

# Textual Interpretation of Enhancing the International Communication Capacity of Taiji Culture

Fangfang Zhang

School of Foreign Studies, Henan Polytechnic University, Jiaozuo, China  
Email: 121071990@qq.com

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## Abstract

In the context of the urgent need to strengthen the capacity building of international communication and thus enhance our international discourse power, the textual interpretation of Taiji culture in international communication stands out, aiming to mitigate external resistance sentiments and reinforce recognition through cultural international communication. The paper firstly explores how the historicity of understanding and the fusion of horizons contribute to the textual interpretation of Taiji culture from the perspective of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics; then proposes three principles of textual interpretation in international communication; and finally highlights the profound implications of telling Taiji stories in textual interpretation and construction.

## Keywords

Textual Interpretation, Taiji Culture, International Communication

## 1. Introduction

It can be predicted that with the inclusion of Tijiqian in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List, Taiji and its cultural influence will continue to expand globally (Han, 2024: p. 79). Far beyond particular sets of techniques, Taiji culture, a comprehensive system integrating traditional Chinese philosophical ideas, martial arts, and self-cultivation, enjoys a high reputation as a treasure of the Chinese people. Deeply rooted in traditional Chinese culture, Taiji converges essence in multiple fields, from Confucianism, Taoism, traditional Chinese medicine to military strategies in ancient China, and highlights moderation, differentiation of yin and yang, and harmony between man and nature. Connotations carried by Taiji

unarguably display the temperament of the Chinese people and even the Chinese attitudes toward the international world. According to [Qin Qin \(2021: p. 59\)](#), the general public around the world is no longer satisfied with superficial knowledge, but pays growing attention to the essence of Taiji, including essence, vitality, and spirit.

At the National Conference on Ideological and Publicity Work in 2013, President Xi Jinping put forward that we should strive to build international communication capacity, innovate external publicity approaches, strengthen the construction of discourse systems, and develop new concepts, categories, and expressions that integrate Chinese perspectives with a global vision<sup>1</sup>. As a typical representative of cultural outreach globally, Taiji has gained ever-increasing popularity among recipients and followers over the last several decades. International communication of Taiji culture thereby determines whether the mission of external publicity could achieve its ultimate goal. Under the circumstances of “telling Chinese stories well,” how to effectively spread this particular culture matters in more than one way. Accordingly, textual interpretation plays a decisive role in spreading and communicating, even in exerting a profound influence in terms of having a say in the international world, since a well-interpreted text may clearly convey the idea, alleviate cultural shock, and achieve common understanding. Textual interpretation is the dynamic meaning-generating process achieved through the fusion of horizons between the historical horizon of the source text and the present horizon of readers (including translators) ([Gadamer, 2004: p. 391](#)). The paper aims to explore in what way the text about Taiji culture could be best interpreted in international communication so as to enhance the international communication capacity of Taiji worldwide from the perspective of Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics. This would probably shed light on promoting text optimization and further devising new ways of delivering textual explanations in globally understandable ways to resonate with target readers in external publicity.

## 2. Interpreting Texts from the Perspective of Fusion of Horizons

[Gadamer \(2004: p. 17\)](#) puts forward the historicity of understanding and defines understanding and interpreting the text as belonging to man’s whole experience world, claiming that both understanding and interpreting are reliant upon the fore-understanding, fore-conception or even fore-judgement of those who attempt to understand and interpret. Thus, with no exceptions, any interpretation accordingly gets started with its fore-understanding. As stated by [Yuan Honggeng \(1991: p. 38\)](#), one cannot understand something that he or she has never understood, so one has to have fore-understanding about it in order to understand. It should be noted that fore-conception does not equal sticking to one’s doctrines without respecting the text and the connotations it strives to deliver. In the course of interpreting, thereby, if one aims to figure out the insight of the text, one has to

