

4 Fighting UNIT against the pandemic



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this unit, you'll be able to:

- ▶ distinguish between collectivism and individualism in cross-cultural communication;
- ▶ explain why some Western media publish biased reports on China's anti-pandemic policies;
- ▶ describe the whole picture of China's measures and achievements in fighting against the pandemic;
- ▶ tell the real China stories of fighting against the pandemic in international communication.



A cross-cultural view

SCENARIO *It is during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Li Qiang, a Chinese college student, is walking on campus and meets Jack, his American friend. Read the dialogue and answer the following questions.*

“

Li Qiang: Hi, Jack. How are you doing?

Jack: Not bad.

Li Qiang: Hey, why don't you wear your mask? The COVID-19 pandemic is taking a heavy toll around the world.

Jack: Come on (*laughing*). I'm not ill. Why should I wear a mask when I can barely breathe with it?

Li Qiang: But the mask can help protect you from catching the disease!

Jack: I'm working out and cleaning my hands regularly. These really help me. You see, I'm perfectly fine.

Li Qiang: But (*worried*) ... don't you hear about the grim situation? You'd better put your mask on.

Jack: Everything is OK. Don't make a fuss about it.

Li Qiang: Anyway, wearing a mask during the pandemic is not just for yourself, but also for others, including your family and friends.

Jack: Ah, thank you, man. Maybe I will consider it.

”

Questions

1. What are the two people talking about?
2. Why do they disagree with each other?

CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING



Collectivism vs. individualism

Basically, the different attitudes toward wearing masks reflect two different cultural values: collectivism and individualism. People from a collectivist culture tend to view themselves as group members, and consider that group needs

are more important than individual needs. People from an individualist culture tend to think they are independent of others, and their individual needs are emphasized. Here is a brief comparison between the two cultural values.

Collectivism	Individualism
Interdependence vs. Independence	
Offering help to group members and expecting help from the group.	Depending on oneself as much as possible.
Collective interests vs. Personal interests	
Putting collective interests before personal interests.	Considering personal interests more important than collective interests.
Collective responsibility vs. Personal responsibility	
Generally feeling more responsible for the group; caring more about what group members do.	Taking credit and responsibility for what they have personally done.

Understanding

1 Decide whether the following statements are true or false. Write “T” for true and “F” for false.

- (1) People from a collectivist culture tend to consider that group needs are more important than individual needs.
- (2) Ignoring the policy of keeping a distance and having big parties during the COVID-19 pandemic are considered individualistic.
- (3) People with collectivist values generally feel more responsible for the group.
- (4) People from an individualist culture have a preference for living together with many family members.
- (5) Collectivists tend to take credit for what they have personally done.

2 Find out the sentences with collectivist ideas and those with individualist ideas in the SCENARIO. Write them down.

Collectivist ideas
Individualist ideas

Online tutorial

*A mini-lecture
on cross-cultural
communication*



Watch the video to learn more about collectivism and individualism.



- 1 **ONLINE ACTIVITIES** Finish the comprehension task for details.
- 2 **CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES** Answer the following questions according to what you have learned.
 - (1) Besides China, are there any other countries that prefer collectivism?
 - (2) Can you find an example that embodies collectivism in your daily life?

CRITICAL THINKING



Work in pairs to discuss the following questions.

Suppose one of your college roommates is from the US. What cultural conflict might happen between you and him / her? How would you deal with it?

Western media perspectives

CASE STUDY



An empty street under the COVID-19 lockdown in Wuhan, China



An empty street under the COVID-19 lockdown in Rome, Italy

Similar lockdown policies

As is known, different cultural values (like collectivism and individualism) make China and the West respond differently to the COVID-19 pandemic. But when viewing the differences between China and Western countries in dealing with the pandemic, in addition to cultural values, there are other factors that need to be considered, especially in the field of journalism and communication. The Western media sometimes publish false reports on China's anti-pandemic policies. Here is an example.

