



A Study of English Translation of Medicinal Diets Names Based on the Principle of “Faithfulness, Expressiveness and Elegance”

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Abstract. Due to the impact of COVID-19 and the increasing attention paid to health care at home and abroad, medicinal diet has been gaining more and more attention, therefore, it is important to study the English translation of medicinal diet for its international publicity. In order to enrich the methods and strategies that can be applied to the translation of medicinal diet, this study intends to explore the methods and strategies for the English translation of medicinal diet names based on the principle of “faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance”, so that the translation can be accurate, simple and concise, while not losing the characteristics of Chinese medicine, in order to better achieve the international communication of medicinal diet. This study takes representative examples of English translations of medicinal diet names as the object of study. Based on the translation principle of “faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance”, the existing examples of English translations of medicinal diet names are analyzed, and it is found that under the standard of “faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance”, translators adopt different translation methods for different types of medicinal diet names. This study is complementary to the existing studies on the English translation of medicinal diet and has some reference value for the practice of medicinal diet translation.

Keywords: Medicinal Diet, “Faithfulness, Expressiveness and Elegance”, English Translation.

1 Introduction

Along with the national emphasis on Chinese medicine, medicinal diets or dietary therapy has continued to enter the public domain. The English translation of medicinal diets can promote the international dissemination of medicinal diets, as well as the thoughts of health care of medicinal diets in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), and the study of English translation of medicinal diets has certain practical significance. TCM contains traditional Chinese culture and traditional medical knowledge, and its language system is very different from the modern one. Therefore, in the translation of TCM, we must apply relevant principles to show the scientific nature of TCM, while trying to maintain its Chinese characteristics, as a way to promote the exchange of TCM culture. Since

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medicinal diets has strong characteristics of TCM and historical and cultural heritage, and its English translation lacks unified translation standards, they pose certain difficulties for the translation of medicinal diets. As translation principles, “faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance” is very concise, and can accurately, smoothly and beautifully convey the characteristics of medicinal diets names. In this study, the author will take “faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance” as the guiding principle of translation and explore the methods or strategies that can be applied to the English translation of the names of medicinal diets, so as to provide strategies and methods that can be used in the future practice of English translation of medicinal diets. The aim of this study is to enrich the theories and principles, strategies and methods of English translation of medicinal diets, so that the English translation of medicinal diets can be more standardized in future practice.

2 Current Status of Medicinal Diet Translation

2.1 Low Attention to Medicinal Diets Translation

At present, research on the translation of medicinal diets culture is still in its infancy, and there is a great lack of material on this subject, which makes it difficult to meet the realistic needs for the promotion of medicinal diets culture. According to data from the CNKI, since 1984, there have been as many as 900 studies on the translation of dish names, including journal papers and master's and doctoral theses at different levels, mainly exploring the translation strategies and methods of Chinese dish names. However, since 1999, there have been only about 20 articles on the translation of medicinal diets or the translation of food therapy related to medicinal diets, and medicinal diets has only been mentioned sporadically in other literature as part of the study of dish names. This shows that the current excavation and collation of information on medicinal diets and its translation is highly disproportionate to the profound culture, application and popularity of medicinal diets in China [1].

2.2 Lack of Unified Standards

There is no unified standard for the English translation of Chinese medicine, and as a branch of Chinese medicine, there is no fixed standard for the English translation of medicinal diet, which poses certain difficulties for the translation of medicinal diet. According to the available research literature, the common principles used in the translation of medicinal diets include faithfulness, accuracy, simplicity and avoidance, etc.; while the common translation methods or strategies include literal translation, free translation, annotation, transliteration, domestication and foreignization, etc. As far as translation methods and strategies are concerned, most researchers have chosen similar translation methods and strategies, and most of them advocate flexibility, the integration of multiple translation strategies, and the application of strategies based on the source, and do not recommend the adoption of a single translation strategy or method.

