

# Cultivating Translation Talents in Local Higher Education for Chinese Culture “Going Global”

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## Abstract

Within the strategic framework of Chinese culture “going global”, the role of translation as the key conduit for cultural dissemination has become increasingly critical. This crucial role, in turn, raises the imperative for translators who are not only linguistically proficient but also possess profound cultural literacy. This paper argues that transcending the prevalent homogenized model of translation training requires the deliberate integration of Chinese cultural content, with a specific emphasis on local cultural resources, into the curricula of local universities. Such an approach fosters the development of distinctive translation talents endowed with robust cultural literacy and cross-cultural competence. The ultimate aim is to equip these talents to enhance China’s international discourse power and articulate its multifaceted cultural narrative globally. Through a critical analysis, the paper examines the necessary structural reforms—including curriculum redesign, development of school-based cultural materials, and strategic faculty training—while addressing the implementation challenges. This culture-centric model is essential for nurturing translators who can authentically engage in global cultural dialogue and address the current imbalance in international cultural flows.

## Keywords

Chinese culture; Local culture; Integration; Translation talent cultivation; Dissemination of Chinese culture.

## 1. Introduction

The convergence of rapid globalization and technological disruption, epitomized by advances in artificial intelligence within the language service industry, necessitates a fundamental re-evaluation of translation education. This moment coincides with China’s national strategy of culture “going global,” a project aimed at fostering mutual understanding and enhancing China’s voice in world affairs. Official directives, such as the Teaching Guide for Undergraduate Translation Majors, explicitly call for curricula that enhance humanistic literacy and integrate Chinese cultural knowledge to cultivate talents with both global vision and Chinese sentiment (Feng, 2020; Jiang, 2019). Dang Zhengsheng (2024) further argues that China requires Chinese-foreign translation talents, making the integration of Chinese and foreign linguistic and cultural knowledge a critical concern in higher education.

However, a significant gap persists between these strategic imperatives and the lived reality in many local universities. Translation programs, often constrained by resource limitations and a rigid adherence to standardized models, risk producing graduates with convergent skill sets—technically adequate but culturally disoriented. This results in a homogenized model of talent cultivation, yielding a workforce inadequately prepared for the intricate task of interpreting China’s complex, evolving reality for global audiences (Chang, 2015). The consequence is a perpetuation of the cultural and informational asymmetry long noted by scholars, where global

knowledge of China lags behind its actual development, reinforcing a “cultural deficit” in international exchanges (Wang & Hu, 2010).

Existing studies have begun to explore localized paths. For instance, Ge Wenfeng and Ji Shufeng discussed a “localization + compound” model in Anhui; Yao Teng explored curriculum design based on Wutai Mountain culture; Wang Xin and Yang Hongyan examined practical education rooted in Sichuan’s Emei Mountain and Leshan Giant Buddha; and Liu Jinlong considered major development utilizing Shanghai’s local cultural advantages. These provide valuable references but often remain as isolated cases rather than a systemic reform blueprint.

Therefore, this paper contends that a more fundamental educational shift is required: moving from a language-centric to a culture-centric paradigm. It argues that the systematic integration of Chinese cultural content—with local culture serving as a vital, tangible component—is not merely an additive enhancement but a core strategy for cultivating “distinctive” translators. This approach directly addresses the limitations of the homogenized model by providing a pathway for local universities to leverage their unique geographical and cultural assets. The analysis will first establish the theoretical inseparability of translation and culture. It will then analyze translation’s function in rebalancing global cultural flows before proposing a dual-framework for cultural integration into the curriculum. Finally, it will critically assess the implementation pathways and inherent challenges, aiming to provide a coherent and actionable blueprint for educational reform that aligns local training with national strategic objectives.

