

A Study on the International Publicity Translation and International Communication of the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique in the Context of Building a Culturally Strong Nation

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of the "Culturally Strong Nation" strategy, the international communication and international publicity translation of intangible cultural heritage have become increasingly important. As a national-level intangible cultural heritage project, the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique holds unique artistic value and cultural significance, yet it still faces numerous challenges in its international dissemination. This paper first reviews the overall situation of international publicity translation and international communication of Wenzhou's intangible cultural heritage, highlighting issues such as inappropriate translation, monotonous content, and unclear audience targeting. By integrating the rich cultural characteristics and international communication potential of the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique, the study analyzes its feasibility and advantages for deeper engagement in a global multicultural environment. On this basis, specific strategies for international publicity translation and optimization paths for international communication are proposed, advocating the flexible use of diverse translation methods and promoting systematic and efficient international dissemination through multi-stakeholder collaboration and multi-channel integration. This research aims to provide theoretical references and practical guidance for the international publicity translation and global communication of Wenzhou's intangible cultural heritage, contributing to the broader endeavor of promoting Chinese culture worldwide.

Keywords

Culturally Strong Nation; Intangible Cultural Heritage; Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique; International Publicity Translation; International Communication

1. Introduction

The study of international publicity translation and international communication of China's intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in the context of building a culturally strong nation serves as an important approach to advancing the innovative yet au-

thentic global dissemination of ICH. It aims to foster internationally influential ICH communication groups, actively promote the global outreach of intangible cultural heritage, preliminarily establish a multi-agent, three-dimensional international publicity framework, and enhance China's international discourse power and influence. The Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique, a traditional local dyeing craft from Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, is recognized as a national-level intangible cultural heritage. Originating during the Qin and Han dynasties and flourishing in the Tang and Song periods, the technique was so esteemed that Emperor Xuanzong of Tang presented it as a national gift to visiting envoys. During the Yuan and Ming dynasties, the technique evolved into predominantly blue monochromatic patterns and eventually survived only in southern Zhejiang, with Wenzhou as its center, extending to adjacent areas like Taizhou and Lishui[1]. Currently, the international communication of the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique faces challenges such as inaccurate translation of publicity materials, monotonous communication models, and insufficient cultural adaptation, which hinder the effective transmission of its cultural value. Although scholarly interest in the international publicity translation and cross-cultural communication of intangible cultural heritage is growing, with theoretical approaches mainly centered on functional equivalence, multimodal discourse analysis. Systematic studies focusing on specific projects like the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique, especially those highlighting regional cultural features, remain scarce. Moreover, there is a notable lack of interdisciplinary research combining linguistics and communication studies in practice-oriented exploration. This study, taking the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique as its case, aims to review the current status of Wenzhou's ICH international publicity translation, analyze existing problems and their underlying causes, propose translation strategies better aligned with cross-cultural communication principles, and offer effective suggestions for optimizing international communication paths. The research seeks to enhance public awareness and appreciation of the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique and other forms of intangible cultural heritage, thereby contributing to the preservation and transmission of cultural legacies. Furthermore, through effective translation and international communication efforts, the study aims to increase the visibility and influence of cultural heritage, build bridges for global cultural exchange, and foster a deeper international understanding and appreciation of China's intangible cultural heritage.

2. Current Status and Existing Problems of Wenzhou ICH International Publicity Translation and Communication

2.1. Wenzhou ICH International Publicity Translation

Compared with the efforts dedicated to the preservation and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), the development of Wenzhou's ICH in the field of international publicity translation is still at an early stage. Research shows that existing

international publicity materials related to Wenzhou ICH mainly consist of digital media content and printed brochures, predominantly in Chinese, with relatively few bilingual resources and very limited formally published foreign language or translated works. Regarding English website construction for ICH, there is still no dedicated English portal for Wenzhou ICH; existing government websites provide only a few news articles about Wenzhou's ICH, lacking systematic and comprehensive English introductions.

In terms of translation quality, due to the highly specialized and extensive fields involved in ICH, coupled with the lack of unified translation standards, existing translation materials often suffer from mistranslations and omissions. Some translations deviate significantly from the original meaning, resulting in inaccurate and inappropriate expressions. These issues are particularly pronounced in the translation of project names, craft features, historical development, and technical terminology (such as in music, architecture, and folk crafts). For example, the national-level ICH item "藍夹纈" (Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique) shows inconsistency across official English translations: the Zhejiang provincial government's official website uses "Indigo Printing Technique," whereas the bilingual edition of the National ICH List translates it as "Indigo Dyeing Technique." Given that the technique primarily involves traditional dyeing rather than printing, "dyeing" more accurately reflects its characteristics, making the latter translation more appropriate.

