

The Voice Reaching the World: Vocal Features and Authority Construction of Chinese Bilingual Anchors in Global Communication

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ABSTRACT

With the enhancement of China's international communication capacity, bilingual anchors, as key agents of communication, have increasingly become crucial forces in cross-cultural exchange and the presentation of national image. They not only fulfill the function of information transmission but also construct professionalism and authority through phonetic features and discourse strategies, thereby shaping audience acceptance and trust. This study investigates how bilingual anchors establish authority in international communication through voice, drawing on communication and linguistic theories to systematically examine their phonetic characteristics, communicative strategies, and cross-cultural adaptation. The findings indicate that Chinese bilingual anchors demonstrate diverse strategies in voice performance, discourse style, and intercultural communication. Such practices not only enhance the credibility of information but also open new pathways for the Chinese voice to reach the world.

KEYWORDS

Bilingual broadcasting; International communication; Phonetic features; Construction of authority; Cross-cultural exchange

1 Introduction

In recent years, as China's discourse power in the global communication landscape has steadily increased, the role of bilingual broadcasting and hosting has attracted growing attention. Whether in the international communication practices of official media or in the individual dissemination activities on new media platforms, bilingual anchors have provided strong support for cross-cultural exchange through their flexible switching between Chinese and English and their appropriate modes of expression. At the same time, bilingual broadcasting is not merely a process of language conversion; it is also a complex practice that involves vocal features, communicative discourse, cultural identity, and the construction of authority. This study aims to systematically examine the vocal characteristics and cross-cultural communication strategies of bilingual anchors, and to explore how they achieve a balance between authority and communicative effectiveness through their "voice."

2 The positioning of chinese bilingual anchors in the context of global communication

In the context of the restructuring of the global media landscape, the role of Chinese bilingual anchors is gradually moving beyond that of a single information transmitter to that of a bridge for cross-cultural communication. This chapter focuses on the positioning of bilingual anchors in the international arena, examining their functions in national image dissemination and in the competition for international discourse power. Compared with traditional monolingual broadcasting, bilingual anchors not only undertake the task of language translation but also construct and balance meaning within diverse cultural contexts. Therefore, this chapter explores the role of bilingual anchors from three dimensions—role definition, communication objectives, and international environment—in order to present a macro outline of how Chinese bilingual anchors reach the world.

2.1 The role of bilingual anchors in the international communication landscape

Within the constantly evolving global communication system, the role of Chinese bilingual anchors is not limited to transmitting information; they also act as "discursive spokespersons" for the national image. As international attention to China's discourse power grows, bilingual anchors enable audiences abroad to directly understand China's positions and viewpoints. Their work is not simply translation. Through precise language and appropriate vocal delivery, they transform abstract national narratives into perceptible and comprehensible sound images, thereby enhancing the acceptance of Chinese discourse in the international community^[1].

The value of bilingual anchors also lies in their role as "cultural interpreters." International audiences often lack a deep understanding of China's social and cultural contexts. Through bilingual expression and vocal adaptation, anchors can effectively reduce such barriers. For example, during CGTN's reports on China's anti-pandemic experience, anchors adopted a steady, clear, and approachable vocal style to render complex policy information into narrative logic that international audiences could easily comprehend. This capacity for discursive transformation makes bilingual anchors indispensable mediators in international communication^[2].

2.2 Media platforms and diverse communication needs

The positioning of Chinese bilingual anchors is closely tied to the platforms on which they operate. In traditional mainstream outlets such as CCTV and CGTN, anchors are often entrusted with a strong sense of authority and the function of representing national discourse. Their voices must convey solemnity and reliability. By contrast, on new media and social platforms such as Weibo, Bilibili, YouTube, and TikTok, bilingual anchors emphasize affinity and interactivity, adopting relaxed language and vocal styles to build rapport with cross-cultural audiences. This differentiation in communication needs requires anchors to develop the ability to flexibly adjust their vocal presentation.

