

A Study on the Translation Methods of Medical Terms in *Diagnosis and Treatment Protocol for COVID-19 (Trial Version 7)*

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Abstract

This paper aims to figure out the translation methods of the terms used in *Diagnosis and Treatment Protocol for COVID-19 (Trial Version 7)*. By comparing the Chinese and English versions of the officially published article and probing into the translation of some mentioned term names, the translation methods of these terms in *Diagnosis and Treatment Protocol for COVID-19 (Trial Version 7)* are divided into three types, a) transliteration; b) free translation; c) combination of literal translation and free translation. It could be found that the combined utilization of these three translation methods makes terms more understandable for foreigners who are interested in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), especially during the period of COVID-19 epidemic. The result suggests that more efforts should be put into the field of TCM translation and expanding the international influence of TCM.

Key words: TCM; term; Literal translation; Free translation; Chinese culture

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INTRODUCTION

Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 since 2019, the whole world has been trapped into a big trouble. In the process of seeking for effective treatments, China took traditional Chinese medicine as a complementary therapy, which has always made a great contribution when large-

scale epidemics broke out. To introduce TCM to the international sight, the first step is to translate TCM terms properly. In this paper, collecting relative journals, classifying translation methods, and other methods of study were used to research the medical terms translation in *Diagnosis and Treatment Protocol for COVID-19 (Trial Version 7)*. It is of great significance to check the progress our country has made and the deficiencies that still exist in the field of TCM translation.

1. SEVERE EFFECT CAUSED BY COVID-19

A terrible epidemic triggered by Coronavirus has swept the world fiercely since 2019. Up to now (March 2022), 319,225 cases have been diagnosed in China, 138,250 cases cured, and the fatality reached 7,263 in China. While in foreign countries, 444,607,518 cases have been confirmed, 377,998,658 cases cured and caused 6,007,903 deaths. Currently, the source of infection is still unknown. The possible transmission routes include droplet transmission, contact transmission, and fecal-oral transmission. On January 30th, 2020, WHO decided to list COVID-19 epidemic as a public health emergency of international concern. The impact of the epidemic is directly reflected not only on the number of deaths and infections but also on the economic situation of countries. The large demand for medical items such as masks, protective gear, and vaccines has made many countries unbearable. Then followed the restriction in public gathering and the lockdown of cities, which strongly hit the service industry and tourism.

2. SIGNIFICANCE OF TCM TERM TRANSLATION

2.1 The Effectiveness of TCM

There are two reasons why we shall pay attention to the translation of terms of TCM. Firstly, over the past

century, TCM has always played an important role in fighting against infectious diseases, especially since 2003. Seventeen years ago, TCM had played a significant role in the clinical treatment of SARS. Its profound effects cover from reducing fever symptoms, controlling the spread of the disease, replacing the dosage of hormones to alleviating complications. After that, TCM also contributes a lot when confronted with viral diseases such as SARS, H1N1, H7N9, MERS, and EBOV. After the investigation launched by the WHO expert group, the relevant treatment protocols were recommended globally.

Subsequently, the experiments on SARS virus showed that some Chinese patent medicines had the efficacy of restraining coronavirus. The State Administration of traditional Chinese medicine is clinical practical utility-oriented and found that the effective prescription screening for Chinese medicine has made a partial achievement. For example, clinical observation of Shanxi, Hebei, and other pilot provinces showed that the total effective rate of Qingfei detoxification decoction, a medicine made of traditional Chinese medicine, is above 90%. Meanwhile, 23 patients with COVID-19 in Hubei hospital were cured and discharged with integrated traditional Chinese and Western medicine treatment. Moreover, eight cases of Guang'anmen Hospital, Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences were cured by Integrated Traditional Chinese and Western medicine, and six of them were severe patients. Therefore, in the prevention and treatment of Coronavirus pneumonia, TCM deserves more attention.

2.2 The Difficulty in Translating TCM Terms

The most difficult part of TCM translation is centered on its term translation. It seems impossible to find a corresponding word in English when it mentioned the herb, symptom, therapy, and other items in traditional Chinese medicine. For instance, a traditional Chinese herb may name after a doctor, an animal, or a plant. Furthermore, the characters used in Chinese are usually esoteric without concrete meaning, such as Lianqiao (连翘), Huoxiang (藿香). When describing a symptom, classical Chinese are usually used, which is more difficult for foreigners to understand. For instance, in the term "Shiduyufeizheng (湿毒郁肺症)", "yu", used as a verb, describes a state of stagnation in one's body, which is rarely used in modern Chinese.