## 2. Translation as the Bridge of Cultural Mediation

To conceptualize translation merely as a linguistic operation is to misunderstand its fundamental nature. At its core, translation is an act of cross-cultural communication, a process of mediating meaning between different socio-cultural systems (Katan, 2004). Culture, defined here as the encompassing matrix of a society’s material artifacts, psychological frameworks (values, beliefs), and institutional structures (language, norms), constitutes both the content and the context of all translational activity (Zhou, 2005). An ancient Chinese insight captures this well: “Translation means change, making words understood,” highlighting its purpose of enabling mutual understanding—which includes both learning from others and introducing oneself.

The translator, therefore, operates as a cultural interpreter. Their task extends beyond finding lexical equivalents to deciphering the cultural codes embedded in the source text and negotiating their transposition into the target cultural-linguistic environment. This process is inherently evaluative and strategic. As Venuti (cited in Guo, 2000) argues, it involves ethical and political choices between domesticating the foreign text to meet target-culture expectations or foreignizing it to preserve the source culture’s distinctiveness. For Chinese culture “going global,” a strategy that respectfully foregrounds cultural specificity—the “otherness” that makes a culture unique—is often paramount, a view echoed by scholars like Xu Chongxin. This resonates with Bassnett’s conception of translation as a culturally situated practice (Liao, 2001), where success is measured by effective communication within a specific cultural frame. Christiane Nord notes that translation-mediated communication involves the transmission of symbols rich in cultural connotations, and Xu Jianzhong (2009) further elaborates that culture forms the primary normative environment for translation ecology, while translation itself aids in spreading, creating, and developing culture.

Thus, translation functions as a primary engine for cultural relocation and exchange, capable of shifting cultural elements from the periphery to the center of global discourse (Wang, 2013). The competence of the translator directly influences the direction and quality of this flow. A translator lacking deep cultural insight becomes a potential point of failure, likely to produce

texts that are either semantically inaccurate or culturally opaque. Consequently, cultivating translators demands an educational model that places cultural competence—the ability to understand, analyze, and transfer cultural meaning—on an equal footing with linguistic proficiency. Translators must be both bilingual and bicultural, capable of the cultural transformation necessary for effective communication.

### 3. Translation and the Rebalancing of China's Global Cultural Voice

The “going global” strategy emerges as a direct response to a protracted imbalance in global cultural exchange. Historically, translation has facilitated more cultural import into China than export from it. Despite the nation's rising international status, comprehensive and sophisticated understanding of its civilizational depth and contemporary dynamics remains limited abroad. This disparity, characterized as a form of “cultural deficit” (Wang & Hu, 2010), hinders equitable dialogue and often leads to misunderstandings, placing Chinese culture at a disadvantage in international exchanges.

Within this context, translation assumes a decisive role as the principal medium for shaping China's international cultural image and discursive presence. It is through translation that Chinese concepts, narratives, aesthetic forms, and scholarly thought enter global circulation, contributing to a more diversified and representative world cultural ecosystem. National initiatives like the National Social Science Fund's “Chinese Academic Foreign Translation” project underscore the official recognition of translation's strategic importance in this endeavor, having made significant contributions over more than a decade (Gao & He, 2020). The Belt and Road Initiative also stands as a model where translation facilitates cultural exchange. As Wang Ning (2013) states, translation plays a unique and decisive role in establishing China as a cultural power.

The translator acts as the crucial regulator within this cultural communication ecosystem (Hu, 2013). Their agency—exercised in selecting source texts, interpreting meanings, and choosing representational strategies—directly governs the quality, quantity, and reception of China's cultural output. Hu Gengshen (2013) proposes that translators play a central, balancing role comparable to maintaining ecological balance. This agency must be informed by more than technical skill, and it requires cultural confidence that integrates a secure knowledge base, critical discernment and the empathetic ability to frame Chinese content in ways that are both authentic and resonant with international audiences. Liu Yunhong (2012) emphasizes the active, subjective role of the translator in shaping cross-cultural perceptions. Therefore, equipping translators with this fortified cultural capacity is not an optional enhancement but a prerequisite for effective and respectful cultural dissemination that can enhance China's international discourse power.

