Comparative study on WHO Western Pacific Region and World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies international standard terminologies on traditional medicine: Syndrome Differentiation According to Eight Principles (Part three)

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

Keywords: linguistics; terminology; translation; English; terms, traditional Chinese medicine; diagnosis; eight principles

Li ZG. J Chin Integr Med. 2010; 8(6); 594-597.
Received April 25, 2010; accepted May 31, 2010; published online June 15, 2010.
Free full text (HTML and PDF) is available at http://www.jcimjournal.com.
Forward linking and reference linking via CrossRef.
DOI: 10.3736/jcim20100614

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：八纲辨证(三)

李熙国
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委员会秘书处，上海 200234

关键词：语言学；学术术语；翻译；英语；中医名词；诊断；八纲

The Chinese characters 寒 and 热, 虚 and 实 are quite common concepts in Chinese language. However in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), they are used as four principles in syndrome differentiation. In terms of translation, 寒 and 热 are very easy to understand and can be simply translated as “cold” and “heat”. But the translation of 虚 and 实 used to be a problem. For a quite long time in translation practice, 虚 and 实 were translated as “asthenia” and “stenhia”, or “deficiency” and “excess” etc. Comparatively speaking, “asthenia” and “stenhia” are quite close to 虚 and 实 in meaning. However in the current translation practice, more and more translators have adopted “deficiency” and “excess”. Maybe this is why such a way of translation is also adopted 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).

As mentioned above, now there is no problem in translation 寒 and 热 as well as 虚 and 实 in terms of the eight principles. However, to properly translate the terms involving these four principles has still proved to be a problem in some cases. In this article, the author is trying to analyze the English translation and international
standardization of the related terms according to WPRO Standard and WFCMS Standard on the basis 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.\(^3\)

寒热辨证 cold-heat pattern identification/syndrome differentiation: a method of pattern identification/syndrome differentiation in which symptoms are categorized as heat or cold, thereby determining the nature of the disease

The so-called 寒热辨证 means to differentiate a syndrome in order to determine whether it is cold or heat in nature, not determining the nature of the disease because a single disease may develop several different syndromes in nature during its progress. For instance, a disease of cold nature may develop a syndrome of heat in nature because of pathological changes at a certain stage during its progress. In this definition, it holds that the purpose of syndrome differentiation or pattern identification is “determining the nature of the disease”. Such a statement is in fact quite inaccurate.

寒热证 cold pattern/syndrome: a general term for patterns/syndromes caused either by external cold pathogen or by insufficient yang within the body, commonly manifested by aversion to cold or fear of cold, cold pain with preference for heat, absence of thirst, thin clear sputum and nasal mucus, long voidings of clear urine, loose bowels, white facial complexion, pale tongue with white coating, and tight or slow pulse

In this definition, the expression “aversion to cold” and “fear of cold” seem to be the translation of the Chinese expression 恶寒 and 恶寒 which sound and feel quite similar to each other in meaning. It is true that 恶寒 and 恶寒 are synonyms, but they still bear certain difference in degree and semantics. Currently in translation practice, these two Chinese terms are often translated collectively as “aversion to cold”. In WPRO Standard, these two terms are translated differently, and thus making certain difference between them.

热证 heat pattern/syndrome: a general term for patterns/syndromes resulting either from attack of external heat or from prevalence of yang qi, usually manifested by fever, aversion to heat and liking for cold, thirst, flushed face, irritability and vexation, thick yellow sputum and nasal mucus, short voidings of dark-colored urine, constipation, reddened tongue with yellow coating, and rapid pulse

In this definition, the expression “prevalence of yang qi” may be the translation of the Chinese term 阳气盛 which is often translated as “predominance of yang qi” or “exuberance of yang qi”. “Vexation” is an ideal word to translate the Chinese term 心烦. Currently in translation practice, 心烦 is also frequently translated as “dysphoria” or even “mental upset”. As to the translation of the Chinese term 小便短赤 as “short voiding of dark-colored urine”, it is analyzed in the article published in the previous issue of this journal\(^4\).

