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A Preliminary Study on the Multimodal Teaching Reform of Fashion Translation Courses Between English and Chinese

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Abstract

In the context of globalization and digitalized education, fashion translation teaching urgently needs to transcend the traditional language-centered paradigm and develop a multimodal pedagogy that integrates diverse semiotic resources. Grounded in multimodal teaching theory, this study constructs a comprehensive instructional framework that combines linguistic, visual, auditory, and interactive elements. It first proposes the establishment of a bilingual (English–Chinese) multimodal corpus for fashion translation to enable the digital storage and visualized management of teaching resources. Then, it elaborates on the structure and implementation of the multimodal teaching model from five dimensions: textual, visual, auditory, interactive, and practical. Furthermore, by integrating theoretical inquiry, textual analysis, translation practice, and pedagogical research, the study explores the intrinsic logic and educational value of multimodal mediation in fashion culture translation. The findings indicate that the multimodal approach enhances students' cross-modal comprehension, cultural interpretation, and intercultural communication competence, facilitating the transformation of fashion translation teaching from knowledge transmission to intelligent collaboration.

Keywords

Fashion Translation; Multimodal Teaching; Corpus Construction; Cross-cultural Communication

1. Introduction

Chinese costume culture, with its long-standing history, embodies the collective wisdom and craftsmanship of the Chinese people over millennia. In the context of globalization, the effective international communication of Chinese costume culture hinges on cultivating high-level professionals equipped with both intercultural communicative competence and specialized translation literacy in fashion and apparel culture.

With the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence and the diversification of media, single linguistic symbols are no longer sufficient for the effective cross-linguistic transmission of cultural meanings. The comprehensive construction and transformation of meaning require the synergistic functioning of multiple semiotic systems and multimodal resources. Traditional language-centered translation pedagogy can no longer meet contemporary demands; therefore, innovation in multimodal collaborative teaching models has become imperative for fashion translation education.

The term multimodality refers both to "a composite of different semiotic modes" (Leeuwen, 2005, p. 281) and to "the various ways in which different semiotic resources are deployed together in a specific text to construct meaning" (Baldry & Thibault, 2006, p. 21). Multimodal pedagogy is defined as "an instructional approach that integrates

linguistic, visual, auditory, and kinesthetic elements into the most effective modes of meaning-making and communication, guiding students to construct meaning through multimodal means" (Fan & Li, 2025, p. 48). Originating from the "multiliteracies" framework proposed by the New London Group in the 1990s, multimodal pedagogy has evolved in the 21st century into a comprehensive theoretical and methodological system. It divides multiliteracy into five core dimensions—linguistic, visual, auditory, gestural, and spatial—arguing that "meaning construction in English classroom teaching arises from the interplay among these modes and their integration" (Lei & Zhang, 2022, p. 73).

This study is grounded in the practical reform of fashion translation teaching and develops research on multimodal pedagogy. Based on the construction of a bilingual (Chinese–English) multimodal fashion translation corpus, it explores multimodal instructional pathways for fashion translation by integrating textual, visual, auditory, interactive, and practical components to create an immersive learning environment that enhances students' multimodal transformation competence and intercultural communicative ability. Meanwhile, it investigates the multimodal translation and dissemination of Chinese and foreign fashion cultures in depth, aiming to promote mutual exchange and understanding between Chinese and international fashion cultures.

2. Construction of a Multimodal Fashion Translation Corpus

The construction of a multimodal fashion translation corpus constitutes a fundamental basis and key support for advancing the multimodal teaching reform of fashion translation courses. From a pedagogical perspective, such a corpus provides authentic and dynamic discourse resources for classroom instruction, enabling students to comprehend the cultural connotations and professional discourse features of fashion through the interaction of multiple semiotic modes—visual, auditory, and textual. Traditional fashion translation teaching often relies on static texts, which fail to convey multidimensional information about fashion design, materials, techniques and presentations. In contrast, a multimodal corpus systematically integrates diverse multimodal resources, allowing students to perceive the interrelations among meaning, vision, and culture within multimodal inputs. This enhances their holistic understanding of fashion discourse and their ability to express ideas across modalities. Furthermore, the corpus offers data-driven instructional support for teachers: through corpus retrieval, comparative analysis, and statistical visualization, it can reveal linguistic patterns and cultural differences in fashion translation, thereby providing a scientific foundation for curriculum design and learning assessment.