Critically, the desired rebalancing cannot rely solely on macro-level policy or increased translation volume, and must also engage micro-level, place-based cultural resources. While grand national narratives are essential, they can sometimes be perceived as homogeneous abroad. In contrast, regional, local, and ethnic cultural stories often provide points of entry that feel more authentic, tangible, and differentiated to foreign audiences. Scholarship in cultural communication suggests that localized cultural artifacts and narratives can serve as more effective and memorable channels for understanding a complex civilization, highlighting the necessity of equipping translators with sub-national cultural literacy.

Moreover, the digital turn fundamentally alters the translation and dissemination landscape, further intensifying the translator's gate-keeping function. On digital platforms and social media, audience-generated translations and subtitles often constitute the primary portal for international audiences. Emerging observations on digital content consumption indicate that translation strategies which thoughtfully retain source-cultural markers (e.g., through

foreignizing translation coupled with brief contextual glosses) can enhance viewer engagement and comprehension compared to strategies that fully domesticate content. This underscores that in the digital age, the translator's deep cultural competence—including the ability to knowledgeably mediate local culture—is not peripheral but central to determining whether China's stories circulate as nuanced, living heritage or are reduced to flattened stereotypes.

## **4. A Dual-Framework for Curriculum Integration: National Spirit and Local Knowledge**

To systematically develop translators' essential cultural capacity and move beyond a homogenized training model, this section proposes a dual-framework approach for integrating culture into the translation curriculum. This approach operates on two interconnected tiers: the foundational tier of core Chinese cultural literacy, and the applied/specialized tier of local cultural knowledge. The integration of both is crucial for cultivating translators who possess not only a firm grounding in the national cultural spirit but also the distinctive local expertise needed to convey the rich diversity of Chinese culture to the world.

### **4.1. Foundational Competence: Education in Core Chinese Cultural Literacy**

The foundational tier is dedicated to cultivating a robust and critical understanding of the core spirit and the historical-contemporary continuity of Chinese culture. Students must achieve more than superficial familiarity, and they require a deep understanding of the main content, basic spirit, and value system of Chinese culture, enabling them to interpret complex cultural phenomena and inherit the Chinese cultural spirit.

First, education must be rooted in the rich content and enduring spirit of the Chinese nation. This encompasses the long, diverse cultural history with multiple ethnic groups, complex geography, enduring agricultural traditions, the theoretical contention of hundreds of schools of thought, and the vast corpus of poetry and classics. This culture exhibits strong vitality, characterized by family-orientation, pragmatism, stability, and a strong sense of self-identification and group belonging. Its core spiritual content—"harmony between humanity and nature, a human-oriented ethos, vigorous vitality, and a respect for peace and harmony" (Zhang & Fang, 2004)—must form the philosophical bedrock of the translator's mindset. Chinese culture emphasizes unity with nature while centering on human flourishing, advocates openness and tolerance, seeks common ground while reserving differences, and encourages perseverance and self-improvement. As Xu Jianzhong (2009) notes, translation and translation studies can foster national self-esteem and pride. Therefore, the core of this learning is to grasp and affirm this unique national spirit, enabling translators to adhere to this harmonious essence and disseminate rich, diverse Chinese cultural information authentically.

Second, and equally critical, is the teaching of New China Culture, particularly the vibrant culture forged from the achievements of reform and opening-up. Contemporary Chinese culture is defined by the pursuit of harmonious coexistence, industrial and technological civilization, a socialist market economy, political democracy, and the development of individual subjectivity. Its manifestations are global in significance: breakthroughs in manufacturing, world-leading aerospace science and technology, a prosperous digital economy, transformative infrastructure, the building of a moderately prosperous society, rural revitalization, and ecological conservation. China's rise contributes strength, wisdom, and innovative approaches—such as the Belt and Road Initiative and the commitment to carbon neutrality—to global governance. Translators must be equipped to articulate not only classical philosophy but also these modern concepts, telling the world how the Chinese people are jointly building a community with a shared future. This comprehensive literacy, as Jin Huikang (2003) advocated, strengthens translation practice focused on Chinese language and culture, highlighting true cross-cultural

communication. It cultivates the “Chinese sentiment” and deep cultural confidence essential for translators to serve as authoritative interpreters (Xiao & Feng, 2019).

