

Study on Idioms of Handan from the Perspective of Intercultural Communication

Jianhua Guo^{*}, Hexin Meng

Guilin University of Technology, Guilin, Guangxi, China

**Corresponding author: Jianhua Guo*

Abstract

With the acceleration of the globalization process, intercultural exchanges among countries have become more increasingly frequent. The collision and integration of different cultures have provided new opportunities and challenges for the dissemination of the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation. Idioms of Handan, as an important carrier of Chinese excellent traditional culture, have played the role of a bridge in international exchanges. On the one hand, we should achieve dynamic balance and information equivalence in cultural cognition and cultural psychological structure through different intercultural communication strategies and media, so as to better display the cultural charm of Idioms of Handan. Meanwhile, we also need to take into account the cultural shock which was brought by cultural differences and have better achieve intercultural adaptation.

Keywords

Handan idioms, intercultural communication, cultural cognitions

1. Introduction

Handan, as a famous historical and cultural city in China, is located in the south of Province Hebei and has a long history and rich cultural heritage. As early as the Neolithic period in the 3rd millennium B.C., human beings have flourished in the Handan area. As the capital of Zhao State during the Warring States period, Handan was historically a political, economic and cultural center, leaving behind many valuable cultural heritages. Handan's cultural characteristics are reflected in its traditional folklore, handicrafts and literary arts. There is a rich variety of operas, plays and folk tales, especially the idiom of "Learning to walk in Handan(邯郸学步)" and "Return the jade intact to the State of Zhao -- to return a thing intact to its owner (完璧归赵)", which vividly reflects the unique charm of the local culture. In addition, Handan's traditional handicrafts, such as paper cutting, ceramics and embroidery, demonstrate the wisdom and creativity of the local people. Handan's natural beauty also complements its culture, with historical sites such as the famous Nuwa Palace and Zhao Yun Temple attracting many visitors. Annual cultural events and festivals combine ancient traditions with modern life, reviving Handan's culture in its heritage. In short, Handan is not only a city with a profound

historical background, but also an important part of Chinese culture. It attracts people with its unique charm and has become an important window for studying and exploring traditional Chinese culture.

Chen Bin [1] holds that from the analysis of the existing achievements, the idioms and allusions of Handan have a distinct feature: The era of the allusions is mainly the Pre-Qin and Warring States Period, basically covering all periods of ancient Chinese history. More significantly, the idioms and allusions of Handan contain many classic works of China throughout the ages. Therefore, Handan is known as the “Capital of Idioms” because of the abundance of idioms, behind which lies the unique imprint of history. In today’s wave of globalization, different cultures are intertwined and collide with each other, so how to carry forward the traditional Chinese culture has become an important task in the new era. Handan is a famous historical and cultural city with more than 3,000 years of history and rich cultural resources, and many idioms and allusions have been created in the course of long-term historical accumulation. Idioms and allusions are the essence of Handan’s traditional culture, and they are the accumulation and carrier of Handan’s civilization development history for thousands of years. The intercultural dissemination of idiom culture is an important way to promote Handan culture, which can fully demonstrate the thickness and classical nature of Handan culture. This paper summarizes and analyzes the cultural connotation of Handan idioms from the perspective of intercultural communication, and explores their strategy and value in intercultural communication. At the same time, considering the cultural conflicts that may be caused by the exchange and integration of different cultures, it suggests that intercultural communication strategies and media should be used to better inherit and promote our excellent traditional culture.

2. Intercultural Overview

Intercultural communication refers to the interaction and communication between people of different cultural backgrounds in the process of communication due to cultural differences. This type of communication involves not only the use of language, but also nonverbal communication, values, customs, beliefs, and social norms. With the deepening of globalization, intercultural communication has become increasingly important. It not only promotes international understanding and cooperation, but also provides opportunities for individuals and organizations to thrive in a multicultural environment. The key to intercultural communication is understanding and respecting cultural differences. Different cultures have different perspectives on time, space, power distance and interpersonal relationships, and these differences can lead to misunderstanding and conflict. Therefore, the success of intercultural communication requires communicators to be culturally sensitive and adaptable, and to be able to flexibly adapt their communication style to the cultural background of the other party.