To fight against COVID-19 effectively, many countries have strengthened their traffic control and quarantine policies in specific areas, known as "lockdown" policies. As a widely known mainstream media organization in the US, *The New York Times* reported and commented on China's lockdown policy on its official Twitter account on March 8, 2020 like this:

Only 20 minutes later, *The New York Times* reported and commented on Italy's lockdown policy on its Twitter account as follows:

The New York Times
@nytimes

BIASED

To fight the coronavirus, China placed nearly 60 million people under lockdown and instituted strict quarantine and travel restrictions for hundreds of millions of others. Its campaign has come at great cost to people's livelihoods and personal liberties.

nytimes.com

China May Be Beating the Coronavirus, at a Painful Cost

Beijing says its heavy-handed measures are working. Can other countries battling the outbreak learn from its efforts—or is the cure worse than the disease?

...

China, the place where it first appeared, says it has the answers.

...

And it has begun trying to promote its efforts as successful in propaganda at home and abroad.

...

FALSE

10:30 AM Mar 8, 2020

The New York Times
@nytimes

Breaking News: Italy is locking down Milan, Venice and much of its north, risking its economy in an effort to contain Europe's worst coronavirus outbreak.

nytimes.com

Italy Locks Down Much of the Country's North Over the Coronavirus

The restrictions affect Milan and the regions that serve as Italy's economic engine, and are the most sweeping measures outside China.

...

Italy's government early Sunday took the extraordinary step of locking down much of the country's north, restricting movement for about a quarter of the Italian population in regions that serve as the country's economic engine.

The move represents the most sweeping effort outside China to stop the spread of the coronavirus, and is tantamount to sacrificing the Italian economy in the short term to save it from the ravages of the virus in the long term.

...

10:50 AM Mar 8, 2020

Are these comments and reports objective and impartial? *The New York Times* prides itself on “giving the news impartially, without fear or favor, regardless of any party, sect or interest involved” and always claims to be “objective,” “impartial,” and “unbiased.”

Obviously, the lockdown policies of China and Italy are similar, but in these reports and comments, *The New York Times* criticized China’s lockdown policy as a “threat” to personal freedom and people’s livelihoods. Meanwhile, it complimented Italy’s lockdown policy as a sacrifice of itself to contain Europe’s coronavirus outbreak.

Words and expressions

quarantine /'kwɒrənti:n/ *n.* 隔离

mainstream /'meɪnstri:m/ *adj.* 主流的

coronavirus /kə'reʊnə'veɪrəs/ *n.* 冠状病毒

institute /'ɪnstɪtju:t/ *v.* 制定(制度、规则等)

livelihood /'laɪvli:hʊd/ *n.* 生计

propaganda /prə'pæ'gændə/ *n.* (政府或政党为了影响民意而进行的) 宣传(通常含贬义)

contain /kən'teɪn/ *v.* 控制; 抑制

sweeping /'swi:pɪŋ/ *adj.* 影响大的; 范围广的

be tantamount /'tæntəmaʊnt/ *to* (几乎) 等于, 无异于

ravages /rævɪdʒɪz/ *n.* (造成的) 破坏, 损害

impartial /ɪm'pɑ:ʃəl/ *adj.* 公正的

unbiased /ʌn'baɪəst/ *adj.* 无偏见的

Proper names

Milan /mɪ'læn/ 米兰(意大利北部城市)

Venice /'venɪs/ 威尼斯(意大利东北部城市)

Discussion

Work in pairs to discuss the following questions.

1. What’s wrong with *The New York Times*’ two sets of reports and comments?
2. Why did it report and comment differently on the two countries’ lockdown policies?

MEDIA LITERACY

Double standards

Obviously, *The New York Times* applied a double standard. A double standard is a rule or moral principle that is unfair because it is used in one situation, but not in another, or because it treats one group of people in a way that is different from the treatment of another. Then, how can we identify such double standards in media coverage? The answer is to figure out the publisher's different attitudes toward identical or similar facts.

In this case, *The New York Times* criticized China but praised Italy for basically identical measures: lockdown policies. In fact, both countries' lockdown policies were implemented for the same purpose: containing the pandemic effectively.

