

BREAKING THE STEREOTYPES, INTRODUCING CHINA WITH NEW LABELS

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Abstract: *Nowadays Eastern Europe and China are having more and deeper cooperation in all terms. However, due to our methods of introducing China, the Eastern Europeans still don't know much about the real modern China. In order to break the stereotypes, the Confucius Institute is supposed to be the starter to try introducing China with new labels.*

Keywords: *Stereotypes, New Facts, Old Labels, Confucius Institute of Veliko Tarnovo University.*

It's universally acknowledged that, benefited from the "One Belt – One Road" program, Eastern Europe and China have never been closer in all terms. In order to have better cooperation with each other, we have to know our partner better. We can't deny that we actually still have an army of stereotypes and misunderstandings between each other, which gave us the reason to think about the new idea of multi-cultural communication.

Examples of Stereotypes or old labels among China and Chinese

Many Chinese who live, work or study abroad have complained that they are always hearing international people's saying "You are so different from Chinese", or "You are not typical Chinese," especially to their good behavior. They also came up with a lot of other stereotypes which were found in their daily life. Here are some of the examples:

1. Chinese worship the evil dragon. The fact is, there are a lot of differences between the Chinese dragon and the Western dragon in terms of their looks and their character.

2. Chinese are born to be able to do Kong Fu and Tai Ji. Even many female Chinese teachers were asked by their students of teaching Kong Fu. A German university even built a square ground for Chinese students to practice Kong Fu and Tai Ji while confused why never any Chinese went and did so. However, this fact actually reminds us Chinese to pay more efforts on our traditional skills.

3. China is in poverty but Chinese people are rich. Many international people are still asking questions on the internet like "Is there any refrigerators

in China?”, “Can Chinese afford to use fans? Can they afford to eat beef?” At the same moment the Chinese are very likely to become the target of stealing because it’s believed that they carry a lot of cards and cash. The fact is, contributed by the progress China has made during the thirty years, it’s so convenient to live a modern Chinese life.

4. ”Made in China” products are still regarded as cheap and bad quality. This is because the consumers are still choosing the cheapest products from China. Nowadays we don’t depress the price of our products because the good quality Chinese products also deserve a fair price.

5. Chinese are Buddhists like all the other Asians. The religion is far not a concern of the Chinese life and Chinese society. According to the survey of a Chinese researching and consulting firm, only 18% of the Chinese population has the acceptance of Buddhism, no more than 20% of them, which means around 3% of the whole Chinese population is real Buddhist.

Not all those stereotypes above are bad, but they did come from some fancied media and pass through generations. Besides, there are some old labels on China, such as the Great Wall, the panda, Spring Festival, Beijing Opera, Calligraphy etc., which had non-negligible effect at the beginning of the diplomacy. From those we can see that the labels and stereotypes are not supposed to be blamed, they are even good under particular circumstances as an easy way for people to know a strange foreign country quickly. However, they no longer play an important role in all Chinese’s life. It’s not difficult to understand the point, those items, traditional art and skills are not a necessary part of ordinary Chinese’s life, which means that sometimes we actually seem to show and teach something to make our students to be “Chinese Plus”. It’s true necessary to show the traditional arts and skills, but it’s more important to show a modern and daily China.

New Facts and Key Words of Modern Chinese life

This year, China came up with a survey result about the key words of “What do International Students think about China”. Here are the top twelve keywords:

We can see that 5 of them (One Belt One Road, Square Dance, Share Bikes, High-Speed Railway, Mobile Payment) are new points for most of the Europeans, 9 of them (all above, except Panda, The Great Wall and Beijing Opera) are submitted from the real life and experience of the international students in China, only 3 of them are mentioned from the very beginning of diplomacy (Panda, The Great Wall and Beijing Opera).

- **One Belt One Road**
- **Panda**
- **Square Dance**
- **Chinese Food**
- **The Great Wall**
- **Share Bikes**
- **Beijing Opera**
- **Air Pollution**
- **The Attractive Countryside**
- **Food Security**
- **High-speed Rail**
- **Mobile Payment**

Not only did the result prove that some of the labels are not stereotypes, but also reveal that those who never visited China cannot believe in their previous knowledge about China. For example, if you have been to China, you are very likely to have tried the high-speed rail which can move more than 300km/h. If you have been to China, you are very likely to have seen that the elder and senior Chinese are much healthier than you thought, most of those start their happy new life for them own in their late fifties or early sixties with traveling, morning exercising and square dancing, studying in the Colleges or babysitting their grandchildren. If you have been to China, you may have seen people riding yellow or orange bicycles everywhere, because those sharing bikes cost several cents of money or sometimes even free. If you have been to China, you may have tried ordering all kinds of delicious food online at home, even including soup, porridge, steak, barbecue and ice-cream. It takes only thirty minutes to be delivered to you. For those who are thinking of visiting China but still worrying about surviving, we would say, welcome to modern life.

The Adjustment We Need in Multi-cultural Communication

The result above reminds us Chinese who work abroad to think again about the proper way of introducing a real China to the international friends. In Confucius Institutes, we provide plenty of cultural activities, most of which are based on some traditional art and skills. But we actually don't make Chinese knots at home and don't study calligraphy or Kong Fu as a required course. Since there is still a gap between the Chinese we are and the Chinese that are known by the world, there are some imperative adjustments we need. We have submitted them up as three "To do and not to do":

1. To focus more on the new facts
Not to rely on the old prides
2. To show the true Chinese items
Not to show the things in tales

3. To make things more acceptable and experiential Not to make things humdrum

Not only can we follow the traditional or previous ways to introduce China, we also have variety of tools such as products and multi-media. We are not always supposed to focus on the heritage from the ancient era. Instead, we are expected to make things more acceptable. And the Chinese Culture is not only the Confucianism, but also the Chinese idea and manner about life. Confucianism and traditional items are the first labels and carriers of China. Now it's time to come up with some new labels and carriers to make China less mysterious and more approachable.

We still have a lot to do to make Confucius Institute a better window of China. And we are also looking forward to have more international people to try forgetting the impression of China which came from the media or elder generations and start to get in touch with the Chinese who live in your city, to see the real features they have. We believe that a new China that beyond people's expectation will be found through the truly communicating.

Summary

In a nutshell, we, the crew of Confucius Institute, are here to be the sample of China and Chinese, everything we do is to let the international people know better China. What we want to claim through this essay is that it's time to break a China in tales. It's true that calligraphy, Kong Fu, pandas and the Great Wall are the pride of China, but they are far not enough in nowadays international communication. They were once good samples of China, but they are getting less important in real Chinese life, which means they are becoming old labels or even stereotypes. Recently a great number of new facts have appeared and truly improved us and our lives, they are ready to be the new key words and new labels of China. Perhaps twenty years later, those new facts I mentioned will also become history or even new stereotypes which need to be break. Time flies, we can't always keep the previous impression among things, instead, we'd better hurry up and realize that so much things have happened without our notice.

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