

Research on the Foreign Publicity Translation of ICH from the Perspective of Communication Studies: A Case Study of the “Beijing Eight Imperial Handicrafts”

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Abstract: Translation is a form of cross-cultural communication, which cannot occur without translation. Actively promoting the international dissemination of the “Beijing Eight Imperial Handicrafts” within the context of cultural outreach helps enhance the global influence of Chinese culture. This study aims to utilize the 7W model of communication studies as a framework to analyze the translation and dissemination processes and challenges of the capital’s traditional craftsmanship intangible cultural heritage, Beijing Eight Imperial Handicrafts. This analysis will focus on the seven key elements of communication: the purpose, subject, content, channel, audience, circumstances, and effect. By examining the names, cultural items, and production techniques involved, the study seeks to summarize appropriate strategies to contribute to the international promotion of the capital’s intangible cultural heritage projects.

Keywords: Foreign Publicity Translation; Intangible Cultural Heritage; Beijing Eight Imperial Handicrafts; Communication Studies

To advance cultural self-confidence and strength, forging a new socialist cultural splendor, “cultural self-confidence is primarily confidence in the traditional culture of the Chinese nation”(Zou, 2023:19). History and reality have proven that this confidence is by no means blind belief in oneself under the policy of isolationism, but rather “a positive and proactive state demonstrated by individuals or nations as they engage with the cultures of other nations and peoples”.(Zou, 2023:19). In summary, without cultural exchange, there can be no cultural self-confidence.

The intangible cultural heritage serves as a significant emblem of a nation’s and ethnic group’s historical and cultural accomplishments. In the case of China, its intangible cultural heritage embodies the wisdom and civilization of the Chinese nation, representing the quintessence of traditional Chinese culture. Promoting the communication of China’s cultural heritage is essential for advancing cultural confidence and strength. The fundamental objective of external dissemination lies in expressing China to the world and facilitating global understanding of China. Translation plays a pivotal role in the process of foreign publicity translation, profoundly influencing its effectiveness, as “the essence of translation is essentially communication” (Fang, 2023: 82). The communication essence of Chinese ICH translation intertwines with its attributes, effects, and objectives, all unified under the central theme of communication.

1. Current Research

In China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), a search was conducted with the keyword "intangible cultural heritage" to retrieve literature from 2013 to 2023, resulting in 20, 150 relevant articles. This indicates an increasing level of attention from domestic scholars towards the study of ICH over the past decade, yielding substantial outcomes. However, conducting a secondary search within these results using the same terms yielded only 83 relevant articles. The research outcomes mainly fall into three categories: review articles, studies from specific perspectives, and analysis of translation strategies, methods, or techniques. Du(2019) analyzed the translation methods of Henan intangible cultural heritage names based on two principles of communication studies. Qiu(2018) took the communication strategies and methods of English translations of ICH in Zhejiang as examples. Hu and Wen(2016) pointed out the essence of English translation of intangible cultural heritage from the perspective of communication studies and made recommendations. Overall, in the past five years, there has been a significant number of research outcomes from the perspective of communication studies on the translation of intangible cultural heritage, with a high degree of theoretical and thematic relevance.

In addition, a total of 275 papers focusing on translation research from the perspective of communication studies were retrieved, including 178 from academic journals, 59 dissertations, and 9 conference papers. Among these, 125 papers from academic journals, 18 dissertations, and 5 conference papers specifically focused on translation for communication research from the perspective of communication studies.

Therefore, it can be observed that a significant proportion of research outcomes guided by communication studies have been achieved, with a continuous increase in the number of related papers in recent years. As a fundamental theory of communication studies, the 5W model has guided a series of fruitful achievements in the research of translation of Chinese culture. Huang(2016) reexamined the translation of traditional Chinese medicine from the perspective of communication models. Pu and Zhao(2020) summarized the problems existing in the English translations of Dujiangyan. Yue (2020) systematically analyzed various elements affecting the translation effects of the intangible cultural heritage "Five-Animal Frolics". In comparison, there are relatively few translation studies guided by the 7W model, with only 3 relevant documents currently found. Ouyang(2021) proposed the impact of communication objectives on the international dissemination of the culture of ancient Guangdong postal routes. Sun and Lin(2016) attempted to explore the explanatory power of the 7W model. Li(2022) analyzed how each communication element acts and influences the overseas dissemination of Du Fu's poetry. Currently, no research guided by the 7W model has been retrieved, but scholars have mentioned the guiding significance of this model for international communication. Rationalizing the roles of purpose and contexts will help enhance the international communication effects of Chinese culture (Ouyang, 2021: 52). This literature provides a reference for research on translation guided by the 7W model.

