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Divergence or Convergence? A Global Bibliometric Analysis of CSR Research Trends Between China and the West

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Abstract

In contemporary business practice, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has emerged as a critical metric for assessing comprehensive corporate value. Leveraging bibliometric data from the CNKI and Web of Science core databases, this study employs CiteSpace 6.2 to conduct a knowledge mapping analysis, systematically tracing the evolutionary trajectory, research hotspots, and future directions of CSR studies between 2015 and 2024. The findings reveal a sustained upward trend in CSR research globally, with a notable acceleration in Chinese scholarship post-2022, publications tripled by 2023, while Western research exhibited gradual growth from 2020 onward. CSR scholarship demonstrates pronounced interdisciplinary diversity, spanning environmental governance, financial performance, corporate governance, and supply chain management. Despite shared thematic foundations, stark divergences exist in regional priorities: Chinese studies emphasize context-specific agendas like "common prosperity" and rural revitalization, whereas Western research prioritizes sustainability frameworks, bibliometric methodologies, and empirical validations. Emerging trends underscore the rising significance of corporate identity construction and the transformative potential of artificial intelligence and big data analytics in CSR practices. To advance the field, we advocate for deeper interdisciplinary integration, theoretical expansion, and strategic adoption of digital technologies to enhance corporate global competitiveness and contribute to sustainable development imperatives.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR); knowledge mapping analysis; interdisciplinary research; corporate identity construction; artificial intelligence; big data

1 INTRODUCTTION

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has evolved into a pivotal concept in contemporary business practice and academic research, reflecting the critical role enterprises play in addressing societal challenges (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). Proactive CSR engagement not only enhances corporate credibility but also fosters economic growth, suggesting a virtuous cycle where robust social responsibility performance translates into tangible economic benefits (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Amid escalating stakeholder demands for ethical accountability (Freeman et al., 2020), the scope of CSR has expanded beyond mere legal compliance (Jamali et al., 2017) to encompass broader commitments to sustainability (Elkington, 2018), social equity, and environmental stewardship. This paradigm shift has spurred multidisciplinary investigations into how firms strategically integrate CSR to bolster competitive advantage and societal well-being (Matten & Moon, 2008).

Recent years have witnessed a surge in CSR scholarship, particularly in exploring the interplay between digital transformation and CSR practices (Bhattacharya et al., 2022). This trend is driven by global imperatives such as climate change (Kolk & Pinkse, 2008), rising inequality, and shifting consumer preferences. Concurrently, the ascendancy of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) frameworks has intensified scrutiny of corporate sustainability performance (Eccles & Serafeim, 2013). Scholars increasingly examine how CSR alignment with core strategy enhances organizational resilience and societal impact (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). The interdisciplinary nature of CSR research—spanning ethics, sociology, economics, and environmental science—has further enriched holistic understandings of corporate accountability (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011).

Despite a proliferation of CSR literature, systematic reviews remain fragmented, necessitating rigorous bibliometric synthesis to map knowledge trajectories and emerging frontiers (Fink, 2019). Prior studies highlight the complexity of CSR governance, particularly in platform-based economies, where antecedent factors and moderators require nuanced theoretical and empirical exploration (Wang & Wang, 2018). This gap is especially salient in China, where rapid economic growth and institutional transitions have created a unique laboratory for CSR innovation (Lin, 2021). By analyzing global and regional CSR research trends, this study aims to elucidate the evolution of corporate responsibility and its implications for business strategy and social progress.

2 Theoretical Framework: Foundations and Evolution of CSR Research

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has evolved into a multidimensional construct shaped by diverse theoretical perspectives, institutional contexts, and stakeholder demands. This study is anchored in three foundational theoretical frameworks that dominate contemporary CSR scholarship: stakeholder theory, institutional theory, and shared value creation. These lenses provide a robust scaffold for analyzing the divergent trajectories of CSR research between China and the West, while also accommodating emerging paradigms such as ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) integration and digital governance.

2.1 Stakeholder Theory: Balancing Competing Interests

Stakeholder theory posits that corporations must address the interests of diverse stakeholders—including shareholders, employees, communities, and regulators—to achieve long-term sustainability (Freeman et al., 2020). Western CSR research often operationalizes this framework through empirical studies on disclosure practices (Eccles & Serafeim, 2013), supply chain ethics (Tang et al., 2021), and shareholder activism (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). In contrast, Chinese scholarship emphasizes state-stakeholder dynamics, where state-owned enterprises (SOEs) prioritize governmental policy alignment (e.g., "common prosperity") alongside market performance (Li & Zhang, 2022). This divergence reflects broader institutional differences: while Western firms navigate voluntary CSR adoption under market-driven governance (Carroll & Shabana, 2010), Chinese corporations operate within a state-guided model where CSR is often instrumentalized for socio-political objectives (Chen & Zhang, 2021).

2.2 Institutional Theory: Legitimacy and Isomorphism

Institutional theory elucidates how CSR practices are shaped by regulatory, normative, and cognitive pressures (Matten & Moon, 2008). Globally, the rise of ESG reporting standards (e.g., GRI, SASB) reflects coercive isomorphism, compelling firms to adopt standardized sustainability metrics (Eccles et al., 2020). Western literature highlights mimetic isomorphism, where firms replicate industry leaders' CSR strategies to mitigate uncertainty (Porter & Kramer, 2019). Conversely, China's CSR evolution demonstrates normative isomorphism, driven by state mandates (e.g., SASAC's 2008 CSR guidelines) and ideological campaigns like "rural revitalization" (Kong & Zheng, 2022). Notably, the platform economy has introduced hybrid governance models, where digital firms (e.g., Alibaba, Tencent) blend Western ESG frameworks with localized CSR narratives (Lin, 2021).

2.3 Shared Value Creation: Strategic CSR and Competitive Advantage

The shared value paradigm (Porter & Kramer, 2011) redefines CSR as a strategic tool for economic and societal gain. Western research emphasizes innovation-driven CSR, linking sustainability initiatives to financial performance (Dyck et al., 2019) and circular economy transitions (Elkington, 2018). Chinese studies, however, explore political embeddedness, where CSR aligns with national agendas like "targeted poverty alleviation" to secure regulatory legitimacy (Wang & Mai, 2019). This dichotomy underscores a critical theoretical gap: whereas Western frameworks prioritize market-based value creation, Chinese models integrate state-corporate symbiosis, often blurring the boundaries between CSR and industrial policy (Li, 2023).

2.4 Emerging Frontiers: Digital Transformation and ESG Integration

Recent advancements in AI and big data analytics are reshaping CSR governance, enabling real-time impact assessments (Liu et al., 2023) but also introducing risks of algorithmic bias (Buhmann et al., 2020). Concurrently, ESG metrics have emerged as a universal evaluative framework, though their adoption in China remains nascent compared to Western markets (Shi & Wang, 2023). These developments suggest a future research imperative: reconciling technological disruption with ethical accountability while accounting for regional institutional variances.

Despite significant advancements in CSR research, critical gaps remain that limit a holistic understanding of global trends. First, while Western scholarship has achieved theoretical cohesion by integrating stakeholder theory, institutionalism, and shared value frameworks (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Porter & Kramer, 2019), Chinese research remains fragmented, with limited dialogue between political economy analyses of state-corporate relations and emerging global ESG paradigms (Shi & Wang, 2023). Second, methodological disparities persist: international studies employ sophisticated bibliometric and meta-analytic approaches (Zupic & ater, 2015), whereas Chinese research predominantly relies on qualitative case studies (Li & Zhang, 2022), creating an imbalance in evidence synthesis. Third, key actors like platform enterprises—central to China's digital economy—are underexplored regarding their unique CSR challenges, such as algorithmic accountability and gig worker welfare (Lin, 2021), compared to Western tech firms. Finally, while Western research has decisively shifted toward ESG-financial performance linkages (Eccles et al., 2020), Chinese studies lag in empirically validating ESG's impact, hindered by fragmented disclosure standards (Wang et al., 2023). These gaps highlight the need for integrative theoretical frameworks, advanced computational methods, and cross-regional sectoral analyses to advance CSR scholarship.

3 Data and Methodology

To address these gaps, this study investigates three core research questions: (1) How do keyword co-occurrence patterns reflect divergent institutionalization of CSR in China and the West? (2) What explains the 2023 surge in Chinese CSR publications—does it represent scholarly innovation or policy-driven com-

pliance? (3) Can emerging technologies like AI-driven analytics bridge methodological divides between regional research traditions? By analyzing bibliometric data through comparative and temporal lenses, we elucidate both convergences and persistent divergences in global CSR research.

3.1 Data Sources

This study systematically analyzes CSR-related journal articles from both Chinese and international scholarship. The Chinese dataset was retrieved from the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database, focusing on publications indexed in Peking University Core Journals and CSSCI (Chinese Social Sciences Citation Index) journals. Using the search terms " 企业社会责任 " (corporate social responsibility) and " 企业社会责任报告 " (CSR reports) with English synonym expansions, we collected articles published between 2015 and 2024 across all disciplines. After manual screening to exclude conference papers and irrelevant entries, 745 valid articles remained (retrieved September 16, 2024). The finalized dataset was exported in RefWorks format for bibliometric analysis.

For international literature, data were extracted from the Web of Science (WoS) Core Collection using the search string: TS=("corporate social responsibility" OR "corporate social responsibility report") with the same temporal coverage (2015–2024). Only articles from SSCI and A&HCI-indexed journals were included, without disciplinary restrictions. Post-retrieval manual filtering yielded 763 relevant publications, exported as plain text files (retrieved September 16, 2024).

3.2 Research Methods

Bibliometrics, rooted in quantitative analysis of scholarly literature, uncovers latent patterns in academic knowledge production (Pritchard, 1969; Liang, 2013). Contemporary bibliometric techniques have evolved from simple citation counting to multidimensional approaches like co-citation analysis, bibliographic coupling, and co-word analysis, enabling comprehensive research frontier identification (Small, 1973; Wang & Leng, 2010).

Among visualization tools, CiteSpace excels in mapping intellectual structures by analyzing citation networks and keyword dynamics (Chen, 2006). Its algorithmic capabilities—including cluster analysis based on betweenness centrality (Freeman, 1977) and burst detection—reveal domain-specific knowledge foundations and emerging trends (Li & Chen, 2022). Particularly, its time-zone graphs and timeline visualizations elucidate thematic evolution, while clustering algorithms (e.g., log-likelihood ratio) identify core research themes (Fu & Ding, 2019).

To conduct our bibliometric analysis, we implemented a rigorous analytical protocol using CiteSpace 6.2 software. The node type was set to Keywords to effectively map conceptual hotspots within the CSR research domain. We established a temporal framework spanning from 2010 to 2024, with one-year intervals for time slicing to capture the evolutionary trajectory of research themes. To optimize network visualization and interpretation, we applied Pathfinder network scaling combined with merged-network pruning techniques, which enhance structural clarity by eliminating redundant connections while preserving significant pathways. The analysis employed a g-index threshold (k=25) to maintain an optimal balance between comprehensive coverage and analytical focus. For thematic clustering and labeling, we utilized the log-likelihood ratio (LLR) algorithm, which provides statistically robust identification of research clusters. This methodological approach follows established best practices for longitudinal bibliometric research (Zupic & ater, 2015), ensuring both reproducibility of results and effective minimization of noise from peripheral or less significant citations in the network analysis. The protocol was designed to maximize the software's capability to reveal meaningful patterns and trends while maintaining methodological rigor throughout the investigation.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Analysis of Annual Publication Volume in Core Journals

The longitudinal analysis of publication volumes in core journals provides valuable insights into the evolving landscape of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) research. Our bibliometric examination reveals distinct developmental trajectories between domestic and international scholarship. During the initial observation period (2015-2018), publication outputs remained relatively balanced across Chinese and international journals. However, a significant divergence emerged in 2019, with international research experiencing accelerated growth that resulted in double the publication volume of Chinese studies by 2020 (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). This period marked the beginning of what might be termed a "global CSR research renaissance".

The Chinese academic community demonstrated a different pattern, with steady but modest growth until 2022, followed by an extraordinary surge in 2023 that saw publication numbers triple compared to the previous year. This dramatic increase, reaching 181 articles in a single year, suggests a fundamental shift in research priorities within Chinese academia. The timing of this surge correlates strongly with several key developments in China's regulatory and corporate landscape (Matten & Moon, 2008).
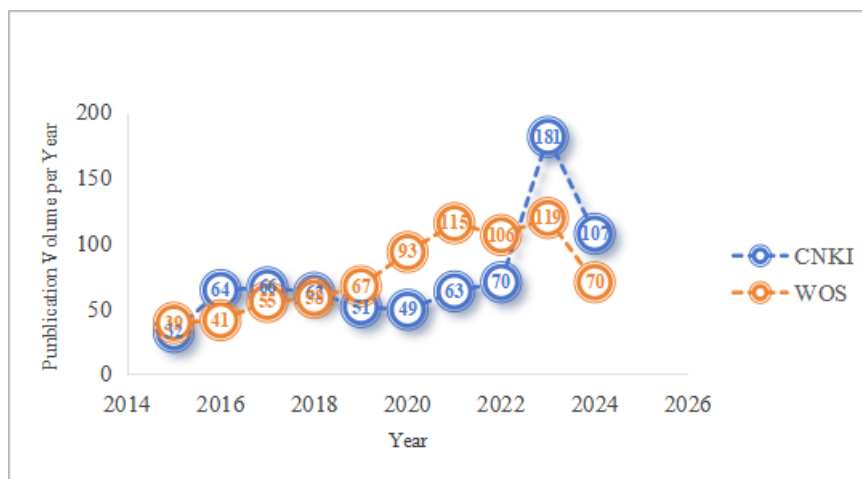
Figure 1: Annual publication volume of core journals at home and abroad

Contextual analysis reveals two primary catalysts for this trend. First, the practice of CSR reporting among Chinese listed enterprises expanded exponentially, growing from a mere 10 reports in 2006 to an impressive 1,422 by 2021, according to Wind Database statistics. This hundred-fold increase reflects a broader transformation in corporate transparency norms. Second, and perhaps more significantly, 2021-2022 witnessed major policy developments including the proposed amendments to China's Company Law incorporating CSR provisions and the integration of CSR requirements into the Listing Rules by both Shanghai and Shenzhen Stock Exchanges (CBNRI, 2023). These regulatory changes appear to have created a "compliance pull" effect, driving both corporate practice and academic inquiry.

4.2 Research Domains and Thematic Analysis

Keywords refer to words or phrases within a text, document, or discourse that encapsulate the central theme or core content of a research paper, representing its fundamental concepts. Consequently, analyzing keywords holds significant importance for comprehending contextual meaning, retrieving information, and conducting data analysis, as they provide a richer interpretation of a topic's centrality (Chen, 2017; Small,

1999). This study employs CiteSpace software, with the node type (Node Types) set to "Keywords", to extract keywords from both domestic and international corporate social responsibility (CSR) research. Furthermore, the clustering function within the software is utilized to perform keyword co-occurrence analysis on the literature.

The principle of keyword cluster analysis (Cluster Analysis) is based on the frequency of co-occurrence (co-occurrence rate) of two keywords within the same document as an analytical theme. By applying clustering statistical methods, closely related keywords are grouped together to form clusters (Leydesdorff & Welbers, 2011). This approach allows for a detailed visualization of the research themes in CSR studies across different regions. The cluster numbering is inversely correlated with the number of members within a cluster—that is, a smaller cluster number indicates a larger volume of literature included.

4.2.1 Domestic Trend in China

Domestic literature yields 288 network nodes and 218 connecting lines, with a network density of 0.0053. The modularity value (0.8407) exceeds the threshold of 0.3, indicating a highly significant clustering effect (Newman, 2006). Additionally, the average silhouette value (0.9702) surpasses 0.7, confirming the reliability of the clustering results (Rousseeuw, 1987). Using the log-likelihood ratio (LLR) algorithm, eight major clusters are identified. Based on their content, these clusters can be categorized into three primary research domains (see Figure 2).
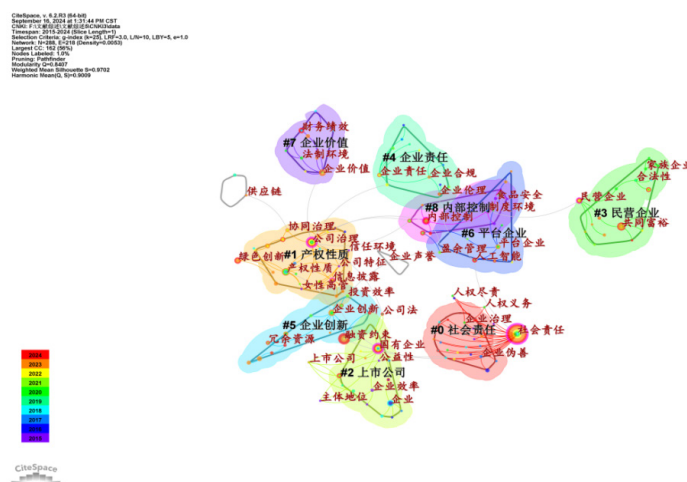
Figure 2: Keyword cluster map of domestic research on CSR

The first research category focuses on the enterprises themselves, particularly studies related to listed companies, state-owned enterprises (SOEs), and private firms in fulfilling corporate social responsibility (CSR). This includes clusters #2 "Listed Companies", #3 "Private Enterprises", and #6 "Platform Enterprises", with major keywords such as "family business", "platform enterprise", "state-owned enterprise", "private enterprise", "dominant position", and "common prosperity". Research on the behavioral characteristics of different types of enterprises in CSR implementation has long been a critical pathway in domestic CSR studies. Empirical evidence suggests that firms with varying ownership structures exhibit distinct CSR behaviors. For instance, SOEs prioritize social contributions and governmental obligations alongside economic performance, whereas private enterprises tend to engage in high-profile CSR activities to enhance their public image and gain governmental recognition (2022 China Corporate Social Responsibility Report: The Power of Endogenous Growth, 2022). These findings reveal how firms balance economic objectives and social responsibilities when addressing diverse stakeholder demands.

The second research category examines corporate institutions and governance, including institutional environments, corporate governance, and property rights, as represented by clusters #1 "Property Rights" and #8 "Internal Control". Key terms in this domain include "information disclosure", "institutional environment", "trust environment", "internal control", and "collaborative governance". Corporate institutions and governance constitute another crucial factor influencing CSR practices. Studies demonstrate that well-structured governance mechanisms and robust internal control systems enhance CSR performance by improving transparency in disclosures (Li, 2023). These insights underscore the pivotal role of internal governance in driving responsible business conduct.

The third research category investigates CSR and corporate value, analyzing the content, hierarchy, and paradigms of CSR, as reflected in clusters #0 "Social Responsibility", #4 "Corporate Responsibility", and #7 "Corporate Value". Relevant keywords include "corporate hypocrisy", "legal environment", and "corporate compliance". Scholars categorize CSR into three hierarchical dimensions such as legal responsibility (the baseline), ethical responsibility, and philanthropic responsibility (Wang & Mai, 2019). Research on the relationship between CSR and corporate value indicates that responsible business practices not only strengthen brand reputation but also mitigate operational risks and capital costs, thereby fostering long-term value creation (Wang & Mai, 2019).

4.2.2 International Trend

This study similarly employs the log-likelihood ratio (LLR) algorithm to perform keyword clustering analysis on international CSR literature, yielding 291 network nodes and 591 connecting lines, with a network density of 0.014. The modularity value (0.6493) exceeds the threshold of 0.3, indicating a statistically significant clustering structure (Newman, 2006). Furthermore, the average silhouette value (0.834) surpasses 0.7, confirming the high reliability of the clustering results (Rousseeuw, 1987). Based on the visualization output, eight major clusters were identified and subsequently categorized into three primary research domains (see Figure 3).
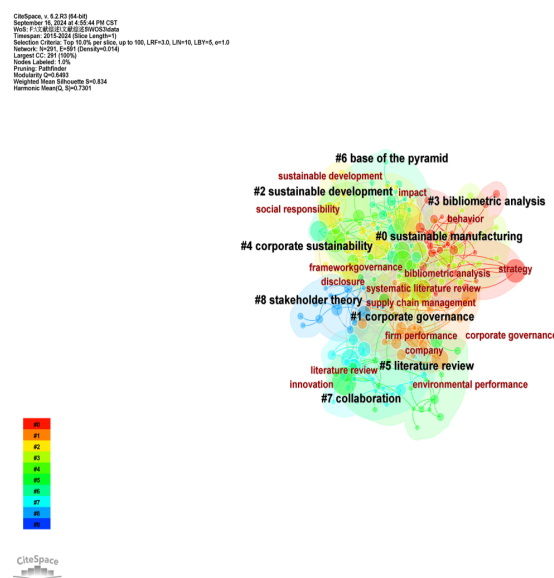
Figure 3: Keyword cluster map of international research on CSR

The first research category centers on corporate governance and foundational theoretical frameworks of CSR, examining intrinsic influencing factors from a governance perspective. This includes clusters #1 "corporate governance", #6 "base of the pyramid", and #8 "stakeholder theory", with prominent keywords such as "corporate governance", "firm performance", "framework", "disclosure", and "supply chain man-

agement". International literature from 2016 to 2020 reveals two key trends in corporate governance research: (1) internal governance mechanisms—particularly board governance, shareholder governance, and executive governance—emerged as dominant themes, while (2) external governance mechanisms, including stakeholder engagement and disclosure practices, gained substantial traction (Tang, Wu, & Tang, 2021).

The second research category focuses on sustainability, encompassing clusters #0 "sustainable manufacturing", #2 "sustainable development", #4 "corporate sustainability", and #7 "collaboration". Key terms in this domain include "sustainable development", "impact", "environmental performance", and "innovation". The rapid industrialization of Western societies has precipitated severe environmental crises, fostering widespread recognition of ecological limits and existential risks to humanity. The World Conservation Strategy (1980) by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) notably asserted: "The relationships between natural, social, ecological, and economic systems—as well as resource utilization processes—must be rigorously examined to ensure global sustainable development". The visualization analysis reveals not only a higher quantity of sustainability-related clusters but also their lower cluster numbers, signifying a disproportionately large volume of publications. This underscores the centrality of sustainability in international CSR scholarship.

The third research category comprises systematic reviews of CSR literature, as evidenced by clusters #3 "bibliometric analysis" and #5 "literature review". This indicates that Western academia has developed a mature, structured body of meta-analytical and bibliometric research on CSR—a phenomenon absent in domestic literature. The lack of comparable systematic reviews in Chinese CSR research suggests a critical gap, warranting future scholarly efforts to consolidate empirical findings through comprehensive meta-studies (Zhao & Weng, 2023).

4.3 Research Hotspots

Following the overview of major CSR research domains in domestic and international literature based on cluster mapping, this study further investigates research hotspots in the CSR field by extracting high-frequency keywords and generating keyword co-occurrence networks (see Figures 4 and 5). In CiteSpace, the node type was set to "Keyword" with a time slicing parameter of 1 year (years per slice = 1), meaning the most frequently occurring keywords were extracted annually. The frequency of keyword appearance reflects its level of academic attention (see Table 1). Since the search terms "企业社会责任" (CSR) and "corporate social responsibility" were used in CNKI and Web of Science respectively, these terms naturally exhibited the highest frequencies but are excluded from discussion.
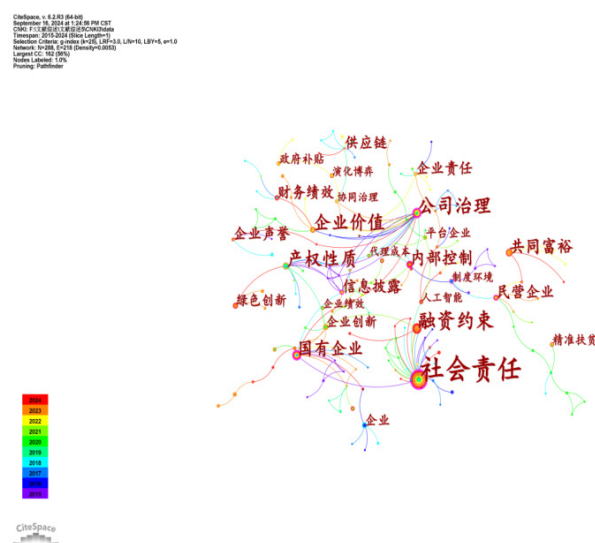
Figure 4: Keyword co-occurrence map of CSR at home
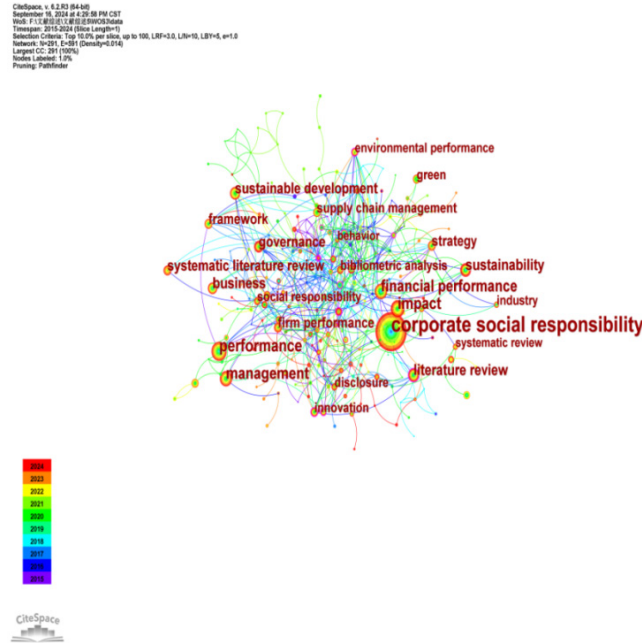
Figure 5: Keyword co-occurrence map of CSR abroad

Figures 4 and 5 reveal that "financing constraints", "corporate governance", "firm value", "property rights", "internal control", "state-owned enterprises", and "common prosperity" dominate domestic CSR literature. In contrast, international research emphasizes "sustainability", "financial performance", "sustainable development", "supply chain management", and "firm performance". For comparative analysis, Table1 presents the top 20 high-frequency keywords from both China and abroad. Cross-regional commonalities include shared focus on corporate governance, supply chains, information disclosure, financial performance, and innovation. Distinctively, domestic studies prioritize financing constraints and property rights, while international scholarship exhibits stronger engagement with sustainability and systematic reviews (e.g., bibliometric analyses).

