

Study on Translation of Visceral Manifestation Terminologies Under the Guidance of Skopos Theory

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Abstract—Nowadays, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) has gotten a wide range of attention. As visceral manifestation is an important component of TCM, many scholars research the translation of visceral manifestation terminologies. Under the guidance of Skopos theory, this paper explores translation of visceral manifestation terminologies in detail. Problems in translation of visceral manifestation terminologies, suggested translation principles and methods of translating visceral manifestation terminologies, such as literal translation, transliteration, and free translation are discussed respectively.

Keywords—visceral manifestation; terminologies; Skopos Theory; translation

I. INTRODUCTION

Traditional Chinese Medicine is a discipline of the study of human physiology, pathology and diagnosis and prevention of diseases. TCM, with a history of thousands of years, unique and integrated theoretical system, rich practical experience and good clinical effect, has been making great contribution to Chinese people's health care and the development of the whole nation. It is a summary of the Chinese people's experience in their struggle against diseases. In the past few decades, it has been attracting increasing attention from other countries.

The development of TCM has a long history, but TCM translation is still a new continent due to many emerging problems during the translation process. Since ancient times, TCM is a national treasure for China, and has developed and improved constantly. Especially in recent years, it becomes a hot topic again due to the more attention for TCM translation at home and abroad. Before 20th century, some missionaries from the west came to China and brought TCM to their countries. During that period, the speed of propagation of TCM was slow, and its transmission range was narrow. But after 20th century, the medical communication between China and western world has been increased greatly. Many professional translators begin to study the TCM translation, and more and more books and journals about TCM translation are published all over the world. However, the translation of TCM differs from other science translation and is difficult to master. In order to translate those medical terms correctly, one must know much about the knowledge of TCM. TCM translation is so significant that it can affect a country on culture and comprehensive abilities.

II. BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO SKOPOS THEORY

In Hans J. Vermeer's general theory of translation, or Skopos theory, translation is viewed as a purposeful human action, and translation approach and strategy must be determined by the expected function of the translated text. Skopos theory regards "Skopos rule" as the top-ranking rule for any translation, and it means that a translational action is determined by its Skopos.

In Skopos theory, translation is a type of communication at first. In other words, translation is a type of human action. Since action is an intentional "change or transition from one state of affairs to another", translation as a human action must also be intentional. Moreover, as human action takes place in a given situation, and the situation is in turn embedded in cultures; therefore, translation must be assessed in a particular culture system instead of being considered just a one-to-one transfer between languages.

Therefore, a translation theory cannot draw upon a linguistic theory alone, what is needed is a theory of culture to explain the specificity of communicative situations and the relationship between verbalized and non-verbalized elements. Thus translation can be described as an intrinsically purposeful human action, initiated by the initiator, who wants to achieve a certain purpose through the translation. In one word, translation in nature is a purposeful, cross-cultural communication.

The above description of translation reveals the essence of translation, i.e. the three characteristics: purposeful, communicative, and cross-cultural. Translation is a transformation in the course of which communicative linguistic or non-linguistic signs (or both) are transformed from one language to another. It also reveals that translation is a text-processing process, as Nord said, the text can be adjusted or even adapted according to the intended function, in this theory, and the ST has lost its primary position in the translation process and is only taken as one constituent of the translation commission. It is up to the translator to decide the role it plays, and the decisive factor is the Skopos of the communication in a given situation. This view is greatly different from the equivalence theory, for Skopos theory offers a descriptive approach to translation.

Skopos theory first assumes that translation must be a kind of human behavior with distinct purpose, the functionalist theory particularly emphasizes target-orientation of translation, and it also stresses the translation situation that always determines the translation strategies to be used. Therefore, to translate is to “produce a text in a target setting for a target purpose and target addressees in target circumstances” (Nord, 1997:12). It describes, rather than prescribes, a mode of thought that will endow the translator with more freedom to explore new approaches to produce a successful target text.

III. INTRODUCTION TO VISCERAL MANIFESTATION

The theory of visceral manifestation (*zang-xiang*) studies the physiological functions and pathological changes of viscera and their relations. It plays an important role in building the theoretical system of TCM and is significant for expounding the physiology and pathology of the human body and for guiding clinical practice. The phrase of visceral manifestation or *zang-xiang* in Chinese first appeared in the Chapter of Six Sections of Discussion on Visceral Manifestation in *Su Wen*. According to the explanation in some Chinese medical classics, “*zang*” refers to interior organs which are stored inside the body, and “*xiang*” refers to exterior manifestation of physiological functions and pathological changes of internal organs.