Additionally, due to budgetary and resource constraints, Wenzhou's international publicity translation tasks are largely undertaken by local overseas liaison offices or university foreign language teachers, lacking a dedicated, stable team of professional translators. Translation personnel are scattered, with no clear standards for translators' cultural literacy or translation proficiency, and the proofreading mechanisms remain incomplete, restricting the overall standardization and professionalization of ICH international publicity translation. For instance, during research interviews, the person in charge of the Cangnan Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing project pointed out that the current promotional materials are mostly translated by temporary staff, lacking institutional support. Existing English content is mainly limited to basic textual introductions, with a significant number of images and video materials still untranslated, urgently requiring systematic foreign language translation support and improvement.

2.2. Wenzhou ICH International Communication

From the dimensions of communication agents, content, and audience[2], there remains significant room for improvement in the international communication of Wenzhou's ICH. First, regarding communication agents, most institutions and practitioners involved in Wenzhou's local ICH projects generally lack systematic international communication experience and have not yet formed internationally-oriented talent teams. In terms of digital technology utilization, the application of new media, social platforms, and short video formats by Wenzhou's ICH communicators remains

limited. International communication methods are relatively traditional, and digital communication strategies have not yet been systematically incorporated into the overall ICH preservation and promotion framework, particularly at grassroots levels and within project teams. Moreover, collaboration and resource integration among different communication agents are insufficient. There is a lack of interdisciplinary cooperation among experts from communication studies, linguistics, education, and arts, resulting in monotonous communication content, low communication efficiency, and a failure to build a collaborative international communication network.

In terms of communication content and forms, the overseas promotion of Wenzhou ICH largely remains static, relying heavily on textual descriptions and artifact displays. There is a lack of diversified, interactive communication forms, such as immersive experiences, interactive exhibitions, and digital cultural innovations. Current content does not fully consider the sociocultural backgrounds, aesthetic preferences, emotional needs, and information reception habits of different overseas audiences, nor are there differentiated strategies targeting segmented audience groups. Such a "one-size-fits-all" model fails to meet the diverse needs of the international market, negatively affecting overseas audiences' understanding, recognition, and sustained interest in Wenzhou's ICH, ultimately hindering its effective global dissemination and in-depth promotion.

Regarding the bidirectionality of international cultural exchanges, Wenzhou's ICH international activities mainly adopt a one-way communication model, typically comprising isolated exhibitions without continuous, in-depth interaction. There is a lack of stable mechanisms for mutual visits and cooperation platforms, and no long-term, normalized cultural exchange channels have been established. For instance, in the case of the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique, in September 2014, experts from over ten countries, including the United States, Japan, France, and Russia, visited the Chen Songyao Indigo Dyeing Studio for observation and learning. However, similar international exchange projects have been extremely limited since then.

Overall, Wenzhou's international communication of ICH still suffers from low frequency, narrow coverage, and the absence of a large-scale, systematic, and bidirectional international exchange network. There remains significant potential for improvement in areas such as event planning, international cooperation, and brand building.

3. Cultural Characteristics and Communication Potential of the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique

As a national-level intangible cultural heritage (ICH), the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique boasts a profound historical background and distinctive craftsmanship, constituting an important part of China's traditional dyeing culture. Its cultural characteristics are reflected not only in the complexity and artistry of its production process but also in the embodiment of Chinese philosophical reflections on nature,

life, and aesthetics. In the current era of global cultural diversity, the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique exhibits considerable potential for international communication, particularly through visual media and the cultural and creative industries, making it well-positioned to "go global." Firstly, with a long-standing history, indigo dyeing and resist printing techniques flourished in the Jiangnan region as early as the Tang and Song dynasties. As one of the key cities along the Maritime Silk Road, Wenzhou played a vital role in cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries. The patterns featured in the technique are often drawn from traditional Chinese symbols of good fortune, such as bats (symbolizing "happiness"), lotuses ("integrity"), the "double happiness" character, and longevity peaches, all of which convey rich cultural meanings and auspicious wishes, showcasing the Chinese folk aesthetic tradition that "every image must have meaning, and every meaning must be auspicious." Secondly, the visual characteristics of Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing offer strong advantages for communication. Its classic blue-and-white color contrast is visually striking, with symmetrical and refined patterns, presenting a style that is both simple and richly expressive. This intuitive and highly recognizable visual language aligns well with the modern international communication trend of "visual-first" dissemination. In today's world dominated by short video platforms and image-driven social media (such as Instagram and TikTok), the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique, as a non-heritage symbol rich in Eastern aesthetics, can quickly capture the attention of international audiences. Its textile products are widely applied in fashion, home decor, and cultural creative sectors, making it easy to integrate with global cultural trends such as sustainable fashion and eco-friendly design, thus enhancing its adaptability to cross-cultural communication. Furthermore, the symbolic nature of Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing grants it the potential to develop into an international cultural IP. As a representative of local ICH under the "Cultural Power" strategy, it is not merely a traditional craft but also a powerful cultural visual symbol. Within the framework of the "Belt and Road" cultural exchanges, the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique can be refined and redesigned into visual imagery, brand packaging, and thematic exhibitions, seamlessly connecting with the overseas cultural and creative industries. This not only enhances its cultural communication capacity but also expands its market vitality, achieving a "culture + industry" win-win scenario.