Except the huge difficulty in translating medical terms, the theory and practice of TCM are very different from modern medicine, which origins in the western country. From the perspective of the source of medical vocabulary, there are professional vocabulary of Greece and Latin, naming terms (terms named by people's names, place names, etc.), medical vocabulary borrowed from common English, etc. However, TCM entirely originated in China and is rooted in Chinese traditional culture. Therefore, there is a general lack of TCM counterparts in English, which causes great difficulties for the international

communication of TCM. Some basic conceptions in TCM do not exist in western medicine, such as "Qi (气)", "Xu (虚)" and "Jingluo (经络)".

It is clear that TCM is effective as a way of complementary therapy when facing epidemic, while quantities of difficulties exist in the process of recommending it to the world. Thus, to raise professionals in the field of TCM translation seems a practicable way to solve this problem.

3. INTRODUCTION OF *DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT PROTOCOL FOR COVID-19 (TRIAL VERSION 7)*

In order to research the translation methods in TCM field, we choose the protocol, *Diagnosis and Treatment Protocol for COVID-19 (Trial Version 7)*, as the source for the following reasons. The most important one is that the seventh version is the latest one publicized by the National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China and the National Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine by June 2020. Compared with the sixth version, the prescription is roughly the same. It is mainly revised and improved on the treatment of critically ill patients. Experts refined the treatment methods and medicines and focused on how to reduce the mortality of critically ill patients. Moreover, the seventh edition of the diagnosis and treatment scheme puts forward more treatment methods, more personalized treatment for patients, and provides more choices for medical staff. Besides, many critically ill patients in Wuhan use respirators. How to give full play to the advantages of traditional Chinese medicine, reduce the adverse reactions to using respirators to the human body is also an important research direction. As a result, it also adds the scheme for traditional Chinese medicine supporting ventilator treatment. At last, the protocol makes more scientific provisions of the use of traditional Chinese medicine injections. The dosage specified in the clinical operation manual of Chinese patent medicine may not apply to all patients in the actual treatment process, which needs to be judged by the doctor according to the patient's physical condition. To conclude, the seventh edition is an improvement to the sixth edition in general. It can be used to guide the general medical staff to diagnose the patients with coronavirus pneumonia. The expert group will also continue to summarize the beneficial experience in the medical practice and continuously improve the diagnosis and treatment plans.

4. TRANSLATION METHODS ADOPTED IN *DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT PROTOCOL FOR COVID-19 (TRIAL VERSION 7)*

In the protocol *Diagnosis and Treatment Protocol for COVID-19 (Trial Version 7)*, three translation methods

are wildly used. The three main translation methods are transliteration, free translation, and the combination of literal translation and free translation. Transliteration is a translation method that transform language through its pronunciation. Literal translation is a translation method which maintains the conformity of content and form between the source language and target language, while free translation focuses on reproducing the general meaning of the original text, which may not closely follow the form or organization of the original. The combination of literal translation and free translation could constitute the third one.

In order to improve our capacity for engaging in international communication, various translation methods are used. In essence, TCM terms are of highly cultural richness and profound connotations, which makes it difficult to translate. During the process of translating TCM terms into English, there are two major steps. One is converting ancient Chinese to modern Chinese, the other is translating modern Chinese into English, which demands translators of a high level of translation skills as well as an understanding of TCM and ancient Chinese.

Diagnosis and Treatment Protocol for COVID-19 (Trial Version 7) Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) treatment includes the authority-verified medication treatment methods to cure COVID-19. To confront with the huge crisis that we human beings are facing with, an acceptable and appropriate translation version is advantageous in spreading it all over the world. Thus, analyzing its translation features and exerting its translation methods properly matters. In the protocol, transliteration, free translation as well as combination of literal translation and free translation are mainly used.

4.1 Transliteration

Systematic transliteration is a mapping from one system of writing into another, typically grapheme to grapheme.

For some basic TCM terms, it is almost impossible to find corresponding words in English, hence transliteration is the most direct translation method. In the *Diagnosis and Treatment Protocol for COVID (Trial Version 7)*, Chinese herbal medicine names are translated through transliteration with notes. Transliteration, to be honest, is basically none-translation, which makes the TCM culture disappear, or even worse, leads to culture confrontation. Adding notes is a way to convey connotative meaning and information out of the text. Some medicines are translated through such method. The typical instances are as follows.