As a result, the lack of uniformity in translation standards creates even greater problems for translations of medicinal diets.

2.3 Inaccurate Word Choice

The translation of the ingredients, cooking methods and dosage forms involved in medicinal diets names is inaccurate and irregular. For example, in a master's thesis of a university in 2012, the translation of “天麻炖鸡仔” is “Stewed Pheasant with Herbs” (which may also be mistakenly written), which translates “鸡仔” as “pheasant”, referring to a kind of wild animal, actually not “鸡仔”, which should be translated as “chicken” [1]. Another example is that “银耳羹” is translated as “Broth of White Fungus”. However, according to Collins Advanced Learner's English Dictionary, “broth” is a thick soup made by boiling fish, meat and vegetables in water, hence in this medicinal diet, the use of “broth” is incorrect [2]. In this case, this dish can be translated as “White Fungus Soup” by using the broader term “soup”. Thus, when translating the name of a medicinal diet, it is necessary to check the specific ingredients and preparation method of the dish to ensure that the translation is accurate and standardized.

2.4 Controversy about the Use of Latin and Ambiguous Words

Academics have expressed their opinions on whether Latin and ambiguous words can be used in translations of the names of medicinal diets, and it is difficult to figure out whose views are correct. As far as the usage of Latin is concerned, some scholars believe that an English translation of Chinese medicinal herbs into Latin is feasible. For example, Geng Liangfeng and Wang Shaoxiang give two reasons: (1) the translation of plant names into Latin is an internationally common method and is conducive to international academic exchange; (2) Medicinal diets are more popular in some Asian countries, and the Latin usage of herbs has become definitive and widely accepted to some extent [3]. Whereas some scholars believe that if the names of herbs are all expressed in Latin in the pharmacopoeia, the names of herbs cannot be understood by a general audience of non-specialists, not to mention their functions [1]. As far as the usage of ambiguous words is concerned, some scholars agree with the use of ambiguous words. For example, Wang Xiaomin argued that there is a wide range of Chinese medicinal herbs with different functions, and if the specific name of each herb is translated, the translated version is not only cumbersome, but also very difficult for foreigners to understand [4]. Foreigners value therapeutic effects, so a translation in ambiguous language can serve the purpose of communication. While some scholars disagree with the use of ambiguous words. The Oxford English-Chinese Dictionary explains “herbs” as: Any plant whose leaves, seeds, or flowers used for flavoring, food, medicine, or perfume, meaning (flavoured or medicinal) herbs, so obviously “herbs” are only a general grass or herb, and cannot specifically refer to a medicinal herb. This vague and general translation cannot reflect the unique role of herbs [1].

2.5 Problems Brought about by Chinese and Western Cultural Differences

There are huge differences between Chinese and Western cultural perceptions, making the translation of medicinal diets names extremely difficult. In terms of ingredient selection, Westerners cannot accept the killing and consumption of wild animals out of environmental and wildlife conservation concerns, whereas many ingredients in medicinal diets names come from wild animals, such as deer antler and snake bile. If these medicinal ingredients are directly introduced to Western consumers, it will inevitably create cultural and psychological barriers for them, leading to their resistance and rejection of medicinal diets. In addition to this, some medicinal diets are derived from animal offal and reproductive organs, and most Westerners are adamant about not eating animal offal and are often intimidated by offal and animal reproductive organs, etc., and generally discard them in their daily lives. Therefore, if these communication barriers brought about by the cultural differences between China and the West are not properly dealt with in the translation, medicinal diets will not be accepted and loved by Western consumers, and it will be difficult to spread the medicinal diets culture truly [5].