Table 1: High-frequency keywords of CSR research at home and abroad (excerpts)

Domestic Journals			International Journals		
Keywords	Frequency	Centrality	Keywords	Frequency	Centrality
Social responsibility	98	0.34	corporate social responsibility	606	0
Financing constraints	29	0.21	performance	154	0.05
Corporate governance	25	0.14	impact	134	0.04
Property rights	20	0.16	management	123	0.04
Firm value	19	0.05	financial performance	113	0.05
State-owned enterprises	16	0.14	sustainability	88	0.04
Common prosperity	14	0	literature review	84	0.1
Private enterprises	13	0.05	business	79	0.01
Internal control	13	0.08	governance	78	0.02
Financial performance	11	0.01	sustainable development	75	0.04
Information disclosure	9	0.12	systematic literature review	68	0
Corporate responsibility	9	0.02	strategy	60	0.08
Corporate reputation	9	0.05	firm performance	59	0.06
Enterprise	8	0.12	framework	59	0.09
Green innovation	8	0.01	supply chain management	54	0.02

Supply chain	8	0.07	disclosure	48	0.05
Corporate innovation	7	0.21	innovation	47	0.16
Platform enterprises	7	0.03	green	47	0
Evolutionary game	6	0.01	bibliometric analysis	45	0.09
Government subsidies	6	0	social responsibility	45	0.09

Beyond frequency, CiteSpace calculates keyword centrality (betweenness centrality) (Li & Chen, 2022). Centrality measures a node's brokerage potential in the shortest paths of a network, identifying pivotal junctions that bridge disconnected clusters (Freeman, 1979; Brandes, 2001). Nodes with centrality ≥ 0.1 are flagged as critical. Typically, high-frequency, high-centrality keywords signify collective research priorities—i.e., hotspots and frontiers.

In domestic journals, critical nodes like "financing constraints", "corporate governance", "property rights", "state-owned enterprises", and "information disclosure" mark pivotal transitions in CSR research, mirroring the historical trajectory of CSR practices in China. Internationally, "innovation" emerges as a keystone node. Notably, frequency and centrality are correlated but not strictly proportional. For instance, while most high-frequency international keywords exhibit low centrality—suggesting they represent isolated research branches— "literature review" and "innovation" demonstrate both high frequency and centrality (≥ 0.1), positioning them as hubs that interconnect disparate CSR subfields. This implies that systematic reviews and innovation serve as methodological and thematic anchors in global CSR research.

Top 5 Keywords with the Strongest Citation Bursts

Keywords	Year	Strength	Begin	End	2015 - 2024
企业	2016	3.67	**2016**	2018	
产权性质	2015	3.55	**2017**	2019	
平台企业	2020	2.22	**2020**	2021	
融资约束	2022	4.92	**2022**	2024	
共同富裕	2022	2.88	**2022**	2024	

Figure 6: Burst items of domestic research on CSR

Top 5 Keywords with the Strongest Citation Bursts

Keywords	Year	Strength	Begin	End	2015 - 2024
identity	2015	4.23	**2015**	2016	
business ethics	2016	5.08	**2016**	2018	
environmental management	2017	5.12	**2017**	2020	
conceptual framework	2017	4.54	**2017**	2020	
competitive advantage	2018	4.03	**2018**	2020	

Figure 7: Burst items of foreign research on CSR

4.4 Analysis of Research Trends

The timezone mapping function in CiteSpace visually demonstrates the evolutionary trajectory of hotspot keywords over time, illustrating the inheritance relationships between nodes through connecting lines. Figures 8 and 9 present the timezone views of keyword co-occurrence clusters in domestic and international CSR research, respectively.

A comparative analysis of CSR studies across regions reveals both convergences and divergences. Notably, "corporate reputation" emerges as a shared emphasis in global scholarship, reflecting broad academic consensus (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990). Firms worldwide leverage CSR initiatives to meet stakeholder expectations and enhance reputational capital—a strategic imperative now entrenched as a global norm (Porter & Kramer, 2019). This universal recognition positions CSR as a critical pathway for reputation-building and competitive advantage, compelling corporations to institutionalize it as a core operational priority.

4.4.1 Domestic Research Trajectory

The historical evolution of Chinese CSR research shows distinct phases. In 2005, seminal keywords included "property rights", "state-owned enterprises (SOEs)", "corporate reputation", and "food safety", marking the inception of China's CSR discourse. This period coincided with two pivotal developments: (1) the State-Owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC) formulated the Chinese Corporate Social Responsibility Standard by year-end, and (2) State Grid Corporation issued China's inaugural CSR report, collectively signaling the institutionalization of CSR practices (Chen & Zhang, 2021). By 2020, research pivoted toward "platform enterprises" and "platform economy", driven by frequent CSR incidents in China's digital economy and policy shifts (Zhu & Shang, 2020). Post-18th CPC National Congress, scholarly attention turned to the exemplary role of SOEs in advancing CSR and sustainable development (Kong & Zheng, 2022).

4.4.2 International Research Trajectory

Western CSR scholarship traces its roots to the late 19th century, when industrialization under laissez-faire capitalism precipitated social ills—fraudulent advertising, bribery, substandard products, and pollution—spurring academic scrutiny (Carroll, 1999). Contemporary international studies prioritize "financial performance", "environmental performance", "innovation", and "disclosure", in multidimensional analytical frameworks (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). A 2024 surge in "ESG performance" research underscores its role in enhancing corporate competitiveness (Liu & Wang, 2024). ESG metrics—evaluating environmental, social, and governance commitments—have matured into a robust assessment paradigm abroad (Shi & Wang, 2023), though remain understudied in China.

4.4.3 Divergent Foci

Domestic research exhibits distinctive Chinese characteristics, with themes like "targeted poverty alleviation", "common prosperity", and "rural revitalization" rooted in national socio-economic agendas. Conversely, international scholarship emphasizes systematic CSR syntheses (e.g., bibliometric analyses, meta-reviews), demonstrating theoretical and methodological sophistication (Gao et al., 2023). The ascendancy of ESG evaluation abroad contrasts with its nascent status in Chinese academia, highlighting a critical research gap.

5 Conclusion

Employing CiteSpace 6.2 for knowledge mapping analysis of CSR literature across domestic and international core journals reveals several critical insights. The comparable publication volume between Chinese and international journals, coupled with the sustained high output since 2022, demonstrates CSR's entrenched position as a pivotal research domain that bridges academic inquiry and corporate practice (Wang et al., 2023). Notably, while global scholarship converges on fundamental areas including environmental impact, financial performance, corporate governance, and supply chain management (Eccles et al., 2020), Chinese research exhibits distinctive contextual depth through its examination of sector-specific applications such as pharmaceutical industry responsibilities. These investigations illuminate how domestic enterprises navigate the complex interplay between profitability and societal obligations, particularly in domains like quality control, pharmaceutical innovation, and sustainable development (Li & Zhang, 2022), thereby manifesting the "Chinese characteristics" of CSR that are deeply interwoven with national strategic priorities.

Building upon current trajectories, Chinese CSR scholarship stands to benefit substantially from several strategic advancements. The imperative for theoretical consolidation through interdisciplinary synthesis emerges clearly, where systematic literature reviews and bibliometric methodologies could transform fragmented findings into coherent conceptual frameworks (Zupic &   ater, 2015). Parallel to this theoretical development, the linguistic dimension of CSR communication warrants deeper exploration, particularly regarding how corporations construct identity through discursive strategies. Huawei's strategic deployment of collectivist rhetoric and crisis narratives in annual reports exemplifies how language can shape perceptions of corporate responsibility (Wu & Chen, 2024), suggesting rich potential for cross-sectoral comparative studies.

The rapid integration of artificial intelligence and big data analytics into CSR research presents both opportunities and challenges that demand careful scholarly attention. While these technologies enable sophisticated impact assessments through techniques like sentiment analysis of stakeholder feedback (Liu et al., 2023), they simultaneously introduce ethical complexities such as algorithmic bias in sustainability reporting and the risk of superficial "ethics washing" by technology firms (Buhmann et al., 2020). This dual nature calls for balanced research approaches that harness technological advantages while establishing robust ethical safeguards.

Equally crucial is the linguistic analysis of ESG reporting, where examination of framing devices, modality choices, and intertextual elements can reveal how companies establish credibility in their sustainability narratives (Morioka et al., 2021). The strategic use of active voice and quantifiable metrics, for instance, has been shown to significantly enhance perceptions of corporate accountability (Dyck et al., 2019), offering practical insights for Chinese firms aiming to strengthen their global ESG positioning.

The unique integration of CSR with national development strategies, particularly through state-owned enterprises' initiatives in areas like common prosperity, positions Chinese research to make distinctive contributions to global sustainability discourse. By strategically leveraging advanced analytical tools while maintaining focus on authentic identity construction and ethical transparency, Chinese scholarship can both enhance domestic corporate competitiveness and meaningfully advance international sustainable development objectives.

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A Study on Turn Design in Business Communication for Suggestion: A Conversation Analysis Approach with the Movie The Intern as a Case

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Abstract

The formulation of suggestions in business communication plays a crucial role in the entire business process. From the perspective of turn-taking design, this study conducts a conversation analysis of collected business communication corpora. First, it analyzes the linguistic resources in turn-taking design of business communication from four aspects: turn-taking, conversational repair, mutual understanding, and preference vs. non-preference organization. It then examines the non-verbal resources in turn-taking design, focusing on gestures and eye contact. Furthermore, it proposes the distinctive features of suggestion construction in business communication. Through corpus analysis and summarization, this study clarifies that turn-taking design in business communication is the result of the joint influence of linguistic and non-verbal factors, providing new insights into communicative skills for business interactions.

Keywords: Business Communication, Suggestion Making, Conversation Analysis, Turn-taking Design

1 Introduction

Conversation is an indispensable linguistic phenomenon in human social activities. Conversation analysis primarily focuses on talk-in-interaction, while also examining non-linguistic forms of social interaction such as gaze direction, gestures, and body movements, as well as the connections between the linguistic and non-linguistic features of interaction (Yu Guodong, 2021). The significance of conversation analysis for business and management research is self-evident, as talk-in-interaction is ubiquitous in the daily operations of any organization and crucial for completing key business and management activities, including strategy formulation, planning, sales, interviews, meeting facilitation, negotiations, and presentations.

The act of making suggestions is an indispensable part of business communication, even playing a decisive role in its success or failure. This paper approaches the topic from the perspective of turn-taking design, analyzing the turn-taking designs in business communication conversations from both linguistic and non-linguistic resources perspectives. Through the study of suggestion-making in business communication and the classification of turn-taking design principles, this research aims to promote the smooth and efficient conduct of business communication, thereby facilitating win-win outcomes in business negotiations.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Conversation Analysis

The concept of 'conversation analysis' broadly encompasses the inquiry into people's interactive communication. In a narrow sense, it signifies a specific analytic tradition established by Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson (1977), which serves as the theoretical framework for this research. Rooted in sociology and informed by ethnomethodology, conversation analysis is characterized as "a naturalistic observational discipline that systematically addresses the minutiae of social actions with rigor, empirical evidence, and formal structure" (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973, p. 289).

Scholarly discussions on conversation analysis primarily address two key themes. The first theme focuses on the genesis of conversation analysis, which can be attributed to Sacks' 1974 scholarship, Goffman's (1983) investigations into interactional order, and Garfinkel's (1967) studies on ethnomethodology. The second theme involves the conversational-analytic frameworks of talk-in-interaction, comprising but not limited to turn-taking mechanisms, discourse overlap, interruption patterns, sequential organization, and repair systems.

2.2 Turn Taking Design

Turn-taking design refers to how speakers construct the current turn to perform a specific action, that is, which resources speakers choose to build the turn to accomplish the intended action. Meanwhile, listeners can infer the action performed in the turn through the resources selected by the speaker (Yu Guodong, 2021). Turn-taking design typically involves two aspects: first, what action the current turn aims to perform; second, how the action is executed through the turn, namely, which linguistic or non-linguistic resources the speaker employs. Linguistic resource selection involves vocabulary, syntax, pronunciation, intonation, etc., while non-linguistic resource selection involves gestures, eye contact, body movements, and other physical actions (Drew, 2005; Drew, 2013; Drew & Heritage, 1992; Yu Guodong, 2011).

3 Turn-taking Design for Suggestion-making in Business Communication

Through the collection and sorting of business communication corpora regarding suggestion-making in the movie The Intern, this paper mainly analyzes the data from two aspects: linguistic resources (turn-taking, conversational repair, mutual understanding, preference and non-preference organization) and non-linguistic resources (gestures and eye contact).

3.1 Linguistic Resources

3.1.1 Turn-taking

Turn-taking serves as the resource and foundation for communicators to engage in talk-in-interaction, where they take turns, construct utterances, and conduct communication according to conversational sequences (Yu Guodong, 2021).

Example (1)

J: Okay. You guys have to remember the homepage has to read in a glance. Also, you have to get back like this if you wanna see what it looks like if you're over 35. Okay, so I can't read anything. But if I could, what do you want me to see? Five girls one shirt or check out the fit?

E: Well, both, but what I really want you to see is the shirt worn by five different body types.

J: Okay, then you gotta make me see that. Try making the photo grid bigger. I love that five—can make it more graphic. Yeah, that's cool.

E: Jules...

J: That's a great red. It is going to fly out of here.

E: I needed you to sign off on this like 2 hours ago.

J: I know, I know, but can you try?

E: Yep.

J: Mia, tell me the thing again.

M: Oh, 40% of our visitors don't go past the homepage, which isn't so bad.

J: Yeah, but we should fix that.

E: Okay, here we go.

J: I love it.

E: Great, and it's up.

J: Okay, thanks, everybody. Thank you.

In Example (1), Jules (J), as the company boss, proposes a suggestion to enlarge the image of female models wearing red shirts in the advertisement. However, Employee E interrupts J's turn to urge immediate approval for the work, demonstrating a strategic use of turn-taking mechanisms. This interaction reveals three key dimensions of linguistic resource design in business suggestion-making:

In business communication, the strategies of turn - transition are intricately intertwined with power dynamics. In the analyzed conversation snippet, Employee E interrupts Boss J's turn with the utterance "Jules...". This prosodic cut - off effectively conveys a sense of urgency. As Drew (2005) argued in his research on "interruption as a resource," subordinates in hierarchical communication contexts often utilize minimal linguistic tokens, such as name addresses, to seize the floor. By interrupting J and then shifting the conversation to a request for a signature, E transforms the discussion from a suggestion - oriented exchange into an action - demanding sequence. This process vividly demonstrates how turn - taking can redefine the goals of interaction, highlighting the significant role of turn - transition strategies within power - laden communication scenarios.

The reception of suggestions in business talk often exhibits patterns of preference organization. When Boss J initially suggests "Try making the photo grid bigger," Employee E responds with partial compliance, saying "Yep," but immediately follows it with a persistent request for approval. This interaction exemplifies the "non - preference organization" pattern proposed by Schegloff and Sacks (1973). In this pattern, E's agreement serves as a preface to a less preferred action—urging for a signature, which softens the potential

challenge to authority. The overlap between J's "but can you try?" and E's "Yep" further illustrates how the timing of turn - taking coordinates competing actions. Such precise management of turn - taking moments allows different communicative intentions to interweave and be reconciled within the limited space of conversation, ensuring its smooth continuation.

The sequential embedding of suggestions is a crucial strategy in business communication. Boss J redirects the conversation to Mia and initiates a new turn by introducing the data "40% of our visitors don't go past the homepage." This strategic turn - shift serves a dual purpose. Firstly, in accordance with Goffman's (1983) principle of "interaction order," the introduction of empirical evidence lends credibility to subsequent suggestions, enhancing their persuasiveness. Secondly, the new turn creates a sequential context, making Employee E's subsequent response "Okay, here we go" not only a reaction to J's suggestion but also a response to the newly introduced data. The conversation concludes with "It's up," which confirms that well - designed turn - taking mechanisms can effectively drive communication towards collaborative problem - solving. This also aligns with Yu Guodong's (2021) argument that turn organization is a process of integrating linguistic and non - linguistic resources. For example, J's repeated praise acts as non - linguistic positive reinforcement, contributing significantly to the smooth progress of communication.

The force of suggestions in business communication is often manifested through linguistic markers. In the first turn, Boss J uses deontic modals such as "have to" and "gotta," which clearly encode authority, signifying the directive nature of a superior's speech. In contrast, Employee E's use of the modal "needed" in the past tense softens the intensity of the request, making the expression more euphemistic. This contrast in grammar, especially the differences in tense and modality selection, clearly demonstrates how syntactic structures function as important linguistic resources for negotiating power dynamics during turn transitions. Additionally, J's repair sequence "I know, I know" further exemplifies the conversational repair mechanisms studied by Drew and Heritage (1992). When faced with conflicting agendas, such self - correction behaviors help maintain the coherence of interaction, preventing the conversation from reaching an impasse due to differences in opinion and ensuring that communication can continue in a relatively harmonious atmosphere.

3.1.2 Conversational Repair

Conversational repair addresses issues of hearing, speaking, and understanding encountered by communicators during interaction. Based on the relationship between the repair initiator and the repair executor, conversational repair can be categorized into four types: self-initiated/self-repaired, self-initiated/other-repaired, other-initiated/self-repaired, and other-initiated/other-repaired (Yu Guodong, 2021).

Example (2)

> J: Hi, this is good, right? I like this arrangement. Uh, Becky, I want you to let Ben give you a hand, okay? And CC him all my emails. Did we get yesterday's numbers?
>
> B: Uh, yes, we did. I saw them here. Here you are.
>
> J: Thanks. And I need to go over the data and customer purchase patterns. Let Ben take a look at that too. Actually, let Ben take a look at that first. Don't worry, Becky, backup is good.

In Example (2), the interaction between Jules, the boss, and Secretary Becky provides a rich illustration of self-initiated self-repair in the context of business communication. When instructing Becky regarding Ben's involvement in reviewing emails, Jules initially states "let Ben take a look at that too," positioning Ben's role as supplementary to Becky's. However, almost immediately, Jules modifies the instruction to "let Ben take a look at that first," a significant shift that reorders the task hierarchy. This self-correction aligns with Drew's (2013) conceptualization of repair as a means of "action reformulation." By using the discourse marker "actually" to signal the change, Jules indicates that the initial suggestion was a provisional thought, not a definitive directive. This strategic adjustment not only clarifies the priority of tasks but also showcases

how speakers in professional settings leverage self-repair to refine the force and scope of their suggestions in real-time interaction.

Jules' self-repair as a leader embodies a complex interplay of strategic intentions deeply rooted in power dynamics. On one hand, by openly correcting herself, Jules projects an image of attentiveness to detail, reinforcing her authority through the display of competence. The act of refining her own suggestion—"I refine my own suggestions to ensure accuracy"—serves as a model for meticulousness within the workplace. On the other hand, Jules employs relational work to mitigate potential face threats. The reassuring comment "Don't worry, Becky, backup is good" softens the impact of the revised instruction, demonstrating an awareness of Becky's face needs. This approach starkly contrasts with other-initiated repair scenarios, where subordinates may be reluctant to correct superiors due to hierarchical constraints (Schegloff, 2007). Jules' choice of self-repair thus navigates the delicate balance between asserting authority and maintaining positive working relationships, highlighting how power structures shape repair strategies in business contexts.

The linguistic markers employed in Jules' repair sequence offer a nuanced view of the underlying communicative mechanisms. The discourse marker "actually" functions as a turn-holding device, alerting Becky to an impending correction and aligning with Drew and Heritage's (1992) findings on repair initiation cues. The substitution of "too" with "first" represents a targeted alteration in deontic modality, transforming the suggestion from an additive afterthought to a prioritized directive. This semantic shift is crucial for clarifying the intended action hierarchy. Finally, Jules' reassuring comment to Becky serves as a post-repair validation, closing the repair sequence and ensuring that the revised instruction is understood without ambiguity. This aligns with Yu Guodong's (2021) observation that self-repair in business talk often integrates prosodic elements, such as the pause before "actually," and pragmatic markers to maintain interactional smoothness.

Beyond its immediate communicative function, Jules' self-repair has far-reaching organizational implications. By prioritizing Ben's involvement, Jules subtly promotes cross-training, an essential strategy for developing a versatile workforce. This approach is embedded within the conversational repair itself, illustrating how everyday talk can encode organizational goals. Additionally, the explicit self-correction reinforces the norm of decision-making transparency, signaling that suggestions are subject to refinement based on situational requirements—a principle vital for fostering collaboration. Compared to scenarios where a subordinate might initiate the repair (e.g., "Do you mean first, Jules?"), Jules' self-initiated repair avoids challenging her own authority while still achieving the desired clarification. This choice optimizes both task efficiency and relational harmony, demonstrating the dual role of repair as a tool for both communicative correction and organizational management.

In conclusion, the interaction in Corpus (2) underscores the strategic nature of conversational repair in business suggestion-making. Through self-initiated self-repair, speakers like Jules can dynamically adjust the pragmatic force of their suggestions, navigate power dynamics, and coordinate interactional coherence using linguistic markers. This example highlights how repair mechanisms extend beyond mere error correction, serving as integral tools for fine-tuning managerial directives and maintaining effective organizational communication.

3.1.3 Intersubjectivity

Intersubjectivity refers to the mutual understanding between communicators regarding each other's discourse and actions, which can be manifested in the sequential structure of conversation (Yu Guodong, 2008; Schegloff, 2007). Intersubjectivity plays a decisive role in communicative interaction, as the accurate interpretation of communicators' intentions in business contexts often determines the success of business communication.

Example (3)

> J: I hope you accept my apology and come back to work for me. If you want. And I'm not just saying this because he's screwed up this morning, but I was thinking that I'd like to bring you up to my area. Next to Becky. I know you can handle more work, if you like more. I—I can't tell you how much I hate that. I jumped the gun and I made you...
>
> B: I'm happy to come back.
>
> J: Excellent. Can I give you a lift back to the office?
>
> B: Sure.

In Example (3), the interaction between Jules, the boss, and Ben offers a compelling illustration of inter-subjectivity in business communication. Jules initiates the conversation by apologizing to Ben for a mis-assigned transfer and extends a proposal for him to return to work. During Jules' hesitant and fragmented apology, characterized by statements such as "I—I can't tell you... I jumped the gun," Ben interrupts with a prompt acceptance: "I'm happy to come back." This seemingly abrupt interruption is, in fact, a nuanced communicative move that exemplifies intersubjectivity through multiple interconnected mechanisms.

The sequential organization of the conversation plays a crucial role in establishing intersubjective understanding. Ben's timely interruption is a testament to his acute sensitivity to the contextual cues embedded in Jules' discourse. As Schegloff (2007) posits, intersubjectivity emerges from "sequential implicativeness," and in this case, Ben adeptly interprets Jules' stuttering and self - blame as a tacit plea for reconciliation. By responding before Jules can fully articulate her apology, Ben effectively resolves the interactional tension that pervades the conversation. The overlap between Jules' self - recrimination and Ben's immediate acceptance functions as a form of "co - completion," a concept proposed by Yu Guodong (2008). This mechanism reinforces the shared understanding between the two parties without the need for explicit elaboration, highlighting the power of sequential coordination in achieving intersubjectivity.

Facework is another critical aspect of this interaction, intertwined with the dynamics of intersubjective repair. Jules' apology, laden with self - criticism, poses a threat to her own face. Ben's interruption serves a dual - purpose strategy in this regard. Drawing on Goffman's (1967) theory of face - saving, Ben's timely intervention cuts short Jules' self - blame, thereby preventing further erosion of her face. Simultaneously, Ben's immediate acceptance of the return offer signals his belief in the genuineness of Jules' proposal. This aligns with Drew's (1998) research on "pre - emptied responses," where subordinates employ interruption as a subtle means of managing power dynamics. By truncating the apology sequence, Ben avoids prolonging Jules' vulnerable position, demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of the hierarchical power structure at play.

The interaction is also rich with linguistic markers that facilitate intersubjective coordination. Ben's entry into the turn precisely during Jules' hesitation, marked by the elongated "I—," constitutes a form of prosodic convergence. This attunement to Jules' emotional tone serves to validate her sincerity, creating a sense of emotional resonance. In terms of deictic alignment, Jules' use of spatial deixis, such as "my area" and "next to Becky," constructs an inclusive work context. Ben's affirmative response effectively accepts this constructed spatial framework, reinforcing their shared spatial imagination. Additionally, the contrast between Jules' hedged statements, such as "if you want" and "if you like more," and Ben's unhedged acceptance, "I'm happy to," results in a modal alignment. This harmony in modality, as described by Heritage (1984), signals a mutual commitment between the two parties, further underscoring that intersubjectivity is a dynamic achievement, constructed through meticulous linguistic coordination.

