Comparative study on WHO Western Pacific Region and World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies international standard terminologies on traditional medicine: Fluid and Humor Differentiation of Syndromes

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

Keywords: linguistics; terminology; translation; English; terms, traditional Chinese medicine; body fluid

In traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), the so-called 水液 refers to all the fluid and liquid flowing and maintaining inside the human body. In Chinese language, 水液 is a phrase composed of two Chinese characters which describes two different kinds of fluid or liquid in the human body. According to the theory of TCM, 水 refers to the part of fluid that is thin in texture and flows smoothly inside the body while 液 refers to the part of fluid that is thick in texture and mainly maintains in the joints of the body to nourish and lubricate the joints. In TCM, there are quite a number of terminologies related to the physiological functions and pathological changes of 水液. However, in WHO International Standard Terminologies on Traditional Medicine in the Western Pacific Region (abbreviated as WPRO Standard), only 10 terms are included. While in International Standard Chinese-English Basic Nomenclature of Chinese Medicine compiled by World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies (abbreviated as WFCMS Standard), more terms are listed. This article tries to analyze and make a comparative study on how to translate and standardize the terms and concepts related to 水液 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.

津液辨证 fluid-humor pattern identification/syndrome differentiation: categorization of patterns/syndromes according to the condition of body fluids

In WPRO Standard, the Chinese concepts 津和液 are translated as “fluid” and “humor” respectively. Though such a translation may be still in need of further consideration, at least it has made a clear distinction between these two concepts. In TCM, 津 and 液 are often used as a collective term to refer to the fluids in the body. In this case they certainly can be simply rendered as “body fluid”. In WFCMS Standard, 津 and 液 are translated as “body fluid” when used as a collective term. However when used as different concepts, they are translated as “thin fluid” and “thick fluid” respectively. In TCM, the Chinese character 液 sometimes refers to the fluid produced in the mouth. In this case the proper translation is certainly “saliva”.

痰证 phlegm pattern/syndrome: a general term for a group of patterns/syndromes marked by cough, dyspnea with profuse expectoration, or by nausea, vomiting and dizziness, or by formation of lumps or nodes

In TCM, 痰 can be classified into two different categories, visible and invisible. Invisible 痰 refers to thick humor that may exist in different parts of
the body which causes obstruction and stagnation. While visible 疾 just refers to the substance discharged from the throat. To make a distinctive difference between these two kinds of 疾 in TCM, visible 疾 is usually translated as "sputum" while invisible 疾 is often rendered as "phlegm".

**痰证 fluid retention pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome marked by dizziness, thoracic and epigastric stuffiness sensation, vomiting of clear fluid, slippery tongue coating and string-like pulse.**

In Chinese language, the character 燥 means to drink or drinks. In TCM, 燥 is a collective term for diseases caused by retention of fluid in different places with different features, usually including 燥痰 phlegm-fluid retention, 燥饮 pleural fluid retention, 燥血 subcutaneous fluid retention, 燥热 thoracic fluid retention, 燥饮 recurrent fluid retention, 燥饮 mild fluid retention and 燥饮 persistent fluid retention.

**水停证 water retention pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome marked by edema, oliguria, or accompanied by ascites, pale plump tongue with white slippery coating and soggy relaxed pulse.**

In the term 水停证, the Chinese character 水 means water and 停 means to stop. So the whole term describes the problems caused by water that stops flowing inside the body. That is why in the current translation field, some translators simply translate it into edema. In fact edema is just one symptom caused by water that stops flowing. Comparatively speaking, "water retention" is an ideal translation of 水停. In this definition, the expression "soggy relaxed pulse" seems to be the translation of the Chinese term 脉浮缓. As analyzed in the translation of 脉浮缓, the Chinese character 缓 means moderate, not relaxed.

**液脱证 humor collapse pattern/syndrome: a severe case of fluid deficiency pattern/syndrome, marked by parched or cracked lips, withered skin, sunken eyes, tinnitus, oliguria and dry fecal binding, reddened tongue with no moisture and fine weak pulse.**

To translate the concept of 液 as "humor" and 液 as "fluid" is a good way to make a difference between them. However, 液 does not always mean "humor" in TCM. In fact 液 frequently refers to "liquid". And 液 also frequently used together with 济 as one collective term to refer to "body fluid".

