

A Study of English Translation of TCM Health Care Terms in *Yinshan Zhengyao*

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Abstract

Yinshan Zhengyao, the first comprehensive treatise on nutrition in China, not only encompasses a diverse array of medicinal recipes, food materials, and cooking techniques but also sheds light on historical cultural exchanges between China and other regions during the Yuan Dynasty. As a result, it holds significant historical value for the advancement of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and the study of diet culture. Moreover, the English translation of *Yinshan Zhengyao* is equally noteworthy for its contribution to the internationalization of TCM. Nevertheless, the intricacies of food nomenclature, obscure Chinese medical terms, and culturally nuanced expressions present formidable challenges for translators. This article critically examines the translations of TCM health care terms pertaining to material and cultural elements found within the English rendition of *Yinshan Zhengyao*, delving into the translators' strategies and methods.

Keywords: *Yinshan Zhengyao*, English translation, TCM, health care terms, diet culture

1. Introduction

Yinshan Zhengyao, the first monograph on nutrition in China, was written by Husihui, a renowned Mongolian medical scientist and nutritionist of the Yuan Dynasty. Proficient in both Chinese and Mongolian medicine, Husihui served as the imperial physician at the royal court and accumulated a wealth of experience in culinary arts and knowledge of diet and health through years of work. He also consulted a large number of ancient books as well as documents, and finally completed *Yinshan Zhengyao*, which combines diet culture and nutriology.

The book consists of three volumes. The first volume, titled "Strange Delicacies of Combined Flavors", introduces 94 kinds of valuable ingredients; the second volume is "Various Hot Beverages and Concentrates", which specifies 56 kinds of cooking techniques and 61 approaches to food therapy and contains contents on food taboos and food poisoning; the third volume is "Food Ingredients", which encompasses rice, cereals, meat, poultry, fish, fruits, vegetables and seasonings. The medical theory and health care thoughts in this book are of great reference value for future research in diet and medicine, and have promoted the development of modern Chinese medicine.

As a masterpiece on diet and health care, *Yinshan Zhengyao* holds significant research value. It not only provides valuable insights for the study of diet and health, but also reflects the historical facts of the cultural exchange between China and foreign countries during the Yuan Dynasty, and preserves some important historical materials (Cui, 2002). The book contains a great deal of historical background on the Yuan Dynasty, which can be a powerful source of evidence for the study of changes in Mongolian food culture and habits. *Yinshan Zhengyao* was born out of a period of great ethnic integration with frequent inter-ethnic exchanges and the interpenetration of different ethnic food customs, as well as the fact that the rulers of the Yuan Dynasty paid much attention to health and had established the role of imperial physicians at the court.

There have been many studies of *Yinshan Zhengyao* in the academic world, most of which have mainly focused on its medical theory and health care, but few studies have combined food and health care with translation. Therefore, this article aims to study the translations of health care terms regarding food materials, medical theories and folk prescriptions in *Yinshan Zhengyao*, and analyze the translators' translation strategies and methods.

2. Overview of the English Translation of *Yinshan Zhengyao*

The English translation of *Yinshan Zhengyao* was initially published in 2000 by Routledge Press in the UK.

Compared with other Chinese medical books such as the *Inner Canon of Huangdi* and the *Compendium of Materia Medica*, *Yinshan Zhengyao* is less influential, and therefore has only one published and complete English translation up to now.

The English translation of *Yinshan Zhengyao* was translated by Paul D. Buell and Eugene Anderson, with an appendix composed by Charles Perry. Paul D. Buell, a historian with a doctorate in history from the University of Washington, has conducted extensive research on Mongolian history and is the author of the *Historical Dictionary of the Mongol World Empire*. Eugene Anderson is a doctor of Anthropology and Professor Emeritus at the University of California, Riverside, USA. He has the representative work of *Food and Environment in Early and Medieval China*. Charles Perry graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, USA, with a main focus on the history of food in the Islamic world. He is known for his representative work of *Medieval Arab Cookery*. All three translators have solid academic research backgrounds and have made great contributions to their research fields, providing quality assurance for the English translation of *Yinshan Zhengyao*.

