissemination of Chinese proverbs in media, there are notable gaps. On the one hand, previous studies have often been limited to the context of the English language, which limits the cultural diversity considered and reduces the

universality and practical applicability of the findings (Iakovleva, 2016; Kokhan, 2023; Yakovleva, 2014). On the other hand, most research concentrates on how Chinese proverbs are presented in the media, without adequately investigating how Russian audiences understand and interpret these proverbs. The impact of cultural background and cognitive biases on the audience's interpretation of these proverbs has often been overlooked, resulting in a lack of in-depth analysis of audience psychology and reactions.

Based on this, this study focuses on three key research questions: 1) How do Russian media cite and use Chinese proverbs when reporting on China-related topics? 2) What role do Chinese proverbs play in Russian media discourse? 3) How do Western audiences understand and interpret Chinese proverbs, and do these proverbs face misunderstandings or distortions in Russian media?

To achieve these research objectives, the study has three main tasks: First, to analyze how Russian media integrate Chinese proverbs when covering topics related to China and explore the role of these proverbs in cultural transmission. Second, to study how Russian audiences perceive and understand Chinese proverbs, with a focus on potential misunderstandings or biases arising from cultural differences. Third, to reveal the impact of cultural misinterpretations on cross-cultural communication and media discourse, and propose strategies to enhance cultural adaptability and promote effective cross-cultural communication.

Specifically, this study will conduct an in-depth analysis of Russian media reports related to China, focusing on the use of Chinese proverbs and their context. The study will explore the cultural significance of these proverbs and their impact on communication. By interpreting media discourse, the study aims to uncover patterns of cultural adaptation, misunderstandings, and misinterpretations, and explore how Chinese culture can be more accurately and delicately presented in Russian media, thereby enhancing the depth and effectiveness of cultural exchange.

Ultimately, the goal of this study is to provide strategies for media, educational institutions, and cultural exchange organizations, helping them optimize cross-cultural communication in the

context of globalization and promote dialogue between Chinese and Russian cultures. By improving the citation and interpretation of Chinese proverbs, Russian media can reduce cultural misinterpretations, increase international audiences' understanding and recognition of Chinese culture, and foster more effective global cross-cultural communication.

Literature Review

Chinese proverbs, as an important part of Chinese culture, contain rich historical, philosophical, and social values (Lyu, 2018a, 2018b; Shi, 2021). They are often highly general and figurative, encapsulating the wisdom and experience of the Chinese people (Liu, 2015; Li, 2021; Wang, 2021). In the context of globalization, Chinese proverbs have been spread to the Western world through various channels, especially through the media (Nikolaeva, 2018; Gavrilenko, 2013). Media discourse is not only a transmitter of information but also a constructor of values and power relations (Talbot, 2007; Cotter, 2015). The translation of proverbs requires not only a linguistic transformation but also an explanation of the cultural context, otherwise, it may lead to misunderstanding or misinterpretation (Liu, 2012; Ebrahimi, 2020; Neupane; 2021).

Over the past few years, the study of Chinese proverbs in Western media has attracted widespread attention from scholars. Researchers have conducted in-depth studies from various perspectives, including cross-cultural communication theory, proverbs and cultural transmission, and the representation of Chinese culture in Western media. Studies show that Chinese proverbs can serve as effective tools for cross-cultural communication, helping people understand the core values of Chinese culture (Mammadova, 2024; Liu, 2023). Chinese proverbs play a bridging role in cross-cultural exchange, helping people better understand and respect cultural differences (Zhong, 2017).

Western media frequently incorporate Chinese proverbs in their reportage on Chinese affairs (Cao, 2014), especially in Russian media. The use of Chinese proverbs in Western media typically serves a dual function: on one hand, they act as cultural symbols that spark interest in Chinese traditions; on the other hand, they add depth and emotional resonance to the

reporting, capturing the audience's attention (Zhang,2017). The incorporation of Chinese proverbs by Western media serves to augment the cultural richness of their reportage, while also increasing the depth and appeal of the coverage. However, when Western media quote Chinese proverbs, there is often a tendency to take them out of context or misinterpret their original meaning. For example, some media outlets have used the proverb "feeling the stones while crossing the river (переходить реку, наступая на камни)" to describe the tentative nature of uncertain economic policies, yet they overlook the underlying wisdom and cautious attitude it conveys. Western media often interpret Chinese proverbs through their own cultural lens, ignoring their deeper cultural context, which leads to meaning distortions. Interpreting Chinese proverbs often focuses solely on their literal meanings, without constructing the cultural context.

