

Research Article

Multimodal Collaboration and Meaning Reconstruction in the English Translation of Cantonese Opera: A Case Study of *The Flower Princess*

Chen Yulian^{*}

South China Business College, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou, China

Abstract

Cantonese opera, a comprehensive art integrating literature, music, performance, and makeup, is a significant part of Chinese traditional culture. However, given its rich multimodal characteristics, translating Cantonese opera poses unique challenges. This paper, grounded in multimodal discourse analysis theory, delves into the last act of the Cantonese opera *The Flower Princess* (*Fragrant Sacrifice*) to explore multimodal collaboration and meaning reconstruction in its English translation. Employing case analysis as the main research method, the study demonstrates the complementary and collaborative relations of multimodal factors in the English translation from four dimensions: culture, context, content, and expression. At the cultural level, it shows how to convey Chinese cultural values such as “loyalty, filial piety, benevolence, and righteousness”. In the contextual aspect, it explains how to reconstruct the historical context of the Ming-Qing transition era presented in the opera. Regarding content, it elaborates on accurately narrating the love story and historical background, and in terms of expression, it focuses on reproducing the tense atmosphere and emotional tone of the original. The research also points out potential problems in the translation process. For example, visual cultural elements like the detailed descriptions of palace settings and the cultural implications of actors' costumes are often lost in translation, and the speech intonation and rhythm unique to Cantonese opera are difficult to replicate in English. Therefore, it emphasizes the necessity of comprehensively considering the multimodal characteristics of the script in translation practice. By selecting targeted English translation strategies and methods, such as adding cultural annotations for visual elements and carefully choosing words to approximate the original rhythm, it is possible to more accurately convey the deep-seated cultural and artistic values of Cantonese opera. This research is expected to contribute to the inheritance and development of Cantonese opera culture on the international stage, promoting cross-cultural communication and understanding of this traditional Chinese art form.

Keywords

The Flower Princess, Multimodal Collaboration, English Translation, Meaning Reconstruction, Cultural Dissemination

1. Introduction

Cantonese opera is an art form that integrates factors like literature, music, performance and makeup. It holds an im-

portant position in traditional Chinese culture due to its unique artistic charm. Against the background of the in-

^{*}Corresponding author: yulianchen2003@163.com (Chen Yulian)

Received: 13 November 2024; **Accepted:** 5 March 2025; **Published:** 18 March 2025



Copyright: © The Author(s), 2025. Published by Science Publishing Group. This is an **Open Access** article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

creasingly frequent global cultural exchanges, the dissemination and translation of Cantonese opera has attracted much attention. Since multimodal factors play an indispensable role in meaning conveyance [1] and multimodal analysis can greatly affect the understanding of culture and art forms [2], the function and impact of multimodal factors need to be taken into consideration in translation practice. This study takes *Fragrant Sacrifice*, the final act of the classic Cantonese opera *The Flower Princess* as the research object, analyzes its multimodal characteristics, explores the collaborative mechanism of multimodal factors and the relationship between the modes in the process of translation and meaning reconstruction, and then proposes effective translation strategies and methods, hoping to provide a useful reference for drama translation research.

2. Researches on the Translation of Cantonese Opera

There are mainly two ways for the dissemination of Cantonese opera: performance and script translation. Script translation is an important way to introduce Cantonese opera to the world. Concerning the translation and dissemination of Cantonese opera scripts, Hong Kong and Macau have made significant contributions. Hong Kong has included Cantonese opera in textbooks and created online course resources to promote the spread of Cantonese opera. Meanwhile, universities like Lingnan University and many famous theaters have carried out plans for the introduction and translation of Cantonese opera scripts, which, together with the work of traditional artists, troupes, and researchers in Macau and Southeast Asia, have jointly promoted the overseas dissemination of Cantonese opera.