The English translation of *Yinshan Zhengyao* has a total of 681 pages. Besides the main body, the preface, introduction, and the catalog of the book have also been translated to present the original structure of the book to the readers. In the preface, there are explanations for the Chinese version of the book chosen and a brief introduction to the background and authorship of the book. Additionally, the English version also indicates that the Latin names of the ingredients and herbs in the translation are based on the *Dictionary of Traditional Chinese Medicine 2* compiled by the Jiangsu New Medical College (now Nanjing Medical University). The common names are derived from *An Enumeration of Chinese Materia Medica 3* written by the botanist Hu Xiuying, while the names of common Western food plants are based on *The Oxford Book of Food Plants 4* published by the University of Oxford in 1969 (Liu et al., 2020), which reflects the rigor of the translators. Given that the original text of *Yinshan Zhengyao* contains a large number of food material names and Chinese medical terms which are difficult to understand, the translators have added many indexes and annotations to avoid confusion among readers.

A good translation enables Western readers to understand Chinese classic books and expands the influence and spread of Chinese culture. Hence, as a masterpiece in the field of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and food therapy, the English translation of *Yinshan Zhengyao* is of great academic value to the international exchange and dissemination of TCM and food therapy culture.

3. The Analysis of the English Translation of *Yinshan Zhengyao*

Yinshan Zhengyao stands as an outstanding work on diet and health, and its English version plays a pivotal role in advancing the study of language and translation. Studying the characteristics of the terms in *Yinshan Zhengyao* and classifying them help to analyze the strategies and methods of the translation more objectively. This section delves into translation of terms from two perspectives, the external material and the internal cultural perspectives.

3.1 The External Material Perspective

The external materials in *Yinshan Zhengyao* include food ingredients, medicinal materials and units of measurement. There are a large number of Mongolian speciality ingredients, foreign ingredients and medicinal materials in this book, which served as the tools and materials utilized by the predecessors for transforming the material world and are named in accordance with those predecessors' own experiences and understanding.

3.1.1 Food Ingredients and Medicinal Materials

In the English translation, 炙羊心 is translated as 'Broiled sheep's heart'. The translators use literal translation to translate this kind of food names, directly showing their ingredients or production methods. This translation method is simple and accurate and preferred by translators.

The Mongolian recipe 围像 mainly consists of mutton and sheep tail, and it has the effect of tonifying the five internal organs (heart, liver, spleen, lung, and kidney). In the translation, the translators render it as 'Ishkane', a reconstructed word. Translating this type of food name, where the name itself lacks meaning and has no equivalent word in the target language, can be challenging. In such cases, translators often adapt the term from the source language. This approach helps readers shift their focus away from the name itself and develop a new understanding.

鸡头粉擀面, the 'Euryale Flour *Juzma' in the translation (the translators make reconstructions from Chinese transcriptions by marking with '*'), is made by grinding the semen euryale into flour, kneading the flour into a dough, then rolling it into a pancake shape, cutting it into wide strips, and finally ripping it off by hand and pouring it into a pot. 'Semen euryale' means 芡实 (鸡头米) in Chinese, 'flour' means 面粉, and 'Juzma' is a

word reconstructed in the translation process, which means 搬面 in Chinese. Reconstructed words can fully exhibit the translators' creativity, but are relatively less accepted (Wang et al., 2022).

马思答吉, originating from Arab, is a bitter, non-toxic spice that benefits qi and quenches thirst. In the translation, it is rendered as 'Mastajhi'. The translators adopt the method of transliteration. Transliteration is a way to express the pronunciation of certain words in another language based on the forms of the native language, while preserving the original meaning of the word. The characters used for transliteration are primarily phonetic symbols, which lose their original meaning and retain only their phonetic and written form. One of the fundamental characteristics of foreign words is their pronunciation rather than their meaning (Zhou & You, 2006). In earlier times, most foreign words were first translated based on their pronunciations. This approach not only accomplished the goal of translation but also maintained the features of the source language. However, transliteration has some drawbacks. For instance, it can confuse readers and fail to clearly convey the original meaning, requiring additional notes for further clarification. There are also many transliterations of food names in the English translation of *Yinshan Zhengyao*, such as 莼蓼—*Shilōn, 咱夫兰—Za' faran, and 哈昔尼—Kasni.

