

Research on the “Cultural Fidelity” Strategy for External Publicity Translation of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Shandong Province

Huiling Zhang, Chao Jiang, Tingting Wang, Ran Xu

Shandong Vocational and Technical University of International Studies, Rizhao 276826, Shandong, China

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Abstract: Shandong’s intangible cultural heritage (ICH) boasts distinctive regional cultural characteristics. However, problems such as inconsistent terminology, weakened cultural imagery, and difficulties in audience comprehension exist in its international communication. This study constructs a three-dimensional evaluation model: Linguistic Level–Cultural Level–Cognitive Level, to diagnose existing translations systematically. It reveals a widespread “cultural cognitive gap” in translation practice: translators’ insufficient understanding of the deep connotations of ICH leads to the loss of cultural information. Accordingly, a Cultural Fidelity Translation Framework is proposed, which adopts a three-in-one strategy of terminology standardization, contextual compensation, and multimodal collaboration to achieve the dual goals of “linguistic accuracy” and “cultural fidelity”. This framework provides a systematic approach to improving the international communication quality of Shandong ICH and can also serve as a reference for ICH external publicity translation in other regions.

Keywords: Shandong intangible cultural heritage; External publicity translation; Cultural fidelity

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1. Systematic sorting of the core cultural symbol system

As one of the important birthplaces of traditional Chinese culture, Shandong owns abundant and representative intangible cultural heritage resources, such as Jiaodong paper-cutting, Weifang kites, and Yangjiabu woodblock New Year paintings. These ICH items not only possess distinct regional cultural features but also contain rich folk symbolism and wisdom of traditional craftsmanship ^[1]. However, in the current international communication texts, some translations still have problems in terminology expression, cultural imagery presentation, and audience understanding, which affect the quality of international communication of ICH.

The image symbols, decorative patterns, and folk imageries in ICH often carry specific cultural implications and are important carriers of traditional cultural values ^[2]. Based on field investigations and literature research, this study systematically sorts out representative ICH items in Shandong, organizes and classifies typical cultural imageries in Jiaodong paper-cutting, Weifang kites and other typical ICH items,

and focuses on recording their image forms, production techniques, and cultural implications, so as to form a systematic cultural database. ICH is not only reflected in specific skills or art forms but also expresses traditional cultural values through rich cultural symbols and folk imageries^[3].

Shandong ICH mainly includes three categories: First, folk symbolic cultural imagery, such as patterns like “fish playing among lotuses” and “koi carp” in Jiaodong paper-cutting, whose meanings are often associated with folk wishes like “abundance year after year” and “prosperous life”; second, traditional craft-based cultural imagery, exemplified by the bamboo framework structures and decorative motifs found in Weifang kite-making techniques; third, integrated cultural symbols, including typical designs of Weifang kites such as the “dragon head centipede” and “sand swallow”. These shapes not only reflect visual aesthetic characteristics but also carry rich folk cultural connotations. Similar cultural imageries widely exist in Chinese ICH art, and their symbolic meanings often need cultural interpretation to be understood by cross-cultural audiences^[4]. Partial examples are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Examples of cultural imageries in Shandong ICH