Viscera, basis for the theory of *Zang-xiang*, is a collective term of internal organs which, according to their physiological functions, can be classified into three major categories: the five *zang*-organs, including the heart, liver, spleen, lung and kidney; the six *fu*-organs, including the gallbladder, stomach, small intestine, large intestine, bladder and triple energizer; and the extraordinary *fu*-organs, including the brain, marrow, bone, vessel, gallbladder and uterus. The theory of *Zang-xiang* was advanced on the basis of the development of the following three aspects, including the knowledge of anatomy accumulated in the ancient times, the long-term observation of the human physiological functions and pathological changes and the repeated medical practice in which certain physiological functions were disproved and analyzed in the light of pathological phenomena and curative effect.

IV. TRANSLATION OF VISCERAL MANIFESTATION TERMINOLOGIES

Rich and colorful Traditional Chinese Medical culture (TCM culture) is included in hundreds and hundreds of Traditional Chinese Medical Classics (TCM classics). With the development of the world medicine and the increasing improvement of Chinese culture soft power, TCM cross-culture communication has already become an introductory letter and a specific name card to the world. Therefore, pushing the cross-culture communication of TCM culture is quite a meaningful issue to the world as well as to China. Considering the special relation between TCM classics and TCM culture, it is quite meaningful and valuable to have a study on TCM cross-culture communication based on TCM classics translation, especially in English.

A. Language Features of TCM Works

The features of TCM language differs from other modern medical language. Since TCM classics were made by the ancient people who used ancient Chinese language, TCM language is hard to understand and translate. Firstly, the words or phrases in TCM combine medical words or phrases and philosophical words or phrases. Most of TCM books are loaded with strong literature color and poor professional level and degree of standardization. The abstraction of TCM language goes against medical demands for objectivity and conciseness. Secondly, the language of TCM is mingled with many western medicine terms. Owing to that some concepts in TCM is different from that in western medicine, people cannot distinguish which one is right with the mixture. Thirdly, the language of TCM texts is characterized by ambiguity and fuzziness. Imprecise expression will affect the clear definition of concepts. As a result, many concepts of the theory system conflict and contradict each other.

The translation of TCM is still a challenge for translation scholars. Although many difficulties we cannot solve now when we translate those medical terminologies, many scholars made a good example for us. They translate some books or essays about TCM and found many translation methods through their years of concentrated efforts. The translation of terminologies of the theory of *Zang-xiang* occupies an important position. The terminologies concerning the theory of *Zang-xiang* could be translated appropriately, which is in favor of the translation of TCM. Furthermore, the translation of TCM can promote the spread and development of TCM in the world, so the translation on TCM ought to be kept a watchful eye on. Translation professional committee of WFCMS (World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies) was established in Shanghai. It aims at promoting the international standardization of TCM English translation of the basic terms and promoting the development of international communication on translation of TCM and professional translation talents training.

B. Problems in Translation of Visceral Manifestation

Nigel Wiseman said “Chinese medicine is difficult to translate, and there are few people able to and even fewer willing to do it”. It is no doubt that English translation of TCM is really a very difficult job. This is mainly because TCM is a medical system with Chinese characteristics, in terms of theory and practice the modern medicine which is very unique, and the huge differences lies between Chinese and western in the language and culture. What’s more, TCM is not just a single medical science, but an important part of Chinese traditional culture. Besides, the most difficult is that most of the expressions of TCM in western countries don’t correspond to TCM language, which increases the difficulty of translation. To fundamentally solve these problems, it needs to undertake research and analysis of translation of TCM. We can find out the solution and make its development direction clear. For the translation of terminologies of theory of *Zang-xiang*, there are several problems that we should pay attention to.

For example, “故五脏盛乃能泄” was translated to “If five solid internal organs are vigorous, they can purge”. Actually,

the translation is not proper because “故五脏盛乃能泄” is not a complete sentence. When we link the context and sentence, we can find this translation is not in conformity with the original meaning. In fact, the whole sentence is “肾主水者，受五脏六腑之精而藏之，故五脏盛乃能泄”，in which the object of “乃能泄” is “kidney” instead of “five organs”. “泄” is producing semen. So understanding the real and internal meaning is the key to translate the medical term. However, those constitutive characteristics of TCM terms are so complex that some translators misunderstand them.

