

On Teaching of TCM English Major: Problems, Solutions and Prospects

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Abstract—Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is a unique treasure of Chinese nation. It has widely been accepted in China but not precisely spread and promoted in foreign countries. Traditional Chinese English Major has been set in some of the colleges and universities to direct professional translation talents for foreign communication of TCM, but the efficiency of TCM English teaching is not satisfying. On the basis of the questionnaire, the paper clearly points out the existing problems about TCM English teaching in the aspects of students' enrollment, teaching material, teaching mode and professor of TCM English major, and analyzes the cause and possible effect. Meanwhile, the thesis puts forward some related solutions about how to change the present situation. This gives some enlightenment on the cultivation of professional translation talents, the internationalization of Chinese medicine and the development of Chinese medical culture.

Keywords—Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) English teaching; problems; solutions; Conclusion

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Research Background

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is a unique treasure of Chinese nation. It is still illegal in western countries despite the great popularity in China. To precisely spread and promote the development of TCM in foreign countries, many medical universities in China have set the English Major, directing the foreign communication of TCM. In recent years, we have seen a number of foreigners crush into China to study TCM, especially acupuncture and moxibustion because they are becoming more and more popular in some foreign countries. However, it has also been noticed that without the permission of Food and Drug Administration (FDA), traditional medicine is not allowed to enter into the circulation area as a kind of medicine, and it only can be sold as the name of food supplement in foreign countries. We are not certain whether TCM that has really been spreading overseas is originated from China for the very reason that it is developing very well in Japan and Korea.

Translators play an essential role in solving the problems met in the communication of TCM. Many teachers, professors have studied the teaching of this major and concluded several common problems, as follows, non-standard textbooks, scattered reference materials, unscientific teaching schedule and unsatisfactory teaching result.

Papers related about this issue have been published since 2004, but to our great disappointment, these problems are still unsolved.

In conclusion, it is necessary for us to change foreigners' misunderstanding of TCM and try our best to enable them to use TCM to cure patients or release their pain. Meanwhile, we need to launch a revolution of the major for an efficient and rapid development, which is exactly the premise of TCM communication.

B. English and TCM English

TCM English, simply speaking, is a unique expression system of English language formed in the process of translation and foreign communication of TCM. As a new member of ESP (English for Special Purpose), it mainly studies the independent system of the combination of English language and other disciplines.

English language will form an expression way when it is applied in different disciplines. The way is closely related to the discipline studied at the same time, and unknown by those who do not study the discipline. Therefore, the combination of English language and the discipline will inevitably create a relative independent language system concerned with the discipline. Thus TCM English is created in and will also develop.

In these years, the TCM English major has not been given enough attention in its development and arrangement in medical universities. Comparing with public English teaching, TCM English teaching is very traditional, basically focused on passage reading and words translation, aiming at the cultivation of reading ability of TCM English and the ability of listening, speaking and writing. The quality of TCM English teaching has been improved after the efforts for more than 20 years, but it has a long way to go to catch up with that of other professional English, like business English, legal English and scientific English.

II. EXISTING PROBLEMS OF TCM ENGLISH MAJOR

A. The Students' Weakness of English Language Ability and Chinese Culture

The common problem in many universities lies in that the English level of the TCM English majors is not much higher than that of other majors. We have investigated that the level of

English teaching in the country sides is comparatively low. During their university year, the stress of students in medical universities is heavy. To deal with the CET-4, CET-6, or even the examination for further education, they spend less time on learning medical English. Additionally, the students are weak in Chinese culture so that they could not completely understand the theories of TCM. As Li Zhaoguo said, TCM English is a hard nut to crack due to the lack of traditional Chinese culture of the students.

B. The Lack of Unified and Standard Teaching Materials

Generally speaking, the development of TCM English teaching is still at the beginning step, and the construction of teaching materials falls behind. The textbooks used now are translated from Chinese edition, based on the translation theories of general English and scientific English. It is because Chinese medicine is used to illustrate something in the way of abstract analogy so that the language is vague and lack of unity, together with the questions of polysemy or several words sharing one common meaning. What is more, a lot of TCM terms and theories can't be found in western medicine, which adds the difficulties of translation.