3 Introduction to “Faithfulness, Expressiveness and Elegance”

Yan Fu(1898), in his “Words on Translation (译例言)” in his Treatise the Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays (《天演论》), said, “There are three difficulties in translation: Xin (faithfulness), Da (expressiveness) and Ya (elegance) (译事三难: 信、达、雅).” Among them, “Xin (faithfulness)” means that the translation should be faithful to the original text, relying on “faithfulness” and reflecting the scientific and accurate nature of the translation. The translation standard of “faithfulness” requires translators not to make use of the subject matter and add too much personal subjective colour when translating, not to mention mistakes of mistranslation, omission and over-translation [6]. Yan Fu also pointed out that “it is already very difficult to seek its “faithfulness”. If the translation version is just faithful without “expressiveness”, it is equal to untranslated ones. Therefore “expressiveness” is higher and prior (求其信已大难矣! 顾信矣不达, 虽译犹不译也, 则达尚焉).” This indicates that “faithfulness” is higher than “expressiveness” and that “faithfulness” can only be achieved with the help of “expressiveness”. If the translation does not live up to the principle of “faithfulness”, then the translation standards of “expressiveness and elegance” will lose their value and meaning. In terms of “expressiveness”, the translation standard of “expressiveness” proposed by Yan Fu can be understood as not being bound to the syntax of the original text, the translation is smooth and easy to understand, and the emphasis is on conveying the meaning and conforming to the thinking and expression habits of the language [6]. According to Yan Fu, “elegance” is the pursuit of as much simplicity and elegance as possible in the language of the translation itself on the basis of “faithfulness” and “expressiveness”, in order to convey the “essence and nuance(精理微言)” of the original text [7]. The translator needs to make the translation literate and elegant, close to the realm and charm of the original, and to reproduce the art and charm of the original text.

Yan Fu summarizes the difficulties of translation as “faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance”, which is not only in line with the actuality of translation, but also inherited from traditional Chinese philosophical-aesthetic ideas and propositions [8]. Additionally, there is a balance among the three elements, if the three are out of balance, the translation cannot be interconnected and is difficult to understand.

4 Application of Three Principles in the Translation of Medicinal Diet Names

On the basis of extensive collection and reading of medicinal diets literature, the author has sorted out the content structure of medicinal diets texts, which mainly include several kinds of medicinal diets names, ingredients, cooking methods, usage and efficacy. According to the data, the study of the English translation of the names of medicinal diets is a hot spot in the field of medicinal diets. The author believes that the English translation of the medicinal diets names is the core of the external communication of medicinal diets. The names not only convey the content of medicinal diets, but also help readers to understand the health care ideology of “medicine in food (寓医于食)” in Chinese medicine culture. Therefore, in this study, the author will focus on the English translation of the names of medicinal diets. The principle of “faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance” are highly consistent with the characteristics of the names of medicinal diets. Under the guidance of the principle of “faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance”, the English translation of the names of medicinal diets can be more faithful, fluent and elegant, and fully express the cultural connotation of medicinal diet.

Though the study of the available literature, the names of medicinal diets can be roughly divided into two categories: one is the realistic type of medicinal diets (写实型药膳), i.e. those named directly after ingredients, cooking methods, dosage forms or functions, such as “枸杞叶炒鸡蛋”, “雪耳炖木瓜”, “天麻炖仔鸡”, “壮阳狗肉汤”, “益脾饼”, etc. The other kind is the imaginative type of medicinal diets (写意型药膳), which are mainly named with symbolic, metaphorical, exaggerated and rhetorical techniques, and some dosage forms can be seen from the names of this type of medicine diets, such as “仙人粥”, “九仙王道膏” and “琼玉膏”. However, some of the names of these dishes do not reveal the dosage form, nor do they reveal the ingredients, cooking method and efficacy of the dish, such as “双耳听琴” and “雪里藏珠”. In this section, the translation methods of the names of realistic type and imaginative type of medicinal diets will be discussed, using the guiding principle of “faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance” respectively.

4.1 Application of “Faithfulness”

For the realistic type of medicinal diets, the literal translation can be used. The main ingredients, cooking methods, dosage forms, and efficacy involved in the name of a medicinal diet are translated in a straightforward manner. This is shown in the following Table 1:

Table 1. English translation version of the names of medicine diets.