For another example, “肺气上通于鼻，才能知香臭” was translated to “When lung *qi* passes the nose, one can know good and bad smell”. In Chinese, two opposite words can be used in an expression instead of an overall concept, such as “大小，长短”. However, we cannot translate as “big and small” or “long and short”. In English, those words are usually expressed by “the size” or using a question word such as “how”. “香臭” refers to “odour”. In fact, “上通于鼻” should be translated to “the pulmonary *qi* reaches the nose”, because pulmonary *qi* reaches nose from top to bottom. Therefore, we must master those different expressions between TCM and English to translate TCM terms accurately.

C. Principles in Translation of Visceral Manifestation Terminologies

Many principles can be found in translating medical terminologies. The concept “faithfulness, expressiveness, elegance” is popular in China. “faithfulness” refers to be honest to text; “expressiveness” refers that the translating text should be clear and coherent; “elegance” refers that the translators should use some figures of speech in order to the elegance of text. But things are different when it comes to the translation of TCM terms and the traditional translation. Under the guidance of Skopos theory, the translation should adhere to the matching words, syntactic equivalence, textual equivalence, and stylistic equivalence. However, TCM terminologies own strong national colors so that the translation principle of TCM differs from common translation principles, and they should be in accordance with our Chinese culture.

As a result, five basic principles will be put forward in this paper to study the translation of TCM terms, namely, natural principle, the principle of concision, the principle of national character, the principle of back-translation, and stipulation principle. Natural principle means that using words or phrases which can be found in the English in the translation of TCM terms. So in the process of the translation of TCM terms, we should not only consider the characteristics of TCM, but also consider what the natural sciences have in common. Simplicity means that the original language of TCM is succinct, so the translation should be as concise as possible. When the TCM terms translated into English is not a term, but a sentence or a paragraph, thus this translation is losing the original simplicity of TCM. Different social main bodies in which nationality principle is involved have different national culture. A translator who wants to translate the terminology of TCM must understand the cultural background of TCM well and also understand its

special principles, conceptual categories, etc. Back-translation means that the translation of TCM terms on the structure should be similar to the form of Chinese; only in this way can the transmission of information in different culture be realized in the international communication of TCM. Finally, stipulation principle refers to the regulations, guidance, standards in the translation of TCM.

D. Methods in Translation of Visceral Manifestation Terminologies

Newmark mentions the difference between translation methods and translation procedures. He writes that, “While translation methods relate to whole texts, translation procedures are used for sentences and the smaller units of language”. He goes on to refer to the following methods of translation:

Word-for-word translation: in which the SL word order is preserved and the words translated singly by their most common meanings, out of context. Faithful translation: it attempts to produce the precise contextual meaning of the original within the constraints of the TL grammatical structures. Semantic translation: which differs from 'faithful translation' only in as far as it must take more account of the aesthetic value of the SL text. Adaptation: which is the freest form of translation, and is used mainly for plays (comedies) and poetry; the themes, characters, plots are usually preserved, the SL culture is converted to the TL culture and the text is rewritten. Free translation: it produces the TL text without the style, form, or content of the original. Idiomatic translation: it reproduces the 'message' of the original but tends to distort nuances of meaning by preferring colloquialisms and idioms where these do not exist in the original. Communicative translation: it attempts to render the exact contextual meaning of the original in such a way that both content and language are readily acceptable and comprehensible to the readership.

After analyzing collected materials, three methods are discussed to translate medical terminologies on Zang-xiang theory.

1) *Literal translation*: Literal translation, as its name implies, is a kind of translation which is in accordance with the original words or sentence structures. In literal translation, the SL grammatical constructions are converted to their nearest TL equivalents, but the lexical words are again translated singly, out of context.

奇恒之腑: extraordinary fu-organs

三焦: three warmers, three heaters, or three burners

命门: the gate of life, or life gate

心开窍于舌: the heart opens into the tongue

肺主气司呼吸: the lung controls *qi* and manages respiration

脾主运化: the spleen controls transportation and transformation

肝藏血，肾藏精: the liver stores blood and the kidney stores essence

藏而不泄，泄而不藏：storage without excretion and excretion without storage

Such direct translation method is very easy to understand, but this method is only suitable for those simple words which can find the corresponding translation in English.

2) *Transliteration*: In the process of TCM translation we can often find this kind of problem: For some expressions, no corresponding expressions can be found in traditional Chinese medicine and in western countries. At this time, we need to resort to other translation methods. Pin-yin is on method that translators can consider.

