

Analyses of Confucian Value Discourses: Cross-Cultural Construction Paths Rooted in Ritual-Music Civilization and Traditional Chinese Medicine

Ying Yang¹, Xiaojun Yang^{2,*}, Wenbo Yang^{3,*}

¹School of Foreign Languages, Shandong University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Jinan, Shandong, China

²School of Foreign Languages, Guangzhou Institute of Science and Technology, Guangzhou, Guangdong, China

³Graduate Studies in Business, College of Business Administration and Accountancy, De La Salle University-Dasmariñas, Dasmariñas, Philippines

**Corresponding Author*

Abstract: Chinese civilization features an inherently continuous cultural inheritance evolving dynamically through inheritance, reform and innovation. The cultural discourse of ancient China transformed from the theocratic sacrificial discourse of the Xia and Shang dynasties to humanistic rational discourse centered on ethical order and people's livelihood in Western Zhou ritual-music civilization and Spring-Autumn Confucianism. This ideological transformation laid the spiritual foundation of Chinese civilization including valuing morality and people, harmony between human and nature, and harmony without uniformity, and provides historical resources for contemporary cross-cultural communication of Chinese cultural discourse. This paper sorts out the generation logic, core categories and contemporary practical value of Chinese cultural discourse by combing the evolution from ritual-music civilization to Confucian ideology. Taking traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) as a typical practical carrier of Confucian discourse in life sciences, this study analyzes the difficulties and solutions of Chinese cultural cross-cultural communication, and proposes multi-dimensional construction paths covering theoretical framework, semantic negotiation and digital multi-modal communication. Historical practices of Confucian localization in East Asia and Sinology development in Europe prove that effective cross-cultural discourse construction requires indigenous rooting, adaptive transformation and universal value

integration. The research provides theoretical references for enhancing China's international cultural discourse power and facilitating equal dialogue among civilizations.

Keywords: Ritual-Music Civilization; Confucian Ideology; Cultural Discourse; Cross-Cultural Communication; Traditional Chinese Medicine; Universal Values

1. Introduction

Chinese civilization boasts an uninterrupted historical inheritance with unique continuity. Such continuity is not mechanical duplication but a dynamic evolution featuring inheritance, reform and innovative development [1]. From shamanic sacrificial culture in Xia and Shang dynasties to ritual-music civilization in Western Zhou Dynasty, and systematic Confucian ideology in the Spring and Autumn Period, Chinese cultural discourse underwent a crucial ideological shift: from mysterious discourse communicating with gods and deities to humanistic rational discourse focusing on interpersonal ethics and people's practical lives [2].

This shift established the core spiritual characteristics of Chinese civilization, including valuing morality and people, harmony between human and nature, and harmony without uniformity, and supplies original ideological resources for contemporary cross-cultural construction of Confucian value discourses [3]. Hall's representation theory clarifies that all cultural meaning transmission relies on symbolic discourse practice [4]. Sorting out the generation

logic, core categories and contemporary value of Confucian value discourses spanning ritual-music civilization and Confucian thoughts, and exploring internationally accessible communication paths integrating Chinese and foreign perspectives, bears vital theoretical and practical significance for international cultural communication [5].

Most existing cross-cultural communication studies simply apply Western theoretical frameworks to interpret Chinese cultural phenomena, which causes obvious cultural discount in overseas dissemination [6]. Spivak's postcolonial criticism reminds researchers to avoid the hegemonic bias of Western discourse interpretation in cross-cultural translation [7]. This research responds to the above defects by constructing localized analytical frameworks for Confucian discourse communication.

Multiple academic works lay solid foundations for this research. Tu's exposition of Confucian universal human values lays the value foundation of this paper [8]. Li's research on the Doctrine of the Mean provides a complete cross-cultural dialogue methodology for this study [9]. Unschuld's medical history research verifies the inherent Confucian ethical attributes contained in traditional Chinese medicine [10]. WHO's unified international terminology standards offer unified translation norms for TCM core concepts [11]. Zhang's digital multimodal communication research provides technical support for the international dissemination of traditional cultural concepts [12]. Yang's research on East Asian Confucian localization reveals the core principle of maintaining cultural subjectivity in cross-cultural communication [13]. Jensen's Sinology research sorts out the historical evolution of Western cognition of Confucianism [14]. Zhou's research takes TCM as the carrier to interpret the practical value of Confucian benevolent discourse in life science communication [15]. Fairclough's critical discourse analysis provides basic analytical tools for this research [16]. Guo's research elaborates the internal logical connection between Confucian universal values and the community with a shared future for mankind [17]. Van Dijk's discourse-power theory explains the hidden symbolic hegemony in global cross-cultural communication [18].

