
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Translation of Traditional Chinese Crafts Culture in the New Media Environment: A Case Study of Subtitle Translation in Li Ziqi's YouTube Short Videos

Yueyue You

School of Foreign Languages, Southwest Jiaotong University, Chengdu, Sichuan, 611654, China

Corresponding Author: Yueyue You, **E-mail:** youyueyue179@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Nowadays, the subjects of external communication are increasingly diversified, and China's new media forms of external communication are rich and varied. In contrast to the authoritative narrative style and tone of official media, short videos have emerged as an important medium for international communication in the new era. With characteristics such as fragmented content, entertainment value, popularity, and colloquial language, they have achieved significant dissemination effects on global social media platforms like YouTube. Therefore, more and more unofficial self-media figures are attempting to share unique Chinese stories and culture through short videos on YouTube, and Li Ziqi is one of them. Li Ziqi has amassed 17.6 million subscribers on YouTube, with a total of 128 videos published and over 2.9 billion views at the time of data collection (2023.07.02). Her short videos showcase her leisurely daily life in natural landscapes, diverse culinary culture, and traditional Chinese crafts culture, among other aspects of traditional culture. At present, Li Ziqi's "Traditional Crafts" series has become one of the important platforms for the external dissemination of Chinese traditional craft culture. This study takes the translation of the subtitles in four short videos from Li Ziqi's "Traditional Crafts" series on the YouTube platform as the research object. From the perspective of the new media environment, it analyzes the external communication of traditional Chinese craft culture in the new era and provides a summary of reflections.

KEYWORDS

Craft Culture, Translation, New Media Environment, Li Ziqi, YouTube

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1. Introduction

On YouTube, Li Ziqi's videos are divided into 9 columns: Spring Scroll, Summer Scroll, Autumn Scroll, Winter Scroll, Traditional Crafts, Inheritance of Eastern Intangible Cultural Heritage, Flowering with Sound, and Eating with Festival and Timeliness. Her short videos mainly revolve around Chinese traditional culinary and crafts culture. For example, she uses her own hands to make various items, such as dyeing skirts with fresh grape juice, making lipsticks from her own grown roses, and foraging while riding a horse to find ingredients for exquisite dinners. Additionally, she showcases traditional Chinese craftsmanship, including soy sauce brewing, making bamboo furniture, and wax-dyeing clothing.

Her videos depict picturesque rural scenery with a distinctive artistic style and Eastern traditional imagery. The combination of classical background music and Li Ziqi's simple yet elegant ancient attire conveys China's profound culinary and crafts culture, satisfying people's yearning for inner tranquility and evoking empathy. Continuously captivating global fans who love Chinese culture, her videos serve as a genuine window to rediscover China, enabling a deeper understanding of its traditional culture and generating new insights into China and its heritage. As a result, it effectively spreads awareness of Chinese traditional crafts culture to the outside world.

2. Traditional crafts culture in the new media environment

2.1 New Media Environment

In today's globalized world, emerging forms of media are prevalent, and compared to traditional media, the new media environment allows for more diverse external communication. Information resources are richer, and the speed of dissemination is faster, making cultural transmission through video platforms more impactful (Tang, 2020).

Within the new media environment, YouTube serves as an international social media and video-sharing website with users from various countries, particularly attracting young audiences who are more receptive to fresh content and different cultures. With 17.6 million subscribers on YouTube, Li Ziqi undoubtedly possesses unique advantages in external communication (Tang, 2020). Additionally, short videos on YouTube cater to people's demand for fragmented media, providing innovative and emotionally appealing content. The combination of visuals and sounds makes the videos easy to share, catering to the fast-paced viewing habits of today's audience and facilitating better understanding and immersion in the content. Cultural transmission through video platforms also carries significant influence, devoid of official narratives, thus broadening acceptance while enhancing the audience's recognition and appreciation of traditional Chinese culture.

2.2 Definition and Classification of Traditional Crafts Culture

Traditional crafts culture is skillful labor involving creativity or design, using natural or artificial materials, relying on hands and other limbs, utilizing tools, and harnessing natural forces to produce practical or aesthetically functional items formed in history (Hua, 2021). Typically, traditional crafts culture has a history of over a hundred years and consists of complete craftsmanship processes. It serves as a carrier of history and culture. Over time and with advancements in science and technology, traditional crafts culture and its classification evolve, giving rise to new types of craft items.