The creation of a multimodal fashion translation corpus should follow the principles of systematicity and scalability, encompassing three core stages: data collection, annotation and application. In the data collection stage, representative Chinese and foreign fashion texts and visual materials should be selected, including fashion design concepts, brand narratives, fashion reviews, and fashion show recordings, to ensure both authenticity and diversity. In the annotation stage, based on Systemic Functional Linguistics and Multimodal Discourse Analysis frameworks, hierarchical annotation should be applied to semantic structures, visual elements, and narrative modes, while establishing a domain-specific tagging system—covering fabric terminology, craftsmanship vocabulary, stylistic features, and cultural symbols. In the pedagogical application stage, corpus-based learning should be integrated into translation tasks and project-based learning, guiding students to engage in activities such as parallel-text comparison, translation evaluation, terminology extraction, and discourse reconstruction. This facilitates data-driven optimization of learning paths and supports knowledge construction.

In essence, the construction of a multimodal fashion translation corpus is not merely an accumulation of teaching resources but a foundational step in promoting the systematic reform of fashion translation pedagogy.

3. Constructing a Multimodal Teaching Model for Fashion Translation Courses

In the era of digital humanities, it is imperative for fashion translation education to establish an intelligent, multimodal, and collaborative teaching model so that students "can ultimately achieve a comprehensive, multi-level, multi-perspective and multidimensional understanding of the meanings conveyed by different modes" (Che, 2022, p. 66). Based on a multimodal corpus of fashion culture translation, the innovation of fashion translation pedagogy serves as an essential pathway to cultivating high-level, creative professionals equipped with intercultural competence and capable of meeting the needs of the fashion industry. The following discussion elaborates on the construction of a multimodal teaching model for fashion translation from five dimensions: textual modality, visual modality, auditory modality, interactive teaching and practical teaching.

3.1 Textual Modality Teaching in Fashion Translation

Textual modality teaching constitutes the core of multimodal integration in fashion translation pedagogy. It aims to enhance students' comprehension and translation of fashion texts through the coordinated presentation of multiple semiotic resources such as language, image and sound. Within this multimodal framework, textual translation instruction moves beyond the traditional language-centered paradigm by integrating diverse text types—including fashion commentaries, brand narratives, and runway scripts—with corresponding visual resources. Students are guided to interpret meaning across semantic, visual, vocal and cultural dimensions. Through discourse analysis, situational reconstruction and task-based learning, instructors help students identify narrative structures, rhetorical features, and cultural metaphors in fashion texts, thereby developing their capacity for meaning reconstruction and intercultural expression in authentic contexts. Meanwhile, AI-assisted tools can perform corpus-based alignment and stylistic analysis of parallel texts, promoting visualization and personalization in learning, and realizing the shift from single-modality language input to multimodal interactive learning.

3.2 Visual Modality Teaching in Fashion Translation

Visual modality teaching centers on visual signs such as images, videos, colors and layouts. Through the interaction between visual and linguistic information, it strengthens students' comprehension of fashion discourse and their ability to perform cross-modal transformation. This mode highlights the meaning-making function of visual elements in fashion translation. Instructors may select materials such as fashion lookbooks, brand advertisements, runway videos and design sketches to guide students in analyzing how visual signs embody cultural values, aesthetic concepts, and brand narratives. For instance, when translating fashion advertisements or brand stories, students must integrate visual composition, color schemes and visual metaphors to grasp the underlying cultural implications and communicative strategies. Classroom activities, such as visual interpretation, semantic reconstruction, and linguistic output, enable students to develop dynamic transformation skills between visual analysis and verbal expression.

