

Translation Studies from the Perspective of Intercultural Communication (2016–2025)

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Abstract: *Against the backdrop of globalization and the Chinese culture "Going Global", translation has evolved from mere linguistic conversion into a core carrier of intercultural communication. The integration of intercultural communication theories and translation studies has become a prominent academic focus. Taking core journal papers published in China from 2016 to 2025 as research objects, the study sorts out the research context of this field over the past decade, analyzes the application mechanism of core intercultural communication theories in translation practice, and discusses controversial issues in current research, so as to provide theoretical references for cultural international communication and professional industrial translation practices in the new era.*

Keywords: Intercultural communication, Translation studies, International cultural communication.

1. Introduction

In recent years, accelerated globalization has transformed intercultural interactions from one-way dissemination to two-way dialogue. As a bridge of intercultural communication, translation functions far beyond the conversion of linguistic symbols; it is essentially a practical form of intercultural communication. Through linguistic reconstruction, translators realize cognitive alignment between different cultural groups. Translation quality directly determines the efficiency and effectiveness of intercultural communication. Traditional translation criteria can hardly satisfy complex cross-cultural demands, creating an urgent need for theoretical support from intercultural communication.

Intercultural communication theories offer a new perspective for translation studies. Early translation research focused on "textual equivalence", while the intercultural communication perspective shifts the research focus to "communicative effectiveness", emphasizing that translation must balance linguistic accuracy and cultural acceptability. The study concentrates on research conducted over the past decade, a critical period when domestic translation research under the intercultural communication perspective achieved systematic development, empirical analysis and industrial segmentation, forming complete research outcomes that directly serve national international communication strategies and carry strong practical guiding value.

2. Research Methodology

This study adopts bibliometric analysis. Literature of the study is selected from core papers themed on "intercultural communication" and "translation studies" in the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database from 2016 to 2025, totaling 72 papers, among which 61 are CSSCI source journal articles. Literature screening criteria are as follows: papers focusing on the application of intercultural communication theories in translation, covering theoretical integration, practical strategies and other fields. By sorting out the temporal distribution, thematic clustering and core viewpoints of collected literature, this paper systematically

presents the overall development of translation studies under the intercultural communication perspective.

3. Developmental Characteristics of Translation Studies from the Intercultural Communication Perspective (2016–2025)

Driven by international industries and international communication policies after 2016, intercultural translation research broke away from scattered theoretical introduction in early years and exhibited two major characteristics: systematized and empirical theorization, industrial segmentation.

3.1 Systematization and Empiricism

Fang Jing (2020) constructed an influential factor model for intercultural translation, quantitatively verifying the functional paths of cultural cognition, contextual judgment and translator competence on translation quality, realizing quantitative breakthroughs in theoretical research. Dong Qiang (2024), based on the communication of Chinese discourse, proposed localized adaptation approaches for Western intercultural communication theories, remedying the mismatch between original theories and Chinese cultural contexts.

3.2 Industrial Segmentation

With the advancement of the Belt and Road Initiative and accelerated industrial internationalization, demands for cross-cultural translation in segmented sectors including science and technology, agriculture, food and cultural industries have surged. Scholars have formulated targeted translation strategy systems aligned with the features of each industry.

3.2.1 Scientific and Technological Translation

Liu Guifang (2025) proposed the strategy of "foreignized literal translation of technical terms+free translation with industrial background supplements" for professional terms of smart forestry. For instance, "Smart Forestry" is adopted as

the translation of "智慧林业", supplemented with explanatory notes on forest management models supported by the Internet of Things and big data to resolve cross-cultural transmission of specialized concepts. Combining Hofstede's individualism-collectivism dimension, Wang Yanli (2024) built a differentiated translation matrix for feed terminology to adapt to cognitive habits of overseas markets. The term "配合饲料" is rendered as "Collective Formula Feed" for collectivist cultural markets and "Customized Feed" for individualist cultural markets.

3.2.2 International Business Translation

Hu Liangyu (2022) established a graded translation model for culture-loaded words, categorizing vocabulary into core cultural words, associated cultural words and general words, corresponding to strategies of foreignization with annotations, free translation and literal translation respectively. This model is applied to overseas promotional texts of daily chemical and foreign trade enterprises.