**津液亏虚证津液亏损证 fluid-humor deficiency pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome marked by dry mouth and throat, parched or cracked lips, thirst with desire for drink, oliguria, constipation, reddened tongue lacking moisture, and rapid fine weak pulse.**

The Chinese terms 津液亏虚证 and 津液亏损证 are somewhat similar to each other in meaning. However, they are also different from each other because 虚 and 亏 are two different concepts in TCM. The former means deficiency or weakness while the latter means detriment or damage. In these two terms, 亏虚 means to become deficiency because of consumption or loss and 亏损 means to become damaged or impaired because of consumption or loss. So it is better to translate these two terms differently.

**津气亏虚证 fluid-qí deficiency pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome due to deficiency of both fluid and qi, manifested by listlessness, shortness of breath, vexing thirst, dry skin, reddened tongue with dry coating and fine weak pulse.**

Though the Chinese expression 亏虚 means loss and deficiency or deficiency due to loss or consumption, to translate it simply as "deficiency" still conveys the basic meaning of this expression. In this definition, the expression “vexing thirst” may be the translation of the Chinese term 煩渴, in which 煩 means vexation or dysphoria and 渴 means thirst. However when used together, 煩渴 simply means frequent thirst due to excessive heat that damages fluid. That is why 煩渴 is often rendered as “excessive thirst” or “frequent thirst”. In this term, the Chinese character 煩 describes the feeling caused by excessive heat.

**气滞水停证 pattern/syndrome of qi stagnation with water retention: a pattern/syndrome marked by edema of limbs, oliguria, heaviness feeling of the head and body, distension, oppression and scurvy pain in the chest, epigastrum and abdomen, pale tongue with white slippery coating and string-like relaxed pulse.**

The Chinese term 气滞水停 means that water stops flowing due to stagnation of qi. Thus to translate 气滞水停 as "qi stagnation with water retention" is quite clear in meaning. However in this definition, the translation of some Chinese expressions or terms is still in need of careful consideration. The expression “scurvy pain in the chest” seems confusing and there seems no such a term or concept in TCM.

**饮停胸胁证 pattern/syndrome of fluid retention in the chest and hypochondrium: a pattern/syndrome characterized by pain in the chest and hypochondrium, which is aggravated by twisting movements or...**
breathing, and particularly by coughing, and associated with thoracic distension, a feeling of pressure in the chest and shortness of breath, white and slippery tongue coating, and string-like pulse.

The Chinese term 风水相搏证 is similar to 悬饮 in connotation. It is usually caused by retention of fluid in the chest and hypochondrium due to stagnation of qi movement. In this definition, the expression “twisting movements” seems to be the translation of the Chinese expression 身体转侧 which means to turn the body, not to twist the body. According to TCM, the manifestations of this syndrome also include dizziness, vertigo and referred pain in the chest when turning the body.

风水相搏证 pattern/syndrome of mutual contention of wind and water: a pattern/syndrome that arises when pathogenic wind attacking the lung causes dysfunction in diffusion and deputative downbearing and leads to abnormal accumulation of water under the skin, and is manifested by acute onset of edema of the head and face, and then generalized, associated with aversion to cold, fever, absence of sweating, reduced amount of urine, thin white tongue coating and floating pulse.

The Chinese term 风水相搏证 is similar to 风水证 caused by invasion of pathogenic wind into the lung which eventually leads to dysfunction of the lung in ventilating and descending activities. In this definition, the expression “diffusion and deputative downbearing” seems to be the translation of the Chinese term 宣降 which actually means the activities of lung qi in dispersing and descending. Sometimes the Chinese concept 宣 also means ventilation when used to describe the function of the lung. That is why in the current translation practice 宣 is often translated as “dispersion”, or “ventilation” or “facilitating the flow of lung qi”. For instance, in the Chinese-English Medical Dictionary published in 1987, terms like 宣肺, 宣肺平喘 and 宣肺化痰 are respectively translated as “promoting the dispersing function of the lung”, “facilitating the flow of the lung qi to relieve asthma” and “ventilating the lung and resolving phlegm”[14]. Since one single Chinese character or concept may mean different things in different context. That is why 宣 is translated quite differently in these three terms in this dictionary. However in standardization, we have to translate one term or one concept always the same though it obviously means different things in different context. Besides, the pulse in this风水相搏证 is often floating and rapid, not just floating. The manifestations in this syndrome also include reddened tongue and sore-throat.

REFERENCES

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

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：津液辨证

李光国
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

关键词：语言学；科学术语；翻译；英语；中医名词；津液