Those who work in editing TCM English teaching materials know English but know nothing or little about TCM, and their knowledge is not enough in Chinese culture. Meanwhile, some TCM experts working in it are weak in English, knowing little about translation techniques. As a result, they may translate improper connotation and expressions of TCM professional terms and cause misunderstanding for the target language readers. Meanwhile, with some limitation in teaching materials available to teachers and poor pertinence of some materials with related subjects, they are far away from the satisfaction of the development of TCM.

C. The Simpleness of Teaching Mode

The teaching mode commonly adopted in the universities is reading and translation in TCM English, which means analyzing passages and introducing a lot of difficult-to-remember professional TCM English words in class at the same time. In some degree, this method helps students grasp the language knowledge and translation techniques, but it fails to attract the students or stimulate their learning initiative. The multimedia equipment has lack of the interaction between teacher and student, and too much information makes students choose to rely on ppt and take hand-written notes more than interactive thinking.

D. The Shortage of Qualified Professors

The present situation is that good English professors don't grasp the TCM theories and vice versa. There are not far enough professors with systematical and comprehensive TCM education, a solid English foundation and a good knowledge of TCM English teaching.

III. SOLUTIONS OF TCM ENGLISH TEACHING

A. Change the Traditional Single Teaching Mode and Explore a new Teaching Mode

The pedagogy of "Traditional Workshop" suggested by the professor Jin Shenghua in Hong Kong is worth learning for TCM English professors. To be specific, the professor divides

students into groups, gives lots of translation tasks to the specific needs; students finish and evaluate their task by themselves. Of course the professor participates in it and makes a final conclusion.

TCM is rooted in the traditional Chinese culture, with concise language but abundant meanings. In the aspect of cross-culture communication, TCM English is not only a transition of language, but a transition of culture, so actually TCM English is a transition from one thinking mode to the other. Therefore, to grasp the culture background of TCM is vital.

Actually TCM English is a transition from one thinking mode to the other. With the deep influence of the traditional Chinese culture and classical philosophy and the absorption of large quantities of philosophical and literature words, how to understand these words directly decides the accuracy of translation. So it is necessary to introduce the background of these words while teaching.

TCM English teaching is aimed to get the students familiar with the expression of TCM in English and to maintain the basic theories and methods of TCM English translation. Consequently, professors should teach the basic translation theories in the process of analyzing a passage so that students can study how to use these theories in the practical situation. That is, through learning in class, students can practically express the connotation of TCM in fluent English. This needs to arouse the initiative of the students and guide them to learn TCM English actively. What is more, professors can give some translation exercises to enable the students to acquire the translation techniques in practice and train their ability of doing translation independently. In the aspect of assessment, professors can combine the formative assessment and summative assessment together and give all kinds of tests regularly to supervise their daily study.

B. Strengthen the Construction of Faculty

Medical universities should strengthen and encourage a close combination between the professors of TCM and those of English to explore and study the teaching strategies of TCM English teaching and make the best of both worlds. At the same time, universities should pay high attention to the faculty construction of TCM English teaching, setting up special founding plan and send medical professors with good foundation of English to go abroad or foreign language universities to study and acquire the English language systematically. Meanwhile, universities also should provide opportunities for English professors to study TCM. They need to promote the academic exchanges, and strengthen cooperation with foreign Chinese medical universities and take the advantage of cooperation in running schools, inviting foreign experts and professors in Chinese medicine to deliver lectures, and participate in the clinical interpretation to improve the clinical practice ability of professors.

C. Edit and Use the Standard Teaching Textbooks

First of all, the construction of TCM English teaching textbooks should be paid much attention and regarded as the systematic and vital work. High-quality teaching material is very important and should be fit for both professors and

students in improving English professional teaching. It is advisable to invite authorized experts in TCM and English to work together to edit more professional textbooks based on the translation standards of WHO (World Health Organization) and WFCMS (World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies). Universities should also select the international popular TCM textbooks or scientific readings to enable the students to know clearly about the writing style and translation theory.

