

PROCEEDINGS ARTICLE

A Sociological Study on the Professional Ethics of TCM Interpreters

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ABSTRACT

As the global impact of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is increasing, new requirements are needed for professional TCM interpreters, leading to a heated discussion on TCM interpreting. Based on the theory of Chesterman's translation ethics model, this article elaborates on the professional ethics of TCM interpreters by analyzing interpreting features presented in different TCM interpreting settings. It is hoped that this article will offer new perspectives for future relevant studies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) witnessed a great boost in global influence with the "Belt and Road" initiative and the outbreak of the pandemic. The development of English translation in TCM communication changed from semantic translation, which only focuses on the interpretation of textual dictionaries, to oral application-based communicative translation, which is crisp in communication, and the TCM interpretation business has also shown great vitality. The current research on translation issues has five main sections, namely, theoretical translation research, applied translation research, translation culture history research, corpus translation research and interpretation research, which give comprehensive attention to translation issues [1].

Among them, interpretation research has a history of more than sixty years, from theoretical exploration in the past to empirical research on interpretation in the present, and the ways and means of interpretation research have become clearer and more explicit. Qin Yuangang (2019) points out that interpretation as the carrier and core of interlanguage, the dynamic

process of interpretation is mainly embodied in the input of the source language, the information storage, the information processing and the output of the target language. The ability of interpretation understanding and interpretation analysis can completely be processed by dynamic interpretation [2]. With the above theoretical basis, the author attempts to explore the ethics of the role of Chinese medical interpreters under the sociological path from Chesterman's research theory of professional ethics of interpreters, five ethical value levels of translation: representation ethics, service ethics, communicative ethics, norm-based ethics and commitment ethics.

2. OVERVIEW OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS OF INTERPRETERS

This century has seen a rise in research examining interpreting activities from macro perspectives such as social cultural and historical perspectives. Unlike the immediate bilingual cognitive division theory, which focuses on internal mechanisms of interpreting behavior, social-cultural activity theory focuses on the macro contexts and external influences of interpreting

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activities. The interaction between social structures is the main concern of sociology, and practice mediates their connection. In the same way, the interaction between actors of interpreters and social structures is the main concern of social translation theory, and translation practice is the mediator that links the two [3]. In the last three decades, interpretation studies have seen rapid and fruitful growth. As early as 1984, the French translator Berman (1984) already put forward the concept of "translation ethics", pointing out that the translator's grasp of the "fidelity" and "accuracy" of the translated work is ethical [4]. Pym (1992) proposed the "interculturality" of translator ethics, pointing out that translators should get rid of the shackles of "fidelity" and focus on cultural communication from their own "interculturality", to improve the relationship between different languages and cultures and thus promote the cooperation and win-win situation of multiple parties [5]. Chesterman (2001) summarized four models of translation ethics based on previous studies on translation ethics [6], and proposed a fifth model of translation ethics, namely "representation", "service", "communication", "norm" and "commitment". These five ethical modes of translation are the comprehensive embodiment of various ethical values of translation. Unlike the traditional translator's ethics of moral self-reflection [7], Chesterman's view makes it clear that translation ethics not only needs to be binding in the professional system, but also feasible to be translated into a translator's competence and translation behavior.

3. PROFESSIONAL ETHICS OF TCM TRANSLATORS BASED ON CHESTERMAN'S TRANSLATION ETHICS MODEL

3.1. TCM Translators and Sociology

From a sociological macro perspective, the influence of TCM in the world is flourishing, however, the language barrier is still a roadblock for the world to understand TCM. Therefore, there is a large talent gap in the market of Western translators of TCM, and the translation of TCM canonical texts, the discourse of TCM terminology, and the establishment of a TCM terminology database are all urgent tasks. In response to the above-mentioned difficulties, the sociological perspective has significantly increased the requirements for the translation ability level and business response ability of TCM translators. TCM interpretation, whether based on purpose theory, interpretation theory, or interpretation and translation models such as simultaneous

interpretation/ consecutive interpretation, is a dynamic process with the comprehension and presentation of meaning at its center (Seleskovith).