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<sup>1</sup><http://jhsjk.people.cn/article/25428563>

adjust his or her fore-conception and even yield to achieve comprehension. The sharp contrast can be seen that the one that well fits the text shall certainly boost comprehension, whereas the one that does not apply will probably hinder interpretation. No one will enter a text with a blank mind; fore-understanding or fore-conception serves as a necessity for one's comprehension. Due to the universal limitation of fore-understanding, Gadamer (2004: pp. 347-350) brings forth the concept of "prejudice", arguing that prejudice is our tendency to be open to the world. Despite the odds of producing misunderstandings, he still asserts the legitimacy of one's prejudice in comprehension. Rather than separating us from the text, it is prejudice that renders access to recreation in interpretation possible. Meanwhile, particular horizons respectively belonging to the author, translators, readers or any others who are trying to understand come into being due to fore-understanding and prejudice of their own. To accomplish comprehension or interpretation, the main task thus refers to how to extend one's original horizon and promote the fusion of the horizons, during which initial disagreement and then negotiation are possibly involved. Therefore, the course of understanding and interpreting can be interpreted as a course of fusion reconstruction of various horizons having a discourse.

The desirable way of spreading Taiji culture globally lies in adapting textual interpretation to overseas target readers' cognitive habits, even lowering the barrier to understanding, so as to resonate with the particular readers. What Taiji displays in its profound connotation and spirit is far beyond the techniques of gestures, or the fitness brought by practicing it. The real point of the cultural outreach of Taiji is to deliver the intrinsic meaning of the philosophy, lifting the stereotype of Taiji as a particular physical exercise item, like Taijiquan, Taiji Fan, or Taiji Ball and the like. The philosophical ideas are the core that is highly demanded in international communication.

As stated in the old saying, to draw a ladle by the gourd is the best way to imitate. However, the cross-cultural communication of such a national treasure is more than drawing a ladle by the gourd. Hence, the urgency would fall into adjusting the existing strategies that feature one-way communication in the absence of interior expressions. On the other hand, it is also required to find out the fundamental factors contributing to the stubborn prejudice held by people from across the world, since prejudice tends to hold back access to the idea and fails to evoke similar inner feelings in target learners as those of the Chinese people. Additionally, locating the joint where the fusion of horizons held by the target learners and the text itself, respectively, could be occurring has been a crucial issue. Thereby, creating the textual interpretation which could promote the fusion of horizons is bound to help bring about empathy by practitioners or general cultural readers toward the complicated elements and their basic logic of Taiji. By doing so, the deep implications Taiji involves may well manage to be picked up by westerners. From this perspective, the formation of the desired point where horizons are supposedly and smoothly fused can also be a reconstruction of a completely

new horizon, superior to the previous ones.

Since textual interpretation is not merely an activity of decoding the literal meaning of texts, but a fundamental mode of human understanding, in international communication, textual interpretation can be considered the fusion of horizons between the reader-translator's pre-understanding and the historical horizon of the source text, and further, the fusion of horizons between the translated version, the new-bearing text, and that of its target readers. In this context, achieving high-quality textual interpretation of Taiji culture demands abiding by the following principles.

### 3. Principles of Textual Interpretation in International Communication

**To illustrate the text in a historical perspective:** Based on Schleiermacher's philosophical concept, Gadamer (2004: pp. 232-235) argues that it is universally seen that strange experience may give rise to misunderstanding. He also asserts that what is obvious can be understood while what is inconspicuous can be grasped in a historical perspective; to interpret is to avoid getting misunderstood. Taijiquan, as a major vehicle of Taiji culture—a comprehensive system, ranges from the specific copper names of each gesture and the hidden metaphorical concepts apart from the names, to the complicated philosophical, martial arts and medical connotations. Among its variety of concepts, six major principles of boxing: Yin and Yang, Opening and Closing, Tension and Relaxation, Void and Substance, Firmness and Gentleness, and Concealment and Manifestation enjoy their fame for complexity and obscurity in other languages. For literal meaning itself does not manifest all the hidden implications. Thus, it is necessary to be aware of the cultural untranslatability since the absence of these cultural points is undeniable. Cultural untranslatability is undoubtedly existent and it is the proof of existence of things that do not come to people naturally, which might be a philosophical concept, customs, or a rule. That is what underlies quietly and inconspicuously there. Thus, it is when one cannot judge it or make sense of it in a present perspective. Instead, a historical view will be better desired, specifically, to explore where it is derived and how it has developed. It is true that the absence of similar experience is bound to lead to no access to thorough understanding. Therefore, it's more reasonable to try to bridge the gap by building some technical terms more familiar to people in foreign cultures or create some other easier-understood means to get across rather than delivering in an alien and rigid perspective. Another example will be given of “yemafenzong”, parting the wild horse's mane, a classic movement in Taijiquan, which gets its fame because of its gesture when performing, which is totally alien to western learners since they are clueless about the origin and the majestic momentum in any of their sport items. Here comes the true meaning of creating the hidden and alien image by interpreting it from the perspective of historical and cultural background that it is derived from ancient martial arts' close-quarters body leaning strike, a practical combat technique

that overcomes straight force with transverse power.

