
AI translation · View original & related papers at
chinaxiv.org/items/chinaxiv-202310.00119

Discourse Innovation in International Communication by Mainstream Media: A Case Study of Xinhua News Agency' s English App Coverage of the 2023 Two Sessions (Postprint)

Authors: Tao Yiping

Date: 2023-10-08T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

[Purpose] To systematically examine the coverage of the Two Sessions and explore new pathways for international communication through innovative major reporting by China' s mainstream media. **[Method]** This article takes Xinhua News Agency' s English-language app coverage of the 2023 Two Sessions as a case study, presenting international communication practices including special topics, timelines, glasses-free 3D posters, and animated shorts, and proposes recommendations for mainstream media' s utilization of English-language apps for international communication. **[Results]** The study reveals that Xinhua News Agency' s English-language app, through agenda setting and discourse innovation, optimized narrative expression, responded to overseas concerns, delivered high-quality works, and vividly articulated China' s positions, solutions, and achievements. **[Conclusion]** For China' s mainstream media to lead in the "news competition" on major current affairs themes, international communication must uphold integrity while innovating and engage with dedication and genuine emotion.

Full Text

Discourse Innovation in International Communication by Mainstream Media: A Case Study of Xinhua' s English App Coverage of the 2023 Two Sessions

Xinhua News Agency New Media Center, Beijing 100083

Abstract

Taking Xinhua's English app coverage of the 2023 Two Sessions as a case study, this paper examines international communication practices including special topics, timelines, naked-eye 3D posters, and animated shorts, and proposes recommendations for mainstream media using English apps in international communication. The study finds that Xinhua's English app has optimized narrative expression and responded to overseas concerns through agenda-setting and discourse innovation, producing high-quality works that vividly illustrate China's positions, solutions, and achievements. The conclusion argues that Chinese mainstream media must uphold innovation while staying grounded, and engage with genuine commitment to lead in the competitive landscape of major political reporting.

Keywords: mainstream media; international communication; Two Sessions; Xinhua English app

CLC Number: G213

Document Code: A

Article ID: 1671-0134(2023)04-012-05

DOI: 10.19483/j.cnki.11-4653/n.2023.04.002

1. Current State of China's International Communication

In recent years, China's international discourse power and influence have significantly improved, yet a substantial gap remains compared with major Western developed countries. The tasks of building international communication capacity and discourse power remain formidable. In the post-pandemic era, China's international media environment has become more complex and multifaceted, with mainstream media facing systematic suppression from some Western countries in international communication practice.

China's Two Sessions have become an important window for the world to observe China and a crucial channel for Chinese mainstream media to guide international society in understanding China. Within the framework of China's characteristic communication system in the new era, mainstream media must enhance international communication capacity building and improve public opinion guidance capabilities by adhering to principles, employing effective narratives, and implementing sound operational strategies.

2. Xinhua's English App: "Connecting China and the World"

2.1 Channel Construction Overview

Xinhua's English app launched the Xi's Time channel in February 2018, the earliest and most influential integrated mobile media channel dedicated to Presi-

dent Xi Jinping's foreign reporting among central media English apps. Through multiple redesigns and upgrades, the channel has optimized its layout by incorporating visual elements of President Xi, refined background colors for a more aesthetic overall design, and reorganized sub-columns for coordinated layout and unified style. The channel features clear themes, rich content, and well-structured presentation, demonstrating integrated convergence.

The Top News channel prominently displays daily news, typically featuring important stories as top stories with large focal images. Other text, video, and live content are arranged according to news value and international attention. The app has also strengthened key channels including China, World, U.S., Photo, and Cartoon, selecting important stories to feature at the top based on daily reporting priorities while maintaining chronological order for other news.

2.2 Content-Technology Integration: “Dual-Wheel Drive” for Quality Production

Xinhua's English app actively embraces technological transformation, promoting tight integration between content and technology to create “chemical reactions” that make reporting more “dazzling” and “trendy.” Leveraging big data, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence, the app provides more convenient and user-friendly news services for global audiences. In recent years, it has produced numerous converged reporting products with influence both domestically and internationally, utilizing VR, AR, and XR technologies that have received high praise from users and media professionals worldwide.

