

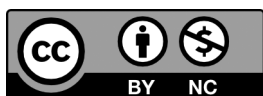
# The Translation for Performance of Jingju Props (‘Dao Qiang Bazi’) from the Perspective of Multimodal Translation Theory

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**Abstract:** Jingju (Peking Opera) translation is caught in a critical dilemma, torn between a protectionist impulse to safeguard its cultural authenticity and the practical demand for genuine performability on the global stage. This article argues that prevailing text-centric translation practices, which often prioritize textual fidelity at the expense of performative function, inadvertently lead to a “cultural discount,” rendering key multimodal elements like ‘Dao Qiang Bazi’ (theatrical weaponry and stylized combat) semiotically inert for non-native audiences. By analyzing the translation of ‘Dao Qiang Bazi’ as a microcosm of Jingju’s holistic artistry, this study adopts performability as its central analytical lens, arguing that a multimodal framework is essential for translating such complex artistic units. The paper proposes a concrete strategic approach that centers on constructing an “immersive interpretive environment” that manages audience cognitive load through three progressive layers: Cognitive Priming, Real-time Assistance, and Experiential Internalization. Ultimately, this study offers a practitioner-focused perspective that shifts the goal of Jingju translation from cultural preservation to successful market integration. By engineering new “affordances” that extend the art form into new performance practices, this approach ensures its complex meanings are not just preserved but effectively communicated, thereby opening up new possibilities for its reception on the global stage.

**Keywords:** Jingju (Peking Opera); Multimodal Translation; Performability; ‘Dao Qiang Bazi’ (Theatrical Props); Cultural Discount



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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Jingju and the Necessity of Multimodal Translation

As a quintessential form of China’s intangible cultural heritage, Jingju (Peking Opera)<sup>1</sup>, a highly stylized and comprehensive performing art that integrates singing, speaking, acting, and martial arts, constitutes a holistic artistic

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<sup>1</sup> Jingju, commonly known as Peking Opera, is a highly stylized and comprehensive performing art that integrates singing, speaking, acting, and martial arts. It is recognized as a quintessential form of China’s intangible cultural heritage.

system that synthesizes linguistic, visual, and kinetic elements to express traditional Chinese values and worldviews. Amidst growing intercultural exchange, the effective translation and dissemination of Jingju are imperative for fostering a global understanding of Chinese culture. Many well-known Peking Opera plays have been translated for international audiences, including classic repertoires such as *Farewell My Concubine* (霸王别姬), *The White Snake* (白蛇传), and *The Drunken Concubine* (贵妃醉酒). These plays are frequently performed and translated, often with accompanying subtitles or program notes to aid comprehension. Furthermore, the China National Peking Opera Company has actively engaged in promoting Peking Opera globally through initiatives like the “Peking Opera Film Series” and the “English Translation Series of 100 Classic Peking Opera Plays.” These official projects aim to systematically translate a large corpus of classic Peking Opera scripts and present them to a wider audience. However, conventional translation practices often treat Jingju as a purely literary artifact, prioritizing textual fidelity at the expense of its intrinsic performative identity. This single-modality approach overlooks the synergistic interplay among verbal text, stylized gestures, and auditory symbols (e.g., percussion rhythms), resulting in the loss of culturally specific meanings and performative functions in target contexts.

Multimodal translation theory offers a more comprehensive framework by conceptualizing meaning-making as an interplay of multiple semiotic systems, including language, gesture, sound, and visual imagery. Drawing on the foundational work of Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) in multimodal discourse analysis, and further developed by scholars such as Gambier (2009) and O’Halloran (2005) in translation studies, this theory recognizes that theatrical communication relies on the synergistic integration of verbal dialogue, embodied performance, and audio-visual cues to achieve narrative and aesthetic coherence. By foregrounding these dynamic interactions, multimodal translation theory facilitates a paradigm shift in addressing the complexities of performance-oriented translation. It moves beyond the limitations of literary translation, which focuses primarily on dramatic texts, to emphasize the co-construction of meaning through integrated semiotic resources. This perspective is vital for translating Jingju, an art form whose success on the international stage depends not on a text-bound translation, but on a holistic approach that considers how choreographed movements, symbolic props (砌末), and musical accompaniment synergize to create a compelling theatrical experience for a live audience. Therefore, this study will apply this theory to focus on one of the most representative performative elements in Jingju—‘Dao Qiang Bazi’—to explore how to achieve an effective cross-cultural transfer of its performative functions.

