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

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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：病机部分（四）

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In the previous issue, we have introduced the third part of traditional Chinese medical terms about pathogenesis of diseases included in WHO International Standard Terminologies on Traditional Medicine in the Western Pacific Region[1] (abbreviated as WPRO Standard) and International Standard Chinese-English Basic Nomenclature of Chinese Medicine compiled by World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies[2](abbreviated as WFCMS Standard). We have also made brief comments on international standardization of the English translation of these terms according to 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[3]. The following is a comparative study on the English translation and international standardization of the fourth part of the terms related to the pathogenesis of diseases included in these two international standards. For the convenience of comprehension, the definitions provided by WPRO Standard are also quoted after each term.

湿伤牌阳 dampness damaging spleen yang: a pathological change characterized by stagnant cold-dampness causing damage to spleen yin

湿伤牌阴 dampness damaging spleen yin: a pathological change in which the depressed dampness transforms into heat causing damage to spleen yin

寒湿困脾 cold-dampness encumbering the spleen: a pathological change in which excessive cold-dampness impairs spleen yang, the same as cold-dampness accumulating in the spleen
脾虚湿困 spleen deficiency with dampness encumbrance: a complex condition of deficiency and excess wherein spleen deficiency leads to accumulation of dampness-turbidity, the same as spleen deficiency with dampness accumulation.

The Chinese character 困 in the term 寒湿困脾 was often translated as “impair” in the early period of translation. However, such a translation seems to have revealed just part of the meaning of this Chinese character. Of course the result of 困 is “impair”, but “impair” alone cannot fully express the process of such a pathological change. Nigel Wiseman, a great translator of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) in the West, has used the word “encumber” to translate 困. Semantically speaking, “encumber” is an ideal equivalence for 困.

脾虚生风 spleen deficiency engendering wind: a pathological change characterized by stirring of wind internally due to spleen deficiency.

脾胃湿热 spleen-stomach dampness-heat: a pathological condition ascribed to accumulation of dampness-heat which impairs the functions of the spleen and stomach, the same as dampness-heat in the middle energizer.

脾虚胃寒 spleen-stomach deficiency cold: a pathological change characterized by decline of yang qi of the spleen and stomach with diminished functions and endogenous deficiency-cold.

脾胃俱虚 dual deficiency of the spleen-stomach: a deficiency condition of both the spleen and stomach, marked by a feeling of emptiness in the stomach, shortness of breath, reversal cold of the limbs and incessant watery diarrhea.

脾虚胃弱 spleen-stomach weakness: a pathological change characterized by diminished spleen and stomach function of food intake and digestion.

脾胃俱实 dual excess of the spleen-stomach: a pathological change marked by presence of excessive pathogenic qi in both the spleen and stomach.

The Chinese word 俱 in the terms 脾胃俱虚 and 脾胃俱实 is also frequently translated as “both” and “simultaneous”. Consequently, the whole terms can be translated as “deficiency of both spleen and stomach”/“simultaneous deficiency of spleen and stomach” and “excess of both spleen and stomach”/“simultaneous excess of spleen and stomach”.

脾虚胃寒 spleen-stomach yin deficiency: a pathological change in which deficiency of yin fluid of the spleen-stomach results in impaired food intake and digestion.

脾肾阳虚 spleen-kidney yang deficiency: a pathological change characterized by insufficient yang qi of the spleen and kidney with endogenous cold and flooding of water.

To render 脾胃阴虚 and 脾肾阳虚 as “spleen-stomach yin deficiency” and “spleen-kidney yang deficiency” is literal translation and understandable, but does not sound quite smooth. In the current translation practice, these two terms are often translated as “deficiency of spleen and stomach yin” and “deficiency of spleen and kidney yang”, which seems to be more expressive.

脾失运健 spleen failing in transportation: dysfunction of the spleen in transporting the essence of food and water.

The term 脾失运健 describes the pathological change due to dysfunction of the spleen. In the early period of translation, this term was rendered as “spleen fails to transport and convert” which was gradually replaced by “failure of spleen in transportation” or “failure of the spleen to transform”. In the WFCMS Standard, this term is translated as “dysfunction of spleen in transportation”, which is quite clear in meaning, but seems not very popular in translation practice.