Besides, both countries' lockdown policies indeed brought some inconvenience to the people, but the inconvenience was temporary, and in the long run all the residents would benefit from the policies.

The different attitudes held by *The New York Times* had no valid reasons and so could not be justified. In reality, some Western media organizations often apply such double standards in their reports about China.

How to figure out such different attitudes? You can pay special attention to the use of language. In reporting and commenting on China's lockdown policy, *The New York Times* used such words and expressions as "heavy-handed measures," "propaganda," "first appeared," "at great cost" and "personal liberties."



After reading such words and expressions describing a country, would you get a positive impression of that country? Probably not.

“Heavy-handed” is an adjective with a disapproving connotation, meaning “not showing any understanding of the feelings of other people,” “using unnecessary force” or “using too much of something in a way that can cause damage.”

“Propaganda” typically means “ideas or statements that may be false” or “presenting only one side of an argument in order to gain support for a political party.” China’s sharing of its anti-pandemic experience with the world is not propaganda.

By saying China is the place where the virus “first appeared,” the report tended to make readers believe that the virus originated in China. In fact, China is the place where the virus was “first reported.” Many authoritative institutions and the academic community, such as the WHO and *Nature*, have repeatedly reiterated that where the virus was “first reported” has no direct relation with where the virus originated.

Such words and expressions as “at great cost” and “personal liberties” can also easily cause readers to think negatively about China.

On the contrary, the report and comment about Italy’s lockdown policy used such expressions as “sweeping measures,” “the extraordinary step,” “in an effort to,” etc. The places being shut down were described as “the country’s economic engine” and Italy’s decision, in the author’s opinion, was “sacrificing the Italian economy in the short term to save it from the ravages of the virus in the long term.” All these expressions led the readers to form positive judgments about Italy’s lockdown policy.

Why did *The New York Times* adopt a double standard in the reports and comments? These might be the most possible reasons: First, it wanted to satisfy its confirmation bias against China. Double standards are sometimes driven by confirmation bias, which causes the media to search for, interpret, and spread information in a way that confirms their preexisting beliefs or ideas. Second, it wanted to politicize the pandemic. By claiming that China’s necessary lockdown policy came “at great cost to people’s livelihoods and personal liberties” and China’s sharing of its anti-pandemic

experience with the world was a kind of “propaganda,” *The New York Times* politicized COVID-19. Third, it wanted to fulfill its sense of “superiority.” Praising a country which has similar systems and cultural values is a way to fulfill its sense of “superiority.”

Words and expressions

double standard *n.* 双重标准
 coverage /'kʌvərɪdʒ/ *n.* 新闻报道
 justify /'dʒʌstɪfaɪ/ *v.* 证明……有理
 originate /ə'ɪrɪdʒəneɪt/ *v.* 发源; 开始; 起源
 reiterate /ri:'ɪtəreɪt/ *v.* 重申
 confirmation bias 确认偏误, 证实偏差
 politicize /pə'lɪtɪsaɪz/ *v.* 使政治化
 fulfill /fʊl'fɪl/ *v.* 实现 (希望、愿望、目标等)

Proper names

Nature 《自然》(英国科学期刊)

Understanding

- 1 **ONLINE ACTIVITIES** Practice reading for details.
- 2 **CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES** Answer the following questions according to what you have learned.
 - (1) What is a double standard?
 - (2) How can we identify the use of double standards in news reports?
 - (3) Why did *The New York Times* adopt a double standard in the reports and comments on China's and Italy's lockdown policies?

Language in use

- 1 **ONLINE ACTIVITIES** Learn to use the words from the text.
- 2 **CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES** Review the summary of the biased language used in the reports and comments, and then finish the task.

Words and expressions *The New York Times* used in reporting and commenting on **China's** lockdown policy

heavy-handed measures	strict
propaganda	at great cost
first appeared	personal liberties

Words and expressions *The New York Times* used in reporting and commenting on **Italy's** lockdown policy

the extraordinary step	sacrificing the Italian economy
sweeping effort	save
in an effort to	economic engine

The following sentences are extracted from some Western media reports about COVID-19. Spot the words and expressions implying possible bias against China, and explain why they are biased.