寒热错杂证 cold-heat complex pattern/syndrome: any pattern/syndrome characterized by complicated heat and cold conditions such as heat in the upper part with cold in the lower part of the body, cold in the upper part with heat in the lower part of the body, heat in the exterior and cold in the interior of the body, or cold in the exterior and heat in the interior of the body

The term 寒热错杂证 is also translated as “syndrome of cold and heat complex”, quite similar to that in WPRO Standard. Just as the definition indicates that 寒热错杂证 means that cold and heat syndromes appear simultaneously in a given disease. For this reason, this term is often translated as “simultaneous occurrence of cold and heat syndromes” or “mixture of cold and heat”.

上寒下热证 upper cold and lower heat pattern/syndrome: any pattern/syndrome with cold symptoms in the upper part of the body and heat symptoms in the lower

上热下寒证 upper heat and lower cold pattern/syndrome: any pattern/syndrome with heat symptoms in the upper part of the body and cold symptoms in the lower

All through the WPRO Standard, it seems that comparatively longer terms usually begin with pattern/syndrome. According to this practice, perhaps the translation of the Chinese terms 上寒下热证 and 上热下寒证 should maintain such a consistency. For instance, the translations of these two Chinese terms may be reasonably changed into “pattern/syndrome of upper cold and lower heat” and “pattern/syndrome of upper heat and lower cold”.

真寒假热证 true cold with false heat pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome arising when exuberant internal cold forces yang qi to outer
body, manifested by subjective feverishness, flushing face, agitation, thirst and sore throat occurring simultaneously with coolness of the chest and abdomen to touch, reversal cold of the limbs, long voidings of clear urine, diarrhea with undigested food, and pale tongue with white coating and sunken string-like pulse.

The Chinese character 假 in 真寒假热证 is also translated as “pseudo-” in some terms in WPRO Standard. Currently this term is occasionally translated as “cold syndrome with pseudo-heat symptoms” or “true cold and false heat syndrome”. Comparatively speaking, “true cold with false heat pattern/syndrome” seems more concise and clearer in meaning. In this definition, the Chinese term 面赤 is translated as “flushing face”. However in other places in WPRO Standard, 面赤 is usually translated as “flushed face” which sounds more reasonable in collocation.

真寒假热证 true heat with false cold pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome arising when exuberant pathogenic heat entraps yang qi in the interior, manifested by cold limbs, aversion to cold or even shivering, impaired consciousness, dark purple complexion, but on the other hand, high fever with the chest and abdomen hot to touch and hot breath exhaled from the mouth and nose, fetid mouth odor, coarse breathing, strong thirst, short voidings of yellow urine, reddened tongue with yellow dry coating and rapid string-like pulse.

In this definition, the Chinese term 热邪 is translated as “pathogenic heat” instead of “heat pathogen” frequently used in WPRO Standard. Objectively speaking, “pathogenic heat” is clearer and more equivalent to the original Chinese term in meaning than “heat pathogen”. The expression “exuberant pathogenic heat entraps yang qi” may be the translation of the Chinese expression 热邪逼阳. The Chinese character 邪 in this term means inhibition or blockage. However, to translate 邪 as “entraps” seems to have more vividly depicted the way how pathogenic heat inhibits or blocks yang.

热闭证 heat block pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome that arises when a heat pathogen congests in the bowels, viscera and meridians/channels, blocking normal movement out of the body.

The Chinese term 热闭 is sometimes also translated as “heat closure” or “heat obstruction”. In this definition, “the bowels” seems to be used to translate the Chinese concept 腹 which is a collective term referring to six different internal organs, including small intestine, large intestine, stomach, bladder, gallbladder and triple energizer. Obviously to translate 腹 as “the bowels” needs further consideration.

热极生风证; 热极动风证 pattern/syndrome of extreme heat engendering wind: a liver wind pattern/syndrome attributed to exuberant pathogenic heat, and marked by high fever with restlessness, convulsions, opisthotonos, and impaired consciousness.

In TCM, there is a concept known as 热极生风 or 热极动风 which means extreme heat may change into wind or may produce wind. However the problem caused by extreme changes of heat is seldom described as 热极生风证 in TCM. Such terms may reflect the development of TCM in some other regions and nations.