3. Innovative Practices in Two Sessions Coverage

3.1.1 Thematic Coverage and Timeline Features with Distinctive Focus

Covering the Two Sessions represents an important measure for studying, publicizing, and implementing Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, thoroughly implementing the spirit of the 20th Party Congress, and advancing high-quality content construction. Xinhua's English app firmly grasped the task of promoting Xi Jinping Thought, closely followed the spirit of the 20th Party Congress, and presented magnificent panoramas of the new era through multimedia formats.

During the 2023 Two Sessions, Xinhua's English app proactively set the agenda by launching a special coverage topic. Procedural reporting adopted a “text livestream” format, maintaining accuracy and timeliness while leading international public opinion. The app promptly issued breaking news and updates on opening and closing ceremonies, plenary sessions, and presidium meetings, flawlessly completing authorized releases to ensure procedural reporting was both fast and accurate.

On March 5, 2023, the First Session of the 14th National People's Congress

opened at the Great Hall of the People. Xinhua’s English app closely followed the meeting agenda, providing timely, in-depth, and comprehensive coverage of the proceedings with authoritative interpretation. With leading push notification speed, the app created dynamic, updated timelines highlighting key points. From the opening ceremony to live excerpts of the government work report, the coverage was rich and distinctive. Through integrated reporting combining text, images, video, and livestreaming, the app comprehensively presented the opening ceremony, fully demonstrating the unique advantages of “Xinhua on mobile.”

3.1.2 “Content + Technology + Inspiration + Aesthetics” for Converged Reporting

Adhering to the principles of content as king, technology as guide, creativity as forerunner, and aesthetics as value-added, Xinhua’s English app concentrated on producing a batch of high-quality converged media products that presented the “Two Sessions on mobile.” Through the “dual-wheel drive” of content and technology and the “dual enhancement” of inspiration and aesthetics, the converged reporting shocked and inspired audiences with grand narratives and aesthetic appeal.

The special topic “2023 Two Sessions” aggregated Xinhua’s text, photo, video, and live coverage, featuring sub-sections including Highlights, In-depth, Opinion, Photos, and Video for categorized display. The app continuously optimized focal images, list images, and in-article illustrations for the Two Sessions coverage, improving image-text compatibility and page aesthetics while ensuring publication security. Using a “rolling broadcast” format to aggregate and push important stories, the app achieved fragmented, integrated dissemination of dispatches, significantly increasing average page views for key stories compared to single-story pushes.

On March 3, 2023, on the eve of the Two Sessions, Xinhua’s English app released the converged media report “The Voice of 1.4 Billion People,” carefully selecting voices from 14 ordinary citizens across various sectors to gather the expectations of 1.4 billion Chinese people for the future. The product innovated expression through “pictorial language,” transforming grand narratives into highly readable, aesthetically rich converged media products according to the “content + technology + inspiration + aesthetics” principle. Applying naked-eye 3D technology to Two Sessions coverage, the dynamic visual treatment presented audiences with realistic three-dimensional scenes, achieving innovative expression and effective external communication results.

The video conveyed emotion through sound, combining themes of economic development, rural revitalization, and cultural inheritance to let audiences feel China’s development pulse through people’s voices. Using sound to drive visuals and creativity to capture audience attention, the report strengthened emotional presets and created immersive experiences through background music.

3.2 Targeting Overseas Audiences with Precision

Seizing the opportunity of Two Sessions coverage, Xinhua’s English app leveraged internal-external coordination to fully utilize Xinhua’s overseas resources. Grounded in its terminal positioning, the app told China’s story and the Two Sessions story well. By focusing on overseas concerns and strengthening agenda-setting, it reflected international society’s high attention and positive evaluation of China’s Two Sessions from multiple angles, serving as the “chief narrator” of China stories.