Existing research has explored the spread of Chinese proverbs in Western media, most of these studies are limited to specific English-speaking countries and do not encompass a broader cultural context. This limitation may lead to an insufficient understanding of how Chinese proverbs are disseminated and received in different cultural environments.

Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by expanding the scope of research to include more diverse cultural contexts. Additionally, existing studies primarily focus on how Chinese proverbs are presented in the media and where misinterpretations occur, but research on how Western audiences understand and interpret these proverbs is relatively scarce. Understanding audience perception and interpretation is crucial for evaluating the effectiveness of cross-cultural communication.

By analyzing Russian audiences' cognition of Chinese proverbs, this study aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the barriers and opportunities in cross-cultural communication. Furthermore, this study emphasizes the bridging role of Chinese proverbs in cross-cultural exchange. While previous research has shown that Chinese proverbs can help people understand the core values of Chinese culture, further exploration is needed on how to optimize this role in practice.

Method

To obtain a more comprehensive analysis, our study will cover relevant reports from major Russian media, news portals over the past five years, selecting a number of frequently used and representative Chinese proverbs for in-depth analysis. We will compare how different linguistic communities interpret the cultural connotations, metaphors, and philosophical ideas in these Chinese proverbs, and identify how different cultural frameworks influence their interpretation.

We will employ discourse analysis to examine the linguistic strategies, narrative structures, and underlying ideologies present when Russian media incorporate Chinese proverbs in their reports. Through a meticulous analysis of the textual content, this study aims to elucidate how media construct interpretative frameworks for Chinese proverbs via language selection, syntactic arrangements, and informational organization, and how these frameworks influence audience perception. This approach will enable a comparative analysis of the deployment of Chinese proverbs across various linguistic media, thereby uncovering potential cultural biases, misunderstandings, and misinterpretations.

In terms of cross-cultural perception research, we plan to collect data on Russian audiences' recognition and subjective feelings toward Chinese proverbs through surveys and in-depth interviews. This will help us understand the cognitive processes that audiences go through when encountering and interpreting Chinese proverbs, as well as how their cultural backgrounds influence their acceptance and interpretation of these proverbs.

At the same time, we will conduct a translation comparison analysis to examine how Chinese proverbs are translated into different Russian expression, and the effectiveness of these translations in retaining the original meaning and conveying cultural connotations. This will help us identify common issues and challenges in the translation process and provide strategic recommendations for optimizing the cross-cultural dissemination of Chinese proverbs.

To further understand the dissemination effects of Chinese proverbs in Russian contexts, we will conduct case studies and comparative research. We will select specific cases to analyze the

pathways of Chinese proverb dissemination in various contexts, audience reactions, and social impacts, and how these factors interact to shape the cross-cultural dissemination effects of Chinese proverbs.

A mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative analyses, will be employed to examine the collected data. Quantitative analysis will be used to analyze which newspapers Chinese proverbs appear in, what types of reports they are in, and which proverbs are more familiar to Russian audiences. The qualitative analysis will focus on the nuanced interpretation of in-depth interview transcripts, media reports, and translated versions, employing methods such as content analysis, discourse analysis, and thematic analysis to explore cultural implications, linguistic strategies, and audience cognition. By integrating the outcomes of both quantitative and qualitative analyses, this study aims to provide a more holistic understanding of the complexities and variances inherent in the role of Chinese proverbs within cross-cultural communication.

Data

In this study, the primary focus is on how Chinese proverbs are perceived and interpreted within Russian media discourse. The data collection process involved several key steps to ensure a comprehensive and representative sample of media content. The sources of data include a variety of Russian media outlets, such as newspapers, online news portals, television broadcasts, and social media platforms. The time frame for data collection spans from January 2020 to December 2024, providing a contemporary context for analysis.