At the same time, teachers also play an essential role in it. Professors who can teach the medical courses both in English and in Chinese are really rare even if the textbooks are available. Therefore, the cultivation of bilingual medical teachers also needs to be focused. The universities should encourage and create opportunities for all teachers to communicate frequently, as well as exchanging opinions about teaching methods. What a professor faces is the college students and what a college student faces is the major. So professors are required to have the holistic view, not only knowing about the teaching objectives of his specialty, but grasping the whole educational objectives of the major. To accelerate the development of the major, students also need to spare lot efforts. Students should try their best to train and improve the ability of self-study to prevent themselves from misunderstanding or taking a backward step. What is more, students should collect materials for translation and find opportunities to practice interpretation of TCM English by themselves.

D. Balance the Source of Students

Medical universities should balance the enrollment of arts or science. There is no certain charge line of the English level between students of arts and students of science, but the way of thoughts has a slight difference. In high school, the students of science have been trained the ability of logical analysis, abstract thinking and real practice, while the students of arts have been trained the ability of understanding, memorizing and creative thinking. Both of the students can make full use of their advantages so as to study TCM English well, for this major is the combination of language and medicine. Universities who only admit the students of arts or science, or the percentage out of balance should really consider it carefully to avoid affecting the atmosphere of the whole class. Both of the students join the discussion and cooperation of necessary disciplines can promote the communication with varied thoughts and improve needed skills.

E. Additional Solution

More practice opportunities are expected to offer. This major is to promote the TCM to the overseas, and in a word, it is for communication. Apart from the literal knowledge in the books, practice opportunities are also vital. In some degree, medical students need to go to the hospital to observe the situation of patients, try to diagnose the disease, and then prescribe in their mind. During the university years, teachers should provide opportunities for students to speak more and translate more, and try their best to offer the latest authentic materials. If a university can cooperate with manufactures, organizations or foreign universities, it will be a great opportunity for improvement. In fact, universities have enough

money to set up the related programs and the cooperators must be willing to give chances to universities and trust them, but only a few students joined in. This is because students who are qualified to join the program must be outstanding and their family also need to be enough rich to cover the expenditure. Therefore, much more affordable and practical programs need to be designed to accelerate the development of TCM English.

IV. CONCLUSION

TCM English is an emerging and developing specialty of the 21st century. Confronted with some obstacles in the process of development, the thesis analyzes them from four aspects, namely, students enrollment, teaching material, teaching mode and professor of TCM English major, so as to explore what the problems are and try to figure out possible solutions.

After the careful analysis, four problems have been found. The college students from the backward regions or the science are relatively weak in English language ability and Chinese culture; the teaching materials are not standard or unified because the specific course arrangement of TCM English major are still under the research; the sufficient and specialized professors with good quality are quite in need; the teaching mode needs to be greatly improved.

Possible solutions closely related to these problems are discussed in five aspects, that is, teaching, professors, teaching material, students and universities. It is critical to improve the teaching mode; the publishing of high-quality materials is supposed to accelerate; professors are encouraged to keep on study and cultivate themselves to be good at this major; universities should give the students more chances to practice and communicate with each other, enabling them to have a better understanding and confidence about this major; meanwhile, students should have a strong desire of study and practice, improve the ability of self-study, and view the TCM communication as a mission and struggle for it.

Students who graduate from this major absolutely can make a great contribution to the promising future of TCM English. Excellent students may provide their exact explanation and wide transmission of Chinese medicine for the international society. People become more and more willing to recognize the advantage of Chinese medicine and consider Chinese medicine as a better choice than ever.

In conclusion, TCM English major is a promising major. This counts on much more efforts to improve and develop TCM English teaching. What mentioned in the thesis is only a small step.

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