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Construction of Sino-Mongolian Bilingual-Interdisciplinary Translation Talent Training Model Under the China (Inner Mongolia) Pilot Free Trade Zone

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of the China (Inner Mongolia) Pilot Free Trade Zone (hereafter referred to as FTZ), deepening China-Mongolia cooperation in trade, diplomacy, infrastructure, and cultural exchange has created a strong demand for high-caliber translation professionals equipped with both Sino-Mongolian bilingual proficiency and interdisciplinary expertise. Based on language-major integration framework, cross-cultural communication theory, and translation ecosystem theory, this study constructs a systematic bilingual-interdisciplinary integrated training model for Sino-Mongolian translation talents. The model adopts a "core + module + track" curriculum structure, integrating bilingual foundation, translation skills, interdisciplinary knowledge, and professional scenarios.

Keywords

Sino-Mongolian translation; Bilingual-interdisciplinary model; Language-major integration; Pilot Free Trade Zone; Talent training

1. Rationale and Framework of the Bilingual-Interdisciplinary Training Model

1.1 Theoretical Foundations of Language-Major Integration

The integration of language education and professional disciplines has become a mainstream direction in modern translation talent training (Li & Shui, 2026; Wang et al., 2025). Traditional translation teaching focuses on textual translation and basic interpretation, often separating language ability from professional knowledge (Bao, 2019). Such a model leads to a common problem, namely, graduates have solid basic translation skills but lack professional knowledge and cannot complete domain-specific translation tasks such as cross-border e-commerce contracts, engineering documents, or diplomatic speeches. This study draws on the translation ecosystem theory (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017). Different from isolated translation research perspectives, this theory emphasizes that any single translation

behavior is not independent; instead, it is constrained and influenced by historical translation practices and synchronous translation activities occurring in the identical social environment.

In the context of the FTZ, the bilingual translation ecosystem covers Chinese, traditional Mongolian and Mongolian Cyrillic translation activities. All translation behaviors within the free trade zone are affected by accumulated bilingual translation experience and real-time cross-border translation demands. Translation educators, translators, cross-border enterprises and regulatory institutions constitute multiple subjects in the ecosystem.

According to Westney et al. (2022), cross-border communication involves three interrelated translation activities: organizational translation, knowledge translation, and interlingual translation. Real translation is not pure language conversion, but a comprehensive practice involving organizational norms, professional knowledge, and cultural context. For Sino-Mongolian cooperation scenarios, translation talents must master not only two languages but also professional knowledge in trade, engineering, diplomacy and cross-cultural rules. Language and major integration breaks disciplinary boundaries and embeds professional content into translation teaching (Niu, 2025). The basic logic regards bilingual ability as the core, professional knowledge as support, cross-cultural competence as guarantee. ranslation talents under the Belt and Road Initiative.

1.2 Bridging Sino-Mongolian Cultural and Linguistic Divides

China and Mongolia share a 4,710 km border and have increasingly close cooperation in economy, trade, infrastructure and culture. However, linguistic differences and cultural gaps remain key barriers to communication (Erdenechimeg, 2019; Shi, 2021). Modern Mongolian uses Cyrillic script, while Chinese uses ideographic characters; the two languages differ greatly in syntax, expression and etiquette system. Culturally, Mongolia has unique nomadic culture, religious customs and social values, which are significantly different from Chinese context. Existing Sino-Mongolian translation training has three prominent shortcomings as follows.

(1) Overemphasis on basic vocabulary and grammar, lacking professional terminology training;

(2) Insufficient cross-cultural modules, leading to pragmatic failures in actual business communication;

(3) Separation from practical projects, resulting in weak employability (Bao, 2019; Li & Shui, 2026).

The bilingual-interdisciplinary model takes cross-cultural competence as a core module rather than an additional part, and systematically integrates Sino-Mongolian cultural comparison, diplomatic etiquette and business customs into teaching. By grounding translation practice in real cooperation scenarios, learners can understand the contextual meaning behind language and achieve accurate and appropriate translation (Westney et al., 2022).

