Comparative study on WHO Western Pacific Region and World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies international standard terminologies on traditional medicine: an analysis of the Diagnostics (Part 4)

Zhao-guo LI
1. College of Foreign Languages, Shanghai Normal University, Shanghai 200234, China
2. Secretariat of Specialty Committee of Translation, World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies, Shanghai 200234, China

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WHO 西太区与世界中医药学会联合会中医名词术语
国际标准比较研究：诊断部分（四）

李照国
1. 上海师范大学外国语学院，上海 200234
2. 世界中医药学会联合会翻译专业委员会秘书处，上海 200234

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Inquiry is the third diagnostic method traditionally used in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). In diagnosis, doctors usually ask patients or their relatives questions about the occurrence, progress, treatment and symptoms of their illness as well as other concerned information in order to fully understand the pathological conditions of the patients and make accurate diagnosis[3].

In TCM there are many terms and expressions concerning inquiry. In WHO International Standard Terminologies on Traditional Medicine in the Western Pacific Region[2] (abbreviated as WPRO Standard), 211 terms are included. In International Standard Chinese-English Basic Nomenclature of Chinese Medicine compiled by World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies[3] (abbreviated as WFCMS Standard), more terms are listed. In both standards, most of the terms are well translated. This article tries to make a comparative study on the English translation and international standardization of the essential terms and expressions concerning inquiry according to WPRO Standard and WFCMS Standard in light of the studies made in the book entitled International Standardization of English Translation of Traditional Chinese Medicine: Study of Theory, Summarization of Practice and Exploration of Methods[4]. For the convenience of comprehension, the definitions provided by WPRO Standard are also quoted after each term.

问诊 inquiry: one of the four diagnostic examinations, a way of gaining information for diagnosis by asking the patient about the complaint and the history of the illness. Undoubtedly inquiry is the ideal English equivalent for it. In current translation practice, some translators also use the word interrogation to translate 问诊. However, the
word interrogation usually means to ask question formally for special purpose and for a certain length of time, often used by police.

问寒问暖 inquiry about cold and heat: asking the patient about sensations of heat and cold

发热: 发热 fever: elevation of the body temperature above the normal or subjective feeling of feverishness.

畏寒 起见 to cold: sensation of cold which cannot be relieved by warmth, also known as chills

畏寒 fear of cold: sensation of cold which can be relieved by warmth, the same as intolerance of cold.

In Chinese, the terms 畏寒 and 畏寒 are quite similar to each other in meaning. The Chinese character 畏 means fear, so to translate 畏寒 into fear of cold is appropriate. However, this term is also frequently translated as chills. The Chinese character 畏 means to dislike or detest. Hence the term 畏寒 is sometimes translated differently because of different choice of words. Though it is often rendered as aversion to cold, we may occasionally find some other ways of translation, such as intolerance of cold and dislike of cold.

畏风 起见 to wind: strong dislike of wind, also known as wind intolerance

畏热 起见 to heat: strong dislike of heat, also known as heat intolerance

寒战: shivering: violent chills with trembling

The Chinese term 寒战 is also translated as rigor or chill in the current translation practice. In WFCMS Standard, the English words shiver, rigor and chill are all listed as the possible equivalents of 寒战. Comparatively speaking, shivering is used more frequently in translation practice.

畏寒 发热; 发热畏寒 aversion to cold with fever: simultaneous appearance of aversion to cold together with fever.

The Chinese terms 畏寒 发热 and 发热 畏寒 sound the same, but still bear some semantic difference. 畏寒 发热 suggests that aversion to cold is the principal symptom while fever is the secondary symptom, so the proper translation may be aversion to cold with fever. 发热 畏寒 suggests that fever is the principal symptom while aversion to cold is the secondary symptom, so the proper translation may be fever with aversion to cold.

但热不寒 fever without chills: elevation of the body temperature with no feeling of cold

但寒不热 chills without fever: feeling of cold with no fever

壮热 high fever: persistent high fever with aversion to heat but no chills

潮热 tidal fever: fever with periodic rise and fall of body temperature at fixed hours of the day like the morning and evening tides

微热 mild fever: low-grade fever, mostly due to interior heat.

日晡潮热 late afternoon tidal fever: fever more marked at 3–5 p.m. daily, as if the tide comes regularly.

午后潮热 afternoon tidal fever: fever more marked in the afternoon.

身热不扬 unsurfaced fever: a persistent fever in which heat is not easily felt on the body surface and can be felt only by prolonged palpation, a sign of dampness-heat.

In both international standards, the translation of the terms listed above is basically the same. The only difference lies in the translation of 身热不扬 which means indistinct fever. In WFCMS Standard, the translation of 身热不扬 is hiding fever, which is used by some translators in the current translation practice.