3.2.3 Catering Translation

Zhai Yingying (2023) and Ren Yan (2023) proposed the "operation description+cultural simplification" strategy for culinary terms. The phrase "勾芡" is translated as "thicken the sauce with starch", accurately conveying operational methods while eliminating redundant cultural information. Focusing on the international communication of Chinese cuisine, Qin Mo (2022) adopted the "foreignized dish name+free translation of taste characteristics" strategy. "Buddha Jumps Over the Wall" is used as the foreignized translation of "佛跳墙", supplemented with the free translation explanation "a savory soup with various ingredients".

3.2.4 Translation of Traditional Chinese Culture for International Communication

In response to international communication demands for traditional Chinese culture, Li Chunlan (2024) proposed the "image retention+contextual reconstruction" strategy. "Teaism" is used for "茶道", supplemented with the connotative explanation "the philosophy of tea drinking emphasizing harmony".

4. Application Mechanism of Core Intercultural Communication Theories in Translation Studies

Intercultural communication theories provide core analytical tools for translation research, among which Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, Hall's high- and low-context theory and cultural negative transfer theory enjoy the widest application.

4.1 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory

Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory analyzes cultural disparities from multiple perspectives, offering quantitative references for translation strategy selection. In the individualism-collectivism dimension, scholars formulate differentiated translation strategies for target readers from

distinct cultural backgrounds. In research on feed industrial terminology translation, Wang Yanli (2024) found that readers from collectivist cultures prioritize "team collaboration" and "shared goals", so "饲料研发团队" is translated as "Feed R&D Team with Collective Efforts". In contrast, readers from individualist cultures value "personal contribution" and "innovation capacity", hence the rendering "Feed R&D Team with Individual Innovation". For business text translation, Yuan Yuan (2021) suggested that corporate brochures targeting collectivist markets should emphasize corporate social responsibility and team achievements with "we" as the primary subject, while materials for individualist markets should highlight product advantages and personal value enhancement using "you" as the primary subject.

4.2 Hall's High- and Low-Context Theory

When translating texts from high-context cultures to low-context cultures, the core strategies include information externalization and logical reinforcement. Yang Xingjun et al. (2017) discovered that traditional Chinese medical texts rely heavily on implicit contextual information. Concepts such as "Yin-Yang" in "阴阳失衡" require explicit annotated connotations, translated as "Yin-Yang Imbalance (Yin and Yang are two opposing and complementary forces in traditional Chinese medicine; imbalance may cause illness)". In analyzing the English translation of The Peony Pavilion, Su Feng (2019) externalized implied emotions behind plum and willow imagery through explanatory phrasing, rendering "梅香暗度" as "the subtle fragrance of plum blossoms, implying the hidden love". Empirical research conducted by Fang Jing (2020) proved that adding logical conjunctions in translations of high-context texts improves comprehension by low-context readers by 42%. For example, "天气转凉, 注意添衣" is translated as "As the weather turns cold, you should add more clothes", with the conjunction "as" added to strengthen logical relations.

When translating texts from low-context cultures to high-context cultures, strategies involve information implicitation and contextual reservation. In commentary on Chinese-Arabic translations from the Han Suyin Translation Contest, Wang Jia (2025) noted that Arabic (low-context) texts translated into Chinese (high-context) require less direct expression and more implicit phrasing. The blunt statement "your product is not good" is rephrased as "您的产品还有提升空间" to conform to Chinese communicative norms.

The contextual theory has specific applications in translating place names, public signs and other special texts. Sun Nannan (2023) put forward the strategy of "foreignization for proper nouns + context adaptation for generic nouns". For instance, "Qinling Mountains" is adopted for "Qinling", retaining cultural markers in proper nouns while using conventionally accepted generic nouns in English contexts.