五脏六腑: five zang-organs and six fu-organs

命门: Ming-men

气: qi

In terms of the translation of visceral doctrine, transliteration should be used as little as possible, but in other Chinese medical terminology, such as meridian theory, theory of Yin and Yang, transliteration could be widely used.

3) *Free translation*: Free translation and literal translation are couple relative terms. It is according to the main idea of the original translation, not a word-for-word translation. This kind of translation method is the most common. And we can find free translation commonly used in the translation of TCM.

脏燥: hysteria

“脏燥” is actually the “hysteria” in western medicine.

脏腑: solid and hollow organs

“脏腑” refers to those organs in our body inside and outside. Some of them are solid and others are hollow.

开窍: as the window of, as the orifice of or specific body opening to

In TCM, we often find some terms like “脾开窍于口”, “心开窍于舌” and so on. Our body is magic. Almost every internal organ has its own corresponding external organ. “开窍” means to be the window outside.

在志为思: associate with thought in emotions

在液为痰: slobber in secretion

Every organ contacts with our body's other parts. There are different patterns of manifestation for other parts. “在志为思” means that the situation of the spleen can be seen through changes of our thought. “在痰为液” means that we can estimate the situation of the spleen by our slobber. In another word, the slobber is another form in secretion.

华盖: canopy

“华盖” refers to the lung, but in TCM the lung is the organ in the uppermost position among all the viscera. So the ancients compared it to the canopy which is described as an imperial carriage for king.

精气为满，水谷为实: essence is characterized by fullness and food by solidness

This phrase is translated as a verbal phrase, which is not the original form. Shift of perspective benefits the transformation between properties of words or sentence patterns so that we can translate a term easily.

有诸内，必形诸外: visceral inside the body must manifest themselves externally

In this phrase, there are only 7 words in Chinese, and we use amplification while translating it. 解剖而视之: the body may be dissected

In this translation, the word “视之” is omitted.

Conclusions can be achieved from the above example: Free translation is not only reflected in the translation of traditional Chinese medicine, but also in sentence translation. Relative to free translation, literal translation is more advantageous to keep some characteristics of the TCM nomenclature by itself. So when the translation methods are chosen, translators should pay attention to when we should use free translation, when we should not use free translation. Generally speaking, if the original meaning expressed by Chinese has a corresponding wording in English, liberal translation can be used. But on the contrary, if we can't find the corresponding words, other methods ought to be considered.

The translation methods of many authors vary greatly, and are rarely explained adequately through a comprehensive glossary. This causes confusion among students and practitioner alike, because of the difficulty in communicating basic concepts of our field in an understandable way. The issue of translation cannot be avoided or glossed over. The writer cannot simply assume that this issue is not important. Our profession is crippled by its inability to communicate with the ease and fluidity of native Chinese readers and speakers. If each English text has a different translation protocol, how can we ever establish databases of clinical data from Western practitioners, or a coherent, independent primary health care profession? Apparently, translators of TCM have to reach a consensus to the translation method of TCM texts because the translator's choice has greatly affected what Western readers learn and understand about TCM no matter he is driven at what considerations.

In general, TCM terminologies, especially the terminologies on Zang-xiang theory, can be translated by the means of literal translation and free translation. Due to the special background of TCM culture, the differences between Chinese and western languages, we need to be flexible when choosing various translation methods in the process of the translation of TCM terms.

V. CONCLUSION

Under the guidance of Skopos theory, this paper explores translation of visceral manifestation terminologies in detail. Problems in translation of visceral manifestation terminologies, suggested translation principles and methods of translating visceral manifestation terminologies, such as literal translation, transliteration, free translation are discussed respectively.

The main purpose of translation of TCM lies to the development and spread of TCM. The translation of terminologies on Zang-xiang theory as an indispensable part ought to be taken seriously. The transformation of modern medicine pattern between the old and new century is the opportunity for TCM to go to the world. But at present the biggest obstacle for the communication of TCM in the world is still about the language. English translation of TCM is a science, and stepping up to carry out the necessary basic researches is its core. This is a systematic engineering, under the consideration of the present situation of domestic and overseas, English translation of TCM should be of retrospective and prospective. A point ought to be emphasized is that the essence of TCM could not be lost when those medical terminologies are translated in order that we can promote the sustainable development of TCM all over the world.

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