

The English Translation and Cross-cultural Dissemination of Li Shizhen's Health Preservation Thoughts from the Perspective of TCM Popular Science

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Abstract: With the gradual progress of the overseas dissemination of traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), it has become an inevitable trend to popularize the knowledge and culture of TCM health preservation among the Western public. Through the analysis of the language characteristics of popular science texts and the selection of dissemination contents of popular science works, this paper explores the English translation of three types of texts in Li Shizhen's health preservation thoughts and the dissemination of Li Shizhen's health preservation thoughts in the new media era, proposes 3 corresponding translation strategies respectively, namely, popularization, conciseness and retention of the rhythm in translating Li Shizhen's health preservation thoughts, and suggests that dimension reduction, dilution, and emotional packaging should be adopted to enhance the attractiveness of popular science works and achieve better dissemination effects and continue to maintain the diversification of dissemination forms by making full use of new technologies such as VR and AI, in order to provide references for the cross-cultural dissemination of TCM culture.

1. Introduction

With the nation's strategy of Chinese culture "going global", the international dissemination of traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) has witnessed an unprecedented prosperity.[1] It has spread to 196 countries and regions, with numerous cooperation agreements signed, 30 overseas centers established, and being incorporated into the systems of 16 countries. In the United States, the acupuncture law has been enacted and acupuncture has been included in medical insurance. Many foreign scholars are involved in the research on traditional Chinese medicine. From the perspective of the international environment, on the one hand, as living standards improve, people's demands for health are no longer limited to disease diagnosis and treatment, but have expanded to the aspects of disease prevention and the overall conditioning of the body and mind. They are pursuing high-quality healthy lifestyles, and the concept of TCM health preservation fits this trend, with the idea of "preventive treatment of diseases" deeply rooted in people's hearts. On the other hand, the continuous affirmation and advocacy of the World Health Organization for the value of traditional

medicine have prompted governments, scientific research institutions and non-governmental organizations of various countries to actively explore the ways of TCM health preservation. The trend of studying acupuncture, tuina and dietary therapy for health preservation is becoming increasingly popular in the world.[2]

With the wide application of the Internet, social media and AI, it has become an irresistible trend to popularize the knowledge and concepts of TCM health preservation among the Western public. The Internet has broken the constraints of time and space. Online lectures, live diagnosis and treatment, and popular science short videos allow overseas audiences to explore the meridians, acupoints and dietary health preservation with just a click on the screen. On social media, the popularity of TCM topics has soared. Bloggers from various countries share their experiences of acupuncture and stories about traditional Chinese medicine in fighting the epidemic, forming a wave of spontaneous folk dissemination. With the help of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies, overseas audiences can have an immersive experience of the operation of Qi and blood in the meridians. Telemedicine enables patients in foreign countries to consult famous TCM doctors in real time. Social media has become a hot place for dissemination. Internet celebrities share their daily experiences of losing weight by moxibustion and beautifying with dietary therapy, setting off a wave of folk interaction.[3]

Compendium of Materia Medica, written by Li Shizhen, is a masterpiece that epitomizes ancient materia medica studies. The health preservation thoughts permeated in it are a treasure trove that urgently needs in-depth exploration and systematic sorting. Its health preservation concepts run through various aspects such as diet, exercise, emotions and daily life, being original and highly practical. For example, with its precise insight into the medicinal value of daily food materials, it turns ordinary fruits, vegetables and grains into good prescriptions for health preservation. The concept of "maintaining health through diet" meets the daily health care needs of the public. Its inheritance and improvement of traditional exercise for health preservation point out the path for strengthening the body. However, at present, these precious thoughts are mostly confined to discussions within the domestic academic and industrial circles, and their international dissemination is scattered and lacks a systematic approach.

Currently, there is still a blank in the research area and it urgently needs to be filled to broaden the path for the international popularization of TCM health preservation. That is to study from the perspective of popular science, focusing on how to translate Li Shizhen's health preservation thoughts into English in a way that is easy to understand and in line with the public's cognition, as well as on how to effectively disseminate them through diversified channels.

2. An Analysis of Li Shizhen's Health Preservation Thoughts and Their Textual Characteristics

Li Shizhen is a renowned medical expert known to every household and famous all over the world. He dedicated his entire life to presenting the great masterpiece *Compendium of Materia Medica* to later generations. Meanwhile, this book also records many of Li Shizhen's insights on health preservation, mainly including concepts such as health preservation through diet, exercise, and emotions. According to the text types, the author divides the texts of Li Shizhen's health preservation thoughts into three categories: the first is health preservation prescriptions, the second is health preservation proverbs, and the third is famous quotations of health preservation viewpoints. For example, in the book *Compendium of Materia Medica*, Li Shizhen clearly put forward that "Diet is the lifeblood of people, and the nutrient qi and defensive qi rely on it. Therefore, it is said that when water is gone, the nutrient qi will be exhausted, and when grains are gone, the defensive qi will disappear." Later generations have summarized hundreds of Li Shizhen's health preservation