3.2. TCM Translators and Chesterman's Ethics of Translation

Many of the symptoms described in TCM, names of prescriptions and medications, are generally obscure old literature, so a TCM interpreter must first fill his or her knowledge of TCM culture, grasp it, and apply it as he or she thinks appropriate in the interpretation. Secondly, these ancient medical texts contain not only thousands of years of clinical experience and medical guidelines of the ancestors but also the long-standing and profound Chinese traditional culture. Chinese medical translator isn't a mere language conversion machine, a medium and tool for traditional culture as well, to go global and tell the story of Chinese traditional culture to the world.

The current professional landscape of TCM interpreters continues to change for the times, and the identity, as well as the role of interpreters, has been reshaped by society and the times. Prof. Wang Binhua (2009) points out that interpreters in the macro perspective tend to maintain and continuously improve their professional skills and proficiency, observe strict confidentiality norms and conflict of interest avoidance norms, and comply with professional norms in terms of professional behavior, teamwork, and working conditions. This summary also provides practical evidence for Chesterman's theoretical model of translation. The role of interpreters is not an easy task, and the following will focus on the professional ethics model of TCM interpreters from the aspects of representation ethics, service ethics, and communicative ethics.

3.2.1. Ethics of Representation

An interpreting event can consume almost all of the interpreter's energy, which may far exceed the interpreter's memory load, but the interpreter still has to convey the meaning expressed in the source language to the other party accurately and objectively. This is the ethics of representation required by the professional ethics of interpreters, which emphasizes the value of truth in interpretation. In Chinese medical interpretation, the interpreter asks the patient to collect the most thorough information about the condition on behalf of the doctor, and also asks the doctor to obtain the most extensive information about the diagnosis on behalf of the patient. It is the patient's responsibility and obligation to ask questions or make statements to both clients in a clear and easily understood manner, and the interpreter

must not change the source language information without permission unless one of the parties does not understand or feels embarrassed. At the interpretation site, for various in-text and out-of-text reasons, the translated text can be related to the original in different, acceptable ways, as long as these connections are true to the source information as required by the specific context. An example:

Doc: 看你样子坐着都喘不过气来，口唇发紫，得马上吸上氧气。

Interpreter: You look as though you're having trouble breathing while you're sitting there. Your lips are pretty purple, too. You'd have to have some oxygen straight away [8].

The words "breathlessness" and "purple lips" are the inner meaning of the doctor's words, but they contain a certain meaning beyond the words: the condition is serious, but we should maintain a peaceful attitude and take measures, such as "lie down immediately".

3.2.2. Ethics of Services

Diagnosis methods such as "different treatments for the same disease" "same treatment for different diseases" and "treating the lower for the upper, and treating the upper for the lower" are ordinary situations in the field of Chinese medicine. For example, in TCM, there are various treatments for common illnesses such as colds and flu, which have different causes, and the treatment plans for wind-heat and wind-cold should be treated separately. At this point, sociological interpreting research can place the interpreting activity in the real social structure and examine the inter-constructed relationship between the interpreter and other participants in interpretation activities in terms of their roles and identities. This is the service ethics required by the professional ethics of translators. Loyalty is the first quality of excellent translators. It is the loyalty to a client, to the authors and to target audiences.

As a result of the diverse etiology of different drugs, the translator must not mistranslate or neglect to translate the patient's major descriptive information when the TCM doctor questions the patient about his health status, and must also explain the medical advice to the patient in detail, otherwise it will directly affect the subsequent treatment and the patient's health condition. As the language of TCM is highly general and abstract, based on the requirements of the service ethics model, the translator needs to grasp the basic spirit of TCM knowledge to translate the target language accurately and efficiently. For example, this is seen in the following dialogue between a TCM doctor and patient.

Doc: 手伸出来。

Interpreter: Please stretch out your hand so that doctor can feel your pulse.

PA: For what?

Interpreter: To make a preliminary diagnosis.

PA: Oh, I Know.

In the process of diagnosis in TCM, doctors' requirements are often concise and comprehensive. Intra-verbal and certain extra-verbal behaviors are both included in the communication, which the TCM interpreter must supplement in the translation. In this translation, the interpreter follows the principle of service ethics and adds the extra-verbal meaning of the TCM context to the interpretation promptly. The doctor asks the patient to extend his hand to check his pulse and further adds to the patient's query for the doctor to make a preliminary diagnosis.