脾气不舒 constrained spleen qi: a pathological change marked by dysfunction of the spleen with impaired digestion and absorption.

脾气不升 spleen qi failing to bear upward: dysfunction of the spleen in upbearing nutrients, the same as spleen qi failing to ascend.

To translate 脾气不升 as “spleen qi failing to bear upward” seems inexpressive. The better translation may be “spleen qi failing to ascend/ rise” which is also a common way to translate this term in the current translation practice.

脾陷下陷 sunken spleen qi: a pathological change characterized as sinking of spleen qi induced by weakness of the spleen with diminished upbearing function.

The Chinese term 脾陷下陷 is also frequently rendered as sinking of spleen qi which sounds more expressive than sunken spleen qi. Some translators have translated 脾陷 as collapse, a sort of liberal translation of course, but appearing ambiguous in meaning.

中气不足 insufficiency of middle qi: deficiency of qi in the middle energizer, marked by diminished function of the spleen and stomach.

中阳不振 devitalized middle yang: weakness of yang qi in the middle energizer, marked by diminished function of the spleen and stomach in digestion and absorption.

The Chinese term 中阳不振 is also frequently translated as hypoactivity of middle yang or deficiency of middle qi.

胃实满 exessiveness in the stomach-intestines: a pathological change characterized by presence
of pathogens deep in the yang brightness meridian that causes exuberant dryness-heat in the gastrointestinal tract.

In the Chinese term 胃热, 胃 means the stomach, 胆 is just serves as a suffix. There are quite a number of such terms in TCM, such as 病家 which simply means patient. Besides, 胃实 just means stomach excess as rendered in the following term 胃炎. So to translate 实 as excessiveness seems unnecessary.

胃炎 stomach excess: a morbid condition due to consumption of body fluid and stagnation of stomach qi, caused by excessive heat accumulated in the stomach.

胃虚 stomach deficiency: a general term for deficiency conditions of the stomach, including qi deficiency, yin deficiency and yang deficiency of the stomach.

胃气虚 stomach qi deficiency: a pathological change characterized by weakness of stomach qi with impaired appetite and digestion.

胃燥 stomach yin deficiency: a pathological change characterized by deficiency of fluid in the stomach with impaired function attributable to intense stomach fire or exuberant heat in a warm disease.

胃阳虚 stomach yang deficiency: a pathological change characterized by decline of yang qi which leads to deficiency-cold of the stomach with markedly impaired appetite and digestion.

The Chinese character 虚 was translated as asthenia in the early period of TCM English translation. Objectively speaking, asthenia is quite equivalent to 虚 in meaning. Both the Chinese character 虚 and the English word asthenia mean the weakened function of something, not the reduction of it in quantity or volume. Ironically, now the English word deficiency is commonly used to translate 虚 and even now taken as the standard translation.

胃寒 stomach cold: a pathological change either due to deficiency of stomach yang or caused by direct attack of pathogenic cold, the former being deficiency-cold of the stomach, and the latter, excess-cold in the stomach.

胃热 stomach heat: a pathological change due to impairment of the stomach by pathogenic heat or caused by overeating of hot pungent food.

胃热消谷 stomach heat with swift digestion: a pathological change in which stomach heat or fire leads to abnormally rapid digestion.

To translate 胃热消谷 as stomach heat with swift digestion seems inadequate and unclear in meaning. This term actually implies a cause-and-effect relationship. That is to say 胃热 (stomach heat) is the cause and 消谷 (digesting food) is the effect. So the whole term means that stomach heat accelerates food digestion and therefore may be properly translated as stomach heat accelerating food digestion.

胃火上炎 stomach fire bearing upward: a pathological change in which exuberant fire in the stomach flares up along the meridian/channel, causing toothache, gum swelling or bleeding, or hematemesis.

To translate the Chinese character 升 in the term 胃火上炎 as bearing upward seems not so concise and clear as ascending or rising.

胃火炽盛 intense stomach fire: presence of excessive pathogenic heat in the stomach with upward flaming of stomach fire.

胃气不降 stomach qi failing to bear downward: impaired downbearing of stomach qi, causing anorexia, nausea, vomiting, belching, and a feeling of fullness in the epigastric region, the same as stomach qi failing to descend.