Name of medicinal diets	English Translation Version
雪耳炖木瓜	Tremella Stewed Wim Pawpaw
枸杞叶炒鸡蛋	Stir Fried Egg with Chinese wolfberry Leaf
利水鲤鱼汤	Carp Soup for Clearing Damp
润肠安神粥	Bowel-moistening and Mind-calming Congee
雪耳龙眼汤	White Fungus and Shelled Longan Soup (with the function of improving lungs and preventing anemia)
枸杞鳝鱼骨汤	Simmered Eel Soup with Chinese Wolfberry Fruits (nourishing lungs, liver and kidneys and supplementing calcium)

As can be seen from the above examples, when translating the names of the realistic type of medicinal diets, translators tend to adopt a literal translation approach, using words with equivalent meanings in the target language to translate the ingredients, cooking methods, dosage forms and efficacy in the names of medicinal diets. For some ingredients that cannot be found in English, Latin words that are familiar to the audience can be considered instead, such as “tremella (雪耳)” and “pawpaw (木瓜)” in the above examples. Moreover, if the names don't show the function of medicinal diet, annotation of the function of the diet can also be used in English translation. For instance, the examples of “雪耳龙眼汤” and “枸杞鳝鱼骨汤” provide a clear and concise explanation of the unique pharmacological efficacy of the dishes on the human body. Therefore, in the translation of the names of the realistic type of medicinal diets from the perspective of “faithfulness”, a literal translation can achieve the purpose of equivalence between the translation and the original text, as well as simplicity and faithfulness.

For the imaginative type of medicinal diets, the translator can use the free translation method. Since the names of these dishes do not directly reveal the ingredients, cooking methods, efficacy or even dosage forms, they are often translated using symbols and metaphors to give them a Chinese cultural connotation, thus making them more difficult to translate. When translating, in order to make the translation meet the requirements of “faithfulness”, translators should first consider the objectivity and specificity of the translation, and find out the ingredients and dosage forms involved in the diets, so that the audience can understand the contents of the diets. For example, the “金髓煎” is made from wolfberry and liquor paste, which can be translated as “Wolfberry and Liquor Paste”; the “琼玉膏” is made from ginseng, poria and honey, etc., which can be translated as “Ginseng and Poria with Honey Paste”. The recipe for “青龙白虎汤” is made from fresh green fruit and fresh radish, so it can be translated as “Chinese Olive and Turnip Soup”.

Therefore, under the guidance of the “faithfulness”, for the realistic type of diets, literal translation can be used to directly translate the information contained in the name of the dish, such as the ingredients, cooking method, dosage form or efficacy. When readers cannot guess the specific contents through the names of the imaginative type of medicinal diets, and it is difficult to find the corresponding words in English, free translation, which has the function of replacing virtuality with reality, can be considered in translating the imaginative type of medicinal diets. Although this method may destroy the artistic conception of the names of medicinal diets, the translated content is faithful to the original text without changing the meaning of the original text, which meets the requirement of “faithfulness” and allows foreign diners to understand the main ingredients of the dishes, and does not lead to misunderstandings.

4.2 Application of “Expressiveness”

Whether it is a realistic or imaginative type of medicinal diet, “expressiveness” requires the translator to first ensure that the translation is faithful to the original text, but also to make it as simple as possible, either by using a literal translation or by considering the use of ambiguous words.