ICH Item	Case Name	Craft Features	Cultural Implication	Cultural Type
Jiaodong Paper-cutting	Fish Playing with Lotus	Combined composition of fish and lotus, smooth lines, mostly used for window decorations	“Fish” homophonic with “surplus”, “Lotus” homophonic with “continuous”, symbolizing “abundance year after year”	Homophonic symbolic
Jiaodong Paper-cutting	Koi Pattern	Symmetrical composition, fish body decorated with scales and water patterns	Symbolizes wealth and good luck, also related to the enterprising spirit of “carp leaping over the dragon gate”	Allusion symbolic
Jiaodong Paper-cutting	Pomegranate Pattern	Pomegranate cracked to expose seeds	Symbolizes many children and good fortune, family prosperity	Folk symbolic
Jiaodong Paper-cutting	Double Happiness Pattern	“Double happiness” combined with flowers	Symbolizes happy marriage and family bliss	Folk symbolic
Jiaodong Paper-cutting	Magpie Perching on Plum	Magpie resting on plum branch	Implies “happiness on the eyebrows”, symbolizing joy and good luck	Folk symbolic
Gaomi Paper-cutting	Dragon and Phoenix Auspiciousness	Symmetrical combination of dragon and phoenix	Symbolizes harmonious marriage and good fortune	Auspicious symbolic
Weifang Kite	Dragon-head Centipede Kite	Large kite with dragon head and multi-section body connected	Symbolizes dragon culture and life continuity	Image symbolic
Weifang Kite	Swallow Kite	Swallow shape, wings spread, symmetrical structure	Swallow symbolizes spring, hope and good luck	Natural symbolic
Weifang Kite	Phoenix Kite	Phoenix shape, gorgeous painting, complex structure	Symbolizes auspiciousness and dignity	Auspicious symbolic
Weifang Kite	Butterfly Kite	Light double wings, rich colors	Symbolizes love, beauty and freedom	Natural symbolic
Weifang Kite	Goldfish Kite	Goldfish shape, tail decorated with ribbons	Symbolizes wealth and an affluent life	Auspicious symbolic
Weifang Kite	Swallow-tailed Kite	Swallow-shaped tail structure	Improves flight stability and has aesthetic value	Technical structural
Weifang Kite-making Craft	Bamboo Bone Framing	Bamboo strips bent to form the frame	Embodies traditional handicraft and craftsmanship spirit	Technical structural
Weifang Kite-making Craft	Tenon-and-Mortise Connection	Bamboo bones joined without metal fasteners	Embodies wisdom of traditional Chinese crafts	Technical structural
Yangjiabu Woodblock New Year Painting	Door God Image	Majestic general image, bright colors	Exorcises evil spirits and protects family peace	Folk belief

Yangjiabu Woodblock New Year Painting	Surplus Year After Year	Child holding fish or fish with lotus	Symbolizes prosperity and harvest	Homophonic symbolic
Yangjiabu Woodblock New Year Painting	Five Sons Passing the Examination	Image of five children	Symbolizes imperial examination success and family honor	Traditional allusion
Shandong Folk Embroidery	Mandarin Duck Pattern	Pair of symmetrical mandarin ducks	Symbolizes loyal love and happy marriage	Love symbolic
Shandong Folk Embroidery	Peony Pattern	Peony flower decoration	Symbolizes wealth and prosperity	Auspicious symbolic
Shandong Folk Embroidery	Auspicious Cloud Pattern	Cloud pattern decoration	Symbolizes good fortune and luck	Auspicious symbolic

2. Construction of a three-dimensional evaluation model and diagnosis of external publicity translations

Existing studies have shown that linguistic expression, cultural meaning, and audience comprehension are important dimensions affecting translation quality in ICH translation ^[5,6]. Based on a systematic review of domestic and foreign research on ICH communication, this study innovatively constructs a three-dimensional evaluation model of Linguistic Level–Cultural Level–Cognitive Level (**Figure 1**) to address common problems such as inconsistent terminology, weakened cultural connotations, and audience misunderstanding in current ICH external publicity translation, so as to comprehensively evaluate and diagnose the quality of ICH external publicity translations. Based on cross-cultural communication theory and translation quality assessment theory, the model divides the translation quality of ICH external publicity texts into three interrelated dimensions: Linguistic Level (terminology accuracy), Cultural Level (symbol integrity), and Cognitive Level (audience acceptance). The three dimensions are independent and supportive of each other, jointly forming an overall framework for evaluating ICH translation quality in the context of international communication.

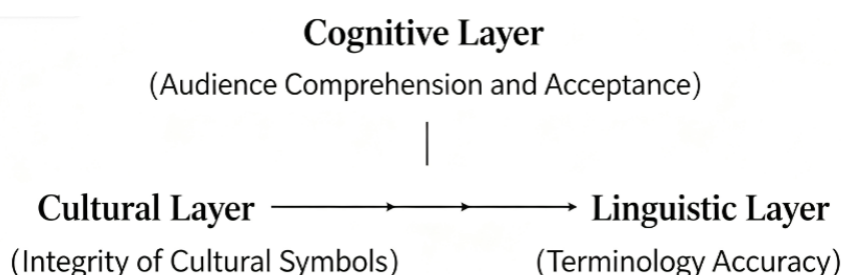


Figure 1. Three-dimensional evaluation model for ICH external publicity translation.

2.1. Linguistic level diagnosis

At the linguistic level, the model mainly focuses on the accuracy and standardization of core ICH terms and professional expressions, including whether the translation of ICH item names, traditional craft names, and typical cultural imageries is accurate, unified, and understandable. The study finds that in existing ICH external publicity texts, inconsistent terminology often appears between different translations, which not only affects communication effects but also reduces the professionalism of ICH communication ^[7]. For example, in some existing external publicity translations, some terms with clear cultural connotations are simply translated literally or freely, leading to the deviation of original conceptual connotations. Therefore, linguistic

level assessment mainly systematically proofreads key terms in translations through term comparison, corpus comparison, and literature retrieval to identify possible mistranslation, omission, or inappropriate expression.

