

Original Paper

Bridging Translation Studies and Cultural Communication: A Critical Review of *Translation and Communication: A Study on the Translation and Introduction of Anhui's Intangible Cultural Heritage*

Wu Bian^{1*}, Sun Tao², Li Mingwen² & Li Na²

¹ School of Interpreting and Translation Studies, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou, China

² Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou, China

* Wu Bian, School of Interpreting and Translation Studies, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou, China

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Abstract

This review provides a critical assessment of Su Tao's Translation and Communication: A Study on the Translation and Introduction of Anhui's Intangible Cultural Heritage (2022), which examines ICH translation across folk literature, traditional drama, and handicrafts through the integrated lens of translation communication studies, eco-translatology, and medio-translatology. While acknowledging the book's interdisciplinary contribution, differentiated translation strategies, and practical teaching resources, this review identifies significant limitations, including restricted empirical scope, lack of audience-based validation, and insufficient theoretical elaboration. Despite these weaknesses, the monograph offers a meaningful advancement in bridging translation studies with heritage communication research. The review concludes by suggesting future avenues for reception-oriented and digitally-informed ICH translation research.

Keywords

Anhui intangible cultural heritage, translation studies, cultural communication, eco-translatology, Book Review

1. Introduction

China's 20th Party Congress report highlights two key goals: better protection for cultural heritage resources, and improved capacity for international cultural exchange. Against this policy backdrop, intangible cultural heritage has drawn growing scholarly attention. ICH carries collective community memory and social values, and translation acts as a critical mediator to help such heritage cross linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Chinese academia has produced large volumes of ICH-translation research over recent years. Existing papers mostly centre on translation tactics, quality assessment and cross-border communication mechanisms (Su, 2022, p. 3). Many prior studies call for balanced treatment: researchers want to preserve cultural uniqueness while keeping foreign audiences in mind (Xu & Wang, 2016; Chen, 2013; Deng & Duan, 2024). Scholars also stress the necessity of translator training and sustainable dissemination frameworks (Hu & Wen, 2016). Even so, few comprehensive studies focus on how regional ICH items get translated and promoted overseas. Anhui-based intangible heritage, in particular, remains under-researched, leaving gaps both in theoretical construction and practical case exploration.

Su Tao's monograph *Translation and Communication: A Study on the Translation and Introduction of Anhui's Intangible Cultural Heritage* (University of Science and Technology of China Press, June 2022) fills part of this research vacuum. The author, based at Anhui University, selects representative Anhui ICH items from folk literature, performing arts and handicraft traditions. He combines bibliometric statistics, field interviews and textual analysis. Building on translation-communication studies, eco-translatology and medio-translatology, he identifies real-world difficulties for ICH translation and outreach, and puts forward context-oriented strategies plus an ecological communication model. This review evaluates the book's content, strengths and weaknesses, and discusses its real-world implications for heritage translation and intercultural communication.

2. Content Overview

The book consists of six core chapters, alongside foreword, preface, conclusion and appendix sections. Chapters 1 and 2 lay theoretical and methodological groundwork. Chapter 1 applies bibliometric tools to map domestic ICH-translation research trends. It points out common problems: researchers tend to choose similar themes, and methodological innovation stays limited. Chapter 2 constructs an integrated analytical framework. This framework merges three theoretical lenses. Translation-communication studies frames translation as multi-party communicative behaviour. Eco-translatology stresses translator subjectivity and adaptive choices within given environments. Medio-translatology focuses on cultural negotiation during cross-cultural transmission. Under this framework, translation is more than simple linguistic conversion. It forms a dynamic process shaped by translators, source texts, media channels, target audiences and surrounding social-cultural contexts.

Chapters 3-5 apply this analytical framework to three groups of Anhui intangible heritage. Chapter 3 looks at folk-literature samples such as *Tongcheng Songs* and *The Peacock Flies Southeast*. It discusses obstacles when translating oral heritage and culture-loaded expressions. Chapter 4 shifts to traditional theatre genres, including Huangmei Opera, Hui Opera and Chizhou Nuo Opera. Here the main challenges lie in cultural transfer and foreign audience comprehension. Chapter 5 deals with traditional handicrafts: Xuan Paper, Huizhou Ink Stick and Wuhu Iron Painting. Discussions centre on technical-term translation and embedded cultural meanings. Each chapter proposes genre-adapted solutions. For theatre works, transliteration plus explanatory annotation is recommended. For handicraft materials, interdisciplinary documentation becomes essential. Chapter 6 brings together previous findings and builds an “ecological model”. This model places translators within a large communication network. Interactions between translators, texts, media, audiences and communication outputs receive heavy emphasis. The author advocates diversified distribution channels, interdisciplinary cooperation and audience-centred translation practices.