Laryy [2] referred that intercultural communication is the exchange of information and cultural interaction between people from different cultural backgrounds. The process of flowing, sharing and interacting with different cultural information in time and space is not only related to the dissemination of information and interpersonal interactions among members of different cultures, but also involves the diffusion, infiltration and migration of many cultural elements in human society. Sun Guangyong [3] also pointed out that, in essence, intercultural communication is a process of intercultural and cross-regional “expansion” of human social relations and social interactions. According to the theory of acceptance aesthetics by Jauss and others[4], the receiver of a cultural information has a prior mental schema and knowledge framework before entering the acceptance process, and this prior structure is the “expectation horizon,” namely the potential expectation of the object formed by the audience’s original education, aesthetics, experience, ideals, and so on.

The unprecedented development of globalization in the present era has not only created new opportunities for intercultural communication and opened up a wide world for cultural communication and exchange among different nationalities and regions, but also challenged national and local cultures, requiring them to improve the level of intercultural communication as soon as possible in order to adapt to the needs of the development of economic globalization. In the context of globalization, local traditional culture can only take the initiative to participate in intercultural communication in order to highlight its unique cultural connotation and spiritual charm in the collision of various cultural trends, and achieve the good effect of promoting local culture to the outside world. As the culmination of Handan culture, Handan idioms condense the essence of Handan traditional culture, which has attracted more and more attention from the international community and become an important carrier of Handan culture for foreign exchange. Therefore, how to realize effective intercultural

communication of Handan idioms and folk tales, enhance their vitality and influence in the cultural clash, make the local and national culture represented by Handan idioms and folk tales fully understood and accepted, and promote the development of both cultures in the exchange has become an important content of Handan cultural exchanges with foreign countries.

Just as Sun Guangyong [3] said that with continuous cultural exchanges, the understanding and acceptance of idiomatic allusions by foreign audiences must be a dynamic process of continuous understanding, recognition and acceptance. The Chinese language forms and cultural characteristics that were difficult to accept or recognize in the past will change with the deepening of communication, namely the expectation of orientation will change while the expectation of innovation will increase. In this case, the dissemination of Handan idiomatic allusions need not seek the same, but should try to maintain the integrity and richness of one's own culture and implant one's own cultural characteristics in foreign cultures, so as to complete the exchange and collision of the two cultures in foreign environments.

3. Strategies and Media for Intercultural Exchange of Idioms

3.1 The Cultural Connotation and Dissemination Significance of Idioms

As an important part of Chinese language and culture, idiomatic expressions not only carry rich historical stories and cultural wisdom, but also contain profound moral concepts and philosophies of life. Behind every idiom is a specific historical background and an allusion that reflects the observation and thinking of ancient people about social life, natural phenomena and interpersonal relationships. For example, the idiom of "Adding Eyes to a Dragon (画龙点睛)" not only describes a key stroke in artistic creation, but also symbolizes decision-making and grasping at a critical moment, so it can be translated into "Make the finishing point". The significance of idioms lies in their ability to transcend the limitations of time and space and to connect ancient wisdom with modern life. Through the use of idioms, people are able to quickly convey complex thoughts and emotions, enhancing the expressive and infectious power of language. In addition, idioms also play an important role in education and cultural exchanges, helping people to better understand and integrate into Chinese culture, and promoting communication and understanding among different cultures. In the context of globalization, the dissemination of idiomatic expressions not only helps to promote the excellent traditional Chinese culture, but also provides a unique perspective for the world to understand China. By learning and using idioms, foreigners can gain a deeper understanding of the essence of Chinese culture and promote multicultural exchanges and integration. Therefore, idioms are not only a treasure of language, but also an important bridge for cultural inheritance and exchange.

Intercultural communication is inevitably based on mutual respect and understanding of different cultures. The intercultural communication of Handan idioms also needs to achieve meaning sharing between the communicator and the audience, so that the foreign audience can accurately receive the cultural information of Handan idioms, fully understand their unique cultural connotation, and have a cultural dialogue with them. Therefore, first of all, we must fully explore the cultural connotation of Handan idiomatic allusions and identify the dimensions in which Handan culture can share meaning with foreign audiences.