**To alleviate unreasonable prejudice:** Reasonable fore-judgement is the premise of understanding. Anyone who tries to understand has to face the interference of fore-judgement or prejudice that is not derived from the target to be understood. As for the philosophical concepts that are exclusive to Taiji, both the practitioners and general cultural readers are bound to bear their fore-judgement and prejudice, consisting of their own experience, values, knowledge, language, culture, and the like in their attempt to understand the text. What should be noted is that if one wants to understand others' views, adhering to one's own fore-judgement solely and blindly would be of no benefit. Rather than abandoning one's own fore-judgement and views while reading or listening, the desirable way is to hold an open attitude toward others' views and the views displayed in the text. In international communication, it is unaffordable for us to expect the target readers in the western world to take the initiative to hold back their own fore-prejudice so as to achieve comprehension. While interpreting the text, first of all, we have to recognize the fact that we have undoubtedly woven our own fore-understanding and fore-judgement in the text; we also have to admit the legitimacy of the target readers' preconception or prejudice belonging to their particular experience. Hence, the following work will be accorded to the constructive interpretation of the predicted prejudice held by the target readers or learners in hope of their easy access to understanding Taiji culture from universal humanistic perspectives like balance, harmony, and self-cultivation so as to convey its authentic essence. To constructively interpret involves the following aspects. Firstly, texts used for international communication are supposed to place their top priority to the touching and emotional content that could bring about empathy between the original readers and the target ones, rendering the powerful innermost being of the Chinese people conspicuous and striking. Secondly, to address the misunderstandings of the text led by the values the target readers cling to and the rules they abide by, evading the problem will not be helpful; instead, facing up to the influence that hinders the target readers from understanding in the desired way really matters. Thirdly, analysis of the formulation of the prejudice is highly demanded and, meanwhile, figuring out the basic logic that gives rise to the prejudice would be of significance.

**To aim at specific target readers:** In terms of content, texts for international communication are supposed to fall into different categories, ranging from the introduction of basic movements of Taijiquan, details of performing the movement, to philosophical ideas hidden behind the movements, and even elements related to traditional Chinese medicine or martial arts. Therefore, general extensive texts introducing Taiji culture without aiming at a specific audience tend to miss their desirable target readers' special attention, so much so that cultural outreach would fail to accomplish the task. Extensive illustration lacking specific and specialized research will not be of use to promote the possible fusion of different horizons owned respectively by target readers and the text. The other way around, focusing on serving personalized expectations from the target readers could facilitate the enlargement and adjustment of their original horizons so as to get close

to the textual horizon. For instance, in the context of informing the public of the beauty and strength of Taijiquan, details of complicated and obscure philosophical statements would probably frighten passersby who might have shown their initial passion for this alien, mysterious eastern performance. Conversely, it is more rewarding to elaborate explicitly on underlying implications in front of those who are keen to acquire further understanding about this intriguing, mysterious eastern treasure. As illustrated above, ignorance of the demands of desired readers should not be welcomed.

#### 4. Constructive Interpretation of Telling Stories about Taiji

Under the circumstances of telling Chinese stories to the world, narrating stories about Taiji is certainly of significance in such an unprecedented era.

**Literary texts:** By searching the keywords of Chinese Culture, International Communication, and Literary Narrative, the author has collected papers published by domestic scholars over the past decade concerning research on literary narrative approaches in the international communication of Chinese culture (Figure 1. DSLNIC). It can be concluded that literary expressions have been accorded value in cross-cultural communication and are gaining growing attention in recent years. By incorporating fictional writing skills, it seeks to realize the organic unity of truthful conveyance of ideas and emotions and diverse artistic forms, which is defined as literary expression (Chen, 2025: p. 66). As one of the common forms of human spiritual civilization, literature carries warmth across temporal and spatial boundaries, exerting a profound shaping influence (Zhang, 2021). Beyond any doubt, what literary works have brought to human society is enlightenment and enjoyment. Featuring fascinating plots and literary language, literature stands out from other genres. From this perspective, literary texts enjoy more strengths in shortening the distance between readers and the text (Zhang, 2021). Moreover, in the process of international communication, it is not rare to see that target readers would be hindered from gaining access to the true meaning of the text on account of their established and conventional experience, customs, and ideology. Given the fact that when confronting things that do not originally belong