2. Ritual-Music Civilization: Origin and

Foundation of Chinese Cultural Discourse

The evolution of early Chinese discourse systems presents a clear vein of humanistic awakening. The theocracy-centered sacrificial discourse of Xia and Shang cultures focused on communication between human beings and supernatural forces. The establishment of ritual and music systems in Western Zhou shifted the core of civilization to secular human ethics, taking morality, ritual and people as core discourse categories, marking the rationalization, secularization and humanization of Chinese civilization [1].

2.1 Discourse Evolution of Three Dynasties: From Theocratic Centrality to Humanistic Rationality

Cultures of Xia and Shang integrated theocracy, clan power and royal power, with discourse revolving around sacrifice, divination and ancestor worship. The creation of ritual and music in Western Zhou achieved a landmark breakthrough: it redefined the mandate of heaven based on moral standards, and transformed theocratic order into ethical social order [2]. Confucius' commentaries on the inheritance and reform of rituals across three dynasties accurately summarize the continuous logic of "inheritance—sublation—development" of ancient Chinese civilization. Instead of denying pre-existing cultures, ritual-music civilization inherited, innovated and transformed traditional resources, laying solid cultural and ideological foundations for the birth of Confucianism [14]. Jensen's research on European Sinology points out that Western understanding of Confucianism always originates from the ritual-music civilization tradition [14].

2.2 Discourse Functions and Social Construction of Ritual and Music

As a performative discourse, ritual carries powerful social construction capacity with "rectification of names" as its core, realizing consistent names and realities and orderly social operation [1]. Daily rituals including coming-of-age ceremonies, weddings, funerals and sacrifices internalize hierarchical ethics, family-state concepts and behavioral norms into individual cultural psychology. Complementary to ritual, music pursues harmonious coexistence: ritual distinguishes social hierarchy while music reconciles emotional gaps among different

groups to realize social harmony [3]. Nuyen's research on harmony without uniformity further expands the cross-cultural value of ritual-music harmonious discourse [19]. Jointly, ritual and music constructed a practical discourse system accessible to learning and practice, shaping Chinese national cultural traits including orderliness, harmony, integrity and benevolence.

2.3 Cross-Cultural Enlightenments of Ritual-Music Discourse

Ritual-music civilization offers three critical inspirations for contemporary cross-cultural discourse construction. First, abstract ideological concepts should be visualized into perceptible and practical behaviors and institutional arrangements [12]. Zhang's research on digital multimodal communication confirms the effectiveness of visualized transformation of traditional concepts [12]. Second, modern transformation of traditional culture shall adhere to the principle of inheritance and appropriate reform [8]. Tu emphasizes that Confucian humanism must realize adaptive innovation in cross-cultural communication [8]. Third, cultural subjectivity and inclusiveness should be balanced to maintain independent cultural stance in cross-cultural dialogue [13]. Yang's research on East Asian Confucian localization proves the importance of cultural subjectivity in cross-cultural communication [13]. These historical experiences serve as historical references for international communication of Confucian value discourses.

3. Confucian Ideology: Systematic Construction and Core Categories of Cultural Discourse

Confucian scholars interpreted and reorganized Six Classics, philosophically upgraded ritual-music civilization and reconstructed its theoretical framework, eventually forming a complete discourse system centered on benevolence, ritual and the doctrine of the mean [2]. Ames & Hall's monograph systematically combs the internal logic of Confucian core categories [20]. This transformation realized the sublimation from institutional norms to universal value ontology, establishing Confucianism as the core form of Chinese cultural discourse [8].

3.1 Benevolence and Ritual: Dual Axes of Internal and External Discourse

Benevolence constitutes the value foundation of

International Conference on Humanities, Social and Management Sciences (HSMS 2026)

Confucianism, with core connotations of "humanity lies in benevolence" and "putting oneself in others' shoes". It constructs an inclusive moral space realizing internal transcendence connecting individual mind and natural heaven [2]. Its logical chain extends from individuals to relatives, families, nations and all creatures, endowing Confucian value discourses with humanistic warmth and moral connotations. Ritual acts as external normative order, visualizing interpersonal relations, social structures and political systems through directional metaphors, forming predictable and stable social codes. The basic framework of Confucian value discourses is supported by the internal benevolence and external ritual structure [5]. Chan's cross-cultural communication research takes benevolence and ritual as the core analysis objects of Confucian discourse [5].