prescriptions. For example, to treat cough: take one big pear, wash it, chop it with the peel on, add rock sugar and stew it before taking. It takes effect quickly. The health preservation proverbs put forward by Li Shizhen have been passed down to this day. For example, "Eat rice with bran, eat vegetables with stalks.", "Men should always have leeks, and women should always have lotus roots.", "Green and red radishes have restraining effects when eaten raw and tonic effects when eaten cooked.", "Don't overeat, and don't lie down immediately after a full meal." These health preservation thoughts are close to daily life, have a natural affinity with the general public, and are suitable for popularization among the public.

3. Popular Science and Its Language Characteristics

The popularization of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) refers to the popularization and promotion of TCM knowledge within certain regions and scopes to make it accessible to the general public. Its aim is to disseminate TCM culture, thoughts, theories, etc. to the public through certain means and channels. The purpose of popular science is to popularize scientific and cultural knowledge among the public, and since the target audience is the public, its language should be accurate, concise, accessible and interesting. The so-called accuracy means that the content should be precise and there should be no vague or incorrect information conveyed. Conciseness means avoiding complicated and lengthy sentences. Accessibility means using simple and easy-to-understand words and trying to avoid professional terms as much as possible. If professional terms must be used, explanations should be provided or analogies should be made to make the complex and abstract content more vivid and easier to understand.

4. Science Popularization Oriented English Translation Strategies for Li Shizhen's Health Preservation Thoughts

When Li Shizhen's health preservation thoughts are disseminated among the Western public, their English translation should be different from that for professional TCM personnel, and corresponding translation strategies should be adopted. According to the language characteristics of popular science texts, the author believes that the following translation strategies should be adopted.

4.1 Popularization

In the process of translating Li Shizhen's health preservation popular science texts into English, popularization is one of the most crucial strategies. Transforming the complex TCM health preservation concepts and methods into easy-to-understand English expressions is the key to opening the door for international audiences to understand. This means abandoning the accumulation of obscure and difficult terminology and adopting everyday, simplified vocabulary and sentence patterns. For example, Li Shizhen left a famous saying about the importance of diet. The meaning of this sentence is that a person's health and longevity are closely related to his proper diet. The sentence contains the term "Ying Wei". In Chinese medicine, Ying and Wei refers to Ying Qi and Wei Qi collectively, and Chinese medicine believes that both Ying Qi and Wei Qi are produced by the essence of water and grains. Ying travels through the veins and has the function of nourishing the body; Wei travels outside the veins and has the function of defending the body. There are two versions of English translations of this term: Nutrient and Wei-defence (WHO standard) or nutrient Qi and Defensive Qi or Nutrient and Defense (National Committee for Terms Standard); if the former is used, TCM professionals may find it concise and standardized, but the general public may not know what to make of it, so the author believes that the latter is closer to the public's understanding. Therefore, I believe that the latter is closer to the public's understanding, because the

latter embodies the meaning of nutrition and defense. In the original sentence, there are several expressions of “diet” to choose from: diet, or food and drink. The author believes that the latter is more common, since drink can also refer to soup in a broader sense, and corresponds to the water and grain in the latter part of the sentence. In terms of sentence structure, the short sentence is more common than the compound sentence containing subordinate clauses, so the whole sentence can be translated as:

Food and drink are the lifeblood of people. Nutrient and Defensive rely on it. So it is said that Nutrient Qi will exhaust without water, and Defensive Qi will die without food.

4.2 Conciseness

There are many prescriptions for treating diseases or dietary therapy prescriptions in Li Shizhen's works, which are the concrete manifestations of his health preservation thoughts and also the most direct knowledge accessible to the public. People can use them directly to prevent and treat diseases and protect health by getting the medicines or food ingredients according to the prescriptions. Therefore, they are also important contents that can be popularized to the West. The prescriptions contain information such as functions and indications, (edible) medicinal materials, and methods of taking, which need to be accurately and concisely translated into English. [4] For this reason, the author suggests referring to the common translation methods of traditional Chinese medicine prescriptions, that is, translating each part of the dietary therapy prescriptions scientifically and simply. In terms of language form, keywords or phrases are adopted instead of complete sentences. The terms related to indications adopt standardized English translations to facilitate communication and be close to the public. For example:

Treatment of edema: watermelon skin, wax gourd skin, red beans, 30 grams each, decocted with water. In this prescription, the disease is edema, and this symptom basically corresponds in both traditional Chinese medicine and Western medicine, so "edema" is used. "decocted with water" is a way of taking medicine in traditional Chinese medicine, usually referring to soaking the traditional Chinese medicinal materials for a certain period of time and then boiling them for taking. Some translate it as "water fried". The author thinks it is inaccurate. "Fry" usually means frying with oil. While "decoct" actually means boiling in water to extract the juice, so it is more accurate to translate it as "decoct". Therefore, the whole sentence can be translated as:

Treatment of edema: watermelon skin, wax gourd skin, red beans, 30 grams each, decocted with water.