沙乞某儿 refers to 蔓菁, which is commonly known as 大头菜 in Chinese. It is translated as 'Swiss Chard', a type of Swiss beet, in this book. It aims to identify a word with an equivalent meaning in the target language that corresponds as closely as possible to the foreign term. Although an exact match of the foreign term may not be achievable, it doesn't affect the overall meaning and allows readers to better understand the intent of the foreign term.

孩儿茶 is translated as 'Children's tea', which is a literal translation. It is called 'tea', but is, in fact, a medicine produced overseas and has an effect that promotes sobering. If the translators do not provide any explanation about it, the readers might misunderstand it.

3.1.2 Units of Measurement

Example 1:

ST: 下香粳米一升, 熟回回豆子二合, 肉弹儿木瓜二斤, 取汁, 沙糖四两, 盐少许, 调和, 或下事件肉。

TT: Add 1 *sheng* of aromatic non-glutinous rice, 2 *he* of cooked chickpeas, "meat pellets", two *jin* of Chinese quince (take the juice), 4 *liang* of granulated sugar. Adjust flavors with a little salt. [The] cut-up meat can perhaps be added.

Example 2:

ST: 羊头洗净二个, 羊肚、肺各二具, 羊白血双肠儿一付.....

TT: two sheep's heads (clean), two sets each of sheep stomachs and lungs, one set of white blood, paired sheep intestines.

Translator's Note: In the translation below we have made no attempt to translate Chinese weights and measures. The following equivalents must be borne in mind when interpreting the recipes: a *qian* 錢 is today 3.12 g or .011 oz and is one-tenth of a *liang* 兩. Sixteen *liang* make a *jin* 斤 (about 500 g). A *sheng* 升 is today 516.19 ml, and is comprised of 10 *he* 合. Ten *sheng* make a *dou* 斗. Units of length relevant to the translation are the *cun* 寸, which is 33.3 mm and comprised of ten *fen* 分, and the *chi* 尺, ten *cun*, or about one third of a meter. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, if Matsui is correct, and we believe that he is, about a standard Mongol-era base of weights and measures, 8 a *qian* was slightly larger, 4 g, and a *jin* was thus 640 g, while a *sheng* was 84.66 ml and a *he* one-tenth of that. These figures are quite different than those found in most standard reference sources (e.g., see the table in Farquhar, 1990, pp. 443–444), which will now require revision. Possibly standards also existed for units of length and land measure too, but these are not discussed by Matsui.

The ancient Chinese language is exceptionally rich in quantifiers and units of measurement, although many of them are no longer used as time goes by. Furthermore, quantifiers and units of measurement in Chinese and English are different, and in some instances, there is no exact equivalent between them. Therefore, the translators resort to transliteration to convey the ancient Chinese units of measurement, as seen in Example 1, where 升, 合, and 两 are translated using Chinese Pinyin. Transliteration effectively preserves the cultural nuances of the original language. To prevent readers from misunderstanding, the translators also provide conversions for these units of measurement in the translator's note, allowing readers to accurately comprehend the specific quantities associated with these units. Additionally, *Yinshan Zhengyao* employs numerous quantifiers that are less commonly used in English. In Example 2, 两个 is translated as "two", omitting the quantifier, and 具 and 付 are rendered as "set", employing the approach of free translation.

3.2 The Internal Cultural Perspective

Terms with the internal cultural perspective in *Yinshan Zhengyao* include Chinese medical terms, folk prescriptions, etc. These terms carry cultural information that reflects differences in culture, local customs, ways of thinking, religious beliefs, and other aspects of the cultural background. The medical theories and folk prescriptions encapsulate the essence of ancient medical practitioners' extensive experiences and are steeped in the national culture. However, due to disparities between Chinese and Western medical terminology systems, some diseases and symptoms lack standardized translations in foreign Chinese dictionaries. Furthermore, the language of TCM terminology exhibits a certain degree of uncertainty, with a particularly distinctive feature known as 'semantic ambiguity'. As a result, TCM theories can be subject to varying interpretations, making it challenging to grasp the fundamental meanings and boundaries of TCM terms. In TCM, some diseases are named based on their symptoms, while others take the patient's condition into account. This naming practice often results in susceptibility to conceptual ambiguity (Yang & Yuan, 2017). Here are some examples.