3.2.3. Ethics of Communication

Translation in communication ethics is a kind of communication behavior. The translator, as a mediator, helps all parties involved in communication to cross linguistic and cultural barriers and helps both parties reach cross-cultural mutual understanding, achieve cross-cultural cooperation and benefit from it. Interpreters are the media of the doctor-patient relationship. They respect the service objects, always put medical practitioners and patients in an equal relationship, and do not change due to differences in gender, race, culture, social status, political views, etc. If the relationship between doctors and patients is out of balance, with the doctor disrespecting the patient and the patient abusing the doctor, translators should actively coordinate, adopt communication strategies, eliminate estrangement and resolve conflicts [9]. Interpretation needs to understand the content, information, symbols, intentions and meanings of the source language, which is a subject output with differences and limited by specific space-time conditions. For example, when interpreting English and Chinese for a minority doctor who uses a southwest dialect, the interpreter can learn about the dialect by communicating with the doctor or consulting materials during the pre-interpretation preparation activities. To respect doctors' national habits, local idioms should be used as much as possible during interpretation, and patients should be restrained from curiosity to avoid misunderstanding.

Interpreters are at the front of the cultural differences between China and foreign countries. In interpreting, they should adapt to such differences, respect the needs of clients and maintain the principle of objectivity and neutrality to achieve the dual transformation of the source language and the

original culture. For example, when interpreting for a female patient in an Arab country, to avoid offending, the interpreter should first understand its social and cultural phenomenon. For example, women in Arab countries will mainly wear black robes, so when providing services for patients, the interpreter cannot choose the traditional clothing color of Arab men.

3.2.4. Norm-Based Ethics

The highly specialized profession of TCM interpreting requires an interpreter with a high level of professionalism to process a large amount of complex information and convert it into a concise and understandable expression in a short period of time. Toury's descriptive translation research and its normative theory, descriptive translation research focus on examining how norms determine or influence the process of translation, and the core value of normative ethics is trust. The translator looks for what kind of translation product is most acceptable to the reader, what the translation is expected to be in the target culture is how it should be translated in that culture [6]. Inghilleri (2003), as a leading figure in the sociological study of interpretation, which has seen a lot of interpretation research since the 21st century, pointed out that interpretation is a translation behavior dominated by rules, with generative characteristics. It goes hand in hand with socio-cultural construction [10]. Thus, in TCM interpreting, the interpretation of the political and economic, ethnic and racial issues of the source and target language countries or regions, as well as the ubiquitous cultural rules and other social factors, always influence the interpreter's interpretation of the translation reality. As a result, they are crucial collaborators in intercultural discourse and co-constructors of communicative activities. Translators can also pick their translation tactics more simply with good translation rules as a guide. With proper translation norms as a guide, translators can also choose their translation strategies more easily.

3.2.5. Ethics of Commitment

On the value level of commitment ethics, Chesterman believes that the ethics of translators should be the highest value to promote understanding, and so do all other ethical values, where "understanding" in the author's opinion has a broad and diverse meaning. "This is the boundary of the definition of translator ethics and the boundary of the responsibility of translators" [1]. As with the pre-translation terminology preparation of translators [11], it has always been an important part of the preparation of Chinese medicine interpreters. Because translators who abide by translation commitments are most

likely to win the trust of readers, pre-translation interpreters often need to mention familiarity with terminology and related information to meet the need for translation ethics in examining the translation process. Thus, the purpose of commitment ethics is to minimize disputes and conflicts between the original author, client, translator, and target readers [12].

4. CONCLUSION

With a long interpretation history, the public have always been curious about this vital and complicated activity, whether it was the "tongue man" in ancient China or the "conduit" and "microphones" in the West. Translation or interpretation is also a bridge between different cultures and a messenger of content exchange for a different cultural reservoir. Secondly, Chinese medicine is an outstanding representative of Chinese civilization and has made positive contributions to the reproduction and prosperity of the Chinese nation and world civilization, the unique value of TCM requires interpreters to play a more active role. In interpretation, the use of language has distinctive features of communicative interaction, and interpreters are the messengers of cultural communication. The professional ethics to be followed by interpreters cannot be generalized in one article. Apart from the five ethics that Chesterman (2001) has summarized, there are other professional virtues such as punctuality, respect, love, and compliance with the law that every qualified interpreter should abide by in interpreting practice.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

This article was independently completed by Jiali Fan. Linxi Zhang contributed to its revising and editing.

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