2. Design and Implementation of the Integrated Training Curriculum

2.1 Curriculum Architecture: From Core Courses to Specialized Tracks

Table 1. Demand Distribution of Sino-Mongolian Translation Talents in Enterprises

Professional Field	Number of Enterprises Demanding	Proportion	Core Competencies Required
Cross-border trade & e-commerce	28	60.9%	Business terminology, contract translation, negotiation interpretation, customs documents, cross-border live-streaming scripts
Infrastructure & engineering	17	37.0%	Technical terms, project documents, construction norms, equipment manuals, safety protocols
Diplomacy & public affairs	12	26.1%	Diplomatic protocols, official documents, cross-cultural communication, government exchanges
Cultural, tourism & green agribusiness	21	45.7%	Cultural terminology, promotional texts, tour interpretation, agricultural product descriptions
Legal & compliance policy	9	19.6%	Legal terms, policy documents, FTZ regulatory compliance, cross-border dispute resolution

This study proposes a "core + module + track" hierarchical curriculum system that is tightly aligned with the industrial positioning and talent needs of the FTZ. The FTZ consists of three coordinated subzones of Hohhot, Manzhouli, and Erenhot, with Erenhot serving as the core port for Sino-Mongolian cross-border trade, which emphasizes cross-border e-commerce, international logistics, agricultural and livestock products processing, port services, cultural tourism, and international cooperation.

To accurately identify real-world demand for translation services within the FTZ, a standardized survey was conducted from September 2025 to March 2026, targeting 46 representative enterprises and institutions involved in Sino-Mongolian economic and diplomatic activities. Respondents encompassed 18 cross-border e-commerce enterprises, 11 international logistics firms, 7 cultural and tourism companies, 6 infrastructure and engineering contractors, and 4 government-affiliated and legal service institutions, collectively representing the industrial layout of the Inner Mongolia FTZ. The demand structure derived from the survey is presented in Table 1.

The curriculum is structured into three integrated tiers, totaling 120 credits, allocated across three hierarchical layers, ensuring both fundamental proficiency and domain-specific expertise.

(1) **Foundational Core (48 credits; 40%)**

(2) The core bilingual and translation courses constitute the foundational layer of the curriculum, accounting for 40% of the total credits and designed to consolidate students' basic bilingual proficiency and core translation competencies. This layer responds to universal linguistic and translation demands identified in the enterprise survey: across industries, enterprises require accurate bilingual expression, fluent interpersonal communication, and basic cross-cultural awareness. The content emphasizes fundamental translation accuracy, intercultural communication skills, and bilingual workplace literacy applicable to diverse professional contexts within the FTZ.

(3) **Interdisciplinary Knowledge Modules (36 credits; 30%)**

(4) The interdisciplinary knowledge modules account for 30% of the curriculum. These modules address the most prominent industry-related gaps revealed by the survey. The results show that most translation graduates lack deep professional domain knowledge and cannot immediately undertake specialized tasks in the FTZ. The top three demand fields of cross-border trade & e-commerce (60.9%), cultural tourism & green agribusiness (45.7%), and infrastructure & engineering (37.0%) indicate that translation talent must master knowledge beyond language. Accordingly, these modules integrate interdisciplinary content closely aligned with the pillar industries of the FTZ, including but not limited to trade logistics, regulatory frameworks, technical communication, cultural promotion, and sustainable agricultural practices.

(5) Targeted Professional Tracks (36 credits; 30%)

The targeted professional tracks constitute the directional layer of the curriculum, accounting for the remaining 30%. Tracks are designed to reflect the structural differences in enterprise demand and the functional positioning of the three FTZ subzones. Survey results indicate concentrated demand in three scenarios, leading to three corresponding tracks:

The Cross-Border Trade & E-Commerce Track: Targets Erenhot and Manzhouli subzones with emphasis on trade, logistics, customs, contract translation, negotiation interpretation, and cross-border livestreaming script translation.

The Diplomacy, Public Affairs & Cultural Tourism Track: Responds to government exchanges, cross-cultural publicity, official document translation, and tour interpretation.

The Engineering & Technical Translation Track: Supports infrastructure cooperation, energy projects, and equipment manufacturing, with a focus on technical document translation and precise terminological work.

2.2 Pedagogical Innovation through Collaborative Learning Platforms

This model constructs a trinity collaborative platform of universities, enterprises and Mongolian institutions, as shown in Figure 1.

Based on the industrial layout and operational characteristics of the FTZ, this research constructs a multi-dimensional, open, and scenario-based collaborative learning platform that deeply integrates universities, enterprises in the FTZ, Mongolian partner institutions, and port and customs authorities. This platform is not only a carrier for teaching organization, but also a key mechanism to transform disciplinary advantages into practical talents for Sino-Mongolian cross-border cooperation. Different from traditional classroom teaching, this collaborative platform takes real business scenarios in the FTZ as the core, takes cross-border translation tasks as the driving force, and realizes the whole-process connection between talent training and industrial demand, which effectively makes up for the disconnection between theory and practice commonly existing in translation education.

