

A Study on the Uniformity in Translation of Resources of Chinese Materia Medica

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Abstract: Reference books on resources of Chinese material medica are generally great in length, thus making huge translation work. The unity of translation principles and strategies could greatly reduce translation work, ensure the technicality, logic and integrity of translated text and enhance the efficiency of translation. This essay is based on the practical translation work of *Resources of Chinese Materia Medica in Jiangxi*. Translation principles such as “correspondence, systematisms, conciseness, identity, retroversion and following the convention” are proposed to guide translation and feasible strategies are suggested to achieve the unity on the translation of fixed sentence patterns and terminologies about location, TCM and herbal properties.

1. Introduction

Resources of Chinese Materia Medica refer to the total reserves of plant, animal and mineral resources that can be used as Chinese medicine, ethnic medicine and folk herbal medicine in a certain space [3]. The reference book of *Resources of Chinese Materia Medica in Jiangxi* records the information of geographical distribution, harvesting and processing, pharmacological action, chemical composition, properties and indications, usage and dosage of precious Chinese materia medica resources, thus playing an important reference role. Internationally, TCM services and products play a prominent role in the prevention and treatment of chronic diseases and emerging infectious diseases. The new era background provides a good opportunity for TCM to go abroad. A large number of TCM works have been translated into the versions of various languages. TCM translation has become an important medium for the internationalization of TCM culture. However, there are still many areas to be unified and standardized in the current translation of TCM works, which has become a stumbling block in the dissemination of TCM culture.

This essay is based on the translation work of *Resources of Chinese Materia Medica in Jiangxi*, aiming to explore the essentials of the translation work on TCM reference books. The work records the local medicinal material resources in Jiangxi province, covering 3737 traditional herbal medicines which involves 10 categories like algae, fungi, lichens and bryophytes. For each type of herbal resource, detailed descriptions about Chinese name, growing places, collection and processing, chemical composition, pharmacological action, properties and indication, usage and dosage are provided.

The unity of sentence patterns and terminology is a difficult and basic task in translation. Zhu Jianping [5], Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences, proposed that the English standardization of TCM terminology should follow the principles of correspondence, systematisms, conciseness, identity, back translation and conventionality, which guided the author's translation work. More specifically, correspondence refers to the correspondence between the meanings of translated words and original text, including the correspondence of word meaning, structure and logic. For cultural default, translation methods such as extra-textual compensation, intra-textual compensation, domestication, deletion and imitation are adopted; systematisms refers to "the name of the same conceptual system should reflect logical relevance. The translation of TCM terminology should take

into account the inter-relationship among various components, and convey to the target language the genus-species relationship between the source language hyponyms, the synonyms, synonyms and antonyms of the same level terminology, as well as the semantic relevance and structural relationship; conciseness, as its name implies, means "to translate names concisely", which has a special guiding significance for the translation of reference books. This is mainly reflected in the omission of definite articles, such as "assaulting heart" instead of "assaulting the heart", in which the preposition is omitted to avoid redundant translation; the principle of identity refers to "the same concept of nouns corresponds to only one word, that is, "one word one meaning"; back translation, also known as "reverse translation", is the translation activity that translates the translated text from the target language to the source language. The principle of retranslativity requires that the translated name be formally identical or similar to that of source language, so that it can be easily retranslated back to the source language; the principle of conventionality refers to the principle that "currently prevailing translations, although not fully in conformity with the above principles, can still be considered for adoption".

2. Unity of Sentences

As a professional reference book, *Resources of Chinese Materia Medica in Jiangxi* provides readers with accurate reference information by using concise language. Therefore, the characteristics of source language are concise, structurally clear and prominent verb-object phrases. For example, under the heading of "Habitat Distribution", the typical language expressions are as follows: “生于……; 有产……; 有分布……”. For example, the habitat distribution of *Saccharomyces lanceolate* is as follows: “生于水沟、田边潮湿处。江西永修、新建、南昌等地有产; 江苏、浙江、河南、贵州、陕西等省有分布” Under the heading of "Harvesting and Processing", the structure of “何种季节采收+加工方法” is the universal expression. Under the heading "Chemical Constituents", the commonly seen sentence structure is “药用部位含有何种化学成分”, while “Properties and Indications” “药用部位的治疗功效”. For universal sentence patterns in the reference book, it is of great importance to offer unified and optimal translation. However, what kind of translation can be acclaimed as the best Try to compare the following two versions of translation.