虚实辨证 deficiency-excess pattern identification/syndrome differentiation: categorization of pattern identification/syndrome differentiation in which the strength of the healthy qi and pathogenic qi are compared, thereby determining the nature of the disease.

To translate 虚实辨证 as deficiency-excess pattern identification or deficiency-excess syndrome differentiation seems quite concise and clear. However, phonetically speaking, such a way of translation may be still in need of certain improvement. In the current translation practice, 虚实辨证 is often translated as “differentiation of deficiency and excess syndromes” or “syndrome differentiation of deficiency and excess” which sounds more balanced in structure.

虚实 deficiency pattern/syndrome: a general term for patterns/syndromes caused by deficiency of the healthy qi (including deficiency of yin, yang, qi and blood).

实证 excess pattern/syndrome: a general term for patterns/syndromes caused by external pathogenic factors such as six excesses, pestilential pathogens, worms and toxins, or by accumulated pathological products due to dysfunction of internal organs, such as phlegm, retained fluid, water, dampness, pus, static blood and retained food.

虚寒证 deficiency cold pattern/syndrome: a cold pattern/syndrome arising from deficiency of yang qi, the same as the yang deficiency pattern/syndrome.

虚热证 deficiency heat pattern/syndrome: a heat pattern/syndrome caused by deficiency of
yin, qi, blood or fluids

虚实夹杂 deficiency-excess complex pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome arising from struggle between the healthy and pathogenic qi while excessive pathogens and insufficient healthy qi exist simultaneously.

In WFMS Standard, the term is translated as "deficiency-excess in complexity", slightly different from that in WPRO Standard. Sometimes this term is also rendered as "mixture of deficiency and excess", sounding quite similar to that in Chinese in structure and meaning.

虚实下虚证 upper exuberance and lower deficiency pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome marked by yin deficiency of the liver and kidney in the lower part of the body together with accumulation of qi, static blood or phlegm in the upper part of the body, the same as the excess above and deficiency below pattern/syndrome.

The Chinese character 虚 is also frequently translated as predominance or superabundance. In the definition, "the excess above and deficiency below pattern/syndrome" is mentioned as another way to translate this term. In fact such a way of translation is seldom used in the current translation practice because it does not conform to the structure of terms or noun phrases in English language.

虚实假实证 true deficiency with false excess pattern/syndrome: any pattern/syndrome deficient in some deceptive symptoms of excess

To translate the Chinese term 虚实假实证 as "true deficiency with false excess pattern/syndrome" is certainly understandable. However in translation practice, this term is also frequently rendered as "true deficiency syndrome/pattern with false excess manifestations". Such a way of translation of course does not appear as concise as that in WPRO Standard, however it seems clear in meaning.

虚实假虚证 true excess with false deficiency pattern/syndrome: any pattern/syndrome excess in nature showing some deceptive symptoms of deficiency.

To translate the Chinese term 虚实假虚证 as "true excess with false deficiency pattern/syndrome" is certainly understandable. However in translation practice, this term is also frequently rendered as "true excess syndrome/pattern with false deficiency manifestations". Such a way of translation obviously is not as concise as that in WPRO Standard, however it seems clear in meaning.

精气虚证 essential qi deficiency pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome arising from deficiency of essential qi, marked by emaciation, dizziness, tinnitus, short and slight of stature, slow in movements, low intelligence, or by infertility, sterility, impotence and premature ejaculation.

In the current translation practice, the Chinese concept 精气 is often simply translated as "essence" or "essence qi". Comparatively speaking, "essential qi" seems more descriptive and associative. The Chinese character 虚 is often translated as "loss" or "consumption". When it is used together with the Chinese concept 虚, it is frequently omitted as done in the translation listed above. However, 虚 and 精气 are in fact not the same thing. 虚气 describes the process of losing while 精气 demonstrates the result of such a progress. Hence the right way to deal with the term 虚气 in translation may be to literally render it as "consumption and deficiency" or "deficiency due to consumption".

REFERENCES

1 World Health Organization Western Pacific Region. WHO international standard terminologies on traditional medicine in the Western Pacific Region. 2007.