2. The 7W Model and Its Significance for the Translation of ICH Beijing Eight Imperial Handicrafts

In 1948, American scholar Harold Lasswell (1902) first proposed the 5W model in his paper *The Structure and Function of Communication in Society*: Who → says what → through which channel → to whom → with what effects. This model holds significant importance in the history of communication studies, as it elucidates the fundamental process of communication activities: sender → message → medium → audience → effects, thereby establishing the five basic dimensions of communication research, namely control research, content analysis, media research, audience research, and effects research, making enormous contributions to communication studies (Dong, 2008:36). However, the 5W model also has certain limitations, namely its uni-directional linear nature, which overlooks the interactive relationships among communication elements. In 1958, American scholar Richard Brodbeck added two communication elements based on the 5W model, namely communication purpose and communication context, thus rectifying the deficiency of the traditional 5W model in neglecting key elements within the academic scope (Sun&Lin, 2016: 68). This theory is termed the 7W model and holds important reference value for researching the translation of intangible cultural heritage.

According to statistics from the official website of Chinese intangible cultural heritage, as of December 2020, there were a total of 42 topics included in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List, ranking first globally. At the national level, there are 1, 557 representative topics of intangible cultural heritage, among which Beijing has a total of 120 national-level representative topics, with traditional craftsmanship accounting for 41 topics, or 34.16% of the total. It can be seen that traditional craftsmanship in Beijing shines brightly. Beijing eight imperial handicrafts originated in Yan and Zhao dynasties, was established during the Liao and Jin dynasties, flourished during the Ming and Qing dynasties, and absorbed the essence of folk crafts from various places, gradually forming the characteristic palace art. It includes eight major categories of crafts: gold lacquer inlay, filigree inlay, cloisonné, ivory carving, jade carving, carved lacquerware, palace embroidery, and palace carpets. By 2010, all of them had been included in the National Intangible Cultural Heritage List.

As a part of Beijing's traditional craftsmanship, they demonstrate profound and unique vitality and the integration and development of national craftsmanship. Also, as the first non-state-owned museum among the key national cultural relic protection units in Beijing and the first museum to integrate the display of palace art and the experience of palace craftsmanship, Beijing Eight Imperial Handicrafts Museum is unique specializing in the exhibition and collection of eight handicrafts and various artifacts, with rich and diverse materials in both Chinese and English, serving as an important source of research and reference for this study. Taking the eight items as an example is conducive to enhancing the international influence and visibility of the capital as a cultural center. It is also beneficial to further improve the domestic attention to the research on translation for communication of intangible cultural heritage by leveraging the platform of the capital, and to deepen the exchange and mutual learning between Chinese intangible cultural heritage and the world, so that each can exhibit its own beauty and achieve common prosperity.

In conclusion, taking "Beijing Eight Imperial Handicrafts" as an example and conducting research on the foreign publicity translation of Chinese intangible cultural heritage from the perspective of communication studies with the 7W model holds significant importance. First of all, compared with the tea culture and the twenty-four solar terms, there is still considerable research space available on the translation of the traditional crafts of the capital city, the eight handicrafts. Secondly, most of the current domestic research on translation of intangible cultural heritage, whether macroscopic review studies or microscopic specific translation strategy and method studies, mostly suffer from the deficiency of the uni-directional linear dissemination inherent in the 5W model, with insufficient research on the interactivity, integrity, and systematic

nature of each communication element. The 7W model used in this study can thus rectify this deficiency, striving to achieve a synergistic interactive effect of “1 + 1 > 2”, and thereby making beneficial explorations into the holistic and systematic research on the foreign publicity translation of Chinese intangible cultural heritage. Lastly, through in-depth analysis and research on the Chinese and English materials currently in use, this study aims to summarize translation issues, propose optimization strategies, and thus enhance the translators’ awareness of the interactive and holistic nature of translation communication elements, making a modest contribution to promoting the practice and effectiveness of translation of Chinese intangible cultural heritage.