3.3 Auditory Modality Teaching in Fashion Translation

Auditory modality teaching employs sound, tone, rhythm, and other auditory signs as media to deepen students' understanding of the content, emotional tone, and cultural connotations of fashion discourse. This approach makes full use of audio-visual resources such as brand promotions, runway commentaries, and fashion interviews, guiding students to analyze the role of tone, stress, and speech rate in meaning transmission. For example, tonal variations in runway narrations often convey the brand's temperament and fashion attitude, while vocal nuances in designer interviews reflect cultural positioning and design philosophy. During instruction, teachers may organize listening, analysis, and translation tasks to train students' ability to convert auditory comprehension into linguistic expression. By integrating auditory perception with linguistic cognition, auditory modality teaching fosters perceptive and culturally sensitive translation competence.

3.4 Interactive Teaching in Fashion Translation

Interactive teaching emphasizes dynamic communication among teachers and students within a multimodal resource environment. This approach transcends traditional lecture-based models by promoting scenario simulation, project collaboration, role-playing, and online discussion to achieve deep integration of knowledge, language, and culture. In fashion translation practice, students may form groups to play the roles of designer, translator, and cultural consultant, collaboratively engaging in semantic reconstruction and cultural re-expression. Teachers serve as facilitators and evaluators, using AI-based learning analytics platforms to track students' interaction data, provide instant feedback, and offer personalized guidance. Interactive teaching may also employ virtual exhibitions, real-time commenting, and digital whiteboards to build immersive learning spaces that stimulate creative expression and critical thinking. This learner-centered process strengthens bottom-up inductive learning and "transforms previously single classroom methods into diversified ones and linear interaction into frequent, multi-channel communication" (Qu & Zhou, 2020, p. 61).

3.5 Practical Teaching in Fashion Translation

Practical teaching stresses the integration of theory and practice, promoting students' application of multimodal

translation skills in authentic contexts through task-driven and project-based learning. Guided by the "learning by doing" philosophy, it includes a range of projects such as translating fashion news, localizing fashion brand slogans, editing bilingual exhibition scripts for fashion museums, and producing subtitles for bilingual videos on fashion culture. In completing these tasks, students synthesize multimodal resources, such as text, image, and sound, to analyze inter-modal meaning construction and to enhance cross-modal expression and intercultural communication skills. Teachers provide guidance and feedback, leveraging AI-powered corpus retrieval, semantic comparison, and automatic subtitle generation tools to improve efficiency and quality. Project outcomes can be presented through classroom showcases, online releases, or virtual exhibitions, aligning academic learning with industry demands. By reinforcing the practical and innovative orientation of fashion translation pedagogy, this approach enables students to master integrated multimodal translation skills in real-world contexts, thereby enhancing their professional competence and communicative proficiency.

In the multimodal teaching model of fashion translation courses, the five instructional dimensions—textual, visual, auditory, interactive, and practical—mutually reinforce one another, collectively constructing a multimodal pedagogy characterized by multi-symbolic coordination. Textual instruction emphasizes in-depth understanding of linguistic discourse and cultural context; visual instruction focuses on the representational reconstruction of meaning through images, colors, and composition; auditory instruction guides students in perceiving content, emotion, and style through voice, intonation, and rhythm; interactive instruction fosters multidimensional communication and knowledge co-construction among teachers and students; and practical instruction transforms theory into application through task-driven learning. Together, these five dimensions constitute an integrated multimodal collaborative teaching model for fashion translation, designed to cultivate high-level fashion professionals with global vision and intercultural communication competence

4. Multimodal Translation Studies of Fashion Culture

Research on multimodal translation of fashion culture provides both theoretical and practical support for teaching reform. Through a multimodal perspective that integrates linguistic, visual, and cultural information, it deepens the exploration of teaching content and methodology, promoting the transformation of fashion translation instruction from language transmission to cultural understanding and cross-modal expression. At the same time, multimodal translation studies of fashion culture offer data-driven and model-based support for textbook compilation, corpus development, and classroom evaluation, thereby contributing to the construction of a multimodal translation pedagogy aligned with the disciplinary characteristics of textile and fashion education and enhancing its scientific rigor and innovativeness. The research primarily encompasses four aspects:

4.1 Theoretical Research on Multimodal Fashion Translation

The theoretical study of multimodal fashion translation is grounded in social semiotics, multimodal discourse analysis, and cultural translation theory. It explores the synergistic mechanisms among linguistic, visual, material and symbolic systems in the dissemination of fashion culture. By introducing multimodal theory, the study reveals the interactive relationships among semantics, visuals, materials, and colors in fashion texts, providing theoretical foundations for the intercultural mediation of fashion culture. The deepening of theoretical inquiry not only helps reconstruct the multimodal meaning system of fashion translation but also offers an operable theoretical framework for classroom instruction, enabling students to understand the cultural connotations and cross-modal logic of fashion discourse.