Over the years, the research on the English translation of Cantonese opera has witnessed some development. *The Flower Princess*, as a shining pearl in the palace of Cantonese opera, has contributed vivid materials to the study of Cantonese opera with its rich and diverse artistic forms, becoming a focus in existing research. Related studies have probed into the language conversion of its English translation, discussing the deep cultural significance and dissemination strategies from the perspectives of cross-cultural communication, translation studies and intangible cultural heritage protection. For example, Li and Zeng analyzed how Cantonese opera has spread overseas through various translation forms and maintained the vitality of the classic national essence in the process of change and innovation [3]. Zhu, using case analysis and corpus research methods, discussed the leading role of translators in the translation process, providing a new perspective for understanding the ecological adaptability of the English translation of Cantonese opera [4]. Yang focused on the theory of translation studies, analyzing the translation and dissemination patterns in five aspects: the subject, content, channels, audience, and

effects of translation, emphasizing the importance of translation in cultural dissemination [5]. Inspired by the theoretical development of multimodal discourse analysis, several researchers have explored this area from the multimodal perspective, such as Jiang and Chen [6]. They have attempted to construct a Chinese-English multimodal bilingual corpus for Cantonese opera by integrating multimodal discourse analysis theory, and explore its application strategies in Cantonese opera translation and translation teaching. Their study aims to enrich the application of multimodal discourse analysis theory in the field of traditional opera translation and pave new avenues for the international dissemination of Cantonese opera art. However, the research remains purely theoretical, lacking concrete empirical validation.

It can be seen that although the English translation research of Cantonese opera represented by *The Flower Princess* has received some attention, the research perspectives are somewhat limited, and there have been few attempts in the multimodal field. As a discourse with obvious multimodal features, the multimodal analysis of the English translation of Cantonese opera is a topic worth exploring.

3. Multimodal Characteristics of Cantonese Opera

The multimodal characteristics of Cantonese opera involve its inherent features in language, culture, music tunes, stage performance, etc., making it a typical comprehensive stage art and discourse type constructed by multimodal systems.

3.1. Linguistic Features

The scripts of Cantonese opera contain a wealth of culturally loaded words and poetic expressions. Words such as “宫闹”“驸马” and “香醪” carry specific historical and cultural information, and often lack corresponding words in English. Since cultural differences have an important impact on the translation of traditional Chinese dramas [7], translators need to adopt appropriate strategies to effectively convey the cultural essence contained in the original words. The language of Cantonese opera is also rich in poetry and uses a large number of poetic meters. In lines like “连理枝前双泪垂，鸳鸯枕上叹分离”, the concise wording and beautiful rhythm express emotions through antithesis and rhyme. This language style contains rich cultural connotations but also increases the difficulty of translation.

3.2. Visual Modality Features

The visual modality features of Cantonese opera are mainly presented in costume makeup and stage settings. The costumes of Cantonese opera actors are gorgeous and colorful, with distinct cultural traits. By way of example, the cos-

tumes of princesses are often made of gorgeous silk, with exquisite embroidery and decorations like phoenix crowns and misty shawls to reflect their noble status. The patches on their faces and the outlines of eyebrows all have unique semantic functions. Take the red eyeshadow for instance, it may indicate enthusiasm or celebration. The stage settings of Cantonese opera are usually rich and varied, from the grandeur of palace architecture to the tranquility of garden scenery, different scene arrangements create different atmospheres for the plot. For example, when depicting palace scenes, there will be resplendent palace settings with dragon and phoenix patterns to highlight royal majesty. The complexity of these non-verbal elements will affect translation practice to a certain extent [8].

3.3. Auditory Modality Features

Cantonese opera own unique musical tunes and sound effects. Different tunes denote different emotions. The Banghuang tune is passionate and often used to express intense emotions or battle scenes while the Erhuang tune is more soothing and suitable for lyrical paragraphs. Sound effects in Cantonese opera can to a certain level enhance the atmosphere. The ebb and flow of the gong and drum beats usually indicate different plot rhythms, and sound effects like wind and rain can create specific environmental atmospheres. In translation practice, translators need to consider how to convey the musicality and rhythm of Cantonese opera and how to maintain the emotions and atmosphere of the original work.

4. Theoretical Basis for Multimodal Research on the Translation of Cantonese Opera

The multimodal characteristics of Cantonese Opera not only enrich its artistic expressiveness but also provide challenges and opportunities for cross-cultural communication and translation. The theories of multimodal discourse analysis can provide a foundation for the English translation of Cantonese opera.