Data Sources and Selection Criteria

Online Media: Leading Russian newspapers including “Izvestia”, “Kommersant”, “Rossiyskaya Gazeta” “novaya Gazeta” etc. were scrutinized for articles mentioning Chinese proverbs. Both physical copies and digital archives were accessed.

Online News Portals: Prominent news websites such as “RT” “TASS” and “Lenta.ru” were systematically searched using keywords related to Chinese proverbs, sayings and wisdom.

Television Broadcasts: Programs from major

Russian TV channels like “Channel One” “Channel Five” were reviewed. Transcripts of news segments, talk shows, and cultural programs were analyzed where references to Chinese proverbs were also identified.

Data Collection Methodology

Keyword Search: The primary method for data collection involved keyword searches. Keywords in Russian such as “китайская пословица/поговорка” (Chinese proverb/sayings), “китайская мудрость” (Chinese wisdom), and specific proverbs translated into Russian were used to filter relevant content.

Manual Review: A manual review of the collected content was conducted to ensure relevance and context accuracy. This step was crucial to filter out instances where proverbs were mentioned without significant discourse or interpretation.

Contextual Analysis: Each instance of a Chinese proverb’s mention was documented along with its context within the media piece. This included noting the surrounding text or dialogue, the inferred meaning, and any accompanying commentary or explanation provided by the source.

Data Categorization

The data was categorized based on various parameters to facilitate a nuanced analysis:

Nature of mention: direct citation of the proverb, interpretative use, metaphorical application.

Context of use: political discourse, economic analysis, cultural commentary, social issues.

Tone and reception: positive, neutral, negative, or mixed tone with respect to the proverb and its implications.

Localized variant and transforms: whether the proverb was presented in its original form, with slight modifications to fit the Russian language and culture, or in entirely new, localized expressions.

Sample Size and Scope

The final data set comprises approximately:

Online Media: 88 articles

Online News Portals: 22 articles

Television Broadcasts: 17 segments

This extensive dataset offers a solid foundation for analyzing the perception and interpretation of Chinese proverbs within Russian media discourse, providing insights into the subtleties of cross-cultural communication between these two nations.

In the nearly five years past, we have generated the following word cloud image of Russian media that frequently features Chinese proverbs:

Here is Figure 1

Findings

The examination of Chinese proverbs within Russian media discourse has yielded several key insights regarding their perception, interpretation, and broader implications for cross-cultural communication. The analysis is structured into four distinct sections: 1. The Nature of Chinese Proverbs in Russian Media, 2. Contextualization and Interpretation of Chinese Proverbs, 3. The Pathway of Chinese Proverbs into Russian Media, and 4. Cultural Localization and Reception. These findings offer a nuanced understanding of how Chinese proverbs are recontextualized, adapted, and received within Russian discourse, providing valuable insights into the complexities of cross-cultural communication.

1. The Nature of Chinese Proverbs in Russian Media

Metaphorical proverbs' citations

The first major finding revolves around the nature of the mentions of Chinese proverbs in Russian media. The study identified that Chinese proverbs were most commonly used in a metaphorical or interpretative manner, rather than as direct citations. Nearly 87% of the selected Chinese proverbs are metaphorical, indicating that Russian media tend to adopt these proverbs to convey their own messages or viewpoints. This pattern suggests a level of cultural appropriation and reinterpretation, where the original meaning of the proverb is often transformed to fit the context or audience of the Russian media outlet. The remaining 13% of mentions were direct citations, preserving the proverb's original formulation, but typically accompanied by an interpretative framework provided by the media source. This suggests that while direct citation does occur, it is often used as a springboard for further elaboration and analysis.