To render the Chinese character 降 in the term 胃气不降 as descend may sound much better than bear downward in meaning. So the whole term can be translated as stomach qi failing to descend which sounds more clearer than stomach qi failing to bear downward.

胃气上逆 stomach qi ascending counterflow: a pathological change characterized by counterflow ascent of stomach qi that causes belching, hiccups, acid regurgitation and vomiting.

To translate 胃气上逆 as reverse ascension of stomach qi may appear more expressive and clearer than the rendering of stomach qi ascending counterflow.

胃不和 stomach disharmony: a general term referring to various functional disorders of the stomach, i.e., dysfunction in receiving and digesting food as well as in conducting the contents to the intestines.

肺脾两虚; 肺脾两虚; 肺脾气虚 dual deficiency of the lung-spleen: qi deficiency of both the lung and spleen marked by failure of the spleen in transportation and transformation and the lung in diffusion and depurative downbearing; the same as lung-spleen qi deficiency.

The Chinese terms 肺脾两虚 and 肺脾两虚 are really identical with each other in connotation and structure. However, they are obviously different from 肺脾气虚 which means qi deficiency of the lung and spleen or dual deficiency of the lung and spleen.

肺络损伤 damage to the lung vessels: a pathological change marked by expectoration of blood, caused by severe or enduring cough or by heat.
pathogen
The Chinese character 经 in the term 经络 is in fact not vessel, but just the branches of the meridians. That is why it is usually translated as collateral. However in the term 脉络, 络 means something different from that in the term 经络. Physiologically speaking, 络 in 脉络 refers to the pulmonary vessel because the injury of it causes expectation of blood. So the translation of 脉络损伤 as damage to the lung vessels is semantically appropriate. In WFCMS Standard, this term is rendered as lung collateral injury, obviously a sort of literal translation.

肺肾阴虚 lung-kidney yin deficiency: a pathological change characterized by deficiency of yin fluid of the lung and kidney with engendering of internal heat.

肺肾气虚 lung-kidney qi deficiency: a pathological change characterized by dual deficiency of lung qi and kidney qi with impaired function of depurative downbearing and qi absorption.

To translate 肺肾气虚 as lung-kidney qi deficiency is certainly clear in meaning. However, it sounds somewhat rigid and awkward because of the pronounciation. In the current translation field, 肺肾气虚 is also frequently rendered as deficiency of lung and kidney qi, which sounds better than lung-kidney qi deficiency.

肺津不布 lung failing to distribute fluid: failure of the lung to distribute fluid, leading to production of phlegm and causing cough and dyspnea.

肺失肃降 impaired lung depuration: a pathological change of lung that gives rise to cough, dyspnea, expectoration of sputum and fullness in the chest.

To translate 肺失肃降 as impaired lung depuration appears imperfect in structure and semantics. The Chinese character 逆 in the term 肺失肃降 and the Chinese character 不 in the term 肺津不布 are identical in meaning. It seems reasonable to render them as fail in both cases. if the term 肺失肃降 is rendered as lung failing to deurate, it will sound much better than impaired lung depuration in structure and meaning. In WFCMS Standard, the term 肺失肃降 is rendered as lung qi failing in purification, appearing better than that in WPRO Standard.

痰浊阻肺 phlegm turbidity obstructing the lung: a pathological change characterized by impairment of diffusion and downbearing of lung qi due to phlegm-dampness obstruction.

To translate 痰浊 as phlegm turbidity appears similar to the original term in structure, but sounds somewhat complicated. If changed into turbid phlegm, it seems more expressive. In Chinese, the character 痰 (sputum or phlegm) already implies 浊 (turbid). In this term, the characters 痰 and 浊 are used together to stress the nature of 痰. Such a way of use also reflects the way of word formation in Chinese. In Chinese, a word is usually composed of two or four characters according to the requirements of phonetics and semantics. In WFCMS Standard, 痰浊阻肺 is translated as turbid phlegm obstructing lung, similar to the translation made in WPRO Standard.

风寒束肺 wind-cold fettering the lung: a pathological change characterized by attack of wind-cold which impairs the normal flow of lung qi.

The Chinese character 束 in 风寒束肺 is often translated as tighten. However, such a translation appears rigid and awkward. In WPRO Standard, it is rendered as fetter, sounding quite vivid, clear and concise.