Multimodal analysis of discourse emphasizes the joint participation of various modalities in meaning construction. In Cantonese opera, language, visual modalities and auditory modalities are interwoven, each with its unique semantic function, and they work together to convey rich and complex meaning [9]. The language modality expresses meaning through text, the visual modality conveys information through images and body movements, and the auditory modality creates an atmosphere through sound and music. The multimodal discourse analysis theory emphasizes the integration of language, images, sounds, and colors to understand and translate the communicative environment and meaning of discourse. From this perspective, the analysis can

be conducted at the levels of culture, context, content, and expression.

4.1. The Cultural Level

The cultural level is the highest level of multimodal discourse analysis, involving values, beliefs, ideologies, and social customs in different cultural backgrounds. The analysis at this level helps to understand the cultural differences between the source language and the target language, thereby better reconstructing meaning. For instance, values such as "loyalty, filial piety, benevolence, and righteousness" in traditional Chinese culture are reflected in the script of *Fragment Sacrifice* through the actions and development of the plot. In the translation process, it is necessary to consider whether there are corresponding values in the target language culture and how to convey these cultural connotations through translation.

4.2. The Contextual Level

The contextual level mainly includes cultural context and communicative context [10]. The cultural context considers the impact of the broader socio-cultural background on communication. The communicative context mainly involves the specific situation in which the discourse occurs, such as the relationship between participants and the purpose of communication. According to the multimodal context parameter theory [11], the context of Cantonese opera can be divided into macro, meso, and micro levels. The macro parameters refer to social background, culture and history, providing a broad background knowledge. By way of illustration, understanding the status of Cantonese opera in Chinese society and culture, and how it reflects the historical background, is crucial for accurately conveying its meaning. The meso parameters involve the themes and sub-themes of Cantonese opera, such as love and war, as well as the multiple identities of characters and the multiple relationships between them. These parameters help to understand the plot structure and character craft, which is of great importance for discourse coherence and meaning transmission in the translation process. The micro parameters include elements like plot construction, semantic meaning of language, grammar and syntax. These parameters are closest to the specific process of semantic formation and can directly affect the audience's understanding and perception of the play. In translation, the analysis at the contextual level can help translators better understand the multimodal information and choose appropriate translation strategies. In specific scenes, the dialogue and expressions of characters, background music, and other multimodal factors together constitute a specific context. Translators need to determine the translation method based on the context to ensure that the translated text can convey the same meaning.

4.3. The Content Level

The content level deals with the specific information conveyed by the discourse, such as themes, plots and character images. The analysis at the content level helps translators accurately narrate the story and express emotions in the source language. The love story and historical background in *Fragrant Sacrifice* need to be conveyed to the target language audience through translation. Translators need to retain the content of the source language while making appropriate adjustments to adapt to the cultural background and aesthetic needs of the target language audience.

4.4. The Expression Level

The expression level pertains to the specific presentation of information, that is, the formal characteristics of various modalities. This includes the vocabulary and grammar of language, the composition and color of images, and the tone and timbre of sound. A scene in the source language can create a tense atmosphere through specific language styles, picture compositions, and musical atmospheres. In the translation process, translators need to reproduce this tense atmosphere by choosing appropriate vocabulary, adjusting sentence structures, and using appropriate rhetorical devices.

Based on multimodal discourse analysis theory, we can more comprehensively understand and translate Cantonese opera. The translation of Cantonese opera is not only a language conversion but also a cross-cultural and cross-modal communicative act, involving an in-depth understanding and creative transformation of the multimodal characteristics of Cantonese opera. Translators need to consider these different levels to ensure that the translation can not only convey the surface meaning but also convey the deep cultural and artistic value.

5. Multimodal Collaboration and Meaning Reconstruction

5.1. Multimodal Complementarity in Cultural Information Transmission

In the English translation of *Fragrant Sacrifice*, translators need to convey the cultural characteristics of Cantonese opera and the connotation of Chinese classical tragedy. In this process, not only the accuracy of language but also the auxiliary expressive function of non-verbal modalities should be considered.

