

# Animation Cross-Cultural Communication from the Perspective of Semiotics

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**Abstract:** In today's globalization, each country in the world is exporting its own economic, political and cultural ideas. The animation industry is part of the cultural industry. China is at a disadvantage in the export in cultural industries. There is a huge gap between China and countries like Japan, Europe and the United States and other countries regarding the animation industry. Therefore, it is necessary to learn the experience and technology of advanced countries to improve ourselves, not only to improve the animation production capacity of China, but also to enhance cultural influence in the international community.

**Keywords:** Semiotics; Animation Cross-Cultural Communication

## 1. Semiotic analysis of the need for cross-cultural communication of animation

Different countries, organizations and societies have different elements of cultural background. In the current context of globalization, various cultures are carrying out mutual exchanges and penetration. In this environment of global cultural diversity, Chinese culture should go abroad and actively communicate with other cultures. Cultural strength is the embodiment of a country's soft power. Strong cultural soft power can also bring strong national influence. Animation industry is not only a part of film and television industry, but also a part of culture. In today's society, animation has a huge influence on young people. While foreign works continue to pour into the Chinese market, there are few works that can be compared with it in China. Therefore, it is likely that adolescents know more about foreign cultures than about their own cultures. And the development of science and technology in today's society makes the spread of film and television extremely convenient, animation film and television category has gradually entered the eyes of all people. Among them, American and Japanese animation have the most extensive influence. And learning the key points of their success has become the key points and objectives of this analysis.

In this paper, "Kung Fu Panda" in the United States, Japan's "Spirited Away" and China's "Big Fish Begonia" are analyzed as research samples.

## 2. Cultural core analysis of cross-cultural communication of Chinese, American and Japanese cartoons from the perspective of semiotics

### 2.1 Analysis of the cultural core of Kung Fu Panda: Diversification of cultural values

Cultural value is an unavoidable topic, just like a thousand readers have a thousand Hamlet, people all over the

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world have different values. How to convey the cultural values that everyone can understand and accept has become the key to the success of cross-cultural communication.

The creation of Kung Fu Panda is inspired by Chinese traditional culture. It describes the story of a clumsy panda who aspires to become a master of martial arts. The film is set in ancient China, and its landscape, scenery, clothing and food are full of Chinese cultural symbols. These symbols constitute a cultural environment acceptable to Chinese audiences, which enables Chinese audiences to have a sense of identity and belonging to the people and events in the film. But in the film, it also reveals the unique atmosphere of individual heroism in the United States. This symbol also shortens the distance between American audiences and the film. Although American audiences may not understand Chinese culture, the cultural core of the film is acceptable to them. The film tells the story of the protagonist who finally overcomes evil and saves his companions from fire and water through hard efforts. It expresses people's pursuit of dreams and their desire for friendship and kinship. This value is shared by all mankind, which makes the film a great success in cross-cultural communication.

## **2.2 Analysis of the cultural core of Spirited Away: The creation of animation images**

Eighteen years have passed since Spirited Away was released in Japan on July 20, 2001, and in mainland China on June 21, 2019. The film grossed more than 100 million yuan in just one day on the mainland. It can be seen that its cultural influence is strong. The film emphasizes the theme of growth, the film tells the girl Qianxun accident came to the supernatural world, in order to save mom and dad, experienced a lot of suffering story. Chihiro, the protagonist of the film, is weak and timid at the beginning, and gradually becomes independent and can bravely face difficulties and save others. This process is a gradual growth process, natural and reasonable. Therefore, the role of Chihiro is vivid and can arouse the resonance of the audience. The film successfully portrays the image of a brave little girl who grows up constantly in the face of hardships and setbacks. This image is the epitome of a person's growth process in the real society. The image of Chihiro has therefore aroused the resonance of the audience and has been widely loved.

## **2.3 Cultural core analysis of Big Fish and Begonia: Localization of animation elements**

It took twelve years for Big Fish and Begonia to be put forward and actually released. The total box office reached 565 million yuan, and a large number of traditional Chinese cultural symbols were used in the film. Fujian Tujia Lou, traditional costumes, and even names are mostly obtained from ancient books. For example, the name of the heroine comes from the word "Chun" in the "Ancient People with Great Chun" in "Happy Travel", and the big fish that the male protagonist becomes comes from the word "Kun" in "Beimingyou Fish, Its Name is Kun". The film is full of symbols of traditional Chinese culture in terms of color, characters, costumes, architecture, music and lines. This is also the reason why it received a lot of praise at the beginning of its release. Because these cultural symbols enable the audience to get a sense of familiarity and identity.