身热夜甚 fever worsening at night: fever more marked at night than at daytime.

骨蒸 steaming bone: a subjective feeling of fever deep in the body, which appears to emanate from the bone or marrow.

骨蒸热 bone-steaming fever: fever which is felt to emanate from the bone or marrow.

骨蒸潮热 bone-steaming tidal fever: tidal fever in which the heat is felt to emanate from the bones.

五心烦热 vexing heat in the chest, palms and soles: feeling of heat in the palms of hands, soles of feet and in the chest, accompanied by uneasiness or restlessness, also called five center heat.

烦热 heat vexation: fever accompanied by uneasiness or restlessness, also known as irritable heat sensation.

手足烦热 vexing heat in the extremities: uncomfortable heat sensation in the extremities.

手足心热 heat in the palms and soles: subjective feverish feeling in the palms and soles.

手足厥冷; 厥冷; 厥逆 reversal cold of the extremities: pronounced cold in the extremities up to the knees and elbows or beyond, also the same as cold extremities.

The Chinese terms 手足厥冷, 厥冷 and 厥逆 are similar to each other in meaning. However there are still some differences. Take 厥逆 for example. It refers to three different syndromes with the symptom of coldness. The first one is “shaoyin disease marked by diarrhea with undigested food in it, interior cold and exterior heat, coldness of hands and feet and indistinct pulse”. The second one is sharp thoracic and abdominal pain with the symptoms of extreme coldness of hands and feet, dysphoria, anorexia and unsmooth pulse. The third one is chronic headache due to invasion of severe cold deep into bone marrow. 厥冷 is usually translated as cold or coldness, making no difference between 厥逆. In recent years, some translators in the West have used the word reversal to translate. Although the English word reversal is not necessarily equivalent to the Chinese character 厥逆 in meaning, it at least has made
a difference between 归 and 逆.

归 reversal of qi; reverse flow of qi characterized by 1) sudden loss of consciousness, usually of short duration or 2) cold extremities up to the elbows and knees or beyond; also known as syncope or severe coldness

寒热来往; 往来寒热; 寒热交作 alternating chills and fever; chills without fever and fever without chills occurring in alternating succession

外寒内热 external cold and internal heat; a complex condition characterized by the simultaneous presence of cold in the external portion of the body and heat in the interior

To translate 外寒内热 into external cold and interior heat is certainly understandable. However, since 外 is translated as external, 内 certainly should be translated as internal instead of interior because the word internal is often used together with the word external and so is the word interior and the word exterior.

内寒外热 internal cold and external heat; a complex condition characterized by the simultaneous presence of heat in the exterior portion of the body and cold in the interior

问汗 inquiry about sweating; asking the patient about his/her condition of sweating

多汗; 大汗 profuse sweating; excessive sweating not related to a hot environment, physical exertion or taking diaphoretics

The Chinese term 多汗 and 大汗 are two terms that are similar to each other but also bear certain difference. 多汗 means both frequent sweating and excessive sweating while 大汗 just means profuse sweating. To make a difference between these two terms, 多汗 can be translated as frequent sweating while 大汗 can be translated as profuse sweating.

自汗 spontaneous sweating; excessive sweating during the daytime with no apparent cause such as physical exertion, hot weather, thick clothing or medication

盗汗 night sweating; sweating during sleep that ceases on awakening

冷汗 cold sweating; profuse sweating accompanied by cold body and limbs

绝汗 expiry sweating; incessant profuse sweating of a patient in moribund state

The Chinese term 绝汗 is also called 厥汗 which is a critical symptom of separation of yin and yang. This pathological condition is usually characterized by profuse sweating all over the body if qi is exhausted, or sweating incessantly as oil if qi is dispersed, or incessant cold sweating if the patient is extremely weak. For this reason, 绝汗 is sometimes translated as exhaustion sweating or sweating of the dying. Expiry sweating is another translation that sounds different. The English word expiry means a treaty or an agreement that lasts for a period. But in old English, the word expiry also means death. In this sense, to translate 绝汗 into expiry sweating seems also reasonable.

战汗 shiver sweating; sweating following shivering

头汗 sweating from the head; excessive sweating on the head, face or neck

头汗 means profuse sweating over the head and face due to insufficiency of water and exuberance of fire, or due to steaming of fire in the stomach, or due to combat between pathogenic dampness and yang. In WFCMS Standard, 头汗 is translated as head sweating, sounding somewhat concise. If the preposition “over” is used to replace “from”, it would sound much more accurate.