## 1.2 ‘Dao Qiang Bazi’ in Multimodal Translation Challenges

‘Dao Qiang Bazi’ (hereafter ‘Bazi’) is a collective term for weapon props on the traditional Jingju stage, including sabers, spears, swords, and halberds. By extension, ‘Bazi’ has become synonymous with staged combat, and the foundational training in these weapon techniques is known as “acrobatic fighting skills” (把子功). Mastery of those skills is essential for actors performing combat scenes. This weaponry performance constitutes a crucial component of the physical action in Jingju, representing a highly stylized refinement of real-life combat that serves to delineate character and advance the plot. In essence, ‘Bazi’ is a microcosm of Jingju’s multimodal artistry, fusing the linguistic (its name), visual (its form), kinetic (its movements), and auditory (its accompanying percussion) into a single performative unit, making it a perfect case for multimodal analysis. However, when confronted with a highly symbolic prop like ‘Bazi’, existing literary-focused translation practices often fall short. By applying simple terminological substitutions without considering the target audience’s comprehension or differentiating between various types of ‘Bazi’, these practices

oversimplify or neglect the cultural symbolism, codified movements, and multimodal interactive meanings inherent in the performance. This approach has objectively led to a distortion and loss of meaning, mirroring the broader challenges in translating Jingju.

Therefore, this study focuses on ‘Bazǐ’ as a specific entry point to address these larger issues, positing that by resolving the translation problems associated with this core element, solutions can be generalized to other multimodal aspects of Jingju. Drawing upon multimodal translation theory, this essay investigates strategies for translating ‘Bazǐ’ for performance by exploring the primary challenges in conveying its cultural symbolism and performative functions to a non-native audience, and proposing practical solutions that balance textual fidelity with cultural intelligibility and stage performability. Ultimately, this study seeks to develop a practical framework that contributes to Jingju’s accessibility as a living art form in a global context.

## 2 Literature Review

This review is structured into three sections. First, it outlines existing research on the translation of Peking Opera. Next, it introduces multimodal translation theory and its application to Chinese opera. Finally, it identifies a research gap concerning stage-prop translation, laying the groundwork for the following analysis.

### 2.1 Peking Opera translation and translation studies

Since the mid-20th century, Jingju translation has garnered increasing attention, revealing diverse and often limited approaches. Performance-oriented translators like Elizabeth Wichmann and Hwang Wei-shu prioritized stage effect and audience acceptance (Wichmann, 1991; Hwang, 1976). While their strategies enhanced performability for Western audiences, they often led to the oversimplification of culturally specific elements, particularly visual props like ‘Bazǐ’, resulting in a loss of symbolic meaning. In fact, this concern for performance is not a recent phenomenon. A recent study by Zhang and Wang (2025) on Arlington’s early 20th-century translation, *The Chinese Drama from the Earliest Times until Today*, reveals early translators’ efforts in tackling this issue. Their analysis points out that Arlington, through his detailed stage directions and notes on performance details, had consciously attempted to translate the entire “performance event” rather than just the script’s lines. Although his methods may seem incomplete by today’s standards, this undoubtedly represents an early budding of a valuable, beyond-the-text multimodal translation consciousness, which in turn highlights the limitations of many later translation practices that reverted to a “text-centric” approach.

In contrast, scholars like Zhao Yanchun have typically emphasized textual fidelity, preserving cultural terms through transliteration and annotation (Zhao, 1999, 2020). While this approach maintains cultural uniqueness, it often avoids the core challenge of effective cross-cultural communication. As Xu and Johnston (2022) argue, such a “protectionist” stance, often adopted by cultural “gatekeepers,” is rooted in a distrust of Western translation practices and a desire to safeguard the art form as a unique expression of national identity. This shifts the burden of comprehension onto the audience, leading to potential misinterpretation and the reinforcement of stereotypes. This phenomenon can be understood through the lens of “cultural discount,” where cultural products lose value in foreign markets due to a lack of shared context (Hoskins & Mirus, 1988). When high-density symbols like ‘Bazǐ’ are presented without an adequate interpretive framework, they risk being reduced to exotic curiosities, diluting their narrative depth.