The visual cultural elements such as costumes, makeup, stage settings, facial expressions and movements, echo the lyrics and jointly convey cultural connotations. In the original text, “帝女花” is the name of the play and also symbol for Princess Changping. When translating into English, it is necessary to retain its cultural connotation and deep mean-

ing by way of annotations or cultural background introductions for foreign audiences to understand. Cultural transmission can also be realized through the complementarity of language modalities and non-language modalities. Specifically, “The Flower Princess” indicates the noble status of the woman from a linguistic perspective; visually, the exquisite embroidered costumes and gorgeous head-wear of the actress (as shown in Figure 1) reflect her noble temperament and auditorily, soft and elegant music sets off a noble atmosphere.

Example 1

Source text: 鸳鸯侣，相偎傍。

Translation 1: Mandarin ducks cuddled up.

Translation 2: As partners in life and death, holding each other. (Figure 2)

Mandarin ducks are considered symbols of faithful love in Chinese culture for they appear in pairs and hold an important position in Chinese classical literature and art, often used to depict love and marital relationships. In modern society, mandarin ducks are not only symbols of love but also represent family happiness and social harmony. As a unique Chinese cultural element, its international recognition may not be as high as other Chinese cultural symbols like dragons and pandas. Foreigners may know relatively little about it, especially those who have not studied Chinese culture in depth. As to the translation of “鸳鸯侣，相偎傍”, “mandarin ducks” in translation 1 accurately corresponds to the Chinese cultural image of “鸳鸯”. “Cuddle up” can also express the action of “相偎傍”, which is in line with English expression habits. This translation retains the emotional tone of the original sentence, but may still require further cultural explanation for Western audiences to fully understand its profound meaning. Comparatively, translation 2 does not retain the relevant cultural image in the language expression, which in a sense causes the loss of cultural information, but with the support of the image (Figure 2), through the characters’ body movements and expressions, it can also produce an intuitive feeling for the exotic audience, helping them to accurately understand the meaning of this expression.



Figure 1. Visual Presentation of the Exquisite Costumes.



Figure 2. Imagery Adaptation of “鸳鸯侣，相偎傍”.

5.2. Multimodal Collaboration in Building Communicative Context

The contextual level involves the specific situation of discourse, including factors such as time, place, and social background. *Fragrant Sacrifice* is the final episode of *The Flower Princess*, which is set against the historical background of the end of the Ming Dynasty and the invasion of the Qing army, with the country in turmoil. Princess Changping and Zhou Shixian are reunited after going through numerous hardships of separation. In such a desperate situation, they resolutely choose to go to the netherworld together on their wedding night to express their loyalty to the country and their adherence to love.

In the English translation, translators need to consider how to rebuild this historical context through language selection, cultural annotations, and the use of audio-visual modalities. In the play, the stage setting and costumes create the environment and historical background of the story, while the lyrics convey the emotions of the characters and the tension of the drama.

Example 2

Source text: 倚殿阴森奇树双

Translation1: Leaning against the palace's gloomy shade, a pair of strange trees stand,

Translation2: Leaning against the Princess Chamber are two mysterious entwining trees.

The lyrics “倚殿阴森奇树双” not only depict the scene but also reflect the atmosphere and emotions. In translation 1, “阴森” is translated as “gloomy”, which accurately conveys the mysterious and oppressive feeling of the trees next to the palace in the original sentence, and appropriately reflects the psychological feelings of the protagonists at the time. Additionally, “殿” is translated as “palace” or “Princess Chamber” to clearly indicate the royal attribute of the scene; “strange” and “mysterious” semantically strengthen the description of the specific context and deepen the emotional connotation.

Similarly, in Example 3, “落花满天蔽月光” is translated into “Falling petals fill the atmosphere, obscuring

the moon” or “Falling petals shadow the moon”, which not only conveys the artistic conception of the original text but also complements the visual modality (such as the falling petals effect on the stage) to jointly construct the tragic atmosphere of the drama. Besides that, the downward melody and slow rhythm, as well as the actors' body language and facial expressions (Figure 3), enhance the sense of sorrow and loss in the lyrics.