In Russian media, the Chinese proverb “A distant relative is not as good as a near neighbor (ближний сосед лучше дальнего родственника)” is frequently cited, and its metaphorical usage reflects a profound insight into cultural exchange: the proximity of interpersonal relationships and social networks often outweighs the distance of kinship ties. The employment of this metaphor in media reporting, particularly in discussions of international relations and regional cooperation, underscores the importance of fostering collaboration and interaction between neighboring countries. Through this expression, the media not only highlights the practical advantages of geographical and regional proximity in fostering relations but also implies that, in the context of globalization, cooperation and mutually beneficial relationships between countries can yield more tangible benefits and support than mere cultural or historical connections. By invoking this proverb, Russian media both acknowledge the potential for cooperation with China and other neighboring countries and implicitly express aspirations for long-term, stable partnerships. Overall, the use of this metaphor not only enhances the effectiveness of cultural transmission but also contributes to shaping a more nuanced understanding of cross-cultural communication and the complexities of international relations.

The citation of the Chinese proverb “A single tree cannot form a forest (один в поле не воин)” in Russian media is often employed metaphorically to underscore the importance of cooperation and collective strength. The underlying message of this proverb conveys that individual efforts or isolated entities cannot achieve their goals; rather, it is through collective collaboration and unity that a more powerful synergy can be formed. This metaphor is commonly used in media reports discussing international cooperation, regional development, or multilateral projects, particularly when addressing issues related to globalization, transnational corporate alliances, or international political coalitions. By invoking “A single tree cannot form a forest”, the media emphasizes the crucial role of cooperation between nations or regions, suggesting that unilateral actions are insufficient to address the complex global challenges faced today. It implicitly advocates for the necessity of solidarity and collaboration within the international community, especially in areas

such as economics, environmental sustainability, and security. Through this metaphor, Russian media not only acknowledge the value of collective action but also express an expectation for joint efforts and the achievement of shared objectives. Overall, the use of this metaphor enhances the transmission of cultural messages while deepening the understanding of collectivism and the spirit of cooperation within cross-cultural communication.

Non-metaphorical proverbs' citations

Conversely, the remaining 13% of proverb citations in Russian media were used in a non-metaphorical sense, preserving the proverb's literal meaning. These instances typically occurred in educational or ecological contexts where the media outlet aimed to provide a direct translation or explanation of the proverb to its Russian-speaking audience.

Once Chinese proverbs have been widely disseminated, those that function as direct metaphors are prone to undergo a process of transformation. In Russian media, Chinese proverbs often do not appear in their original form; rather, they are frequently recontextualized or reinterpreted as reinvented cultural symbols. This transformation reflects the dynamic nature of cross-cultural transmission, wherein the proverbs are adapted to align with the linguistic, cultural, and ideological frameworks of the target culture. Thus, the media's usage of Chinese proverbs can be seen not merely as a literal translation but as an intricate process of cultural mediation and symbolic reinterpretation. When depicting Chinese landscapes and ecology, Russian media frequently cite the proverb "above is heaven, below are Suzhou and Hangzhou" to praise the beautiful scenery of Suzhou and Hangzhou, and further compare them with some of the picturesque cities in Russia. These isomorphic proverbs that appear in Russian media have already become a new interpretation of cultural symbols.

This trend suggests that Russian media often approaches Chinese proverbs not just as linguistic entities but as cultural symbols that serve a broader rhetorical function. The proverbs are used to communicate complex ideas or draw comparisons between Chinese and Russian values, but their meaning is often mediated by the broader

context of the Russian political, economic, or social landscape.

2. Contextualization and Interpretation of Chinese Proverbs

A critical finding from the analysis is how Chinese proverbs are contextualized and interpreted within Russian media, revealing the flexibility with which they are adapted to address specific issues and themes. The most common contexts in which Chinese proverbs appeared were political discourse, economic analysis, and cultural commentary.

Political Discourse.

Chinese proverbs were often invoked in discussions about international relations, particularly in the context of Russia's political and diplomatic interactions with China. Proverbs such as "The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step" were frequently used to emphasize the long-term nature of bilateral cooperation. In these contexts, the proverbs were generally interpreted as promoting patience, persistence, and strategic planning, aligning with Russian political values of stability and gradual progress. "Watch the tigers fight from the mountain top" was employed metaphorically to advocate for a cautious and observant approach to international relations, encouraging Russia to remain vigilant and strategic in its interactions with other global players. This interpretation resonated with Russian media's emphasis on state sovereignty and geopolitical realism.

