A Study on Acupoints Translation from the Cross-Cultural Perspective

Yingying Lei

School of Foreign Languages, Southwest Petroleum University, Xindu, Sichuan, 610500, China

Abstract: As profound culture in China, acupuncture has gradually developed into a systematic scientific theory and treatment method over thousands of years of medical practice. The wide spread of acupuncture is not only limited to clinical effects, but acupuncture translation also plays an important role in international communication. Although China has made great efforts in acupuncture translation, the problems caused by mistranslation of terminology cannot be ignored. As the basic knowledge in acupuncture learning, acupoints are something that students need to pay more attention to. Based on the current state of research on acupoints translation at home and abroad, the paper explores methods of acupoints translation in combination with the specific value connotation of cross-cultural communication. For example, transliteration, free translation and combination of transliteration and free translation.

Keywords: Acupuncture; Acupoints translation; Cross-cultural

1. Introduction

Traditional Chinese medicine culture and Chinese traditional advantageous culture are moving towards the world. The proposal of the “internationalization strategy of traditional Chinese medicine” and the in-depth promotion of the “Belt and Road” initiative have brought unprecedented opportunities for the internationalization of traditional Chinese medicine. [1] The spread of traditional Chinese medicine culture not only promotes the academic exchange of traditional Chinese medicine, but also improves the influence of Chinese traditional culture and the national voice. In China, there are countless books related to acupuncture, involving innumerable acupuncture points. As an important part of acupuncture, acupuncture points have a close relationship with all aspects of human activities, which can be summarized as culture. The cultural backgrounds of the East and the West are very different, and the ways of thinking are also different. This kind of cross-cultural communication will certainly bring about some effects. The translation of acupuncture terms is one example. Although Chinese acupuncture has a long history abroad, it has not attracted enough attention to the research on the English translation of acupuncture points. Many Chinese scholars have always focused on the international standardization of acupuncture terms, focusing on the unknown results in the future rather than the process of translation development. In today’s world, the translation of acupuncture points is not only a language transmission but also a cross-cultural communication. Acupuncture points contain a lot of cultural information and background, with a very strong Chinese color. However, the standardized translation of acupuncture points is calculated by human fingers. Translators' understanding of traditional Chinese medicine culture is not at the same level. As a result, there are more or fewer problems in the translation of its related knowledge. Whether the general translation is suitable for the original concept of traditional Chinese medicine and whether it can most accurately express the content. When studying acupoints translation, this paper takes more account of the differences between Chinese and Western cultural backgrounds, with the purpose of promoting traditional Chinese medicine culture, and tries to make contributions to acupoints translation.

2. Development History of Acupuncture

2.1. Development History of Acupuncture in Foreign Countries

In 1971, “Oriental Apollo Acupuncture” successfully landed in the United States, opening up the way for the development of traditional Chinese acupuncture in the United States and bringing acupuncture to other countries in the world at the same time. [2]In the United States, except for
Washington state, 45 other states have confirmed the legal status of acupuncture. Acupuncture has a long and deep history in Korea and plays an important role in people's daily life and disease treatment. It reached its peak in the Wei Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties.

Acupuncture in Japan can be traced back to AD552. A set of “acupuncture classics” was presented to Japan from China. In the development process, Japan has gradually formed its own characteristics. At the same time, Japan also pays more and more attention to the study acupuncture history and has established an acupuncture museum.

In 1821, acupuncture became very popular in Britain. The landmark event was that a surgeon named John Churchill successfully used acupuncture to treat otitis media and rheumatoid arthritis, and published it in a British magazine. Since 1985, acupuncture has been applied to more than 40 common clinical diseases. The first acupuncture school in Britain was established in the 1960s. Jack. R. Worsley founded the Worsley acupuncture school, which opened the history of acupuncture education in Britain.

After entering the 1960s, Australians paid special attention to their health. More and more attention has been paid to traditional Chinese acupuncture. In the late 1960s, the first Chinese acupuncture school was established in Sydney. With the obvious increase of Chinese immigrants, the development of traditional Chinese medicine in Australia is also fast. On July 1, 2012, Australian traditional Chinese medicine joined the national registration and certification scheme. This marked the legalization of Chinese medicine in Australia and enjoyed the same legal status as other healthcare industries.