Example 3

Source text: 落花满天蔽月光

Translation1: Falling petals fill the atmosphere, obscuring the moon.

Translation2: Falling petals shadow the moon.



Figure 3. Context Presentation Aided by the Body Language and Facial Expressions of the Actress.

Likewise, in Example 4, “the wedding candle” in and “dream wedding”, supplemented by the scene setting and the actors' costumes, can easily make foreign readers understand the specific context of the story. Yet, compared with “turn into a blood wave” in translation 2, which seems to be relatively strong and clumsy, “end in blood and death” in translation 1 is more in line with English thinking habits. In this case, being familiar with the background and theme, combined with the scenes presented on the stage and the actors' expressions and actions and other non-verbal factors, can help foreign audiences better understand its meaning.

Example 4

Source text: 盼得花烛共偕白发，谁个愿看花烛翻血浪？

Translation1: Looking forward to growing old together with the wedding candle, who would want to see the wedding candle turn into a blood wave?

Translation2: Finally, my dream of a dream wedding till death do us part has come true, who would dream that our dream wedding would end in blood and death?

5.3. Multimodal Interaction in Presentation of Content

The content level concerns both the form and meaning of

discourse; the form of discourse concerns various non-verbal factors, such as narration, background music, actions, and sound effects, whereas the meaning of discourse is further divided into conceptual meaning, interpersonal meaning, and textual meaning. Translators need to consider all aspects of the content, carefully design subtitles, supplement visual and auditory information, enhance the understanding and emotional experience of foreign audiences, and enable them to fully understand and feel the profound connotation and artistic charm of this Cantonese opera.

5.3.1. Discourse Form

In *Fragrant Sacrifice*, the background music and the actors' actions jointly create a tragic and beautiful atmosphere. When Princess Changping and Zhou Shixian take poison together, the desolation of the background music and the actors' mournful actions convey a sense of tragic beauty. Translators can convey this emotion through subtitles and additional descriptive words to supplement the emotions conveyed, such as "The mournful music begins to play, and the two protagonists slowly raise their poisoned wine, their eyes filled with reluctance and determination".

5.3.2. Discourse Meaning

Meaning cannot exist independently; it must be embodied by specific signs or combinations of signs, such as language, or in conjunction with other modalities, and can also be represented by signs outside of language, such as images and animations [12]. Conceptual meaning deals with the basic facts or information. As shown earlier, "帝女花" refers to both chrysanthemums and the identity of Princess Changping as an imperial daughter, and translating it as "The Flower Princess" not only retains the concept of "flower" but also clearly defines the identity of "princess", reflecting the accuracy of conceptual meaning. Interpersonal meaning relates to social relationships and interactions. The relationship between Princess Changping and Zhou Shixian is the core of this tragedy. It is necessary to convey their profound love and spirit of sacrifice, and to strengthen this relationship through the translation of dialogue and lyrics. To illustrate, the translation in Example 5 conveys the emotions and intentions of the original text and maintains the conveyance of interpersonal meaning through the rhythm and rhyme of English.

Example 5

Source text (male): 寸心盼望能同合葬 鸳鸯侣相偎傍
泉台上再设新房

Source text (Female): 唉，惜花者甘殉葬 花烛夜难为驹
马饮砒霜

Translation (male): My heart longs for us to be buried together. As a pair of mandarin ducks cuddled close. To set up a new house on the platform of springs.

Translation (Female): Alas, the flower-lover is willing to

be buried on the wedding night. It's hard for the prince to drink the poisoned wine.

Textual meaning indicates how discourse organizes and constructs the entire story. The plot of *Fragrant Sacrifice* revolves around the love tragedy. It is essential for the translators to maintain the coherence and logic of the plot to ensure that foreign audiences understand the development and climax of the story. They can clearly mark each scene transition and key plot points through subtitles, such as adding an English introduction as shown in Example 6 to introduce the background, outline the main conflicts of the plot, and reflect the integrity of textual meaning.