Example 1:

ST: 夜不可多食，卧不可有邪风。

TT: One should not eat much at night. When sleeping one should not be [exposed to] evil wind.⁷

Note 7: Wind here refers to environmental influences causing disease and is not literally wind.

In this sentence, the translators translate 邪风 as 'evil wind', employing a literal translation. Within TCM, 风 is recognized as one of the five pathogenic qi, and 邪风 specifically pertains to wind-related causes of diseases. To avert any potential misunderstanding, the translators include a note to clarify that 'evil wind' does not refer to literal wind. This translation approach serves the purpose of allowing readers to grasp the distinctive nature of the names of Chinese diseases, while also providing a visual understanding of the disease's origins and symptoms.

Example 2:

ST: 勿向西北大小便。

TT: One must not defecate or urinate towards the northwest.⁸

Note 8: This is probably a Mongolian rather than a Chinese prohibition. Although the preferred Mongolian direction is southeast, and not northwest, special consideration was shown this direction as well (See Gongor, 1970–1978, vol. 2, pp. 94–95). The Mongolian yurt (ger) also normally faced southeast and urination or defecating towards the northwest may have meant disrespect for its sacred world. Note, for example, the strong traditional prohibition against urination inside a dwelling mentioned by John of Plano Carpini (Beazley, 1967, p. 48). Mongols living at the Yuan court may also have been fearful of offending the land and water spirits of Mongolia, if they urinated or defecated in the direction (from Daidu) of the old Mongolian homeland. On Altaic views of the spiritual potency of earth and water see Jean-Paul Roux (1984, p. 132). Our colleague Henry Schwarz notes that this prohibition may have a practical aspect too due to the prevailing direction of the wind in Mongolia.

This sentence contains information about ethnic culture. The translators use a literal translation, but this approach may lead to confusion among readers. Therefore, the translators add a note to provide the relevant cultural background information, ensuring that readers who understand the cultural context will not be puzzled by the literal translation.

Example 3:

ST: 莲子不去心，食之成霍乱。

TT: If one does not remove the heart of a lotus seed, and eats it, it will give rise to huoluan.⁷³

Note 73: The conventional translation of *huoluan*, which Ou (1982) calls "diseases characterized by acute diarrhea and vomiting" (p. 246), is cholera. This is appropriate only relatively late in Chinese history and not during the fourteenth century.

After examination, the translators found that the 霍乱 in Chinese is different from the 'cholera' in the West. Therefore, instead of translating it directly as 'cholera', the translators opt to transliterate it phonetically as '*huoluan*'. This represents a zero-translation method, wherein certain components of the source language are directly introduced into the target language without any translation (Xiong, 2014). Because terms of this nature encompass specific cultural information, they may be challenging for readers to comprehend, necessitating additional notes to provide specialized explanations.

Example 4:

ST: 凡枯木大树下, 久阴湿地, 不可久坐, 恐阴气触人。

TT: One should not sit for a long time in any place there is withered wood, which is below a large tree and which has long been shaded and damp. It is to be feared that the yingqi [of the place] will touch a person.

The term 阴气, originating from *Zhou Yi*, is rooted in the ancient yin and yang theories, and since then, it has been used in the realms of religion, philosophy, and medicine. While 阴气 was initially translated phonetically, it was later widely embraced both within the nation and internationally as a fundamental concept of TCM. As a result, it has found its way into Western medical dictionaries and is now a standard translation in the field of TCM. In addition, to provide readers with a foundational understanding of common TCM terms, the translators introduce concepts such as ‘qi’, ‘yin and yang’, and the ‘five elements’ at the beginning of the translation.

Example 5:

ST: 服之十剂, 绝其欲, 修阴功, 成地仙矣。

TT: If ten doses are taken, it should suppress the passions, and if one cultivates secret merits, I think one could become an earth immortal.