3.2 Intercultural Communication Strategies

Intercultural communication strategies are effective methods and techniques used to overcome cultural differences and potential misunderstandings when people from different cultural backgrounds communicate. These strategies are designed to promote understanding, reduce conflict, and increase the effectiveness of communication. In today's world of increasing globalization, it is especially important to master intercultural communication strategies. First, cultural sensitivity is the foundation of intercultural communication. Understanding and respecting the values, customs, and behavioral norms of the other culture can effectively prevent conflicts that arise from misunderstandings. For example, proper etiquette and respect for the authority of the other party are especially important when communicating with people from cultures with high levels of hierarchy. Second, active listening is also key. Listening carefully to the other person's views and feelings can increase understanding and build trust. In communication, using open-ended questions to guide the other party to express his or her views can help both parties to better understand each other's cultural background. In addition, nonverbal communication should not be ignored. Different cultures have different understandings of

body language, eye contact, and personal space, so adapting to each other's nonverbal communication habits can help break down communication barriers. Finally, flexibility in communication style is another effective strategy. Adjusting one's language style and expression at the right time according to the cultural characteristics of the other party can make communication smoother. In intercultural communication, maintaining an open attitude and a learning mindset can not only improve one's intercultural communication skills, but also promote understanding and integration among cultures.

Many words in Handan idioms have become iconic cultural symbols, so they should be translated by literal translation and liberal translation. First of all, the unique cultural symbols and images should be retained in the direct translation so that the audience can perceive the existence of these symbols and images, and at the same time, the connotation should be interpreted in the Italian translation. First, we all know that Handan idioms are based on the ancient Zhao culture as a cultural background, and many unique local cultural factors can be seen in them. For example, the idiom "Return the Jade to Zhao" has two cultural symbols, "jade" and "Zhao", which are distinctive features of Zhao culture. These two symbols are bound to become the symbols of Handan culture and attract the attention of foreign readers. In the intercultural communication of Handan idioms and stories, these cultural symbols should be emphasized so that the audience can have a direct perception and vivid understanding of Handan history and culture. So it can be translated "returning to Zhao with perfect performance".

For some context-specific words, cultural notes can be added to the translation to help the target language readers understand the cultural connotation. As for some idioms whose cultural imagery floats on the surface, they do not need to be naturalized, but focus directly on explaining our local cultural tendencies, namely retaining the linguistic and cultural differences of the original language, especially the national and local colors. Through this strategy of combining naturalization and alienation, the target language group can fully perceive and understand the unique linguistic charm of Handan idioms. At the same time, the retention of unfamiliar symbols will trigger the audience's imagination and recreation, forming a cultural collision. This kind of collision, on the other hand, will produce unique aesthetic and emotional effects that will make Handan culture more deeply impressed on the minds of foreign audiences. Handan idioms are often related to the historical landscape and local customs of Handan. Such as the idiom "a beautiful dream of yellow sorghum(黄粱美梦)", allusion to the occurrence of the place is called yellow sorghum dream, Handan is a famous cultural and tourist attractions, yellow sorghum dream Lv Xian Temple scenic area is the only dream as the carrier of cultural attractions at home and abroad to enjoy a high degree of visibility. But this translation is too simple to express its real meaning so we can translate it into "A pipe dream". This unique cultural landscape of Handan can enter the field of vision of foreign audiences through the dissemination of idioms, thus arousing their interest in further understanding and achieving the purpose of showing the regional flavor of Handan. In addition, idiomatic allusions are characterized by profound meaning and conciseness, and often carry a great deal of cultural and spiritual information in a highly condensed form. For example, in the idiom "offer a humble apology (负荆请罪)" one of them, Lin Xiangru and Lian Po, can bear insults and humiliation regardless of personal grudges, and the other can change at every turn, and this kind of unity spirit, which is as open as a valley and takes into account the whole situation, embodies the profound connotation of Zhao culture. Handan idioms contain the spirit and soul of Zhao culture, and conveying this spirit is an important part of intercultural communication that cannot be ignored.