Example 6

The Flower Princess (*Dae Neu Fa* or *Dinihua* in Mandarin) has become the most renowned Cantonese Opera since its 1957 premier in Hong Kong. The opera is a serious political drama played out between the Han and non-Han following the fall of the Ming dynasty, and the plot pits romantic love against the lofty Confucian ideals of social hierarchy and moral rectitude.

5.4. Multimodal Collaboration in Emotion Expression

The expression level refers to the form in which discourse is ultimately manifested in the material world. Translators need to consider how to convey the emotions and atmosphere originally expressed through music and performing arts through text. The rhythm, rhyme, and emotional intensity of the lyrics need to be reproduced through word selection and sentence structure. This transformation of expression reflects a complementarity between the language modality and the auditory modality, jointly conveying the emotional depth of the drama. In translation, in order to retain the rhythm and rhyme, it is recommended to choose lyrical words. Visually, the translation of facial expressions and movements should accurately convey emotions. Auditorily, the translation of music should take into account the restoration of melody and rhythm. Therefore, various modalities can work collaboratively to convey emotions at the expression level.

The Chinese lyrics of Cantonese opera usually have a certain rhythm and rhyme, and the artistic appeal is enhanced through antithesis, rhyme, and other techniques. It is difficult for English translations to fully replicate this. For example, the English translation in Example 7 is relatively plain in sentence structure, which is quite different from the structure of the original Chinese sentence. Although it has a certain sense of rhythm, it still cannot match the original. The characteristics of the original Chinese poem are difficult to reflect after translation, which is a common problem in Cantonese opera translation.

Example 7

Source text: 倚殿阴森奇树双，明珠万颗映花黄。

Translation: Leaning against the palace's gloomy shade, a

pair of strange trees stand. A myriad of pearls reflecting the yellow flowers' glow.

6. Possible Problems in the English Translation of Cantonese Opera

6.1. Loss of Visual Cultural Elements

The visual cultural elements of Cantonese opera are rich and diverse. The costumes, expressions, and actions of the actors in the play are important visual elements. From the perspective of visual modality, the original lines outline images such as “宫殿、奇树、明珠、花烛” for the audience. Words in the translation such as “the palace”, “trees”, “pearls” and “flowers”, help the target audience to build corresponding visual images in their minds. However, compared with the rich visual presentation of the original play, the translation is relatively brief. More precisely, there is a lack of more detailed description of the gloomy atmosphere of the palace and the unique shape of the trees, and it cannot fully convey the visual shock and delicacy of the original play. In the original play, “鸳鸯侣，相偎傍” can present a picture of a couple's close dependence through visual elements such as the actors' performances, stage settings, and props with mandarin duck patterns. In the English translation, “mandarin ducks” and “cuddle up” can provide relevant visual imagination foundation for Western audiences, but due to cultural differences, they may not be able to intuitively feel the delicate emotions and beautiful pictures contained therein as Chinese audiences do. Equally, “谁个愿看花烛翻血浪” in the original play may suddenly switch from a joyful wedding scene to a bloody picture through changes in stage lighting, colors, and actors' performances, bringing a strong visual impact to the audience. However, in the English translation, this visual contrast is difficult to directly convey through text, and the audience needs to rely more on imagination to build the picture. These cultural visual elements carry rich cultural connotations, and their loss may affect the target audience's in-depth understanding of the opera.

6.2. Loss of Speech Intonation and Rhythm

In the original play, the actors' speech intonation, ups and downs, play an important role in emotional expression and meaning transmission. In the translation, due to the differences between the English and Chinese phonetic systems, these characteristics of speech intonation cannot be directly transformed. The subtle differences in emotions conveyed through changes in tone and speaking speed in the original sentence are difficult to reflect in the English translation, and the rhythm cannot match the performance rhythm of the original play. The music and sound effects in the original play are closely coordinated with the lines, creating a sad and desolate atmosphere. The translation may echo this emotion-