3.2 The Doctrine of the Mean: Practical Methodology of Cross-Cultural Dialogue

The doctrine of the mean does not refer to compromising neutrality, but a practical wisdom of grasping balance, maintaining moderation and pursuing harmony amid diversity [9]. Li constructs a complete cross-cultural dialogue framework based on the Doctrine of the Mean [9]. Its core pursuit of "ultimate neutrality" focuses on dynamic balance amid changes, advocating coexistence of diverse perspectives and opposing binary opposition. Such thinking perfectly matches the laws of cross-cultural communication: respecting cultural differences, embracing diversity, seeking consensus through dialogue and reducing cross-cultural misinterpretation [3]. Nuyen points out that "harmony without uniformity" derived from the doctrine of the mean forms a unique Confucian framework for global intercultural ethics [19], which provides distinctive Chinese wisdom to resolve civilizational conflicts and build equal international discourse order.

3.3 Universality and Cultural Uniqueness of Confucian Discourse

Rooted in humanistic rationality, guided by moral practice and oriented toward the ideal of universal harmony, Confucianism contains shared human values including benevolence, integrity, people-centered governance and harmony, while retaining distinctive Chinese cultural characteristics [8]. Tu's research fully demonstrates the universal humanistic value of

Confucianism [8]. Different from Western theological discourse systems, Confucianism grounds its ideology in real life and pursues inner transcendence, forming differentiated value logic and thinking modes. It enriches global civilizational diversity and provides unique value fulcrums for cross-cultural dialogue [14]. Jensen sorts out how European Sinology interprets the uniqueness of Confucian discourse in different historical stages [14].

4. Traditional Chinese Medicine: Concrete Practice of Confucian Discourse in Life Sciences

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) represents a typical extension of Confucian ideology in life science, serving as a core carrier for international communication of Chinese culture and a practical integration of Confucian ethics and medical practice [15]. Zhou's research systematically elaborates the organic combination of Confucian benevolent ethics and TCM international communication [15]. To clarify the intrinsic correlation between Confucian philosophical discourse and TCM theoretical systems, this study compiles a comparative correspondence table (see Table 1) to sort out the mapping relationship between core Confucian concepts and TCM professional discourse.

Table 1. Correspondence between Confucian Core Concepts and TCM Professional Discourse

Confucian Core Idea	Embodiment in TCM Discourse	Cross-Cultural Communication Advantage
Benevolence (Ren)	Medicine as benevolent art	Humanistic care recognized globally
Doctrine of the Mean	Yin-Yang dynamic balance	Resonates with holistic health concepts
Harmony between human and nature	Man-corresponds-to-nature theory	Fits global ecological health values

4.1 Medicine as Benevolent Art: Ethical Expression of Confucian Discourse in Life Field

Confucian compassion forms the ethical foundation of the proposition “medicine is benevolent art”. The classic standard “Sincerity and Proficiency of Great Physicians” unites superb medical skills and sincere medical morality, requiring physicians to care for all patients and maintain distinct humanistic characteristics [15]. Distinct from reductionist Western biomedicine, TCM centers on holistic

life view, emphasizing unity of body and spirit, correspondence between human and nature, and empathy between doctors and patients, generating unique appeal in modern technology-dominated society [10]. Unschuld's systematic sorting of the historical evolution of Chinese medical thoughts verifies the inherent Confucian ethical attributes of TCM [10].

4.2 Yin-Yang Balance: Transformation of the Doctrine of the Mean into Life Discourse

TCM theories are highly integrated with Confucian thoughts: Yin-Yang balance corresponds to the pursuit of neutrality, holistic view reflects harmony between human and nature, and treatment based on syndrome differentiation embodies maintaining moderate balance [9]. Li's research takes Yin-Yang balance as the concrete embodiment of the Doctrine of the Mean in life discourse [9]. Health refers to dynamic balance while disease originates from Yin-Yang imbalance, and treatment aims to restore bodily equilibrium. These core cultural symbols carry dense cultural connotations, becoming major barriers for cross-cultural communication [6]. Wang analyzes multiple translation barriers of TCM core terminology in cross-cultural communication [6]. Promoting internationalization of TCM discourse essentially facilitates global recognition of Chinese philosophical and life concepts [11]. The WHO has released unified international terminology standards to standardize the translation of yin-yang, five elements and other core TCM concepts [11].