2.2. Development History of Acupoints Translation

Acupuncture was introduced to Japan and Korea in the Sui and Tang Dynasties. Therefore, the terms names of acupuncture are very different, and the same Chinese characters also have different pronunciations, which leads to the inability to reach a consensus on the translation of acupuncture terms.

2.2.1. Before the 17th Century

The early translation of traditional Chinese medicine was very few, and its spreading range was limited to Southeast Asian countries. In the 8th century, the opening of the Silk Road brought Chinese culture to western countries. At the same time, it also opens the door for foreign exchanges of traditional Chinese medicine. Acupuncture, in particular, has gradually been recognized by western countries.

2.2.2. From the 17th Century to the 19th Century

Before modern times, medical exchanges between China and Europe had made great progress in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Acupuncture, in particular, has spread to Europe. Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), an Italian missionary, introduced traditional Chinese medicine to the west by writing the book Ricci Chinese herbal medicine.[3] But missionaries are not real spreaders. The real spreaders who introduced TCM to the West were Western medical experts. Wang Jiming mentioned Gout compiled by the Dutch in 1676 in his book called List of Traditional Chinese Medicine, the book was translated into English by the Dutch, it is a Western literature recording moxibustion and represents the beginning of standardization of acupuncture terms. In the book, acupuncture and moxibustion have always been used on humans.

In 1825, Franklin Bach,[4] a famous American chemist and doctor, translated Moran's Research Report on acupuncture and moxibustion into French and published it, and applied it to clinical treatment.[5] Since then, western countries have paid more and more attention to traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture, which have been widely used in clinic. With the development of acupuncture translation activities, the “acupuncture boom” in the West has been set off for the first time.[6]

2.2.3. After the 20th Century

At the beginning of the 20th century, Chinese scholars began to directly study the translation of traditional Chinese medicine. English journals and periodicals of traditional Chinese medicine were published by medical schools. At the same time, the dominant position of English began to highlight. In the middle and late 20th century, the standardization of acupuncture and moxibustion was taken seriously by scholars in various countries. In 1958, Chinese scholars tried to include the ordering of acupuncture points into the international standardization plan and used Chinese pinyin to replace the
old Wilma pinyin to translate the names of acupuncture points. In December 1978, the Chinese government decided to replace the name Wilma Pinyin with Chinese Pinyin, which laid the foundation for the unification of acupuncture points.

Since the 1980s, the standardization of acupuncture and moxibustion at home and abroad has further developed. In order to consolidate the position of acupuncture and moxibustion in the world, the International Standardization Manual of Acupuncture and Moxibustion was compiled for the first time in 1990. In the same year, (GB12346-1990) Acupoint Parts was the first national standard in the field of acupuncture and moxibustion. In 1992, the Name and Place of Auricular Point (GB/T13743-1992) standard was formulated. In 1981, the book Standard Acupuncture and Moxibustion V'omencla published by the World Health Organization marked the beginning of the standardization of acupuncture and moxibustion terms. From October to November 1989, acupuncture and moxibustion were named as an international standard by the World Health Organization. A meeting was held in Geneva to discuss and formulate the naming standards for 14 meridians, eight external meridians, 361 meridians, 48 external nerve points and scalp acupuncture. “Acupoints” is the first national standard for acupuncture and moxibustion clinical treatment formulated by China and the World Health Organization in 1990. This latest standard has been widely used in the world, especially in western countries. In 1993, WHO issued the Standard Nomenclature of Acupuncture and Moxibustion (the Second Edition), which puts forward corresponding norms from four aspects: the standardized names of classic acupuncture points, the brief explanations of acupuncture points, the multilingual comparison table of acupuncture point names, and the translation of acupuncture meridians and collaterals. These standards have been recognized and applied in clinical practice all over the world. From the standardized research of acupuncture terms to the research of basic training, safety measures, indications and contraindications related to acupuncture and moxibustion, they have put forward the requirements of operational norms, which not only promote the exchange of international acupuncture and moxibustion teaching, science and clinical practice but also lays a solid foundation for the standardization of acupuncture and moxibustion.