al atmosphere to a certain extent through the choice of words and expression of tone, such as translating “悲咽” as “weeps” and “断肠” as “grievous” to convey sadness. However, compared with the rich appeal of the original play, the translation is relatively weak. The atmosphere created by the rhythm, melody, and unique instrumental performance in the original play cannot be directly presented in the translation. For instance, the rhythm changes of gongs and drums, and the melodious and smooth string music, are difficult to find corresponding auditory effect expressions in the translation, making it impossible for target readers to directly experience the artistic charm of the original play. It is suggested to simulate the ups and downs of the original text by skillfully arranging the stress of words and the rhythm of sentences. For example, use means such as alliteration, rhyme, and onomatopoeia. For lines in the original text with a strong sense of rhythm, when translating, choose English words with a rhythmic pronunciation, such as “pitter-patter” (simulating a brisk rhythm like raindrops), “rumble” (simulating a deep, booming rhythm), etc. to compensate for the inability to directly convert speech intonation through the phonetic effects of vocabulary. For the parts in the original text where emotions are conveyed through changes in speaking speed, achieve similar effects in the translation by alternating between complex and simple sentences. For example, for short sentences in the original text that quickly express excited emotions, the translation also presents concise and powerful short sentences; for long sentences in the original text that slowly and heavily express sadness, use long sentences with complex structures and modifying components in the translation to echo.

7. Conclusion

The cross-cultural communication and translation of Cantonese opera is a complex and challenging task. The multimodal characteristics of Cantonese opera require translators to not only be proficient in language but also to have a deep understanding of cultural backgrounds, context parameters, content meanings, and expression forms. Effective translation strategies and methods should consider the complementarity and collaboration between language, visual, and auditory modalities to ensure that the translated work convey the same emotional depth and artistic charm as the original play in the target culture. Although there are problems with the transmission and translation of visual cultural elements and speech intonation, through continuous research and practice, we can explore more effective translation methods to promote the dissemination and appreciation of this Chinese cultural treasure.

Acknowledgments

The author wishes to acknowledge the support from the

project “Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Lingnan Cultural Discourse: Meaning Construction and Translation Studies” (Project Code: 2021WTSCX151) and the project “Research on the Integration of Lingnan Culture into the Ideological Education for English Majors: A Practical Teaching Perspective” (Project Code: 2022GXJK408).

Author Contributions

Chen Yulian is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

References

- [1] Bassnett, Susan. (2014). *Translation Studies*. London: Routledge.
- [2] Jewitt, C. (2009). *The Handbook of Multimodal Analysis*. London: Routledge.
- [3] Li Y. X., Zeng Y. W. (2018). The Translation and Evolution of Cantonese Opera Under the Frame of Intercultural Communication: Taking the English Translation of *The Flower Princess* as an Example. *Sichuan Opera*, (9), 18-23.
- [4] Zhu Y. B. (2021). On the English Translation of Cantonese Opera from the Perspective of Ecological Translation Studies: A Case Study of the English Translation of *The Flower Princess*. *Journal of Wanxi University*, (03), 116-121.
- [5] Yang G. F. (2022). A Study on the Current Status and Strategies of Cantonese Opera Dissemination from the Perspective of Translation Studies: A Case Study of *The Flower Princess*. *Journalism and Media Studies*, (11), 99-102.
- [6] Jiang L. P., Chen X. (2025). On the Construction of a Chinese-English Multimodal Bilingual Corpus of Cantonese Opera and Its Application in Translation. *Journal of Wuyi University (Social Science Edition)*, (2), 71-75+94.
- [7] Chen Y. (2015). Cultural Differences in Translation: A Case Study of Traditional Chinese Opera. *Translation Quarterly*, (3), 45-62.
- [8] Liu M. (2016). The Translation of Traditional Chinese Opera Performance Elements. *Babel*, (4), 567-582.
- [9] Zhang D. L. (2009). On A Synthetic Theoretical Framework for Multimodal Discourse Analysis. *Foreign Languages in China*, (01), 24-30.
- [10] Halliday, M. A. K. & R. Hasan. (1989). *Language, Text and Context: Aspects of Language in a Social Semiotic Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [11] Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2006). *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
- [12] Zhang D. L. (2023). On the Models of Modal Integration in Multimodal Discourse Construction. *Modern Foreign Languages*, (04), 439-451.