

# Research on Training Strategies for Italian TCM Translators

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**Abstract:** TCM (Traditional Chinese Medicine) translators are a bridge in the spread of TCM culture from China to the rest of the world. The training of TCM translators in China is still in its infancy and is based mainly on English. The training of Italian TCM translators basically doesn't exist. Making good use of domestic and international resources to strengthen the training of non-universal language TCM translators is important for communication of TCM culture outside of China. This research was a comprehensive and systematic exploration of Italian TCM translation resources at home and abroad. It explored interdisciplinary theoretical and professional models of Italian TCM translation and training methods.

**Keywords:** TCM translation; Talent training strategy; Italian

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## 1. Introduction

Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) is an important carrier of Chinese culture to the outside world, and an important way to realize internationalization of TCM<sup>[1]</sup>. In addition to the curative effect and cultural charm of TCM, TCM translation can also build a bridge between China and other foreign countries<sup>[2]</sup>. The “Belt and Road” initiative has brought unprecedented historical opportunities to the internationalization of TCM. As a unique health resource with independent intellectual property rights in China, TCM can play a special role in the implementation of the “Belt and Road” cooperation. This has created an urgent need for a large number of TCM translators<sup>[3]</sup>. TCM translation is a complex and difficult task. The translator not only needs to have a deep language foundation, but also a cultural background related to TCM in order to accurately translate the professional terms and their rich philosophical connotations. In 2019, there were 13 TCM universities with undergraduate degrees in English TCM translation, and 7 universities with graduates' de-

gree in English TCM translation<sup>[4]</sup>. However, the current training of TCM translators in China is still in its infancy, and non-universal language talents including Italian are very rare, which hinders the spread of TCM in countries along the “Belt and Road”. At present, the 175 countries that have established diplomatic relations with China involving at least 95 languages<sup>[5]</sup>. How to use domestic and international resources, and explore non-common language TCM translator training models has become an important aspect of external communication of TCM culture. This article uses Italian as an example to study the challenges faced by domestic TCM translators, and feasible strategies for international cooperation in training TCM translation talent.

## 2. The History and Current Situation of Italian TCM Translation

In the 13th century, the rise of the Mongol Empire basically cleared all obstacles to the smooth flow along the Silk Road from the east to the west<sup>[6]</sup>. TCM was introduced to Italy through *Travels of Marco Polo* which

described China's health care methods. It also specifically introduced Chinese medicinal materials such as ginger, tea, galangal, pepper, rhubarb, musk, cinnamon, etc. Marco Polo recorded the Chinese understanding that deer musk originated from a sac under the skin rather than from the belly button, correcting a nearly 8 centuries' wrong understanding in Europe<sup>[7]</sup>.

From the 18th to the 19th century, some Italian doctors became interested in the scientific verification and use of TCM especially acupuncture. In 1820, Bozetti published "Acupuncture", the first monograph on acupuncture written by an Italian. In 1939, the Italian scholar Muto-Nardone Pietro published a paper "Traditional Chinese Medicine and Western Medicine"<sup>[8]</sup>, a comparative study of Chinese and Western medicine, which attracted the attention of academic circles. In 1997, Iannaccone published "The Philosophy and Science of Chinese Medicine", demonstrating the theory of Chinese medicine and the scientific nature of Chinese medicine from a philosophical perspective.

In 1968, the first Association of Acupuncture and Moxibustion (SIA) was established in Italy, which promoted the dissemination of basic knowledge of acupuncture. In 1970, Bruni Pasquale published "Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow of Traditional Chinese Medicine"<sup>[9]</sup>, which discussed the development process and trend of TCM. In 1973, the Italian-Chinese TCM Association was established. It organized forces to translate the English version of "Chinese Acupuncture" into Italian, and contributed to the development of acupuncture in Italy. On January 14, 1986, the first graduate school of traditional Chinese medicine in Italy was established in the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Pavia to cultivate TCM talents and build a TCM research base.

In 1979, the Paracelso Research Center was established, which is a research institution of TCM and also opened clinics in Rome and Venice. After 40 years of development, the Paracelso Research Center has developed from a research group composed of several TCM enthusiasts into a well-known TCM communication center integrating medical treatment, teaching, scientific research, health care, and rehabilitation to promote TCM into the vision of ordinary Italians.

In 1998, the Italian Association of TCM was established. As a founding member of the World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies established in 2003, the Italian Association of TCM plays an important role in the process of internationalization of TCM in Italy, and is known especially for its outstanding contributions to the

translation of TCM in Italian.

In 2009, the 62nd World Health Assembly passed the "Traditional Medicine Resolution", calling on member states to incorporate TCM into their own national health service system. In 2010, "Acupuncture and Moxibustion in Traditional Chinese Medicine" was listed on the "Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity". TCM entered the International Classification and Code of Diseases (ICD) for the first time.