- (1) To the surprise of some, the country that concealed and mismanaged the initial outbreak appears to be bringing it under control, at least by its own official figures. (*The New York Times*)
- (2) Around the world people are getting used to post-lockdown life with vaccines ... In China however, a hard elimination policy remains where the pandemic first began. (*BBC News*)
- (3) Hundreds of thousands of people in China did not get COVID-19 because of this aggressive response. (*Science*)

Online tutorial

A mini-lecture
on international
communication



You have now got a general idea of why *The New York Times* adopted a double standard in the reports and comments. But what are the specific motives for and intentions of doing so? How can we take a look at the case from a cross-cultural perspective? Now let's watch a video to find out the answers.



- 1 **ONLINE ACTIVITIES** Finish the comprehension task for details.
- 2 **CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES** Answer the following questions according to what you have learned.
 - (1) What are the consequences of the double standard used by *The New York Times* in the reports and comments on China's and Italy's lockdown policies?
 - (2) Viewing from a cross-cultural perspective, why do you think *The New York Times* adopted a double standard?

CRITICAL THINKING



Work in groups to discuss the following question.

As is pointed out in the mini-lecture, some foreign officials distorted China's assistance to many countries as "mask diplomacy," accusing China of expanding global influence during the pandemic. Another similar accusation is "vaccine diplomacy." If you were a diplomat, how would you refute such accusations?

Real China

CHINESE MEDIA INSIGHTS

The whole nation fights as one



Now that some Western media organizations like *The New York Times* distorted China's efforts to battle COVID-19, then how can the Chinese media respond and tell China's anti-pandemic stories accordingly? Let's watch a short video called "The whole nation fights as one" from the program *China in Words* launched by *China Daily*, and learn how it tells China stories.



Discussion

Work in pairs to discuss the following questions.

1. What does "the whole nation fights as one" mean? Can you give some examples?
2. How does the program *China in Words* provide a good way of telling China stories in international communication?

REAL CHINA STORIES

China's achievements and experience in fighting against the pandemic

The program *China in Words* sets a good example of telling China's anti-pandemic stories in international communication. Each episode of the program introduces one Chinese buzzword to explain China's practices, policies, as well as the development and changes of Chinese society to overseas netizens. The short video is much easier to understand compared with a long lecture. Besides, with the use of stop motion, the storytelling is more vivid and interesting. Therefore, to tell China's anti-pandemic stories well in international communication, it is crucial to use a vivid and well-accepted method. More importantly, it is necessary to have a comprehensive understanding of the stories. For instance, what has China achieved in containing the pandemic? Why could China make the achievements?

What has China achieved in containing the pandemic?

China has made many achievements in containing the pandemic, and the following are some of the most prominent ones.

First, China responded promptly, and successfully curbed the spread of the

virus by greatly reducing domestic cases. Then a dynamic zero-case policy was implemented throughout the country, helping to make the situation under full control. China has been considered one of the safest countries in the world in this regard.

Second, China has made some successful scientific research into the virus in order to control it. Chinese scientists identified and isolated the first new coronavirus strain, and shared the information about the whole genomic sequences of the virus with the world immediately. Also, China has developed vaccines and medicines efficiently. The development cycle of COVID-19 vaccines was much shorter than that of traditional vaccines.

Third, China has made great contributions to the global community in fighting against the pandemic. For example, as is mentioned above, China has always been sharing its latest information and experience, which helps the whole world to battle the virus more scientifically and efficiently. Also, China has offered wide-ranging emergency humanitarian assistance to many countries.



Fourth, China restarted its economy quickly and became the first major economy in the world to return to growth after the outbreak of the pandemic. The efficient anti-pandemic measures ensured the stable economic performance: China reached a GDP growth of 2.2% in 2020, and 8.1% in 2021. No other country made such remarkable achievements during the same period.