2.2.4. From the 21st Century to Today

Since the 21st century, with the support and promotion of the standardization of traditional Chinese medicine, the standardization of acupuncture and moxibustion has entered a period of all-round development. China is the birthplace of acupuncture, in order to keep better communication of acupuncture and moxibustion with foreign countries, the theoretical and practical research of acupuncture and moxibustion translation into English is more important in China. In 1898, Yan Fu, a well-known translator, put forward three translation standards of “faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance”, in which “faithfulness” means accuracy and faithfulness to the original text; “expressiveness” means not limited to the original form, the translation should be smooth and easy to understand; “Elegance” is the highest realm of translation, which requires artistic translation. Although Yan Fu's three translation standards have a history of more than one hundred years, they also play a guiding role in the study of acupoint translation. Following the standards of faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance can improve the nonstandard phenomenon in translation. Among them, faithfulness requires the translator to first understand the basic connotation and extension of acupuncture points, and understand their basic concepts in detail. It is not easy to understand the original text correctly for knowledge in the field of traditional Chinese medicine, and it is even more difficult to faithfully translate it. For acupoint translation, the translator is required not to rigidly copy the language form of the original text, but to break through the constraints of language form, accurately convey the language information of the original text, so as to highlight its concise language features. Traditional Chinese medicine terms are obscure and difficult to understand. If they are expressed in more elegant language, it will increase the burden on readers' understanding. Therefore, when translating, it is only necessary to ensure that the translation is serious and academic. Professor Li Zhaoguo mentioned four principles of English translation of TCM terms in Introduction to TCM Translation: nationality, objectivity, scientificity and practicality. In the book TCM English Translation Skills, he points out the importance of theoretical guidance, and puts forward five principles of improving “naturalness, conciseness, nationality, translatability and prescriptiveness”, Tang Simin adds the principle of “uniformity, accuracy, academic and habituation” on the basis of the theory proposed by Professor Li Zhaoguo, which can better serve the translation of traditional Chinese medicine.

In recent years, with the continuous development and update of translation theory, more and more new theories have emerged to guide the practice of acupoint translation, such as eco-translatology theory and postcolonial translation theory. Their emergence has provided new ideas for acupoint translation, opened up a new path, and promoted acupoint translation to advance with the times. As
China's comprehensive strength and international status have improved significantly, more and more attention has been paid to the image of China. The country has vigorously promoted traditional Chinese culture. More and more scholars in China have also actively responded to the call of the country and participated in the translation research of Chinese classics. As the most profound Chinese medicine culture in China, it has a long history, and there are countless ancient celebrity works, such as the The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Medicine, Classic of Questioning, the Treatise on Cold Pathogenic and Miscellaneous Diseases, and the Compendium of Materia Medica, all of which are the crystallization of the ancient medical wisdom. Scholars' attention to traditional Chinese medicine translation has also changed significantly. More and more translators have studied the methods of acupoints translation and put forward many constructive suggestions on acupoints translation, which has greatly improved the standardization of acupoint names, promoted effective communication between Chinese and Western countries in the medical field, and greatly promoted the traditional Chinese medicine culture to the world.

As the naming of acupuncture points reflects typical Chinese cultural characteristics, the names of acupuncture points have rich meanings and very complex naming rules. Some are named after stars to directly show the meaning of the acupuncture points; Some are named after celestial phenomena to show the varied naming rules of acupuncture points; while others are named after the movements of mountains to show their indications; Some are named after ravines and valleys to show the shape and location of the acupuncture points; Some of them are named after roads and street markets to show where the acupuncture start and end; Some are named after palaces and halls to show different meanings of what they stand for; and others are named after courtyards and corridors to show a profound message of acupuncture points; Such complex acupuncture point names are not necessarily known by domestic traditional Chinese medicine professionals, not to speak of foreigners. Therefore, in the process of translating acupuncture names, translation mistakes are clearly present. The writer tries to use the following three translation methods: transliteration; Free translation; The combination of transliteration and free translation to analyze their applicability, simplify the complex acupoint names, and enable foreign scholars to understand the main indications and significance of acupoints as intuitively as possible. Try to use cultural symbols with Chinese characteristics to explain the cultural significance behind the names of acupoints, so as to achieve better cross-cultural communication goals and better display the Chinese image.