First, literal translation can be considered when the translated version is complicated. In the selection of information in the original text, it would be too lengthy to enumerate the main ingredients, preparation methods, health benefits, and deep cultural connotations of the medicinal diet, and the mere reading of the names of the medicinal diets would take too much time for the reader. Wen Jie mentioned in the article *Rumination on the Characteristics of Longcai diet and the English Translation of Its Dish Name* that: “药炖排骨” is a medicinal diet made of angelica (当归), codonopsis pilosula (党参), prepared rehmannia (熟地), chuanqiong (川芎), cassia twig (桂枝), wolfberry (枸杞), star anise(大茴), pork chops (猪小排) and ginger (姜), which has the effect of regulating blood energy and warming blood vessels, and can be translated as “Stewed Spare Ribs with Chinese Herbs (codonopsis pilosula, prepared rehmannia, cassia twig, Chinese wolfberry, star anise and ginger)” [9]. However, the author believes that translating too many of the main ingredients would make the translation too long and would cause fatigue to the reader. In specific cases, such as when medicinal diets names appear in the list of recipes, the English translation of the names of medicinal diets should be concise and coherent, and some information can be omitted without affecting the choice of medicinal diet by the audience, for example, “药炖排骨” can be directly translated as “Stewed Spare Ribs with Chinese Herbs”. Hence, in order to make the translation concise and smooth, when the main ingredients in the name are not specific, the name of the medicinal dish can be directly translated, e.g., “八珍糕” can be translated as “Eight Ingredient Cake”, and “三七三汁奶” can be translated as “Drink of Notoginseng, Three Juice and Milk”. The eight main ingredients of the “Eight Ingredient Cakes” as well as the three kinds of milk in “Drink of Notoginseng, Three Juice and Milk” do not need to be translated in detail.

In addition, ambiguous words should be taken into consideration. If the name of the Chinese herbal medicine is simply translated into the corresponding Latin name, the

majority of the translated audience will not know exactly what it is, such as the translation of “冬虫夏草” as “Cordyceps or Chinese Caterpillar Fungus”, “当归” as “*Angelica-sinensis*”, “百合” as *Lilium brownii*, “杜仲” as *Eucommia ulmoides*, “松茸” as “*Tricholoma matsutake*”, “天麻” as “*Gastrodiaelata*”, “西洋参” as “*Panax quinquefolius*”, etc. Because most Chinese herbs do not have corresponding English names, and some of the corresponding Latin words are too complicated and relatively unfamiliar to the audience, the English word “herbs” is generally used to replace the names of all kinds of herbs in Chinese diet (except for a small number of herbs such as tremella (银耳) and ginseng (人参), which are familiar to both Chinese and Western people). For example, “虫草鸭” can be translated as “Steamed Duck with Herbs” [10]. The use of ambiguous words rather than complex and unfamiliar Latin can make the translation more understandable.

Therefore, for both types of medicinal diets, on the basis of the “faithfulness”, the translator needs to make the translation meet the requirements of “expressiveness” by omitting some of the information, using literal translation or making some of the content ambiguous according to the actual situation. The translator must carefully consider the information contained in the medicinal diet and choose what best conveys the connotations of the medicinal diet so that the translation is as accurate and concise as possible.

4.3 Application of “Elegance”

The names of the imaginative type of medicinal diets often use rhetorical techniques, such as exaggeration and metaphor, and are characterized by the beauty of the language and the rich cultural connotations. The word “elegance” in the principle of “faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance” means that the translation is well-chosen and well-written, and that it can convey the meaning of the original text as well as ensure the literary quality of the translation. The term “elegance” is therefore mostly used to guide the translation of the imaginative type of medicinal diets. In order to preserve the elegance of language, translators may consider using free translation with annotated transliteration and be cautious of “taboo words”.

For the imaginative type of medicinal diets, free translation with annotated transliteration can be used. If the ingredients, cooking methods, or efficacy of the dish are translated directly into Chinese, the key information contained in the dish can be faithfully conveyed, but the cultural flavor of the dish will be lost. The English translation is intended to promote the unique culture of medicinal diets beyond the borders of China, and should therefore try to preserve the cultural meaning and reflect the elegance of medicinal diets. Therefore, for the names of medicinal diets with literary and artistic overtones, translators mostly use the method of free translation with annotated transliteration, i.e. finding out the raw materials, production methods, efficacy and dosage forms of medicinal diets, reconstructing the structure of raw materials + production methods, efficacy + dosage forms, etc., then followed by transliteration [11]. In this way, the expectations of Western audiences can be met, while the annotated transliteration helps preserve the cultural traces of medicinal diets. For example, “仙人粥” is

