Comparative study on WHO Western Pacific Region and World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies international standard terminologies on traditional medicine: Syndrome Differentiation of Lung Diseases

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The lung is one of the five zang-organs located in both sides of the chest. It governs qi flowing in all parts of the body, controls respiration, regulates water passage, diffuses and distributes defensive qi, connects with all the meridians and vessels in the body and assists the heart to pump blood. Since the position of the lung is higher than that of any other viscera in the body, it is known as the canopy of the internal organs. Physiologically speaking, the lung is intolerable to cold or heat and is thus subject to invasion of pathogenic factors. That is why it is also called the delicate viscus in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM).

According to the theory of TCM, the lung stores the so-called 魂, frequently translated as “corporeal soul”, governs qi and pertains to metal in property in terms of the five elements. The lung is functionally characterized by governing qi, controlling respiration, regulating water passage and connecting with all vessels as well as the activities of diffusing and distributing, purifying and descending to promote the heart in adjusting and regulating the movement of qi and blood. The lung is connected with the throat and externally related to the skin and body hair. It is also related to sorrow in emotions. In terms of liquids, it is related to the snivel. In terms of constituents, it is related to the skin. In terms of orifices, it opens into the nose. Functionally it lusters hair. In terms of meridian system, the lung meridian of

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hand-taiyin and the large intestine meridian of hand-yangming are mutually inter-related, and that is why the lung and the large intestine are internally and externally related to each other.

There are quite a number of terms related to the lung. In *WHO International Standard Terminologies on Traditional Medicine in the Western Pacific Region*[^1] (abbreviated as WPRO Standard), 19 terms related to the lung are included. While in *International Standard Chinese-English Basic Nomenclature of Chinese Medicine* compiled by World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies[^2] (abbreviated as WFCMS Standard), more terms related to the lung are provided.

This article tries to make a comparative study on how to translate and standardize the terms and concepts related to the lung 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].

肺病辨证 lung diseases pattern identification/syndrome differentiation: visceral pattern identification/syndrome differentiation dealing with lung diseases

To translate 肺病 as “lung diseases” is certainly acceptable. However when translating 肺病辨证, it seems natural to use the singular form of disease instead of the plural form because in this term 肺病 serves as a modifier of 辨证.

肺气虚证; 肺气逆证 lung qi deficiency pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome marked by pale complexion, shortness of breath, feeble voice, intolerance of wind and spontaneous sweating

In TCM, 肺气虚证 and 肺气逆证 are two terms that are similar to each other in meaning. Though similar to each other in meaning, they are independent terms that still bear certain pathological difference if careful analysis is made. In terms of terminology translation, it is better to translate them separately rather than the same for the sake of distinction. According to the structure and meaning of these two terms, they can be respectively translated as “lung qi deficiency pattern/syndrome” and “lung qi depletion-deficiency pattern/syndrome”.

肺阴虚证; 肺阴虚证 lung yin deficiency pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome attributed to yin deficiency of the lung with endogenous heat, manifested by unproductive cough, afternoon fever, night sweating, flushed cheeks, dry throat, red and dry tongue, and rapid fine pulse

In TCM, 肺阴虚证 and 肺阴虚证 are also two terms that are similar to each other in meaning. However, they still bear certain difference in pathology and thus should not be translated the same for the sake of distinction. Pathologically speaking, 肺阴虚证 emphasizes the aspect of deficiency while 肺阴虚证 emphasizes the aspects of both depletion and deficiency. According to the meaning and structure of these two terms, they can be respectively translated as “lung yin deficiency pattern/syndrome” and “lung yin depletion-deficiency pattern/syndrome”.

肺阳虚证 lung yang deficiency pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome resulting from deficiency of yang qi to warm the lung, usually manifested by cough, dyspnea and thin expectoration, fear of cold and cold extremities, spontaneous sweating, pale complexion, enlarged tongue with white slippery coating and weak pulse

The expression “fear of cold” may be the translation of the Chinese term 邪寒 or 恶寒, both of which means dislike of the cold. In the current translation practice, sometimes it is hard to make a clear distinction between them. However, careful analysis shows that these two terms, though similar to each other in meaning, still bears clear difference. According to Chinese language, 恶 is stronger than 邪. To make a difference between these two terms, 邪寒 can be translated as “fear of cold”, while 恶寒 can be translated as “aversion to cold”.