3. Acupoints Translation from a Cross-cultural Perspective

In ancient Chinese books, "Wen" refers to the characters in articles and documents, as well as the etiquette and music system and legal provisions. "Hua" means enlightenment. In the West, the word "culture" has two Latin roots: culture and colere. The former means reclamation, while the latter means farming, which originally means planting and planting plants, including the meaning of absorbing nutrients from the land or the environment. Since the 15th century, it has gradually expanded to cultivate people's character and ability. According to the different historical development paths of various countries, different personalities of people in different countries have been created, thus giving completely different meanings to culture. However, so far, the definition proposed by anthropologist Edward Taylor in 1871 is still the highest reference rate. It is considered to be the most scientific meaning, covering one of the most popular and accurate definitions, and has the greatest impact. His famous definition is: "Culture or civilization in the broad sense of ethnology is a whole, including knowledge, belief, art, morality, law, custom, and all other abilities and habits acquired as members of society." In many cultural concepts, we can summarize them into two types: one is civilization in the sense of social structure, and the other is culture in the sense of personal behavior. The definition of culture shows that culture is not only the reflection of social existence, but also the interpretation, standardization and comprehensiveness of the technology, social model and value orientation of all human behaviors, and the embodiment of the relationship between man and nature, man and society, and man and himself. What is translation? This is one of the basic questions to be answered in translation. For more than half a century, translation theorists have never stopped defining translation. Today, we can see all kinds of translated works everywhere. Although the definitions of these translation views are different, they show all aspects of translation from different cultural perspectives and deepen our understanding of translation. In the research stage of structural linguistics paradigm, it is generally believed that only texts equivalent to the original can be called translation. For example, the concept of translation, which was first introduced into China, was put forward by Fverov: "Translation is the faithful and full expression of another language by means of one language (faithful and comprehensive translation is different from free translation, brief description and various
really master language.” Wang Zuoliang said in an article, “Without understanding the social culture in language, no one can
It can be said that cultural differences and cultural diversity limit the possibility of translation. As Mr.
particular culture, it is difficult to retain all the elements contained in the language, from the apparent
differences and their reflection in language. Because they are either restricted by culture or unique to a
language can be easily overcome in another language. However, it is difficult to overcome cultural
In a word, language is the product of culture. Generally speaking, pure language barriers in one
similarities that often set traps for translation. If people are not careful, they will make cultural mistakes.
The Chinese and English cultures are very different. They are both contained in their own languages and expressed
through their own languages. The two languages have always been the carriers and containers of the
two cultures. At the same time, the two cultures are the soil for the existence of the two languages.
Therefore, without culture, there is no language. Different languages produce different cultures.”
Culture. No matter what culture it is, once it exists, it must be spread, exchanged, continued and
developed. All this is done through language. Translation is a kind of cross-language communication as
well as a cross-cultural communication activity. When using language to communicate, cultural
differences are obstacles and difficulties in translation. Any language is restricted by culture. Because
of their different origins, they show different cultural features, habits and characteristics. It is a
common saying in culture A, but it may be a blank in culture B. The same meaning, in culture A is this
expression, in culture B may be completely another expression. Therefore, the cultural habits and
characteristics of different nationalities must be taken into account when translating. Due to the
differences between language and culture, most translations can only achieve relative correspondence
or even cannot achieve correspondence when expressing cultural characteristics. Sometimes some
languages show more or less similarities in surface form or meaning, but it is precisely these surface
similarities that often set traps for translation. If people are not careful, they will make cultural mistakes.
In a word, language is the product of culture. Generally speaking, pure language barriers in one
language can be easily overcome in another language. However, it is difficult to overcome cultural
differences and their reflection in language. Because they are either restricted by culture or unique to a
particular culture, it is difficult to retain all the elements contained in the language, from the apparent
meaning and image word formation to the deep connotation and cultural characteristics, in a translation.
It can be said that cultural differences and cultural diversity limit the possibility of translation. As Mr.
Wang Zuoliang said in an article, “Without understanding the social culture in language, no one can
really master language.”