3. Critical Evaluation

3.1 Theoretical Contributions

The book’s biggest theoretical merit lies in interdisciplinary synthesis. Most earlier research adopts single-discipline thinking; Su Tao combines three translation-theory systems for joint analysis. Such integration lets researchers judge not merely translation quality, but also actual communication effects, offering fuller insights for ICH-related cross-cultural exchange. The ecological model treats ICH translation as an interconnected interactive system. It shifts research attention away from isolated text conversion and towards broader cultural circulation processes. For subsequent heritage-translation projects, this conceptual tool delivers solid reference value.

That said, the theoretical framework has visible flaws. While three theories are grouped together, the logical connections between these theories and concrete case analyses are not fully worked out. The ecological model mainly appears in the final chapter. Readers may wonder how this model could reinterpret folk-literature or theatre cases discussed earlier in the book. In addition, though the author describes this as a new analytical framework, other cultural-translation scholars have tried similar integrated approaches (Zhang & Wang, 2020). The monograph does not sufficiently distinguish its own model from these existing frameworks. Explicit comparative discussion would strengthen its claim to theoretical originality.

3.2 Practical Contributions

On practical levels, the book develops differentiated translation strategies for various heritage categories. For folk-literature works, translators should balance heritage preservation and readability through adaptive rewriting and contextual notes (Su, 2022, pp. 51-53). For traditional operas, transliteration with annotations helps narrow cross-cultural gaps (ibid., pp. 77-78). Handicraft

translation demands interdisciplinary knowledge and flexible terminology management (ibid., pp. 99-100). These actionable suggestions benefit professional translators and cultural-institution workers alike.

The research also expands observation scope beyond translated texts to full communication workflows. It covers digital platforms, social-media short-video resources and hybrid online-offline promotion modes, reflecting today's digital-communication trends. Further, the appendix collects translated sample texts. These materials can serve teaching purposes, helping trainees build cultural awareness and intercultural competence.

Nevertheless, most practical suggestions remain prescriptive rather than empirically verified. The author does not carry out audience-reception surveys or quantitative assessments to test whether these strategies really work. For instance, short-video promotion is suggested for handicraft heritage, yet no empirical evidence shows how overseas audiences respond to such content. This gap between proposed solutions and real-world testing weakens practical usability. Discussion on communication channels also stays quite general. It gives little information on platform operation details or cost-benefit conditions, factors that practitioners cannot ignore during actual implementation.

3.3 Limitations and Unresolved Issues

Several important shortcomings deserve attention. First, the dataset cuts off in 2020; the 5th batch of national-level ICH listings, published in 2021, falls outside analysis scope. Second, Anhui hosts a large number of national-level intangible-heritage items, yet only three categories receive analysis, limiting how widely these conclusions can be generalised. Third, translation examples are mostly drawn from established authoritative versions, which cannot represent the full spectrum of real-world translation practice. Text analysis of these examples sometimes lacks fine-grained linguistic and discursive exploration. Fourth, literature-review sections tend to be descriptive, lacking deep critical engagement with prior publications. The book cites a statistic: "more than 15,800 monographs on ICH-related topics have been published since 2001" (p. 3), without offering clear source references. The logical step from this statistic to the claim that regional-ICH-translation research has major gaps is not fully justified. Finally, the proposed ecological model, conceptually attractive as it is, has not undergone empirical testing. It remains abstract; follow-up studies need to prove its practical value and predictive capacity.

4. Conclusion

Su Tao's monograph advances ICH-translation studies. It synthesises multiple theoretical perspectives and focuses on under-studied regional-heritage translation topics. Its ecological framework offers valuable conceptual tools, and category-specific translation suggestions provide practical guidance for translators and cultural promoters. Still, empirical constraints, insufficient validation of proposed strategies and missing audience-reception research hold back its overall strength.

Future research built upon this work should introduce reception-study methods, digital-data analysis and cross-regional comparison, so researchers can empirically test the effectiveness of these proposed theoretical models. Despite its imperfections, this book represents meaningful progress toward systematic, interdisciplinary understandings of how regional Chinese intangible heritage can be translated and shared internationally. It will interest translation-studies, heritage-communication and intercultural-studies researchers, and supplies methodological references for cultural-translation research beyond China.

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