The resolution of this interaction through intersubjective means has significant organizational implications. Firstly, by circumventing an extended apology, Ben and Jules minimize the potential downtime caused by the misassignment, adhering to the norms of business efficiency. Secondly, Ben's proactive acceptance and Jules' subsequent offer to provide a lift back to the office go beyond the immediate task at hand, serving as an investment in their professional relationship. This aligns with Holmes' (1995) assertion

that business talk often integrates both task - oriented and relational goals. Finally, the interaction embodies a corporate norm that emphasizes the importance of promptly resolving interpersonal issues to preserve team coherence. This norm is realized not through explicit rules but through the intersubjective practices demonstrated by Ben and Jules, highlighting the role of everyday communication in upholding organizational culture.

In conclusion, Example (3) underscores that intersubjectivity in business suggestion - making is a carefully managed sequential practice. Through the coordination of turn - taking, the implementation of facework strategies, and the deployment of linguistic markers, communicators like Ben and Jules can achieve mutual understanding and navigate complex interpersonal dynamics. Ben's interruption, rather than being a disruption, emerges as a valuable intersubjective resource that transforms a potentially uncomfortable situation into a collaborative resolution. This example vividly illustrates the pivotal role that conversational structure plays in enabling effective business communication, where intersubjectivity serves as the linchpin for successful interaction in professional settings.

3.1.4 Preference and Non-preference Organization

Adjacency pairs vary in how the first part constrains the second. When multiple possible second parts exist and their social implications differ, the concept of preference becomes salient for both communicators and researchers. Preference analysis encompasses two dimensions: action-based preference and design-based preference (Sidnell, 2010: 86). Key features of preference organization, or actions that exhibit preference, include promptness, unqualified responses, and lack of justifications.

Example (4)

J: Okay. You guys have to remember the homepage has to be legible at a glance. Also, you have to view it like this if you want to see how it looks to someone over 35. Okay, I can't read anything. But if I could, what do you want me to notice? Five girls in one shirt or the fit details?

E: Well, both, but I really want you to focus on the shirt worn by five different body types.

J: Okay, then make sure I can see that clearly. Try enlarging the photo grid. I love the five-model concept—it makes the design more graphic. Yeah, that's great.

E: Jules...

J: That red color is amazing. It'll sell like hotcakes.

E: I needed your approval on this two hours ago.

J: I know, I know, but can you make the adjustments?

E: Yep.

Example (5)

C: There's extensive research on this, and the results are truly remarkable. Imagine having an intern with a lifetime of experience instead of someone who spent the last four years partying.

J: Do they expect to get hired here eventually?

C: Darling, they're all retired. They just want the experience. And I'd like one to work directly with you.

J: Wait, Cameron, no.

C: What?

J: First of all, I'm not comfortable around older people. You know how I am with my parents. This could be… Why do I have to do this?

C: Because you need to set the standard.

J: I don't think this will work. But if I have to, how long is the minimum?

C: Six weeks, or we'll face legal issues.

J: We never discussed this before.

C: Yes, we did. Seriously.

In example (4), Employee E's succinct response of "yep" to Boss Jules' directive—"can you make the adjustments?"—serves as a prime example of action-based preference, as defined by Kendrick & Torreira (2014). This instantiation of preference organization unfolds through three interrelated linguistic and interactional dimensions. First, the immediacy of E's reply significantly reduces the temporal gap between J's request and the corresponding acknowledgment, adhering to Schegloff's (1968) principle of "next-turn relevance." Such promptness not only signals attentiveness but also conveys a sense of professional commitment to task execution. Second, the unqualified nature of "yep"—devoid of hedges like "I'll try" or conditional clauses—exemplifies Heritage's (1984) observation that preferred responses often eschew justifications, implying that compliance is assumed and requires no elaboration. Third, this response performs crucial relational work: by enacting a preferred action, E reinforces J's authority while positioning themselves as a reliable team member. This dual function—streamlining workflow through reduced negotiation and strengthening hierarchical bonds via deferential compliance—aligns with Goffman's (1971) insights into face management within institutional settings.

Conversely, Example (5) illuminates the mechanics of design-based non-preference organization through Jules' resistance to Cameron's proposal. J's response manifests three defining characteristics of non-preferred actions (Heritage, 1984). The interaction begins with a categorical refusal—"no"—followed by a series of objections, including "I'm not great with older people" and "Why do I have to?" This delayed acceptance disrupts the sequential flow, overtly signaling reluctance and deferring potential agreement until constrained by the ultimatum: "six weeks or we'll be sued." Additionally, J provides detailed justifications for opposition, citing personal discomfort and lack of prior consultation—strategies that align with Heritage's (1984) argument that non-preferred responses often include accounts to mitigate the face threat of disagreement. Finally, J's use of hedging—"I don't think this will work"—and conditional acceptance—"how long do I have to… minimum?"—stands in sharp contrast to E's unhedged "yep" in Example (4). These modal markers weaken commitment, reflecting a power struggle in which J seeks to negotiate terms despite C's authoritative stance.

The contrast between these examples underscores the strategic role of preference organization in business communication. In Example (4), preferred actions facilitate efficient decision-making, while Example (5) demonstrates how non-preferred responses invite negotiation, with communicative goals shaping this strategic choice—E prioritizes task execution, whereas J aims to challenge a directive. Power dynamics are equally salient: E's preferred response reinforces J's leadership, while J's non-preferred stance contests C's authority, echoing Drew's (1990) assertion that preference organization serves as a site for power enactment. Subordinates often deploy preferred actions to demonstrate compliance, while superiors may leverage non-preferred responses to assert autonomy. Culturally, these examples mirror distinct organizational norms: Example (4) reflects a hierarchical culture valuing prompt obedience, while Example (5) suggests a more permissive environment where objections are tolerated, albeit with consequences.

In essence, preference and non-preference organization emerge not as static linguistic phenomena but as dynamic strategies through which communicators navigate tasks, relationships, and power in professional settings. By deploying these resources, interlocutors can achieve specific interactional outcomes—from efficient task delegation to strategic resistance—thereby highlighting the pivotal role of turn design in shaping organizational communication. This dual capacity to structure both discourse and power relations underscores the integral function of preference organization in maintaining the delicate balance between efficiency and relational harmony in business contexts.

3.2 Non-linguistic Resources

3.2.1 Gestures

As a crucial component of body language, gestures play an indispensable role in conversation analysis. In business communication, gestures convey emotions and ideas, and accurately interpreting their variations can enhance communicative effectiveness.

Example (6)

> J: If you ask me, I think that you'd be much better off working on creative marketing. (taps the table with two index fingers) It's a little bit slower pace, maybe a little bit easier to grasp. If you requested to transfer, we can make that happen. (rests arms on the table, clasps hands)
>
> B: If that's what you prefer.
>
> J: You'll be happier. Believe me, I am not so fun to work for. (waves hand three times)
>
> B: That's how I gather, but I can get along with anyone. And I'm here to learn about your world. Give help where I can, so...
>
> J: So you don't want to transfer?
>
> B: Not really, sir. I'm terribly sorry. Excuse me.
>
> J: Okay. Well then it looks like you're stuck with me.
>
> B: Great, I'm excited.
>
> J: I will e-mail you when I have something for you to do. (opens laptop)
>
> B: Or I could just stop by a few times a day, check in.
>
> J: I'll e-mail you.

In example (6), Jules (J) strategically employs a sequence of distinct gestures to structure her suggestion for Ben (B) to transfer to the marketing department, offering a compelling demonstration of how non-linguistic resources integrate with verbal discourse in professional interactions. When proposing the transfer, J's act of tapping the table with two index fingers serves as a deictic emphasis, a physical gesture that anchors the suggestion in the immediate environment.

Following the suggestion, J assumes a posture of resting her arms on the table and clasping her hands, a physical configuration that Kendon (1990) identifies as a "relaxed postural closure"—a non-verbal cue signaling the completion of her turn. This gesture performs a tripartite function in the interaction: it explicitly yields conversational control to Ben, aligning with Schegloff's (1984) principles of non-verbal turn transition; it conveys a stance of anticipation, effectively pressuring Ben to respond promptly with its implicit message of "I await your reply"; and it reinforces J's authority through a dominant tabletop posture—arms spread, hands clasped—that contrasts subtly with Ben's likely deferential stance (inferred from contextual norms), echoing Goffman's (1979) analysis of body language in hierarchical dynamics. The clasped hands, in this sense, serve not only as a turn-yielding device but also as a non-verbal assertion of professional authority.

At the conversation's conclusion, J's act of opening her laptop exemplifies what Goodwin (1981) terms "object-coupled gesturing," where manipulating an artifact becomes a non-verbal adjacency pair to her verbal closure ("I will e-mail you"). This gesture strategically redefines the interactional context: by prioritizing computer work, J signals a shift from discussion to task execution, aligning with business efficiency norms. Simultaneously, it functions as an implicit rejection of Ben's counterproposal to "stop by a few times"—a non-verbal strategy that softens the face threat of refusal, as Brown & Levinson (1987) note, by avoiding explicit negation. Additionally, the laptop-opening gesture cues Ben to terminate the interaction, illustrating how non-linguistic resources like object manipulation manage conversational boundaries in professional settings, as Hopper (1992) has discussed.

The sequential progression of gestures—tapping, clasping, opening—forms a cohesive multimodal package with J's speech, each movement reinforcing a specific conversational function. The tap synchronizes with the suggestion's key predicate, aiding Ben's cognitive processing of the proposal; hand-clasping humanizes J's authority, balancing firmness with approachability to foster relational harmony; and laptop-opening minimizes conversational drift, adhering to the task-oriented ethos of business communication. This integration of non-linguistic and linguistic resources supports Yu Guodong's (2021) argument that turn-taking design in professional talk is a cross-modal achievement, were bodily actions and speech co-construct communicative intent. Ben's prompt exit following J's final gesture indicates his successful decoding of these non-verbal cues, underscoring the necessity of gestural competence for effective business interaction.

In essence, this episode reveals that gestures in business suggestion-making are not ancillary to speech but rather strategic tools for emphasizing propositional content, managing turn transitions, negotiating power dynamics, and regulating interactional boundaries. J's gestural repertoire demonstrates how non-linguistic resources actively shape conversational meaning, illustrating the indispensable role of multimodal analysis in unpacking the complexities of professional communication. By integrating bodily actions with verbal discourse, communicators in business contexts can achieve finer-grained control over interactional outcomes, balancing task efficiency with relational maintenance through the nuanced deployment of non-verbal cues.

3.2.2 Eye Gaze

Eye gaze, as a subtler component of non-linguistic resources, conveys emotions in a more implicit manner, requiring sensitive interpretation to enhance business communication effectiveness.

Example (7)

> J: I just wanted to say, (looks at the floor) I slept on it. I haven't called Townsend yet, but (blinks once and looks at Ben) I still feel like it's the right thing to do.
>
> B: I didn't sleep so well myself.
>
> J: Over this?
>
> B: Remember the day I drove you to the warehouse, you gave me the wrong directions and all that.
>
> J: Yeah, I remember. (stares at Ben with a smile)
>
> B: Okay, well I stood in the back and watched you show the workers how to fold the box to close. I knew then why ATF was a success.

In example (7), Jules (J) demonstrates strategic use of eye gaze shifts while consulting Ben (B) about hiring a CEO, illustrating how ocular movements serve as nuanced non-linguistic resources in business suggestion-making. When J initially gazes at the floor while saying "I slept on it," this behavior aligns with Kendon's (1990) concept of gaze aversion, a non-verbal cue that signals psychological hesitation. Goodwin (1981) has noted that downward gaze in decision-making contexts often correlates with internal conflict, and here the gaze shift performs dual functions: it masks J's uncertainty to maintain professional composure while providing cognitive space for discursive preparation, as evidenced by her pause before mentioning "calling Townsend" (Yu Guodong, 2021). The contrast between this aversive gaze and subsequent direct eye contact highlights how ocular movements encode emotional transitions in business talk, much like prosodic shifts in verbal discourse.

J's blink followed by direct eye contact when stating "I still feel like it's the right thing to do" constitutes a strategic "blink-gaze package" that solicits intersubjective alignment. As Argyle & Cook (1976) have observed, the blink momentarily exposes vulnerability, while the subsequent gaze lock invites response. This behavior creates a "shared attentional frame" (Tomasello, 2003), pressuring Ben to acknowledge the suggestion in a manner analogous to a linguistic question. Drew (2013) has argued that such non-linguistic

resources function as "implicit adjacency pairs," where gaze behaviors replace explicit requests for confirmation—a dynamic clear in J's non-verbal cueing.

During Ben's narrative, J's smiling stare exemplifies a "positive gaze complex" that integrates eye contact with facial expression to facilitate turn continuation. This non-verbal cluster reinforces Schegloff's (1984) principle of "continuation relevance" by signaling interest and approval, while also mitigating power distance through the strategic combination of dominance (direct gaze) and warmth (smile), a key strategy in hierarchical contexts (Goffman, 1971). The gaze fixation on Ben's face further aligns cognitive focus, guiding his attention to the relevance of his story for legitimizing J's proposal—an instance of "relational work" in business talk as defined by Holmes (1995).

The three-phase gaze trajectory—from aversion to blink-gaze to smile-gaze—forms a multimodal sequence that mirrors the rhetorical structure of J's suggestion. Kendon (2004) has emphasized that eye movements in professional settings are "orchestrated with talk," and here the sequence progresses from articulating doubt (gaze aversion) to asserting conviction (blink-gaze) to expanding dialogue (smile-gaze). Ben's responsive storytelling indicates successful decoding of these gaze cues, underscoring the vital role of ocular competence in negotiating suggestions. Taken together, these findings reveal that eye gaze in business communication serves as a dynamic resource for managing emotions, soliciting support, facilitating conversational flow, and negotiating power relations—all of which highlight the necessity of multimodal analysis for understanding professional interactional competence.

4 Distinctive Features of Suggestion Construction in Business Communication

In the preceding sections, we analyzed the turn-taking design for suggestion-making in business communication from the perspective of formal classification, examining linguistic and non-linguistic resources through corpora from the movie. This analysis has deepened our understanding of suggestion-making in business contexts. Next, we summarize the characteristics of suggestion construction to further illuminate the design of suggestive turns in business communication.

4.1 Directivity

The "advice-seeking-advice-giving" sequence represents a special form of question-answer sequence. One distinctive feature of suggestion turn construction is proposing an action for the addressee to perform in the future (Yu Guodong, 2021).

Example (8)

J: Maybe check the delivery cost on those boots. Yeah, that's all.

B: Hi. I took a look at the data on purchase patterns. Should I come back later?

J: No, no, come on in. That was fast.

B: Well, thanks to Beck's help. It seems the most expensive advertising channel is actually attracting customers who spend the least, while the channels you invest in the least are adding enormous value. Some market segments currently seen as low-value actually have the highest spending potential. That's what I've found so far.

J: Oh, Ben, can you deal with that for me? Maybe come up with a better plan. I mean, if you have the time, I'd appreciate it.

B: Yeah.

In Example (8), Jules (J) illustrates the task-directive nature of business suggestions by urging Ben (B) to "come up with a better plan," an interaction that unpacks three interrelated dimensions of directivity in suggestion construction. Linguistically, J employs a strategic blend of deontic modality and action-oriented syntax to balance authority with politeness. The modal verb "can" in "can you deal with that" softens the directive into a request, while the hedging adverb "maybe" in "maybe come up with" mitigates face threat,

aligning with Brown & Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness strategies. This grammatical choice reflects Drew's (2013) concept of "mitigated directivity," where superiors use modal markers to navigate power dynamics. The shift from J's initial imperative ("check the delivery cost") to the interrogative-proposal hybrid in her follow-up turn demonstrates how syntax adapts to the interlocutor's competence—Ben's rapid data analysis elicits a more collaborative tone, as noted by Yu Guodong (2021), who argues that business suggestions are "linguistic actions oriented toward future tasks" with grammatical forms encoding both directive force and interpersonal tact.

The suggestion unfolds in a three-stage sequential structure that exemplifies Schegloff's (1984) principle of conditional relevance. Ben's report on inefficient advertising channels first establishes a factual basis for J's suggestion, followed by J's pre-suggestion question ("can you deal with that") that prepares Ben for the task assignment. The hedged clause ("if you have the time") then solicits Ben's voluntary commitment, transforming the directive into a collaborative agreement. This staged progression aligns with Goffman's (1971) view of communication as a ritualized process, where each turn strategically builds on the prior to achieve interactional closure. The sequential organization underscores that directivity in business talk is not a monologic act but a dynamically negotiated accomplishment.

J's suggestion embodies a delicate balance between authority enforcement and employee empowerment. By framing the task as "deal with that for me," J reinforces her role as decision-maker, yet hedges like "maybe" and praise ("that was fast") mitigate face threat, reflecting Holmes' (1995) concept of "relational work." This pragmatic tension is further evident in the contrast between J's initial terse command and her nuanced follow-up, which adapts to Ben's demonstrated competence. As Kendrick & Torreira (2014) note, directivity in professional settings is context-sensitive, with communicators adjusting their linguistic style to interlocutors' responses.

Organizationally, this interaction serves as a managerial tool for optimizing efficiency, delegating skills, and maintaining relational harmony. By anchoring the suggestion in operational data, J ensures task relevance, while assigning the planning task to Ben leverages his analytical expertise, aligning with principles of task specialization. The hedged suggestion format allows Ben to accept the task without losing face, fostering a cooperative work environment. As Streeck (2009) argues, such directivity in business suggestion-making is not merely communicative but a strategic mechanism for coordinating tasks, distributing power, and upholding organizational culture.

In sum, Example (8) demonstrates that directivity in business suggestion construction is a multimodal phenomenon shaped by context-sensitive linguistic forms, sequentially staged interactions, and power-relational negotiations. J's suggestion exemplifies how professional communicators convert information into actionable plans through directivity, highlighting its role as a foundational element of effective business communication.

4.2 Beneficiary Orientation

That the hearer benefits is one of the distinctive features of suggestion turn construction (Yu Guodong, 2021).

Example (9)

> J: I want to figure out a way for friends to shop together online. Make it less of a lone thing. Email that idea, will you?
>
> B: Yeah, I like that. Is now a good time to call your mom back?
>
> J: Dude, I'm on a bike.

Qualitative Analysis (Expanded Version):

In Example (9), Jules (J) instructs Becky (B) to email her an idea for online group shopping, an interaction that vividly exemplifies the beneficiary-oriented feature of business suggestions. This exchange reveals

how beneficiary orientation in suggestion construction is realized through a complex interplay of linguistic strategies, sequential organization, power dynamics, and organizational logic. Linguistically, J employs a dual approach to frame the request as benefiting others while subtly advancing her own interests. The proposal to make online shopping "less of a lone thing" positions the idea as addressing a user experience problem, invoking Brown & Levinson's (1987) concept of "positive face work" by presenting the request as contributing to a shared goal. Simultaneously, the tag question "Email that idea, will you?" softens the directive into a polite request, blending deontic modality with an appeal to collaboration— a hybrid form common in business talk that allows superiors to maintain authority while appearing cooperative, as noted by Drew (2013). This linguistic contrast between altruistic framing and practical benefit demonstrates how beneficiary orientation is discursively constructed through strategic language use, in line with Yu Guodong's (2021) argument about the discursive nature of business communication.

The suggestion unfolds in a three-stage sequence that reinforces its beneficiary orientation, exemplifying Schegloff's (1984) principle of "sequential implicativeness." J first defines the issue as a user-centric problem ("lonely shopping"), creating a normative expectation for a solution. The directive to email the idea is then presented not as a unilateral task but as a collaborative step toward addressing this problem, framing the action as a shared endeavor. Becky's acceptance ("I like that") confirms her alignment with the proposed benefit, transforming the directive into a collective project. Notably, J avoids explicit mention of her own benefit (acquiring the idea), instead relying on interactional staging to construct the suggestion as mutually advantageous. This sequential organization highlights how beneficiary orientation in business talk is not a static attribute but a dynamically achieved interactional accomplishment.

J's suggestion embodies a strategic balance between authority and rapport, reflecting the pragmatics of hierarchical communication. The directive ("Email that idea") asserts J's role as decision-maker, while the tag question ("will you?") softens its force, aligning with Goffman's (1971) theory of face management. By framing the request as contributing to a user-centric goal, J positions Becky as a valued collaborator rather than a subordinate, engaging in what Holmes (1995) terms "relational work" to foster positive workplace relations. The contrast between J's directive and Becky's supportive response ("I like that") illustrates how beneficiary orientation facilitates compliance by appealing to shared values— such as improving user experience— rather than relying on hierarchical obligation. This strategy aligns with Kendrick & Torreira's (2014) research on "cooperative turn-taking," where suggestions framed as beneficial elicit more willing engagement.

Organizationally, this interaction serves multiple strategic purposes that extend beyond mere communication. By soliciting Becky's input, J engages in idea crowdsourcing, a common strategy in creative industries to harness organizational intelligence (Streeck, 2009). Presenting the task as contributing to a meaningful goal— enhancing user experience— also empowers Becky by fostering a sense of agency, aligning with management theories of intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, the beneficiary frame balances task efficiency with relational harmony, reducing the risk of perceived exploitation in hierarchical exchanges. As Goodwin (1981) has argued, such communicative strategies serve as managerial tools for optimizing collaboration, innovation, and workplace morale.

In summary, Example (9) demonstrates that beneficiary orientation in business suggestion construction is a multifaceted phenomenon achieved through altruistic linguistic framing, sequentially staged collaborative meaning-making, and strategic power-relational balancing. J's suggestion exemplifies how professional communicators use beneficiary orientation to convert directives into shared goals, highlighting its role in enabling effective and harmonious business interaction. By integrating linguistic form, interactional sequence, and organizational context, this analysis underscores the vital role of beneficiary orientation as both a communicative strategy and a managerial resource in professional settings.

4.3 Epistemic Asymmetry

Compared to the advisee, the adviser assumes a K+ epistemic stance regarding the matter at hand, meaning there exists epistemic asymmetry between communicators (Heritage & Sefi, 1992).

Example (10)

> J: I just wanted to say, I slept on it. I haven't called Townsend yet, but I still feel like it's the right thing to do.
>
> B: I didn't sleep so well myself.
>
> J: Over this?
>
> B: Remember the day I drove you to the warehouse, you gave me the wrong directions and all that?
>
> J: Yeah, I remember.
>
> B: Okay, well I stood in the back and watched you show the workers how to fold the box to close. I knew then why ATF was a success.

In Example (10), the dialogue between Ben (B), a senior intern with extensive professional experience, and Jules (J), a young executive steering a startup, provides a rich illustration of epistemic asymmetry in business communication. When advising J on the decision to hire a CEO, Ben's K+ epistemic stance (Heritage & Sefi, 1992) becomes evident through an intricate interplay of conversational mechanisms, revealing how knowledge disparities shape professional interactions.

Ben strategically deploys linguistic resources to assert his epistemic authority. He recounts a past incident at the warehouse using the past tense, stating "I stood" and "I watched." This narrative choice grounds his knowledge claim in direct observation, aligning with Heritage's (2012) research on how narratives can establish epistemic stances. By vividly detailing how J demonstrated leadership in folding boxes for the workers, Ben constructs an empirically verifiable account, contrasting sharply with J's more subjective statement "I feel like it's right." Additionally, Ben uses phrases like "I knew then" with past-tense modals, distancing his insights from mere momentary opinions and framing them as timeless truths. This aligns with Wilkinson & Kitzinger's (2006) concept of "epistemic ownership," where tense is used to claim authoritative knowledge. The juxtaposition of J's hedged, affect-laden expression and Ben's assertive epistemic declarations starkly instantiates the K+ vs. K- epistemic divide.

The conversation unfolds in a carefully sequenced manner that reinforces the epistemic hierarchy between the two interlocutors. J initiates the exchange with a subjective judgment, admitting "I slept on it," which signals her relatively uncertain (K-) position on the matter. Instead of offering direct advice, Ben responds with a story, a strategy Schegloff (1996) describes as "indirect epistemic assertion." By delaying the actual advice and building his narrative, Ben accumulates authority before making his point. His concluding statement, "I knew then why ATF was a success," reframes J's initially subjective notion of the "right thing" into an objective outcome of her leadership, effectively advising her to trust her instincts. This sequence aligns with Drew's (2018) research on how storytelling can upgrade the epistemic status of advice, demonstrating that epistemic asymmetry in business talk is dynamically constructed through turn-taking strategies rather than being a fixed state.

In the hierarchical context of their relationship, Ben's K+ stance reflects a delicate negotiation of power. As a subordinate, he avoids directly contradicting J, instead packaging his advice within a nostalgic narrative—a strategy of "face-saving deference" as described by Goffman (1955). This approach positions him as a seasoned observer offering wisdom rather than a subordinate challenging authority. J's response, marked by acknowledgment of the incident and subsequent silence, signals her accommodation of Ben's epistemic authority. This interaction exemplifies how power dynamics influence epistemic negotiation, as noted by

Holmes (1995). Unlike more symmetric epistemic exchanges where advice is given straightforwardly, this interaction underscores how factors such as age and experience mediate the display of knowledge in professional settings.