For instance, the self-media blogger “Xiaopeng(Peng Yixuan)” frequently interacts with overseas followers in her vlogs by alternating between Chinese and English. Her vocal delivery remains clear and fluent while incorporating a light, upbeat tone and everyday speech rhythm, enabling her to effectively shorten the psychological distance with her audience in cross-cultural contexts. By contrast, CGTN anchors reporting on international conferences employ a more formal and solemn style. These differences in platform context and audience expectations highlight the flexibility required of bilingual anchors in diverse media environments.

2.3 National image construction and the extension of discourse power

Ultimately, the positioning of bilingual anchors in global communication points to the construction of national image and the extension of discourse power. A national image is not a single political symbol but rather a composite shaped through language, voice, expression, and interaction. Vocal features such as tonal stability, intonation control, and pausing techniques can subtly influence international audiences’ perceptions of China’s professionalism and credibility.

In terms of international communication effects, authority and affinity are not mutually exclusive but dimensions that must be balanced. In major international news coverage, anchors such as Dong Qian and Zou Yun employ stable and clear vocal styles to build the authority of China’s discourse. Meanwhile, in cultural variety programs or transnational youth exchange activities, anchors adopt a more relaxed and natural vocal style to highlight the openness and inclusiveness of Chinese culture. This dual combination of “authority” and “affinity” enables Chinese bilingual anchors to not only shape the national image but also expand the influence of Chinese discourse in the global communication arena.

3 Analysis of articulation, pronunciation, and voice production: vocal performance and communicative effectiveness of bilingual anchors

In the context of global communication, the voice production and vocalization of Chinese bilingual anchors has transcended its purely acoustic properties, evolving into a composite symbol that carries national image and cultural intention. The features of articulation and pronunciation are essentially a strategic process of symbolic encoding aimed at achieving cross-cultural understanding. This chapter systematically analyzes how bilingual anchors utilize voice production and vocalization, along with articulation and pronunciation, to effectively transmit cross-cultural information and construct an initial sense of authority, focusing on three dimensions: the normative and symbolic attributes of articulation, the strategic function of code-switching, and overall communicative effectiveness.

3.1 Normativity and symbolism of articulation: acoustic anchors of cultural identity

Articulation and vocalization, as essential components of spoken language, primarily serve to deliver semantic information clearly and accurately. For Chinese bilingual anchors, pronunciation normativity forms the foundation of credibility, reflected in precise control over the two linguistic systems. In Chinese, they must strictly adhere to Mandarin standards, ensuring correct initials, finals, and tones, with clear enunciation. In English, they are expected to meet the intelligibility standards of internationally recognized varieties (e. g., General American or Received Pronunciation), avoiding comprehension barriers caused by heavy accents. As Professor Zhao Lin emphasized in *The Art of Bilingual Broadcasting and Anchoring*, “Bilingual normativity is the fundamental prerequisite of bilingual broadcasting, requiring conformity in articulation, vocabulary, and grammar.” This implies that bilingual anchors must serve as exemplary executors of both language systems, with the clarity of their articulation and pronunciation itself directly reflecting professionalism and authority^[3].

At a deeper level, articulation and pronunciation serve as powerful symbols of cultural identity. Switching between the two linguistic systems is not merely a technical operation but an acoustic manifestation of cultural identity. Standardized Putonghua reflects adherence to and inheritance of the official national discourse system, while fluent and idiomatic English signals the ability and openness to engage in direct dialogue with the international community. Mastery of this dual vocal identity transforms the anchor’s voice into an audible symbol of “China’s position, international expression,” providing a credible interface for cross-cultural communication.

3.2 Strategic code-switching: information regulation and cognitive guidance

A core dynamic feature of bilingual broadcasting is code-switching, whose function extends beyond literal translation.