#### **4.2. Distinctive Competence: Exploration and Education of Local Culture**

The second tier leverages the unique advantage of local universities—their rootedness within specific regional cultural ecologies—to develop distinctive talent and avoid national homogenization (Chang, 2015). The vastness of Chinese culture necessitates a diversified global dissemination, where various local cultures actively participate to form a joint force.

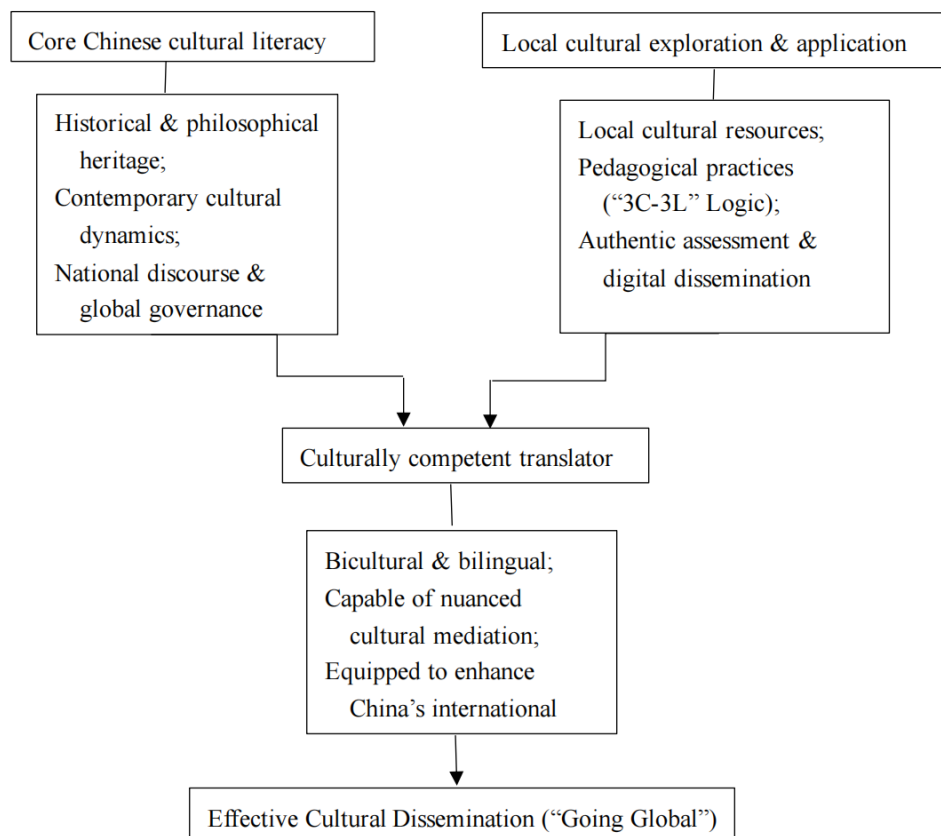
This integration must be practical, moving beyond theory. It involves the development of school-based textbooks derived from local history, literature, folklore, and cultural industries. It requires designing translation practical training sessions and project-based learning around local museums, intangible cultural heritage sites, festivals, and cultural industries. For instance, institutions in Sichuan and Chongqing can deeply integrate Bashu culture—including world natural and cultural heritage like Jiuzhaigou, the Cancong & Yufu culture of ancient Shu, and the rich history of the Three Kingdoms.