Source Text:

【生境分布】生于池塘或湖泊中。江西九江、都昌、鄱阳、余干、南昌、吉安等地有栽培，现逸为野生；长江流域以南各地均有分布。

Version 1: It grows in ponds or lakes; and it is planted in places like Jiujiang, Duchang, Poyang, Yugan, Nanchang and Ji'an of Jiangxi, and now it becomes wild; it is distributed in the southern area to the Yangtze River.

Version 2: Grows in ponds or lakes; planted in places like Jiujiang, Duchang, Poyang, Yugan, Nanchang and Ji'an of Jiangxi, and now becomes wild; distributed in the southern area to the Yangtze River.

The only difference between the two versions is that version 1 supplements the subject "it" to refer to the herbal medicine, while the second version omits the subject, featuring verb phrases, which is concise and succinct and highlights the key information, so the second Chinese version is better than the first one. Dan Bensky [2] also uses this verb imperative sentence style in his book *Traditional Chinese Medicine*, which is presented as follows:

Preparation: Decoction. Cook until the rice is done, then strain and ingest the liquid. Available in prepared form.

Actions: Clears qi-level heat, drains stomach fire, generates fluids, and alleviates thirst.

Talking about the sentences under the title “Properties and indications”, another translation strategy is also worth learning.

Source Text:

【性能主治】果实：甘、涩，平。健脾益胃，除烦止渴，解毒，抗癌。

Version 1

Properties and indications

Fruit: sweet and astringent and neutral. Fortifies the spleen and replenishes the stomach, clears away the irritation and quenches the thirst, detoxifies, and resists cancer.

Version 2

Properties and indications

The sweet and astringent and neutral properties of its fruit fortify spleen and replenish stomach, clear away irritation, quench fire, detoxify and resist cancer.

Apparently, version 2 is fluent and complete with prominent information, thus superior to the first one.

Most of the sentences under the heading of "Harvesting and processing" are imperative sentences guided by the original form of verbs. For example:

Source Text:

【采收加工】春、秋季采收藤茎，鲜用或切段晒干。

Collecting and processing

Harvest its vines in spring or autumn, use freshly or cut into sections, and then dry in the sun.

3. Unity of Places

Under the heading of "Habitat and Distribution", the growing places of various traditional Chinese medicines will be introduced, and the administrative areas of our country are divided into provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities directly under the Central Government, cities, counties, townships, districts and so on. When translating these places into English, if each place has its specific place reference, such as "province", "county", "autonomous region" or "special administrative region". The translation of geographical names should be very tedious. Therefore, it is suggested to translate geographical names directly in *Pinyin*.

Source Text:

【生境分布】江西南康、瑞金、赣县、信丰、大余、上犹、龙南、会昌等地有栽培；福建、广东、广西、四川等省区有栽培。

Translation:

Habitat and distribution Cultivated in Nankang, Ruijin, Ganxian, Xinfeng, Dayu, Shangyou, Longnan, Huichang in Jiangxi as well as in Guangdong, Guangxi and Sichuan.

Geographical location information can be explained in detail by appending a form to the end of the reference book.

Big district, such as “华东、华南、华北、华中、西南、西北、东北、东南” can be translated as “East China, South China, North China, Central China, Southwest China, Northwest China, Northeast China and Southeast China”. For instance, “华中师范大学” and “华南师范大学” can be translated as Central China Normal University and South China Normal University respectively. “长江流域以南各地” is translated as “in the southern areas to the Yangtze River”, while “海拔...米” as “... meters above/below sea-level”. For example, “海拔 500~1700 米” is translated into “500-1700 meters above sea level”

In addition, the translation of some small locations should also be noticed. Prepositions, such as *has*, *in*, *at*, *on*, *under*, *by*, *beside* and *within*, should be flexibly used according to the description of location in translation. Those small locations mentioned above should be in plural form. If not necessary, do not add the definite article *them*.