According to relevant national regulations and recognition by intangible cultural heritage authorities, traditional crafts culture includes 15 major categories, such as traditional food processing techniques, weaving and dyeing, stationery production, and toolmaking.

2.3 Characteristics of Subtitle Translation in Short Videos

2.3.1 Colloquialism

Short videos are characterized by fragmented content, combining visuals and auditory elements. The subtitles are concise, straightforward, and easy to understand, as the audience's attention is focused on the video's content. The purpose of video subtitles is to help the audience better comprehend the video's content and the message the creator intends to convey. Therefore, the corresponding subtitle translation needs to be concise, refined, and colloquial, aiming to foster an understanding of the video's content and establish empathy between the audience and the creator.

In Li Ziqi's short videos, there are not many flowery words. The subtitles mainly include explanations and instructions about ingredients, materials, and the production process, along with a summary at the end. The translation of these subtitles is simple and not overly verbose. It succinctly conveys the core elements of the video colloquially, helping the audience understand the story and the cultural information being conveyed, thereby immersing them in Chinese culture.

2.3.2 Cultural Differences

As a means of cultural dissemination, short videos not only promote Chinese traditional culinary and crafts culture to the outside world but also carry and inherit the cultural concepts of the nation and local culture. Different countries have varying cultural backgrounds and connotations. Therefore, when translating, cultural differences between China and other countries should be fully considered.

Respecting both cultures while maintaining one's unique cultural identity, specific style, and established behavioral norms is crucial. In different contexts and in the face of cultural clashes resulting from cultural differences, it is essential to use the corresponding extended meanings of words and sentences. This approach helps avoid misunderstandings and mistakes caused by cultural disparities, thus effectively conveying the intended meanings of the vocabulary.

3. Case Study

In Li Ziqi's short videos, she presents a picturesque and mysterious rural lifestyle with an oriental poetic touch, conveying traditional Chinese culinary, craft, and folk culture. The videos subtly depict the spiritual world of the Chinese people and showcase distinct cultural differences. Consequently, the translation of the video subtitles encounters inevitable challenges due to the language characteristics and cultural nuances. The subtitles need to be concise, clear, and accurate, avoiding any potential misunderstandings caused by language and cultural gaps.

Through the enchanting visuals and melodious classical music, the unique Eastern temperament and the nostalgic lifestyle, as well as traditional cultural elements such as food, customs, and craftsmanship, are effectively portrayed. With appropriate, comprehensive, and precise subtitle translations, China's traditional culture can be more quickly disseminated to the world, sharing the precious spiritual essence of those traditional cultures that have influenced the world. Isn't this precisely about telling our own Chinese story?

Li Ziqi takes a rational approach to understanding the essence of subtitle translation in her videos, utilizing creatively translated English subtitles to establish an imaginative space between the short videos and foreign viewers, fostering intellectual exchange and dialogue.

The YouTube platform features Li Ziqi's "Traditional Crafts" section, where we can see data from four videos on their total views, likes, and comments (as of July 2, 2023). These videos have received substantial engagement, with the highest video reaching over 30 million views and receiving 490,000 likes and even the lowest one obtaining 140,000 likes. The videos also prompt active interactions through comments.

Title Chinese	English	Loading Time	Views	Likes (thousand)	评论数 (thousand)
蓝草的一生？ 蓝印花布的一生？ 还是李子柒花裙子的一生？	The life of blue calico dresses hand-dyed by Li Ziqi?	March 20, 2020	10,088,094	200	11
古老的东方蚕桑文化， 治愈每一个怕冷的人—— 蚕丝被	winter bedding from double-cocoon silk	October 17, 2018	30,267,474	490	21
千年民俗蕴服章之美， 蜀绣文化彰华夏礼仪	Shu Embroidery	August 9, 2019	21,094,226	460	21
千年长安千年纸， 原来最原始的纸张是 这样造出来的	Papermaking	November 18, 2017	10,304,142	140	6.8

In this study, four subtitle translations from four different videos will be selected as research objects, and the analysis will be conducted from both the language and cultural aspects in the context of the new media environment. The aim is to explore whether subtitle translations in Li Ziqi's short videos can further promote traditional Chinese crafts culture to "go global," tell compelling Chinese stories, bring Chinese traditional culture to the international stage, and resonate with a wider audience.