肺气不宣 lung qi failing to diffuse: disordered diffusion of lung qi generally attributable to external pathogens invading the lung or fettering the exterior, and manifesting in cough, hoarse voice, and nasal congestion, the same as lung qi failing to disperse.

The character 逆 in the term 肺气不宣 is often translated as translated, which is in fact confused with the translation of 逆. In WPRO Standard, it is rendered as diffuse, though still sounding inaccurate, but appearing much better than disperse.

肺气不密 inhibited lung qi: any disturbance of depurative downbearing of lung qi and the lung's governing of the waterways.

肺气上逆 lung qi ascending counterflow: a pathological change characterized by counterflow ascending of lung qi instead of depurative downbearing.

The Chinese character 逆 means opposite or reverse. So if 肺气上逆 is translated as reverse ascension of lung qi, it may be more clearer and more reasonable than lung qi ascending counterflow in meaning.

肺虚 lung deficiency: a general term for deficiency conditions of the lung, including lung qi deficiency and lung yin deficiency.

肺阴虚 lung yin deficiency: a pathological change characterized by insufficient lung yin with endogenous heat.

肺气虚 lung qi deficiency: a pathological change characterized by deficiency of qi with diminished function of the lung.

肺寒 lung cold: a term either referring to external cold invading the lung or to deficiency-cold of lung qi.

肺实: 肺气实 lung excess: any excess condition of the lung, attributable to attack of the lung by
external wind, cold, dryness, and heat pathogens or obstruction of the lung by phlegm-heat, phlegm-dampness, etc.

The terms 肺实 and 肺气实 may be similar to each other in meaning. However, they are two separate concepts anyway. For this reason, it may be better to translate them differently.

肺火 lung fire: a pathological change characterized by presence of intense heat in the lung, either of excess type or of deficiency type

肺热 lung heat: a general term for heat conditions of the lung

肺实热 excess heat in the lung: a pathological change characterized by presence of excessive pathogenic heat in the lung

肺气实 dryness qi damaging the lung: a pathological change characterized by damage of the lung fluid by pathogenic dryness that impairs the diffusion and deputative downbearing function

The so-called 肺气 in Chinese just means 肺 which can be simply translated into dryness instead of dryness qi.

火热肺火 fire heat distressing the lung: a pathological change characterized by pathogenic fire-heat accumulating in the lung or intense fire-heat scorching lung yin

金破不鸣 broken metal failing to sound: an expression figuratively referring to hoarseness due to deficiency of lung qi

金实不鸣 excess metal failing to sound: an expression figuratively referring to hoarseness or loss of voice due to excessiveness of lung qi

To translate 金实不鸣 and 金破不鸣 is really a difficult task because they are metaphors. The Chinese character 金 in these two terms refers to the lung, though it literally means metal. These two terms were previously translated respectively into “broken bell cannot ring” and “solid bell cannot be sounded”. Latter on they were changed into “a broken bell does not sound” and “a stuffed bell does not ring”. All these translations sound awkward and unclear in meaning. The so-called 金实不鸣 refers to hoarseness or loss of voice due to invasion of pathogenic factors into the lung, usually seen in acute inflammation and edema of the throat. The so-called 金破不鸣 refers to hoarseness due to impairment of lung qi, usually seen in the late stage of pulmonary tuberculosis. Since in both cases the problems are associated with sound and voice. In the human body, the organ related to sound and voice is the lung. In fact, all the problems concerning hoarseness and loss of voice are related to the pathological changes of the lung. According to the theory of five elements, metal corresponds to the lung in the human body. That is why the Chinese character 金 is used in these two terms. It is obvious that 金 in these two terms means metal, not bell.

大肠寒结 large intestinal cold bind: a pathological change characterized by retention of cold in the large intestine with constipation, the same as large intestinal cold accumulation

大肠湿热 large intestinal dampness-heat: a pathological change characterized by accumulation of dampness-heat in the large intestine which impairs the qi movement, damages the intestinal blood vessels, and causes abnormal bowel evacuations

大肠液亏 insufficiency of the large intestinal humor: a pathological change ascribed to insufficient fluid in the large intestine

The Chinese character 液 in the term 大肠液亏 is a collective concept, referring to fluid. Thus it is unnecessary to translate 液. In TCM there is a term known as 津液 which is composed of two parts, 津 which means thin fluid and 液 which means thick fluid. In order to make a difference in translation, some translators in the West render 津 as fluid and 液 as humor. However in translating 大肠液亏, it seems awkward to render 液 into humor because its meaning is quite clear and obvious.