This exchange has significant organizational implications. Ben's narrative acts as a vehicle for transferring institutional memory, encoding valuable insights about leadership efficacy that J, as a young executive, may lack. This aligns with Streeck's (2009) research on knowledge transmission through workplace conversations. By accepting Ben's epistemic authority, J subtly rebalances their relationship, elevating Ben from the role of an intern to that of a mentor. Moreover, Ben's K+ stance lends legitimacy to J's decision-making process, transforming her intuitive judgment into an evidence-based choice that carries more weight within the organization. These functions collectively demonstrate that epistemic asymmetry in business suggestion-making serves as a critical mechanism for managing organizational knowledge, building relationships, and validating decisions.

In conclusion, Example (10) showcases how epistemic asymmetry in business communication is manifested through narrative-based knowledge claims, sequentially staged displays of authority, and discursive strategies attuned to power dynamics. Ben's K+ stance exemplifies how experienced communicators can influence decision-making while maintaining relational harmony, highlighting the central role of epistemic dynamics in shaping professional interactions. This analysis underscores the importance of understanding these dynamics for effective communication and knowledge management within organizational settings.

5 Conclusion

This study adopts a turn-taking design framework to conduct conversation analysis on business communication corpora involving suggestion-making in the movie The Intern. By systematically categorizing and examining linguistic resources—including turn-taking mechanisms, conversational repair, intersubjectivity, and preference organization—and non-linguistic resources such as gestures and eye gaze, the research illuminates how suggestions are constructed in professional contexts. For instance, in Example (1), the employee's strategic interruption during the boss's turn exemplifies how turn-transition strategies redefine interactional goals in hierarchical settings, while Example (6) demonstrates how table-tapping gestures reinforce the emphasis of suggestions, aligning with Kendon's (2004) research on multimodal communication.

Through corpus analysis, the study identifies three distinctive features of suggestion construction in business talk: directivity, beneficiary orientation, and epistemic asymmetry. Directivity, as seen in Example (8), is realized through deontic modals (e.g., "can you") and sequential task framing, reflecting organizational norms of efficiency. Beneficiary orientation in Example (9) employs altruistic linguistic framing ("make it less of a lone thing") to transform directives into collaborative goals, while Example (10) illustrates epistemic asymmetry where the senior intern's K+ knowledge stance (Heritage & Sefi, 1992) is asserted through narrative grounding ("I watched you show workers..."), redefining mentorship dynamics.

The analysis confirms that turn-taking design serves as a dual mechanism in business communication: it enables speakers to articulate intentions efficiently (e.g., through repair strategies in Example 2) and allows listeners to decode implicit meanings promptly (e.g., via eye gaze shifts in Example 7). This dual function ensures communicative fluency and facilitates (maximization of interests) by aligning suggestions with organizational objectives. Drawing on conversation analysis, the study not only uncovers the sequential mechanisms of turn-transition—such as how preference organization in Example (4) streamlines task delegation—but also offers novel insights for professional communication skills, such as using smile-gaze combinations (Example 7) to enhance intersubjective understanding.

Notably, the research acknowledges limitations arising from its reliance on cinematic corpora. The restricted movie duration constrained the comprehensiveness of business communication data, potentially oversimplifying real-world complexities like multi-party negotiations or written correspondence. However, the integration of linguistic and non-linguistic resources represents a theoretical innovation, bridging tra-

ditional conversation analysis with multimodal research. Future directions will focus on translating these findings into practical applications—for example, developing training modules that teach professionals to leverage turn-taking strategies (e.g., hedged directives in Example 8) and non-linguistic cues for more effective suggestion-making in corporate settings. This study thus paves the way for interdisciplinary research that connects conversational micro-mechanisms with organizational macro-goals.

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Multimodal Cross-Cultural Communication in Black Myth: Wukong (2024)

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Abstract

With growing cultural consciousness, Chinese are increasingly exploring traditional Chinese cultural heritage, utilizing rapidly evolving digital technologies for cultural innovation and international dissemination. The "gaming plus culture" transmission model exemplifies this trend. The profound depth of Chinese traditional culture provides expansive potential for game development, and Chinese-produced games are garnering increasing international attention. As China's first AAA game, Black Myth: Wukong, adapted from Journey to the West, leverages robust gaming resources while incorporating elements from literature, philosophy, music, architecture, and other domains, serving as a paradigmatic example of cross-cultural communication. This study employs Delu Zhang's (2019) comprehensive framework for multimodal discourse analysis to examine the English promotional videos and main storyline cutscenes of Black Myth: Wukong (2024). The study encompasses three dimensions: cultural-loaded elements, contextual elements, and non-verbal expressions. It investigates the characteristics of translation across these dimensions, the relationships between different modalities, and how these modalities collectively construct textual meaning.

Keywords: Multimodal discourse analysis, Black Myth: Wukong, cross-cultural communication.

1 Introduction

As globalization progresses, the connections between China and the world grow increasingly interconnected, and the dissemination of Chinese culture continues to advance. The significance of promoting Chinese culture going global lies in its capacity to enhance the nation's cultural soft power and shape an inclusive and influential cultural image [1]. This cultural dissemination serves as a vital mechanism for facilitating civilizational dialogue and mutual learning. Furthermore, it functions as a bridge for value transmission, contributing to the resolution of cultural conflicts while advancing the preservation and promotion of global cultural diversity. In the era of the accelerated process of Chinese culture going global, external communication plays a crucial role in constructing the national image [2]. Unlike China, foreign countries, particularly Western nations, have not yet developed a similarly strong receptive environment for foreign cultures and literature. This necessitates careful consideration of cultivating an audience and receptive environment for Chinese literature and culture in foreign countries, especially in Western nations [3].

Meanwhile, the rapid development of digital technology has revolutionized how cultural content is created, distributed, and consumed globally. Among diverse digital platforms, video games have emerged as a particularly potential medium for cross-cultural communication, offering immersive experiences to players and effectively conveying various and complex cultural elements to global players. The evolution of gaming technology and cross-cultural communication presents new opportunities and challenges for promoting traditional cultural heritage in an increasingly digital world.

In recent years, China has taken strides in developing high-quality digital cultural products that show its rich cultural heritage. In particular, the gaming industry has demonstrated its remarkable potential in adapting traditional Chinese cultural products (like Chinese characters, poems, myths, etc.) for global audiences. This development aligns with China's objective to enhance its international cultural presence while preserving and passing down its traditional values. The success of Chinese games in international markets shows that interactive digital media can be regarded as effective vehicles for cross-cultural communication. This paper aims to apply multimodality to game localization in the popular case of Black Myth: Wukong (2024), intending the explore the insightful interplay between multimodal discourse analysis and the game industry that could be applicable to translation studies and beyond.

1.1 Contextualizing Journey to the West and its Modern Adaptation

Journey to the West [4], one of China's four classical masterpieces, highly represents traditional Chinese culture and values, embodying the profound heritage of Chinese classical literature. Created by the author Wu Cheng'en from Ming Dynasty, it stands as China's first romantic chapter-style novel featuring supernatural beings [5]. The novel constructs a fictional world where gods and demons coexist, narrating the story of Sun Wukong's emergence and his subsequent journey accompanying the Monk Tang Sanzang, Zhu Bajie, Sha Wujing, and the White Dragon Horse on a journey to obtain Buddhist sutras from India, known as the West or Western Paradise, where Buddha and his followers dwell, overcoming eighty-one tribulations before ultimately obtaining the sutras. Based on Xuanzang's historical westward journey, the story showcases ancient Chinese philosophical thought and folk beliefs under the convergence of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism during the Song and Ming dynasties [6].

Black Myth: Wukong, developed by Game Science[1] (游戏科学), uses Journey to the West as a foundation for its narrative. It tells the story of events following Sun Wukong's abandonment of his Buddhist status, which triggered the Celestial Court's punitive war against him and his death. The game draws on Journey to the West's Buddhist cosmology and subversive themes to craft its narrative.

At the outset of the game's narrative, Sun Wukong, who has attained the title of "The Victorious Fighting Buddha," deliberately renounces his Buddhist status to retire to Mount Huaguo. This decision prompts the Celestial Court to dispatch Erlang Shen and the Celestial Army to the mountain, threatening to destroy it

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1   Game Science: founded in 2018, full name Hangzhou Youke Interactive Technology Co., Ltd.; Chinese game developer.

and Sun's descendants unless Sun Wukong returns. Following an intense battle that literally shakes heaven and earth, Sun Wukong is defeated. His "Six Relics" (" 六根 " from Buddhist philosophy, which means five sense organs and one's mind) – the first five, eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body - are distributed as rewards to five demon kings: Black Bear Guai, Yellow Wind Sage, Yellowbrow, Hundred-Eyed Daoist Master, and Bull King. The sixth relic, "mind," transforms into a mysterious stone atop Mount Huaguo, becoming a legendary tale passed down through generations of monkeys. Throughout history, countless monkey descendants have embarked on quests to challenge these demon kings and retrieve the five relics, hoping to resurrect Sun Wukong. The game's main content continues to build on this concept, telling a series of stories about the player's journey to retrieve the Six Relics.

The player assumes the role of "the Destined One" (a monkey that looks like Sun Wukong and is destined to resurrect Sun), one of those Sun's descendants. Players gain insight into the intricate relationships and narratives of various deities and immortals throughout this journey, which either continue or echo the original Journey to the West storylines. This game preserves the core cultural values of the original work while updating its presentation through modern interpretation and expression. The traditional Chinese mythological narrative has been repackaged and presented to global audiences and players in a contemporary gaming format, breathing new life into it within a new cultural context [6]. This serves as powerful evidence that Chinese traditional culture can forge new paths and achieve new successes in its international dissemination.

Black Myth: Wukong represents a significant milestone in contemporary gaming, earning prestigious recognition across the industry's most esteemed awards ceremonies. Its nominations and victories at The Game Awards 2024, including the coveted Game of the Year nomination and Best Action Game award, alongside its Ultimate Game of the Year honor at the 2024 Golden Joystick Awards, demonstrate the game's exceptional achievement in interactive entertainment.

The game has received high marks from the industry, with a number of prominent game publishers giving it high scores. The Chinese gaming publication 3DM Game and Imagine Games Network China (IGN China) awarded the title perfect scores, emphasizing its narrative sophistication, visual accomplishments, and refined gameplay systems. The game's international appeal is further evidenced by strong reviews from IGN's global network, with the primary IGN platform and IGN Brazil awarding scores of 8.0 and 8.5 out of 10[2] (until December 27, 2024), respectively, reinforcing the game's substantial impact on the medium.

Until Dec.19, 2024, Black Myth: Wukong demonstrates significant engagement metrics across major global content platforms, indicating substantial international anticipation for this Chinese mythology-inspired action game. As is shown in Figure 1, the game's official gameplay demonstration video on Bilibili, China's prominent video-sharing platform, has garnered 61.91 million views with 390,000 interactions, demonstrating robust domestic engagement. This exceptional viewership suggests intense anticipation within the Chinese gaming community.

International reception appears equally compelling, as evidenced by performance metrics on global platforms. As is shown in Figure 2, on YouTube, gameplay footage shared by content creator Thai Devil Gamer accumulated 65.75 million views[3] within three months, indicating substantial international interest in this culturally-influenced action title. Furthermore, Wukong's presence on Reddit, a significant gaming community platform, reveals sustained community growth. In Figure 3, the official Black Myth: Wukong subreddit (an online community of this game), established in August 2020, has attracted 501,000[4] members and ranks within the top 1% of gaming communities by size, suggesting robust community engagement and discussion.

These cross-platform metrics collectively demonstrate that Black Myth: Wukong has successfully cap-

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2   Data collected from https://heishenhua.com/, Dec.19, 2024

3   Data collected from https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=black+myth+wukong&sp=CAM%253D, Dec.19, 2024.

4   Data collected from https://www.reddit.com/r/BlackMythWukong/, Dec.19, 2024

tured attention in both domestic and international markets. This suggests a broad appeal for its integration of traditional Chinese mythology into contemporary gaming frameworks. The consistent high engagement across diverse platforms indicates significant anticipation for the title among global gaming players.

Figure 1. Views and danmu on Bilibili

Figure 2. Views on Youtube

Figure 3. Subreddit of Black Myth: Wukong

The selection of Black Myth: Wukong as a research subject is significant for four reasons. First, the game's narrative foundation resonates with traditional Chinese cultural values. Its reimagining of Buddhist philosophy and its exploration of moral themes demonstrate the integration of cultural elements that maintain authenticity while appealing to modern sensibilities. This careful balance between tradition and innovation makes it an ideal case study for examining effective cultural adaptation strategies. Second, the game's core values align with China's cross-cultural communication objective. Its unique themes of redemption,

perseverance, and the pursuit of destiny transcend cultural boundaries while remaining firmly rooted in Chinese philosophical traditions. The game's approach to presenting these themes through interactive storytelling creates an engaging framework for introducing international audiences to Chinese cultural concepts. Therefore, it is particularly valuable for studying cross-cultural communication through digital media.

Third, BlackMyth's technical performance and artistic achievements have garnered widespread recognition from domestic and international gaming communities, as evidenced by winning awards and consistently positive review scores. This critical acclaim validates the game's quality as a cultural product and demonstrates its success in meeting global entertainment standards while maintaining its cultural identity. The favorable reception from diverse audiences suggests that the game has successfully overcome potential cultural barriers, making it an exemplary case for studying effective cross-cultural communication strategies. Last but not least, the game's substantial following across multiple platforms and regions provides a rich dataset for analyzing cross-cultural reception patterns as a supporting basis. The large and diverse audience base offers valuable insights into how different cultural elements are received and interpreted by audiences worldwide. Black Myth: Wukong's ability to attract and engage such a broad audience base while maintaining its cultural authenticity makes it particularly worthy of academic investigation.

These factors collectively establish Black Myth: Wukong as an ideal subject for examining the intersection of cross-cultural communication, digital entertainment, and cross-cultural communication. The game represents a significant achievement in adapting traditional Chinese cultural elements for a global audience through interactive media, making it a valuable case study for understanding effective strategies in cultural exportation and cross-cultural communication.

2 Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Multimodal Discourse Analysis (hereinafter MDA) serves as a critical analytical framework for examining how meaning is created through the interaction of multiple semiotic modes affluent in the case study of Black Myth: Wukong. MDA describes the interaction between socially and culturally shared semiotic modes for creating meaning [7].

The theoretical foundations of MDA can be traced back to Halliday's [8] system-functional linguistics and social semiotics [9-10]. Kress and van Leeuwen [11] pioneered the systematic analysis of visual communication by developing a "grammar of visual design". In this work, they argued that, like language, visual elements follow organized patterns that create meaning within specific social and cultural contexts. Based on this work, scholars have expanded MDA to examine how various modes work together to construct meaning: text, images, gestures, sound, and layout [12]. MDA's significance lies in its ability to integrate language with other meaning-making modes [13]. This approach enables us to examine the role of linguistic systems in meaning exchange processes and the effects produced by other non-verbal semiotic modes, such as images, music, and color. Through this analytical lens, we can achieve a more thorough and accurate interpretation of discourse meaning and finally reveal how humans strategically employ multiple modalities to accomplish their social communication objectives [14].

MDA research in China developed rapidly after Li Zhanzi [15] first introduced this field to China in 2003. After that, Zhang Delu [16] proposed a comprehensive framework for MDA that systematically outlined the relationships between different semiotic modes and their functions in the meaning-making process. Feng [9] further elaborated on the applications of this framework and the outlook of MDA in relevant fields.

Chinese scholars have widely adopted the framework above in various fields. For instance, researchers like Li [17] employed this framework in film studies to examine subtitles in The Black Swan (2010). Her findings showed how different modes interact with each other to construct meaning in cinematic contexts. In the field of publicity materials and cultural communication, Fan and Bai [18] applied this framework to analyze the subtitles of Chinese cultural publicity films, demonstrating how visual, verbal and audio modes collaborate to convey cultural messages across linguistic boundaries of different cultures effectively.

Zou and Liu [19] examined the multimodal features of book cover designs for The Story of the Western Wing(1991, 2013)'s English version. In animation studies, Su and Zhang [20] applied this framework to analyze character image construction in the animated film Ne Zha: Birth of the Demon Child (2019), showing how different semiotic resources shape the characters. Recent MDA scholarship has formalized analytical frameworks for video games. Li [21] conducted a multimodal analysis of the online game League of Legends (2011) from the perspective of its translation strategies. All these studies demonstrated how the framework can effectively decode meaning construction in digital and print media contexts. Wildfeuer and Stamenkovi   [22] propose a dual-layered logic to dissect tutorial discourse in Grand Theft Auto V (2013) and Batman: Arkham Knight (2015). Their model encodes multimodal cues (interface elements, camera angles, etc.) into logical forms to infer narrative/instructive events, then links these via discourse relations (Elaboration for embedded instructions). While their approach rigorously models gameplay semantics, it overlooks cultural-contextual factors in cross-cultural adaptations. This gap aligns with Zhang Delu's [16] culture-sensitive MDA framework, which this study adapts to analyze Black Myth: Wukong's transcultural strategies.
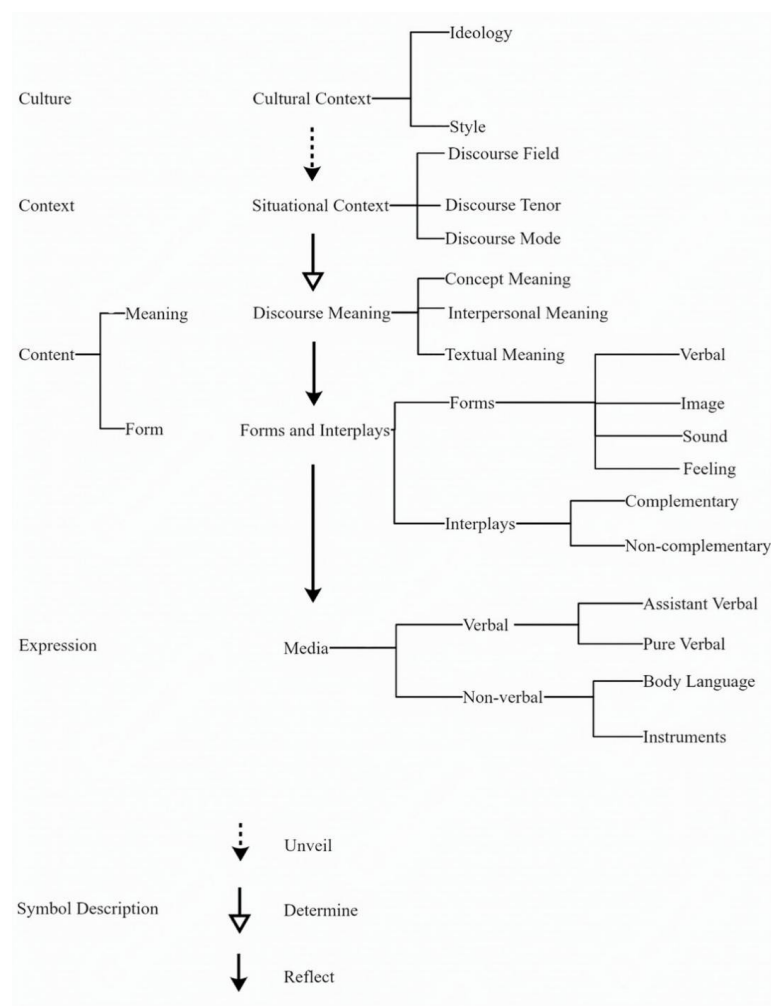
Figure 4. Multimodal Discourse Analysis Framework [16]

Recent studies from home and aboard have demonstrated the effectiveness of MDA in examining cultural communication across different media formats. In China, there are two specific pieces of research about Chinese cultural elements and gaming. First, Fan and Bai's [18] research highlighted the importance of considering cultural backgrounds and differences while ensuring different (verbal and non-verbal) modes complement each other to form discourse meaning precisely and completely. When translating those cul-

turally-loaded contents, they found that translators may pay attention to verbal and non-verbal elements to achieve cross-cultural communication. As for Li's [21] studies, he demonstrated that game translation or localization requires careful consideration of how visual, linguistic, and audio modes interact to create a cohesive player experience. The study found that successful game localization depends on accurately translating the text and ensuring that hopefully all modes work together to preserve the intended meaning and the resonance between two or more cultures.

Also, O'Hagan [23] conceptualizes video games as multidimensional-multimodal artifacts, positioning localization as a process of techno-cultural reconfiguration. Case studies like Tokimeki Memorial (1995) illustrate how narrative frameworks and aesthetic designs undergo a radical transformation to meet regional expectations. The study emphasizes the interplay of interactivity (motion controls, online interactions) and multimodality (text-image-sound dynamics), necessitating strategies that merge technical precision (code adjustments) with cultural sensitivity (ideological adaptations). O'Hagan further advocates leveraging player engagement metrics to validate localization efficacy empirically. Bernal-Merino [24] argues that game localization demands creative adaptation (transcreation) beyond conventional translation. Analyzing titles such as Final Fantasy series(I-VI) (1987-2006), the study reveals how culturally specific elements — religious symbols, gender depictions, and language-based puzzles — require recontextualization to align with target cultural norms. The research highlights the necessity of coordinating linguistic adjustments with visual redesigns (character models), audio modifications (voice acting styles), and technical adaptations (user interface layouts) to sustain player immersion across diverse markets.

These insights from cultural publicity studies and game studies are relevant for analyzing Black Myth: Wukong. Publishers of this game aim to effectively communicate Chinese cultural elements to the international community through the game, which requires a coordinated use of multiple semiotic modes. The multimodal nature of video games, combining interactive gameplay, visual design, music, and narrative elements, creates a rich text suitable for a comprehensive analytical approach. The framework developed by Zhang [16] provides valuable tools for examining how different semiotic modes construct meaning in such a complex digital form. According to this framework, multimodal discourse media can be categorized morphologically into verbal and non-verbal types, and cultural and situational contexts jointly determine the information conveyed at both content and expression levels.

Black Myth: Wukong is an Action Role-Playing Game (ARPG) that, as a contemporary form of new media, inevitably conveys its cultural foundations and narrative substance to players through various sensory-engaging elements, including level design, character dialogue and subtitles, background music, and character design. This multimedia approach makes the game amenable to MDA. This study analyzes how Black Myth: Wukong facilitates cross-cultural communication through multimodal discourse by examining verbal expressions at cultural and contextual levels, as well as non-verbal expressions at content and expressive levels.

Furthermore, this analytical framework is proven applicable in studying how traditional Chinese cultural elements are adapted and presented in contemporary media formats. Successful cross-cultural communication requires careful consideration of how different modes (textual, visual, and auditory) can be coordinated to effectively convey cultural concepts to international audiences while maintaining their essential meaning [18]. This makes MDA suitable for examining how Black Myth: Wukong adapts and presents elements from Journey to the West through the modern gaming form. Building on this foundation, this study selects the main storyline's Chinese and English subtitle texts of Black Myth: Wukong alongside associated audio-visual materials as its corpus, conducting case study analysis through the comprehensive analytical framework of MDA by integrating verbal and non-verbal elements.

3 Methodology

This study employs a three-phase approach to examine cross-cultural communication strategies in Black Myth: Wukong, integrating theoretical frameworks from MDA with observations from player communities. The methodology identifies cultural elements through gameplay analysis, supplemented by platform-based content screening to ensure relevance and research originality.

The research began with repeated playthroughs of the main storyline and detailed documentation of key scenes, dialogues, and interactive sequences. This immersive process aimed to capture the game's multi-modal structure—integrating text, visuals, sound, and feedback. For instance, dialogues based on classical Chinese literature or visual design indicating traditional architectural styles were prioritized for further analysis.

High-visibility content from major gaming platforms was analyzed to ensure the selected examples resonated broadly with players. On Bilibili, relevant gameplay videos with millions of views and extensive viewer interactions (e.g., comments on the reinterpretation of Buddhist terms) were identified as critical case studies. Similarly, discussions on Reddit (e.g., threads debating the localization of cultural concepts) provided insights into international player perspectives. This step ensured that chosen examples reflected both domestic and global player engagement, validating their cultural and communicative significance.

The selection of case studies followed two steps to ensure analytical rigor and cultural validity. First, the first author's preliminary screening. As the primary researcher, I initially swept Black Myth: Wukong's main storyline through repeated gameplay sessions, identifying segments rich in cultural and multimodal elements. This involved dialogues, visual designs, and audio sequences referencing classical Chinese literature, philosophical concepts, or traditional aesthetics. Scenes with high views—those widely discussed on platforms like Bilibili (the trailer, the scene of Erlang Shen's confrontation, etc.) or Reddit and other social media platforms—were prioritized as potential candidates.

Second, to mitigate subjective bias and enhance scholarly robustness, the corresponding author—an experienced subtitler and researcher in cross-cultural game localization—reviewed the preliminary selections. This involved: assessing the cultural representativeness of examples, evaluating translational coherence, and cross-checking against industry standards for game localization.

Discrepancies were resolved through iterative discussions, refining the final corpus to 12 verbal and non-verbal examples. Examples were categorized under Zhang Delu's MDA framework, emphasizing two dimensions: verbal modality (cultural-loaded elements and contextual elements) and non-verbal modality (audio, image and visual design).

The methodology's strength lies in integrating platform-based information and theoretical rigor. Grounding the analysis in heated player discussions and gameplay content ensures that selected examples reflect real-world cultural communication. The focus on multimodal interdependence—how text, image, and sound jointly construct meaning—provides a holistic perspective to evaluate cross-cultural communication effects, bridging theoretical ideas with practical player experiences.

While the process prioritizes widely discussed content, it may overlook subtle cultural nuances in other scenes. Furthermore, reliance on platform data inherently favors regions with active online communities, potentially overlooking perspectives from less digitally engaged player groups and players from other foreign regions.