3.1 Indigo Dyeing

As an ancient printing and dyeing technique in China, indigo dyeing has a long history. Extracting the blue dye from the Polygonum plant to create the indigo dye, it is then used to color clothing and fabrics. Indigo dyeing holds profound significance as a traditional craft in China, reflecting the diligent labor of our ancient ancestors and serving as a precious intangible cultural heritage passed down through generations.

Example 1:

“青出于蓝，而胜于蓝”
从一颗蓼蓝种子到两次收割，

打靛、起缸、染布、做衣！
 蓝印花布蜡染这些老前辈们的手艺
 不知道还有多少人记得呢！

"Blue dye comes from the indigo plant but is even bluer."

Plant the indigo seeds and harvest twice a year,
 Squash the leaves in a tank of liquid, drain to extract the dye, hand print the cloth, and make it into clothes!
 Blue calico dyeing and batik printing are time-honored crafts handed down through generations.
 I wonder how many of you still remember them.

The first sentence uses an allusive rhetorical device, referencing the proverb "青出于蓝，而胜于蓝" from the book "Xunzi". It means that the indigo color comes from the indigo plant, but it is even bluer than the plant itself. The term "蓝" refers to the indigo plant, which is a natural source of indigo dye used for coloring and medicinal purposes. Indigo dyeing is an ancient Eastern craft that originated in China and falls under the category of printing and dyeing within traditional Chinese crafts culture. The direct translation "Blue dye comes from the indigo plant but is even bluer." remains faithful to the original text, follows language norms, and conveys the implicit message while retaining the cultural characteristics of the Chinese language.

The origin of Blue Calico Fabric (蓝印花布) can be traced back to the Qin and Han dynasties, flourishing during the prosperous Tang and Song periods. It is a traditional Chinese craft of printing and dyeing that has a history of 1,300 years. The third sentence, "打靛、起缸、染布、做衣！" outlines the general steps for making Blue Calico Fabric, which is translated in "Squash the leaves in a tank of liquid, drain to extract the dye, handprint the cloth, and make into clothes!", carefully explains each step of making Blue Calico Fabric, and the choice of verbs in the translation is appropriate, corresponding one-to-one with the original text. The production of Blue Calico Fabric typically involves four steps: "打靛" (Squash the leaves), "起缸" (Drain to extract the dye), "染布" (Handprint the cloth), and "做衣" (Make into clothes). Hence, the use of "and" in the sentence is fitting, representing the four steps of making Blue Calico Fabric.

The use of an allusive rhetorical device at the beginning enriches the expression subtly, introducing the ancient Chinese craft of Blue Calico Fabric. The translation directly presents the raw material "蓼蓝" (indigo) and its characteristics and value, indicating that it can be harvested twice a year. The full steps of making Blue Calico Fabric are also demonstrated, emphasizing that indigo dyeing or batik is a time-honored traditional craft in China. The last sentence in the original text is "不知道还有多少人记得呢！", translated as "I wonder how many of you still remember them." uses the second-person pronoun "you" to bridge the gap between the original author and the audience, increasing the emotional impact of the video. The message implies that Blue Calico Fabric or batik is a traditional Chinese crafts culture that all of us should remember. The art of indigo dyeing embodies the unique human feelings, thought processes, psychology, and values of certain ethnic groups, reflecting their cohesion and identity. It represents a simple character and aesthetic demand. Hence, it is worthwhile to pass down this thousand-year-old crafts culture and introduce this traditional craft to overseas audiences, showcasing its artistic effects and emotional significance (Hao, 2022).

3.2 Sichuan Embroidery

Sichuan embroidery, also known as Chuan embroidery, originated from the folk traditions in the western part of Sichuan province, and it is a representative of the traditional culture of the Sichuan region and a part of China's traditional crafts culture. Simultaneously, Li Ziqi's short videos have gained popularity among the public, making her the first ambassador for promoting Chengdu's intangible cultural heritage. At the 2019 Super Influencer Festival, Li Ziqi wore clothing embroidered by herself to promote the culture of Sichuan embroidery online.