3.3 Equivalence of Cultural Cognition

In intercultural communication, reciprocity of cultural cognition is an important factor in promoting effective communication and understanding. Cultural cognition involves not only understanding one's own culture, but also knowing and respecting the cultures of others. When people from different cultural backgrounds communicate, both parties should strive to achieve cognitive equivalence in order to minimize misunderstanding and conflict. First and foremost, cultural cognitive equivalence requires both parties to maintain an open and tolerant communication attitude. Understanding the values, customs, and communication styles of the other culture can help build trust and increase the effectiveness of the interaction. Therefore, understanding these differences can help you adapt your communication style to communicate more effectively. Second, cultural cognitive equivalence in intercultural communication is also reflected in sensitivity to language. Language is not only a tool for communication, but also a carrier of culture. By learning the language or idioms of the other party, we can better understand their cultural background and way of

thinking, so as to create an equal communication environment in communication. In cross-cultural communication, only when both parties are willing to understand and accept each other's cultural differences can real communication and exchange be realized. Such a reciprocal relationship not only helps to eliminate misunderstandings, but also creates favorable conditions for mutual learning and integration of cultures. So, the reciprocity of cultural cognition in intercultural communication is the foundation for realizing harmonious communication and win-win cooperation.

Sun Guangyong [3] pointed out that although the strategy of literal translation plus liberal translation at the level of linguistic symbols can enable the audience to initially understand the basic meaning of Handan idiomatic allusions, language differences are a kind of obstacle in intercultural communication, and the audience groups in different language systems cannot really restore the full picture of culture, which constitutes the discrepancy of cultural cognition in the communication process. In order to reduce this discrepancy, non-textual means can be chosen to support communication to achieve cultural cognitive equivalence. For example, through pictures, movies, digital images and so on. The images in idioms are presented directly and even the plot is reproduced. There are various ways of cultural cognition, and the development of cognition means the development of the space of shared cultural meaning in intercultural communication.

For example, the idiom "Kill two birds with one stone (一箭双雕/一石二鸟)". When communicating with the target language group, the idiom can be compared with similar stories or proverbs in their culture, such as "Kill two hawks with one arrow" in Western culture. Such analogies can help the target group better understand the deeper meaning of the idiom. In addition, cultural cognitive equivalence is also reflected in the understanding of the emotional color of idioms. Different cultures may express the same emotion in different ways, so when translating, one should consider the emotional expression habits of the target culture and choose the vocabulary and expression methods that can resonate the most. Encouraging two-way communication is also an important strategy for achieving cultural cognitive equivalence. By organizing cultural exchange activities and allowing foreign friends to share their idioms and stories, we can promote mutual understanding and respect, thus forming a deeper cultural identity in the exchange. Through these strategies, Handan idioms and stories can not only shine on the international stage, but also build bridges of understanding and integration between different cultures.

3.4 The equivalence of Cultural Psychological Structure

Yu Ling [5] pointed out that cross-cultural psychological equivalence research remains a hot topic in both domestic and international studies, but overall, the research scope is rather limited. In intercultural communication, the equivalence of cultural psychological structures is an important foundation for effective communication and understanding. Cultural psychological structures include the values, beliefs, attitudes, and behavior patterns formed by individuals in a particular cultural context. These psychological structures profoundly influence the way people think and communicate. In intercultural communication, understanding and respecting each other's cultural psychological structure can help reduce misunderstandings and conflicts. First of all, the reciprocity of cultural psychological structure requires both communicators to have some knowledge of each other's cultural background. Understanding the psychological characteristics and thought patterns prevalent in each other's culture can help us better understand their words and behaviors. For example, in some cultures, collectivist values may lead to a greater focus on teamwork, while in other cultures, individualism may motivate individuals to be more concerned with self-expression. In such cases, understanding the other person's cultural psychological structure can help us adjust our communication style to better meet the other person's needs. Second, the establishment of reciprocity in the cultural psychological structure also requires both parties to adopt an open and tolerant attitude in communication. Maintaining curiosity and a learning attitude in the face of cultural differences can promote mutual understanding and respect between the two sides in communication. This reciprocity not only helps to eliminate cultural prejudices, but also creates the conditions for deeper cultural communication. Finally, the reciprocity of cultural psychological structure in intercultural communication is also reflected in emotional resonance. By sharing personal experiences and emotions, both parties can find common ground in cultural differences and establish emotional connections. This emotional resonance can not only enhance the depth of communication, but also create new understanding and identity in the cultural collision.

