

Exploring Cultural Factors and Strategies in TCM Translation: Terminology and Equivalence

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Abstract: The existence of TCM language is deeply rooted with traditional Chinese culture. Therefore, in the process of translating TCM terminology, not only can translate the surface layer of the linguistic symbols, but also the translation of TCM terminology is highly necessary, translating the source into the target text. In the process of translating Chinese medicine terms, certain principles must be followed. Firstly, the original text must be faithfully considered. Secondly, the natural translation must be ensured, and finally the colors in the original language must be preserved. To ensure the quality of Chinese medical terminology into English, translators must have a deep understanding of the original text and have superb translation expression skills, so as to truly achieve a perfect communication between Chinese and Western medicine.

Keywords: Translation of TCM Terminology; Cultural Factors; Translation Strategies

Chinese medicine has a very long history in China. The language of Chinese medicine contains a large number of Chinese medicine terms, short sentences and phrases. The existence of these languages is refined through long-term cultural precipitation. These TCM terms contain rich cultural information and distinctive TCM characteristics. Therefore, the contradiction between language and culture must be dealt with in the translation of TCM terms, so as to achieve the equivalently cultural exchange and ensure the effective transmission of cultural information in translation.

1. Cultural differences between Chinese and Western medicine

Different regional cultures and historical cultures will cause certain differences between Chinese and Western cultures, which will bring certain difficulties to the translation of TCM terminology.

1.1 Exotic vocabulary

After the precipitation of history and culture, there are many terms in Chinese medicine, such as the five elements: yin and yang, nine palaces, eight trigrams, meridians, acupoints, and the eight methods of tortoise. There are no English terms that can correspond. It implies that translator can face difficulties in translation.

1.2 Non-existence of cultural correspondents

In the process of translating Chinese medicine, there are often conflicts in some cultural information. The cultural information and the cultural information expressed by the corresponding words in the target language are mutually contradictory, which leads to the inconsistency of the translated words and the inability to express their intentions clearly. Even if the meanings are similar sometimes, the cultural information carried could be different. It notes that a few mistakes in the translation can trigger huge misunderstanding between the source and target readers.

1.3 Lack of implication

In the process of translation between Chinese and English, medical terminology is unique in terms of vocabulary,

phonetics, and grammar. It possibly can cause no equivalent translation. The implicature cannot be perfectly conveyed in the translation. This aspect can bring great obstacles to translators. Literally, traditional Chinese medicine terminology is abstract or implicit, which cause translation difficulties and lack of vacancies in the linguistic meaning.

2. Translation strategies of TCM terms

History of traditional Chinese medicine is old as time, back in thousands of years. It has been continuously improved and refined in use to form the current cultural essence. In terms of the language forms between Chinese and Western medicine, both have some similarities. However, there are quite differences geographically. It possibly differentiates between the both world, e.g., lifestyle, living habits, and religious beliefs, and the like. Therefore, both Chinese and Western medicine have their own national specialties. In the process of translating TCM terminology, a certain amount of attention should be paid to image (word-for-word translation) processing as well as sense-for-sense translation. Whether the image processing can be completed is of vital importance to the translation of TCM terminology. In the process of translation, we should strive to achieve the meaning and shape.

2.1 Image transplantation

In the process of translating Chinese medicine terms, the terminology image in the original language cannot be fully expressed in the target language, but sometimes it is literally translated to the target language. In translation, however, image transplantation must be firstly understood and accepted by target audiences. This translational strategy for Chinese medical terms can promote natural communication and integration between Chinese and Western medical cultures.

2.2 Image abandonment

When some terms in Chinese medicine cannot be expressed in the target language, and when the method of image transplantation cannot be adopted. The only possible way is to discard the image in the original language during the translation process. Instead, the use of vivid and concise language to carry out the original language is recommendable. In the process of translation, it is quietly important for translators to minimize the language gap between Chinese and English in order to help target readers understand the translation.

2.3 Image conversion

In the process of translating Chinese medical terms, when the image of the original language cannot be expressed in the target language, the original language can be expressed in the form of image conversion. During the translation process, the translation can be based on the reader's expression habits or the image terms that the readers are familiar with, and the image in the original language can be converted into the image familiar to the target readers. Ultimately, the readers can generate detailed semantic associations as in reading process: empathetic understanding of the original image.

2.4 Application of equivalent words

In the process of translating traditional Chinese medicine terms, in order to facilitate readers' reading and understanding, equivalent words that can correspond to the source terminology should be employed in translation. It can possibly help target readers to catch up with the contextual meaning.

3. Conclusion

In terms of Chinese medicine terminology in translation, a flexible translation strategy, dynamic equivalence translation, is very recommendable rather than formal equivalence translation. This strategy makes it possible to introduce the Chinese medicine culture to others. One possible way to achieve a translational goal in medical translation is that the meaning and image in the original language should be implicitly and explicitly translated to make the translation natural. A main purpose of translation is to pursue naturalness, using equivalent and corresponding terminology particularly in medical translation. In other word, in the process of translation of TCM terminology, in order to ensure the accuracy of TCM terminology translation and the accuracy, speed and effectiveness of the original image, translators are required to resolve the contradictions between Chinese and Western medical cultures and its terminology.

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