Example2:

一针一线是底蕴，
 一丝一缕是文化
 在蜀绣上看见，川蜀大地千年风俗
 冬去春来，又是一年！
 千年岁月流淌，蜀绣之美依旧！
 愿更多人知道中国优秀的传统文化，
 迟到的七夕礼物，愿你我皆平安。

Weaving culture into every stitch
 Unveiling history with fine needlework
 Shu embroidery embodies the splendor of Sichuan tradition
 It gains extra charm with the test of thousands of years
 as another winter eases into spring
 May you savor the delicacy of Chinese culture in a piece of Shu embroidery

May you enjoy a belated Chinese Valentine's Day
May peace be with you

"Weaving culture into every stitch" and "Unveiling history with fine needlework" effectively capture the essence of Sichuan embroidery by skillfully incorporating cultural significance, artistic expression, and historical value into each stitch. The translation conveys the cultural, artistic, and historical aspects of Sichuan embroidery vividly and comprehensively.

"看见" in "在蜀绣上看见，川蜀大地千年风俗" is translated as "embodies". The use of "embodies" intends to convey that Sichuan embroidery symbolizes the essence of Sichuan's cultural heritage. Rooted in the traditional civilization of Ba-Shu, it carries the richness of culture and history as well as the strong spirit of the nation (Zhao, 2019). Sichuan embroidery serves as a witness to the cultural heritage and traditional crafts culture of the region.

"冬去春来，又是一年！千年岁月流淌，蜀绣之美依旧！" is translated as "It gains extra charm with the test of thousands of years, as another winter eases into spring." The translation retains the artistic mood and effectively conveys that despite the passage of time, the allure of Sichuan embroidery remains captivating. The use of "eases" to describe the transition from winter to spring signifies the gradual and steady development of Sichuan embroidery from obscurity to global recognition. The translation reproduces the artistic conception in the original subtitle, and the translation is vivid and vivid, allowing the audience to feel the complexity and exquisite craftsmanship of Shu embroidery using language alone.

The translations of the last three lines all begin with "may you," expressing Li Ziqi's sincere feelings and well-wishes. The translations convey the warmth and goodwill of the Chinese people, hoping that more people will learn about China's excellent traditional culture, experience the romantic Qixi Festival, and wish for peace and well-being. The translations maintain the same tone and faithfully convey the meaning of the original subtitles, exuding a sense of positivity and aspiration, which complements the refreshing, classical, and beautiful atmosphere in Li Ziqi's short videos.

The video showcases Li Ziqi's meticulous embroidery work, accompanied by elegant background music, providing visual stimulation and enhancing the audience's artistic appreciation. It increases the viewers' understanding and impression of Sichuan embroidery, deepening their appreciation for the craft. Through the YouTube platform, this subtle, powerful presentation helps disseminate the historical and cultural aspects of Sichuan embroidery, as a representative of China's traditional crafts culture, to a global audience.

3.3 Cotton Fluffing

Cotton fluffing, also known as cotton batting, is a traditional folk craft related to cotton processing and has its origins dating back to the end of the Shang Dynasty and the beginning of the Zhou Dynasty. However, the development of this excellent traditional craft of cotton fluffing is currently facing significant challenges due to various factors. As a traditional craft, cotton fluffing possesses unique characteristics and advantages. Compared to machine processing, handmade cotton fluffing is not only a skill but also a cultural expression, containing rich cultural connotations and symbolizing people's aspirations for a better life (Zhang, 2010).

Example 3:

"弹棉花呀~弹棉花~半斤棉弹成了八两八哟。旧棉花弹成了新棉花，弹好那个棉被姑娘要出嫁。"
出嫁的姑娘倒是没有，但我有个可爱的老人家。
去年种了我们这很多年都没人种过的棉花！
种的不多，收成也不大好！
刚好够给她做床新棉絮！

"Fluuuuff, fluff cotton, into soft, downy clouds.
Re-fluff old quilts into new ones,
and then the good girl shall get married."
I've got no bride there but a lovely lady granny.
We haven't grown cotton for ages, but last year we did.
The harvest was modest,
But enough to fluff her a new comforter!