The cultural characteristics of acupoint names are inextricably linked with their rich and colorful
sources. There are many idioms reflecting their characteristics in different geographical environments
of various countries, and a large number of acupoint names have also been produced in unique literary
works of various countries. The living habits and thinking concepts of each nation are also reflected in
the profound and visual acupoint names. Sometimes the similar life experiences and ideological
understanding of the two peoples make some acupoints show some similar cultural characteristics.
The communication between the two sides has also added habitual expressions to the two languages,
but this only accounts for a small part of the acupoint translation. A large number of acupoint names
also show different language habits and cultural characteristics. Language is the most important means
of intercultural communication. When using language for communication, it is inevitable to encounter
idioms with distinctive national cultural characteristics and their application and translation problems.

4. Translation Methods of Accupoints

4.1. Transliteration

Chinese characters are deeply influenced by traditional culture, so it has the only uniqueness.
Therefore, it is difficult to find the corresponding words in English. Considering the language
characteristics of acupuncture points, Chinese pinyin can also be used for translation. Transliteration
uses Chinese pinyin to explain acupuncture points, which preserves national culture to the greatest
extent characteristic, for example, “应以内膝眼, 膝眼, 百虫窝, 鹤顶, 主穴 “ is translated as ”Neixiyan, xiyan,
The term "Baichongwo" refers to a large number and "虫" refers to lumbricoides, "窝" refers to wormhole, this acupoint can be used to treat various diseases caused by parasites, so it is called Baichongwo. This transliteration method well preserves the Chinese culture embodied in Chinese characters.

However, transliteration of acupoint translation is only applicable to a few acupuncture points involving cultural factors. For most acupuncture points, if you use Chinese pinyin at will, it is not conducive to the spread of traditional Chinese medicine culture, but also creates obstacles to academic communication.

4.2. Free Translation

Free translation is usually applied to the acupuncture points whose names have rich meanings but cannot be accurately translated through literal translation. Free translation is not strictly confined to form or words, but mainly conveys the meaning and style of the original text. Due to the differences between Chinese and foreign cultures, the understanding of acupuncture points in acupuncture translation is inevitably biased. In order to make acupoints translation easy to understand, free translation becomes very important in translation methods. As we all know, in the process of free translation, the translator must consider and express the true meaning of the source language. For example, scholars of all dynasties believe that the life gate is the root of personal masculinity and the driving force of life activities. Its function helps men hide the essence of their reproductive organs. It also has a great impact on the female reproductive system. This acupuncture point plays a warm and moist role in the physiological activities of Zang Fu organs, it can promote absorption and transportation. Therefore, according to its meaning, "命门" is translated as the life gate, which can show descriptive and explanatory characteristics and make the translation accurate. At the same time, from the perspective of culture, life refers to people's roots, and gate refers to the door for people to enter and leave, its significance focuses on the function of the kidney. There is also the connotation of Chinese traditional culture in translation. However, not all acupoints translation is suitable for free translation. For example, for those learners who do not know enough about acupuncture points, may find it difficult to use free translation.

4.3. Combination of Transliteration and Free Translation

Although it is difficult to understand sometimes, transliteration is good for maintaining the national characteristics of acupuncture terminology; On the other hand, in terms of understanding, free translation may be a better way. For some terms, we can first use transliteration to maintain our local culture and then use free translation to make it easy for readers to understand. For example, 阿是穴 Ashi point is mentioned in Sun Simiao's Thousand-Golden-Prescriptions in the Tang Dynasty. It can be explained that when a doctor presses a patient's acupuncture points for examination, the patient's reaction is cheerful or painful. Ashi point is the acupuncture point that causes patients to shout, its name is very vivid, so this acupuncture point is translated as Ashi point. However, this study is more inclined to the opinions of some translators, translating Ashi acupuncture point into Ashi point by transliteration and free translation, Ashi into Ashi by transliteration and point by free translation. First, the translation preserves the etymology of the term. Secondly, more importantly, the combination of transliteration and free translation reflects our unique thinking on the traditional culture of the Chinese nation. The naming of acupuncture points shows Chinese traditional culture and the wisdom collected by the ancient laboring people. And its translation better interprets the breadth and profundity of Chinese culture.