大肠虚寒 large intestinal deficiency cold: a pathological change in which debilitation of yang qi in the large intestine leads to endogenous cold and causes abnormal bowel evacuations

大肠实热 large intestinal excess heat: a pathological change characterized by exuberant pathogenic heat obstructing the bowel qi

Structurally speaking, to change the translations of 大肠虚寒 and 大肠实热 into “deficiency cold in the large intestine” and “excess heat in the large intestine” may sound smoother and clearer.

热迫大肠 heat distressing the large intestine: a pathological change in which pathogenic heat impairs the function of the large intestine, leading to acute diarrhea with abdominal pain, burning sensation in the anus, scanty dark urine, and dry yellow tongue coating

大肠热结 large intestinal heat bind: a pathological change characterized by exuberant heat in the large intestine that causes dryness and constipation, the same as large intestinal heat accumulation

The term 大肠热结 is often translated as accumulation of heat in the large intestine. To render 结 as accumulation sounds much more clearer and accurate than bind. In English, the word bind means to tie something up. However 结 in 大肠热结 means accumulation, not tying something up.
大肠虚 large intestinal deficiency: deficiency of the large intestinal qi with abnormal bowel evacuations
大肠实 large intestinal excess: excess of pathogens in the large intestine
大肠热 large intestinal heat: excess of pathogenic heat in the large intestine
肾虚 kidney deficiency: a general term for deficiency conditions of the kidney, including kidney yin deficiency, kidney yang deficiency, insufficiency of kidney essence, and insecurity of kidney qi
肾精不足 insufficiency of kidney essence: a pathological change of the kidney with insufficiency of its essence and impaired function
肾虚水泛 kidney deficiency with water flood: a pathological change characterized by deficiency of kidney yang with impaired water metabolism and resultant retention of fluid.

The term 肾虚水泛 implies a cause-and-effect relationship in which 肾虚 is cause and 水泛 is effect. So this term means water flood due to kidney deficiency, emphasizing the fact that 水泛 (water flood) is caused by 肾虚 (kidney deficiency). To translate this term as “kidney deficiency with water flood” seems to have failed to reveal the cause-and-effect relationship implied in it.

肾火偏亢 hyperactive kidney fire: relative excess of kidney fire due to deficiency of kidney yin

In the English translation of 肾火偏亢, the word hyperactive is better to be changed into hyperactivity and the translation of the whole term can be adjusted as hyperactivity of kidney fire which appears structurally balanced.

肾气不固 insecurity of kidney qi: a pathological change characterized by diminished essence-storing and astringing function of the kidney

The Chinese characters 不固 in 肾气不固 means weakness. To translate it as insecurity sounds somewhat unclear as compared with the connotation of the original term.

肾不纳气 kidney failing to receive qi: deficiency of the kidney qi preventing the reception of lung qi

肾阴虚 kidney yin deficiency: a pathological change characterized by deficiency of yin to nourish the kidney, leading to deficiency-fire or deficiency-heat, a pathological change characterized by deficiency of yin to nourish the kidney, leading to deficiency-fire or deficiency-heat

肾阳虚; 肾阴虚衰 kidney yang deficiency: a pathological change characterized by deficiency of kidney yang with diminished warming function and failure in qi transformation

肾阳虚; 肾阴虚衰 are in fact two separate terms and therefore should be translated differently. The ideal translation of 肾阳虚 is certainly "kidney yang deficiency". And the ideal translation of 肾阴虚衰 may be “decline of kidney yang”. If one wants to maintain the structure of the original term, 肾阳虚衰 also can be translated as “deficiency and decline of kidney yang”. In TCM there is still some terms similar to 肾阳虚衰, such as 肾阳衰衰 and 肾阳式微 which can be translated as “declination of kidney yang”. In Chinese, 衰弱 does not mean slight decline, but extreme decline.

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