Official translation initiatives, such as the *Peking Opera Film Series*, also provide valuable resources but remain

largely text-centric. Their focus on linguistic access through subtitles and scripts, while essential, often fails to convey the nuanced meanings embedded in non-linguistic modes like stylized gestures or symbolic props. This reliance on linguistic transfer can reduce the rich multimodal performance to a textual equivalent, leading to a diminished appreciation of the art form's holistic semiotic system. A potent example of this is provided by Xu and Johnston (2022), who note how even a profoundly tragic opera like *Farewell My Concubine* can be misrecognized in Western reviews as a "melodrama," with its stylized movements and acrobatics viewed as mere spectacle rather than integral parts of its emotional core. This demonstrates how a strategy of "non-translation," even when mediated by surtitles, can fuel misrecognition and relegate Jingju to the status of "showcase culture."

These varied strategies reveal a common underlying issue: a predominant "text-centric" approach that proves inadequate for a multimodal art form like Jingju. This focus on textual transformation severs the intrinsic link between lyrics and action, creating a disconnect between the translated script and theatrical practice (Taylor, 2003; Li, 2012). This critical reflection highlights a clear research gap: the lack of systematic study on translating stage props, specifically 'Bazǐ', for performance purposes.

## 2.2 Application of Multimodal Theory in Chinese Opera Translation

While the systematic application of multimodal translation theory to Jingju is still nascent, valuable explorations have emerged in the translation of other Chinese opera genres. For instance, Jiang and Chen's (2025) work on Cantonese opera is methodologically pioneering, demonstrating how to construct a multimodal bilingual corpus that integrates resources from script and lyrics to body movements and music. However, its focus remains on the macro-level framework of corpus construction rather than on micro-level translation strategies for specific, culturally-laden props.

Similarly, studies by Zhu (2015) on Kunqu opera and Jin (2024) on Huangmei opera have effectively applied multimodal theory to the analysis of stage scripts, confirming the theory's applicability to traditional Chinese theatre. Yet, these studies largely concentrate on the theoretical application at a broader level and do not offer systematic solutions for translating high-density symbolic elements like 'Bazǐ' in a way that mitigates "cultural discount." Even research that acknowledges the importance of non-verbal sign systems in Jingju, such as that by Zhang and Zou (2023), provides a general overview rather than a focused, practical framework for translating specific props for performance.

Therefore, a significant research gap exists. While existing literature validates the potential of a multimodal approach, it lacks a dedicated, systematic study on how this theory can be practically applied to the performance translation of 'Bazǐ'. It must be reiterated that a focus on performative function does not negate the foundational value of literary translation but rather builds upon it. This study aims to fill this gap by proposing and analyzing concrete translation strategies driven by the pursuit of more complete meaning transfer and the practical goal of preparing Jingju for its potential entry into the global cultural market.

## 3 The Semiotic Functions and Cultural Significance of 'Dao Qiang Bazǐ' in Jingju

### 3.1 'Dao Qiang Bazǐ' and the Realization of Stage Functions

'Bazǐ' is the collective term for weapon props in traditional Chinese opera, categorized into long weapons (spears,

clubs), short weapons (swords, axes), and unarmed combat techniques. In Jingju, ‘Bazǐ’ is indispensable for narrative construction. Highly stylized routines, such as “knife flourishes” (刀花), are executed in coordination with percussion to drive the storyline and shape the theatrical atmosphere. The arrangement, tempo, and dynamics of these routines collectively shape the theatrical atmosphere and emotional tenor, creating effects ranging from tension and intensity to tragedy or humor. This deep integration with narrative, emotion, and ethical themes elevates ‘Bazǐ’ beyond mere martial choreography into a complex symbolic system. Consequently, the translator’s task must extend beyond literal interpretation. Because the meaning of a ‘Bazǐ’ sequence is embedded in the performance itself—in its rhythm, its coordination with music, and its visual patterns—the translator must first interpret its dramatic function. This involves understanding whether the sequence symbolizes a character’s inner struggle, a shift in power dynamics, or a moral victory, and then conveying this subtext. The challenge is magnified because a non-native audience, accustomed to realistic theatrical conventions, may misinterpret these stylized actions—for example, perceiving a fierce, symbolic combat sequence as mere dance, thereby missing its narrative significance largely and rendering the ‘Bazǐ’ itself seemingly unnecessary.