On March 4, 2023, Xinhua’s English app produced the animated product “Ten Perspectives to Understand Chinese Modernization,” comprehensively interpreting the core connotations of Chinese modernization from ten dimensions including high-quality development, high-level opening-up, harmonious coexistence between humans and nature, common prosperity, and cultural confidence.

The same day, the app used the Explainer format to report on the CPPCC’s “sectors” and the newly established environment and resources sector for 2023. Through a lively Q&A format and accessible writing style, it introduced hot topics to overseas audiences, explaining Chinese political common sense and effectively responding to overseas concerns, creating a favorable public opinion atmosphere for the successful convening of the Two Sessions.

3.3 Technology-Enabled Media Convergence for Discourse Innovation

Xinhua’s English app coverage of the Two Sessions featured not only solid content design but also “cool” visual expression. Technology empowerment combined powerful facts with flexible expression, telling the story of China’s Two Sessions to overseas audiences and demonstrating China’s confidence in high-quality economic development and its determination to continue expanding opening-up.

Before the 2023 Two Sessions, the app released the animated short “Getting to Know China’s ‘Two Sessions’ ” in 3D animation form, vividly explaining the importance of China’s Two Sessions to overseas audiences and introducing the selection process and work responsibilities of NPC deputies and CPPCC members in a more lively, engaging way that interprets China’s whole-process people’s democracy.

The animation employed an entirely new production workflow. Using multiple software tools, it utilized 3DMAX and BLENDER for three-dimensional modeling, Unreal Engine for animation and rendering, and After Effects for post-production output. This exploration changed the traditional shortcomings of 3D animation—long rendering times and high modification costs—significantly reducing rendering time while maintaining image precision, enabling fast and efficient overall animation modifications.

Technology-enabled media convergence reporting, using new technologies to produce news products and comprehensively applying all-media methods, popular

language, and artistic expression forms, enhances the expressiveness and appeal of international communication and external reporting.

3.4 International Discourse Interpretation and Cross-Cultural Consensus Building

In the 2023 Two Sessions coverage, Xinhua’s English app focused on key topics, emphasized discourse transformation, and launched converged reports responding to overseas public opinion concerns, vividly illustrating China’s positions, solutions, and achievements, and interpreting new paths of Chinese modernization from different perspectives.

The app prominently featured the “ ‘Foreign Correspondents’ on the Two Sessions” series, which broke down communication barriers through international interpretation, outlined the development blueprint of Chinese modernization, and presented vivid practices of China’s whole-process people’s democracy through “foreign eyes” and “foreign voices,” objectively guiding positive public opinion through Sino-foreign viewpoint exchanges.

On March 9, 2023, the app published the original Two Sessions explainer “Explainer | China’s Economic Growth Target 2023,” interpreting why China’s 2023 economic growth target was set at 5%. Following the release of the government work report, overseas media and experts paid close attention to China’s latest development goals. The report used the economic growth target as an entry point, interpreting the rationality of the target from perspectives of high-quality development, risk and resilience, pragmatism and confidence, further explaining China’s economic development strategy and planning, and promptly and precisely responding to overseas concerns.

Xinhua’s English app focused on explaining the significant differences between Chinese and Western democracy through accessible approaches, elucidating the institutional advantages of whole-process people’s democracy in simple terms, and fulfilling its role as the main force in the Party’s news and public opinion work.

4. Recommendations for Mainstream Media Using English Apps in International Communication

4.1 Building Integrated International Communication Platforms

English apps are crucial terminals for mainstream media international communication. Their development resonates with the advancement of international communication and external reporting. As China’s national strength increases and its international influence grows, the communication power of Chinese mainstream media English apps will consequently improve.

Currently, gaps remain between Chinese mainstream media English apps and Western mainstream media with English as their native language. The relative

weakness of Chinese discourse has long placed China's image at a disadvantage in international society. Chinese mainstream media need to proactively build integrated international communication platforms, actively gathering content, talent, and channel resources for international communication, and work hard to transform content advantages, talent advantages, and channel advantages into communication advantages.