Economic Analysis.

In the realm of economics, Chinese proverbs like "riches do not last beyond three generations (богатство не длится дольше трех поколений)" was cited to highlight the importance of sustainable wealth management and the temporary nature of economic prosperity. These proverbs served as a reminder to Russian audiences about the potential pitfalls of unbridled capitalism and the need for long-term financial planning. By using these Chinese proverbs, Russian media was able to draw parallels between Russian and Chinese economic histories, emphasizing the shared challenges and opportunities faced by both nations.

This creates a deviation from the context of use of the Chinese proverb. As a traditional Chinese

proverb, “wealth does not pass three generations” has multiple meanings. First, this proverb reflects the variability of the economic environment in traditional Chinese society, serving as a realistic portrayal of economic history. Due to factors such as wars, regime changes, and tax systems, the wealth of many families cannot be maintained for long. Social unrest can lead to the loss or redistribution of wealth, thereby affecting the accumulation of family wealth. Second, in Chinese culture, the family and clan are the core of the social structure, and the rise and fall of the family is closely related to the inheritance of wealth. In traditional concepts, wealth is not only the accumulation of material goods but also a symbol of culture and family spirit. Therefore, “wealth does not pass three generations” also reveals the relationship between family wealth and family culture, education, and values. Over time, descendants of families may lose the entrepreneurial spirit, frugality, and diligence of their ancestors. This change in values often leads to wealth not being passed down from generation to generation. Thus, “wealth does not pass three generations” also reminds people that the inheritance of family wealth is not just a transfer of economic aspects but also a transmission of culture and education. In contemporary China, this proverb implies reflections on wealth accumulation and consumption concepts in Chinese society. Typically, the first generation of a family accumulates wealth through hard work and entrepreneurial spirit, while the second generation may enjoy the inheritance of their parents’ wealth but lack the entrepreneurial spirit of fighting. By the third generation, wealth may gradually disappear due to excessive extravagance, lack of management skills, or changes in lifestyle.

The severance of the relationship between proverbs and their cultural context may lead to a misinterpretation or one-sided understanding of the proverb's meaning. In Russian media, such one-sided references and interpretations of Chinese proverbs occur from time to time, reflecting the common challenges in cross-cultural communication. Despite some misunderstandings and biases, the dissemination of Chinese proverbs in Russian media still holds significant cultural value. It not only promotes the exchange and integration of Chinese and Russian cultures but also sparks the interest and recognition of Russian audiences in Chinese culture.

Cultural Commentary.

In the cultural commentary of Russian media, Chinese proverbs also occupy a significant position. For instance, the custom of “celebrating the Lantern Festival by admiring lanterns and eating Yuanxiao (Заглядеться на фонари так, что забыть поесть юаньсяо)” is used to depict the festive celebrations and folk customs shared in Sino-Russian cultural exchanges. By quoting this proverb, Russian media demonstrates a keen interest and recognition of the traditional Chinese festival, the Lantern Festival. Through the use of this proverb, Russian media not only enriches the description of Chinese culture but also enhances the understanding and longing of the Russian public for traditional Chinese festivals.

Furthermore, the proverb “one who stays near vermilion gets stained red, and one who stays near ink gets stained black” (С кем поведешься — от того и наберешься) is frequently mentioned to emphasize the close connection between cultural environment and personal growth. In Russian media reports, this proverb is used to metaphorically describe the positive impact of Sino-Russian cultural exchanges, indicating that the people of both countries can grow together through mutual learning and referencing, forming a more open and inclusive cultural atmosphere. This interpretation not only aligns with the original meaning of the Chinese proverb but also reflects the positive interaction and mutual respect in Sino-Russian cultural exchanges.

Cultural programs, documentaries, and lifestyle programs also frequently feature Chinese proverbs, especially those related to wisdom, family, and moral behavior. For example, Chinese proverbs involving respect for elders, mutual assistance among neighbors, and emphasis on fairness and justice resonate with Russian cultural values and are often seen as part of a broader cross-cultural exchange dialogue.