### 3.2 Stylization, Polysemy, and Convention

Props on the Jingju stage are deliberately sparse but often possess “polysemy,” their meanings dependent on context. A horsewhip can symbolize riding a horse; flags can represent armies or natural elements. From a multimodal perspective, the meaning of these props is not inherent but is co-constructed through the interplay of the visual sign of the prop and the kinetic sign of the actor’s performance. This complex interplay creates a “symbolic divide” for a Western audience accustomed to realism, presenting a quintessential multimodal translation challenge. The solution, therefore, must also be multimodal. It requires an active “re-education” strategy that moves beyond a single linguistic channel, employing supplementary materials like program notes (textual mode) and visual aids (visual mode) to guide the audience in appreciating these symbolic and conventional functions.

### 3.3 Case Selection: The Example of *Women Generals of the Yang Family*

*Women Generals of the Yang Family* was selected as the primary case study for several reasons. The opera features a rich tapestry of martial scenes where weapon usage is integral to plot progression, making it an ideal lens to examine the translation challenges of ‘Bazǐ’. Furthermore, the availability of a 2012 bilingual-subtitled film version with minimal deviation from stage performance allows for direct and focused analysis. Finally, the play challenges Western stereotypes of Chinese women by portraying its heroines as resilient and brave, offering unique insights for cross-cultural understanding.

## 4 Stage translation strategies based on multimodal translation theory

### 4.1 Translation Challenges: Linguistic Modality

Jingju is replete with specialized terminology that often lacks direct equivalents in English. For instance, the Chinese character “枪” (qiāng) refers to a category of long-handled polearms, not a “gun,” and “刀” (dāo) encompasses

theatrical weapons like broadswords, not just knives. Furthermore, the conceptual underpinnings of many Jingju terms are deeply intertwined with Chinese cultural contexts. Direct translation methods risk creating cultural voids, potentially leaving audiences unable to fully grasp their deeper significance. A telling example is the “Plum-Blossom Spear” wielded by Yang Wenguang, the son of Mu Guiying, in *Women Generals of the Yang Family*. Although the name incorporates “plum-blossom,” the physical prop itself typically does not feature actual plum blossom decorations, nor is its naming directly derived from the plant. Consequently, a literal interpretation could easily lead the audience to mistakenly perceive “plum-blossom” merely as a component of the name, thereby overlooking its authentic referent. In reality, the “plum blossom” in “Plum Blossom Spear” does not refer to the plant in a botanical sense. Instead, it denotes the spear’s distinctive techniques, footwork, and combat trajectories, which are fundamentally rooted in or emulate the principles and forms of the traditional Chinese martial arts training known as “Plum Blossom Stake Practice” (Zhang, 2022).

#### 4.2 Translation challenges: Non-linguistic Modality

Props in Jingju performances possess significant “polysemy.” Their symbolic meaning is dynamic, shifting in accordance with the changing dramatic context. For instance, a whip can symbolize the swift gallop of a horse, while a table might represent a towering mountain. The complete significance of a prop is not inherent in the object itself, nor can it be conveyed by a superficial textual translation; it must be interpreted in conjunction with other visual sign systems and the stylized movements of the performers, collectively contributing to the narrative construction. Even seemingly identical weapon props can carry diverse symbolic connotations and functional implications. The proliferation of various types of weapon props on the Jingju stage makes the need to explain and differentiate them particularly pronounced. Translation strategies should therefore transcend simple literal correspondence, opting instead for a more dynamic and contextually adaptive approach. Proven methods include employing visual aids or providing pre-performance explanations, a technique effectively used by scholars like Wichmann (1991) to bridge cultural gaps. The core function of translation, in this regard, is to guide the audience in understanding how props, through their interaction with performers’ physical expression and the overarching narrative, collaboratively construct the deeper meanings embedded within Jingju artistry.

#### 4.3 Translation Strategies: Constructing an Immersive Interpretive Environment to Manage Cognitive Load

Building upon the analysis of Jingju’s multimodal challenges, an effective translation strategy must extend beyond the stage and the script. This resonates with Xu and Johnston’s (2022) call for translators to move beyond a “safeguarding” mentality and actively seek “affordances”—opportunities for connection—within new performance ecosystems. The core objective is to construct an immersive interpretive environment for the audience, a guided context of reception designed to manage their cognitive load. When faced with a novel and symbol-dense art form, an unprepared audience’s cognitive resources can be quickly overwhelmed, leading to frustration and a superficial viewing experience—the very essence of “cultural discount.” A successful strategy, therefore, is one that proactively provides the necessary interpretive frameworks, transforming the viewing from a challenging decoding task into an engaging aesthetic experience. The construction of this environment can be divided into three progressive stages: pre-performance, in-performance, and experiential, which correspond to the respective strategies of Cognitive Priming, Real-time Assistance, and Experiential

Internalization.