3. Foreign Publicity Translation of “Beijing Eight Imperial Handicrafts” under the 7W Model of Communication Studies

The following will use the framework of 7W model to analyze the translation process of the eight handicrafts in the capital city. It will explore the difficulties encountered in translating and disseminating the names, cultural specialties, and production techniques of the “Beijing Eight Imperial Handicrafts”. Corresponding strategies are summarized.

3.1 Communication Purpose

In the 7W model, this element refers to the transmission, reception, or feedback of meaningful symbols between individuals and society, enabling people to acquire the authentic information (Dong Lu, 2008:37). The foreign publicity translation of intangible cultural heritage is an important source of China's soft power, conducive to promoting China's cultural confidence. Beijing eight imperial handicrafts have fully absorbed the essence of folk crafts from various regions, reaching new peaks in traditional Chinese craftsmanship during the Qing Dynasty, and gradually forming the characteristic palace art. They once declined, but after the founding of the People's Republic of China, Beijing has successively restored museums dedicated to the those handicrafts, continuing the exquisite skills and craftsmanship heritage.

3.2 Communication Subject

This element refers to the subject, who is responsible for the collection, processing, and transmission of information during the communication process. The subject can be an individual, a group, or a specialized organization. For the eight handicrafts, cultural inheritors, institutions and organizations, media and platforms, and local governments are the communication subjects. Firstly, the inheritors pass down the production techniques of eight handicrafts through generations. Secondly, relevant cultural associations and heritage protection organizations promote handicrafts through exhibitions, activities, etc. Thirdly, media platforms introduce them to the public, promoting its recognition. Fourthly, local governments enact policies to protect and inherit the eight crafts. In summary, multiple subjects jointly promote the inheritance and development of this intangible cultural heritage.

3.3 Communication Content

In the 7W model, content refers to the information of communication, which consists of meaningful symbol combinations, including both language and non-language symbols. The communication content of intangible cultural heritage mainly includes project introductions, names, cultural terms, and production techniques. Beijing eight imperial handicraft Museum, located within the Cheng'en Temple, showcases hundreds of pieces (sets) of crafts, including the eight craftworks and various ancient wood carvings, root carvings, and stone carvings. It is the first museum in Beijing to integrate the exhibition of court art with the experience of court craftsmanship, representing an intangible cultural heritage museum. The introduction of the museum, the names and production techniques of the crafts, and the cultural terms are crucial for publicity communication. The content is as follows:

Names	CULTURAL TERMS
gold lacquer inlay	Gold Lacquer inlaid The Eight Auspicious Symbols Bow Set
filigree inlay Filigree Inlaid metal art	Filigree Inlaid “Prosperous Flower” Handbag Set
ivory carving	Ivory carving: Nine children playing with Milory Ivory carving Guanyin(Qing Dynasty)
carved lacquer ware	carved lacquer dragon plate(Ming Dynasty) carved lacquer peach holding box(Qing Dynasty)
cloisonné	Cloisonne “Three Goats bring glorious life”
jade carving	Hetian jade carving Guanyin(Qing Dynasty)
palace embroidery	Rosewood root carving: Be radiant with joy
palace carpets	

The table above shows the main contents of the communication, namely the craft names and cultural specific terms. The translation of craft names mainly adopts the literal translation method, where each word is translated one by one to convey the specific meaning of the name

to the target language readers. Cultural specific terms are translated using various methods such as transliteration, literal translation, and free translation to ensure that the translated names are concise, easy to understand, and memorable. However, through on-site inspections of the museum, it is found that the translations of the same names on display boards and promotional pages are inconsistent. For example, “Jin xi xiang qian” is displayed with two translations: “filigree inlay” and “Filigree Inlaid metal art”. It indeed refers to a form of metal art. This article suggests that the introductions on display boards should be concise, while the purpose of promotional pages is to help readers understand the content as much as possible and eliminate unfamiliarity. Therefore, adding “metal art” can serve this purpose.