4.3 Retention of the Rhythm

Li Shizhen left behind many healths preservation proverbs. These proverbs are the knowledge of health preservation and cares summarized through practical tests and are widely spread among the people. The language of the proverbs is vivid, well-structured, colloquial and rhythmic, which is popular among the public.[4] For example, “Rotten fish and shrimp can be harmful to health; Don't sleep on stones in summer nor on planks in autumn; Don't expose your navel in spring and don't cover your head with a quilt in winter; Be active during the day, and you'll have fewer dreams at night and so on. When translating them for popular science purposes, direct translation can be applied. While expressing the connotations, try to keep the neatness and antithesis of the language structures as much as possible to maintain the sense of rhythm of the proverbs. For example, in the health preservation proverb "Don't wash your hair when you're full. Don't take a bath when you're hungry. Wash your face with cold water for beauty and health benefits", there are two antithetical sentences without any traditional Chinese medicine terms. When translating, pay attention to keeping the neatness of the original sentence patterns and the rhythm. So it can be expressed with

two parallel "Don't....when..." sentence patterns, as shown below: "Don't wash your hair when you're full, don't take a bath when you're hungry, wash your face in cold water, and maintain beauty and health."

5. Dissemination Content Strategies for Popular Science Works on Li Shizhen's Health Preservation Thoughts

With the emergence of technologies such as artificial intelligence and the metaverse, new media has become the main force in popular science. [5] Due to the popularity of mobile terminals, short videos have become the primary means of dissemination. According to statistics, as shown in the 51st "Statistical Report on the Development of China's Internet Network" released by CNNIC (China Internet Network Information Center), as of December 2022, the number of Internet users in China reached 1.067 billion, and the Internet penetration rate reached 75.6%. The scale of short video users exceeded 1 billion for the first time, with a user usage rate as high as 94.8%. During the five years from 2018 to 2022, the scale of short video users grew from 648 million to 1.012 billion, with an annual increase of more than 60 million new users. The gap between it and the usage rate of the largest Internet application (instant messaging) was narrowed to 2.4 percentage points. The rapid development and continuous "sinking" of short videos have made them an important channel for information dissemination. Since the launch of the Douyin APP, the number of its users has exceeded 800 million, the number of daily active users has exceeded 700 million, and its downloads and user usage have been rising steadily, making it a medium that cannot be ignored in current discussions on dissemination. [6] Among the various works collected in the Traditional Chinese Medicine Reading Contest and the Traditional Chinese Medicine Health Knowledge Contest hosted by the National Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine, short videos accounted for the vast majority. In the past two years, short videos on popular science of traditional Chinese medicine have witnessed a blowout development. Although supported by new technologies such as new media, there are still many bottlenecks and problems in the popularization of traditional Chinese medicine health knowledge, resulting in poor dissemination effects. Besides the reason that the quality of works varies greatly, another important reason is that the content of health preservation popular science works is too professional, the language is not plain and vivid enough, and it lacks warmth and attraction for the public. Therefore, the author has two suggestions: First, in terms of the selection and processing of dissemination content, strategies such as dimension reduction, dilution, and emotional packaging should be adopted to enhance the attractiveness of popular science works and achieve better dissemination effects. (2023. Anning) Dimension reduction means reducing the professional difficulty of traditional Chinese medicine works and avoiding using too many professional terms, and trying to explain them in plain language as much as possible. Dilution refers to the fact that there should not be too much professional knowledge in the works. Emotional packaging means that the works should be able to arouse the resonance of the audience from an emotional perspective. Second, we should continue to maintain the diversification of dissemination forms. Create various forms of works such as popular science articles, short videos, audio, paintings, and lectures. In particular, make full use of modern technologies such as AI and VR to construct three-dimensional virtual spaces, restore history, make Li Shizhen's health preservation thoughts visible, audible, and perceptible, and enhance the cultural experience. [7]

6. Conclusion

Li Shizhen is a traditional Chinese medicine expert with international influence. His health preservation thoughts are not only precious wealth for the Chinese people but also should be spread all over the world to benefit all living beings. When popularizing Li Shizhen's health preservation

thoughts to the world, the target audience of popular science should be fully considered. The English translations should be as plain and accurate as possible. The dissemination forms should be as diversified as possible, and new technologies should be fully utilized to enhance the cultural experience. This article briefly discusses the translation strategies for Li Shizhen's health preservation thoughts from the perspective of popular science, hoping to provide new perspectives and references for relevant research.

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