

A Translation Study on Drug Instructions from the Perspective of the Skopos Theory

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Abstract: In the current era of progress and economic development, the import and export of drugs have become very common. Drug trade is also increasing in many countries, and countless drugs have entered our country. The most important thing for a drug besides itself is its instructions, which also involves the translation of English instructions. The quality of source text translation determines whether patients can use drugs correctly. The translation of the drug instructions is to make the patient use the drug completely and correctly. A good translation should convey the source language information to patients as accurately as possible under the restriction of culture and space. Therefore, Skopostheorie provides a new theoretical perspective for drug instructions. Based on the functional Skopos theory, this paper chooses the drug instructions of several common drugs and their English translation as the research object, finds out the Chinese and English cultural factors and then make a comparative analysis, deconstructs and analyses their English translation, and sums up their translation strategies, with a view to making some research contributions to the translation of drug instructions and making patients better.

1. Introduction

In today's society, the import and export of drugs have become crucial. Drug exchanges have also become a major trend. Carrying basic information related to drugs, pharmaceutical instructions are the scientific basis for doctors, nurses and patients to use drugs correctly. They are also the main medium for drug suppliers to publicize and introduce drug knowledge to medical staff and the masses.

Depending on the source of the drug, the instructions are used differently as there are English-speaking countries as well as non-English-speaking countries. The instructions are complicated, different from each other. The shorter contain only a hundred words, and the longer have tens of thousands of words. Simpler instructions include ingredients, indications, contraindications, usage and dosage; more detailed instructions include drug properties, pharmacological effects, clinical pharmacology, pre-clinical animal trials, clinical experience, precautions, adverse reactions, expiry date, storage conditions, patient's instructions and many other items.

In order to read and translate the English instructions of imported drugs smoothly and correctly, we should not only have a good foundation in English and master certain professional knowledge (such as medicine, chemistry, pharmacology, pharmacokinetics, etc.), but also master the structure and language of the English instructions.

Pharmaceutical instructions are not only the written basis for doctors to prescribe, but also the convenience for patients to understand the causes and treatment methods. Therefore, to some extent, translating English drug instructions is a highly professional and serious work that should not be neglected.

With drugs from many countries entering China, some scholars have also been studying the translation of drug instructions for our own patients in China.

Generally speaking, Skopostheorie holds that translation is a purposeful activity, emphasizing the translator's purpose in explaining translation problems. Traditional translation theories hold that

equivalence and faithfulness are the only criteria for judging translated texts.

Based on Skopostheorie, this paper illustrates that translators adopt different translation strategies in translating drug instructions that otherwise won't be taken according to traditional translation theories.

2. Skopos Theory

Skopostheorie is a new branch of translation studies, which can guide many kinds of translation activities. Different from the traditional idea of equivalence, the functionalist approaches developed by German scholars Katharina Reiss, Hans J. Vermeer, Justa Holz Manttari and Christiane Nord provide a new perspective for translation studies which can provide a special significance to the study on the translation of pharmaceutical instructions.

In 1970s, Hans J. Vermeer told the world the Greek word "skopos", which means the aim or purpose of a translation. He is completely divorced from the theory of equivalence. He regards translation as a kind of human individual behavior, which is subjective and purposeful under certain circumstances.

The Skopos theory supports that "the way the target text eventually shapes up is determined to a great extent by the function" (Hatim, 2005: 74). According to the theory of target language, translators need to use the target language. However, there are great differences between language and culture, and there may be great differences between what is translated and what is expressed by the original author.

According to Vermeer, the audience of the target language is a key factor in determining the use of teleology, and needs vary from country to country and from place to place. This paper emphasizes the purpose of translation activities and the needs of the audience, so that translators have more freedom.

Skopostheorie does not mean equivalence between Skopostheorie and the original text, but it is emphasized that translation should be based on the original expected function. According to different contextual factors, translators should choose the best way to translate. Therefore, teleology has high practicability and scientificity.

Skopos Theory provides more precise and useful translation principles and criteria for the translation of drug instructions. Translation cannot be simply faithful to the original text. Translation is regarded as a cultural transformation between languages. Translators must formulate correct and specific translation strategies according to the characteristics of the text which should be translated. In the whole process of translation, the translator should consider the differences between different countries in all aspects, so as to achieve the desired translation objectives. Drug names, description, pharmacological, actions, indications, contraindications, dosage and administration, adverse reactions, precautions, package, storage and others are included in the instructions. Translators should try their best to convey accurate Chinese character information to users. Therefore, the translator should abide by the rules that are always audience-oriented and disseminate correct drug use methods.

3. Translation Strategies and Methods of Drug Instructions

3.1 Literal Translation

Literal translation, also known as word-for-word translation, refers to the translation of the original content from one word to another while conveying the meaning of the original text. Literal translation is also intended to clarify the meaning of the original, not to understand or delete the meaning of the original. At the same time, it wants to keep the original style. More importantly, even original intentions, demands, demands and adaptations should not be ignored. Through literal translation, the public know directly what this medicine is, and what kind of medicine to treat.

3.2 Free Translation

Free translation means that words are translated from one language to another language by its

meaning rather than by its form. Free translation needs to show the textual main points and does not need to pay more attention to the details. Translation should read naturally in the target language. Therefore, in translation, if we cannot use the structure and expression of the original text directly, we must change them according to the form and characteristics to convey the connotation of the original. To make the language clear, persuasive and idiomatic, the translator must try to conform to linguistic customs and correct usage of the target language, rather than insisting on expression of the original.

3.3 Omission Translation

Omission refers to prune some unimportant minor or superfluous words or sentences including repeated information, filler words, attached question sentences, which are used to keep the fluency and smooth of dialogues in spoken language. It can transmit necessary information to target audiences to comprehend the source text in drug instructions translation, a strategy to retain the necessary part and leave out the unimportant information to realize conciseness and compactness in translation.

3.4 Addition Translation

The theory of target language tells us to present expressiveness and informativeness in the target text so that the audience can have a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the source text. When the source text can not provide enough information to the audience, translators have to show the key information to the translation. In this way, it can help users better understand the implied content in the source text, and make the translation results match the purpose. That is why the translators add the words to get it easily understood.

3.5 Amplification Translation

Amplification enlarges the users' cognitive context. When we look at the drug instructions, the target language may sometimes be longer than the original text. There are long sentences and difficult sentences in the drug instructions, which means that it is difficult for users to understand their connotations. Therefore, the translator must expand and explain the source question in content. Meanwhile, due to the implicit language in English, translators need to enlarge the source text in order to maintain the coherence and authenticity of the original text.

4. Conclusion

Nowadays, imported drugs have also become a daily routine. We will use western medicine in our daily life, and we will learn from their advantages and draw on their strengths. Therefore, the correct use of these drugs becomes critical.

This paper tries to be guided by teleology and do some systematic analysis in the translation of some drug instructions. This paper looks for some typical examples in the translation of drug instructions, expounds the application of three rules in the translation of drug instructions, and further demonstrates five effective strategies of literal translation, free translation, omission, addition, amplification in the translation of drug instructions.

However, in the translation of drug instructions, limitations are inevitable. Because of the different social conditions and ways of thinking, different nationalities have different cultural differences. This cultural difference has brought immeasurable difficulties to translation. Therefore, further research should pay more attention to maintaining cultural diversity, so that language barriers in this important field become less and less. The purpose of this study is to give us useful references for the translation of drug instructions.

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