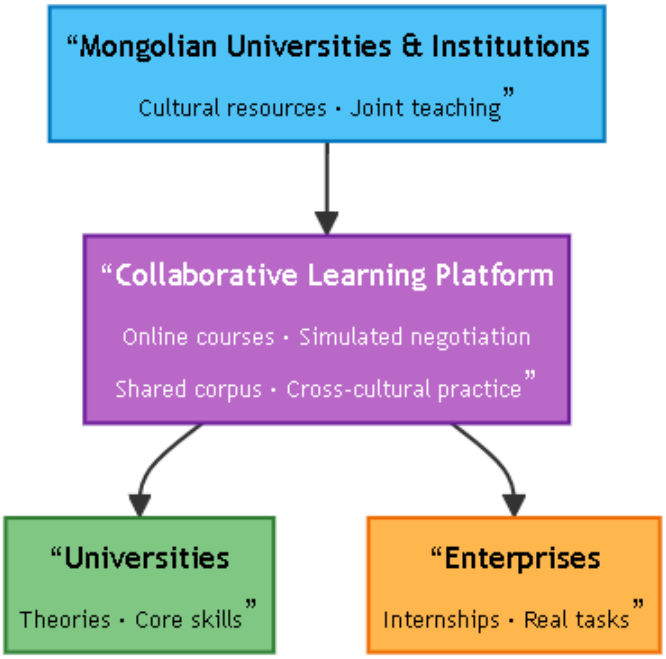

Figure 1. Trinity Collaborative Education Platform for Sino-Mongolian Translation Training.

The collaborative learning platform is formed by four interconnected subjects, which jointly participate in the curriculum implementation, practical teaching and ability evaluation of the whole training process. First, universities undertake the output of theoretical system and basic ability training, responsible for the design of core courses and interdisciplinary modules, and provide academic guidance and linguistic norms for translation practice. Second, enterprises in the Inner Mongolia FTZ, including cross-border e-commerce companies, international logistics enterprises, infrastructure contractors, cultural tourism companies and foreign-related service institutions, provide authentic translation tasks, internship positions and on-site mentors, covering commercial contracts, customs documents, product descriptions, technical materials, promotional texts and other types closely related to daily operations of the FTZ. Third, Mongolian universities and cultural and educational institutions provide first-hand cross-cultural context resources, participate in the co-construction of courses and corpora, and jointly carry out simulated negotiations, cross-border exchanges and other practical links, so that students can fully contact the use habits and cultural logic of the target language. Fourth, the port management, customs and foreign affairs departments in the FTZ provide policy interpretation, regulatory requirements and official scenarios, so that students can accurately grasp the norms and standards of translation practice in cross-border supervision, customs clearance and government affairs communication. The four parties form a closed loop of "knowledge teaching – practical training – scenario simulation – real application" to ensure that every teaching link is rooted in the actual needs of the Inner Mongolia FTZ.

3. Evaluation, Impact, and Future Prospects of the Model

3.1 Assessment Mechanisms for Multidisciplinary Translator Competence

To match the positioning of the FTZ and its demand for high-adaptability, high-practicality bilingual-interdisciplinary translation professionals, this study constructs a four-dimensional, process-oriented, and scenario-based comprehensive assessment system that replaces the traditional single-written examination model. The evaluation system is designed to measure not only basic bilingual and translation skills but also the practical competence required by cross-border trade, port logistics, international engineering, cultural tourism, and public affairs cooperation within the FTZ. Grounded in the translation competence framework and the translation ecosystem perspective, the system integrates linguistic accuracy, domain knowledge mastery, practical operational ability, and cross-cultural adaptability into a unified evaluation structure, with each dimension closely corresponding to the real working scenarios of Sino-Mongolian translation posts in the Inner Mongolia FTZ, as shown in table2.