Example 1: Xu Chang Qing (Cynanchi paniculati Radix) 徐长卿

In TCM, this is a kind of herbal named after an ancient doctor's name who saved the life of Emperor Taizong in Tang dynasty. It was named after a person rather than the material. Given no corresponding words in English to explain a Chinese name, transliteration is the appropriate method. Xu Chang Qing, a name that would even make

Chinese feel confused, is actually a plant called Cynanchi paniculati Radix, so the notes are aimed to make it clear. Similar method is also used to translate herbs that were named after person, Liu Ji Nu (Diverse Wormwood Herb), Du Zhong (Eucommiae Cortex), just to name a few.

Example 2: Hua Ju Hong (Citri grandis Exocarpium rubrum) 化橘红

The origin of the name Hua Ju Hong also has a story. Ju Hong in ancient times was the orange peel that had been dried. However, Hua Ju Hong is actually made of grapefruit peel rather than orange. And Hua is aimed at showing the place of origin, Huazhou. To make target readers less confused about what it really is, the explanation "Citri grandis Exocarpium rubrum" is given while maintaining the transliteration method.

Example 3: Huoxiang Zhengqi Capsule (Pill, Liquid, Oral Liquid) 藿香正气胶囊 (丸, 水, 口服液) & Lianhua Qingwen Capsule (Granule) 连花清瘟胶囊 (颗粒)

Such medicines are used widely and well-known to the world. When translating the name of medicines, translators tend to translate its materials or functions. However, the materials and functions of these TCM medicines are too complicated, which makes its translation version tedious and confusing. Take Huoxiang Zhengqi Capsule for example, it is comprised of Cang Zhu, Chen Pi, Bai Qi, Fu ling and other various TCM herbivores. Moreover, its functions are quite various, for instance, treating a cold, headache, vomiting and so on. The three Chinese patent medicines (Lianhua Qingwen Keli/Jiaonang Forsythiae and Honeysuckle Flower Pestilence-Clearing Granules/Capsules), Jinhua Qinggan Keli (Honeysuckle Flower Cold Relieving Granules) and Xuebijing (Stasis-Resolving & Toxin-Removing) Injection have been officially approved by the National Medical Products Administration to list COVID-19 as an additional indication. Thus, it is possible for us to use transliteration without causing confusion or misunderstandings. Similar examples like Jinhua Qinggan Granule and Shufeng Jiedu Capsule (Granule) are also included in the *Diagnosis and Treatment Protocol for COVID (Trial Version 7)*.

From the above instances, it can be concluded that transliteration plays a significant role in TCM translation, which truly reflects TCM culture. Besides, the international communication of TCM is getting increasingly strengthened and foreigners get access to learn related knowledge, which makes transliteration more acceptable for readers to get a knowledge of TCM.

4.2 Free Translation

With a large quantity of words that boast traditional Chinese culture and sufficient expertise, transliteration cannot always meet the need of TCM cultural exchange, and thus calls for free translation. Free translation is one of the most prevalent method of translation. It fundamentally means translating the meaning of each

whole sentence before moving on to the next, and stands in normative opposition to word-for-word translation (also known as literal translation).

According to *Diagnosis and Treatment Protocol for COVID-19 (Trial Version 7) Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) treatment*, the method free translation is mainly adopted by the patterns of syndromes. The typical instances are as follows.

Example 4: Epidemic toxin blocking the lung pattern (疫毒闭肺症)

This is a typical syndrome of Coronavirus. Its Chinese name consists of five monosyllables, each of which stands for a word with specific meaning. Hence for the integrity and lucidity of the English version, it gives distinct explanations of these monosyllables without affecting the coherence of its whole meaning.

Example 5: Poor appetite (纳呆) & epistaxis (衄血)

“纳呆” might be a confusing terminology for both Chinese as well as English. It is a typical TCM syndrome and we can hardly explain it through transliteration or literal translation. Under such circumstances, translators are supposed to deliver its deep meaning. And “纳呆” actually means the function of stomach being poor, with syndromes of poor digestion, poor appetite, etc. Thus, providing it with further meaning in translation version is necessary to express its implication to foreigners. Poor appetite (纳差) belongs to the same category.