风寒袭肺证 pattern/syndrome of wind-cold assailing the lung: a pattern/syndrome marked by chilliness, stuffy nose, sneezing, profuse watery nasal discharge, thin sputum, thin white tongue coating and floating tight pulse

To translate 袭 in the term 风寒袭肺证 as “assail” sounds quite vivid, though not frequently used in the current translation practice. In Chinese language, there are three characters that sound similar to each other in meaning, but still bear certain semantic difference, i.e. 袭, 攻 and 犯. In the current translation practice, translators tend to take these three Chinese characters as synonyms and thus translate them either as “attack” or as “invade”, without making any distinction. In fact, 袭, 攻 and 犯, though similar to each other in some way, are not exactly the same in meaning. Semantically speaking, 袭 means taking secret action to offend, while 攻 means direct attack and 犯 means violation. In WPRO Standard[^1], 袭, 攻 and 犯 are respectively translated as “assail”, “attack” and “invade”. Such a translation may still need further consideration, but it at least has made certain difference between these three characters.

风寒束肺证 pattern/syndrome of wind-cold fettering the lung: a pattern/syndrome arising when wind-cold invades the lung to cause nondiffusion of lung qi, manifested by cough with thin white phlegm, aversion to cold with possible mild fever, stuffy nose with clear nasal discharge, itchy throat, oppression in the chest, white tongue coating and floating tight pulse
In the term 风寒束肺证, the Chinese character 束 means to tie or to bind up. The so-called 风寒束肺 means that the function of the lung is affected and disturbed by invasion of wind and cold. In the current translation practice, the Chinese character 束 is usually translated as “tighten”, or “attack”, or “fetter”. Comparatively speaking, “fetter” is now used more frequently than the other two words. And semantically speaking, to use “fetter” to translate 束 sounds more vivid and accurate.

风热犯肺证 pattern/syndrome of wind-heat invading the lung: a pattern/syndrome marked by fever with mild chilliness, headache, sore throat, cough, reddened tip of the tongue with thin yellowish coating, and rapid floating pulse.

The syndrome of wind-heat invading the lung is usually caused by wind-heat that invades the lung. In this definition, the expression “fever with mild chilliness” may be the translation of the Chinese expression 发热微恶风寒, which means fever with slight aversion to wind and cold. The expression “mild chilliness” alone seems inadequate in expressing the idea of aversion to both cold and wind.

燥邪犯肺证; 燥邪伤肺证 pattern/syndrome of dryness invading the lung: a pattern/syndrome marked by dry cough without sputum or with scanty sticky sputum difficult to expectorate, chest pain, mild chills and fever, thirst, dry lips, mouth, throat and nose, and floating pulse.

In TCM, 燥邪犯肺证 and 燥邪伤肺证 are two independent syndromes or patterns, which, though sharing some similarity in meaning, still bear certain pathological difference. The term 燥邪犯肺证 emphasizes the process of pathogenic dryness that invades the lung while the term 燥邪伤肺证 emphasizes the result of pathogenic dryness that has already invaded the lung. For the sake of distinction, it is better to translate 燥邪伤肺证 as “pattern/syndrome of dryness damaging the lung”.


In TCM, 肺热证 is not an independent syndrome/pattern. In fact it is often related to other causes, and therefore usually appears in other syndromes/patterns, such as 表寒肺热证 (syndrome/pattern of exterior cold with lung heat) caused by affection of pathogenic cold that leads to interior stagnation of lung heat with the clinical manifestations of aversion to cold with fever, thirst, no sweating, restlessness, cough and asthma, chest distress, yellow and white tongue coating, and floating and rapid pulse; and 阴虚肺热证 (syndrome/pattern of yin deficiency with lung heat) caused by superabundant lung heat that leads to deficiency of yin fluid with the clinical manifestations of fever, thirst, cough with scanty sputum, asthma, constipation, yellow urine, reddish tongue, yellow tongue coating with scanty fluid, and rapid pulse.

肺热炽盛证 intense lung heat pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome marked by fever, thirst, cough, dyspnea or chest pain, constipation, dark urine, reddened tongue with yellow coating.

In the Chinese term 肺热炽盛证, the phrase 炎盛 means flaming or ablaze, usually translated as “hyperactivity”, which, actually is an inaccurate translation. In WPRO Standard[1] and WFCMS Standard[3], 炎盛 is rendered as “intense”, sounding much better than “hyperactivity”.

痰热闭肺证 pattern/syndrome of phlegm-heat obstructing the lung: a pattern/syndrome marked by cough, dyspnea, expectoration of thick, yellow or blood-stained sputum, chest pain, reddened tongue with yellowish slimy coating and rapid slippery pulse.