It operates as a sophisticated communication strategy to regulate information flow and guide audience cognition. Professor Zhao Lin from Communication university of China pointed out that advanced bilingual switching constitutes an “instantaneous bilingual transformation,” whose higher form involves inductive and progressive re-creation of information, facilitating immediate processing of domestic and international content, and enhancing the international competitiveness of the media ^[4]. This strategic approach is manifested in three ways: First, information layering. Anchors often present core facts and positions in one language (e.g., Chinese) to establish the framework, then switch to another language (e.g., English) for explanation, elaboration, or introduction of international perspectives, accommodating audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds. Second, emphasis reinforcement. During code-switching, anchors utilize suprasegmental features such as stress, pauses, and speech-rate variations to highlight key information across languages, ensuring that core messages are strengthened rather than diluted ^[5]. Third, cognitive load reduction. When presenting culture-specific items, anchors immediately provide explanatory switches. For example, after introducing The Targeted Poverty Alleviation in Chinese, they immediately explain its core mechanisms and objectives in English, constructing a cognitive scaffold for international audiences and reducing cross-cultural comprehension difficulties.

3.3 Overall communicative effectiveness of voice production and vocalization: unity of clarity, inclusiveness, and stability

Ultimately, the communicative value of voice production, vocalization, and articulation must be evaluated in terms of overall effectiveness, reflecting the unity of clarity, inclusiveness, and stability. Clarity is the technical foundation, requiring pure vocal quality, moderate pitch, and controlled speech rate to ensure accurate transmission of information. Inclusiveness represents a cultural strategy, realized through vocal warmth and affinity (e.g., moderate smile voice, warm timbre) and timely code-switching, creating an acoustic environment that welcomes diverse audiences and reduces psychological distance. Stability is the psychological key to constructing authority. It refers to an anchor’s ability to maintain steady voice production, pitch, and rhythm when delivering complex, urgent, or sensitive information, avoiding acoustic cues that may signal anxiety or uncertainty, such as breath irregularity, sudden pitch spikes, or uncontrolled tempo. CGTN anchor Zou Yun exemplifies this in international reporting. Her voice production and vocalization consistently convey calmness, composure, and firmness—a vocal manifestation of “unshaken composure even under pressure.” This enhances both the credibility of information and the perceived authority of the anchor. Such stability communicates to global audiences the image of China as a mature, responsible, and confident nation.

4 Constructing authority: voice production, articulation, and cross-cultural communication strategies of bilingual anchors

Authority is a critical factor for bilingual anchors to gain recognition in international communication. Its formation depends on the coordinated interaction of voice production and vocalization, articulation and pronunciation, and cross-cultural strategies. This chapter examines how anchors create a communicative image that balances professionalism and approachability through normative vocal practices and diverse discourse techniques. Authority does not stem solely from institutional endorsement; it also depends on the communicator’s expressiveness and adaptability in cross-cultural contexts. The discussion is structured along three dimensions: vocal performance, cross-cultural discourse strategies, and illustrative case analyses, revealing how bilingual anchors construct authority in complex communicative settings.

4.1 Vocal foundation of authority: integrated design of pitch, speech rate, and stress

Authority is not determined simply by “low timbre,” but emerges from the integrated perception of pitch contour, speech-rate density, stress, and rhythmic organization. In Chinese segments, standardized tones and clear syllable boundaries make information demarcation more precise; in English segments, appropriately elevated stress and extended duration of key words significantly enhance emphasis perception. Speech rate should be calibrated by “information density per unit time.” For factual content, a moderate or slightly slower rate, combined with perceivable pauses at paragraph boundaries, facilitates semantic packaging for cross-linguistic audiences. For breaking news or rolling reports, a moderate-to-fast rate conveys timeliness, while a narrower pitch range avoids emotional bias.

Timbre and resonance control provide a “physiological” stability reference. Combined resonance across the chest, oral, and head cavities enhances vocal richness and intelligibility, reducing distortion in remote connections or noisy environments. Psychoacoustic studies suggest that mid-to-low pitch and moderate speech rate evoke impressions of “stability and reliability,” and emotional vocal cues are perceptible across languages, providing theoretical support for the bilingual anchor’s “emotional modulation—rational orientation” strategy.