“衄血” is another example. Many TCM terminology comes from ancient Chinese, these characters or words have undergone great semantic changes from ancient Chinese to modern Chinese. “衄” can refer to both nosebleed and injury. Under such circumstances, nosebleed is more appropriate since it refers to a kind of bleeding. To define it more clearly based on the context, epistaxis is both accurate in meaning and style. The same reason can be applied to stomach discomfort (脘痞).

From the above instances as well as cultural exchange, it can be concluded that free translation is of paramount significance for TCM terms translation. On one level, the translation version by virtue of this method dominates an advantage of extending the meaning. On the other level, the text is given to be more fluent in English within a complete sentence. With COVID-19 ravaging, understandability provides people with more chance to comprehend the diagnosis and treatment protocol. Additionally, free translation is able to rid burdens of original context, such as baffling classical Chinese and rhetoric. Reasonable changes of order can also add color to the translation version. In conclusion, free translation is another catalyst of the popularization of the diagnosis and treatment protocol for COVID-19.

4. 3 Combination of Literal Translation and Free Translation

Transliteration and free translation may function under some circumstances, but there are still occasions that

need literal translation and free translation at the same time. And thus when translators go to all lengths to make a balance between maintaining the meaning and conveying Chinese culture, they tend to combine these two methods together. Such circumstances are shown in a few medical patterns mentioned in the protocol. Here are the examples.

Example 6: Cold-damp obstructing the lung pattern (寒湿阻肺证)

This syndrome is related to TCM concepts, cold-damp. Cold-damp means a disease caused by deficiency of spleen. As Chinese culture becomes increasingly popular in the whole world, this concept is well-known for people in western countries. However, some people still have no idea about it, so in authors' view, explaining that such concept derives from TCM is preferable.

Example 7: Cold-damp “constraint” in the lung pattern (寒湿郁肺证) & Damp-heat “accumulation” in the lung pattern (湿热蕴肺证)

What deserves to be mentioned is the translation of the word. As a whole, these two phrases are nouns, hence the translator has chosen to use constraint and accumulation so as to maintain the correspondence of the part of speech. Both “郁” and “蕴” are in classical Chinese, which is difficult for foreigners to understand. Word-for-word translation will only put a lampshade over them. On the contrary, see them from the complete phrase and explain them specifically can erase confusion.

Example 8: Blazing of both qi and ying pattern (气营两燔证) & Lung-spleen qi deficiency pattern (肺脾气虚证) & Deficiency of both qi and yin pattern (气阴两虚证)

To translate the above syndromes, Qi, Ying, and Yin are of great significance. When talking about TCM, Qi, Yin, Yang are the terminology that occur most frequently. Hence there is no need defining them. What needs to be translated here are “燔” and “虚”. And the translation version combines both literal and free translation. On the one hand, it maintains the nationality and cultural implication of TCM. On the other hand, it fully demonstrates the meanings of these syndromes. As a consequence, it is applied to the *Diagnosis and Treatment Protocol for COVID-19 (Trial Version 7)*.

To conclude, so as to give full play to TCM in COVID prevention and control, translation of *Diagnosis and Treatment Protocol for COVID-19 (Trial Version 7)* is of great significance. To make sure it is spread accurately and understandably, the combination of literal translation and free translation is advisable. The audience are able to get exposed to TCM culture and know about the protocols to deal with coronavirus.

Translation is a kind of activity during culture interactions. Under today's special circumstances, spreading TCM culture appears to be more important and should be put on the agenda. Though there are wide differences between Chinese and English culture,

translators can still use the most acceptable version to make contributions to spread TCM culture. Translation serves as a bridge, which connects Chinese with people around the whole world to find a possible way to fight against Covid-19. By using literal translation as well as free translation, this protocol is just a start for translators to bring TCM to the world. And by analyzing and absorbing its advantages, more acceptable versions of TCM protocol will come to public sight.

CONCLUSION

There are three main types of translation methods in promoting *Diagnosis and Treatment Protocol for COVID-19 (Trial Version 7)*, transliteration, free translation, and combination of literal translation and free translation. All of them are important in the process of better understanding traditional Chinese medicine while maintain its difference with Western medicine. However, problems still exist. Firstly, the standard translation principle is under discussion until today. Thus, there is not a certain judgmental criterion. Secondly, it is difficult to think about some creative ideas in this field. There are a number of articles conveying the similar point. Thirdly, owing to the diverse discipline of medicine and English, finding a person who is interested in both subjects is not that easy. The development of TCM translation is relatively slow and unproductive. Thus, for the goal of pushing TCM to the wilder stage, there is still a long way to go.

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