Pattern/syndrome of phlegm-heat obstructing the lung is caused by the interior accumulation of phlegm heat that obstructs lung qi. The common clinical manifestations still include fever, thirst, chest distress, heavy breath and flaring of nares. In WFCMS Standard[3], 痰热闭肺证 is not included. However, it includes another term called 痰热壅肺证 (syndrome/pattern of phlegm-heat obstructing the lung) which is similar to 痰热阻肺证 in meaning.

痰浊阻肺证 pattern/syndrome of phlegm turbidity obstructing the lung: a pattern/syndrome marked by cough with expectoration of copious whitish sputum, feeling of stuffiness in the chest, whitish slimy coating of the tongue and soggy pulse.

In WFCMS Standard[3], 痰浊阻肺证 is not included. However in the part of pathogenesis, it includes another term called 痰浊阻肺, which is translated as “turbid phlegm obstructing lung”. In the Chinese term 痰浊阻肺证, the Chinese phrase 痰浊 means turbid phlegm. In WPRO Standard[1], 痰浊 is rendered as “phlegm turbidity”, sounding a little abstract.

寒痰阻肺证 pattern/syndrome of cold-phlegm obstructing the lung: a pattern/syndrome marked by cough with profuse phlegm easy to expectorate and a feeling of pressure in the chest, or phlegmatic wheezing, aversion to cold and cold limbs, pale tongue with white slimy or slippery coating, and string-like slippery pulse.

In the term 寒痰阻肺证, the Chinese character 阻 is also frequently translated as “block”. However in WPRO Standard[1], “block” is usually used to translate the Chinese character 阻 which literally means “close”. In this definition, the expression “white slimy” is certainly the translation of the Chinese expression 白腻, which is sometimes translated as “white greasy” in the current translation practice; while the expression “string-like slippery pulse” is obviously the translation of the
Chinese term 脉弦滑 in which the character 弦 is also frequently rendered as “taut” or “wiry” as seen in WFCMS Standard\(^2\).

暑伤肺络证 pattern/syndrome of summerheat damaging the lung vessel: a pattern/syndrome marked by fever, thirst, cough, expectoration of fresh blood, reddened tongue with yellow fur and rapid weak pulse.

In the term 暑伤肺络证, the Chinese character 暑 refers to hot weather or hot condition in summer, usually translated as “summer-heat” with a hyphen between “summer” and “heat”. The Chinese character 络 literally refers to the branches of something. In the theory of TCM, it refers to the branches of meridians, often translated as “collaterals”. So 肺络 may either refer to the branches of lung vessels or the collaterals of lung meridian. According to the theory of TCM, 肺络 may be reasonably understood as the collaterals of the lung meridian instead of the branches of the lung vessels. 暑伤肺络证 is usually caused by summer-heat that damages the lung collaterals.

热毒闭肺证 pattern/syndrome of heat toxin blocking the lung: a pattern/syndrome marked by fever, reversal cold of limbs, cough, dyspnea, a feeling of pressure in the chest with coarse breath, reddened tongue with yellow coating and rapid sunken pulse.

In the term 热毒闭肺证, the Chinese character 闭 means block or obstruction, which is quite similar to another Chinese character 障. That is why in the current translation practice, “obstruction” and “block” are used to translate both 闭 and 障. However in WPRO Standard\(^1\), “obstruction” is used to translate 障 while “block” is used to translate 闭, making a clear distinction between these two similar concepts which is certainly practical for the international standardization of TCM terminology. In TCM, 热毒闭肺证 is caused by obstruction of the lung by heat toxin, usually treated with the therapeutic method of eliminating toxin, expelling pathogenic factors and ventilating the lung to dissipate qi stagnation.

肺燥肠闭证 pattern/syndrome of lung dryness with intestinal obstruction: a pattern/syndrome marked by cough, dyspnea, thirst, constipation, abdominal distension, yellow dry coating of the tongue and sunken replete pulse.

According to the theory of TCM, 肺燥肠闭证 is caused by lung dryness that leads to fluid consumption and obstruction of fu-organ qi. The common clinical manifestations include abdominal fullness and pain. In WPRO Standard\(^1\), the Chinese character 闭 is usually translated as “block”. However in 肺燥肠闭证, the character 闭 is rendered as “obstruction”, failing to maintain a necessary consistency. For the sake of standardization, the translation of 肺燥肠闭证 may be reasonably changed into “pattern/syndrome of lung dryness with intestinal block”. In WFCMS Standard\(^2\), 肠闭 in 肺燥肠闭证 is rendered as “constipation”, sounding too liberal and specific.

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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：肺病辨证

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关键词：语言学；科学技术；翻译；英语；中医名词；肺病辨证