A Study of Polysemy Translation in the *Inner Canon of Huangdi-Su Wen* From the Perspective of Prototype Category Theory

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Based on the difficulties of polysemy in translation, this paper explains the rationality of prototype category theory in polysemy translation. Taking Li Zhaoguo's English version of *Su Wen* as the research object, it analyzes the polysemy translation of "Jing", "Zong", and "Jiu" as examples, and puts forward the translation strategies of polysemy under the guidance of prototype category theory: equivalent substitution between categories, synonymous conversion between categories, transliteration and introspection outside categories, so as to provide reference for the study of polysemy in English translation of texts on traditional Chinese medicine.

Keyword: prototype category theory, *Su Wen*, polysemy, translation strategies

Introduction

Inner Canon of Huangdi is divided into two parts: *Ling Shu* and *Su Wen*. The latter describes human physiology, pathology, diagnosis, and treatment in detail (Qu & Xu, 2016, p. 1310), and contains a variety of common diseases. Its rich medical thoughts have attracted the research and attention of many doctors and scholars. Up to now, there are 24 English versions of *Su Wen*. However, at present, scholars mainly focus on the English translation of *Su Wen* in the following aspects: culture-loaded words, metaphors, vagueness, duality, ellipsis, etc. There is less research on the English translation of polysemy in *Su Wen*, and whether the polysemy is translated correctly or not will have a great influence on the dissemination of the content of TCM classics. Therefore, under the guidance of prototype category theory, this paper will select the English translation of the *Inner Canon of Huangdi-Su Wen* by Li Zhaoguo (2005), a famous scholar in TCM translation research, to study the English translation strategies of polysemy in the original works, hoping to provide a reference for the English translation of polysemy in TCM classics.

Brief Introduction of *Su Wen* and Polysemy

Polysemy was proposed in the 1860s by M. Breal, the founder of modern semantics in France. He believes that polysemy refers to a linguistic phenomenon in which a word item has two or more closely related meanings (Taylor, 1995, p. 99). Because people's memory is limited, if everything has corresponding new words, it will cause memory and cognitive load for people. Therefore, adding new meanings to existing words

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is the most economical way to meet people's expression needs, which is simpler and more convenient than creating new words or borrowing foreign words.

On May 27, 2011, *Inner Canon of Huangdi* was successfully selected into *Memory of the World Register*. It "has effectively provided theoretical guidance and artistic conception for the clinical practice of traditional Chinese medicine for 2,000 years. Its significance to Chinese medicine is just like that of *Bible* to western culture". The book is not only full of rhetoric, but also embraces many polysemy words, such as "Zong", "Jing", and "Jiu". Through the analysis of these polysemy phenomena, we can better understand the meaning of some words in different contexts, and have certain guiding significance for the English translation of polysemy.

An Overview of Prototype Category Theory

Prototype category theory is developed on the basis of traditional category theory. "Prototype" and "family similarity" both form the core of prototype category theory. On the premise of category cognition, prototype should be defined as a psychological representation and a cognitive reference point (Coleman & Paul, 1981, p. 31). Prototype is the most typical member of a category. Other members expand and extend outward with reference to prototype, and finally produce a larger category centered on prototype. The concept of "family similarity" was put forward by Wittgenstein, which means that the boundary of the category is not clear, and the members in the category are tied together by a complex and cross similarity network (1953), but the similarity between members is different, resulting in unequal status of members in the category; some members are in the central position, while others are in the marginal position.

The process of human understanding new things is to explore the relationship between new things and known things in combination with their existing cognition and experience, so as to save cognitive costs. In the prototype category theory, it is used to connect the new members of the category with the prototype to reduce cognitive efforts and understand new things faster. Similarly, in the evolution of word meaning, each word will have a central meaning, that is, the most familiar prototype meaning. Based on family similarity, it forms one or more semantic chains through extended mechanisms such as metaphor, metonymy, and association. In short, the application of prototype category theory can give play to the initiative of human cognition, and provide strong persuasion and interpretation for the formation and development of polysemy.

Analysis of Polysemy Translation of *Su Wen* Under Prototype Category Theory

The translation of TCM classics has been more than 1,000 years in China. The translation of *Su Wen* can be traced back to the 1920s, which was initiated from a paper by German Dawson (1925). Li Zhaoguo has been engaged in the study of English translation of traditional Chinese medicine for more than 40 years. This part will take his English translation as an example to analyze the English translation of polysemy in *Su Wen* with the prototype category theory.

Analysis of Translation Example of "Jing"

Example 1: 《离合真邪论》：……人有经脉。   Translation: …(twelve) rivers and …channels.
Example 2: 《至真要大论》：……足以乱经。   Translation: …disturb (Qi of the) channels.
Example 3: 《著至教论》：……以彰经术。   Translation: …expound the theory.

Analysis: There is evidence in *Paraphrasing Texts and Words* (Shuo Wen Jie Zi) that "Jing means weaving". In Example 1, "Jingshui" is a metaphor, which implies that the water flows like a meridian. Therefore, after knowing its meaning, it can be translated into "River" to fully convey the meaning of the

original text. In Example 2, "Jing" in "it's enough to disrupt Jing" refers to Qi Jing. It needs a certain medical background to translate it accurately. Li translated it as "(Qi of the) channels", and the missing meaning has been added and the vacant category has been transplanted reasonably, so that readers can better understand the meaning of "Jing" here. In Example 3, it is also the third meaning of "Jing", which refers to scriptures, so "Jing Shu" is the theory of classics. Although the translation only translates "theory", it is actually the omission of the Scriptures mentioned above, which can still be understood by readers in connection with the above. In these three examples, the meaning of "Jing" takes the prototype "longitudinal line of fabric" as the core and extends through metaphor and association. Li Zhaoguo also achieved the synonymous transformation between the translation and the original text under the condition of fully understanding the extended meaning of the word "Jing".