Therefore, in the process of international publicity translation and communication, the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique is fully capable of becoming a representative ICH case that enhances China's cultural soft power.

4. Strategies for International Publicity Translation

In the context of building a "culturally strong nation," international publicity translation plays an indispensable bridging role in the process of promoting the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique to the world. To enable overseas audiences to

better understand the unique forms of expression and profound cultural connotations embedded in intangible cultural heritage (ICH) projects, great emphasis must be placed on the quality of translation. Given that ICH projects often involve complex layers of knowledge spanning history, religion, folk customs, and classical literature, translation work is particularly challenging, and the quality of translations directly affects the overseas audience's acceptance and recognition of these cultural projects. Therefore, prior to formally carrying out the international publicity translation of the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique, it is necessary to systematically collect, accumulate, and organize relevant materials and digital resources. All collected materials should undergo review and verification by the relevant authorities to form a comprehensive, standardized, and permanently accessible ICH archive, laying a solid foundation for future translation and dissemination efforts. In translation practice, it is essential to adhere to the "Three Approaches" principle of international publicity translation: staying close to China's actual development, aligning with the needs of foreign audiences for information about China, and adapting to foreign audiences' ways of thinking[3]. Based on this principle, it is necessary to develop English translation standards tailored to the characteristics of the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique according to different types of texts. A normative study should be conducted on elements such as project names, craft characteristics, terminology, historical information, and the evolution of the technique. Translation standards should balance "faithfulness" and "fluency," while striving for linguistic "elegance" to enhance the professionalism and appeal of the translations. In terms of specific strategies, translators should flexibly apply a variety of translation methods—such as excerpt translation, moderate transliteration, annotation, and free translation—depending on the nature of the text and dissemination needs, in order to improve the overall quality of translations.

Taking the translation of the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique as an example, the Chinese character “缬” (xié) does not have a precise equivalent in English. Translators can add an annotation upon its first appearance, such as: "Xie (缬) refers to a traditional Chinese tie-dyeing technique involving resist patterns created with carved wooden clamps." The technique has been variously translated as “Indigo Printing Technique” or “Indigo Dyeing Technique.” Given that the craft primarily involves dyeing with the use of clamp-resist methods rather than printing, “Indigo Dyeing Technique” is a more accurate translation. Moreover, to highlight the uniqueness of the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique in international communication, it is advisable to retain its original pinyin form “Lan Jiaxie (蓝夹缬)” in translation, accompanied by an explanatory note, such as: "Lan Jiaxie (蓝夹缬) is a traditional indigo dyeing technique from Wenzhou, featuring hand-carved wooden clamps to create intricate patterns, reflecting a unique blend of artistry and folk craftsmanship." This translation approach not only accurately conveys the craft's characteristics but also enhances audience interest and awareness of the cultural

symbol, thereby boosting its international influence.

Regarding team building for international publicity translation, it is recommended to establish a dedicated translation team for Wenzhou's ICH projects, prioritizing the recruitment of university faculty members or professional translators with relevant skills and academic backgrounds. Translators should not only possess rich practical translation experience but also have an in-depth understanding of the cultural connotations and technical features of Wenzhou's ICH projects. During the translation process, translators should be encouraged to consult relevant literature, seek guidance from ICH inheritors and translation experts, and accurately grasp the cultural and technical nuances, striving to maximally restore the unique value and spiritual essence of intangible cultural heritage in cross-linguistic communication. Furthermore, accurate translation can facilitate the expansion of dissemination channels. Precise and fluent translations make it easier for content related to the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique to enter international mainstream media, academic institutions, and cultural exchange platforms, thus broadening the scope and impact of cultural export. Through the bridging role of language, it becomes possible to transition from one-way output to two-way communication, and from superficial dissemination to deep integration, truly promoting the sustainable international transmission of Wenzhou's ICH culture. Thus, proper international publicity translation is not merely about linguistic accuracy and fluency, but is a crucial link in optimizing communication paths and enhancing cultural soft power.