But the corresponding thing is the distortion and lack of values expressed in the story told by the film, which sacrifices the lives of the whole people for their own purposes. This is also the reason why the film has attracted a lot of negative comments while receiving unanimous praise for its super high production standards. In the overseas market, "Big Fish Begonia" has also been praised, but the content is about the Oriental mystery expressed in the picture, not the appreciation of culture or the appreciation of the cultural core. Just stay on the lowest level of the picture and music. Cross-cultural communication is undoubtedly a failure.

# **3. Analysis of cross-cultural communication of Chinese, American and Japanese animation from the perspective of semiotics**

## **3.1 Cross-cultural communication analysis of Kung Fu Panda**

"Kung Fu Panda" which was released in 2008, grossed \$631 million, with China accounting for \$150 million of the total. This film, with its strong Chinese elements, has unsurprisingly won the biggest success in China. Although the

topics of friendship, family, dreams and so on expressed in Kung Fu Panda are not specially designed for Chinese audiences, these feelings are what we care most in Chinese traditional culture. Therefore, "Kung Fu Panda" on the one hand because of its strong traditional Chinese cultural symbols, on the other hand because of its expression in line with the core of traditional Chinese culture, so it is no surprise that it has become an excellent film loved by Chinese audiences, suitable for all ages and full of educational significance. Chinese audiences consume the value core of friendship and kinship hidden in the film. In some environments that do not attach importance to these cultural cores, they consume the most superficial Chinese element symbols and understand Chinese traditional culture. The cross-cultural communication of Kung Fu Panda is undoubtedly successful, no matter where the audience can find cultural symbols that can be understood and accepted.

### **3.2 Cross-cultural communication analysis of Spirited Away**

In 2001, Spirited Away was released in Japan and earned 30.4 billion yen at the box office during its public release. This box office record has not been surpassed so far. The film has a strong Japanese culture, food, clothing, architecture and so on are all filled with a strong Japanese flavor. However, the reason why this film can be loved by people all over the world is because of the story it tells and the perception and thinking of growth it contains. Spirited Away tells the story of a little girl who gradually becomes brave in order to save her parents. This story line is very simple, but the film uses a simple story to depict the process of a person's growth. Every audience can experience this growth in this story and correspond to themselves, triggering their own thinking. Both adults and children can gain something in the film. Therefore, people's consumption of this film is no longer focused on the superficial content, but on the growth and perception contained in the consumption film. "Spirited Away" has also been a great success, even if the audience does not understand or are not interested in Japanese culture, but the values contained in the film are understandable and acceptable.

### **3.3 Cross-cultural communication analysis of Big Fish and Begonia**

Although the total box office of Big Fish and Begonia is as high as 565 million yuan, most of them are contributed by the mainland market. The response in overseas markets is mediocre. "Big Fish Begonia" and "Thousand and Thousand Spirited Away" are similar to the local culture as the main body to create. Therefore, although Big Fish and Begonia has been criticized in the domestic market, it still has a good box office performance. The reason is that the traditional Chinese culture in Big Fish and Begonia has been recognized by the audience. Although the plot and narrative aspects have been criticized, the cultural symbols are still worth consuming. However, in the overseas market, the situation is quite different, overseas audiences do not understand Chinese traditional culture, let alone the meaning of role names. Therefore, it is the values that can attract overseas audiences, but "Big Fish Begonia" has a great lack in this respect, and does not perfectly tell the story and spirit that it wants to express. Therefore, "Big Fish Begonia" in the cross-cultural communication on the one hand, they suffered a failure.

## **4. Reflection and perception**

Animation is a part of cultural communication, especially in the current society, and has increasingly far-reaching impact on young people. Cultural communication will lead to cultural identity, and China's disadvantage in the animation industry leads to the domestic animation market flooded with other countries' cultures. As a result, young people have a wrong understanding of traditional culture, that is, they may have an idea that foreign culture is better. Through the analysis of Kung Fu Panda, Spirited Away and Big Fish Begonia. It is not difficult to find that China is not inferior to the animation powers in animation production and cultural connotation. What's missing is the ability to tell a story, that is, how to express the core values of the film in a limited space. The lack of this aspect is mainly due to the prejudice of the society towards the cultural carrier of animation after 2000. The long-term prejudice against animation has led to the lag of the development of animation industry. The lack of excellent producers leads to the lack of excellent works. Therefore, the development of Chinese animation industry not only needs to learn from excellent

works, but also needs the support of the public for the animation industry.

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