

Study on the Development of Western Medicine Chinese Teaching and Textbook Compilation

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ABSTRACT

Western Medicine Chinese is a language tutoring course for foreign students who come to China for professional education of Western Medicine. Because of its importance to foreign students' professional learning and clinical practice, it has become a compulsory course for foreign students majoring in Western Medicine. In the past two decades, with the increase of the number of foreign medical students in China, Western Medicine Chinese Teaching has received increasing attention. It has become a big branch of Major Chinese Teaching with a long history, diverse curriculum, complete publication of textbooks and good development momentum. The author makes an overall investigation on the development process of Western Medicine Chinese since 1950s, introduces the development status and characteristics of each stage, collects the textbooks published in China so far, and investigates and studies Western Medicine Chinese textbooks used by Medical foreign students taught by Chinese or English. This paper introduces and evaluates the publishing situation and compilation characteristics of each textbook set, and points out its advantages and disadvantages of the compilation. Through research, the author puts forward that the compilation concept of Western Medicine Chinese Teaching textbooks tends to be disciplinary in the 21st century and there are some problems in the compilation of the textbooks, such as weak teaching pertinence and lack of rigorous attitude. The existing textbooks still cannot meet the needs of students, and the practicability and pertinence of textbooks need to be strengthened.

Keywords: *Western Medicine Chinese Teaching, Chinese-medium Medicine, English-medium Medicine, textbook compilation, MBBS*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the 1950s, international students began to come to China to further their studies in Western Medicine, and most courses were taught in Chinese then. Since 1995, when Xi'an Medical University first recruited international students for English-medium Clinical Medicine program, other medical colleges also began to enroll international students, and the number of international students of Western Medicine majors has been growing rapidly since 2002. By 2017, the number of international students for Medicine majors has reached 46,900 in China, accounting for 19% (241,500) of the total number of international students studying for academic degrees in that year, of which 37,400 students majored in Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) accounting for 80% of the total number of international students of Medical majors, heading up the list of all majors offering academic degrees for international students^[1].

With the increase of international students studying in Medicine colleges in China, it is needed for them to learn Chinese to make life and study more effective. In order to meet the needs of international students to improve their Chinese proficiency levels, the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language for medical students, also known as "Medical Chinese", is growing more vigorously. Western Medicine Chinese textbooks, compiled at different eras and targeted at different majors, different learners and different learning stages, all have their own characteristics with relatively complete publication types on the whole, and all meet the needs of international students for clinical practice. This paper attempts to examine the evolution of Chinese teaching and the development of Western Medicine textbooks since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 by focusing on the characteristics of textbook compilation and publication so as to summarize experiences and point out possible problems.

2. WESTERN MEDICINE CHINESE TEACHING AND TEXTBOOKS USED FOR CHINESE-MEDIUM MEDICINE MAJOR

In the 1950s and 1960s, the first international students began their study of Western Medicine in China, but the number of students was small^[2], and their Chinese language teaching was conducted in the University Foundation Year or the bridging course under science and technology majors^[3]. With the increase of international students studying Western Medicine in China, Beijing Language College has begun to offer a special Chinese bridging course for Western Medicine since the 1970s, with about 20 students^[4], but the number of international Medical students in China has not increased much until the 1990s. Western Medicine Chinese was subject to the overall offerings of the whole Chinese bridging programs, without its own characteristics.

As there was just a small number of international students in the university foundation year, no much progress was made in Western Medicine Chinese teaching, and no official Medical Chinese textbooks were officially published for a long period of time. *Medical Chinese Course*, compiled by Yang Jingxuan of Beijing Language College in the 1980s, is the earliest known Western Medicine Chinese textbook used for Chinese bridging programs. Its trial started in 1987, but it has never been officially published. *Chinese for Western Medicine* series, compiled by Tianjin University published in 2013, is the first and currently the only set of officially published Western Medicine Chinese textbooks for preparatory course. The series consist of *Listening and Speaking course* and *Reading and Writing course*, mainly featuring the common Western Medicine knowledge with task-based activities and compiled in a systematic and innovative approach. In order to avoid arbitrary selection of medical vocabulary, the author created a corpus of medical topics and a glossary of medical specialty, with a rigorous and responsible attitude. Over the past 70 years from the 1950s to the present, only these two sets of Western Medicine Chinese textbooks are used as Chinese bridging courses for international students.