The first layer is Cognitive Priming, which occurs pre-performance. At the foundational level, linguistic strategies like transliteration with annotation for culturally specific terms such as “Bazī training” remain essential. However, these are best delivered within a broader educational framework that primes the audience before they enter the theatre. Channels such as program notes, supplementary brochures, official websites, and social media platforms become crucial tools. This preparatory information can establish a baseline understanding of Jingju’s conventions, from the symbolism of scene settings (e.g., a table and two chairs) to the codified rules of movement (e.g., circling the stage to indicate a journey). By pre-loading this information, the translator reduces the amount of new data the audience must process during the performance itself.

The second layer is Real-time Assistance, which provides support during the performance. This is where multimodal tools are most impactful, as they can link an explanation directly to the performative moment. Dynamic subtitling, as will be explored in the case studies, can offer context for non-verbal cues precisely when they appear. Future advancements could involve Augmented Reality (AR), offering real-time, overlaid annotations on smart glasses or mobile devices that explain the polysemy of a horsewhip or the meaning of a specific gesture without disrupting the theatrical flow (Chen & Lee, 2021). These tools act as a simultaneous multimodal glossary, ensuring that the meaning co-constructed by actors, props, and music is not lost in translation.

The final layer is Experiential Internalization, which aims to deepen understanding post-performance or through dedicated interactive experiences. This layer transitions the audience from passive reception to active, experiential learning. Emerging technologies like Virtual Reality (VR) are particularly promising. For instance, a pre-show or lobby VR experience could offer a virtual tour of a Jingju stage, allowing audiences to interact with digital replicas of props like ‘Bazī’ and even practice a simple stylized movement (Smith & Jones, 2020). By creating such multi-layered, interactive points of entry, these technologies help to construct a rich, supportive context that not only lowers the cognitive load but also allows for a deeper, more embodied appreciation of the artistry. These approaches align with the principles of digital humanities and offer new avenues for effective cultural mediation in performance translation (Brown & Davis, 2022).

## 5 Multimodal Analysis of Performative Translation Strategies

This chapter analyzes three specific cases from *Women Generals of the Yang Family* to illustrate how the proposed multimodal translation strategies can be practically applied. These cases demonstrate how meaning embedded in non-verbal modes—such as color, prop choice, and prop transformation—can be effectively conveyed to a non-native audience, thereby directly countering the effects of “cultural discount.”

### 5.1 Case 1: Translating Symbolic Color in Weaponry

In a pivotal battlefield scene, set to the percussive clang of cymbals and the urgent rhythm of the drum, the opposing armies face off. The visual tension is palpable in the actors’ stylized postures and the stark stage design. Here, the armies wield spears distinguished only by the color of their tassels—red or white. For a Chinese audience, this visual cue is immediately legible: white is traditionally associated with mourning. The Yang family generals carry white-

tasselled weapons to honor their recently fallen warriors, a culturally specific symbolism that an international audience would likely miss, perceiving it as a mere costume choice.

This gap in understanding presents a classic multimodal challenge that a static program note, read hours before, cannot adequately solve. The meaning needs to be delivered at the moment of perception. To bridge this gap during the extended, dialogue-free martial sequence, a dynamic subtitling strategy is superior. As the combat unfolds, subtitles can provide crucial, real-time context without disrupting the performance rhythm:

‘White Tassels: The Yangs, fighting and mourning for their fallen soldiers’

‘Red Tassels: The Xi Xia enemy forces’

This approach exemplifies a core principle of multimodal translation: using one mode (the textual) to clarify another (the visual) at the precise moment of reception. It is a direct application of the “Real-time Assistance” strategy, managing the audience’s cognitive load by providing a timely interpretive key. This ensures that the visual symbolism is not lost, but rather integrated into their comprehension of the narrative, effectively preventing a “cultural discount” of the scene’s emotional weight (Film, 01:24:32).

## 5.2 Case 2: Translating the Multi-layered Meaning of a Prop

A notable example occurs when She Saihua, the elderly matriarch, takes command. Her entrance is a moment of high drama, as the fate of the army rests on her shoulders. She wields an “Elephant-trunk Blade” (象鼻刀), a weapon traditionally associated with aged warriors. This single prop conveys two complex, interwoven layers of meaning that are crucial to understanding her character and the play’s themes. At the level of character, it serves as a powerful visual supplement to her established identity as a capable and decisive leader from a renowned military family. It is not just any weapon; it is a symbol of her experience and enduring authority. On a broader thematic level, the prop also symbolizes the brutality of war and the immense cost of peace, a poignant reflection on the sacrifices required in times of national crisis.

