

# The Strategy of Translation of Foshan Paper-cut Culture from the Perspective of Communication

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## Abstract

The translation of Foshan paper-cut holds significant importance in cross-cultural communication and exchanges. This paper, from the perspective of communication, in combination with the actual examples of Foshan paper-cut culture translation, proposes the fundamental principles of Foshan paper-cut culture translation, explores the translation strategies and methods of Foshan paper-cut culture translation, with the aim of contributing to the cross-cultural communication of Foshan paper-cut culture, which is of considerable significance for promoting Foshan culture.

**Keywords:** Communication Theory, Foshan paper-cut culture, translation examples, translation method

## 1. Introduction

Foshan paper-cut culture constitutes an essential part of Foshan's traditional culture. The objective of the translation of Foshan paper-cut is to enable the world to comprehend Foshan culture. In reality, the dissemination and communication of Foshan paper-cut art within the international community are inseparable from the assistance of translation, and unified and standardized translation terms play a crucial role in promoting Foshan's outstanding traditional culture and enhancing Foshan's cultural soft power.

In the realm of domestic research on Foshan paper-cut culture, a paucity is observable. Employing "Foshan paper-cut" as the key term, 53 papers were retrieved on the CNKI. The extant research mainly centers on introducing

the artistic traits and craftsmanship of Foshan paper-cut, its inheritance and development, the path to revival, and the design and application of paper-cut cultural and creative products. Guan Hong (2020) expounded upon the history, production technology, and artistic value of Foshan paper-cut. Xie Zhongyuan (2012) deliberated on the inheritance and protection of Foshan paper-cut from the aspect of production safeguarding and production and marketing. Yu Lin (2018) analyzed the bottleneck predicaments encountered by the Foshan paper-cut industry and probed into the revitalization of the traditional Foshan paper-cut craft. Tang Jinyu (2017) contemplated the application of Foshan paper-cut art in the urban public sphere. Within the existing research on Foshan paper-cut culture, the translation of paper-cut culture remains unaddressed.

Grounded in the theory of translation and communication, this paper will put forward the fundamental principles of translation for Foshan paper-cut culture and explore the translation strategies and methods of Foshan paper-cut culture translation by integrating the actual language materials in the translation of Foshan paper-cut culture. Thus, it aims to contribute to the cross-cultural communication of Foshan paper-cut culture and furnish references for the translation of Foshan intangible cultural heritage. The objective is to disseminate and carry forward the outstanding traditional culture of Foshan more effectively, which holds significance for promoting the cultural enterprise of Foshan.

## 2. Introduction to Communication Theory

Harold, an American political scientist and forerunner in communication, posited that communication holds three social functions: surveilling the environment, coordinating society to adapt to the environment, and transmitting social heritage across generations. As a nascent discipline, communication studies have exerted an influence on the domestic translation domain in recent years. According to Harold's 5W model theory on the communication process, the communication process comprises five elements: the communication subject, communication content, communication medium, communication audience, and communication effect. (Harold Lasswell, 2013) Among these, the most salient and core element is the communication effect, and the other four elements exert an impact on the communication effect, among which the communication subject has the most pronounced influence on the communication effect, as the communication subject undertakes the coding work in the communication process, that is, information source — code — message — decoding — destination.

From the communicative perspective, the main body of paper-cut translation encompasses the original author, the translator, the local government, the publishing institution, the target audience, and so forth. The translation of paper-cut involves two disparate languages and cultures, wherein the translator assumes the role of an intermediary: Firstly, they receive the original information and decode the original text in accordance with relevant requirements and personal comprehension; Subsequently, on the basis of decoding the original text, a multiplicity

of translation techniques are utilized to re-encode the original text to form a translation and convey it to the target audience. The target audience reads the translation to form their own understanding. In the communication process of the original text — translator — decoding — coding — translation — decoding, the translator should not only fulfill the intralingual communication between the original author and the target audience but also effectuate interlingual communication between the original and the target audience. In the course of completing the conversion from the original text to the target text, the translator must collect, process, and disseminate the relevant information to realize the social and economic benefits of the information. In each link, translators possess their own subjective initiative. Under the premise of adhering to the relevant scope and requirements, the translator can communicate with the author of the original information and make certain adjustments and alterations to the original information as necessary. The translator also needs to consider the cultural disparities of the target audience in terms of cultural background, reading habits, needs and interests, psychological characteristics, and other aspects, and adopt appropriate translation strategies and methods to make secondary adjustments to the original text, such as sentence structure, text structure, language style, amount of information, content arrangement, etc., to render the translation more in alignment with the reading habits of the target audience. The purpose of English translation for is to enable the recipient to clearly apprehend the information conveyed by the target text. To achieve this end, the translator should endeavor to resolve the differences in style, logic, culture, and other aspects between Chinese and English and take the target language as the destination language, so that the recipient of the target text will not encounter impediments in the process of absorbing information.