The 2023 Two Sessions coverage fully demonstrated the reporting advantages of "Xinhua on mobile," presenting to the world a panoramic view of Chinese modernization during the "Two Sessions time." Through agenda-setting, highlighting main themes, and emphasizing converged media strengths, the app achieved discourse innovation in international communication and effectively voiced China's positions.

4.2 Leveraging Social Media to Enhance Interaction

Currently, many mainstream media still suffer from poor audience interactivity, outdated interaction methods, insufficient communication closeness, and unimproved audience attention. Audience participation has not been fully mobilized in enhancing mainstream media communication power. Encouraging audience participation and expression of views helps improve mainstream media international communication capacity.

Chinese mainstream media can attempt to utilize social media platforms by establishing user zones and training users in media literacy, encouraging domestic and overseas audiences to upload self-collected multimedia news materials and reporting clues, with clarification that such materials may be authorized for use in daily news reporting.

Social media has become a new public opinion field. Mainstream media should transform communication thinking, skillfully use social media to identify audience empathy points, enhance user interaction and participation, and shift focus from communication "channels" to communication "effects."

4.3 "Borrowing Mouths" and "Borrowing Boats" for Effective International Outreach

"Borrowing mouths" is an effective international communication method. Actively mobilizing and leveraging the role of foreign staff in exploring new converged media production models and integrating "foreign mouths" personalized expression into news product creation can narrow the distance between overseas audiences and China, effectively enhancing acceptance and communication effectiveness.

The " 'Foreign Correspondents' on the Two Sessions" series precisely targeted audiences unfamiliar with China's Two Sessions. Through three foreign correspondents from the U.S., UK, and India, it used specific data to explain "What are China's Two Sessions?" , "What political role do they play in China?" , and

“What are the highlights this year?” , focusing overseas audiences’ attention on China’ s Two Sessions.

From the perspective of foreign correspondents’ personal experiences in observing China’ s new development, the series authentically demonstrated the characteristics and advantages of China’ s political system as reflected in the Two Sessions. Through their observations, feelings, thoughts, and words, the reports fully leveraged collective strength to present China’ s true face to overseas audiences.

In exchanges and cooperation with Chinese mainstream media, we should also skillfully use the voices of overseas media correspondents and international friends to tell China’ s story. Strengthening cultural exchanges with foreign media and conducting distinctive media cooperation presents a more authentic, multi-dimensional, and vivid China. “Borrowing mouths” better aligns with target audience interests and is more persuasive, accessible, and acceptable to them.

Meanwhile, mainstream media can also fully utilize overseas media and social platforms to “borrow boats for overseas voyages.” Collaborating with mobile phone brands, software providers, and app developers that already hold certain market shares and significant influence overseas can broaden thinking, integrate resources, and enhance the international communication capacity of English apps.

References

- [1] Zheng Baowei, Wang Qing. Current Status, Problems, and Countermeasures of China’ s International Communication [J]. Media Observer, 2021(8): 13-19, 2.
- [2] Tian Xiangning, Zeng Xiangmin. International Communication Platform Construction of China’ s Mainstream Media Under Media Convergence [J]. Chinese Editors, 2022(7): 23-28.
- [3] Ma Yuanyuan. Research on Paths and Strategies for Enhancing International Public Opinion Guidance by Mainstream Media for External Publicity [J]. Journalism Lover, 2021(10): 26-29.
- [4] Shi Anbin, Liu Changyu. Conceptual Upgrading and Practical Innovation for Enhancing International Communication Power in the Converged Media Era [J]. News Front, 2021(20): 58-62.
- [5] Xie Anyue. Research on Strategies for Enhancing News Communication Power of Mainstream Media in the New Media Era [J]. China Media Technology, 2022(11): 67-70.

Author Information

Author: Tao Yiping (1989-), female, from Nanchang, Jiangxi, master’ s degree, editor. Research direction: new media.

(Corresponding Editor: Chen Xuguan)

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

Source: ChinaXiv –Machine translation. Verify with original.