Table 2. Multi-Dimensional Assessment System for Translator Competence

Assessment Dimension	Weight	Evaluation Indicators	Scoring Standard (100 points)
Linguistic Accuracy	30%	Grammar, vocabulary, fidelity	26–30: Accurate, no errors 21–25: Minor errors, clear meaning
Domain Knowledge Mastery	25%	Terms, industry norms	22–25: Standard and correct 18–21: Individual term errors
Practical Operational Ability	25%	Project completion, efficiency	22–25: High-quality completion 18–21: Basically qualified
Cross-Cultural Adaptability	20%	Appropriateness, pragmatic competence	17–20: Appropriate expression 14–17: Slightly inappropriate

As illustrated in Table 2, the assessment system is composed of four weighted dimensions that together reflect the complete competency structure of interdisciplinary translators. The first dimension, Linguistic Accuracy, accounts for 30% of the total score, focusing on grammar correctness, terminology precision, fluency, and translation fidelity to the source text. The second dimension, Domain Knowledge Mastery, accounts for 25% and evaluates trainees' command of professional terms, industry norms, and contextual logic in specialized fields including cross-border e-commerce, infrastructure engineering, cultural tourism, and FTZ-related policies. The third dimension, Practical Operational Ability, also accounts for 25%, and assesses task completion quality, work efficiency, team collaboration, and compliance with industrial standards in real or simulated translation projects derived from the Inner Mongolia FTZ. The fourth dimension, Cross-Cultural Adaptability, constitutes 20% and evaluates the appropriateness of language expression, pragmatic competence, sensitivity to cultural differences, and ability to avoid cross-cultural misunderstandings in Sino-Mongolian communication.

3.2 Empirical Impact and Data Analysis

To empirically verify the effectiveness of the bilingual-interdisciplinary training model tailored to the FTZ, a 12-month longitudinal tracking study was conducted on 180 translation trainees. Of these, 120 were assigned to the integrated model group and 60 to the traditional training control group.

The control group of 60 trainees received a conventional translation curriculum focused primarily on developing general bilingual proficiency and text-based translation skills, encompassing grammar, syntax, vocabulary acquisition, and general text analysis. Crucially, this traditional curriculum lacked the specialized interdisciplinary modules, real-world FTZ project simulations, or explicit integration of cross-border trade, engineering, or policy knowledge that characterized the integrated model.

Assignment to either the integrated model group or the traditional control group was based on enrollment cohort availability and administrative considerations rather than strict randomization. However, to mitigate potential selection bias, baseline entry-level translation proficiency was assessed for all participants prior to the study commencement. Both groups demonstrated statistically comparable initial competence scores (Integrated Group: M=65.8, SD=4.2; Control Group: M=64.5, SD=4.5; $p > 0.05$), suggesting similar starting points for the trainees.

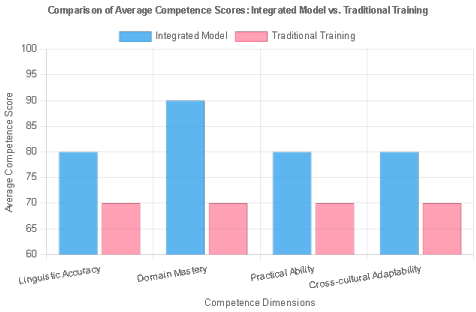

Figure 2. Comparison of Average Competence Scores.

The average competence scores presented in Figure 2 were derived from a comprehensive post-training evaluation battery administered at the conclusion of the 12-month period. This battery included standardized assessments for: (a) linguistic accuracy (e.g., error analysis in target texts, fluency assessment); (b) domain knowledge mastery (e.g., scenario-based problem-solving, specialized terminology quizzes); (c) practical operational ability (e.g., timed translation tasks involving industry-specific tools and formats); and (d) cross-cultural adaptability (e.g., simulated intercultural communication exercises, cultural sensitivity assessments).

Regarding linguistic accuracy, the integrated model group achieved an average score of 80 (SD=5.1), significantly outperforming the traditional training group's average of 70 (SD=6.5) [$p < 0.01$]. This statistically significant, albeit numerically modest, 10-point difference underscores the integrated model's effectiveness in reinforcing bilingual proficiency through continuous exposure to and practice with FTZ-specific terminology and discourse structures, rather than solely general language exercises.

The most pronounced disparity was observed in domain knowledge mastery. The integrated model group achieved an impressive average score of 90 (SD=4.8), while the traditional group lagged significantly with an average of 70 (SD=7.2) [$p < 0.001$]. This substantial 20-point difference robustly demonstrates the integrated model's core advantage: by systematically embedding specialized knowledge of cross-border trade, engineering principles, and FTZ policy frameworks directly into translation training, trainees developed a profoundly deeper understanding of industry-specific terminology, norms, and contextual nuances that a conventional language-only curriculum is inherently unable to provide.