## 3. The Translation Principles of Foshan Paper-cut Guided by the Communication Theory

The translation of Foshan paper-cut art is a highly purpose-driven activity, and its goal is to attain a favorable communication effect. External publicity translation pertains to the domain of external communication and is essentially cross-cultural communication. Only

by adhering to the norms of communication can translation achieve good communication outcomes. Under the purview of communication, the translation of Foshan paper-cut must adhere to the following two cardinal principles:

### *3.1 Effect-first Principle*

Harold Lasswell, a pioneer in communication studies, proposed the 5W model of the communication process, which remains influential to this day. That is, the communication process consists of five elements: the communication subject, communication content, communication medium, communication audience, and communication effect. The 5W model not only indicates that the communication process involves five elements; in fact, Lasswell's research is centered around the communication effect. The core of the five elements is the communication effect, and the other four elements are the influencing factors of the communication effect. The effect of communication is the priority of Lasswell's research on the phenomenon of communication.

As a category within communication, if one aspires to achieve a good communication effect and gain recognition from foreign audiences, one must initially contemplate how to ensure that the English translation achieves a favorable communication effect. The effect-first principle implies that in the process of English translation, factors such as the communication subject, communication content, communication medium, and communication audience should be thoroughly considered regarding their impact on the communication effect. Translators should effectively control these influencing factors in English translation to ensure that the translation is recognized by the target audience to the greatest extent and achieves a good communication effect. The effect-first principle possesses comprehensive and dynamic characteristics and represents a comprehensive consideration of all the influencing factors that can affect the final communication effect of the translation.

### *3.2 Audience-centered Principle*

According to Communication Theory, the communication audience does not passively accept the information transmitted by the communication subject but demonstrates subjective initiative when receiving information. The communication audience is the active seeker of information, and they often seek specific

information based on their own interests and needs to fulfill their requirements. Whether the translation of Foshan paper-cut art can obtain the recognition of the target audience and achieve good communication effects depends to a significant extent on whether the translation can recreate "the text form that directly elicits the expected reaction". Therefore, in the translation of paper-cut, the target recipient and the target audience, who reflect the transmission effect of the translation, should be placed in the central position. The audience's acceptance preferences, needs, reading expectations, and habits of the text, and other factors should be fully taken into account to achieve internal and external differences in English translation and create a translation that the target audience prefers. The audience-centered principle is related to whether the target text can be recognized by the communication audience and the degree of recognition and is related to the final communication effect of the target text.

## **4. Examples Analysis and Methods of Foshan Paper-cut Translation**

### *4.1 Methods for the Translation of Paper-cut Works*

The work of paper-cut art is tangible; we refer to it as "form," in contrast to the "text" that describes, introduces, and studies it. In the process of translation, it is imperative to effectively translate the textual parts of paper-cut works, namely the title and description sections, and introduce them to the audience. This text may be the self-expression of the original creator of the paper-cut work or the interpretation of the cultural promoter of the work. In the process of translating the content and culture of the work, the following specific translation methods can be adopted.

#### *4.1.1 Transliteration with Annotations*

Foshan paper-cut culture frequently employs homophony to convey people's splendid longing and aspiration. When translating homophonic words, Chinese pinyin is utilized to express them, and the underlying meaning of the words is interpreted, being straightforward and comprehensive. The work "Jia Guan Jin Jue" serves as an illustration of this.



Example 1. "Jia Guan Jin Jue"

Chinese: 加官即升官，爵是指爵位，贵族的等级。图中两官一手举爵，一手抱如意，有吉祥的象征，更有事如人意的美好寓意。

English: The two officials in the painting hold a Jue (an ancient wine vessel with three legs and a loop handle) in one hand and a Ru Yi (an ancient ornamental scepter) in the other hand. Jue and Ru Yi are homonyms in Chinese. Jue carries an additional meaning of "rank of nobility". Ru Yi also has an additional meaning of "satisfactory and happy". Therefore, "Jia Guan Jin Jue" possesses the meaning of "promoting someone to a higher rank" and "everything is satisfactory to someone".

#### 4.1.2 Amplification Method

Amplification method refers to adding certain words, phrases or sentences to the translation in accordance with the distinct ways of thinking, language habits and expressions of the two languages, so as to express the meaning contained in the original text more precisely.