Chinese-medium Western Medicine courses for international students usually commenced after they completed the Chinese bridging course, and they were generally taught in the same class together with Chinese students. The compilation of continued Chinese language textbooks for international students of Chinese-medium Medical is more fruitful than in the university foundation year. The earliest Western Medicine Chinese textbook compiled for these students is *College Medical Chinese Course* compiled by Hong Caizhang, a teacher from Sun Yat-sen University, and published in 1990. The textbook consists of three volumes, featuring the promotion of popular scientific knowledge on physics, chemistry,

biology, medicine and other subjects. It was written in accordance with the spirit of "Teaching Chinese for science and technology should focus on the teaching of basic professional knowledge" proposed by the "Symposium on Teaching Chinese for Science and Technology as a Foreign Language" held in 1986. With the compilation and publication of more Chinese textbooks, textbook compilers began to publish their research results in the 1990s, introducing their teaching and text-writing ideas. Their teaching and compilation experience remains a valuable reference for the successors.

When *College Medical Chinese Course* was used for teaching, teachers and students found that its content was more like the popularization of science and technology than a targeted tutoring for the learning of major courses, and they complained about the shortcomings. In order to achieve a better tutorial effect in the limited study duration of one year, Medical Chinese teachers prepared new Medical Chinese class handouts as teaching materials, based on their own teaching experience and students' needs. For example, *Medical Chinese Basics (Anatomy, Histology and Embryology Chapter, and Cell Biology Chapter)*, published in 2017, was based on the class handouts of Medical Chinese teachers at Sun Yat-sen University over years of teaching. The idea that Medical Chinese textbooks should be compiled focusing on the teaching of specialized knowledge of medical courses rather than the popularization of medical science has been well acknowledged by the Medical Chinese teaching community.

The contents of Western Medicine Chinese textbooks published in the 21st century for Chinese-medium Medicine have changed greatly from the 20th century. *Practical Chinese for Basic Medicine* series and *Practical Chinese for Clinical Medicine* series were published by Jiamusi University in 2013, with a complete set of 5 volumes. These textbooks are basically synchronized with the contents of the core courses of Clinical Medicine majors, with high language demand on students. This set of textbooks covers the most major courses, the most extensive specialized knowledge, and the most abundant cases of Western Medicine courses among the Western Medicine Chinese textbooks currently available. In 2015, *Medical Chinese Course for International Students in China (Advanced)* compiled by the teachers of Medical College in Peking University, and *Medical Chinese Basics* by the teachers of Sun Yat-sen University, published in 2017, are compiled based on the 3 basic specialized courses "Systematic Anatomy, Tissue and Embryology, Cell Biology". These four textbooks herein are used as language tutoring materials for specialized courses. Their content is either completely identical with that of specialized courses or with slight adaptations, and the language level is close to that of specialized courses of Western Medicine. Therefore, a new characteristic appears that the content of Western

Medicine Chinese textbooks in the 21st century is getting close to or more like that in the specialized courses of Western Medicine.

3. WESTERN MEDICINE CHINESE TEACHING AND TEXTBOOKS FOR ENGLISH-MEDIUM MEDICINE MAJOR

The English-medium education for international students of Western Medicine in China started in the 1980s, when the specialized courses began to be taught in English to international students to facilitate their learning of specialized courses and improve their academic performance in a short period of time, but it was offered in a limited scale. In the 1990s, there was a breakthrough in the academic education for international students of Western Medicine. Since 1995, Medical colleges in China have started to recruit international students for medical programs taught in English, covering students of both master's degree and bachelor's degree of Western Medicine. Except clinical medicine program, Medical Chinese teaching in other Western Medicine programs has been rarely introduced in the literature currently available, and most programs adopted the same textbooks and teaching modes with each other. In the new century, thanks to students available and their needs, the Western Medicine Chinese teaching for English-medium medical majors at colleges has witnessed many advances. Medical institutions at various levels have begun to offer general Chinese courses and Medical Chinese courses to international students of medical majors. *The Interim Provisions for Quality Control Standards on Undergraduate Medical Education in English for International Students in China* promulgated in 2007 has greatly promoted the development of Western Medicine Chinese teaching, and stimulated the interest of Medical Chinese teachers in teaching and research efforts.