The term 修阴功 originates from traditional Chinese culture and signifies that individuals can mitigate posthumous penalties by engaging in virtuous actions during their lifetime. This notion is steeped in feudal superstition, which emerged due to the limitations of understanding prevailing at the time. This context highlights the disparities between Chinese and Western cultures and their respective religious beliefs. Evidently, the translators might not grasp the genuine essence of 修阴功, leading them to interpret it through their own imagination and comprehension. Therefore, this translation approach could potentially lead to misunderstandings among readers.

Example 6:

ST: 凡遇风雨雷电, 必须闭门, 端坐焚香, 恐有诸神过。

TT: Whenever one encounters wind and rain, thunder and lightning, it is obligatory to shut the gate, sit up straight, and light incense. One should fear the various spirits passing by.

This statement strongly embodies feudal superstitious beliefs and carries religious undertones. Taoism had deeply permeated the social and cultural fabric of the time, interweaving with feudal customs. The author, Husihui, himself possessed a profound understanding of Taoism. This prohibition reflects the religious and cultural implications of that era, representing a distinctive cultural phenomenon. In ancient China, a firm belief in the existence of gods and immortals prevailed. People hesitated to defy these beings due to the fear of repercussions and the violation of sacred taboos. Conversely, they sought blessings from these deities and immortals. The translators, by opting for a literal translation without offering explanations or contextual details, run the risk of causing misunderstanding among Western readers unfamiliar with traditional Chinese culture and Taoist ideology. Moreover, viewed from the perspective of contemporary readers, this statement lacks a scientific foundation and might be interpreted as an unexplainable supernatural occurrence that defies the realms of natural science. Consequently, unless the translators provide a contextual explanation and supplement the cultural background, the cultural gap could potentially hinder readers' comprehension.

Example 7:

ST: 避色如避箭, 避风如避仇, 莫吃空心茶, 少食申后粥。

TT: Avoiding lust is like avoiding an arrow. Avoiding dissipation is like avoiding an enemy. No one should drink tea on an empty stomach. Eat little congee after the shen hour [3:00–5:00 PM].

申 is an ancient Chinese unit of time measurement. In ancient China, the day was divided into 12 时辰, each consisting of two hours. The ancients named each 时辰 according to the time when animals of the 12 Chinese zodiac signs appeared. In this instance, the translators employ the transliteration approach to maintain the distinctiveness of the source language and culture. Recognizing that Western readers might encounter difficulty in comprehending this culturally-connotated unit of time measurement, the translators augment the specific time of 申 with a contemporary time measurement commonly understood today. This approach ultimately enables Western readers to both appreciate the unique traits of exotic cultures and grasp the intended meaning of the original author.

Example 8:

ST: 如本命日, 及父母本命日, 不食本命所属肉。

TT: On one's own birthday, or on the birthdays of one's parents, do not eat the meat of animals associated with these days.¹⁰

Note 10: Reference is to birthdays dated according to the Chinese cycle of 60, combinations of the 10 celestial stems and 12 earthly branches. Each of the latter is associated with an animal, and it is the meat of these animals which must be avoided. If one is born on a jiachen 甲辰 day, for example, one would avoid eating the meat of the dragon.

本命 is a unique cultural concept within traditional Chinese culture. To Western readers, the term 本命 might be entirely unfamiliar. Hence, in translation, the phrase 本命 is directly rendered as one's own birthday, offering a highly accurate and more readily understandable representation for readers. To elucidate the origin of the statement 不食本命所属肉, the translators supplement it with a note that delves into the intricacies of traditional Chinese culture, specifically the celestial stems and earthly branches (天干地支). In a bid to foster a more profound understanding, the note further provides an illustrative example. Through these added notes, the translation not only becomes more accessible and informative, but also captures the essence of the original language's cultural nuances.

Example 9:

ST: 立不可久，立伤骨。

坐不可久，坐伤血。

行不可久，行伤筋。

卧不可久，卧伤气。

视不可久，视伤神。

TT: If one should stand, one should not stand for long periods. Standing wounds the bones.

If one sits, one should not sit for long periods. Sitting wounds the blood.