Practically, anchors can train a unified annotation system for stress, pause, and intonation: first designing stress and pause patterns in the Chinese script, then mapping them onto the English script for word-level, sentence-level, and information-level emphasis, achieving cross-code equivalence. Simultaneously, a pitch template of “descending at the end—stable mid-segment—rising at key points” guides audience attention and meaning construction.

4.2 Cross-cultural discourse strategies and multimodal coordination

Authority in cross-cultural contexts is shaped not only by voice but also by discourse strategies and multimodal alignment. The first strategy is “frame-first”: presenting positions and factual frameworks in Chinese, then explaining and extending in English, maintaining subjectivity while enhancing comprehensibility. The second is the “analogy—paraphrase—calibration” sequence: when explaining China-specific concepts, provide a cross-cultural analogy, semantic paraphrase, and boundary calibration to prevent misinterpretation. This sequence can be applied in small-scale speeches, live broadcasts, and documentary narration. The third is the dual-track terminology system: Chinese terms ensure policy and factual accuracy, while corresponding English terms or plain-language explanations serve audiences with different knowledge levels. The fourth is multimodal coordination: titles, lower-thirds, infographics, and subtitle translations should align with vocal stress points, creating consistency between “what is seen, heard, and understood.” For example, CGTN often highlights core topics in titles, lists key points visually, and synchronizes oral emphasis with on-screen cues, reducing cognitive load for cross-linguistic audiences. The fifth is posture and environment: camera framing, attire color, and background setup constitute “visual authority.” When visual and vocal signals align, audiences form more stable credibility judgments.

4.3 Integrated case pathways: complementary practices in official media and new media

Official media pathway: Anchors emphasize paragraph rhythm and key-word stress in articulation and pronunciation, and follow a “facts first, judgment later” discourse sequence to avoid cross-cultural misinterpretation. Typical scenarios include UN side events and multilateral climate dialogues, where anchors decompose complex issues into comprehensible logic chains with synchronized on-screen data and keywords, mutually reinforcing credibility through voice and visuals. Traditional news interview pathway: Taking Dong Qian’s hosting style in *Face to Face* as an example, authority does not rely on loud volume but emerges from the rhythm of “question—clarification—silence”: lowering volume and speech rate at key points, extending pauses, and concluding sentences with falling intonation guide audiences to refocus on facts and responsibility. This rhythm aligns with international norms emphasizing “evidence first, orderly reasoning,” providing a clear native-language logic framework for English-language elaboration.

New media pathway: In Xiaopeng (Peng Yixuan)’s bilingual Vlogs, the strategy emphasizes “approachable authority.” Vocally, she uses higher-frequency smile voice features and flexible speech rates; discursively, she employs narrative storytelling and situational demonstration to reduce unfamiliarity; multimodally, captions, sketches, and pinned comments create an interactive explanatory loop. Practice shows that a stable cycle of “explanation—interaction—re-explanation” maintains approachability without diminishing authority, particularly for young or non-specialist international audiences. These three pathways are not mutually exclusive. With technological and platform integration, official and new media are forming a “topic guidance—social diffusion—re-agenda-setting” cycle: official media provides reliable information and framing, while new media disseminates and explains across audiences, with cross-platform coordination and personnel exchange facilitating mutual learning and co-construction of voice strategies.

5 Conclusions

This study analyzes the articulation, pronunciation, voice production, and vocalization of Chinese bilingual anchors in international communication, highlighting the central role of voice in cross-cultural transmission. From official media anchors such as Dong Qian, Zou Yun, and Zhong Shi, to new media practitioners like Xiaopeng Peng Yixuan, bilingual anchors exhibit diverse approaches in vocal expression and discourse strategies.

They enhance the credibility of communication through their voice and balance authority with approachability via cross-cultural adaptation. These multifaceted practices collectively promote the rise of the “Chinese voice” in the global communicative landscape, providing valuable insights and practical experience for constructing a discourse system with greater international influence.

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