2.2. Cultural level diagnosis

At the cultural level, the model focuses on evaluating the retention degree of ICH cultural symbols in the translation process, namely the “integrity” of cultural symbols. ICH items often contain rich folk symbolism and cultural metaphors, such as the auspicious implications in paper-cut patterns and cultural symbols in kite shapes ^[8]. If the translation only stays at the surface description and ignores its cultural background and symbolic meaning, it is easy to cause the loss of cultural information. Therefore, cultural level assessment mainly judges whether the translation retains key cultural imageries and their symbolic meanings through cultural context analysis and symbolic meaning interpretation, so as to identify the missing or weakened phenomenon of cultural information in the translation process.

2.3. Cognitive level diagnosis

At the cognitive level, the model further pays attention to the comprehensibility and acceptance of the translation among the target audience. Relevant studies point out that in ICH communication, appropriate cultural explanation and background supplementation can effectively improve international audiences’ understanding of traditional Chinese culture ^[9]. Due to the differences in readers’ cognition of traditional Chinese cultural symbols under different cultural backgrounds, effective communication is often difficult to achieve if the translation lacks necessary explanation or cultural compensation. Therefore, in the cognitive level assessment, this study focuses on whether the translation adopts appropriate explanatory expressions, cultural notes, or contextual compensation strategies to help overseas readers understand the core connotations of ICH.

Based on the model construction, the research team selected a number of existing ICH external publicity texts as samples, including scenic spot introduction texts, cultural publicity materials, and relevant English website content, to conduct a systematic translation diagnosis and analysis. The study finds that although the current ICH external publicity translations can basically convey basic information at the linguistic level, there are still some non-standard phenomena in term use; while at the cultural level, the problems are more prominent. Some translations ignore the symbolic meaning of cultural symbols in the translation process and only retain surface morphological descriptions, resulting in the weakening or even deviation of the original cultural connotations. Partial examples are shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Translation diagnosis cases of the three-dimensional evaluation model

ICH Cultural Element	Original Expression	Existing Translation	Diagnosis Problem	Optimization Suggestion
Fish Playing with Lotus Pattern	“Fish Playing with Lotus” implies abundance year after year	Fish and Lotus Pattern	Only describes pattern form without auspicious meaning, cultural meaning missing	Fish and Lotus Motif symbolizing “abundance year after year”
Dragon-head Centipede Kite	Weifang traditional “Dragon-head Centipede” kite	Dragon-Head Centipede Kite	Literal translation without explaining its feature as a large performance kite	Dragon-Head Centipede Kite, a traditional multi-section performance kite from Weifang
Swallow Kite	Weifang classic “Swallow” kite	Swallow Kite	Too simple a translation without cultural background	Sha-yan Swallow Kite, a traditional kite symbolizing spring and good fortune

It can be seen from the above cases that although the existing translations can basically convey surface information at the linguistic level, there are varying degrees of weakened or missing cultural information at the cultural and cognitive levels. Such problems are not simply linguistic expression errors, but stem from translators' insufficient cultural understanding, that is, the lack of in-depth cognition of ICH cultural symbols and their cultural backgrounds, making it difficult to accurately reproduce their cultural value in the translation process^[10]. This study summarizes this phenomenon as a “cultural cognitive gap”, that is, the translator fails to fully understand and convey the deep connotations of the source culture in the process of language conversion. This gap not only leads to the loss of cultural information but also affects the accurate presentation of ICH in international communication to a certain extent.

Through the systematic diagnosis of the three-dimensional evaluation model, this study clearly reveals the structural problems existing in the current ICH external publicity translation, and further points out that future ICH external publicity work needs systematic improvement in improving translators' cultural understanding ability, perfecting the term standard system, and strengthening the cultural explanation mechanism, so as to achieve the dual goals of “linguistic accuracy” and “cultural fidelity” in the international communication of ICH.

3. Construction and verification of the cultural fidelity translation framework

Existing studies have shown that in ICH external publicity translation, the loss of cultural information in the translation process can be effectively reduced through terminology standardization and cultural explanation mechanisms^[11]. Therefore, based on cultural decoding and translation diagnosis, this study further proposes a Cultural Fidelity Translation Framework for ICH external publicity communication. With the core goal of ensuring the complete transmission of cultural information, this framework integrates strategies from three levels: terminology standardization, cultural explanation, and communication presentation, forming a three-in-one translation path of terminology standardization–contextual compensation–multimodal collaboration (**Figure 2**).