In the English translation of acupuncture and moxibustion points, it is not difficult to find that the naming methods of acupuncture names are very complicated, which include both image comparison and realistic description. The meaning of acupuncture points has both profound cultural connotation and practical diagnostic and therapeutic significance, so it is not easy to translate them. Insisting on a concerned translation strategy will only make the traditional Chinese medicine culture, which was originally in the marginal zone, more unable to integrate into the international stage. In the process of translating the names of acupuncture points into English, we should inherit Lao Tzu's spirit of “one should be as inclusive as the vast ocean which admits hundreds of rivers”, emphasize the self-confidence of our national culture and absorb the essence of other national cultures, so as to achieve the goal of promoting Chinese culture. In a word, the combination of transliteration and free translation is necessary for the translator to directly express the meaning of acupuncture points. The key point of a translator is to understand traditional Chinese culture and original ideas, and then take
these factors into consideration in terminology translation. 4. Attention Points in Acupoints Translation.

5. Attention Points in Acupoints Translation

5.1. Avoid word for word translation without considering the meaning

As we all know, acupuncture points embody Chinese cultural characteristics. There are many acupuncture points and the naming rules are complicated. Faced with such complicated acupuncture points, word for word translation may lead to distortion of the information in the source language. Let's take a look at some translators' translations. 风市穴 is translated into the wind market, this will make foreign readers confused. How can there be a “wind market”, but the real meaning is no relationship with wind or market, 风 refers to wind pathogen, which is a kind of Chinese medicine term, 风市穴 is the gallbladder meridian acupuncture point, which is the main acupuncture point to cure wind pathogen and 日月穴 is translated into sun and moon, foreigners may think that the acupuncture point is related to the sky and the earth, but it is not the fact, maybe Riyue can better explain its meaning. The word for word translation of these acupuncture points does not tell the reader the physiological anatomy of the acupuncture points. Therefore, some translators translate 风市穴 and 日月穴 into the wind acupuncture point and the sun and moon acupuncture point. On the contrary, these acupuncture points of word for word translation are incomprehensible to foreign readers. This also deviates from the original intention of translation and the program advocated by the World Health Organization.

5.2. Avoid translating acupoints without considering cultural factors

The acupoint translation has a certain impact on the current situation of acupuncture culture communication, so more attention should be paid to this issue. The names of acupuncture points reflect the characteristics of Chinese characters and are part of culture. Its evolution, use and expression are inevitably influenced and restricted by the cultural environment. If the translator ignores the literal expression covering the social and cultural background, he will mislead the audience.

6. Conclusion

The medical interpretation of acupoints is that they can be used for acupuncture and moxibustion. The naming of acupuncture points shows the characteristics of Chinese culture. The names of acupuncture points have many meanings, and the naming rules are also very complex. Some are named after stars to express their intuition; Some are named after the sky to show the herringbone shape, and so on. Faced with such complicated acupoints names, translators should translate them according to cultural background. Otherwise, it will cause mistranslation. As one of the quintessence of modern Chinese medicine, acupoint naming is not only incisive and concise in form, but also rich in connotation. Therefore, it is a great test for translators. With the continuous spread and development of traditional Chinese medicine in the context of the Belt and Road, in order to make Chinese medicine better serve the people of the world and give play to its unique advantages, it is necessary to strengthen translation work. As a culture loaded word, the name of acupuncture points is one of the typical expressions of Chinese medicine culture, which has rich meanings. The English translation of the acupuncture terms shows Chinese cultural characteristics. Adhere to cultural self-confidence, fully tap the meaning of its connotation core words in the Chinese cultural background, and translate Chinese culture into the target language culture. This is not only a progress in the internationalization of traditional Chinese medicine, but also shows that the discourse and leading power of traditional Chinese medicine translation are in the hands of an increasingly powerful China. As a cultural practice of connecting different nations, translation can be used by European and American centrists to marginalize “weak cultures” through their shaping function, so our national culture in a weak position can resist the oppression of “strong culture” in the same way, reshape localization, and reposition its national culture internationally.

With regard to the acupoints translation, this paper discusses the translation of acupuncture points from cross-culture perspective. In fact, the process of translation is the dialogue between one culture and another, the transmission of the source language culture in the translation culture, and translation itself is a reflection of a culture. The naming of acupuncture points shows the wisdom of the ancient laboring people, which requires translators to devote more time and energy to unearthing the essence, promoting traditional Chinese medicine to enter the international stage.
References