4 Case Analysis: Cross-Cultural Communication in Black Myth: Wukong

Adopting MDA framework, this study analyzes how Black Myth: Wukong achieves cross-cultural communication through various semiotic modes, including verbal and non-verbal elements(audio, image, etc.). Three main aspects will be discussed: verbal expressions, including cultural-loaded elements; contextual elements, and non-verbal expressions, including music, action, and visual design. By examining these dif-

ferent modalities and their interactions, how the game effectively conveys Chinese cultural elements to international audiences while maintaining player engagement can be discovered.

The analysis begins with verbal expressions, particularly focusing on translating culturally-loaded terms and concepts. This is followed by an examination of how the game adapts specific contextual elements for international audiences. Finally, the study explores how non-verbal elements complement and enhance the cross-cultural communication process. This comprehensive approach allows us to evaluate the effectiveness of different strategies in achieving cross-cultural communication through interactive digital media.

4.1 Verbal Expressions: Cultural-loaded Elements in Game Translation

Examples 1-6 are selected from the dialogue between Erlang Shen and Sun Wukong's confrontation in Chapter One. Those conversations occur against the backdrop of the Celestial Court campaign against the descendants of Sun Wukong, following his renunciation of the Buddha's position.

Example 1 Those High Above

(1)Description of the Scene: Sun Wukong, dissatisfied with the actions of the Celestial Court, took to the battlefield to confront the celestial soldiers and generals.

(2)Line:

Sun: 上面的天王老子信不过我，我懂。

[The supreme authorities up the Court don't trust me, I understand.]

Translation: Those high above don't trust me. I understand that.

The term " 天王 " originates from Buddhist scriptures, originally denoting the creator and supreme ruler of the celestial realm. In Chinese linguistic contexts, this phrase commonly serves as a metaphor for individuals of noble status and supreme authority. Instead of attempting a direct translation that might require extensive cultural context, "Those high above" creates a more accessible concept of authority that resonates across cultures. This generalization effectively reduces cultural distance while preserving the essential meaning of supreme authority. Avoiding specific religious references allows Western players to understand the power dynamics without requiring detailed knowledge of Chinese religious hierarchy. This approach exemplifies how careful generalization can facilitate cross-cultural understanding while maintaining the original's core implications of power and authority. It also demonstrates the translator's profound understanding and flexible handling of both linguistic and cultural systems.

Example 2 Knuckleheads

(1)Description of the Scene: Sun Wukong, dissatisfied with the actions of the Celestial Court, took to the battlefield to confront the celestial soldiers and generals.

(2)Line:

Sun: 让你小子带些虾兵蟹将过来虚张声势 ……

[(The Court) Let you bring some shrimp soldiers and crab generals to come over and make an empty show of strength...]

Translation: And they send you and those knuckleheads…

The phrase " 虾兵蟹将 ", literally meaning "shrimp soldiers and crab generals", originally referred to diminutive soldiers and was later extended to describe individuals of insignificant status or importance. This culturally rich Chinese expression exemplifies the language's vivid imagery. In the English version, the translators opted for "Knuckleheads," which carries a similar pejorative connotation, effectively portraying these characters' status and image within the game's narrative. Both terms share similar characteristics that create comparable reading experiences for their respective audiences: they are relatively uncommon expressions with clear derogatory connotations. A direct translation of " 虾兵蟹将 " as "shrimp soldiers and crab generals" would likely confuse Western players unfamiliar with the Chinese idiom. The phrase's metaphori-

cal meaning (weak, insignificant forces) might be lost, potentially evoking unintended humor or dissonance due to the literal aquatic imagery. Players may misinterpret it as literal marine-themed enemies rather than understanding its derogatory connotation toward incompetent subordinates. This could disrupt narrative immersion and character perception.

The Chinese phrase, using metaphorical imagery of shrimp and crab soldiers, and the English term "knuckleheads" both create a sense of linguistic distinctiveness that stands out from everyday language. This parallel maintains the original's stylistic effect, as both expressions create a similar sense of distance from standard discourse while effectively conveying contempt. The translation thus preserves the semantic meaning and the rhetorical impact across cultural boundaries, allowing Western players to experience a similar level of linguistic uniqueness as Chinese audiences.

Example 3 The Celestial Court

(1)Description of the Scene: In this instance, Erlang Shen warns Sun Wukong of the potential consequences of engaging in battle and offers him the opportunity to surrender.

(2)Line:

Erlang Shen: 这样罢, 一会儿若是你败了, 我带你回天庭。

[In that case, if you are defeated in a moment, I will take you back to the Heavenly Court.]

Translation: Here's my offer. If you lose, I'll take you to the Celestial Court.

The term " 天庭 " originates from Chinese Taoist culture, referring to the celestial realm where immortals reside. In folk mythology, it represents the governing seat of the Jade Emperor, symbolizing supreme authority. The translation "Celestial Court" effectively preserves the core meaning of the term, with "Celestial" conveying the divine aspects. At the same time "court" emphasizes its role as a center of governance. It creates a conceptual bridge for Western players by allowing them to draw parallels with similar concepts in Western mythology, such as Heaven or Mount Olympus from Greek mythology. While maintaining specific Chinese cultural concepts, such cross-cultural rendering helps Western players better understand the game's cosmology and enhances their immersion.

Example 4 All Realms and Beings

(1)Description of the Scene: Rejecting Erlang Shen's offer, Sun shows his disdain for immortality by saying this sentence.

Sun: 长生不老 …… 三界六道, 不就毁在这四个字上？

[Immortality... haven't the Three Realms and Six Paths been destroyed because of this word?]

Translation: Immortality… For that word, all realms and beings have ruined themselves.

" 三界 " (Three Realms) and " 六道 " (Six Paths) represent fundamental concepts in Buddhist culture. The Three Realms encompass the Realm of Desire, Form, and Formlessness, while the Six Paths refer to the paths of Hell, Hungry Ghosts, Animals, Asuras, Humans, and Devas. Together, these terms comprehensively describe all phenomena in existence. Considering Western players' general unfamiliarity with Buddhist philosophical concepts, the translation removes explicit religious references and replaces them with more common concepts, "realms and beings". This translation achieves effective cultural localization by transforming Buddhist philosophical concepts into more universal expressions, gaining broader cultural accessibility. It allows players from diverse backgrounds to grasp the basic logic of a complicated concept, balancing the importance of cultural specificity and universal understanding.

Example 5 The Image of Monkey

(1)Description of the Scene: Unsatisfied with Sun's response, Erlang Shen prepares to launch an attack.

(2)Line:

Erlang Shen: 泼猴, 你受了天箓, 本性难改。

[Mischievous monkey, having received the Heavenly Register, yet your fundamental nature is difficult to change.]

Translation: The celestial court welcomed you, foul monkey, yet you remain untamed!

The monkey figure serves as a crucial image throughout the game, occupying a significant portion of subtitle translations. These translations address Sun Wukong and the Destined One and will be discussed in the following three examples.

The term " 泼猴 " (pō hóu) in the ST is a derogatory reference to Sun Wukong, stemming from his unruly and defiant nature. " 天 箓 " (tiān lù) refers to the celestial court's favor and recognition. The translation "foul monkey" resonates with Western cultural stereotypes of monkeys as mischievous and unruly creatures while maintaining the original's derogatory tone. This cultural communication enables Western players to understand Erlang Shen's attitude toward Sun Wukong immediately. Furthermore, consistently using the image of monkey throughout the game establishes a stable cultural symbol system that works across both Eastern and Western contexts.

Example 6 The Image and The Monkey

(1)Description of the Scene: This line occurs just before the player's battle against Erlang Shen as he leads his celestial army against Sun Wukong.

(2)Line:

Erlang Shen: 我身后有十万天威!

[Behind me are one hundred thousand soldiers of the Heavenly Court!]

Translation: Open your eyes, monkey!

Figure 5. Soldiers of the Heavenly Court

The game visually displays a vast army of celestial soldiers. Erlang Shen's dialogue carries tremendous gravitas, delivered with a deep, resonant tone that befits his status as a celestial general and the Jade Emperor's son.

Rather than literally translating the " 十万天威 "(hundred thousand celestial might), the English version opts for "Open your eyes, monkey!" This translation emphasizes visual perception, complementing the on-screen display of celestial troops while warning players to face reality. The address "monkey" conveys Erlang Shen's contempt for Sun.

From a multimodal perspective, the original conveys overwhelming celestial might through both audio (tone) and visual modes, implying Sun's dire circumstances. The translation cleverly converts these modes into textual form, using the visual metaphor "Open your eyes" and the address "monkey" to convey similar semantic content. While the specific number " 十万 " (one hundred thousand) is omitted, the visual expression of the game effectively communicates Sun's disadvantageous position to target language players. The translation emphasizes Erlang Shen's attitude toward Sun, achieving vivid characterization.

Example 7 Hold Your Monkeys

(1)Description of the Scene: The Destined One and Zhu Bajie disguise themselves as cargo workers attempting to infiltrate a temple. Facing locked temple doors, the Destined One grows impatient and begins forcefully banging on them.

(2)Line:

Zhu Bajie: 莫要猴急！

[Don't be impatient like a monkey!]

Translation: Hold your monkeys!

In context, this line reflects Zhu Bajie's recognition of the Destined One's impatience and his tolerant, mediating role as a companion. The word " 猴 " (monkey) also references the Destined One's appearance, serving as Zhu Bajie's playful commentary on their adventure.

The translation "Hold your monkeys!" cleverly adapts the English idiom "Hold your horses" while maintaining the original's humorous effect. The term "monkeys" directly references the Destined One's character while implying their rash behavior, yet maintains a humorous tone. This playful teasing and genuine concern balance accurately preserves the original context and character relationships.

From the target audience's perspective, while "Hold your horses" is a familiar idiom, its modification to "monkeys" creates a novel expression without compromising comprehension. This localization strategy actually engages players, encouraging them to bridge cultural connections. The translation's concise wit also complements the game's entertainment value, enhancing players' immersion in gaming.

In the game scene, the locked temple doors and the Destined One's agitated body language create a sense of urgency. Zhu Bajie's line serves as a counterpoint to this tension, using tone modulation to defuse the situation. This creates an interplay between language and visuals, generating comic effect through contrast while developing more nuanced character portrayals.

4.2 Language Expression: Specific Contextual Elements in Games

Example 1 The Rise of the Yellow Winds

(1)Description of the Scene: The Destined One proceeds to seek the second relicand enter a new area under the control of the Yellow Wind Sage. At this time, the Destined One encounters a headless monk, the incarnation of the Bodhisattva Lingji, singing a song about the story of this place.

(2)Line:

The Headless Monk:

金铁击石全无力

大圣天蓬遭虎欺

枪刀剑戟浑不避

石猴似你不似你

.....

(黄风岭，八百里，曾是关外富饶地)

一朝鼠患凭空起

乌烟瘴气渺人迹

无父无君无法纪

为非作歹有天庇

幸得大圣借佛力

邪风一时偃旌旗

哪知不测奇祸起旦夕

那黄毛孽畜再回籍

凶犯不死好得意

福星横尸却成谜

普天之下

父子君臣纲纪 伦常规矩天理

哪个说了才算 哪个放任不管

你瞧那鼠辈倒讲人情

可怎么就落得个子亡父逃尸骨寒

[Metal and iron have no strength in striking stone

The Great Sage and the Marshal of the Heavenly Reeds suffer the Tiger's mockery

Spears, knives, swords, and halberds are all carelessly dodged by you

Stone Monkey is like you, yet unlike you

(Yellow Wind Ridge, eight hundred li, was once prosperous land beyond the pass)

Suddenly rat's plague arises from nowhere

Black smoke and miasma obscure human traces

No father, no ruler, no law or discipline

Wrongdoing and evil deeds have heaven's protection

Fortunately, the Great Sage borrows Buddha's power

Evil wind temporarily lowers its banners

Who knew unforeseen strange disaster would arise in an instant

That yellow-haired evil creature returns to its domain

The violent criminal lives on, pleased with itself

The lucky one lies dead, and his death becomes a mystery

In this world

Father-son, ruler-subject relationships and moral principles, common ethics and rules of heaven

Who decides what's right? Who allows things to go unchecked?

Look how those rat-like beings now speak of human sentiment

How did it end with son perishing, father fleeing, and corpses turning cold?"]

Translation: The tiger deceived them, led them to attack a rock,

But the rock stood firm, leaving hands sore and the tiger's mock.

Did this one's deceit recall yer true norm?

A stone monkey defies harm in all forms.

…

(Yellow Wind Ridge, a mighty ole' range, once buzzin' with joy and glee.)

But the pesky rats took hold, a sudden unfold, turned it all barren and bleak.

The King got denied, rules thrown aside, evil connived, runnin' wild and free.

Wukong went to the Bodhisattva to plead, granting this land a moment o'peace.

Yet before long, another disaster struck.

The cursed beast returned on a killin' spree.

The hero, he lies there dead. With the truth hidden from ye and me...

Across all realms,

Fathers and sons, kings and folks,

The former bonds the latter, that's how it goes.

These rats have obeyed the rule,

But how come fate snatched the son, and the father flew?

This passage, or lyric, is a Shaanxi-style storytelling piece (" 陕北说书 ") titled The Rise of the Yellow Winds from the game, which has captured significant attention from both domestic and international communities because of its vigor and power. It encompasses much of the narrative of this chapter and employs traditional Shaanxi storytelling linguistic patterns across multiple dimensions. The narrative begins with seven-character parallel couplets (" 金铁击石全无力，大圣天蓬遭虎欺 ,"). It uses structured language patterns to set a poetic and pessimistic tone. The narrative incorporates geographical descriptions using five-character verses " 黄风岭，八百里，曾是关外富饶地 ," which sets the spatial context for the second chapter's opening scene. The language gradually moves from a specific narrative to philosophical discourse about moral principles.

The English translation adopts a style of English folk narratives, using colloquial forms such as "yer" for "your" and "ole" for "old" to maintain the characteristic of folk art and dialects in storytelling. The translation of "Yellow Wind Ridge, a mighty ole' range, once buzzin' with joy and glee" preserves the original narrative rhythm while allowing Western audiences to experience linguistic features similar to their indigenous folk-art traditions.

It is worth noting that this paragraph is sung through the background sound, combined with the design of the game scene with wind and sand, the sense of desolation in the Chinese and English text combined with the mode of sound and image has been integrated and unified. At the same time, the collision between the Chinese singing style and the English spoken word unified the language and culture of the two different language styles and tones, realized the cross-cultural combination, and provided a new way of practice for cross-cultural communication.

Example 2 Samsara and Nirvana

(1)Description of the Scene: After defeating one of Yellowbrow's monsters, Yellowbrow took action and knocked the Destined One out. A moment later, the Destined One regained consciousness.

(2)Line:

Yellowbrow: 入了此番轮回，就别想再轻易涅槃。

[Having entered this cycle of samsara, you do not expect to easily achieve nirvana again.]

Translation: You have chosen your way. This time, there will be no easy way out!

This line appears in Chapter Two as voice-over narration by Yellowbrow. Although Yellowbrow is a demon king, he claims to be an enlightened monk who seeks to establish his realm by leading other demons, ultimately challenging Buddhist authority. When players enter Yellowbrow's territory, he delivers this line with an arrogant and mocking tone, superficially warning players of the difficulties ahead while actually demonstrating his own perceived wisdom and courage. The English translation, "You have chosen your way. This time, there will be no easy way out!" does not directly translate Buddhist concepts like " 轮回 "(samsara) and " 涅槃 "(nirvana). However, phrases like "chosen your way" and "no easy way out" convey Yellowbrow's arrogance and malice while suggesting the challenging battle ahead for players. Phrases like "chosen your way" and "no easy way out" connect with Western themes of fate and choice, making the dialogue both meaningful and accessible to Western players. This cultural transformation maintains the original's dramatic tension while ensuring the game's narrative remains coherent and engaging for international audiences.

Example 3 Rewriting of Buddhist precepts

(1)Description of the Scene: The dialogue takes place during the confrontation between Yellowbrow and The Destined One, when The Destined One is locked in a difficult battle, with Yellowbrow's background audio reflecting his contempt and rebellious personality.

(2)Line:

Yellowbrow: 还记得盂兰会上，世尊说过："众生之苦，多因不守戒律，放情纵欲。"要我说，放屁！不杀生，仇恨永无止息；不偷盗，强弱如我何异；不邪淫，一切有情皆孽；不妄语，梦幻泡影空虚；不馋酒，忧怖涨落无常；不耽乐，芳华刹那而已；不贪眠，苦苦不得解脱；不纵欲，诸行了无生趣。

[Remember at the Ullambana Assembly, the Buddha once said: "The suffering of all beings mostly comes from not following precepts, indulging in desires and emotions." In my opinion, it makes no sense! Not killing - hatred never ends; not stealing - how am I different from the strong and weak; not engaging in sexual misconduct - all sentient beings are evil; not lying – dreams and illusions are meaningless; not drinking alcohol - anxiety and fear rise and fall inconstantly; not indulging in pleasure – good time is just a moment; not being greedy for sleep - suffering continues without an end; not giving in to desire - all actions lack the essence of life.]

Translation: I remember what the Buddha said at the Ullambana, "All beings suffer as they heed not the precepts and indulge." I say: nonsense! Thou shalt kill, lest feuds instill. Thou shalt snatch, a fair play in a fair match. Thou shalt lust, before all loves turn into dust. Thou shalt boast, for prestige and legacy it doth host. Thou shalt drink, and drench unease shall sink. Thou shalt revel, prime year shan't be spent to settle. Thou shalt dream, to reach in bleak void the sole gleam. Thou shalt indulge, or life is but a scourge!

The text in this example presents philosophical implications through an ironic and rebellious rewriting of Buddhist precepts. The Chinese original sets a solemn tone with the opening "I remember what the Buddha said at the Ullambana" and systematically subverts traditional precepts through parallel structures like "Thou shalt kill, lest feuds instill. Thou shalt snatch, a fair play in a fair match." The language maintains the gravity of Buddhist scriptures while creating strong satirical effects through contrary interpretations.

The official English translation draws inspiration from the Ten Commandments format: "Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal," [25] echoing the source text's parallel structure with phrases like "Thou shalt kill, lest feuds instill." By borrowing the solemn tone of the Bible, the translation maintains the original's absurdity yet solemnity while enabling Western players to understand the irony through familiar textual structures. This translation strategy successfully achieves a cross-cultural transfer of contextual meaning while preserving the original's connotation.

4.3 Non-verbal Expression: Music, Action, and Visuals

Games as a multimodal medium, in addition to the verbal expressions that can convey information, the graphics(image), soundtrack(sound), scene design, and many other non-verbal modalities are all involved in the multimodal construction of the game. These non-verbal expressions are as involved in constructing meaning as verbal expressions in this new medium, which makes the game connotation and other deeper cultural information realize effective transmission in cross-cultural communication.

From an audio modality perspective, Black Myth: Wukong employs dual forms of non-verbal media expression in its final boss battle. The game selects Clouds of the Celestial Palace (云宫迅音), the theme song from the Journey to the West television series in 1986, as background music. It is a choice carrying profound cultural implications. As a classic piece of Chinese film and television music, Clouds of the Celestial Palace embodies collective memories of the Journey to the West narrative for generations of Chinese viewers. When hearing this familiar melody during the scene and views of the final battle, the player feels an epic atmosphere aroused by this song and their emotional connection is evoked to the original work through musical performance. Since international players might lack a similar cultural context, the developing team rearranged this classic soundtrack by incorporating modern music elements while preserving the

original's essence. This therefore achieves a balance between tradition and modernity, and enables Western players to experience the epic quality of the background music during the combat.

Moreover, synchronizing action, visual effects, and sound effects develop a rich perceptual system. In particular, the final battle scene with the Great Sage's Broken Shell is one of the representations of this combination, where the game features a series of visually powerful and violent combat scenes. The appearance of the Boss Great Sage's Broken Shell recreates the classic image of the Monkey King in his prime faithfully. From the form of an image, this design reimages the classic hero in The Journey to the West; Sun Wukong's fragmented armor and weathered textures evoke a tragic aesthetic of heroic decline.

When wielding the "Golden Cudgel," Sun's famous weapon, the player's character's blocking, rolling, and counterattack movements are meticulously designed, complemented by rapidly shifting visual work and gripping battle background music. This action design not only reflects the aesthetic characteristics of traditional Chinese martial arts, which combines hardness and softness, but also allows players to tangibly feel the power of each strike through controller vibration feedback through their hands. This instance combines three forms: image, sound and feel. Therefore, western players can infer weapon weight through action genre conventions ("combat feel"), avoiding excessive cultural terminology in this fierce battle.

Figure 6. Design of the Great Sage's Broken Shell

Examining both elements together, the visual presentation of costume and scene design forms an intertextual relationship with the background music. The perfect harmony between music and visuals enhances game immersion and bridges traditional culture with modern gaming expression. When intense battle scenes align with the uplifting musical theme, the unity of sound and visuals achieves maximum effect, delivering a dual-sensory immersive experience for players. From one of the top comments of the Clouds of Celestial Palace (Black Myth: Wukong Version), [Listening to the version of the 1986 drama makes me feel like I'm a god, but after listening to this one makes me feel like to fight those gods.] it can be seen that players have been immersed into the game scene with the combination of music and visual expression.
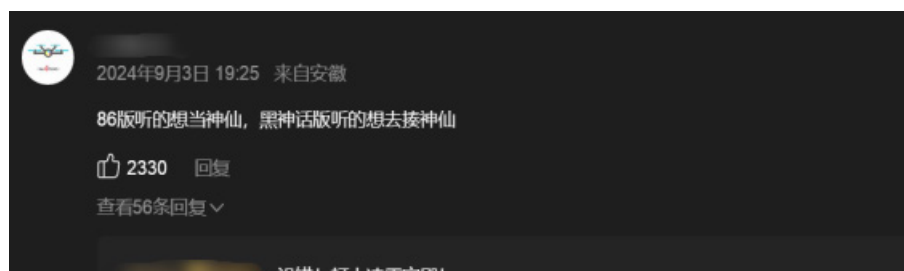

Figure 7. Comments on the Background Music

Visual modality is a crucial factor in determining whether audiences will remain engaged with the game [26]. The game's scenes extensively reference traditional Chinese architecture, with 36 real Chinese locations studied and recreated in-game, such as the Jade Emperor Temple and Kaiyuan Temple, shown in Figure 8 and Figure 9 . Even though international players may not have visited these locations personally, the game conveys Chinese architectural aesthetics to domestic and international players through faithful scene recreation. Beyond architectural reproduction, the game incorporates artistic expressions like murals and ink paintings, communicating traditional Chinese religious philosophy and romantic expression to foreign players through these forms.

Figure 8. Jade Emperor Temple

Figure 9. Kaiyuan Temple

The analysis reveals that Black Myth: Wukong achieves cross-cultural communicative effects through successfully combing several multimodal modes—culturally-adapted verbal modes (e.g., " 泼猴 " to "foul monkey"), recoded audiovisual symbols (e.g., the remix of "Clouds of the Celestial Palace"), and sensual feedback (e.g., controller vibrations mimicking the hitting feedback of the Golden Cudgel). These strategies validate Zhang Delu's "cultural-contextual" constraints on multimodal meaning-making and highlight the games' pivotal role as new media for cross-cultural communication by enabling players to decode foreign cultural symbols (e.g., spatial demonstration for "Three Realms") within familiar cognitive frameworks; they construct progressive pathways for cultural comprehension. The following discussion will elaborate on these findings' implications for MDA theory and game localization practice.

5 Conclusion

Our analysis reveals that Black Myth: Wukong achieves cross-cultural resonance through procedural multimodal combination, where gameplay mechanics dynamically align linguistic, visual, and interactive modes.

This strategy leverages players' sensory immersion to compensate for cultural gaps. Such findings extend Zhang Delu's framework by considering players' interactivity as a meaning-making mode. From the perspective of MDA, this paper examines representative examples of dialogue subtitles, scene design, and background music in the game, classifying them into verbal and non-verbal expressions and evaluating their effectiveness in achieving cross-cultural communication. The study finds that in translating specific cultural and contextual elements, the game employs translation strategies such as literal translation and transliteration to realize its purpose of cross-cultural communication better. To a certain extent, this preserves traditional Chinese cultural concepts while leveraging existing or similar cultural concepts, idioms, or sentence structures from Western culture, allowing foreign players to experience the game content while appreciating traditional Chinese literature, philosophy, aesthetics and other cultural elements with the help of their cultural background.

5.1 Theoretical Contributions and Recommendations

This research makes several theoretical contributions to MDA and game localization studies. From the theory perspective, Zhang's framework is further extended by demonstrating its applicability to the gaming form, showing how players' interaction adds a new dimension to the traditional multimodal analysis. Also, game mechanics function as a distinct semiotic mode, working with conventional modes like text and visuals to construct meaning. Such findings expand current theoretical understanding by considering interactivity as an essential component of the multimodal meaning-making process in digital contexts. Besides, the study develops our understanding of how cultural elements can be effectively translated across different modalities, showing that a comprehensive integration of visual, auditory, and interactive elements by publishers and designers is the prerequisite for successful cross-cultural communication in games.