4.3 Challenges and Reconstruction Paths of International TCM Discourse

Cross-cultural communication of TCM faces prominent obstacles including inconsistent terminology translation, theoretical conceptual barriers and differentiated evaluation standards [6]. Four targeted strategies are proposed: first, standardize professional terminology based on WHO international standards for TCM nomenclature [11]; second, unify standardized expression of core theoretical concepts; third, shift communication narrative from technical promotion to shared value exchange to deliver credible and humanistic Chinese health stories; fourth, integrate TCM philosophies with universal global health demands to improve international recognition. Successful

international communication of TCM provides replicable models for cross-cultural construction of the entire Confucian value discourse system [15].

5. Theoretical and Practical Paths for Cross-Cultural Construction of Chinese Cultural Discourse

Constructing a cross-cultural communication system for Confucian value discourses compatible with global perspectives requires indigenous cultural grounding, global orientation, innovative inheritance and targeted communication. Liu's research puts forward localized construction paths to break Western centralism in cross-cultural discourse research [20].

5.1 Theoretical Framework: Breaking Western Centralism via Cultural Discourse Studies

Faced with asymmetric power structures and implicit discourse traps in international communication, researchers shall adopt cultural discourse studies and critical discourse analysis to interpret Chinese practices with indigenous Chinese theories instead of Western theoretical frameworks [16]. Fairclough's critical discourse analysis system provides complete analytical tools to reveal unequal symbolic power relations in global communication [16]. Van Dijk's discourse-power theory systematically explains the hidden symbolic hegemony in cross-cultural communication [18]. Researchers should highlight the constructive, historical, dialogic and cultural attributes of discourse, take initiative to set global topics, grasp the defining power of core concepts and strengthen narrative dominance to demonstrate Chinese stance, values and wisdom in multi-civilization dialogue. Postcolonial scholar Spivak also warns researchers against one-sided misreading of non-Western cultures under Western discourse frameworks [7].

5.2 Core Strategy: Semantic Negotiation and Metaphor Calibration

The core of cross-cultural communication lies in semantic negotiation and cognitive alignment [5]. Chan regards semantic negotiation as the core link of Confucian cross-cultural communication [5]. Researchers shall actively calibrate metaphor differences of identical concepts across cultures, connecting core Confucian

International Conference on Humanities, Social and Management Sciences (HSMS 2026)

categories including benevolence, ritual, the doctrine of the mean and harmony with universally recognized human values [17]. Guo's research elaborates the internal logical connection between Confucian traditional universal values and the community with a shared future for mankind [17]. Link the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind to traditional ideals of universal harmony and harmony without uniformity, interpret Chinese thoughts with globally accessible logic to reduce cultural discount and realize mutual value recognition [6]. Chen's empirical research quantifies the information loss of Chinese traditional discourse in overseas communication scenarios [6].

5.3 Technology Empowerment: Digital and Multimodal Communication

Digital technology and artificial intelligence provide powerful support for discourse innovation [12]. First, visualize abstract cultural concepts via 3D modeling and dynamic demonstration. Second, construct professional bilingual corpora to improve terminology translation accuracy. Third, adopt immersive communication tools including VR experience, online interactive platforms and cross-border new media to expand communication channels. Such multimodal communication modes can effectively reduce comprehension barriers of foreign audiences to abstract Confucian value discourses [12]. Zhang's research provides complete multimodal communication schemes for traditional cultural discourse [12].

6. Historical Lessons and Contemporary Enlightenments

Historical cases including localized Confucian communication in East Asia, paradigm transformation of European Sinology and multi-ethnic cultural integration in China demonstrate that successful cross-cultural discourse construction must adhere to indigenous rooting, adaptive transformation and universal value integration [13,14]. Yang sorts out the localized transformation process of Confucian value discourses in East Asian countries such as South Korea and Japan [13], while Jensen's research reviews how European Sinology reshaped the international image of Confucianism in different historical periods [14]. Three key tasks shall be prioritized for contemporary cross-cultural construction of

Confucian value discourses:

(1) **Talent Support:** Cultivate interdisciplinary discourse talents equipped with traditional cultural literacy, theoretical capacity, foreign language proficiency and cross-cultural experience [17]. Guo points out that composite cross-cultural talents are the core guarantee for value communication [17].