手足心汗 sweating from the palms and soles; excessive local sweating from the palms and soles

手足汗 sweating from the hands and feet; excessive local sweating from the hands and feet

心汗 sweating from the heart region; excessive sweating in the precordial region

腋汗 sweating from the armpits; excessive local sweating from the armpit

The Chinese terms 手足心汗，手足汗，心汗 and 腋汗 all describe a sort of phenomenon or state of sweating. In the English translations of these four terms, the preposition “in” or “over” may be better than “from”.

阴汗 genital sweating; localized sweating in the genital region

无汗 absence of sweating; abnormal deficiency or absence of sweating, the same as anhidrosis

In English language, there is a technical term known as anhidrosis which means no sweating, quite equivalent to the Chinese term 无汗.

漏汗 leaking sweat; incessant sweating

半身汗半-body sweating; sweating only on the upper or lower, right or left half of the body

半身无汗 half-body absence of sweating; no sweating on the upper or lower, right or left half of the body

The Chinese expression 半身 means half of the body. In English language, the word hemilateral also means half of the body. That is why in WFCMS Standard, 半身汗 and 半身无汗 are translated as hemilateral sweating and hemilateral anhidrosis respectively.

油汗 oily sweat; sticky sweat like oil

大汗淋漓 great dripping sweat; abnormal profuse sweat with continuous dripping

The Chinese term 大汗淋漓 is also frequently translated as profuse sweating. However, profuse sweating is an expression often used to translate a number of Chinese terms or expressions like 多汗, 大汗 and 汗出 that all generally means excessive sweating. In WPRO Standard, 大汗淋漓 is translated as great dripping sweat which sounds alien but at least makes a difference in translation.

神疲 lassitude of spirit; lack of mental vigor

The Chinese term 神疲 means fatigue or lassitude that affects the mental state or spiritual state
of a person. For this reason, the better translation of 疲乏 may be mental lassitude or spiritual lassitude.

乏力 lack of strength; lack of physical strength

睡着 somnolence; excessive sleepiness

失眠; 不寐; 不得眠 inability to sleep; inability to sleep or abnormal wakefulness, the same as insomnia

The Chinese terms 失眠, 不寐 and 不得眠 all mean sleeplessness. To translate them into inability to sleep or difficulty to sleep is of course understandable and acceptable. However in English language, the technical equivalence for these three terms is certainly insomnia.

多梦 profuse dreaming; a condition in which sleep is frequently disturbed by dreams

The Chinese expression 多梦 is usually translated as dreaminess. To translate 多梦 as profuse dreaming sounds quite new, but also alien.

梦游 sleep walking; rising out of bed and walking about or performing other behavior during an apparent state of sleep

身痛 generalized pain; pain involving the whole body, the same as general body ache

头痛 headache; pain in the head

颈强 stiffness of the neck; muscular contraction and rigidity of the neck and the upper back with impaired movement

头顶痛 headache and painful stiff nape; headache accompanied by rigidity and pain of the nape

头重 heavy-headedness; feeling of heaviness in the head

The Chinese term 头重 is often translated as heaviness of head, seeming clearer than heavy-headedness in meaning. Some translators have rendered 头重 as tight and heavy sensation of head, which sounds quite clear in meaning, but looks complicated and wordy.

眉棱骨痛 supraorbital pain; pain felt in the eyebrow bone

耳痛 ear pain; pain in the ear

It may be better to translate 耳痛 into pain in the ear instead of ear pain. Because ear pain can be understood as pain of the helix.

胸痛 chest pain; pain in the middle or lateral part of the chest

乳房疼痛 breast pain; pain in the breast, usually accompanied by feeling of distension

胁痛 hypochondriac pain; pain in the area between the armpit and the lowest rib, unilateral or bilateral

胃脘痛; 胃痛 stomach pain; the same as epigastric pain

The Chinese terms 胃脘痛 and 胃痛 all refers to stomachache. Perhaps stomachache is the natural equivalence of 胃脘痛 and 胃痛.

腹痛 abdominal pain; pain in the region between the hypochondrium and pubic hairline

肠鸣 lower abdominal colic; severe colicky pain in the lower abdomen usually accompanied by constipation and ischuria

The Chinese term 腹痛 is usually translated as hernia. However in TCM, 腹痛 refers to a number of diseases. In TCM literature, there are the so-called five kinds of hernia and seven kinds of hernia. Clinically hernia in TCM can be classified into three major categories. The first category covers the diseases marked by protrusion of the organs in the cavities of the body, such as small intestinal hernia and inguinal hernia. The second category includes diseases that involve the reproductive organs and genitals in men and women, such as ulceration of genitals in women and scrotal swelling in men. The third category generally refers to sharp abdominal pain with difficulty to urinate and defecate[5].

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