

# Huangtu Occupation Study: enabling occupational therapists in mainland China to use OT professional reasoning effectively

Chiu, ML Teresa<sup>1</sup>; Shi, Xiao Chang<sup>1 2</sup>; Cui, Jing Long<sup>1 3</sup>; Liao, Pang<sup>1 2</sup>; Song, J  
Abby<sup>1 4</sup>

1 Huangtu Occupation Study Group; 2 Hong Kong Polytechnic University;

3 Xiangya Boai Rehab Hospital; 4 The Second Affiliated Hospital of Kunming Med University



9-12 FEBRUARY

BANGKOK, THAILAND

# Introduction

- In the early 1980s, occupational therapy was introduced to mainland China as a therapy technique (作业疗法).
- Professional reasoning (专业思维) was considered non-essential for OT in the early days.
- A lack of theoretically-sound professional reasoning has affected the development of the OT profession in China.



# Objectives

To describe how Huangtu Occupation Study (《黄土学说》 Huangtu OS) has enabled OTs in mainland China to develop theoretically-sound professional reasoning.



# Objectives

To describe how Huangtu Occupation Study (《黄土学说》 Huangtu OS) has enabled OTs in mainland China to develop theoretically-sound professional reasoning.

Chiu et al., 2018





# Method

2014-2026

Conceptual translation, theory construction, application

2017-2019

2018-2024



# Method

2014-2026

Conceptual translation, theory construction, application

2017-2019

Field visit and indepth interviews  
of local practice and education

2018-2024



# Method

2014-2026

Conceptual translation, theory construction, application

2017-2019

Field visit and indepth interviews  
of local practice and education

2018-2024


Historical literature review of professional  
reasoning in early development

# Results

## 01 Conceptual translation, theory construction, and application

- The Huangtu OS constructed a set of culturally and linguistically appropriate terms that support OTs to master the difficult-to-understand OT concepts.

2014-2026



Main Study

# Huangtu Occupation Study 《黄土学说》




# Results

## 01 Conceptual translation, theory construction, and application

- After learning the Huangtu OS, OTs became competent to use core theoretical concepts such as occupation (生活事情), occupational performance (生活本事) and client-centered practice (以做事的人为中心) in practice and education.

2014-2026



## Main Study

3 posters  
2 papers



# Huangtu Occupation Terms: a set of occupational therapy terms that are linguistically and culturally appropriate for use in mainland China

Chiu, ML Teresa<sup>1</sup>; Shi, Xiao Chang<sup>1,2</sup>; Cui, Jing Long<sup>1,3</sup>; Liao, Pang<sup>1,2</sup>; Song, J Abby<sup>1,4</sup>

1 Huangtu Occupation Study Group; 2 Hong Kong Polytechnic University;

3 Xiangya Boai Rehab Hospital; 4 The Second Affiliated Hospital of Kunming Med University

## Results

1

A set of Huangtu Occupation terms was constructed based on Chinese traditional thinking. Core theoretical concepts such as occupation, occupational performance that are difficult to understand and apply were translated, forming the solid foundation of sound professional reasoning in OT practice and education in China.



The logo is the oracle bone script of *shi* (事) in ancient China. The ancient word depicts a hand (bottom) holding a wooden hunting tool (top). The word *shi* vividly brings forth the Chinese way of thinking occupation (事) and doing occupation (做事).

Occupation

生活事情

Occupational  
performance

生活本事

Occupational  
engagement

投入做事

Client

做事的人

Fig 1 Examples of Huangtu Occupation terms

Main Study

Displayed poster #65



# Results

## 02 Field visits and indepth interviews of local practice and education

In the field visits conducted in 5 cities, 60 OTs and educators participated in qualitative interviews. They were invited to describe and explain the OT treatment and education. It was found that:

- Key OT terms that were seldom used:  
e.g., occupations, occupational performance, occupational engagement, client-centered OT
- Instead, RT terms were often used to describe treatment:  
e.g. function, compensation, functional limitation

2017-2019

## Substudy 1



# Results

## 03 Historical literature review of early OT development

- After the review of 22 textbooks published between 1980s and early 2000s, a phenomenon called “thinking void” (思维真空) was found.
- “Thinking void” was formed when core OT concepts, such as occupational performance, client-centered practice were missing in the description and explanation of OT treatment.
- The service quality, professional identity and education of OT nowadays is affected by the thinking void.