The first sentence is an excerpt from the song "Fluff Cotton" in the movie "Clever Escape." It matches the theme of the cotton fluffing in the video, and while translating the lyrics, it's important to recreate its ambiance, preserving the original charm and uniqueness. The chosen lyrics at the beginning mimic the sound of cotton being fluffed, and the corresponding translation, "Fluuuuff", visually immerses the audience in the live experience of Li Ziqi fluffing cotton and the entire process of turning cotton

into cotton floss. Retaining the rhythm of cotton fluffing, "Fluuuuff-Fluuuuff-Fluuuuff," enables the audience to immerse themselves through a triple combination of visuals, subtitles, and sound (Zhang, 2019). The vivid depiction of the song not only conveys a sense of rhythm and melody but also evokes a strong visual experience, maintaining the musical essence of the original text.

The video emphasizes visuals, music, and subtitles, and during the subtitle section, it coincides with Li Ziqi fluffing cotton, producing impactful sounds, "fluff cotton, into soft, downy clouds." This description narrates the scene of cotton fluffing, portraying cotton being fluffed softly, resembling fluffy and downy clouds, leaving the audience with a vivid imagination of the visuals.

"A lovely lady granny" directly depicts Li Ziqi's charming and endearing grandmother, adding information not present in the original text. The translation is concise and avoids redundancy, fitting well with the context and maintaining a contextual adaptation with homophonic harmony.

The phrase "收成也不大好" is translated as "The harvest was modest." Although "modest" typically means modest, composed, or shy, in this context, it conveys the idea of a moderate harvest, which the target audience can understand. Translating it as "the harvest was bad" would lose the elegance of the original expression.

The translation is colloquial and accessible, with a pleasant flow, while accurately conveying the original meaning. It reflects Li Ziqi's positive outlook on life and conveys the uses, steps, and traditional Chinese craftsmanship involved in cotton production to the audience.

From the many comments in the video, we can see that before watching the video, many commenters had only a superficial understanding of traditional Chinese craftsmanship. Li Ziqi's videos provide a more tangible understanding of traditional crafts. Many viewers express that this is the first time they have seen the production of cotton floss through video, finding it a fascinating process. They admire Li Ziqi's grandmother, and it also highlights China's long-standing respect and care for the elderly, a virtue shared by people worldwide. Many netizens believe that Li Ziqi's love-filled videos can deeply resonate with audiences both in China and abroad, greatly helping to promote traditional culture in an international context.

3.4 Handmade Papermaking

Handmade papermaking is one of China's Four Great Inventions, a manifestation of ancient Chinese civilization and cultural heritage passed down to us. It involves using materials like hemp or tree bark as the primary ingredients and employs either no machinery or very simple hand-operated tools in the papermaking process. Li Ziqi's videos showcase the process of papermaking, starting from preparing the raw materials to the final finished sheets of paper. This undoubtedly represents the inheritance of Chinese traditional craftsmanship, a legacy passed down through generations of Chinese civilization. Through her videos, Li Ziqi contributes to the preservation and promotion of this traditional craft, showcasing the beauty and significance of China's cultural heritage to a global audience.

Example4:

手工造纸的起源最早可追溯到公元前2世纪时的西汉初年，那时我们的祖先便开始用麻皮和树皮制成最原始的纸张。在这个已经拥有了大量机械化生产纸张的年代，但愿我们还能知晓祖先们是怎样用一双手，让中国成为了世界上最早发明纸的国家！

Papermaking can be traced back to the early Western Han Dynasty in the 2nd century BC when our ancestors began to produce the most primitive form of paper from hemp netting and bark. In this highly-industrialized age of mass production, I hope we still have an idea of how our Chinese ancestors, without any modern machines, invented paper!

The source text takes literal translation, accurately conveying Li Ziqi's intended meaning about the origin of handmade paper and the required materials, making the target language audience clearly understand the information. Compared to today's mechanized production, traditional crafts like handmade papermaking are more precious and worthy of inheritance. The translator uses passive voice and concise phrasing, adhering to English language conventions and employing longer sentences with a logical flow to suit the language habits of the target audience. The translation is simple, clear, and fluent, enhancing the audience's understanding and awareness of handmade papermaking.

In the video, you can see Li Ziqi starting with preparing the raw materials, soaking hemp and tree bark, cutting them into small pieces, and adding lime to dissolve... Then she takes the paper mold from the tank, lifts it from the pulp, sun-drying the paper, and finally obtains immaculate sheets of paper. This allows many viewers to witness the transformation of simple raw materials into exquisite artworks through countless processes. They are drawn to the charm of each detail and witness the creative and aesthetic

aspects of Chinese traditional craftsmanship directly presented before their eyes. Isn't this precisely spreading Chinese traditional craft culture?