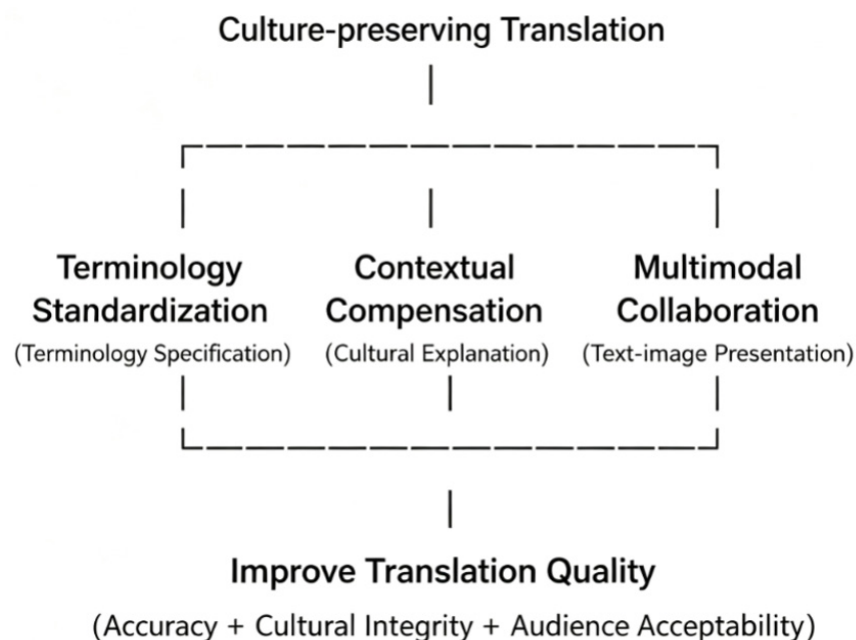


Figure 2. Cultural fidelity translation framework.

3.1. Terminology standardization

In terms of terminology standardization, the study emphasizes the establishment of a relatively unified ICH term expression system to ensure the accuracy and consistency of professional terms in the translation process. By sorting out relevant literature and translations, this study summarizes and standardizes a number of representative core term translations, so as to reduce expression differences in translation practice and improve the professionalism and standardization of translations.

3.2. Contextual compensation

In terms of contextual compensation, the study points out that for ICH elements with specific cultural symbolic meanings, literal translation alone is often difficult to fully convey their cultural connotations. Therefore, appropriate explanations or supplementary explanations are needed in the translation process to make up for the comprehension obstacles caused by cultural differences^[12]. For example, for traditional patterns with auspicious meanings, brief explanations can be added to the translation to enable overseas readers to understand their cultural symbolic meanings.

3.3. Multimodal collaboration

In the context of digital communication, the communication mode of ICH is gradually showing a multimodal trend. The combination of images, videos, and texts can further improve the international communication effect of ICH^[13]. In terms of multimodal collaboration, the study proposes that in ICH communication, text translation should be combined with visual information such as images and diagrams to present cultural content through text-image complementarity. Due to the obvious visual characteristics of ICH, multimodal presentation can display cultural information more intuitively, thereby improving the communication effect^[14].

To verify the feasibility of the translation framework, the research team selected some typical cultural cases for application analysis and sorted out a demonstrative translation case library. By comparing common translations and optimized translations, the case library shows the specific application of terminology standardization, contextual compensation, multimodal collaboration and other strategies in translation practice. For example, in the translation of the paper-cut pattern “Fish Playing with Lotus”, the traditional translation is usually only “Fish and Lotus Pattern”. Although it can express the pattern form, the implied meaning of “abundance year after year” is not reflected. According to the translation framework proposed in this study, on the basis of maintaining terminology expression, the translation adds cultural explanation through contextual compensation and expresses it as “Fish and Lotus Motif, symbolizing abundance year after year”. At the same time, the external publicity text is matched with relevant image display, so that readers can understand both the pattern form and cultural implication.

On the whole, this study enriches the theoretical perspective of ICH translation research to a certain extent and provides a practical path for the international communication of local ICH. Future research can further improve the evaluation model based on a larger-scale corpus, and combine digital communication and multimedia technology to explore more possibilities for multimodal international communication of ICH^[15].

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