Taking the Yufu culture of the ancient Shu kingdom as a specific example, its multidisciplinary research achievements—spanning origins, ethnicity, social structure, bronze art, primitive religious beliefs, and exchange activities—constitute a vast reservoir for teaching resources. The core spirit of Bashu culture lies in its people’s resilience, struggle, and innovation within challenging natural environments. As an integral part of Chinese culture, Bashu culture currently faces significant difficulties in overseas dissemination. Therefore, optimizing translation major construction for corresponding talent training is a prerequisite for effectively enhancing its international introduction. Integrating such local culture achieves multiple objectives, as it provides authentic, engaging material for skill development; equips graduates with a niche, marketable specialization (e.g., in cultural tourism or heritage translation); and directly enables a more granular, diverse, and authentic presentation of Chinese culture to the world. As Xu Jun (2020) emphasized, the integration of local cultural education nationwide is vital for fostering distinctive talents and advancing the study and global presentation of China’s diverse cultural landscape.

To illustrate its implementation, the following details a pilot program at the author's university since 2022. This program, designed to operationalize the two-tier model, is built around a “3C-3L” (3C= Content, Context, Concept; 3L= Local, Regional, National) sequencing logic. In each semester, students first confront local artifacts (content), then reconstruct the historical context that produced them, and finally articulate the underlying value (concept) in idiomatic English. For instance, after handling a Yufu bronze artifact—such as a bird-head spout—they trace Ancient Shu water-control history in bilingual mini-lectures, and must conclude with a fifty-word museum label plus a 150-word educator’s note that interprets “resilience-in-adversity” for overseas visitors. The same spiral is repeated at regional level: a Sichuan opera mask becomes the anchor for Qing migration routes, and the class produces a sixty-second TikTok clip with foreignising subtitles and concise glosses. By the time they reach national documents such as the “shared future” white paper, learners are accustomed to moving from concrete object to abstract idea, and their final assignment is an English-to-Chinese back-translation accompanied by a critical commentary that makes their cultural positioning explicit. To prevent local culture from being reduced to static exhibits in translation teaching, each student cohort should undertake a field-based cultural documentation project every term. Working in teams of three, students would identify a practising cultural custodian—such as a bamboo-weaver or a folk singer—conduct a semi-structured interview, create a three-minute video recording, translate and annotate the content with explanations for culture-specific terms, and finally upload this package to an open-access platform under a Creative Commons license. This iterative process allows students to progressively grasp the culturally embedded

meanings, capture authentic terminology, and gradually builds a reusable open repository. This archive can then be adapted and reused by sister universities, eliminating the need for costly reprinted textbooks.

Finally, we sustain faculty capacity through micro-residencies. Language teachers spend two weeks on site at Yufu Ancient City shadowing curators, recording bilingual explanations, and co-authoring interpretive panels. Following this activity, students must incorporate at least one item of authentic cultural material into their subsequent class. This material could be, for example, an audio recording linked to a QR code for easy access, or a three-dimensional digital model of a cultural artifact. This short-cycle immersion avoids the time-and-cost barrier of semester-long fieldwork while keeping the education materially grounded and community-connected.



**Figure 1.** A Dual-Framework Curriculum Model for Cultivating Culturally Competent Translators

Note: The dual frameworks operate synergistically, ensuring translators are rooted in both national narrative and local authenticity.

## 5. Implementation Pathways and Critical Challenges

Transitioning from theory to practice demands strategic, university-wide commitment and an objective appraisal of implementation hurdles. While culture-centric reforms at Dalian University of Technology and Shanghai International Studies University (Chang, 2015; Xiao, 2017) attest to feasibility, local adoption requires a systematic blueprint. Accordingly, the focus here is on operationalizing the dual-framework model through curricular redesign, resource development and faculty capacity building, while candidly addressing inherent challenges. The aim is to offer local universities a pragmatic roadmap for translating strategic intent into sustainable educational practice.