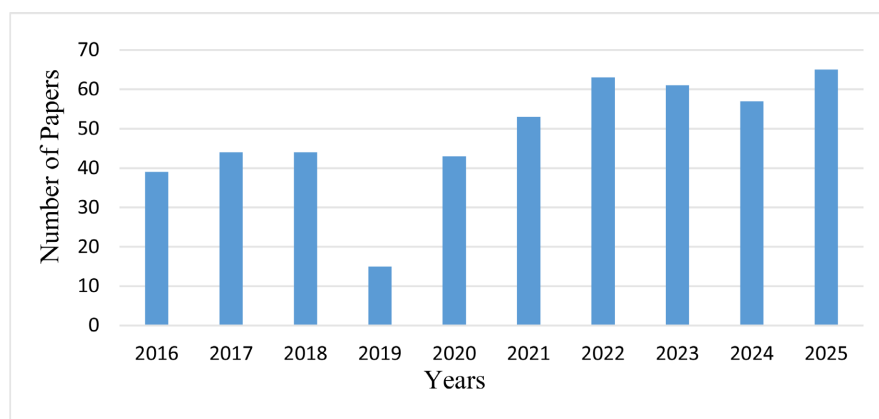
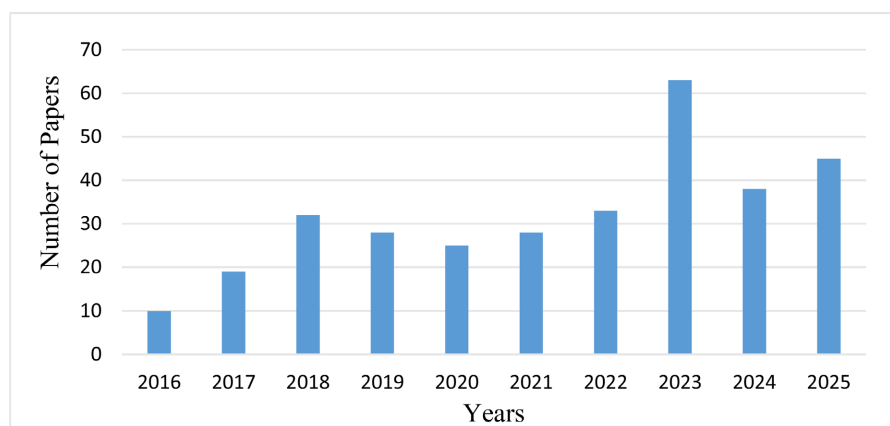


Figure 1. Domestic studies on literary narration in international communication (DSLNIC).

to their own society, such as information alienation, value collision, and absence of counterparts, those who try to understand the text tend to render their understanding stagnant or even come to an end. Measures therefore have to be taken to lift the barriers. Literary texts stand a higher probability of consolidating identity by breaking through the barrier of ideology and further entering the spiritual mind of the readers because of their reputation for exclusive affinity. Additionally, if the particular theory can gain wide circulation, the perspective to interpret should be placed as a top priority since unique and specific perspectives will be capable of enhancing its appeal and function. Meanwhile, building precise logic in expression and interpretation also proves indispensable, for by doing so the argument can be justified as expected and the effect of communication would also be optimized accordingly.