If one walks, one should not walk for long periods. Walking harms the sinews.

If one lies down, one should not lie down for long periods. Lying down wounds the *qi*.

If one looks at something, one should not look for long periods. It harms the spirit.

Parallel structure is frequently encountered in traditional Chinese medical texts. This structure possesses conciseness and a neat form while carrying a rhythmic quality, reflecting one of the defining attributes of the ancient Chinese language. The translation adheres to the original structure, preserving the parallelism. In this example, the juxtaposition between sentences is maintained, employing the same sentence patterns and verb forms to accentuate the contrast. This approach effectively captures readers' attention. The utilization of parallel structure in the translation aligns with the principle of 'functional equivalence', which not only upholds the linguistic traits of the source language but also maintains proximity to the source work in both content and form. Simplicity is another hallmark of ancient Chinese language. Consequently, sentences without subjects frequently appear in ancient Chinese texts. This characteristic poses challenges for translators in terms of understanding. When faced with sentences lacking subjects, the translators must thoroughly understand the original work's meaning and infer accordingly from the context to introduce an appropriate subject. In this instance, the original sentences adopt imperative sentence structures without subjects. Thus, the translators employ 'one' as the subject, yielding a highly accurate rendering.

Translation of TCM terms is an outward transmission of indigenous Chinese scientific concepts. The fact that most of the terms have no equivalent words in English decides that the standardization of translation of TCM terms is bound to involve translation issues (Hong & Zhu, 2013). The difference between the source language and target language, as well as the variation in their cultures, makes the process of translation a real challenge (Ordudari, 2007). Instead of rigidly adhering to a single translation method, the translators employ appropriate strategies based on the context and situation, aiming to preserve the linguistic characteristics of the original text. This flexible approach not only facilitates the spread of Chinese medical culture in the West but also ensures that the translation accurately conveys the intended meaning. Moreover, the translation process often involves unverifiable diseases, symptoms, and folk prescriptions. To prevent potential misinterpretation among readers, the translators generally opt for literal translation in most cases. However, since such types of terms carry special cultural connotations, it is inevitable that the translators may encounter challenges in fully grasping their meaning during the translation process.

3.3 The Analysis of Translation Strategies and Methods

Translation strategies and methods play a pivotal guiding role in the translation process, and they influence the accuracy and quality of the translation. Jaaskelainen (1999) maintains that strategies are “heuristic and flexible in nature, and their adoption implies a decision influenced by amendments in the translator’s objectives.” Krings (1986) defines translation strategy as “translator’s potentially conscious plans for solving concrete translation problems within the framework of a specific translation task.” Lörcher (1991) believes that a translation strategy is “a potentially conscious procedure for solving a problem which an individual faces when translating a text segment from one language to another”. Hejwowski (2004) offers a broader definition, defining it as “a translator’s preferred procedure (consciously or unconsciously) within an entire text or its significant passages”. He distinguishes this concept from technique, which he defines as “the choice of a solution to a specific problem encountered during the translation process.” Additionally, translation is not only a transformation of language but also a transmission of cultural information (Guo, 2010). Therefore, a good translation of an ethnic classic should not only convey the meaning of the original text accurately, but also effectively communicate the readers about the underlying national culture of the classic.

Venuti (1998) indicates that translation strategies involve the fundamental tasks of selecting the foreign text to be translated and devising a method for its translation. He employs the concepts of domestication and foreignization as translation strategies. The English translation of *Yinshan Zhengyao* primarily adopts the translation strategy of foreignization, complemented by elements of the domestication strategy. Foreignization emphasizes the translators’ simultaneous respect for the external form and the internal cultural connotation of the source language. It uses expressions from the source language to convey the content of the original text, aiming to highlight the source language’s characteristics and preserve its exotic linguistic style (Wang, 2022). This translation strategy aims to enrich and promote the target language and culture. It aligns more with the macro perspective of cultural exchange and integration (Zhu, 2020). *Yinshan Zhengyao* is a medical classic; however, it encompasses a significant amount of cultural background and historical information with ethnic features. These aspects are crucial for Western readers to comprehend the Mongolian culture during the Yuan Dynasty. Therefore, the translators primarily embrace the translation strategy of foreignization. This approach more effectively preserves the linguistic characteristics and cultural connotations of the original work, brings the translation closer to the ideas the author intends to convey, and reduces deviations in comprehension, thereby enhancing the conveyance of cultural information to the readers.