### 5.1. Formulating Characteristic-Driven University-Level Standards and Programs

Guided by the principle that “national standards are the guideline and university-level standards are the foundation” (Peng, 2018), local universities must formulate their own distinctive program standards. These standards should explicitly mandate curricular depth in Chinese cultural studies and create a flexible yet rigorous framework for incorporating local cultural modules. This process transforms a generic program into one with a defined “cultural character,” such as a program known for producing translators adept in regional ecological narratives or local cultural heritage. As scholars like Wei Xiangqing and Yang Ping suggest, this involves exploring the common connotation of “China’s knowledge” while strategically enhancing the value of “locality.” Leadership must prioritize this cultural depth, which may necessitate reallocating resources from more traditional, technical course clusters. With concerted effort, a specific and feasible characteristic talent training plan can be developed within a year.

To maintain reform momentum, each program should establish and track an 18-month roadmap of key milestones (e.g., textbook peer-reviewed, 50% faculty on-site immersion, >60% elective enrollment). Publicly posting progress on the university portal fosters inter-departmental accountability and supports budget reallocation. External validation can be enhanced by forming a regional consortium of 3–5 universities to conduct annual cross-institutional reviews of student artifacts. This practice reduces grading subjectivity and enables shared printing costs of school-based textbooks.

### 5.2. Designing an Integrated Curriculum and Developing Authentic School-Based Materials

The curriculum system is the core vehicle for talent training. It must structurally reflect cultural priorities by establishing required courses on Chinese cultural overviews and elective/required modules on local cultural translation as pillars. As Sun Lin (2020) notes, curricula must adapt to strengthen international communication awareness. Chinese culture education and local exploration are direct strategies to cultivate talents who can meet the world’s need to understand China, emphasizing humanistic literacy, Chinese sentiment, and positive cultural information (Feng, 2020).

The development of high-quality, bilingual school-based textbooks is a significant but necessary undertaking. This requires a collaborative taskforce of translation studies faculty, local cultural scholars, and professional translators. The process should be systematic, entailing several key stages: collecting source materials from local cultural research; developing the core content and narrative in Chinese; drafting an initial version with supporting visuals and annotations; revising the draft based on peer review and pilot-teaching feedback; and, finally, preparing a substantial manuscript (e.g., ≥200,000 words) for institutional approval and printing. These textbooks serve internal curriculum reform and become a tangible asset of the program.

Curriculum timetables are encouraged to integrate a “Bashu Week” every semester, during which students rotate through museum exhibit label writing, heritage-site interpreting and start-up pitches for local cultural products, with each output graded as part of their coursework. This intensive block guarantees authentic material throughput without extending the overall programme. All artifacts are uploaded under Creative Commons licences, building an open archive that partner universities can adopt, ensuring cost-effective expansion across the province.

### 5.3. Building a Bicultural, Bilingual, and Instructionally Skilled Faculty Team

The faculty is the ultimate cornerstone of this reform. Cultivating distinctive translation talents requires a team where members combine translation expertise with deep, applicable cultural

knowledge. Achieving this demands innovative strategies: establishing incentives for interdisciplinary collaborative teaching between translation and cultural studies departments; providing targeted, sustained professional development for existing faculty in cultural content pedagogy; and revising recruitment practices to prioritize candidates with combined academic and vocational profiles. Critically, the administration must allocate a specific budget for training teachers to use the school-based textbooks and conduct effective bilingual (Chinese-foreign language) instruction. These teachers must be responsible for both delivering content and assessing student outcomes in local culture learning.

To ensure the short-term residency is not an isolated event, it is structured as a cyclical program. Faculty must revisit the heritage site every two years with a new student group to refresh teaching resources with new recordings or 3D digital scans. Following each lesson that substantively incorporates cultural materials, structured peer feedback is collected. This input contributes to an annual symposium on teaching innovation, where the best example of integrating artifacts into instruction is awarded seed funding. This mechanism aims to sustain a pedagogy that is deeply informed by primary sources and maintains active community ties.

#### **5.4. Adopting Comprehensive, Competency-Based Strategies and Assessment Methods**

To secure the effectiveness of cultural education, institutions must develop coherent strategies and scientific assessment methods. Administrations should foster a serious institutional attitude towards cultural education, raising teacher awareness and enthusiasm. Teachers, in turn, must actively observe and engage students, stimulating their initiative and moving them beyond a passive or indifferent attitude towards cultural learning.