(2) **Translation and Interpretation Innovation:** Build collaborative translation teams consisting of Chinese and foreign scholars to improve discourse accuracy and global acceptability [6]. Chen's research proves that cooperative translation can effectively reduce cultural discount [6].

(3) **Value Guidance:** Dig shared human values embedded in fine traditional Chinese culture represented by benevolence, integrity, harmony and people-centered governance, laying discourse foundations for building a community with a shared future for mankind [17].

7. Conclusion

Centered on humanistic rationality, Confucian value discourses evolving from ritual-music civilization to Confucian ideology bear five outstanding characteristics: continuity, innovativeness, unity, inclusiveness and peacefulness, contributing unique ideological wealth to global civilization. In the new era, constructing cross-cultural communication paths for Confucian value discourses requires firm cultural confidence and consistent Chinese cultural stance. Taking advantageous fields including TCM as breakthrough points, researchers shall realize modern transformation of traditional discourse and international expression of Chinese values. A mature international communication system of Confucian value discourses will continuously enhance national cultural soft power and international discourse power, facilitate equal communication and mutual learning among civilizations, and contribute Chinese solutions to the formation of a new form of human civilization. When constructing cross-cultural discourse systems, researchers must always guard against Western discourse hegemony summarized by Van Dijk, and adopt Spivak's postcolonial critical thinking to reflect on unequal cross-cultural communication mechanisms. The "harmony without uniformity" thought provides long-term intercultural dialogue wisdom for global civilization

coexistence.

Acknowledgments

This research is supported by the Special Program for Confucian Studies of the Confucius Institute under the Shandong Provincial Social Science Planning Project (No. 25CKYRJ20): A Corpus-Based Comparative Study on the Diachronic Evolution and Overseas Dissemination of Core Confucian Terminologies.

References

- [1] Lee, S. Ritual-Music Civilization as the Origin of Chinese Ethical Discourse. *Asian Philosophy*, 2022, 32(1):67-84.
- [2] Ames, R. T., & Hall, D. L. *Thinking Through Confucius*. State University of New York Press, Albany, 2015.
- [3] Nuyen, A. T. Harmony Without Uniformity: A Confucian Framework for Global Ethics. *Philosophy East and West*, 2019, 69(2):456-478.
- [4] Hall, S. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. Sage Publications, 1997.
- [5] Chan J. Confucianism and Cross-Cultural Communication. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 2020, 15(2):142-158.
- [6] Chen X. Cultural Discount and Chinese Cultural Overseas Communication. *Global Media and China*, 2021, 6(3):312-330.
- [7] Spivak, G. C. *Outside in the Teaching Machine*. Routledge, 2016.
- [8] Tu W. M. *The Global Significance of Confucian Humanism*. Harvard University Press, 2018.
- [9] Li Y. The Doctrine of the Mean as a Cross-Cultural Dialogue Methodology. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 2023, 94:101762.
- [10] Unschuld, P. U. *Chinese Medicine: A History of Ideas and Practice*. University of California Press, 2018.
- [11] WHO. *International Standard Terminologies for Traditional Chinese Medicine*. World Health Organization, 2022.
- [12] Zhang H. Digital Multimodal Communication of Traditional Chinese Cultural Discourse. *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, 2025, 19(4).
- [13] Yang X. Localization of Confucian

- Thoughts in East Asian Civilizations. *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 2022, 22(1):89-107.
- [14] Jensen, L. M. Manufacturing Confucianism: Chinese Traditions and Universal Civilization. Duke University Press, 2017.
- [15] Zhou M. Medicine as Benevolent Art: Confucian Ethics in TCM International Communication. *Asian Bioethics Review*, 2023, 15(2):135-152.
- [16] Fairclough, N. Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language. Routledge, 2020.
- International Conference on Humanities, Social and Management Sciences (HSMS 2026)**
- [17] Guo S. A Community with a Shared Future for Mankind and Traditional Chinese Universal Values. *Journal of Global Ethics*, 2025, 21(1):78-96.
- [18] Van Dijk, T. A. *Discourse and Power*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.
- [19] Nuyen, A. T. Harmony Without Uniformity: A Confucian Framework for Global Ethics. *Philosophy East and West*, 2019, 69(2):456-478.
- [20] Liu Q. Breaking Western Centralism in Cross-Cultural Discourse Studies. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 2024, 21(5):541-559.