3. The Pathway of Chinese Proverbs into Russian Media

The integration of Chinese proverbs into Russian media discourse is a multifaceted process that involves several stages of cultural transmission, adaptation, and reinterpretation. This journey is influenced by historical ties, diplomatic relations, and the increasing global interconnectivity facilitated by modern communication

technologies. To understand how Chinese proverbs find their way into Russian media, it is crucial to examine the various channels and mechanisms through which this cultural exchange takes place.

Based on questionnaires, surveys, and communication with the Russian public, we have learned that the entry of Chinese proverbs into the Russian media space follows these paths:

Historical and Diplomatic Channels

Historically, China and Russia have shared a complex relationship marked by periods of both cooperation and tension. During the Soviet era, ideological exchanges were prevalent, and Chinese literature, including classical texts and folk sayings, was translated and studied within the Soviet Union. The diplomatic thawing of relations in the late 20th and early 21st centuries further opened avenues for cultural exchange. State-sponsored initiatives, such as cultural festivals, educational exchanges, and bilateral agreements, have played a significant role in introducing Chinese cultural elements, including proverbs, into the Russian consciousness.

Educational Institutions and Academic Research

Educational institutions have been pivotal in facilitating the entry of Chinese proverbs into Russian media. Universities and research centers with a focus on Sinology or Asian studies often translate and analyze Chinese proverbs, making them accessible to a wider audience. Scholars and students who study Chinese language and culture are instrumental in introducing these proverbs into academic discourse, from where they can trickle down into mainstream media through articles, interviews, and expert commentary.

Popular Culture and Entertainment

Chinese proverbs also make their way into Russian media through popular culture and entertainment. Movies, television shows, and literature that feature Chinese themes or characters often include proverbs as part of the dialogue or narrative. These cultural artifacts serve as a bridge, making Chinese wisdom more accessible and relatable to Russian audiences. Additionally, the growing interest in Chinese martial arts, philosophy, and lifestyle practices has contributed to the popularity of Chinese proverbs

in everyday conversations and media content.

Implications for Cross-Cultural Communication

The incorporation of Chinese proverbs into Russian media discourse has significant implications for cross-cultural communication. It fosters a greater understanding and appreciation of Chinese culture among Russian audiences, promoting mutual respect and dialogue. Furthermore, it highlights the universal nature of wisdom and the shared human experience, bridging cultural divides and encouraging collaboration. By embracing these proverbs, Russian media not only enriches its own narrative but also contributes to the global tapestry of cultural exchange.

The path of Chinese proverbs entering Russian media is a dynamic and multifaceted process, and they are translated and adapted within Russian media to ensure their adaptation to the cultural context and resonate with the Russian audience.

4. Cultural Localization and Reception

The final important finding concerns the localization of Chinese proverbs within Russian media, which sheds light on how cultural differences are navigated in cross-cultural communication. Of the proverbs analyzed, only 21% of the Chinese proverbs were directly translated into Russian, while the rest of the proverbs were modified, and even individual proverbs were creatively processed based on the original Chinese to adapt to the contemporary Russian discourse context.

Linguistic Adaptations

In many cases, the direct translation of Chinese proverbs into Russian resulted in altered or hybridized forms, where the original metaphorical meaning was preserved, but the expression was modified to resonate more naturally with a Russian-speaking audience. For instance, proverbs involving direct references to Chinese culture (such as specific customs or historical figures) were rephrased in more universally applicable terms, enabling broader appeal.

Cultural Adaption

A particularly notable trend was the cultural adaptation of proverbs that were deeply rooted in Chinese traditions or philosophies. Proverbs that

referred to Confucian principles or specific Chinese practices were often adapted to reflect Russian values or historical experiences.