translated as “Prepared Heshouwu and Red Dates Congee (xianren zhou)”, “琼玉膏” is translated as “Ginseng and Dihuang Paste (qiongyu paste)”, “双耳听琴” is translated as “Black Fungus and White Fungus with Celery (shuang er ting qin)”, “雪里藏珠” is translated as “Deep-fried Pigeon Eggs Wrapped with Flour & Egg White (xue li cang zhu)”.

In addition to this, no matter for realistic type or imaginative type of medicinal diets, based on the “elegance” of the translation of medicinal diet, free translation is also used to avoid “taboo words” in medicinal diets. Because the “taboo words” in medicinal diets will effect the acceptability of the translated text to the audience. Words used in the names of medicinal diets should not correspond to words that are unacceptable or indecent in the target language. For example, in the realistic type of medicinal diet “鹿鞭壮阳汤”, if “鹿鞭” is translated into “deer penis”, that would be too realistic and affect the appetite of diners, therefore it is better to use “deer tail” to refer to it and translate “鹿鞭壮阳汤” as “Deer Tail Soup for Strengthening Yang”. Similarly, “牛鞭” seems too vulgar if translated realistically as ox penis or ox testes, and should be translated as “ox tail” [1]. Therefore, in this case we can use free translation to avoid using taboo words. In addition, the same consideration should be made in the translation of the imaginative type of medicinal diets, such as the “龙” in “大青龙汤”, which in Western culture is a symbol of evil and the incarnation of the devil. If it is translated directly as “Major Bluegreen Dragon Decoction”, Western audiences may be resistant to it. If it is translated as “Chinese Ephedra and Cassia Twig Decoction (da qing long tang)” by using free translation with annotated transliteration, this medicinal diet would be more acceptable for Westerners.

From the above examples, it can be seen that in order to make the English translation of the names of medicinal diets meet the standard of “elegance”, the free translation with annotated transliteration is a good choice. Transliteration is an important way to maintain the essence of Chinese medicine and the flavour of Chinese. Free translation with annotated transliteration makes the translation concise and easy to understand. In addition to the transliteration, the efficacy of the medicine can also be annotated to facilitate the audience's understanding of the medicine itself. At the same time, under the principle of “elegance”, translators need to pay attention to the handling of “taboo words”, which are used in Chinese without harm but should be avoided in English. In the translation process, while preserving the cultural characteristics of medicinal diets, it is also necessary to consider whether the translation is “elegant” for the audience, so as to help the dissemination of Chinese medical culture.

5 Conclusions

According to the above analysis, under the principle of “faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance”, translators can adopt translation methods including literal translation, free translation, annotation, and free translation with annotated transliteration. At the same time, in order to make the translation accurate and concise, appropriate consideration can be given to the audience's familiar Latin and ambiguous words. In addition, because the medicinal diet has a unique health care effect, regardless of the use of any

principle, if the name does not express its efficacy, annotation can be taken into account to explain the unique efficacy of the medicinal diet when needed. Finally, when the principle of “faithfulness, expressiveness, elegance” is applied to traditional Chinese medicine diets, translators should consider the requirements of the three principles at the same time, flexibly choose translation methods and strategies to pursue the accuracy, smoothness and elegance of the translation. Due to the relative lack of research on the English translation of medicinal diets names and the small number of medicinal diets texts in English translation, the repetition rate of the listed medicinal diets names in various studies is high, which leads to the lack of comprehensive analysis of medicinal diets examples in English translation. Future research can also focus on the ingredients, cooking methods, usage and dosage, and efficacy of medicinal diets in order to deeply explore their value and promote the culture of medicinal diet.

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