3.4 Communication channel

The communication channel refers to the intermediary for information transmission (Dong, 2008: 43). It can be interpersonal media such as letters, telephones, etc., or mass media such as newspapers, radio, television, etc. In today's new era, cultural digitization has also become a national-level strategy in China. The publicity communication of “Beijing Eight Imperial Handicrafts” can be divided into two channels: online and offline. Online channel mainly includes television reports, documentary filming, promotion on self-media platforms, and cloud exhibitions of works. Offline channel mainly involves museums, art exhibitions, cultural festivals, craft experiences, etc. As an important part of intangible cultural heritage, the eight crafts have attracted the attention of key departments in the capital. The Association has continuously deepened its practice in promoting the creative transformation and innovative development of crafts, achieving very good results.

3.5 Communication to Audience

This element refers to the recipients of media, also collectively referred to as readers, listeners, and viewers, who are the targets of communicators. In the era of traditional media, audiences were passive receivers of information. In the new media era, audiences have gained new power. They actively engage in the production, distribution, and consumption of content (Dong, 2008: 43). The audience for the eight handicrafts can encompass various groups. Firstly, cultural enthusiasts and intangible cultural heritage protectors. Secondly, media audiences. Thirdly, international students, teachers, and individuals involved in cultural heritage education.

3.6 Communication Context

This element refers to the collective term for external objects, conditions, or factors that directly or indirectly influence specific communication behaviors (Guo, 2011: 46). In the communication process of the Beijing eight imperial handicrafts, systems, means, and platforms play crucial roles, with inheritors being the key elements in enhancing the interactive nature of craft dissemination. Government policy support and protective measures play important guiding and facilitating roles in the dissemination of intangible cultural heritage, providing a favorable environment for the foreign publicity communication of eight handicrafts. Different communication methods can disseminate relevant information to different audience groups, expanding its visibility and influence. Inheritors pass down the cultural connotations and traditional skills of the Eight handicrafts through teaching techniques and storytelling, increasing the interactivity and attractiveness of communication.

3.7 Communication Effects

It refers to the responses across various levels of cognition, emotion, and behavior in the audience after receiving information. It serves as a crucial measure for evaluating the success of communication activities (Dong, 2008: 44). The bilingual introduction of the Beijing eight handicrafts is presented on both online media platforms and offline exhibition activities, enhancing foreign friends' understanding of this craftsmanship. In the context of new media, ordinary audiences are endowed with the right to choose and continue communication, and their collective strength becomes an important driving force for the overseas dissemination of cultural information. Traditional media raise new topics on domestic social media platforms like Weibo and WeChat, as well as foreign platforms like Facebook and Instagram, which attract netizens' attention, shares, and comments on the eight crafts, thereby promoting their dissemination and acceptance overseas. Additionally, whether audiences are willing to purchase, collect, learn related skills, and participate in relevant cultural activities and heritage protection actions are also important factors reflecting communication effects. Major universities in China have organized activities to bring intangible cultural heritage into campuses, targeting both Chinese and international students, encouraging them to experience the production process, further promoting the inheritance and development of the eight handicrafts.

Of course, there are some factors influencing the communication effects. Firstly, the museum is located in relatively remote areas of the capital city and have limited daily appointment slots. Secondly, through on-site visits to the museum, it can be observed that some craft exhibition plaques only provide translated names without translated content introductions, which will inevitably affect the acceptance of foreign readers and thus the dissemination effect. Therefore, the communication effects brought by online platforms and intangible cultural heritage activities on campuses are better.

4. Conclusions

The publicity translation of the Beijing eight imperial handicrafts meets the demands of the times and has achieved good translation and

communication effects. The translation of its craft names, cultural terms, and other elements adopts appropriate translation methods and techniques, effectively conveying the basic meanings to target language readers.

However, there are still some difficulties to be addressed and resolved in the process, mainly in the following aspects. First, the names involve specific regional vocabulary or cultural connotations, requiring the preservation of their original flavor while ensuring understanding by target language readers. Second, the production techniques and cultural background need appropriate explanation and introduction to the target culture for audience understanding. Third, it is necessary to select suitable communication channels according to the characteristics and habits of the target audience to maximize the communication effect. Fourth, there is a need to establish a scientific evaluation system to quantitatively or qualitatively analyze the effects, providing reference and improvement suggestions for subsequent dissemination activities. By fully considering the various elements of the communication model and combining an understanding of the cultural characteristics of the Beijing eight imperial handicrafts, effective communication strategies can be formulated to enhance their influence.

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