Similarly, Sun Guangyong [3] intercultural communication involves the diffusion and change of many cultural elements in human society, in which the cultural psychological structure of both sides plays a

fundamental role. Due to the great differences in historical traditions and cultural backgrounds, foreign audiences often feel strange and incomprehensible to the unique expressions as well as the values and world views embedded in them when confronted with the ancient idiomatic allusions culture, which creates a huge gap between the idiomatic allusions and the recipients. At present, the cultural and psychological distance between the two sides can be narrowed as much as possible by restoring the historical situation and recreating the storyline, but a more effective way to solve the problem is to seek the common point of cultural and psychological structure.

4. Challenges and Coping Strategies in Intercultural Communication

4.1 Cultural Shock

In intercultural communication, the dissemination of Handan idiomatic expressions often faces the challenge of culture shock. Such culture shock is caused by the specific historical background and cultural connotations of the idioms, which may differ significantly from the values, customs, and ways of knowing of the target culture. For example, the idiom “Learning to walk in Handan” emphasizes the lesson of losing oneself by imitating others, which in Chinese culture is seen as a warning that emphasizes individual independence and self-awareness. In some Western cultures, however, imitation is seen as an important way to learn and grow, which can lead to a misunderstanding of the meaning of the phrase. In addition, the emotional overtones and cultural symbols embedded in idioms can lead to culture shock. For example, the use of idioms is often closely tied to specific social contexts that may not exist or may have different meanings in different cultures. Such differences can lead to audience confusion in understanding idioms, or even misunderstanding and conflict. To cope with this culture shock, participants in cross-cultural communication need to enhance their cultural sensitivity, gain a deep understanding of the values and customs of the target culture, and flexibly adjust their communication strategies. At the same time, by providing appropriate cultural background information and explanations, they can help their audience better understand the deeper meanings of idioms and reduce misunderstandings caused by cultural differences. Positive interaction and communication can promote cross-cultural understanding and respect, and overcome the challenges of culture shock.

4.2 Intercultural Adaptation

Cultural adaptability refers to an individual’s ability to flexibly adjust his or her behaviors, attitudes, and ways of thinking in the face of different cultural environments in order to better integrate and understand the culture of others. Such adaptability is not only the key to successful communication, but also an important factor in promoting the harmonious development of intercultural relations. Cultural adaptability requires individuals to have an open mind and a passion for learning. When people are in unfamiliar cultural environments, maintaining curiosity and a willingness to explore can help them understand and accept new cultural norms and values more quickly. Cultural adaptability is also reflected in reflection and critique of one’s own culture. Individuals often discover the limitations and prejudices of their own culture through contact with the culture of others. Through this reflection, individuals can not only understand their own culture more fully, but also look at other cultures more objectively to achieve a higher level of resonance and understanding in communication. It is an indispensable skill in intercultural communication that not only promotes the growth and development of individuals, but also builds a bridge for communication and understanding between different cultures. In today’s deepening globalization, it is especially important to cultivate and improve cultural adaptability.

Qi Mingzhen [6] referred that the communicator needs to accurately grasp the cultural expectations of the cultural recipients, but at the same time, they also need to have a clear understanding of the cultural identity they are communicating. They should focus on the recognition of the local cultural identity, value the spirit and historical characteristics of the idiomatic culture, and must not sacrifice the cultural identity of the local culture to meet the cultural expectations of the cultural recipients. Intercultural communication has economic and political motives. In the process of local culture dissemination, the low-position culture disseminator hopes to realize the rapid development of the local economy and the improvement of its own image through cultural dissemination, but the high-position culture receiver hopes to confirm its own cultural identity by accepting other cultures. This creates a mismatch between the needs of the transmitters and the receivers, leading to an