As these symbolic meanings are not articulated verbally, they are entirely inaccessible to an international audience without additional semiotic support. A simple textual translation of the prop’s name in the program would be insufficient to convey these layers. An effective multimodal solution is the use of supplementary visual annotations, such as projected captions featuring a brief explanation and an image of the prop, perhaps displayed discreetly to the side of the stage. This strategy reconstructs meaning across different semiotic systems, actively bridging the gap between the visual prop and its deeper cultural and thematic significance. It serves as another form of “Real-time Assistance,” preventing the “cultural discount” that would occur if the prop were perceived as a mere exotic object and allowing the audience to grasp the full weight of She Saihua’s decision to return to battle (Film, 01:42:30).

## 5.3 Case 3: Translating Prop Transformation as Narrative Cue

In the climactic battle, the heroine Yang Qiniang’s performance is a whirlwind of stylized acrobatics and intense emotion. As the tide of battle turns, she switches weapons from a ‘Great Spear’ (大枪) to a ‘Conqueror Spear’ (霸王枪). For an informed audience, this is a clear non-verbal cue. In Jingju tradition, the ‘Great Spear’ is associated with exceptional martial skill, while the ‘Conqueror Spear,’ as its name implies, signifies extraordinary strength and heroic charisma. This shift in props, coupled with the actor’s transformed facial expression from strained determination to confident dominance, and a likely shift in the percussive score to a more triumphant rhythm, implicitly signals the impending victory. This is a multimodal narrative climax, constructed through the synergy of prop, performance, and music.

Failure to distinguish between the two weapons would cause the audience to perceive them as interchangeable, missing the subtle but important narrative implication. Given that stage movements are highly codified, the most effective strategy is Cognitive Priming through pre-performance education. Program notes can explain the symbolic meanings and typical users of each weapon type, providing the audience with the necessary framework to decode this crucial moment when it happens. This pre-loaded knowledge reduces their in-performance cognitive load, allowing them to appreciate the nuance rather than being confused by it. Additionally, incorporating interactive pre-show experiences where audiences can see or even touch replicas of the spears could further deepen their cross-cultural understanding by engaging tactile and spatial modes of learning, a form of Experiential Internalization (Film, 01:30:06).

## 6 Conclusion

This study began by identifying a central tension in the global dissemination of Jingju: the conflict between the desire to safeguard cultural authenticity and the practical necessity of achieving genuine performability for a non-native audience. It argued that traditional text-centric translation approaches, whether prioritizing fidelity or fluency, fail to resolve this tension, often resulting in a “cultural discount” where the rich, multimodal meanings of the performance are lost.

The core finding of this paper is that a successful translation of Jingju, particularly of its dense symbolic elements like ‘Bazi’, requires a reconceptualization of “performability” itself. True performability is not merely linguistic, but multimodal; it is achieved when the entire semiotic fabric of the performance, including its visual, kinetic, and auditory cues, is made accessible to the target audience. To this end, this study proposed a holistic strategic framework centered on the construction of an “immersive interpretive environment.” Through the progressive layers of Cognitive Priming, Real-time Assistance, and Experiential Internalization, this framework offers a practical methodology for managing the audience’s cognitive load and bridging the symbolic divide.

Ultimately, this paper’s primary contribution lies in shifting the role of the translator from that of a linguistic converter to a cultural mediator and an architect of the audience’s experience. By proposing a concrete model for achieving multimodal performability, this research offers a constructive response to the “safeguarding” dilemma described by scholars like Xu and Johnston (2022). Instead of treating Jingju as a static cultural relic to be preserved, this approach seeks to find new “affordances” for it within the global performance ecosystem, ensuring it can be appreciated not as an exotic artifact, but as the vibrant, living art form it truly is.

This study has several limitations. First, the analysis is centered on a single case study; further research is needed to test the applicability of these strategies across a wider range of Jingju genres, including civil plays (文戏), where symbolic props function differently. Second, the proposed digital strategies, particularly those involving VR and AR, are currently more theoretical than practical, contingent upon production budgets and technological infrastructure. Therefore, future research could introduce empirical audience reception studies to quantify the actual effectiveness of these multimodal translation strategies, thereby providing more robust data to support the theory.

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