The findings of this study also show implications for game developers and localizers to deal with those culturally-rich contents. The localization strategies identified in Black Myth: Wukong stands as a pioneer in adapting traditional cultural elements for the international community successfully. For instance, the study shows that effective cultural translation often requires moving beyond literal translation to find creative equivalents that create a connection with target audiences while preserving core Chinese cultural meanings. Also, the game's approach to visual design and music adaptation demonstrates how cultural elements can be presented in ways that balance authenticity and accessibility. Based on this, three major recommendations to replicate this successful gaming practice are provided:

(1)Pre-Release Playtesting Integration: Trial translations alongside complementary non-verbal cues. For example, test localized terms like " 十万天威 " with scene-specific audio effects (e.g., thunderous orchestral crescendos) and environmental animations (e.g., overwhelming soldier crowds) to convey scale without literal translation.

(2)Context-Sensitive Tactile Feedback: Deploy vibrating controllers or other tactile forms when players encounter battles or high-context scenes. For instance, synchronize weapon vibrations with foreign epic-themed soundtracks during mythological boss fights to reinforce cultural gravity.

(3)Genre-Driven Modality Mapping: Reserve text localization for genre-conventional mechanics while assigning high-context cultural terms to scene-specific audiovisual combinations.

Besides, as an important component of multimodal media [1], the game's background music and scene visuals complement the textual modality of verbal expressions, presenting Chinese and foreign players with a grand traditional Chinese epic story adapted for modern times. However, some elements in the game lack absolutely equivalent concepts in Chinese and foreign contexts, and some scene designs and dialogues lack

background story introductions, posing challenges to the game's cross-cultural communication to a certain degree. From a broader perspective, this study illuminates the significant role that interactive digital media can play in fostering international cultural exchange. The success of Black Myth: Wukong demonstrates how video games can serve as an effective medium for cross-cultural communication, offering immersive experiences that allow players to engage with traditional cultural elements in meaningful ways. By successfully adapting classical Chinese literary works and philosophical concepts for a global audience, the game establishes a new paradigm for cultural communication that transcends traditional language and cultural understanding barriers. This achievement is particularly significant in the context of China's ongoing efforts to share its rich cultural heritage with the world, as it demonstrates how modern technology and traditional culture can be integrated to create engaging, accessible experiences for international audiences.

5.2 Limitations and Future Studies

However, this study still has several limitations. First, while the analysis introduces and analyzes multiple aspects of the game's multimodal elements, it primarily focuses on certain culturally-loaded scenes and dialogues rather than discussing the entire game. In the future, researchers could conduct a more extensive analysis of how different modalities work together throughout the complete gaming experience and the game's background. Secondly, the study's findings are based on one game, which may limit the generalizability of the conclusions. This partial coverage may overlook nuanced multimodal interactions in untested segments. To address this, future research should expand the analysis to the complete narrative and compare strategies across multiple samples. For example, contrasting Black Myth: Wukong's approach with Japanese mythology-adapted games or other games with myths as background. Such efforts would enhance the generalizability of the conclusion while mitigating possible sampling bias. Additionally, while the study analyzes the game's cultural translation strategies, it does not directly measure their effectiveness through player reception studies with data analysis. Future research could incorporate player feedback and reception analysis with quantitative data (e.g., player feedback, usage statistics) to understand better how international audiences interpret and engage with those translated cultural elements.

Overall, Black Myth: Wukong represents a successful experiment in bringing Chinese culture overseas, providing experience and reference for the form and path of future outbound transmission of Chinese culture.

Funding

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Digital Empowerment: Unravelling the Mechanism of Rural E-Commerce on Entrepreneurship and Income Growth

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Abstract

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1 Introduction

In the era of digitalization, driven by the widespread adoption of the internet, China has entered a phase of significant transformation. This transition has provided opportunities for the emergence of novel product forms and business models, with the e-commerce paradigm standing out prominently. In comparison to traditional trade, e-commerce offers distinct advantages such as overcoming geographical limitations, reducing trade costs, streamlining distribution channels, and standardizing trade practices. In order to propel the development of e-commerce, the Ministry of Commerce in China introduced the "Internet + Commerce" Action Plan in 2015, with a particular emphasis on the growth of rural e-commerce.

Rural areas have long been a focal point of attention in China, and addressing the income disparities among rural residents has remained a key policy goal. The significance of this goal is accentuated, especially given the pronounced urban-rural income gap. In recent years, the government has introduced policies aimed at encouraging rural entrepreneurship. However, rural residents face multifaceted challenges when embarking on entrepreneurial endeavors, including a lack of entrepreneurial experience, inadequate financial support, and a dearth of suitable business opportunities. Against this backdrop, rural e-commerce has emerged as a promising and transformative force, prompting numerous regions to actively promote its development. China, with a substantial rural population, holds tremendous potential for rural e-commerce. Nevertheless, despite the rapid growth of rural e-commerce, there exist certain limitations in the existing body of research, necessitating a deeper and more comprehensive analysis.

The rapid rise of e-commerce is profoundly impacting the agricultural sector by enhancing the visibility of agricultural products, expanding sales channels for farmers, reducing transaction steps and costs, creating additional income opportunities, and fostering sustainable development in rural areas. Presently, there is a growing body of literature focusing on rural e-commerce. However, much of this research predominantly addresses surface-level aspects and lacks in-depth and meticulous analysis. In the broader context of the "Internet + Entrepreneurship," an investigation into the impact of rural e-commerce on farmers' income not only contributes to enriching and extending the current body of knowledge but also serves to bridge certain gaps in the existing research landscape. This study, therefore, seeks to address these research limitations by delving deeper into the influence of rural e-commerce on farmers' income and by providing a more comprehensive theoretical and empirical foundation for the development of rural e-commerce in China.

2 Conceptual Definition and Theoretical Foundation

2.1 Concepts related to rural e-commerce

2.1.1 Electronic commerce

Currently, there exist multiple definitions for the concept of electronic commerce (e-commerce), with varying perspectives among scholars. Drawing upon an analysis of relevant research literature, this paper synthesizes these viewpoints and posits that e-commerce refers to commercial activities facilitated by network information technology for the supply, exchange, and sale of goods. In other words, it entails the provision and sale of goods and services over the Internet in a novel, paperless transaction format spanning local area networks, wide area networks, and metropolitan area networks. E-commerce represents a measure taken to enhance the efficiency of commercial activities by overcoming temporal and spatial constraints, building upon traditional business practices, and ushering in a new form of trade hinged on digital technology and online networks. As a burgeoning model of business operations, it holds substantial potential for development in both commodity trade and financial services.

2.1.2 Rural e-commerce

Presently, electronic commerce (e-commerce) in rural contexts is defined in various ways by scholars from different countries, each tailoring the definition to their specific research focus. In the majority of cases, scholars concur that rural e-commerce involves a series of commercial activities that leverage fast, efficient, and cost-effective network technology and internet-enabled electronic devices to promote, market, and sell agricultural products on the internet. This paper amalgamates relevant research findings and posits that rural e-commerce encompasses economic activities conducted on the internet, encompassing the production, marketing, promotion, and sale of agricultural products, as well as various life and business network services closely related to rural livelihoods. The development of rural e-commerce enables farmers to market and promote agricultural products on the internet, mitigating issues such as product unsold due to information asymmetry or price manipulation. It accelerates the flow of agricultural products, averting economic losses stemming from product stagnation, and contributes to maintaining product freshness.

2.2 Theoretical foundation

2.2.1 Economies of Scale Theory

Economies of Scale Theory, also referred to as Economies of Scope Theory, posits that as the scale of production expands, profitability increases. For instance, when producing goods that require the input of multiple production factors, doubling the quantity of all input factors can result in a more than twofold increase in product output, consequently leading to a reduction in average production costs per unit. This economic principle was first introduced by the renowned economist Adam Smith in "The Wealth of Nations," where he emphasized that specialization enhances the skills of individual workers and saves considerable time otherwise wasted due to job hopping. John Stuart Mill systematically analyzed the Economies of Scale Theory, highlighting how large-scale production can effectively reduce operational and distribution costs for businesses.

In the context of rural e-commerce, a pivotal aspect involves harnessing internet technology to consolidate diverse and dispersed resources, such as agricultural product information, user data, and enterprise data, to form an integrated value chain. This integration spans production, packaging, and logistics, facilitating centralized large-scale operations. Leveraging the foundation of Economies of Scale Theory, rural e-commerce stands to significantly reduce associated costs, thereby optimizing economic benefits.

2.2.2 Industry Chain Theory

The value chain is a derivative relationship that typically links related resources, products, and services within industrial clusters. This relationship encompasses various aspects, including product interconnections, supply relationships, value relationships, and more, exhibiting characteristics of comprehensiveness, directionality, and hierarchy. Furthermore, the value chain can be divided into four dimensions: the supply chain, the enterprise chain, the value chain, and the spatial chain. When the interactions between these dimensions are balanced, a relatively stable value chain with self-regulatory capabilities is formed, and the generation of added value within this chain constitutes its core.

The agricultural value chain, as a specific subset of the value chain, primarily revolves around agricultural products and typically constitutes a network structure closely associated with primary agricultural production. Within the process of product circulation, efficient connections among various links play a pivotal role in ensuring the smooth operation of the rural e-commerce value chain.

2.2.3 Internet Marketing Theory

A novel marketing paradigm currently in use is internet marketing. Specifically, it is a marketing approach that utilizes online media and information technology to achieve marketing objectives, based on an interactive mode of marketing. The distinctive features of this form of marketing include transactions typically being conducted online, a more efficient and convenient marketing process, and significantly reduced marketing costs. Presently, the primary methods employed include platform marketing, website advertising, software promotion, search engine marketing, among others. Website advertising and software promotion have a broader target audience reach, in contrast to search engine pay-per-click advertising, which often only targets specific customer groups. However, advertising costs on some highly visible websites or software platforms are generally high, which may pose challenges for typical rural e-commerce entities as they struggle to cover advertising expenses. Consequently, precise evaluation of advertising effectiveness and cost control become essential. Currently, in the development of rural e-commerce, the applications of e-commerce platform marketing, B2B platform marketing, and search engine marketing are relatively more widespread.

3 Current Status of Rural E-Commerce Development in China

3.1 The Policy Environment for Rural E-commerce in China

The policy environment for rural e-commerce in China has evolved significantly in the policy Environment for Rural E-commerce in China has evolved significantly recent years, creating a conducive atmosphere for its development. First, in 2005, the State Council issued a directive titled "Several Opinions on Accelerating the Development of E-commerce", marking China's first comprehensive policy document promoting e-commerce. Later, the State Council General Office released the "Opinions on Accelerating the Transformation of Agricultural" in 2015. This policy urged transparency in transactions to eliminate barriers between consumers and participants in rural e-commerce. It introduced the concept of "innovative agricultural marketing services", encouraging collaboration between various agricultural operators and e-commerce enterprises. The goal was to cultivate new formats for agricultural product distribution and promote the development of logistics and distribution facilities. Subsequently, in October of 2017, the State Council issued the "Guiding Opinions on Accelerating the Development of Rural E-commerce". This directive actively encouraged the growth of rural e-commerce. To ensure the safe conduct of rural e-commerce for operators and consumers alike, it required relevant local authorities to establish legal frameworks and mechanisms for resolving disputes related to rural e-commerce. It also advocated the incorporation of modern management concepts and methods, such as industrial chains, supply chains, and value chains, into agriculture. The goal was to establish, by early 2020, a rural e-commerce market system characterized by integrity, compliance, orderly competition, and environmental sustainability. All the above policies released by government have collectively fostered a favorable policy environment for rural e-commerce, facilitating its growth and development.

3.2 The Foundational Conditions of Rural E-commerce in China

3.2.1 Hardware Conditions of Network Infrastructure

China's network information technology and related infrastructure construction have developed rapidly since entering the 21st century. With the support of national finances and technology, significant progress has been made in the construction of rural information networks in China. The goals of rural network coverage have been achieved ahead of schedule, with a fiber optic penetration rate reaching 98%. During the 12th Five-Year Plan period, China achieved full coverage of e-commerce in rural areas, including all impoverished counties. A significant number of comprehensive agricultural information service platforms and demonstration bases were established, providing crucial support to rural areas. Simultaneously, the "Internet

+ Wisdom Assistance" project has also achieved remarkable results. The internet access rate in rural prima-ry and secondary schools nationwide increased from 78.3% at the end of 2015 to 98.7% at the end of 2020. This has provided a talent reserve for the future development of rural e-commerce and laid an important foundation for the development of rural e-commerce in the context of "Internet + Entrepreneurship".

3.2.2 Market Conditions with Abundant Agricultural Product Supply

Rural development in China has been rapid, with the country leading the world in the production of meat, poultry, eggs, and aquatic products. Grain production has also seen fourteen consecutive years of growth. Rural areas boast a rich variety of agricultural and sideline products, some of which are highly popular with consumers both domestically and internationally. Table 1 illustrates the changes in the output value of China's agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, and fishery sectors from 2018 to 2023. It is evident that the total output value of each industry has maintained continuous growth, driven by the robust supply and demand in the agricultural product market. This growth has facilitated the rapid expansion of China's rural e-commerce market and stimulated the demand for agricultural market information. Furthermore, in the era of "Internet+", the traffic to major agricultural information websites in China continues to rise. Currently, these websites rank among the top three global rural e-commerce platforms, laying a solid foundation for the development of China's rural e-commerce market.

3.2.3 Mature and Convenient Electronic Payment Means

China's rural electronic payment market has been experiencing rapid development, with an average annual growth rate of over 20% in recent years. In rural areas, electronic payment channels have evolved from basic online banking payments to include various coexisting methods such as phone payments, mobile payments, online payments, and third-party payments. These multiple payment options cater to the diverse needs of different users engaged in rural e-commerce. Furthermore, China has established a basic payment clearing system among commercial banks. As of the end of 2020, the People's Bank of China had issued payment business licenses to 147 third-party payment institutions. In addition, in recent years, many market entities such as portal websites, publicly listed companies, and e-commerce platforms have actively entered the field of internet payments. They have done so by establishing, investing in, or acquiring payment com-panies, providing a flexible and diverse range of financial platforms to support the development of rural e-commerce.

Table 1: China's agriculture, forestry, pastoralism and fishery output value statistics(billion yuan)

Year	Agriculture	Forestry	Pastoralism	Fisheries	Agriculture, forestry and fisheries services
2018	64865.92	5681.78	36329.01	12382.25	4869.90
2019	71897.26	7646.88	45508.51	14544.12	5585.42
2020	18676 107	8798.13	47028.57	16146.23	6173.81
2021	84137.11	9789.09	49197.15	18440.78	6811.43
2022	89006.64	11889.09	49647.07	19307.44	7546.38
2023	91316.67	12184.44	52877.22	19953.02	8065.28

Data source: National Statistical Yearbook

3.2.4 Quality Warehousing and Logistics Services

The improvement of supporting services such as warehousing and logistics is currently bridging the last mile of rural e-commerce development in China. In the 13th Five-Year Development Plan of China, there is a clear goal to achieve basic access to courier services in every village by the year 2020. This target has created favorable conditions for the development of rural e-commerce. Moreover, e-commerce giants like Alibaba, JD.com, and Suning have actively established their own logistics and distribution systems in rural areas to capture more business opportunities. Alibaba, leveraging Cainiao Network and other third-party logistics companies, has facilitated package delivery. JD.com and Suning, on the other hand, have set up their own warehouses at the county and even village levels, establishing efficient channels of communication between suppliers and farmers in rural e-commerce. Additionally, various major express delivery companies have accelerated their entry into rural markets, establishing comprehensive logistics and distribution networks. These efforts have played a positive role in the development of rural logistics and distribution, greatly promoting the growth of rural e-commerce.

3.3 Major Problems in the Development of Rural E-Commerce in China

3.3.1 Insufficient development of market players

China's rural agricultural population is substantial, and many farmers have relatively limited education, leading to lower levels of science and technology expertise and cultural awareness. They possess limited knowledge of information technology and are more inclined towards traditional methods of production and lifestyle. Furthermore, the majority of farmers are unfamiliar with computers and e-commerce operations, resulting in a lack of awareness and limited organizational skills, which significantly hinders the rapid development of rural e-commerce. Additionally, the underdeveloped economic and social conditions and cultural environment in rural areas, coupled with the lengthy and challenging nature of agricultural technology training, deter many individuals with knowledge of e-commerce technology and management from showing a strong willingness to work in rural areas. Even those who do go often find it difficult to remain. This severe shortage of rural e-commerce talent does not support the rapid and stable growth of rural e-commerce.

3.3.2 Infrastructure Development Lags Behind

In some rural areas, network communication infrastructure is weak, information technology equipment is outdated, and the hardware and software conditions for network security are insufficient to meet the requirements of e-commerce development.   Additionally, logistics and distribution mainly involve road construction, information transmission, product processing, transportation, warehousing, and cargo management. However, organic green agricultural products are often produced in remote rural or hilly areas where many roads have poor quality, transportation options are limited, and the extended transport times due to remote locations make it even more challenging to ensure the freshness of agricultural products. The relatively underdeveloped logistics infrastructure in rural areas also hinders the rapid development of rural e-commerce.

3.3.3 Inadequate Service Application Capability

Currently, there are over 2,000 rural e-commerce websites in China, but most of them lack professional standards and distinctive features. These websites have long update cycles, a high degree of content repetition, and provide more information to leaders than to farmers. They lack practicality, targeted services, and have insufficient service application capability. Additionally, due to the differences and complexities in factors like regional geography, resources, climate in agricultural production, and the long-term accumulation of big data related to rural human society, natural environment, and economic conditions, the accumulation of big data related to rural areas in China is relatively weak, making it challenging to establish large-scale practical databases.

3.3.4 Low Standardization Level of Agricultural Products

China's agricultural production has a low overall level of standardization and is characterized by small-scale, relatively dispersed, diverse, and low-value-added production. Agricultural products undergo a lengthy process from fields to tables, involving planting, harvesting, processing, packaging, transportation, and sales, among other intermediate steps. However, the information symmetry in China's rural product transactions is poor, and there is significant fragmentation in the supply chain. E-commerce is best suited for standardized, recognizable, and market-accepted products. Yet, some non-standardized agricultural products lack reliable quality and safety assurances, making them challenging to be accepted by consumers, businesses, and the market, thereby hindering their sales.

4 Current Situation of Chinese Farmers' Income

4.1 Disposable Income of Chinese Farmers

In the Initial Central Document in 2013, the Chinese government pointed out that China's agriculture faced prominent contradictions in supply and demand, with comprehensive production costs continuously rising, leading to increasingly severe ecological degradation in rural areas. Issues such as farmers' diversification of income sources and rural depopulation became more pronounced. To address these challenges, China introduced a strategy for rural revitalization, promoting farmers' income growth, improving their quality of life, and tackling various problems in the agricultural development process, particularly through measures like the integration of the three rural sectors.

As shown in Figure 1, with the government's increased focus on agriculture and financial support, the per capita disposable annual income of rural residents in China has steadily increased from 4,144 yuan in 2011 to 15,192 yuan in 2023, nearly quadrupling during this period. These efforts have yielded significant results in increasing farmers' income.
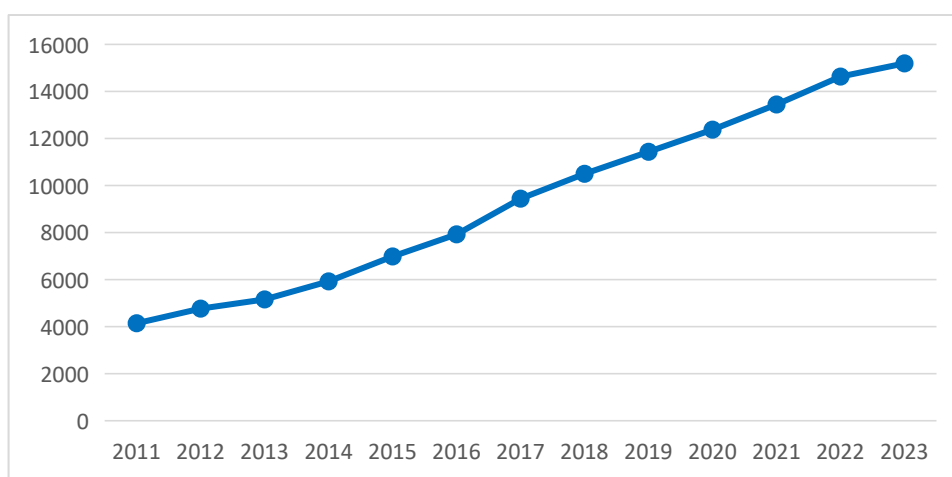
Figure 1: Changes of annual income of rural residents in China (per capita)

4.2 Analysis of the Structure of Chinese Farmers' Income

Farmers' annual income is primarily composed of four parts: wage income, household business income, property income, and transfer income, as shown in Table 2. Additionally, the bar chart Figure 2 displays the structure and proportion of the annual income sources for farmers in per capita.

From the two graphs, it can be observed that wage income and household business income consistently constitute the majority of farmers' income sources. With the development of urbanization and the advancement of measures to support rural migrant workers, farmers have increasingly found employment opportu-

nities in various positions, leading to a significant increase in wage income, rising from 1,598 yuan in 2011 to 6,208 yuan in 2023. While household business income also has a substantial share, its proportion has been gradually decreasing overall. This shift is attributed to farmers diversifying their sources of income, no longer solely relying on agricultural production. Farmers' property income showed slow and continuous growth from 2011 to 2023, but its proportion remained small and demonstrated a decreasing trend. This indicates that rural residents have relatively low financial awareness and investment levels, making it challenging for them to utilize their assets to generate additional wealth. Farmers' transfer income increased nearly 14-fold from 222 yuan in 2007 to 3,190 yuan in 2023. This growth can be attributed to the critical period of "comprehensive prosperity" during this timeframe. The government increased investment and support for rural areas, enhancing fiscal transfers, thereby gradually raising farmers' transfer income.

Table 2: Composition of Chinese farmers' annual income

Year	Annual income (per capita)	Salary income	Household business income	Property income	Transfer income
2011	4144	1598	2196	128	222
2012	4766	1856	2438	148	324
2013	5157	2063	2529	167	398
2014	5924	2433	2836	202	453
2015	6984	2966	3225	229	564
2016	7924	3451	3537	249	687
2017	9441	3657	3939	195	1650
2018	10498	4156	4241	222	1879
2019	11434	4605	4509	252	2068
2020	12375	5027	4746	272	2330
2021	13445	5503	5033	303	2606
2022	14631	6002	5364	342	2923
2023	15192	6208	5437	357	3190

Data source: National Statistical Yearbook and Avery Consulting
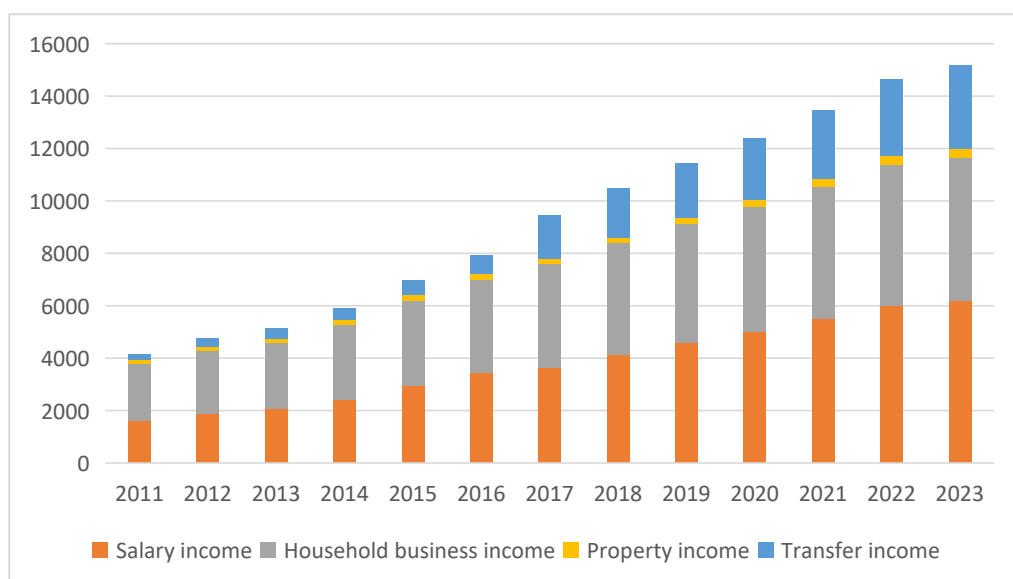

Figure 2: Structure and proportion of Chinese farmers' income source

4.3 Income Disparity Between Urban and Rural Residents in China

As shown in Figure 3, the per capita income of urban residents significantly surpasses that of rural residents in the decade. Although there is an obvious decline during 2013-2017, the per capita income of urban residents has been increasing vigorously from 2013, leading to a widening income gap between urban and rural areas. In terms of per capita income and overall consumption in rural areas, farmers' consumption accounts for approximately 80% of their income. Most of their income is allocated to the consumption of production materials and the purchase of essential goods. Faced with natural disasters or major illnesses, their limited remaining assets can result in significant financial shortfalls.
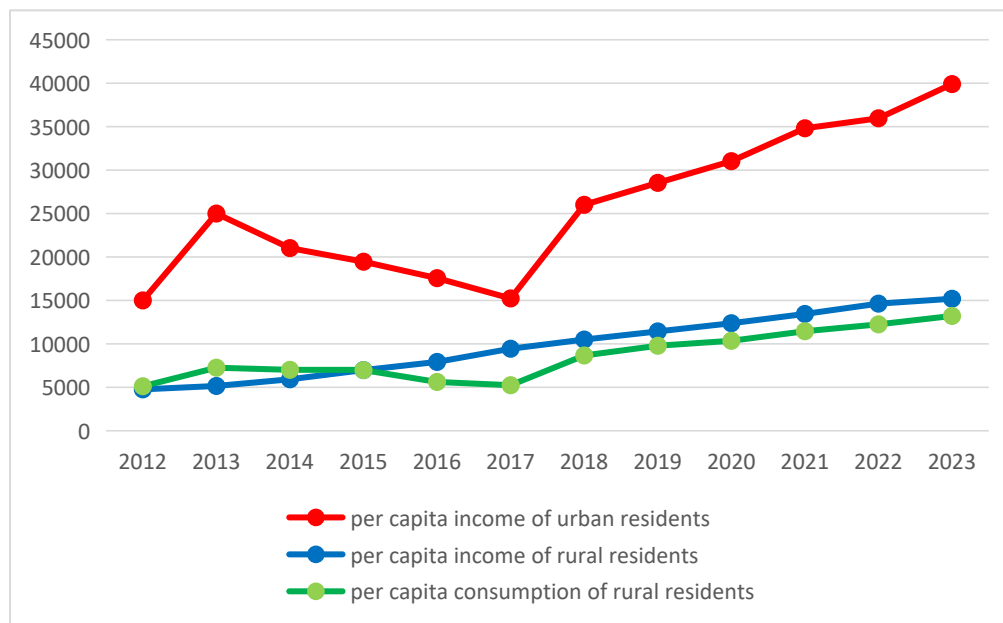

Figure 3: Comparison of income and consumption between urban and rural areas

5 Empirical Analysis

5.1 Sample Selection and Data Sources

This chapter is to explore the relationship between rural e-commerce, farmer entrepreneurship, and farmer income growth. Combining with the research models of relevant scholars, the main variables selected for empirical research are as follows:

Dependent Variable: Farmer Income (y). The per capita disposable income of rural households, formulated by the National Bureau of Statistics, is a scientific indicator to measure the income level of farmers. Therefore, this study chooses the per capita disposable income of rural households as the dependent variable for research.