Example 2. "The Gods of Harmony"

Chinese: 和合二仙是民间传说之神，一人持荷花，另一人捧圆盒，意为“和（盒）好”。人们借此祝

贺新婚夫妇白头偕老，永结同心。

English: The Gods of Harmony are Chinese folk gods. One holds a lotus, and the other one holds a round box. The homophones of He (lotus) and He (box) mean harmony. People employ this as a benediction for newly-married couples, so that they would live together in harmony till they are old and grey, as two in body but one in spirit.

#### 4.1.3 Transposition Method

From the perspective of Communication, "Transposition" refers to the translator's re-encoding and decoding of the original information with the aim of highlighting the key points and attracting readers, thereby enhancing the efficiency of information transmission.



Example 3. Support of Green Horses

Chinese: 《禄马扶持》中的绿色马谐音伟“禄马”，中间为铜钱造型，象征八方来财；四个对角上的马都衔着石榴花枝，寓意石榴花开，多子多福。

English: In *Support of Green Horses*, green horses are a homonym for wealthy horses. The money pattern in the center symbolizes money coming from all directions. The blooming pomegranate flowers in the mouths of the four horses in the four diagonal directions are praying for more children and more happiness.

In this instance, "pomegranate flower branch" was originally utilized as an object. To highlight the point and arouse readers' interest, when translated into English, "pomegranate flower branch" is placed in the subject position.

#### 4.1.4 Eclectic Translation (Combination of Transliteration and Free Translation)

"Transliteration" involves representing the name of the work using Chinese pinyin, and free translation refers to translating based on the general idea of the original text rather than word-for-word translation. The work "Zi Wei Zheng Zhao" can be translated in this way.





**Example 4. Zi Wei Zheng Zhao**

Chinese: 道教称紫薇是元始天尊的化身，位居紫薇宫，即是北极星的神格，故又称紫薇大帝。紫薇统率三界星辰与鬼神，能呼风唤雨、化灾解厄，为黎民百姓主持正义，所以为民间所敬奉。

English: Taoism calls Zi Wei the incarnation of Lord of Heaven, located in the Zi Wei Palace, which is the divine form of the North Star, hence also known as Zi Wei Emperor. Zi Wei commands the stars and ghosts in the three realms, can summon wind and rain, dispel disasters and relieve misfortunes, and uphold justice for the common people, so it is revered by the people.

#### 4.2 Methods for the Translation of Paper-cut Research and Appreciation Text

Foshan paper-cut exhibits variety and wide application. Beyond the publicity translation of paper-cut works, there are also research works on paper-cut culture, production techniques and other contents, as well as the appreciation texts for promotion and publicity. For these research texts that detail the introduction of Foshan paper-cut, the compiled method can be adopted. That is, during the translation process, the information that the target audience requires and is interested in is selected for translation and presentation, and the compiled method is employed under the guidance of the two principles of “effect-first” and “audience-centered”. The aim is to enhance the reading efficiency and interest of the readers, enabling them to obtain the requisite information in the shortest time, thereby ensuring that the target language readers express the maximum degree of identification with the information delivered by the translator. Therefore, when translating the texts of Foshan paper-cut research and appreciation, attention should be focused on the aforementioned contents and the method of compiled translation should be employed.

Example 5: The artistic features of Paper-cut on pages 106-109 of the Atlas of Foshan Intangible Cultural Heritage introduce Paper-cut as follows:

“佛山剪纸是来自民间的工艺品，它明显有别于宫廷工艺品的匠气和雕琢气，而显得淳朴自然，富于生活气息和人情味；……佛山剪纸有几个特点。1.美好吉祥的乡情美。2.意象造型的装饰美。3.玲珑剔透的线条美。4.千刻不断的刀法美。5.富丽堂皇的色彩美。……” (644 Chinese characters)

Then, in the process of translation, it is not necessary to correspond the entire paragraph word for word, and only the points that the reader requires and is interested in need to be translated. The trial translation is as follows:

*Foshan paper-cut is a kind of folk handicraft. In sharp contrast to the exquisite craftsmanship of royal handicrafts, it is rich in the flavor of life and demonstrates the affection and feelings among people. Foshan paper-cut possesses several characteristics. Firstly, it showcases beautiful and auspicious nostalgia. Secondly, it presents the decorative beauty of image modeling. Thirdly, it exhibits exquisite line beauty. Fourthly, it demonstrates the beauty of a thousand cuts. Fifthly, it reveals magnificent color beauty. (80 words)*

#### 5. Conclusion

Paper-cut culture is an integral part of Foshan's traditional culture. In the context of “cultural globalization”, the dissemination of Paper-cut culture is of great significance. Guided by communication theories, employing the principles of “effect-first” and “audience focus”, and utilizing strategies such as transliteration with annotations, amplification, transposition, eclectic translation, and complied translation, can enhance the promotion of Foshan's Paper-cut art.

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