5. Optimization of International Communication Pathways

From the perspective of the audience, the international communication strategy for the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique should be adjusted based on the interests and needs of the international audience, analyzing their acceptance across different cultural backgrounds. To effectively enhance the communication impact of the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique on the international stage, the strategy must be audience-centered and scientifically formulated. First, research should be conducted on the international communication audience, including but not limited to overseas Chinese communities, foreign governments and cultural institutions, multinational organizations, international tourists, intangible cultural heritage experts, and the general overseas public. The research should cover basic information about the audience (age, educational background, cultural identity, etc.), media usage habits, the level of interest in Chinese culture, especially handicraft techniques, and their preferences and barriers in receiving cross-cultural information. This can be done through online surveys, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and social media data analysis to obtain authentic data on audience needs and acceptance. Based on the research findings, different audience groups should be segmented to form precise audience profiles. For example, for the academic and expert audience, specialized texts focusing on the historical origins, technical evolution, and preser-

vation research of the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique can be launched. For the general public and tourists, communication products centered around the experience of making Wenzhou indigo dyeing and cultural story short videos can be designed.

From the perspectives of both the communication subject and the content, the international communication pathway for the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique should be scientifically planned. Firstly, in terms of the communication subjects, there should be a shift toward diversification and specialization. In addition to traditional government departments and cultural institutions, efforts should be made to actively include university research teams, intangible cultural heritage inheritors, international cultural exchange organizations, professional translation institutions, and new media platform operators to participate in the international communication system. By building interdisciplinary, cross-regional, and cross-cultural collaborative mechanisms, a communication model of “government leadership, social participation, professional support, and market operation” can be formed to enhance the overall communication effectiveness. In terms of communication content, both systematization and innovation must be combined. On the one hand, a coherent and sustainable content system should be developed around the core elements of the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique’s historical origins, craftsmanship processes, and cultural significance. On the other hand, innovative content formats should be emphasized, combining emerging media methods such as short videos, interactive experiences, immersive exhibitions, virtual reality (VR), and digital museums to enhance the interest, interactivity, and immersion of the communication content. Meanwhile, based on the interests and cultural backgrounds of different target audiences, the narrative perspective and expression strategies should be flexibly adjusted. For example, academic narratives should be emphasized for professional audiences, while stories and emotional resonance should be highlighted for the general public, achieving precise “segmented” communication.

Regarding the methods of communication for the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique, the selection of communication channels and media formats should also match the preferences of the target audience. For example, visual content aimed at the international public can be published on platforms like YouTube and Instagram, while academic content aimed at expert audiences can be communicated through academic conferences and other channels. By conducting scientific audience research and designing precise content, the acceptance and impact of the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique across different cultural backgrounds can be significantly improved, leading to effective international dissemination of Wenzhou’s intangible cultural heritage. At the same time, the integration of Wenzhou’s intangible cultural heritage with the tourism industry should be promoted. International communication of intangible cultural heritage is not only a form of cultural expression but also a strategy to strengthen cultural and tourism integration. It makes tourism a carrier

for culture, and culture drives tourism[4]. Promoting the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique abroad can not only attract domestic and international visitors to learn and experience it but also stimulate the sale of related cultural products such as handicrafts and creative products. This can directly promote the local cultural tourism industry and indirectly boost the local economy in Wenzhou, forming mature integrated development models such as “Intangible Cultural Heritage + Cultural Tourism,” “Intangible Cultural Heritage + Industry,” “Intangible Cultural Heritage + Creative Industries,” and “Intangible Cultural Heritage + Research and Learning.”

6. Conclusion

In the context of the ongoing "Cultural Power" strategy, the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique, as an intangible cultural heritage with regional characteristics and cultural depth, plays an important role in international cultural communication. This paper, through an analysis of the current state of international publicity translation and communication of the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique, explores the issues in areas such as international publicity translation strategies, communication subjects, content, and audience positioning, and proposes optimization pathways. High-quality international publicity translation is not only a crucial guarantee for accurately conveying the cultural value of the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique but also a key approach to enhancing the understanding and recognition of international audiences. In the future, the international communication system should be built on a collaborative mechanism involving multiple stakeholders, guided by scientific audience research, and supported by systematic content development and diversified communication methods, to create a precise, efficient, and dynamic international communication system. Only by continuously improving translation quality, innovating communication methods, and telling the story of the Wenzhou Indigo Dyeing Technique in a compelling way can we effectively promote the global presence of Wenzhou's intangible cultural heritage, contributing to the enhancement of national cultural soft power and increasing international discourse power.

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