In January 2011, WFCMS and the Italian Association of TCM signed a cooperation agreement to formulate the "Chinese-Italian Comparison of Basic Terminology of Traditional Chinese Medicine". In February of the same year, an editorial board composed of 22 experts was established. The editorial board lasted for two years and consulted more than 100 Chinese and Italian books and a large number of documents. It adopted the same style on the basis of the "International Standards for Chinese and English Basic Terminology of Traditional Chinese Medicine" issued by the World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies in 2008. Published in Italy in September 2013, "International Standards for Chinese and Italian Comparison of Basic Terminology in Traditional Chinese Medicine", with 21 chapters and 6,526 entries, has made unprecedented contributions to the teaching, scientific research, practice and exchange of Chinese-Italian Chinese medicine, and has become a model of cooperation between China and Italy in the field of Chinese-Italian translation.

On October 11, 2020, the Italian Society of Traditional Chinese Medicine was formally established in Rome which is based on the former Italian Association of TCM and promoted by Chairman Guo Chunbiao. It has introduced a group of Italian TCM physicians and Italian consultants, which has attracted great attention from the international TCM community.

### **3. The Current Situation of Domestic Italian TCM Translator Training**

Italy officially joined the Belt and Road Initiative in March 2019. It is the only country among the G7 member countries that has joined the Belt and Road Initiative. Currently, there is no Chinese university offering Italian TCM translation training program. In 1955, the University of International Business and Economics started the first Italian major in China. There are currently 22 universities offering Italian undergraduate degree in China: University of International Business and Economics, Beijing Foreign Studies University, Shanghai Interna-

tional Studies University, Communication University of China, Xi'an International Studies University, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Tianjin Foreign Studies University, Dalian University of Foreign Studies, Hebei Science and Technology Normal University, Nanjing Normal University, Sichuan International Studies University, Beijing Language and Culture University, Beijing International Studies University, Luoyang University of Foreign Languages, Jilin University of Foreign Studies, Yuexiu University of Foreign Languages, Sichuan International Studies University Chengdu University, Sichuan International Studies University Chongqing Southern Institute of Translation, Zhejiang International Studies University, Hebei University of Foreign Languages, Nankai University, Heilongjiang University of Foreign Languages. Four colleges offer Italian majors: Jiangxi Vocational and Technical College of Foreign Languages and Foreign Trade, Hunan Changsha University of Foreign Languages, Hainan University of Foreign Languages, and Dalian University of the Arts. In addition, 10 universities including Peking University, Tsinghua University, China University of Political Science and Law, Beijing University of Technology, Tongji University, Xiamen University, Guangzhou University, Sichuan Normal University, Wenzhou University, and Beijing University of Chemical Technology use Italian as a second foreign language for foreign language majors. The teaching program includes Italian language, literature, culture, economics and trade, translation and area studies. Among the 22 universities that offer Italian undergraduates, 10 offer graduate courses, but so far there is no professional Italian Chinese TCM dictionary and there is a lack of research papers on the theory and practice of TCM Italian translation.

#### 4. Strategies for Training Italian TCM Translators

The culture of TCM is the sum of internal values, ways of thinking, external norms of behavior, and the image of artifacts related to Chinese medicine<sup>[10]</sup>. The development of TCM culture draws on the knowledge of philosophy, medicine, mathematics, history and other disciplines, which is both scientific and full of humanistic attributes. Cultivating high-end talents for translation of TCM culture requires cross-professional, cross-country, and cross-cultural cooperation.

a) Strengthen the interdisciplinary theory construction of TCM

The external communication of TCM culture is a systematic project that spans linguistics, communication, translation and medicine. It is an important subject related

to the health and well-being of human beings around the world and building a community with a shared future for mankind. It involves international cooperation, government support, and relative policies. The establishment and implementation of the system, the development of the entire field of industry, education and research, the complementarity of theory and practice, and the identification and promotion of results are all needed. Such a systematic project needs the support of a systematic theoretical system. It must not be just an empirical generalization, but a systematic in-depth analysis and research on the theory of external communication of TCM culture.

b) Strengthen the construction of non-universal language TCM translation theory

The language barriers of TCM culture to the outside world, especially the translation of non-universal languages, play a particularly important role in the effect of communication. From a macro perspective, to strengthen the construction of translation disciplines in non-universal languages of TCM, it is necessary to vigorously develop the training of foreign language talents and cultural background knowledge of TCM, establish a systematic study of non-universal language translation of TCM, standardize the translation of TCM terminology into foreign languages, explore the scientific and philosophical nature of translation of TCM culture, promote practical cases of translation of TCM culture, and predict the development direction of non-universal language Chinese medical translation careers, so as to build a non-universal language translation discipline system.