Different from foreignization, domestication primarily emphasizes translating in a manner that is generally acceptable to the readers of the target language. This approach aims to align more closely with the linguistic, literary, and cultural norms of the target language during the translation process. Culler (1976) asserts that languages are not merely nomenclatures; rather, the concepts in one language can diverge significantly from those in another. This divergence stems from the fact that each language articulates and organizes the world in its own distinct way. Hence, for certain country-specific and obscure cultural concepts within *Yinshan Zhengyao* that cannot be accurately and comprehensively translated through foreignization, the translators employ the domestication strategy. In doing so, they render these cultural concepts using expressions commonly employed by readers of the target language. The utilization of domestication addresses the particular requirements of the target language readership. It ensures the linguistic fluidity of the translation and mitigates ambiguities stemming from cultural differences.

In terms of translation methods, the English translation of *Yinshan Zhengyao* mainly adopts literal translation and transliteration within foreignization, supplemented by free translation within domestication. Hervey and Higgins (1992) believe that “to translate proper names, either the name can be taken over unchanged from the source language to the target language, or it can be adopted to conform to the phonic/graphic conventions of the target language.” They refer to the former as “tantamount to literal translation, and involves no cultural transposition,” and the latter as “transliteration”. Cultural transposition occurs when names of the source language are replaced by indigenous names of the target language that are not their literal equivalents but have similar cultural connotations. Linguists, represented by British TCM translator Nigel Wiseman (2002), believe that literal translation oriented by the source text can better reflect the original appearance of TCM. The names of diseases and medical terms in the book have distinctive ethnic features and are difficult to replace with terms of the same connotation in modern medicine. Even if equivalent words can be found, it is possible that the cultural connotations will be lost. Therefore, the translators often adopt literal translation and transliteration, which not only faithfully reflect the content of the original text but also preserve the cultural characteristics of the source language while introducing the medical system with Chinese cultural characteristics to Western readers.

In contrast to literal translation, free translation is a translation method that interprets the original text based on

its meaning. Although free translation discards the form and features of the source language, it can accurately convey the fundamental meaning of the source language (Chen, 2022). In the translation of *Yinshan Zhengyao*, the use of free translation is rooted in the recognition that literal translation or transliteration could result in ambiguity during the translation process. The translators need to possess a comprehensive understanding of the cultural context of the source language, as well as the cultural disparities between the Eastern and Western cultures. This understanding is essential to more accurately convey the core meaning of the source language and grasp the importance of cross-cultural communication.

The English translation of ethnic classics significantly contributes to the propagation of TCM culture, where translation strategies and methods are pivotal in determining the translation's quality and its role in cultural dissemination. To enhance the accessibility of TCM culture for Western audiences, translators should adeptly select translation strategies and methods, which could ensure the precise dissemination of TCM culture without imposing comprehension challenges on readers.

4. Conclusion

Yinshan Zhengyao represents the essence of diet and health culture at the Mongolian court during the Yuan Dynasty. It stands as a testament to the exchange and integration of various peoples during that era. Nevertheless, due to its limited impact, the sole English translation of the book has received little scholarly attention. This article examines the translation of TCM health care terms on food names, medical terms and folk prescriptions in the English translation of *Yinshan Zhengyao*. It assesses these elements from both external material and internal cultural perspectives, culminating in the formulation of conclusions. In terms of translation strategies, the translators mainly adopt foreignization, complemented by domestication, to retain the cultural connotations of the Chinese medical language to the greatest extent possible. In the light of translation methods, the translators primarily employ the literal translation and transliteration within the framework of foreignization, supplemented by free translation within the domain of domestication. The appropriate utilization of translation strategies and methods can more accurately reproduce the cultural connotation of TCM health care terms in the original text, and help the Western readers more comprehensively and accurately understand the TCM diet culture, thereby advancing the global dissemination of TCM culture in a more efficacious manner.

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