Independent Variable: The purpose of this chapter is to explore the impact of rural e-commerce and farmer entrepreneurship on farmer income. Therefore, this study selects rural e-commerce (eco) as the independent variable for analysis. Since rural e-commerce in China is still in the development stage and has not formed a unified database, it is difficult to obtain precise data on the level of rural e-commerce development. Rural express delivery services are a crucial and core component of rural e-commerce. Hence, this study uses the volume of rural express delivery services to measure the level of rural e-commerce development.

Control Variables: As the main factors affecting farmer income, this study selects farmer entrepreneurship, the extent of financial support for agriculture from the government, rural grain production, and rural education level as control variables.

(1) Grain Production (crop): For farmers currently engaged in agricultural production, grain is their main source of income. Grain production reflects the effectiveness of farmers' production. The higher the grain production, the more income farmers will earn. In this study, grain production is measured based on the ratio of the area of grain cultivation to total grain production in rural areas.

(2) Financial Support for Agriculture (exp): The extent of financial support for agriculture from the government has a significant impact on the daily lives and production activities of farmers. The larger the amount of financial support for agriculture, the higher the income of farmers. In this study, the extent of financial support for agriculture is measured based on the annual amount of financial support for agriculture by the government.

(3) Rural Education Level (edu): Many scholars have found that increasing investment in human capital in rural areas can also promote income growth for farmers. In rural areas, investment in human capital can be considered as the education level of farmers. In this study, the education level of farmers is based on the number of people with a high school education or above in rural areas.

(4) Farmer Entrepreneurship (employ): The main forms of farmer entrepreneurship in China are individual businesses and the establishment of private enterprises. Accurate data on farmer entrepreneurship in China is difficult to collect. Considering data availability, this study measures farmer entrepreneurship by the number of individual business operators in rural areas and the proportion of private enterprise investors to the total rural population.

Based on the availability of data, this study utilizes panel data from 29 provinces and municipalities in China for the years 2011-2023. Please note that Tibet and Xinjiang were not included in the analysis due to missing data. The empirical research is conducted using EViews. The data sources for this study include the "China Rural Statistical Yearbook," provincial statistical yearbooks, and sources from Alibaba Research Institute, among others. Considering the impact of the Consumer Price Index (CPI), this study uses 2015 as the starting point to adjust the per capita net income of rural residents using the rural consumer price index. Additionally, due to the large amount of collected data and to ensure the stability of the results, logarithmic transformations were applied to these variables. The definitions and indicators of the main variables for empirical research are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Variables and Definitions

Variable	Name	Measurement Indicator	Symbol
Dependent Variable	Farmer Income	Per Capita Net Household Income	y
Independent Variable	Rural E-commerce	Express Delivery Service Volume	eco
Control Variables	Grain Production	Total Grain Production / Cultivated Area	crop
	Government Financial Support for Agriculture	Financial Support for Agriculture Amount	exp
	Rural Education Level	Number of People with High School Education or Above	edu
	Farmer Entrepreneurship	(Number of Individual Business Operators + Number of Private Enterprise Investors) / Total Rural Population	employ

5.2 Empirical model setting

$$ln\ y_{i,t} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 ln\ eco_{i,t} + \alpha_2\ crop_{i,t} + \alpha_3 ln\ exp_{i,t} + \alpha_4 ln\ edu_{i,t} + \alpha_5\ employ_{i,t} + v_i + \varepsilon_{i,t}\ (1)$$

In model (1), the natural logarithm of for rural e-commerce is used as the explanatory variable, and the natural logarithm of for rural household income is used as the dependent variable, while other variables are used as control variables.

5.3 Panel Data Unit Root and Cointegration Tests

In order to avoid spurious regression and ensure the validity of measurement results, this paper conducted unit root tests for the panel data's stationarity. The examination results in Table 4 indicate that, except for the crop variable, which shows stationarity in all tested methods for level sequences, the level sequences of other variables are not stationary in all tests. However, all variables exhibit stationarity in their first-order differenced sequences at a 5% significance level, making them all first-order integrated.

Next, a cointegration test is conducted to study the equilibrium relationship between rural e-commerce, farmers' entrepreneurship, and farmers' income. As shown in Table 5, it can be observed that at a 1% significance level, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating the existence of a long-term equilibrium relationship between the variables, allowing for regression analysis.

Table 4:Unit Root Test Results for Panel Data

Variable	LLC	IPS	ADF	PP
Iny	11.1465	9.4581	7.7991	12.2237
	-1.0300	-1.0300	-1.0300	-1.0300
Ineco	-4.8195	1.6402	43.5291	87.4849
	0.0000	-0.9386	-0.9402	-0.0078
Inexp	13.1716	7.7286	21.5800	22.5875
	-1.0300	-1.0300	-1.0300	-1.0300
crop	-14.4561	-1.9046	91.6931	185.7760
	0.0000	-0.0332	-0.0034	0.0000
lnedu	1499.6800	3.3385	21.7900	20.9258
	-0.7629	-1.0294	-1.0300	-1.0300
employ	-23.2182	-6.2886	138.8358	226.5804
	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
△ Iny	-0.1052	-1.8732	97.0108	94.6928
	-0.3090	-0.0355	-0.0011	-0.0019
△ Ineco	-35.3423	-6.7180	138.2260	189.2110
	-0.3090	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
△ Inexp	-3.5098	-1.0499	80.3067	107.3600
	-0.3090	-0.0453	-0.0286	-0.0001
△ crop	-12.6666	-4.2812	117.1017	153.7584
	-0.3090	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
△ Inedu	-16.1342	-4.4493	120 9 24	158.2008
	-0.3090	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
△ employ	-133.2758	-19.1790	-150.8198	193.4113
	-0.3090	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

Table 5: Cointegration test results for panel data

Test Method	Statistic Object	Statistic Value	P-Value
Pedroni test	V-Statistic	-2.8633	0.0000
	Rho-Statistic	4.7635	0.0071
	PP-Statistic	-8.1464	0.0000
	ADF-Statistic	-3.3845	0.0000
Kao test	ADF	-4.3849	0.0002

5.4 Empirical Results and Analysis of the Econometric Model

After passing the data tests, we progressively incorporated each variable into the fixed-effects regression model for analysis. The results are presented in Table 6. From the table below, we can observe that when all variables are included, rural e-commerce development exhibits a positive and statistically significant relationship with rural income at the 5% significance level. This indicates that rural e-commerce can directly promote an increase in rural income.

Table 6: Fixed Effects Regression Results

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
lneco	0.3314***	0.2826***	0.3106**	0.4454*	0.4167**
	(4.23)	(4.15)	(2.23)	(1.47)	(2.25)
lnexp		0.2246	0.2257	-0.0138	0.2908***
		(1.72)	(1.56)	(-0.11)	(5.34)
crop			0.1833	0.1964	0.1168
			(0.29)	(0.68)	(-0.40)
lnedu				4.3562***	2.2173***
				(1.95)	(1.53)
employ					1.1329***
					(2.84)
_cons	8.8036***	8.6393***	8.5498***	7.2202***	-8.9134***
	(405.54)	(85.63)	(25.97)	(22.16)	(-5.86)
N	253	253	253	253	253
R^2	0.0253	0.0354	0.0397	0.2638	0.6985

Note: ***, **, and * represent significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels respectively, the same below.

As for the control variables, the impact of financial support for agriculture (exp) on rural income is not statistically significant. This suggests that the financial allocations made by the national government for rural areas have limited effects on increasing rural incomes. Despite improvements in the conditions of various impoverished rural regions and a significant reduction in the number of people living in poverty following the implementation of rural support policies, a considerable portion of rural poverty alleviation funds have been directed towards the construction of impressive but often superficial projects. By the time these funds reach the hands of rural residents, they are often in short supply, leaving the economic circumstances of some farmers unchanged.

Rural residents' incomes remain relatively low compared to their urban counterparts. While an increase in grain production (crop) positively contributes to higher rural incomes, its impact is less significant compared to education and entrepreneurship. This may be attributed to the diversification of employment op-

portunities for rural residents in recent years, with more individuals engaging in non-agricultural activities. Consequently, the reliance on grain production for income augmentation has diminished, reducing the influence of grain production on rural incomes.

Rural education level (edu) demonstrates a significant positive effect on rural incomes at the 1% significance level. This indicates that higher levels of education among rural residents lead to increased income levels. As illustrated in the accompanying figure, a significant correlation between rural residents' education levels and income levels isevident. This is because higher educational attainment equips individuals with stronger innovative abilities, and innovation is a source of sustained development. Therefore, as the level of education among rural residents rises, so do their income levels.

Rural entrepreneurship (employ) exhibits a significant positive impact on rural income at the 1% significance level. This underscores the role of rural entrepreneurship in facilitating income growth for rural residents. The entrepreneurial endeavors of rural residents enhance their work motivation, boost the economic vitality of rural areas, and effectively contribute to the elevation of income levels. It also stimulates the development of rural economies. Thus, rural entrepreneurship plays a substantial role in fostering income growth among rural residents. As a form of innovative behavior, a higher entrepreneurial spirit in rural areas generally corresponds to higher income levels.

In summary, rural e-commerce, education level, and entrepreneurship have significant positive impacts on rural income growth. Financial support for agriculture and crop production also has positive effects but to a lesser extent. This analysis demonstrates the importance of these factors in promoting rural income growth and rural economic development.

5.5 Robustness Tests

Since the variables described in this paper are dynamic, there may be endogeneity issues among the variables, which could lead to some bias in the research results. To avoid this situation and ensure the robustness of the model estimation results, this paper will further conduct robustness tests on the model. This paper draws on established testing models and conducts regression analysis of the explanatory variables of the model with a one-period lag, as shown in Table 7 for specific details. The results of the robustness tests indicate that the signs and magnitudes of the coefficients for each variable are generally consistent with the previous test results. This validates the robustness of the model and confirms the reliability of the research findings presented earlier.

6 DISCUSSIONS

According to the empirical analysis, there is a positive correlation between the development of rural e-commerce and farmers' income. This means the significant role of the e-commerce model in promoting farmers' income in China. Furthermore, the development of e-commerce has also stimulated the innovative potential of farmers and motivating them to engage in entrepreneurship. Therefore, the e-commerce model not only provides a pathway for farmers to increase their income but also offers them broader career development prospects, contributing to the sustainable development of rural areas.

However, despite the significant progress made by rural e-commerce in promoting rural entrepreneurship and farmers' income, there are still some shortcomings. Firstly, the network infrastructure and information technology equipment in some rural areas lag behind, limiting the development of e-commerce and farmers' participation. Secondly, a proportion of farmers may lack sufficient e-commerce awareness and skills, requiring more training and support. Additionally, the standardization level of agricultural products is relatively low, making it challenging to sell non-standardized agricultural products on e-commerce platforms, which restricts farmers' sales choices. Finally, the logistics and distribution systems in some rural areas are still not well-developed, resulting in higher costs for the preservation and transportation of agricultural products. Therefore, we propose the following recommendations for the development of rural e-commerce in China under the "Internet + Entrepreneurship" framework.

Firstly, increase government investment in rural network infrastructure. A well-developed network infrastructure is fundamental for the advancement of rural e-commerce in the context of "Internet + Entrepreneurship". Therefore, it is imperative to boost investments in rural network infrastructure construction and the planning of network website systems. Local governments should promptly introduce supportive policies and measures, fulfilling their role in macroeconomic regulation. They should guide rural residents in acquiring network technology skills while increasing local fiscal revenue. Additionally, incentive policies, such as subsidies for infrastructure and supporting equipment, can be implemented to encourage small businesses to expand their e-commerce operations. This will help farmers perceive a supportive policy environment, fostering their enthusiasm for rural e-commerce entrepreneurship and providing additional avenues for increasing their income.

Secondly, enhance awareness of e-commerce among rural residents. The traditional production and operation methods of farmers often exhibit a relatively closed nature. Cultivating awareness of rural e-commerce requires a shift in farmers' traditional mindsets. They should gradually embrace the concepts associated with "Internet + Entrepreneurship", acquire network technology skills, understand advanced agricultural production techniques and market information, and apply their knowledge of information technology to e-commerce or entrepreneurial activities. In the era of "Internet + Entrepreneurship", the government should actively promote the convenience of online transactions. They should guide farmers to experience online transaction processes firsthand and educate them on online transaction security. Enabling farmers to purchase suitable products at affordable prices in a secure and convenient manner will stimulate their e-commerce awareness. This, in turn, encourages farmers to leverage various advanced technologies for agricultural production, sales, or entrepreneurship, ultimately promoting rural e-commerce development in China and increasing farmers' income.

Thirdly, strengthen standardization and branding of agricultural products. Rural e-commerce is not solely about price competition; it also involves brand competition. Under the "enterprise-led, government-guided" principle, rural governments should facilitate geographical indication registration and certification, as well as trademark registration for organic and green foods tailored to local conditions. They should develop and nurture high-quality characteristic agricultural products, ensuring that these products are sold based on credibility and quality. In the era of "Internet + Entrepreneurship", where product information spreads rapidly, and considering the diversity of agricultural production methods and product types, China should establish standards that align with its national conditions. This will ensure the quality of agricultural products and services, enhance the market competitiveness of these products, increase the added value of goods, and improve the success rate of entrepreneurship. These efforts will contribute to the growth of farmers' income and enhance the competitiveness of rural e-commerce.

Finally, promote the establishment of a modern rural e-commerce logistics system. On the one hand, enhance basic transportation infrastructure for agricultural products. To foster rural e-commerce development and promote farmers' entrepreneurship and income in the "Internet + Entrepreneurship" era, a robust logistics distribution system is essential. Without it, e-commerce activities cannot be effectively executed. Firstly, by considering the current state of rural logistics, the focus should be on promoting and publicizing agricultural products, establishing a robust market system. Furthermore, specialized warehousing equipment for trade logistics should undergo large-scale, intensive integration and transformation to expand the logistics system further. Additionally, the construction of a modern logistics system should be accelerated, emphasizing areas such as processing, packaging, transportation, warehousing, and distribution. Special attention should be given to logistics distribution centers, logistics hubs, and transportation infrastructure. These efforts will facilitate the professional development of the logistics industry. On the other hand, promote the diversified development of third-party logistics entities. In the context of "Internet + Entrepreneurship", rural e-commerce is experiencing rapid growth. Ensuring the freshness and safety of agricultural products is crucial, but traditional agricultural product logistics often involve blind circulation of products, outdated disease and pest prevention methods, inadequate low-temperature treatment, and insufficient processing ca-

pabilities. The third-party logistics model, with logistics agencies at its core, offers an efficient solution. Under this model, logistics companies and agricultural product trading entities operate independently, enabling modern logistics distribution, professional services, information management, and centralized coordination. This significantly reduces logistics costs while expediting the product flow. Consequently, it is imperative to provide robust support for the development of third-party logistics companies through policies such as tax reductions and preferential interest rates on loans.

7 Conclusion

This study explores the application of e-commerce models in rural areas and finds a positive correlation between the advancement of rural e-commerce, farmer engagement in entrepreneurship, and increased income. However, there are deficiencies in China's rural e-commerce development, including network infrastructure, farmers' e-commerce skills, agricultural product standardization, and logistics. To address these issues, we provide targeted recommendations. These suggestions, based on China's experience, can serve as a reference for other countries, particularly developing ones.

This study still has some limitations. Firstly, the content analysis is limited to the Chinese case, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Further research could extend the empirical analysis of the impact of the e-commerce model on farmers' well-being to other countries and regions, especially in developing countries with a large proportion of rural residents. This research could reveal the particularly crucial role of e-commerce in rural development, especially in the context of the global public health crisis.

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A Study of Applications of Face Negotiation in International Business Negotiation Conflicts -Taking Copyright Negotiations in the Film of Americans Dreams in China as an Example

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Abstract

Face negotiation involves complex language strategies in business negotiation conflicts. Taking copyright negotiations in the film of Americans Dreams in China as an example, the study is to construct the conflict management strategies in the perspectives of concern for self, concern for others, and concern for each other, with the purpose of exploring the specific applications of conflict management strategies international business negotiation conflicts, and the findings go as follows: 1.In the selection of conflict management strategies, international business negotiators has boasted their own characteristics, and the use of individual strategies have great consistency and continuity; 2.Cultural differences influence the use of negotiation conflict management strategies, with collectivist cultures generally more concern for each other, more use of emotional expression, third party help, avoiding and dominating strategies, and individualistic cultures generally more concern for self, using more dominating strategies; 3.Cultural, personal, and environmental factors related to international business negotiators influence their specific negotiation conflict management strategies, and these factors shall be paid attention to. This study is to help to promote the effects of international business negotiations.

Keywords: Face-negotiation; International business negotiation; Copyright conflicts; Language strategies; Americans Dreams in China

1 INTRODUCTION

Face, encompassing both dignity and favor, reflects interpersonal relationships and implies the nuances of social interactions in human communications. With the deepening of China's reform and opening-up policy, international business negotiations have become increasingly frequent in our country. Due to cultural differences between the East and the West, people have varying understandings and applications of the concept and theory of face, leading to distinct manifestations in international business negotiation conflicts. Based on the study of face negotiation theory and international business negotiations, this paper takes the copyright negotiation scene from the movie "American Dreams in China" as an example to analyze the specific linguistic strategies and representations of key figures in Sino-American international business negotiation conflicts from self-focused, other-focused, and mutual-focused perspectives. It examines the conflict resolution strategies in face negotiation theory, including avoidance, compromise, forbearance, integration, and forcing, as well as strategies such as emotional language expression, third-party assistance, and passive-aggressive behavior. This analysis aims to explore the application of negotiation conflict language strategies among Sino-American international business negotiators, providing important references and exemplars for China's current and future international business negotiations.

2 RESEARCH BACKGROUND ANALYSIS

2.1 Face negotiation and its research

The concept of facework was first proposed by American sociologist Erving Goffman (1967), who believes that face is the concern for one's anticipated self-image, characterized by immediacy and spontaneity, and intricately linked to the dynamic nature of social interaction. The crux of face issues lies in the mutual effort of both parties in conversational exchanges to protect their own and each other's face. Subsequently, the British anthropologists Brown and Levinson (1978) introduce the Face-saving Theory, positing that face is a public self-image that every member of society strives to attain, serving as a means to understand how individuals from different cultures manage friendly relations and disagreements. They point out that face, as a marker of self-image, encompasses both a positive face (the desire for approval from others) and a negative face (the desire for one's thoughts and actions to be unimpeded), and that face, as a personal emotional investment, is often a focus of attention in interactions, where it can be lost, preserved, or enhanced.

Ting-Toomey (1988) proposes the Face-negotiation Theory, contending that face is the sense of a favorable social self-image that individuals require within their relational networks. Face is influenced by speech acts. She advocates that:1. All cultural communication is based on preserving and negotiating face; 2. Face becomes an issue when identity is questioned; 3. Cultural, individual, and situational variables influence the choice of face concern (e.g., self-oriented or other-oriented face-saving strategies); 4.Individualistic cultures tend to adopt self-oriented facework, while collectivistic cultures opt for other-oriented facework; 5. Cultures with small power distances favor egalitarian frameworks for facework, while those with large power distances prefer hierarchical frameworks; 6. Behavior is also influenced by cultural differences, individuals, relationships, and situational factors; 7. Intercultural communication competence represents the pinnacle of knowledge and thinking (Ting-Toomey 2005).

Fraser (1990) argues that every society has its own set of social norms, which prescribe explicit or implicit rules for behavior, events, and thought. Politeness, in turn, is the linguistic behavior expected in adherence to these social norms. Yang(2009) suggests that face negotiation in business negotiations involves interpersonal relationships, with negotiators employing different politeness strategies and linguistic representations to manage their communicative discourse. Richard Watts (1992) distinguishes between two levels of politeness: first-order politeness, which is the cooperative, other-considerate behavior found in any language and corresponds to the "lay or everyday concept of politeness," and second-order politeness, which is an "ide-

alized, universal, scientific concept of politeness" applicable across any sociocultural language, regardless of time and place (Sun 2008). Scollon and Scollon (1995) further refine the theory of face, highlighting its contradictory nature, encompassing two sub-concepts: "involvement" and "independence." That is, speakers must attend to others or grant attention to them, while also maintaining a certain degree of independence and respecting the independence needs of others.

Research on face-related cross-cultural communication between China and the West has become increasingly rich. Regarding communicative conflict language strategies, the Face Negotiation Theory integrates the dimensions of self-concern and other-concern, categorizing conflict handling strategies based on their relative importance. These strategies include: domination (prioritizing one's own position and goals over others), avoidance (escaping the conflict topic, parties, or situation), accommodation (prioritizing the other party's interests over self-interests), compromise (reaching a middle ground through mutual concessions), and integration (developing solutions that highly consider both parties' concerns) (Rahim 1983, 1992). Ting-Toomey et al. (2000) add three additional approaches for handling cross-cultural communicative conflicts: affect expression (clearly expressing personal emotions to manage and control conflicts), third-party help (seeking additional assistance to manage and resolve conflicts), and passive aggression (addressing conflicts indirectly and assuming responsibility in an oblique manner). Chang and Huang (2022) analyze the connotations and development of the Face Negotiation Theory from sociological, linguistic, and cultural cognitive perspectives.

Research on face in Western and Chinese cultures has yielded insightful findings. Scollon and Scollon (1995) explore how Westerners' and Asians' concepts of face influence interpersonal politeness strategies, reflecting different thinking and cognitive modes. Lei and Yao (2008) point out that Western culture emphasizes individual face-saving, while Chinese culture prioritizes interpersonal harmony in social interactions. The differences in face between China and the West are rooted in their distinct cultural cores: humility, respect, trustworthiness, diligence, and wisdom for China, versus freedom, equality, and competition for the West. Zhao (2012) examines the mechanism of face from a social psychological perspective and explored its impact on organizational management. Chen (2011) conducts empirical research on conflict handling strategies such as avoidance, compromise, forgiveness, integration, and autocracy in cross-cultural contexts, attempting to establish realization forms of face negotiation behavior in cross-cultural conflict contexts. Chen proposes cultural and social dimensions of face, as well as cross-cultural conflict management strategies, to enhance face negotiation and cross-cultural conflict handling abilities. Zhou and Daniel (2016) summarize debates on the division of positive and negative face, the inadequacies of culture-specific face research, and the necessity of face research tailored to Chinese cultural characteristics. Yang (2019) explores the cross-cultural pragmatic trends of thank-you expressions and the "intention" in politeness cognition from a politeness perspective. Chang and Huang (2022), based on culture and interaction, analyze the connotations of the Face Negotiation Theory through multiple dimensions like face work, value orientations in face maintenance, self-construal in face negotiation, and face conflict management strategies. They particularly highlight the scarcity of applied research on the Face Negotiation Theory in China. Therefore, understanding the current research status of face theory and conducting a detailed analysis of specific strategies for handling cross-cultural conflicts in the Face Negotiation Theory can facilitate the exploration of application strategies for face negotiation in international business negotiation conflicts, while enriching the research on the Face Negotiation Theory in China.

2.2 Face and international business negotiation

Conflict refers to the actual or imagined opposition arising from the differing needs, values, and interests of two individuals. International business negotiation is a behavioral process where parties involved in commercial activities from different countries or regions engage in consultation on various elements of a transaction through information exchange to reach an agreement. As negotiators from different countries

participate, they face cross-cultural communication conflicts in ideology, culture, consciousness, and inter-ests to resolve conflicts of interest and achieve mutually beneficial outcomes, manifesting as exchanges and conflicts between Eastern and Western civilizations (Peng 2022).