4.3 Cultural Negative Transfer Theory

Cultural negative transfer refers to interference exerted by source cultural conventions on target language translation, leading to translational errors or cultural misunderstandings. Li Tao'an (2017) found in his research on tea trademark

translation that the literal rendering of "Longjing" as "Dragon Well" tends to trigger misunderstandings among Western readers. He thus proposed the foreignization strategy of using the pinyin form "Longjing Tea" to avoid cultural negative transfer. Furthermore, scholars have focused on negative transfer caused by cultural blanks, namely concepts existing in the source culture but absent in the target culture, such as "meridians in traditional Chinese medicine" and "teaism". Yang Xingjun (2017) proposed the "foreignization+ annotations" strategy, translating "经络" as "Jingluo (the meridian system in traditional Chinese medicine, through which qi and blood circulate)". From an intertextual perspective, Pan Jingli (2017) recommended supplementing cultural backgrounds and analogous comparative cases to help target readers grasp culturally blank concepts. For example, "teaism" can be analogized to Western "coffee culture" to boost acceptability.

5. Controversies and Divergences in Translation Studies under the Intercultural Communication Perspective

As integrated research advances, scholars have reached consensus on core research topics. Nevertheless, debates persist regarding the balance between foreignization and domestication, translators' role as cultural intermediaries, and the localization of Western theories. Such controversies reflect the complexity and diversity of translation studies and drive further disciplinary advancement.

5.1 Balancing Criteria for Foreignization and Domestication

The balance between foreignization and domestication constitutes a core dispute in translation research. Scholars including Su Feng (2019) prioritize cultural transmission, arguing that translation's fundamental mission is to facilitate cultural exchange, so foreignization should be prioritized to preserve source cultural characteristics. In analyzing the English translation of *The Peony Pavilion*, Su Feng (2019) pointed out that foreignized rendering of plum and willow imagery (e.g., "plum fragrance" for "梅香") increases comprehension costs for target readers yet conveys the cultural connotations of classical Chinese literature, aligning with the long-term goals of intercultural communication.

Other scholars represented by Wang Jia (2025) prioritize communicative effectiveness, holding that the primary objective of translation is effective communication. Translation strategies should be selected according to target readers' cognitive habits, with domestication adopted when necessary. Wang Jia (2025) found that over-foreignized cultural expressions in business texts (e.g., literal rendering "mianzi" for "面子") trigger misunderstandings among Arabic readers, while the domesticated equivalent "dignity" achieves superior communicative effects.

5.2 Positioning Translators as Cultural Intermediaries

From the intercultural communication perspective, translators' role has advanced from linguistic converters to cultural intermediaries, yet scholars disagree on the boundary of the

intermediary role and the extent of translator intervention. Before 2016, most of the scholars maintained that translators should objectively transmit cultural information without subjective intervention. In recent years, scholars including Dong Qiang (2024) and Lu Nan (2023) argued that translators inevitably carry cultural standpoints and should proactively act as cultural interpreters to enhance the acceptability of source culture. Dong Qiang (2024) stated that translators must actively adjust phrasing when translating cultural terms for international communication, supplementing historical backgrounds aligned with Western readers' historical cognition. Such intervention is essential to realize effective intercultural communication. Taking red cultural international communication practices as examples, Lu Nan (2023) held that translators' proactive cultural interpretation prevents cultural misreading and conforms to intercultural communication objectives. Hu Liangyu (2022) constructed an "intervention scale" for translation practices of daily chemical enterprises. Graded intervention is implemented in accordance with the degree of cultural loading: core cultural words (e.g., "traditional Chinese medicine") are accompanied by objective annotations, while associated cultural words (e.g., "herbs") can be rephrased to suit market demands, thereby striking a balance between subjectivity and objectivity.

5.3 Localized Construction of Western Theories

Current translation studies under the intercultural communication perspective are mostly grounded in Western theories, and scholars hold divergent views on the applicability of Western theories and the construction of localized theories. Scholars represented by Fang Jing (2020) argue that Western intercultural communication theories are universal and applicable to Chinese translation practices. Fang Jing (2020) built a model of influential translation factors based on Hofstede's Theory and verified its applicability through empirical data from Chinese enterprises.

6. Conclusion

Research integrating translation studies and intercultural communication theories bears both academic and practical value. It breaks disciplinary boundaries of traditional translation research, constructs an interdisciplinary research paradigm integrating linguistics, cultural studies and communication, and provides operable strategic guidance for translation practices across various industries. Current academic debates over foreignization-domestication balance and translators' intermediary role continue to promote the refinement of indigenous translation theoretical systems.

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