In China, as a whole, there isn't English environment in which English, as a foreign language, can be widely used or understood. The low level in Chinese language proficiency brings many obstacles for international students in their learning and the management on them, so it is absolutely necessary to offer Chinese language courses to international students of medical majors at university level. In addition to that, calls have been made that Chinese bridging course should be offered to international students of medical programs to help them better prepared for the learning of specialized knowledge and to overcome psychological barriers^[5]. 7 sets of Western Medicine Chinese textbooks applicable for English-medium Medicine majors for international students have been published in China:

1. The earliest was *Medical Chinese Internship (Volume 1)* published in 1995, which had some errors or problems as it was compiled for urgent needs. In 2007, the first volume was republished after revision. From 2007 to 2012, the three volumes of *Medical Chinese*

Internship written by teachers of Sun Yat-sen University were published one after another, which took the typical cases of internal medicine, surgery, gynecology or pediatrics as the topic of each lesson, and were compiled in the principle of "First learn what is in urgent need". The content of the three volumes was adapted from major courses of Medicine majors, but with language simplified and class schedules more reasonably arranged, which has been well recognized by teachers and students. By 2020, this set of textbooks has been reprinted seven times, making it the most widely circulated and most used set of Medical Chinese textbooks in colleges today.

2. After the publication of *Medical Chinese Internship*, with the development of international English-medium Medical programs, each colleges has accumulated some teaching experience and has produced its own compilation concepts and demands in respect of Medical Chinese textbooks. In 2008, Wuhan University took the lead in organizing the compilation of *Practical Medical Chinese* series, which consists of 13 volumes, divided into chapters of Elementary (4 volumes), Preclinical (4 volumes) and Clinical (4 volumes), plus *Clinical Vocabulary Handbook of Practical Medical Chinese*, making it the largest series of Medical Chinese textbooks contained in a single set today. The series are suitable for international students of Western Medicine to learn Chinese throughout the whole period of their study in China, starting from zero Chinese, and gradually moving from daily dialogue, basic medical knowledge to clinical practice knowledge and language skills. Despite of complete textbook structures and content arranged systematically, this set of textbooks also has its weak points: the content in "Clinical" is too much and rather difficult; the "Elementary" and "Preclinical" are rigorously written, but there are too many contents for the limited credit hours given to medical students at various colleges.

In addition, "There are some deficiencies in the arrangement of difficulty levels, which brings many difficulties to teachers in their lesson preparation and teaching" ^[6]. Consequently, the content of this set of textbooks cannot be fully utilized, leading to some problems in the actual teaching process. The content of textbooks should be what students need most, and the teaching workload as well as the credit hours should be taken into account. Otherwise, all the compilation efforts would be not as fruitful or productive as intended, and teachers and students would refrain from selecting or recommending the textbooks they used.

3. *Introduction to Medical Chinese Course*, compiled by teachers of Zhengzhou University, was published in 2009, targeting at international students of Western Medicine starting from scratch. A primary Chinese textbook though, it contains several sections integrating medical vocabulary and knowledge into each lesson, and mingling them with the daily life of international

students. This textbook is composed of many sections with innovative writing styles, rich layouts, and vivid and interesting illustrations, making it a specialized Chinese textbook for beginners that is innovative, practical, interesting and rigorously written, thus of great research value.