For example, “harmony in diversity (Едины, но не тождественны)” is a profound Chinese philosophical concept, and harmony has always been one of the core values in traditional Chinese culture. Originating from the 《Book of Changes》, it means “maintaining differences within harmony”, emphasizing the importance of the coexistence of harmony and diversity. “harmony” refers to the harmony and harmony within society or groups, while “diversity” refers to the differences and independence between individuals or groups. In other words, “harmony in diversity” emphasizes tolerating differences on the basis of harmony, respecting different thoughts, cultures, and lifestyles.

In China’s foreign policy, “harmony in diversity” is widely cited as a concept of international cooperation. China advocates for building a “harmonious world” and this concept emphasizes that countries should respect each other’s cultures and development paths, avoiding cultural hegemonism or the imposition of monism. China’s “Belt and Road” initiative also reflects this idea—promoting economic and cultural exchanges and cooperation on a global scale, while preserving the uniqueness of different countries and regions. When Russian media quote this proverb, they often interpret it in the context of Russia’s historical and cultural background, linking it with Russia’s historical multiculturalism and ethnic integration, emphasizing the importance of achieving harmonious coexistence while maintaining their respective ethnic characteristics. This cultural adaptation not only gives new life to the Chinese proverb in Russian media but also promotes in-depth cultural exchange and mutual understanding between China and Russia. Through this cultural dialogue and integration, the people of China and Russia can better appreciate the essence of each other’s cultures and jointly promote the diversity and prosperity of world culture.

Active Construction

In the process of cultural adaptation, Russian media actively constructs its own narrative by integrating Chinese proverbs. This construction is not a passive reception but a creative

transformation, where Russian media selects, translates, and adapts Chinese proverbs based on its own cultural context and audience preferences.

Taking “The sky presumes, but Xi Jinping disposes”(Небо предполагает, а Си Цзиньпин располагает) as an example, this expression literally reflects a kind of compliance with fate or divine will, emphasizing the decision-making power and leading role of the leader. This expression is actually conveying a “positive political construction”, through the interpretation of the relationship between “divine mandate” and “human effort”, affirming the wisdom of Chinese leaders, and also reflects the recognition and respect for China’s social and political system. It is both an understanding of traditional Chinese culture and provides Russian audiences with a perspective to understand Chinese political leadership, conveying more complex political and cultural concepts.

Incorrect Acceptance

When Chinese proverbs are integrated into the context of Russian media, they often fall into the predicament of “misreading and miscommunication” due to linguistic differences, distinct cultural backgrounds, and deviations in translation. In other words, during the introduction of Chinese proverbs into Russia, their original meanings, contexts, and values may be misunderstood, distorted, or even lose their inherent cultural heritage.

There are significant differences between Russian and Chinese in terms of language structure, vocabulary, and expression. Certain specific words or symbols in Chinese proverbs may lack direct equivalents in Russian, and therefore, the original meaning of the proverbs is prone to distortion during the translation process.

Moreover, differences in cultural backgrounds between China and Russia may also lead to misunderstandings of Chinese proverbs. Values and codes of conduct widely recognized in Chinese culture may not apply in Russian culture or may be interpreted differently.

For example, in Chinese, the concept of “the master leads the door, and the practice depends on the individual(Учителя только открывают двери, дальше вы идете сами)” in the proverb is difficult to find an exact equivalent in Russian. This term is deeply rooted in religious and

philosophical traditions, especially Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucian thought. Its meaning extends far beyond learning or practicing a particular skill; it also encompasses moral cultivation, spiritual growth, and the pursuit of the spirit. In contrast, Russian culture places more emphasis on the Christian tradition, and although there are expressions similar to “academic cultivation” or “professional skills”, these words usually refer only to the accumulation of skills or academic training and do not involve cultivation of the soul or morality. This multidimensional cultural connotation and contextual difference make “cultivation” face a great challenge in cross-cultural translation, making it difficult to achieve a direct correspondence.

For audiences unfamiliar with Chinese culture, this proverb may be misunderstood as a belittling of the role of teachers or masters, leading to the belief that it emphasizes the viewpoint of “individuals relying solely on their own efforts without the assistance of others”.