For students, enhancing cultural study awareness means expanding learning channels far beyond the classroom. They should be encouraged to conduct social surveys and group studies to experience cultural elements—history, festivals, customs, geography, new economic sectors—firsthand. Extracurricular reading, online media, and daily life observation are all viable channels for cultural acquisition.

Assessment itself must evolve to measure cultural-learning outcomes and competencies. This requires moving beyond translation accuracy tests to incorporate portfolio assessments (e.g., collections of local culture translations), critical analyses of existing translations of Chinese texts, and simulated real-world tasks (e.g., crafting promotional materials for a local cultural festival). Assessment should consider the whole while highlighting key points, combining theoretical literacy with practical application, using scientific methods to evaluate learning, and thereby gradually normalizing high-standard humanistic literacy education within translation programs.

Assessment data are combined: (i) rubric-scored artifact, (ii) reflective vlog (2 min) explaining cultural-transfer choices, and (iii) public engagement metrics (views, likes, comments). A dashboard compiles these indicators each semester; if any drops below the faculty-set threshold, the course team must submit a remedial action plan—ensuring continuous enhancement rather than final bureaucratic formality, and making digital visibility a routine learning outcome.

### **6. Limitations and Future Research Directions**

While this study proposes a systematic, culture-centric model for translation talent cultivation and illustrates its implementation through a localized case (e.g., the Yu Fu culture curriculum and the “3C-3L” education), several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the model’s feasibility and effectiveness are primarily demonstrated through a single regional case (Sichuan). Its wider applicability to other local contexts with different cultural resources,

institutional capacities, and socio-economic conditions remains to be tested. Second, the proposed reforms—such as developing school-based textbooks and conducting faculty on-site immersion schemes—rely on sustained institutional commitment and resource allocation, which may be challenging for universities with limited budgets. Third, although a tripartite assessment framework is suggested, its long-term impact on students' cultural competence and career outcomes requires longitudinal empirical validation.

Future research could therefore explore the following directions: (1) conducting cross-regional comparative studies to identify contextual factors that facilitate or hinder the adoption of the dual-framework curriculum; (2) tracking the long-term professional development of graduates trained under such models to assess their actual impact on China's cultural dissemination; (3) investigating the growth capacity and sustainability of digital open-access archives built through student-created content; and (4) deepening the theoretical dialogue between translation education and cultural ecology studies, particularly regarding the role of "local knowledge" in global cultural flows. Such inquiries would further refine the model and contribute to a deeper understanding of how translation education can serve national strategies while retaining local distinctiveness.

## 7. Conclusion

The convergence of technological disruption and the pressing need for deeper global engagement fundamentally reshapes the essence of translation. In this new paradigm, the unique value of the human translator lies increasingly in their cultural intelligence, interpretive authority, and capacity for sensitive mediation. For local Chinese universities, this presents a compelling call to action: to pioneer a new generation of translators who are not merely linguistic channels but cultured mediators, deeply rooted in both the grand narrative of Chinese civilization and the vibrant distinctive features of local tradition.

This paper has argued that such an outcome necessitates a critical, systematic integration of culture into the very foundation of translation education. While the challenges—from resource constraints to faculty readiness—are substantial, they represent the growing pains of a necessary evolution. The alternative is the continued production of a homogenized workforce, unequipped to address the complex discursive tasks of the "going global" era. The construction of a translation major framework must be accomplished: formulating university-level standards, talent training programs, and curriculum systems; coordinating faculty resources; training specialized teachers; and establishing corresponding assessment methods.

By fully embracing a culture-centric model, local universities can transform their perceived limitations into distinctive strengths, cultivating translators endowed with the knowledge, confidence, and competence to navigate the nuanced dialogues of the 21st century. These talents will form a diversified joint force to spread Chinese culture globally, fulfill the goal of Chinese culture "going global," and articulate China's story with authenticity, sophistication, and power.

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