imbalance in the identities of the transmitters and receivers of culture. Transmitters must make efforts to construct an image that is pleasing to the receiver so that the receiver of the culture appreciates the national culture, but they should not sacrifice the cultural identity of the local culture to achieve their political and economic goals in order to meet the expectations of the receiver of the culture. When exporting Handan idiomatic culture, communicators should emphasize self-interest, self-esteem and self-confidence to influence and persuade others, have full cultural self-confidence, clarify cultural identity and insist on the sustainable export of culture. The recognition of cultural identity can maintain and develop the excellent genes of local culture and truly reflect the plurality of global culture.

5. Conclusion

With its unique historical origin and rich cultural connotation, Handan idioms carry profound local characteristics and national wisdom. In intercultural communication, idioms, as the essence of language, can not only convey thoughts and emotions, but also promote understanding and recognition among different cultures. Through the study and dissemination of Handan idioms, we can not only better understand the depth of Chinese culture, but also find common values and resonance of human emotions in the collision with other cultures. Therefore, the preservation and promotion of Handan idiom culture is not only the heritage of local culture, but also an important way to promote cultural diversity and the progress of human civilization. It is hoped that in future exchanges, Handan idioms will continue to exert their unique charm and become an important medium for connecting different cultures and promoting mutual understanding.

Xiong Wei [7] pointed out that due to the influence of various factors such as thinking patterns, language systems, and cultural contexts, it is difficult for the source text and the target text to achieve absolute equivalence in meaning during the translation process. By conducting comparative studies and mutual references between the process of cross-cultural communication and the translation process, various problems that may arise in translation can be predicted or discovered, and explanations and solutions to these problems can be found. The idiomatic culture of Handan is deep and profound, and in order to realize the set purpose of dissemination and integration and achieve the exchange of cultural meanings, the disseminator must accurately grasp the cultural expectation horizons of the recipients of foreign culture and satisfy the expectation horizons through a variety of effective ways. At the same time, the intercultural propagation of idiomatic culture should establish a mode of cultural exchange on an equal footing and explore its unique Zhao cultural connotation. In the process of intercultural communication, the communicator must accurately grasp the cultural expectations of cultural recipients, but at the same time, it is more necessary to have a clear understanding of the cultural identity of the culture it communicates, focus on the identity of local culture, pay attention to the spirit of idiomatic culture, the historical characteristics and the value of idiomatic culture, so as to realize the complete communication and integration of idiomatic culture.

References

- [1] Chen, B. and Zhang, J. H. A preliminary exploration of the cultural stories and allusions of Handan. *Journal of Handan Polytechnic College*. 2005(04), pp. 8-13.
- [2] Samovar, L. A. *Intercultural Communication: A Reader*. Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 1988.
- [3] Sun, G. Y. Study on Idioms of Handan from the Perspective of Cross-cultural Communication. *Hebei Academic Journal*. 2011, 31(3), pp. 222-225.
- [4] Jauss, H. R. and Holab, R. C. *Reception Aesthetics and Reception Theory*. Zhou, N. and Jin, Y. P. Trans. Shenyang: Liaoning People's Publishing House, 1987.
- [5] Yu, L. *The Structure, Function and Educational Metaphor of the National Culture Mental Life Space*. Doctoral Dissertation, Guilin: Guangxi Normal University, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.27036/d.cnki.ggxsu.2024.002454>.
- [6] Qi, M. Z. Cross-cultural communication: Cultural expectations and local cultural identity – The dissemination and integration of handan idiom culture. *Writer Magazine*. 2012(24), pp. 163-164.

- [7] Xiong, W. Translation studies from the perspective of intercultural communication “Models”: Revisiting the interdisciplinary nature of translatology. *Journal of Hubei University (Philosophy and Social Science)*. 2025, 52(5), pp. 160-167. <https://doi.org/10.13793/j.cnki.42-1020/c.2025.05.008>.

Funding

This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgment

This paper is an output of the science project.

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author (s), with first publication rights granted to the journal. This is an open - access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).