From a micro perspective, in the process of TCM translation, translators will encounter a large number of terms, many of which are not literal. They need to go deep into the cultural context of TCM to accurately understand their meaning and master the essence of TCM. TCM translation also has the particularity of using a large amount of ancient Chinese, which requires the translator to have a high level of Chinese, understand the original text correctly, and find the best correlation between the source language and the target language<sup>[11]</sup>. At the same time, it must conform to the Italian context and be easy for Italian readers to understand. Whether to use literal translation or free translation, the choice of strategy is based on the translation goal of "striving for the accuracy, completeness, smoothness and fluency of the translation"<sup>[12]</sup>.

c) Strengthen the construction of non-universal language TCM translation profession

In the context of "One Belt One Road", it is necessary to accurately translate TCM culture into foreign lan-

guages. Foreign language colleges and universities should make full use of their language advantages to further enhance the possibility of cross-knowledge backgrounds in TCM majors, and cultivate multi-lingual TCM translators. In translation teaching, universities can hire out-of-campus TCM experts, scholars and teachers to enter the classroom. Massive online TCM courses can also be screened and provided to students through the MOOC platform. Teachers should be encouraged to compile relevant TCM Italian translation tutorials, to publish Italian dictionaries of TCM, to strengthen the theory and practice of TCM translation, to communicate and cooperate with TCM colleges and universities, and to provide more translation services for the society.

d) Make good use of foreign talents and resources

The history of Chinese teaching in Italy began in the first half of the 18th century. In 1732, Italian priest Matteo Ripa founded the Chinese Academy in Napoli, the first veritable Chinese school in the West. With the deepening of China-Italy economic and trade cooperation, Italy has set off a "Chinese fever". At present, there are nearly 30 universities in Italy teaching Chinese, and the total number of students studying Chinese is about 5,000. Chinese is almost the most popular foreign language course for college students except English. As of the end of 2018, Italy has established 12 Confucius Institutes and 43 Confucius Classrooms. The total number of Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms ranks 4th in the world and 2nd in Europe<sup>[13]</sup>. In 2005, Manzoni Language High School in Milan took the lead in opening up Chinese teaching in Italian high schools. At present, the development of Chinese education in high schools in Italy is generally good: Chinese has become the second largest foreign language studied by high school students after English. According to statistics from the Italian education department, by the end of 2017, there were about 17,500 high school students studying Chinese in the country. There were 279 high schools offering Chinese language teaching. Among them, 41% of high schools have adopted Chinese as a subject of the high school graduation examination.

Italian universities and middle schools, as well as Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms, as the base for training local Chinese talents in Italy, should form a joint force with domestic Italian teachers and students to promote the spread of Chinese medicine culture in Italy<sup>[14]</sup>.

e) Strengthen all-round international cooperation in the field of TCM

As a cross-cultural and cross-professional commu-

nication activity, TCM translation requires cooperation and communication between domestic and foreign forces to perfect this vast and complex project. We need to learn from foreign experience and strengthen the all-round internationalization of TCM through international cooperation in running schools, international academic exchanges and exchanges of experts and students.

At present, there are two Chinese medical institutions that cooperate with Italy in running schools: Since 2019, Henan University of Traditional Chinese Medicine has cooperated with the University of Siena in Italy to organize an undergraduate education program in nursing, and plans to enroll 120 students every year. Since 2018, Xinxiang Medical College has cooperated with the University of Turin in Italy to hold an undergraduate education program in medical imaging technology. In 2018, it enrolled 99 people and enrolled 80 people in 2019. These two colleges have created a precedent for the cooperation between China and Italy in the medical field. All courses are taught in English, and students do not need to learn Italian.

If more and more universities especially those which have Italian major students can join this kind of cooperation and exchange program it will be possible to achieve a breakthrough in professional Italian translation teaching programs. On the basis of international cooperation, a new phase in the construction of TCM departments between China and Italy will be created.

According to the "One Belt One Road" Development Plan for Traditional Chinese Medicine (2016-2020) jointly issued by the State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine and the National Development and Reform Commission, by 2020, a new pattern of all-round cooperation will take shape. The value of TCM medical treatment and health care is widely recognized and more countries recognize the legal status of TCM. In this process, the dissemination of TCM culture is inseparable from translation, especially language translation and services in non-universal languages. Its significance and strategic value are self-evident. It can be said that the task of cultivating translators in non-universal languages has a strong urgency and strategic importance<sup>[15]</sup>. Strengthening the development of talent, establishing a trans-professional, cross-country, and cross-cultural TCM language system, actively exploring theoretical and practical innovations, creating a new style of external communication of TCM culture, and improving the soft power of TCM culture are all related to the realization of the "Chinese Dream"<sup>[16]</sup>.

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