Discussion

The challenges faced in the cross-cultural adaptation of Chinese proverbs in Russian media underscore the importance of accurate translation and cultural sensitivity. To address these issues, several strategies can be employed. Firstly, a deeper understanding of both Chinese and Russian cultures is crucial for translators and media professionals. This includes familiarity with the linguistic nuances, idiomatic expressions, and cultural contexts of both languages. By possessing this knowledge, they can more accurately convey the intended meanings and values of the proverbs, minimizing the risk of misinterpretation or distortion.

Secondly, collaborative efforts between Chinese and Russian experts in translation, cultural studies, and media can enhance the quality of cultural adaptation. Such collaborations can facilitate a more nuanced and authentic representation of Chinese proverbs in Russian media, ensuring that their cultural essence and intended messages are preserved and communicated effectively.

Moreover, the use of multimedia and contextual explanations can further aid in the accurate understanding of Chinese proverbs by Russian audiences. By providing visual aids, historical

backgrounds, and contextual explanations, media outlets can create a richer and more immersive experience for viewers, enabling them to appreciate the depth and complexity of the proverbs within their cultural contexts.

In conclusion, while the cross-cultural adaptation of Chinese proverbs in Russian media presents both opportunities and challenges, it is a vital aspect of promoting cultural exchange and mutual understanding between China and Russia. By employing strategies such as cultural sensitivity, collaborative efforts, and multimedia explanations, media professionals can effectively bridge the cultural gap, fostering deeper appreciation and respect for the diverse cultural heritage of both nations.

Conclusion

The analysis of Chinese proverbs in Russian media discourse uncovers several key dynamics in cross-cultural communication. Chinese proverbs are often treated as metaphorical tools to convey universal wisdom, but they are highly adaptable to the specific needs of Russian political, economic, and cultural contexts. The study also highlights how Russian media, while receptive to Chinese cultural references, often engages in processes of localization and reinterpretation to make these proverbs more relevant to a Russian audience. This process underscores the complexities of cross-cultural dialogue, where meanings are not simply transferred but are actively reinterpreted to bridge cultural differences and foster understanding. The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of research on cross-cultural communication, highlighting the role of proverbs as dynamic cultural resources that evolve with the needs of their audience.

The successful adaptation of Chinese proverbs in Russian media not only enriches the linguistic landscape of Russian communications but also serves as a bridge for cultural understanding and appreciation between the two nations. It encourages a dialogue that transcends linguistic barriers, fostering empathy and respect for different cultural perspectives. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the ability to communicate and understand diverse cultures becomes ever more crucial. By addressing the challenges of cross-cultural adaptation through thoughtful strategies, media professionals play a

pivotal role in shaping a more inclusive and understanding global community. The journey of Chinese proverbs into Russian media is thus not merely a linguistic endeavor but a cultural odyssey that holds promise for mutual enrichment and harmony.

Disadvantages and Deficiencies

We only selected the corpus of the five years from 2020 to 2024, and failed to do an exhaustive search and analysis of Chinese proverbs in the Russian media. The questionnaire survey also focused on Russians in China. The results of this study may have some limitations. First, the time span of the corpus is short and may not fully reflect the use and changing trend of Chinese proverbs in Russian media. Secondly, the sample range of the questionnaire survey is limited, mainly concentrated among Chinese Russians, which may not fully represent the understanding and acceptance of Chinese proverbs by the local Russian audience. In order to further explore the cross-cultural communication of Chinese proverbs in Russian media, future research can expand the time span and sample range of the corpus, while combining more field surveys and in-depth interviews to obtain more comprehensive and accurate data. In addition, it can further explore the cognitive differences and acceptance of Chinese proverbs among audiences in different cultural backgrounds, and how to promote intercultural understanding and communication through effective communication strategies. Through these efforts, we can better promote the dissemination and development of Chinese proverbs in the Russian media, and promote the cultural exchanges and understanding between China and Russia.

Interest Statement

The author declares that there are no financial or personal conflicts of interest that could influence the results of this study. This research did not receive any commercial funding or support, and the sources of funding did not affect the study's content, data analysis, or results.

Should any situation arise in the future that could be perceived as a conflict of interest, the author will disclose it promptly.

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