Analysis of Translation Example of "Zong"

Example 4: P. 1184　《至真要大论》有证：……归其所宗。　Translation: … the due position.

Example 5: P. 882　《六元正纪大论》有证，别其宗司。　Translation: … dominating (Qi).

Example 6: P. 1288　《解精微论》：水宗者，积水也。　Translation: Water comes from ...

Analysis: "Zong" is a pictographic character, which originally means to be a place for worshipping ancestors. As in Example 4, TCM stresses that Qi belongs to different clans, and the "clan" here is the category. The translation is "the due position". Although it does not translate which category it belongs to, it has achieved the effect of communication. The meaning of Example 5 is to distinguish the ruling branch at the age of Qi Yun. Here, "Zong" is flexibly used as the verb "ruling", and the literal translation of "dominating" is also adopted in the translation, which fully conveys the original meaning. The "Zong" in Example 5 means "source", which is translated as "come from", which also faithfully conveys the meaning of the original text. The word "Zong" in *Su Wen* reflects the characteristics of unequal status of members in the category in the prototype category theory. The same word represents different parts of speech and meanings in three sentences, and their meanings are independent of each other. Li Zhaoguo's translation also reflects the characteristics of unequal internal members under the prototype category theory, and takes into account the equivalence between the categories of the original and the translation.

Analysis of Translation Example of "Jiu"

Example 7:　《八正神明论》：工候救之……　Translation: … protect the body from...

Example 8:　《八正神明论》：上工救其萌芽。　Translation: … diagnose and treat …

Example 9:　《方盛衰论》：心气虚则梦救火阳物。　Translation: … putting out fire.

Analysis: "Jiu" means to send leather clothes to people in severe cold weather, and then the meaning changes. The central meaning changes into: offer help to get rid of difficulties or danger. The meaning of Example 7 is "to save". The two sentences are combined and translated into "protect... from...", which is more concise and clear. The definition of Example 8 is: A wise doctor gives treatment at the beginning of the disease. Therefore, "rescue" here is "treatment", and the word "treat" in the translation version is very appropriate and easy for readers to understand. "Put out fire" in Example 9 literally means to put out the fire, but its actual purpose is to prevent fire, so it can be translated as "prevent". It can be seen that the different meanings of the word "Jiu" in *Su Wen* are the semantic chain generated by family similarity. The original meaning is "rescue". The word "treatment" is extended by the way of "rescue", and finally the meaning of "prevention" is extended

by the purpose of "treatment". Therefore, the translation of above examples under the guidance of prototype category theory can make the translation more accurate.

Translation Strategies of Polysemy in TCM Classics Under Prototype Category Theory

Based on the above analysis, Li Zhaoguo's translation of polysemy in *Su Wen* basically reflects the principle of prototype category theory with "prototype" and "family similarity" as the core, which is not only easier for readers to understand and accept, but also reflects the cultural connotation in *Su Wen* to the greatest extent. Through the analysis of Li Zhaoguo's translation of Su Wen, the author summarizes that under the prototype category theory, the English translation of polysemy in TCM classics can adopt the following translation strategies:

Equivalence Substitution Between Categories

For the common meanings in polysemy, the translation will not cause cognitive load to the translator. At this time, the literal translation strategy can be adopted, which can not only accurately convey the connotation of the source language, but also achieve the equivalence of translation functions, so that the target language readers can obtain the same reading experience as the readers of the original text. Although there are great differences in theory, diagnosis, and treatment methods between Chinese and western medicine, many disease spectra are similar, but some words are different in word formation and naming due to different cultural backgrounds. So we can learn from western medicine vocabulary, such as the translation of "Jing" in meridians, which can be translated into "channel" to realize the equivalence of the essential meaning of words at the cross-cultural level and promote the better dissemination of the translation.

Synonymous Words Transformation Between Categories

In addition to the central meaning of vocabulary, there must be many marginal meanings in polysemy. At this time, the translator should not only have a deep understanding of the marginal meaning, but also pay attention to the transmission of the translation. For example, in Example 3, Li Zhaoguo translated "Jing" into "theory" by means of free translation, so as to make the translation coherent and natural. In addition, for the translation of marginal meaning, it can also achieve equivalence in content and meaning through part of speech conversion. For example, in case of shuizong, "Zong" means the noun "source", but the translator translates it into the verb phrase "come from", but this does not affect the transmission of the meaning of the original text. Therefore, when translating marginal meaning, we can achieve the conversion effect between categories through free translation or part of speech conversion.

Transliteration and Omission Beyond Categories

A few polysemy words have no corresponding category in the target language culture. At this time, the strategy of transferring the source language category to the target language category can be adopted, that is, transliteration, which not only retains the characteristics of traditional Chinese medicine culture, but also is of great benefit to the dissemination of traditional Chinese medicine culture. Finally, for the meaning of some words, their connotation does not belong to important information in the original text. If translated, it will only increase the burden on readers. For example, in Example 4, the meaning of "Zong" in "belonging to its Zong" is generic and translated into "due position", which can achieve equivalence between categories. Therefore, the strategy of provincial translation can be adopted.

Conclusion

Polysemy reflects the economy, flexibility, and creativity of language, and shows the charm and vitality of language. As the first of the four classics of traditional Chinese medicine, *Inner Canon of Huangdi* has concise language, broad meaning and contains a lot of polysemy, which will undoubtedly cause some difficulties for translators. Selecting prototype category theory to analyze these polysemy phenomena and flexibly adopting appropriate translation strategies can standardize the translation of polysemy and promote the dissemination of TCM knowledge and culture all over the world.

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