Similarly, for practical operational ability, the integrated model group scored an average of 80 (SD=5.5), significantly exceeding the traditional group's 70 (SD=6.8) [$p < 0.01$]. This outcome highlights the positive impact of project-based learning methodologies and engagement with authentic FTZ translation tasks in developing trainees' competence to execute standardized translation work efficiently and accurately within industry parameters.

Finally, the integrated model group also showed superior performance in cross-cultural adaptability, achieving an average score of 80 (SD=5.3) compared to the control group's 70 (SD=6.0) [$p < 0.01$].

This significant difference underscores the crucial value of incorporating cross-border collaborative learning experiences and context-rich practical scenarios, which are vital for cultivating the pragmatic and intercultural communication competence essential for effective Sino-Mongolian cooperation within the FTZ context.

3.3 Employment Outcomes and Industrial Alignment: A Comparative Analysis of Training Models

To further validate the practical impact of the bilingual-interdisciplinary training model tailored to the FTZ, this study conducted a six-month post-graduation employment tracking survey of the 180 trainees in both groups, examining their market performance and alignment with FTZ industry needs.

Table 3. Employment Competitiveness Comparison

Indicator	Traditional Training (N=60)	Integrated Model (N=120)	Improvement Rate
Employment rate within 3 months	61.7%	92.5%	+30.8%
Enterprise satisfaction score	65.3%	89.7 %	+24.4%
Proportion entering target industries	38.3%	80.0%	+41.7%
Average translation task pass rate	72.5%	92.1%	+19.6.0%

The most immediate indicator of success is the three-month employment rate, where trainees from the integrated model achieved 92.5%, compared to just 61.7% for those receiving traditional training—a 30.8 percentage point improvement. This stark difference reflects the model’s focus on building job-ready competencies, as trainees were trained on the exact translation tasks required by FTZ enterprises, including customs documents, cross-border trade contracts, and tourism promotional materials. Employers in the FTZ often prioritize candidates who can contribute

immediately, and the integrated model's emphasis on practical experience ensures graduates do not require extensive on-the-job training.

Enterprise satisfaction scores further confirm this practical advantage, with the integrated model group earning an average of 89.7 out of 100, compared to 65.3 for the traditional group—a 24.4% improvement. Feedback from FTZ employers highlighted that graduates of the integrated model demonstrated superior domain-specific knowledge, such as familiarity with cross-border e-commerce terminology and understanding of Mongolian business culture, which allowed them to complete tasks more accurately and efficiently. In contrast, traditional training graduates often struggled with specialized terms and lacked awareness of industry-specific norms, leading to longer onboarding periods and higher error rates in early assignments.

Most notably, the proportion of trainees entering target industries—cross-border trade, engineering, tourism, and public affairs in the Inner Mongolia FTZ—reached 80.0% in the integrated model group, compared to only 38.3% in the traditional group, representing a 41.7% increase. This outcome underscores the model's effectiveness in aligning training content with the structural needs of the FTZ, where translation services are concentrated in high-demand sectors. The specialized tracks and real-world project-based learning ensured that trainees developed skills directly applicable to these industries, making them more attractive to employers than graduates with a general translation background.

Finally, the average translation task pass rate, as measured by employer evaluations of work quality, was 92.1% for the integrated model trainees versus 72.5% for the traditional group, a 19.6% improvement. This metric captures both linguistic accuracy and contextual appropriateness, reflecting the model's balanced focus on bilingual proficiency, domain knowledge, and cross-cultural competence. Graduates of the integrated model consistently produced translations that met both linguistic standards and industry-specific requirements, such as compliance with FTZ regulatory language or technical precision in engineering documents.

4. Conclusion

This study constructs a bilingual-interdisciplinary integrated training model for Sino-Mongolian translation talents, which responds to the practical demand of China-Mongolia cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative. Based on language-major integration and translation ecosystem theory, the model adopts a "core + module + track" curriculum and a trinity collaborative education platform, and uses a multi-dimensional evaluation system to ensure training quality. Empirical results show that the model effectively overcomes the deficiencies of traditional translation education, significantly improves learners' professional competence, practical ability and cross-cultural adaptation ability, and greatly enhances employment competitiveness and enterprise recognition. The model is scalable and can be used as a reference for the cultivation of translation talents in other cross-border language pairs. I

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AI Usage Statement

The authors used ChatGPT (GPT-4, OpenAI) for language editing and readability improvement. All scientific content, data interpretation, and conclusions were reviewed and approved by the authors.

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