4. *Practical Chinese for Basic Medicine* and *Practical Chinese for Clinical Medicine*, published in 2013 consist of 5 volumes, with large teaching content, and rich and systematic professional knowledge. *Practical Chinese for Basic Medicine* is basically synchronized with the content of the courses for Preclinical Medicine, covering all major courses, while *Practical Chinese for Clinical Medicine* is divided into chapters on internal medicine, surgery, gynecology and obstetrics, pediatrics, E.N.T, infectious diseases, dermatology and venereology, psychiatry, ophthalmology, medical imaging, stomatology, and so on. This set of textbooks covers the widest range of Medical expertise, but it has imposed very high requirements on teachers' teaching and management ability to make full use of these textbooks, considering the large teaching content and less credit hours. Some of the contents in this set of textbooks, not written rigorously enough, are similar to those of the "Clinical" and "Preclinical" sections of *Practical Medical Chinese*, the contents about psoriasis, albinism, paternity testing, color blindness, female infertility, and scalds, to name but a few.

5. *Chinese Course for International Students in Medicine*, compiled by teachers of Yangzhou University and published in 2016, is rich in content and close to the internship life of medical students, as it simulates the clinical internship scenarios and involves many departments and common clinical cases. This textbook is presented in both pinyin and English, taking into account the Chinese proficiency levels of international students and the Chinese curriculum arrangements. However, its contents are not well coordinated as a whole, resulting in redundancy in content and wording, and fewer types of exercises, thus not complete in textbook design.

6. *Medical Chinese* compiled by teachers of Dalian Medical University and published in 2018, is one of the course books for international students majoring in MBBS (taught in English) under Project China's 13th Five-Year Plan. With large teaching content and emphasis on dialogue practice, this book is organized in the order of internal medicine, surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, and stomatology following the patterns of hospitals, taking typical cases as the topic of each lesson, and conversations in clinical practice scenarios as the teaching content, making it a systematic Medical Chinese textbook written rigorously.

7. *Elementary Medical Chinese Course* and *Clinical Medicine Chinese Course*, compiled by teachers of Qiqihar Medical College and published in 2018, simply

selected some typical medical cases as Chinese teaching contents. This set failed to analyze and interpret the texts; the contents of the texts were not well examined, either, and teaching procedures were not designed rigorously. These shortcomings have posed a considerable challenge to teachers who want to use this set of textbooks but do not know much about its content arrangements. *Elementary Medical Chinese Course* was not written with clear compilation guidance. The difficulty level of the dialogue part is not proportionate to that of the text part. The exercises are designed mainly to enhance the understanding of the meaning of vocabulary, but there are no sufficient exercises to further the understanding of text contents. Some words in the preface are confusing, for example, "suitable for international students starting from scratch with Chinese language" does not match the content of the textbook; "the exercises are designed with the task-oriented teaching method" are not well reflected in the design of the textbooks.

4. CONCLUSION

In the 20th century, Western Medicine Chinese was insignificant in teaching Chinese as a foreign language, with few students and few teachers. In the 21st century, with the number of international students of Western Medicine in China ranking among the top in the number of international students studying in China for academic degrees, Western Medicine Chinese teaching is becoming more and more significant in the education of medical international students, and more Western Medicine textbooks have appeared, but the quantity and quality still cannot meet the needs of the learners.

In the past ten years, we've seen that greater efforts have been made by the Ministry of Education of China to strengthen the supervision and development of Medicine for international students in China. In December 2019, *Syllabus of Clinical Medical Education for International Medical Students (in English)* was published (including the syllabus of "Elementary Chinese" and "Elementary Medical Chinese"), which has changed the situation that there was no national unified syllabus available for MBBS programs in the past. In December 2019, the Medical Chinese Test (MCT) officially started nationwide. In December 2020, *Medical Chinese Test Syllabus* was published, listing the topic syllabus, task syllabus, and medical vocabulary syllabus. These two documents will certainly play a great leading role in the development of Western Medicine Chinese teaching and its textbook writing.

In addition to the guidelines of the Syllabus and the MCT, Western Medicine Chinese textbooks quality also depends on the investigation into actual clinical practice, which requires more innovations in content and designs, and requires the relevant management departments to mobilize more Medical Chinese teachers to join the

efforts to write textbooks, so as to better promote the development of Western Medicine Chinese teaching.

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