Face plays a crucial role in international business negotiations. Yang (2004) points out that Chinese ne-gotiators encounter cultural adaptation issues such as face, Chinese language sentiment, and cultural threats in international business negotiations, and offers suggestions for a "salad-style" cultural adaptation. Yang (2009), from the perspective of Foucault's "theory of discourse power," discusses the issues of "discourse right" and "discourse power" in Sino-US trade negotiations and proposes establishing a shared discourse power negotiation realm, understanding the hidden mechanisms linking discourse and power, and insight into the complex relationships between discourse and subjects. Combining Hofstede's (1991) cultural di-mension theory, Li (2012) focuses on analyzing cultural differences in international business negotiations across five dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, and long-term vs. short-term orientation. Wang and Zhang (2013) propose broadening the approach to business negotiations from linguistic perspectives such as discourse analysis, pragmatics, and speech acts. Wan (2014) analyzes face negotiation in cross-cultural communication through the event of the Macartney Mission to China and points out that although both Eastern and Western cultures pursue face, the East focuses on the positive aspect while the West emphasizes the negative aspect. Based on face-nego-tiation theory, Yang (2022) analyzes the problems and strategies in Sino-French cross-border e-commerce communication with Chinese customer service representatives flexibly using face-saving strategies of pre-vention and self-recovery to maintain the face of all parties. Zhu (2015) explores face-negotiation behavior in discourse communication, analyzing the concept, dimensions of face, negotiation strategies and their sig-nificance, showing that factors such as cultural background influence face-negotiation strategies. Xiao and Qin (2019) take the public announcement of the relationship between Lu Han and Guan Xiaotong as the research object, exploring the sub-cultural types in fan communities, the conflicts between cultures and the cross-cultural negotiation process, and showing that cross-cultural conflicts in fan communities are closely related to the concept of face, and integration and third-party control are effective solutions.

In summary, there is a lack of quantitative research combining face theory with conflict in international business negotiations. Further quantitative and qualitative analyses are needed. This paper will explore application strategies for face negotiation in conflicts during international business negotiations by specific negotiation cases.

3 Research Design

3.1 Research subjects

This study takes as its example the script of the copyright negotiation between three representatives from the Chinese company New Dream and two American negotiators in the film "American Dreams in China" (also known as "China Partners"). Focusing on face negotiation and linguistic strategies, it specifically in-vestigates the following two questions:

(1)What are the characteristics of the face negotiation conflict language strategies employed by Chinese and American international business negotiators in handling negotiation conflicts?

(2)What cultural and individual traits do Chinese and American international business negotiators exhibit when selecting language strategies for negotiation conflicts?

3.2Research methods

Based on the sequential appearance of the four copyright negotiation scenes in the film "American Dreams in China", the negotiation corpus is organized by meticulously watching the negotiation content, transcribing it carefully, and having two experienced colleagues review the transcripts to ensure the accurate representation of the English language used during the negotiations. The conflict handling strategies are then categorized from three perspectives: self-focused, other-focused, and mutually-focused. Subsequently, detailed analysis and statistical examination are conducted on avoidance, compromise, forbearance, integration, and domination strategies, as well as emotional expression, third-party assistance, and passive-aggressive strategies, to explore their application in each section and the overall copyright negotiation. This analysis aims to identify the language strategy characteristics of Chinese and American international business negotiators, both collectively and individually, in handling negotiation conflicts.

4 Analysis of Language Strategies in Copyright Negotiations

The film "American Dreams in China", whose prototype is the real-life New Oriental Education Group, is set against the backdrop of the 1980s to the early 21st century, depicting the inspiring story of three Chinese young people who met and became friends during their university days, shared business dreams, worked together to establish an English training school, and ultimately achieved a listing on the New York Stock Exchange. In the process of handling conflicts during the Sino-US copyright negotiations, the issue of face concern for both Chinese and American parties is highlighted, revealing the influence of various factors such as individualism and collectivism, power distance, and the individual and contextual aspects of negotiation on conflict resolution. Based on the perspectives of self-focus, other-focus, and mutual-focus, the eight strategies for conflict language in international business negotiations are categorized as follows in Table 1.

Table 1 Strategies for Conflict Language in International Business Negotiations

Focus Perspective	Specific Strategies	Strategy Characteristics
Self-focus	Control, Emotional Expression	Emphasizes concern for self-image, control and management of conflicts
Other-focus	Appeasement, Passive Aggression	Emphasizes concern for the other's image, coordination and management of conflicts
Mutual-focus	Avoidance, Integration, Compromise, Third-party Assistance	Emphasizes concern for both parties' images, multi-channel resolution of conflicts

In the copyright negotiations depicted in "American Dreams in China", there are four main parts with five negotiators from both China and the US involved. Based on the main negotiation content and its characteristics, these parts are divided into: negotiation focus, first half of the negotiation, negotiation break, and second half of the negotiation. In terms of negotiators, the Chinese side, represented by New Dream, has three representatives, namely 1. Meng (Meng Xiaojun), with an overseas returnee background; 2. Cheng (Cheng Dongqing), characterized as a "local" entrepreneur; and 3. Wang (Wang Yang), with a "rebellious" demeanor. The American side, represented by EES, has two main negotiators: 1. Lady, a lady serving as the company's legal advisor; and 2. Bernot, the chairman of EES. They employ face negotiation conflict language strategies that focus on self, others, and mutual concerns during the negotiation conflicts. Following the order of appearance, the negotiation content and strategy applications are reflected in the four stages of the negotiation process.

4.1 Language strategies for discrepancies in Sino-U.S. copyright negotiations

In the initial phase of the Sino-U.S. copyright negotiations, the focal point was the legitimacy of using examination materials. There are notable differences in the language strategies employed by both China and the United States during the negotiation's onset.

Lady: Mr. Cheng, Mr. Cheng, Mr. Cheng, do you acknowledge that your company has used unauthorized test materials from my client, Education Exam Services of Bernot New York State, so that Chinese students could have unfair advantages during exams.

Meng: I formally declare to you that what you just said has hurt the integration of all Chinese students.

Cheng: I want to remind you that to make legal use of the materials, we pay annually for the EES.

Bernot: Mr Cheng, back to be mediocre of your record. The school you founded has enabled to send thousands of students abroad in the US. To them, you're a hero; to me, a thief.

During the negotiations, Lady, the legal advisor for EES Corporation from the US, employs a control strategy by accusing the Chinese side of using unauthorized exam materials, thereby giving Chinese students an unfair advantage in the exams. Meng, on the Chinese side, adopts an avoidance strategy, pointing out that the American accusations has tarnished the reputation of all Chinese test-takers. Cheng uses a passive-aggressive strategy, suggesting that the Chinese side pay an annual fee to EES. Bernot, also from the US side, continues with the control strategy by questioning Cheng's credentials on the spot, highlighting his humble beginnings yet his ability to send tens of thousands of students to study in the US, and implying that he has committed theft. In this segment, the American side is on the offensive, focusing more on their own image and employing control strategies aimed at overpowering the opposing side with sheer force. The Chinese side, on the other hand, is on the defensive, concerned not only with self-preservation but also with the welfare of others, raising issues of verbal harm inflicted by the other party and highlighting their own efforts.

4.2 Language strategies in the controversy over EES' issuance of warnings

Regarding the controversy surrounding EES' issuance of warnings, Lady, the legal advisor for the American EES company, continues to employ a control strategy. This is evident during the second phase of the negotiations.

Lady: Mr. Cheng, my client, Education Exam Services, has issued a warning to all US universities of the possibility that New Dream students have cheated on the TOEFL and GREs, the universities have been advised to investigate any New Dream's students with exceptionally high scores.

Meng: You can't issue such a notice.

Lady: And it has already been issued.

Meng: What are your accusations based on? It's already to prove them guilty, a violation of the fundamental principle of American law.

Bernot: Mr Meng, if that's how you feel, why would you travel all the way here for this meeting?

Meng: I know what we've done wrong, but you don't know what you have done, and you don't even care.

Bernot: I admire your critical thinking. It just proves you've received good education in the US. I came across some interesting files about Chinese culture, the imperial exams have first established the tradition of cheating begun in China with many documents and techniques on how to cheat. This is also a record. It's just an interesting anecdote I want to share.

Lady: Where're you going?

Wang: To take a leek. You want to go with me?

Cheng: I'm going with him.

Lady points out that EES has issued warnings to universities across the United States, alerting them to potential cheating by New Dream students in the TOEFL and GRE exams. Bernot, the representative from the American company, employs strategies of avoidance and third-party assistance, sidestepping Meng's inquiries about the basis for the accusations and citing historical data on cheating in China to suggest that cheating has been a phenomenon in Chinese history. Meng adopts strategies of control, passive aggression, third-party assistance, and compromise. She argues that the Americans should not issue such warnings, questions the basis for their accusations, points out that their actions violate fundamental principles of American law, and acknowledges her side's mistakes while suggesting that the Americans are unaware of their own errors and dismiss them. Wang and Cheng, on the other hand, utilize strategies of avoidance and accommodation, working together to seize opportunities to ease the tense atmosphere and pressure of the negotiation conflict. In terms of this part of the negotiation, the Americans primarily employ a comprehensive face-negotiating conflict resolution strategy that focuses on self-image, others, and mutual concern. The Chinese, however, primarily focus on mutual concern, while also incorporating strategies that focus on self and others.

4.3 Language strategies in the contest over unfair advantages

In the section dealing with the contest over unfair advantages, Meng, the representative from the Chinese company New Dream, successively employs strategies of accommodation, passive aggression, control, and avoidance. In response to the Americans' claim that Chinese test-takers have obtained unfair advantages in the exams, Meng questions how the Americans define "unfair advantages," proposes the option of legal action, and emphasizes the clarity of her self-expression. These strategies are specifically manifested in the third stage of the negotiation.

Meng: Mr. Bernot, you claimed that our tutorial materials gave Chinese students unfair advantage doing exams. Can you define what do you mean by unfair advantage?

Bernot: You should know what that means better than I do. But we'll go to that later. Right now I want you to admit the unauthorized use of that material.

Lady: We filed the motion with the courts, ordering you cease your infringement, and destroy all unauthorized copies of EES materials. We're seeking 15 million in damages, this figure does not include punitive.

Wang: That's ridiculous.

Meng: The damages you are seeking far exceed our total profits. You leave us no choice but go to court.

Lady: Please repeat what you just said

Meng: You heard me, loud and clear, in English.

Cheng: I suggest we take a break.

Lady: Fine.

At this stage of the negotiation, both Wang and Cheng employ emotional expression and avoidance strategies. Wang points out the unreasonableness of the American demand for a compensation of USD 15 million, while Cheng proposes a recess to ease the tension in the negotiation. The American representative, Bernot, adopts avoidance and control strategies, sidestepping the definition of unfair advantage and demanding that the Chinese side admit to the unauthorized use of their exam materials. The American legal advisor, Lady, employs control and accommodation strategies by proposing that they have initiated legal proceedings to require the Chinese side to cease infringement, destroy the materials, and pay a compensation of USD 15 million excluding penalties, and asks the Chinese side to reiterate the legal proceeding options. Subsequently, she agrees to Cheng's suggestion of a recess. Overall, at this stage, the Chinese side employs a balanced approach to conflict resolution strategies that focus on self, others, and both parties, while the American side primarily focuses on self, with a comprehensive application of strategies that also consider others and

both parties. Up to this point, the emotional and financial demands of both the Chinese and American nego-tiating parties have been clearly expressed.

4.4 Language strategies for resolving copyright conflicts through emotion and reason

As the most prominent part of the copyright negotiation in the movie "American Dreams in China", this section adopts an approach that combines emotion and reason to resolve conflicts, embodying Chinese et-iquette culture and demonstrating different handling techniques for face concerns and negotiation conflicts between China and the United States. The specific negotiation discourse strategies are reflected in the fourth stage.

Wang: Mr. Bernot, it's your gift, from me.

Bernot: It's got from Chinatown?

Wang: Chinese moon cakes. Next week is the moon festival. And if the fight breaks out later, I have something to throw.

Bernot: Hahahaha...

Wang: Oh hoo, you got the joke, for you.

Cheng: Mr. Bernot, we officially offer a formal apology, we acknowledge the commodity copyright in-fringement and prepare to settle.

Wang: But not fifteen million.

Cheng: Please, take any clause you want, any clause that is related to our copies.

Lady: Clause eleven.

Cheng: The WIPO Copyrights and Performances and Phonograms Treaties of Implementation Act of nineteen ninety-eight, amended section 101 by adding the definition of Geneva Phonograms Convention. Pick another one please.

Lady: Thirty five.

Cheng: The WIPO Copyrights and Performances and Phonograms Treaties of Implementation Act of nineteen ninety-eight, requires that some paragraph D, the definition of eligible country take effect a part entry into force of the WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaties with respect to the United States which occurred on May 20th 2002.

Cheng: This because I memorized the entire text on the plane coming here. It is a skill that I mastered when I was eighteen, that year, I memorized the whole XinHua English dictionary. For your information, I was only considered mediocre among my peers, Chinese students are extremely adept at taking exams, you can't imagine what they are willing to go through to succeed, you don't understand Chinese culture.

Meng: Mr. Bernot, regardless of the final ruling, this meeting marks the start of our formal partnership. We hope the EES can enforce its copyrights in the Chinese market. We don't like being called thieves. We've come here today, hoping to educate you about one thing. China has changed. Unfortunately, you are still stuck in the past.

Bernot: Mr. Meng, I remind of you, Yao Ming is in the NBA.

Meng: That's because NBA was trying to tap into the Chinese market, China is already the world largest market for English language education. Today, Chinese students don't aspire to stay in America, they want to go home. Yet you're still stuck on whether they cheat on exams.

Cheng: Mr. Bernot, before we came to the States, we debated whether to list the New Dream on the stock exchange. Now, I've come to a decision, New Dream's IPO will be officially announced, today.

Bernot: What makes you think I care?

Cheng: But you will care, I will be waiting for the right opportunity for the company to go public, now, I've got it. That's right; it's you who give us this opportunity. Thank you, Mr. Bernot. You are the one who has

gained us the attention of potential investors form Wall Street. They will see us as a company with integrity and courage. The more we pay in compensation, the greater valuation we will get in the future. In addition, there will be at least one more benefit from listing New Dream. Someday, when we are no longer teachers, but the representatives of the world's largest educational service cooperation, you may finally show us the respect we deserve. We won't have to rely on lawsuit to communicate with each other. More importantly, I'm also doing this for personal reasons. I have a friend, who is more brilliant that I will ever be, and more deserving of success. But when he came to America, I realized the best man of my generation destroyed here. Mr. Bernot, the playing field has never been even. This is my way of reclaiming my friend's dignity. According to a Chinese proverb，I'm like a TUBIE --a soft shell of turtle, someone afraid to go out and take risks. Now, I'm standing here, terrified even as we speak. But as my friend once said, some things are so important that enforce us to overcome our fears.

In the fourth stage, Wang, the representative of China New Dream Company, primarily adopts conflict resolution strategies of third-party assistance and control. Taking advantage of the upcoming Mid-Autumn Festival, he presents mooncakes to Bernot, the American representative, as a gesture of goodwill from the Chinese side, while also proposing that the compensation cannot be USD 15 million. Cheng employs a range of strategies in the negotiation, including compromise, third-party assistance, emotional expression, passive aggression, and integration. He first apologizes to the American side for the infringement and expresses willingness to compensate, then allows the American side to select the copyright clauses, and recites the entire content of the selected clauses verbatim to demonstrate the hard work and wisdom of the Chinese people. Cheng tells the American side that Chinese test takers put in more effort than they can imagine for the exam, announces that New Dream Company will be listed in New York on that day, and thanks Bernot for the opportunity, stating that the higher the American side's claim for compensation, the higher the company's market value will be. He proposes that the company's listing in New York will promote mutual respect and equality between China and the United States. Cheng also mentions that unfair competition has always existed, citing his friend's struggle in the United States as an example, and says that the company's listing is a way to regain his friend's dignity. He describes himself as a "local bumpkin" who fears risk but is driven to overcome it by important matters.

Meng employs strategies of integration, control, third-party assistance, passive aggression, and emotional expression. He believes that, regardless of the verdict, this round of negotiations marks the beginning of a partnership between China and the United States. He expresses the hope for authorization in the Chinese mainland market and tells the American side that China is changing while they are not. Using the NBA as an example, he illustrates the attractiveness of the Chinese market and points out that China is now the largest English education market in the world, with Chinese test takers preferring to return home rather than stay in the United States, while the American side only focuses on whether they cheat.

Bernot, the representative of EES Company in the United States, employs strategies of accommodation, emotional expression, third-party assistance, and integration. He asks if the mooncakes are from Chinatown, laughs at Wang's joke, points out that Yao Ming is already in the NBA, and asks what his concerns are regarding the company's listing on the NYSE. Lady, the legal advisor for EES Company, employs an accommodation strategy by selecting two clauses related to the copyright as requested by Cheng and listening carefully to check his recitation.

Overall, in this part of the negotiation process, both the Chinese and American negotiators prominently employ language strategies that focus on each other, mainly reflected in third-party assistance and integration strategies. They also comprehensively utilize strategies that focus on self and others. The Chinese side relatively employs more self-focused strategies, especially emotional expression, while the American side employs more other-focused strategies, particularly accommodation. This indicates that in the process of resolving conflicts in international business negotiations, both parties need to first focus on each other, while also paying attention to self and others, and flexibly employ language strategies to achieve mutual benefit and win-win outcomes.

5 Language Strategies for Copyright Conflict Negotiation and Their Effects

Based on the comprehensive analysis above, the frequency of conflict language strategies employed by Chinese and American negotiators in four negotiation sections of international business negotiations is counted. Subsequently, according to the negotiators' appearance information and their different perspectives of self-focus, other-focus, and mutual-focus, combined with their specific conflict handling strategies, their language strategies are summarized and comprehensively analyzed. The language strategies used by Chinese negotiators in international business negotiation conflicts can be summarized in the following table (Table 2).

Table 2 Summary of Chinese Negotiators' Conflict Language Strategies

Negotiator Appearance Information			Self-Focus		Other-Focus			Mutual-Focus		
Negr Sd	Section	Negrs	Ctrl	EE	Accom	PA	Avd	Intg	Comp	TPA
Chinese	2	Wang					1			
Chinese	3	Wang		1						
Chinese	4	Wang	1	1	1					1
Chinese	1	Meng					1			
Chinese	2	Meng	2			1				1
Chinese	3	Meng	1		1	1	1			
Chinese	4	Meng	1	1		1		1		1
Chinese	1	Cheng				1				
Chinese	2	Cheng			1		1			
Chinese	3	Cheng					1			
Chinese	4	Cheng		4				1	1	3
	Subtotal		5	7	3	4	5	2	1	6

Note 1: Negr Sd stands for Negotiator Side, Negrs stands for Negotiators, Ctrl stands for Control, EE stands for Emotional Expression, Accom stands for Accommodation, PA stands for Passive Aggression, Avd stands for Avoidance, Intg stands for Integration, Comp stands for Compromise, and TPA stands for Third - Party Assistance.

The table above indicates that, although Chinese negotiators employ different language strategies in various sections of copyright negotiations, they generally tend to use more language strategies that focus on mutual-focus and self-focus, while relatively fewer strategies that focus on other-focus. Specifically, Chinese negotiators relatively frequently apply strategies such as emotional expression, third-party assistance, avoidance, and control. Additionally, the negotiation conflict language strategies employed by the same negotiator in different negotiation sections demonstrate both certain variations and relative continuity. The overall strategies used by Chinese negotiators are quite diverse, with continuity manifested in Meng's consistent use of control and passive aggression strategies in the latter three sections. There are significant differences in the conflict language strategies employed by different negotiators: Wang prominently uses self-focused emotional expression strategies, Meng frequently employs self-focused control strategies, other-focused passive aggression strategies, and mutual-focused third-party assistance strategies, while Cheng pays great attention to using self-focused emotional expression strategies, mutual-focused third-party assistance, and avoidance strategies.

During the Sino-US copyright negotiation process, the conflict language strategies employed by American negotiators are summarized in the following table (Table 3).

Table 3 Summary of American Negotiators' Conflict Language Strategies

Negotiator Appearance Information			Self-Focus		Other-Focus		Mutual-Focus			
Negr Sd	Section	Negrs	Ctrl	EE	Accom	PA	Avd	Intg	Comp	TPA
American	1	Lady	1							
American	2	Lady	1							
American	3	Lady	4		1					
American	4	Lady			2					
American	1	Bernot	1							
American	2	Bernot					1			1
American	3	Bernot	1				1			
American	4	Bernot		1	1			1		1
	Subtotal		8	1	4	0	2	1	0	2

Note 2: Please refer to Note 1 for the meanings of the above abbreviations.

Table 3 indicates that during the process of handling conflict discourse in Sino-US copyright negotiations, American negotiators predominantly employ self-focus language strategies, frequently utilize mutual-focus strategies, and also adopt other-focus strategies. Specifically, the most frequently used strategy by the Americans is the self-focused control strategy, followed by the other-focused accommodation strategy. Regarding individual negotiators, there is a certain degree of variation in the strategies employed by American negotiators, and they also exhibit relatively consistent negotiation conflict language strategies. For example, Lady has consistently used the control strategy six times in the first three sections. In terms of the strategies used by different individuals, there are also notable differences among American negotiators. Lady, the legal advisor, has most frequently employed the control strategy and also used the accommodation strategy, while Bernot, the representative from the American company, has comprehensively utilized specific conflict language strategies such as control, avoidance, and third-party assistance.

The overall differences in the strategies used during the Sino-US copyright negotiation process can be summarized in the following simplified table:

Table 4 Simplified Table of American Conflict Language Strategies in "American Dreams in China" Copyright Negotiations

Negotiator Appearance Information		Self-Focus		Other-Focus		Mutual-Focus			
Negr Sd	Negrs	Ctrl	EE	Accom	PA	Avd	Intg	Comp	TPA
Chinese	Wang	1	2	1		1			1
Chinese	Meng	4	1	1	3	2	1		2
Chinese	Cheng		4	1	1	2	1	1	3
Subtotal		5	7	3	4	5	2	1	6
American	Lady	6		3					
American	Bernot	2	1	1		2	1		2
Subtotal		8	1	4	0	2	1	0	2
Total		13	8	7	4	7	3	1	8

Note 3: Please refer to Note 1 for the meanings of the above abbreviations.

As shown in the table above, throughout the entire copyright negotiation process, both Chinese and American negotiators employ a variety of conflict language strategies. Relatively speaking, the negotiation strategies employed by the Chinese side are more diverse. Specifically, Chinese negotiators most frequently use mutual-focus conflict resolution strategies, with 14 instances, followed by self-focus conflict language strategies, with 12 instances. The use of other-focus strategies is relatively less frequent, with 7 instances. On the other hand, American negotiators most frequently employ self-focus conflict resolution strategies, with 9 instances, while mutual-focus and other-focus strategies are used less frequently, with 5 and 4 instances respectively. In terms of the use of negotiation conflict language strategies, Chinese negotiators utilize all eight types of negotiation conflict resolution strategies, whereas American negotiators only use six of them. From a self-focus perspective, American negotiators employ more control strategies, with 8 instances, compared to 5 instances by the Chinese. Chinese negotiators use more emotional expression strategies, with 7 instances, compared to 1 instance by the Americans. From an other-focus perspective, American negotiators employ more accommodation strategies, with 4 instances, compared to 3 instances by the Chinese. Chinese negotiators use more passive-aggressive strategies, with 4 instances, while the Americans use none. From a mutual-focus perspective, Chinese negotiators employ more third-party assistance, avoidance, and accommodation strategies, with 6, 5, and 2 instances respectively, compared to 2, 2, and 1 instances by the Americans. The Chinese also use compromise strategies, which are not used by the Americans.

This indicates that Chinese negotiators, who come from a collectivist and high-power distance culture, pay more attention to the image and interests of the collective, as well as their own personal image and interests, while relatively less attention is paid to others. In terms of the specific negotiation conflict language strategies used, they generally employ a relatively rich and diverse set of strategies. In contrast, American negotiators, who come from an individualist and low-power distance culture, pay more attention to their own image and interests, and less attention to the image and interests of others and the collective. Additionally, American negotiators generally employ fewer negotiation conflict resolution strategies overall. Furthermore, the table also shows that while the conflict language strategies chosen by different negotiators generally reflect certain cultural characteristics, there is considerable individual variation in the specific strategies used.

6 Conclusion

By analyzing the research connotations and related studies of Face Negotiation Theory, this paper summarizes the research status of face and international business negotiations. Based on the conflict language strategies of Face Negotiation Theory, it refines specific conflict language strategies that focus on self, others, and mutual concerns. Through the analysis and organization of international business negotiation cases, with the copyright negotiation of "American Dreams in China" as a representative, this paper explores the specific conflict resolution strategies employed by Chinese and American negotiators in international business negotiations, analyzes the characteristics of language strategies used by international business negotiators, and points out that collectivist cultures generally pay more attention to mutual and self-concerns, and frequently employ emotional expression, third-party assistance, avoidance, and control strategies, while individualist cultures tend to focus on self-concern and prominently use control strategies.

In future research on the application of Face Negotiation Theory, researchers can conduct comprehensive studies on international business negotiations with a larger scope and more data. As China continues to expand its opening to the outside world, it will participate in more and more international business negotiations. In terms of face negotiation, international business negotiators need to pay attention to the application characteristics of face negotiation in international business negotiations, choose appropriate language strategies, and ensure that all parties in the negotiation are treated equally, get along harmoniously, and achieve mutual benefit and win-win results. Furthermore, this study also provides an empirical analysis basis for business negotiation teaching and the implementation of language strategies.

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