4.2 Analytical Research on Multimodal Fashion Translation Texts

Analytical research on multimodal fashion translation focuses on how multimodal signs are constructed and translated across various types of discourse. Its research objects include fashion press releases, brand promotions, exhibition descriptions, and design concept statements. Through the integrated analysis of text, imagery, layout, color, and narrative structure, it uncovers the symbolic and aesthetic dimensions of cultural representation. By employing multimodal corpora and analytical tools such as ELAN and NVivo, researchers can combine quantitative and qualitative approaches to establish translation strategy systems tailored to different modal features. Such analyses provide visualized examples for teaching and help students master multimodal translation patterns through analytical practice.

4.3 Practical Research on Multimodal Fashion Translation

Practical research emphasizes the integration of theory and application by constructing a multimodal translation practice platform grounded in authentic contexts. Through project-based learning, students participate in the translation of multimodal texts such as fashion fair brochures, brand websites, short-video subtitles, and descriptions of design works, thereby experiencing the synergistic transformation between linguistic, visual, and symbolic modes. This practice not only cultivates students' intercultural communication competence and digital media literacy but also generates empirical data for updating multimodal teaching content. Reflective assessment and case-based comparison further explore innovative models for the intercultural mediation of fashion culture, enhancing the creativity and effectiveness of teaching reform.

4.4. Pedagogical Research on Multimodal Fashion Translation

Pedagogical research on multimodal fashion translation, guided by multimodal teaching theory, investigates innovative approaches to classroom design, teaching resources, and assessment systems. By establishing an integrated "text–image–video–interaction" instructional model, it guides students to comprehend the semantic networks and intercultural meanings of fashion culture in multimodal contexts. The research values the auxiliary role of AI and digital platforms—such as intelligent corpus analysis and virtual exhibition environments—in achieving personalized and immersive learning experiences. Meanwhile, a comprehensive evaluation system encompassing linguistic accuracy, cultural interpretive ability, and visual representational competence is developed to foster the coordinated development of students' knowledge, skills, and cultural awareness in multimodal translation.

Together, these four dimensions form an organic framework for multimodal translation studies of fashion culture. Theoretical research provides the epistemological foundation for multimodal mediation, clarifying the interactions among language, visuals and culture; textual analysis elucidates the compositional patterns and translation strategies of multimodal discourse; practice-based research operationalizes theoretical insights through project-driven innovation; and pedagogical research, empowered by digitalization and intelligent technologies, reconstructs learning and assessment systems. Ultimately, multimodal translation studies of fashion culture advance the evolution of fashion translation from single-language transfer to multimodal cultural communication, fostering students' integrated development in linguistic competence, disciplinary knowledge, and intercultural communication skills

5. Conclusion

The multimodal teaching reform of fashion translation courses, grounded in the construction of a multimodal fashion translation corpus, integrates five major modules—textual, visual, auditory, interactive, and practical—through coordinated innovation, thereby forming a new pedagogical paradigm aligned with the requirements of educational digital transformation in the new era. The study demonstrates that multimodal translation pedagogy not only enhances the quality and efficiency of fashion translation instruction but also provides a feasible pathway for innovating content, updating methodologies, and transforming talent-training models in higher-education foreign-language teaching.

Future research should further strengthen the application of frontier technologies such as AI-based intelligent analysis and virtual-reality presentation in multimodal fashion translation education. Continuous optimization of teaching resources and evaluation systems will facilitate deeper integration and innovation of fashion translation pedagogy within the domains of intercultural communication and industry practice.

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