The following are some translations of small locations with high frequency in the reference books of TCM resources.

生于海拔 500~1700 米的山谷、溪边阔叶林中 It grows in valleys, broad-leaved forests alongside streams at 500-1700 meters above sea level.

常绿阔叶林 evergreen broad-leaved forest

沟谷阔叶林 broad-leaved forest of a cheuch
 沟谷 cheuch
 沟边杂木林 shaw alongside a trench
 灌丛 bushwood
 林缘 forest edge
 路旁 roadside
 山地疏林 open forest on a mountain
 山谷溪边 alongside a stream in a valley
 山谷溪边林中 in a forest of a valley or by a stream
 山坡 mountain slope
 山坡阔叶林 broad-leaved forest on a mountain slope
 溪边阔叶林 broad-leaved forest alongside a stream
 溪边湿润的疏林 moist open forest alongside a stream
 溪旁林 moist hillside or forest alongside a stream

4. Unity of TCM Terminology

When introducing the medicinal functions of traditional Chinese medicines under the heading of “Properties and indications”, a large number of terms with Chinese characteristics will appear, such as 疏风解表 dispel wind and relieving exterior syndrome, 清热解毒 clear away heat and toxins, 化痰理气 remove stasis and regulate qi、宣肺发表 diffuse the lungs and disperse the exterior、理气活血 regulate qi and activate blood circulation, 益肾定喘 tonify kidney and relieve asthma、健脾利湿 invigorate spleen and promote dampness、祛痰止咳 dispel phlegm and relieve cough、散风除湿 disperse wind and remove dampness, 健脾止痛 Invigorate the spleen and relieve pain、解毒止痒 detoxify and relieve itching, 燥湿杀虫 dry dampness and kill insects. These cultural-loaded phrases are usually in the four-word structure, thus the translation work should follow the principles of correspondence and back translation, especially the unity of verbs, such as, 解 release, 清 clear, 疏 scatter, 解毒 resolve toxin, 化 dissolve, 宣 disperse, 理 regulate, 活血 activate blood, 健 fortify, 益 replenish, 祛 dispel, 散 dissipate and 涩 astringe.

5. Unity of Properties

Xie Zhufan [5] pointed out that “药” in traditional Chinese medicine is not recommended to be translated into *drug*, because the word *drug* refers to chemical drugs or narcotic drugs, which is far from the meaning of traditional Chinese medicine in the concept of traditional Chinese medicine. Currently, the most widely accepted translation is *medicinal*, and “中药材” is translated as *Chinese herbal medicine*, and “药材” as *medical material*. The *four properties and five tastes* of Chinese herbal medicines are translated as *cold, hot, warm, cool, sour, bitter, sweet, acrid and salty*. And there is no need to supplement “in flavor” and “in nature” in translations to demonstrate the taste and nature of medicinal materials. For example, “Its root is acrid and bitter (*in flavor*), and neutral (*in nature*).”

The sentence pattern of “适用于……” is better translated as *indicated for*, because it is more concise and authentic compared with the translation of *It is used to treat*.

The following is a sample:

【性能主治】全株：酸、涩、凉。消积利湿，活血止血，清热解毒。适用于消化不良、痢疾、泄泻、肝炎、衄血、便血、脱疽、外伤出血、跌打肿痛。

Properties and indications Whole herb: sour and astringent and cool. Disperses accumulation and drains dampness, activates blood and stops bleeding, Clears heat and removes toxins. Indicated for

indigestion, diarrhea, dysentery, diarrhea, hepatitis, bleeding, hematochezia, digital gangrene, hemorrhage and traumatic swelling.

6. Conclusion

The compilation of reference books on resources of Chinese material medica plays a positive reference role in recording the resources of Chinese medicines in detail and facilitating the production of Chinese materia medica and teaching of TCM. As an important work in the dissemination of TCM culture, the translation of reference books on resources of Chinese materia medica takes a lot of time and energy of translators. At present, the research in the field of TCM translation is on the rise, but scholars have different views on the translation of culture-loaded TCM terms. Therefore, the unification of academic views can avoid taking less detours in the translation of TCM resource reference books and improve the efficiency of translation.

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