2018-2024

## Substudy 2



# Results

## 04 Conceptual translation, theory construction, and application

- Essential OT concepts that are difficult to understand and resulted in “thinking void” became the focus of the Huangtu OS.
- Occupation (生活事情), occupational performance (生活本事) and client-centered practice (以做事的人为中心) replaced the “thinking void” and formed the integral part of OT professional reasoning (专业思维).

2014-2026




Main Study

# Results

## 04 Conceptual translation, theory construction, and application

- Essential OT concepts that are difficult to understand and resulted in “thinking void” became the focus of the Huangtu OS.
- Occupation (生活事情), occupational performance (生活本事) and client-centered practice (以做事的人为中心) replaced the “thinking void” and formed the integral part of OT professional reasoning (专业思维).

2014-2026



## Main Study

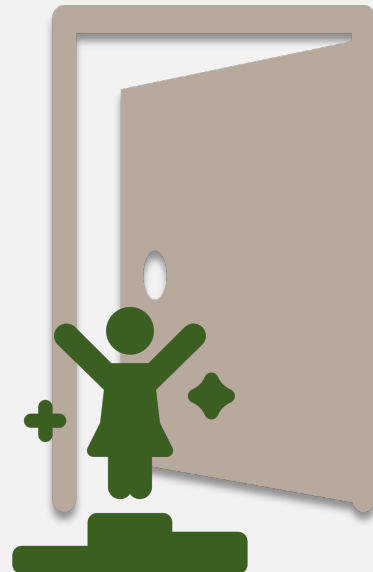


# My journey of doing, being and becoming an occupational therapist in mainland China

Chunyu Yuan<sup>1</sup>, Xu Dong<sup>1</sup>, Teresa ML Chiu<sup>2</sup>,  
<sup>1</sup> Shandong University of Traditional Chinese Medicine,  
<sup>2</sup> Huang-Tu Occupation Study Group

“I opened the door that brought me from function-centered reasoning to occupation-centered reasoning: functional limitations no longer restrict the unlimited possibilities of doing occupations.”

“我打开了从功能思维到做事思维的大门：功能限制无法框定生活做事的可能边界”



Main Study

eposter

**WFOT**  
Congress 2026  
9-12 FEBRUARY BANGKOK, THAILAND

# Using both literal and semantic translations to address the challenge of applying volition in OT practice in China

Xu Dong 1, Teresa Chiu 2,

1 Shandong University of Traditional Chinese Medicine,  
2 Huang-Tu Occupation Study Group

Literal translation  
“xin xiang shi cheng”  
(心想事成)

Semantic translation  
Internal motive to do things  
(内在做事原动力)

“Integrating both translation versions in practice has strengthened my professional reasoning. Doing so has helped me to stay focused on occupational outcomes.”

“整合两种翻译来增强专业思维能力，聚焦做事治疗成果”

Main Study

eposter



# Conclusion

- By addressing the difficult-to-understand OT concepts, Huangtu OS has helped OTs open the door of occupation-centered reasoning and minimize the influence of “thinking void” .
- If more OTs in China can develop theoretically-sound professional reasoning, the service quality, OT education and professional identity in Chinese communities can be further improved.



# WFOT papers on Huangtu OS

## Poster #65

- Chiu, MT, Shi, XC, Cui, JL, Liao, P, & Song, JA. Huangtu Occupation Terms: A set of occupational therapy terms that are linguistically and culturally appropriate for use in mainland China.

## ePoster

- Dong, X, & Chiu, MT. Using both literal and semantic translations to address the challenges of applying volition in OT practice in China
- Yuan, C, Dong, X, & Chiu, MT. My journey of doing, being and becoming an occupational therapist in mainland China

## Lightning talk

- Shi, XS., Ma, LH & Lee, M. Shaping the future: A culturally-relevant Occupational Therapy curriculum that reflects the everyday lives and thinking of the Chinese people.

## 2018 paper

- Chiu, T., Cui, J., Shi, X., & Liao, P. (2018, May 21). Huang-Tu Occupation Study: A study of occupational therapy theory written in Chinese for use in China [Oral presentation]. The 17th WFOT Congress, Cape Town, South Africa.



*Thank You*

**WFOT**  
**Congress 2026**



**9-12 FEBRUARY**

**BANGKOK, THAILAND**