**Figure 2.** Domestic studies on storytelling narration in international communication (DSSNIC).

**Story-based communication:** Likewise, by searching related keywords, as shown in **Figure 2** DSSNIC, the general overview of domestic research on storytelling narration in the international communication of Chinese culture over the past decade indicates that in promoting Chinese cultural communication, the value of storytelling narration has also come to be noticed, and relevant research has increased with an overall upward tendency. Adopting story-based communication is conducive to further boosting communication effects and strengthening greater public recognition. Stories serve as carriers of cultural memory; through the interweaving of plots, characters, and emotions, they enhance the memorability and transmissibility of cultural content, transforming cultural symbols into vivid mental images (Su & Dai, 2025: p. 131). During the elaboration of Taiji culture, fabricating stories with appealing plots and impressive characters may well help it gain popularity among people worldwide. Stories are reputed for rendering serious theories relaxing, abstract concepts concrete, and complex logic simple. Taiji consists of many allusions stemming from historical legend, Taoist philosophy, martial arts, and literary arts, marked by profound cultural connotations. Among the well-known ones, “taiji sheng liang yi”, Taiji generates the Two Modes,

or from Taiji come Yin and Yang, has long been regarded as the core philosophical allusion of Taiji, elaborating the fundamental theory that Yin and Yang are the origin of all things in the universe. The same allusion for original readers and target ones differs from each other in more ways than linguistically. Unlike the original readers raised in traditional Chinese culture, influenced by some other similar philosophical ideas consciously or unconsciously, it is rather hard for beginners worldwide to comprehend such an abstract statement. Under such circumstances, narrative techniques serve as a top priority, and accessible stories tend to help people cast off their ideological burdens and the fear of difficulties brought by the unknown, striking a deep chord with the audience. Accordingly, expressing philosophical principles through stories and embedding military tactics in tales are considered ideal approaches to reducing readers' possible trouble in comprehension and thereby expanding the horizons of target readers.

**Mini stories, powerful principles:** The international cultural outreach of Taiji is not only concerned with a particular Chinese culture itself, but also with the conviction Chinese people hold and the principles our nation asserts. Both the achievements of material civilization and the fruits of spiritual civilization we have ever gained display the reason and justification of our own theories and principles. New concepts and innovative ways of expression in the discourse system come into being consequently, offering standardized interpretations, defining Taiji independently, and preventing misinterpretation to gain cultural discourse power. Therefore, to construct totally new discourse symbols as the times require is what should be done at present. As a vehicle of profound traditional Chinese philosophy and wisdom for keeping fit, Taiji has been deeply integrated into national cultural strategy and the international landscape. Among all the philosophical concepts Taiji reinforces, the unity of heaven and humanity and the Dao follows nature shine among others, have been the cornerstone to empower new quality productive forces in our nation. Notably, it has been proved that it is the cultural cornerstone that perfectly shows the specific guidance and instructions for our development and achievements. Hence, in international communication, such practical concepts and valid theories are those that are well worth introducing and interpreting as crucial symbols of our national cultural soft power. Most importantly, the task is not only to make these cultural symbols heard, but also to get them across and further build up our own discourse system globally. In such a context, storytelling texts comparatively on the one hand alleviate the alienation of particular theories and degrade the cultural shock and even the resistance sentiment of the target readers on the other hand. For the affinity of narrative pieces stands more chances of touching one's inner heart and inviting the audiences to get close to what is desired to spread after rendering them off their guard. Only by letting the new things come to them naturally, would the target readers' established horizon start their movement, including possible negotiation and finally fusion afterwards. For instance, in the interpretation of Yin-Yang harmony, the conventional way is to explain what it means by giving its definition and conno-

tation: Yin-Yang harmony advocates mutual rooting, mutual embedding and intercommunication and opposes zero-sum games, which is obviously lacking in elaborate philosophical description that our nation has been claiming to seek harmony out of differentiation and will not exert an impressive influence on global attention. In the storytelling system, metaphorical narration and vivid language are apparently superior to stiff and straightforward exposition of our governing conceptions of multi-governance and consultative democracy. Therefore, the narration to interpret our distinctive theories and evaluation criteria by telling stories proves to have unparalleled advantages.

## 5. Conclusion

China is undergoing an unprecedented surge in all fields, demanding a unique international discourse system that boosts mutual understanding around the world as well as delivering our distinctive and unique theories to the international world. Under such critical circumstances, Taiji takes its exclusive initiative to get closer to a growing number of enthusiasts and professional practitioners, known as Taiji diplomacy, contributing to gaining international discourse power to a large extent. Via formal and systematic textual explanations, thereby building independent cultural discourse expression, standardized textual interpretations of Taiji culture in external publicity are accordingly committed to efficient communication globally in the context of a rapidly changing diplomatic atmosphere. Exposing the surface and conveying the essence worldwide will be the eternal theme of Taiji.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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