Why could China make such achievements in fighting against the pandemic?

All these achievements have gained recognition both at home and abroad, even though some Westerners tried to distort the facts. So, why could China make such achievements confronting the huge challenges of the pandemic?

Firstly, the Chinese government has been very efficient in dealing with the disease. It allocated resources with high efficiency

across the country, giving top priority to people's lives and health. In addition, it has established a well-coordinated prevention, control and treatment system, making it possible to win the war against the virus.

Secondly, with a collectivist culture, the Chinese people united as one to contain the pandemic. All citizens shared the responsibility for the fate of their country. Medical workers rose to the challenge; community workers, officials, police, customs officers as well as the general public all worked hard and devoted themselves to fighting the war.

Under such circumstances, China has achieved a heroic feat in mankind's fight against the disease by securing major strategic achievements. It is necessary for us to refute the distorted Western reports and share China's real anti-pandemic stories in international communication.

Words and expressions

buzzword /'bʌzwɜːd/ *n.* 时髦术语, 流行术语

stop motion 定格动画 (逐格拍摄平面图画或立体物体, 使它产生运动幻觉的一种拍摄手法)

dynamic zero-case policy 动态清零政策

strain /streɪn/ *n.* 类型, 品种

coronavirus strain 冠状病毒毒株

genomic /dʒiː'nəʊmɪk/ **sequence** 基因组序列

humanitarian /hjuː'mænə'teəriən/ *adj.* 人道主义的

allocate /'æləkeɪt/ *v.* 分配, 配给

heroic /hɪ'rəʊɪk/ *adj.* 英雄的, 英勇的

feat /fi:t/ *n.* 业绩, 功绩, 壮举

Understanding

- 1 **ONLINE ACTIVITIES** Practice reading for details.
- 2 **CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES** Answer the following questions according to what you have learned.
 - (1) Why has China been considered one of the safest countries in the world during the pandemic?
 - (2) Why do you think the Chinese people could unite as one to fight against the pandemic?

Language in use

- 1 **ONLINE ACTIVITIES** Expand your vocabulary.
- 2 **ONLINE ACTIVITIES** Translate and record.

Online tutorial

*A mini-lecture
on international
communication*



You have now got a general idea of why China could make the achievements in fighting against the COVID-19 pandemic. Actually, there are various reasons behind these achievements. Now let's watch a video to learn more about them.



- 1 **ONLINE ACTIVITIES** Finish the comprehension task for details.
- 2 **CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES** Answer the following question according to what you have learned.

What did the Chinese government do to ensure that people's lives and health are made the first priority?

CRITICAL THINKING



Work in pairs to discuss the following questions.

Can you give a specific example to illustrate that the Chinese people united together to contain the pandemic? How does the example reflect China's collectivist culture?

Tell your China stories

During the COVID-19 pandemic, China has provided a huge number of vaccine doses to many countries. However, some Westerners distorted China's assistance to those countries as "vaccine diplomacy," accusing China of expanding global influence during the pandemic. Make a short video to analyze and refute this groundless accusation, and release your video on a social media platform. You may follow the steps to complete this task.



Step 1

Review

Review what you have learned in the unit. Think about in what way the knowledge can be used to help you finish this task.

A cross-cultural view	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distinguish between collectivist and individualist cultures
Western media perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify the double standards applied by biased media• Analyze the bias against China in some Western reports
Real China	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Get the whole picture of China's achievements in containing the pandemic• Understand why China could make such achievements

Step 2 Research and discuss

Work in groups to search for more information about the groundless accusation of “vaccine diplomacy.” Discuss and find out the underlying reasons and think about how to refute the accusation based on facts. Fill in the table below.

Underlying reasons (including a cross-cultural perspective)	Refutations based on facts
1.	
2.	
3.	
...	

Step 3 Draft and present

Work with group members to draft the script for your group video. Then choose one member to present it to the whole class.

Step 4 Revise and upload

Based on the teacher’s feedback, revise the script of your group video. Make the video individually after class, and then upload it onto Ucampus and a social media platform.