4. Enlightenment and Reflection on the Translation of Craft Culture in Li Ziqi's Short Video

Li Ziqi's short videos provide a narrative possibility for telling China's story through cross-cultural communication. Nurtured by traditional culture, she maintains a love for life and gains insights into the wisdom of ancient people in her daily life. This might be the reason why audiences like her. By transforming raw materials into exquisite handicrafts, she authentically spreads China's rich culture and history, showcasing traditional crafts culture.

Chinese traditional craftsmanship is a long process, and many exquisite handcrafting techniques have accumulated profound traditional civilization (Zhao, 2009). Li Ziqi is also exporting our excellent and profound traditional civilization and culture to the world. YouTube viewers have expressed that without visiting China, it might be challenging to experience authentic Chinese traditional culture solely through the Internet or oral accounts. However, watching Li Ziqi's videos makes them feel like they are truly in China. She is teaching us about the parts of China we didn't know. CCTV News has also reported that video blogger Li Ziqi has introduced the world to the beauty of China. She tells the story of Chinese culture and presents it well.

We need more "Li Ziqi", different from official mainstream reports, who can present the most authentic aspects of China, such as Chinese traditional culture, hardworking and kind Chinese people, and magnificent landscapes to the world. We should transmit the long-standing Chinese traditional craft culture using accessible and popular language to let more people understand the real China and fall in love with it.

5. Conclusion

In the current era of new media, cultural dissemination is multi-channel, multi-form, and diverse. Using the overseas YouTube video platform, Li Ziqi chooses to present China's traditional culture, such as ecology, customs, cuisine, and craftsmanship, in a daily and life-like manner to the world. The "Traditional Crafts" column has become an important platform for the external dissemination of China's traditional craft culture. This article selects subtitles from four videos as examples: Blue Dyeing, Sichuan Embroidery, Cotton Fluffing, and Handmade Papermaking, to further analyze the external dissemination of Chinese traditional crafts culture.

The subtitling translation should not only consider the translation of words but also combine the video's images, actions, and background music to ensure that the original information is conveyed completely, accurately, and smoothly. The use of concise, vivid, and straightforward colloquial language that is understandable to the audience allows Li Ziqi's short video subtitles to be accepted by the target audience. This not only helps foreign audiences have a better understanding and appreciation of the video content but also leaves them with a sense of accomplishment, knowledge, and broadened horizons. Over time, the content of the short videos will be internalized and subtly influence various aspects of people's lives (Zhang, 2021), contributing to the external dissemination of Chinese traditional craft culture and introducing forgotten Chinese culture, art, and wisdom to the world. It showcases the origin, current status, and development of Chinese traditional craft culture, telling China's story and promoting Chinese traditional culture.

6. Limitations and Suggestions:

There are several limitations to this study. Firstly, the small number of selected samples, only four videos out of thirteen in the traditional crafts category, could introduce random effects during analysis, potentially failing to represent the diversity and breadth of Li Ziqi's videos. Moreover, these four videos might lack representativeness due to variations in style, content, and emotional expression. These nuances may not be fully captured within the limited scope of just four videos. Secondly, the author needs to personally perceive the emotions, details, and cultural nuances conveyed through the subtitle translation while also possessing a certain understanding of Chinese traditional crafts culture. Throughout the process of comprehension and reflection, there could be instances where the author might not be able to accurately analyze, and in the case of analysis, there might be a deficiency in conveying certain cultural, emotional, and contextual elements.

In light of these limitations, it's essential to acknowledge that while the study provides valuable insights, these constraints suggest the need for caution when generalizing the findings. To mitigate these limitations, firstly, future research could involve a larger and more diverse sample selection and the involvement of multiple analysts to enhance objectivity in Li Ziqi's videos. Additionally, conducting more in-depth case studies of selected videos could enhance the accuracy of analyzing subtitle translation and the dissemination of Chinese traditional crafts culture. Secondly, in order to provide in-depth and accurate research conclusions, sufficient preparation work needs to be done before the research. For example, carefully watching the videos to deeply understand

their themes, content, and emotions, gaining comprehensive knowledge of the relevant Chinese crafts culture background and seeking assistance and feedback from individuals knowledgeable in this field.

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