An Analysis of the Chinese Translation of the Health Article Bladder Control Check-Up from the Perspective of Dynamic Equivalence

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Abstract: In this paper, three excerpts from the Chinese translation of the English article Bladder Control Check-Up are examined and criticized based on the theory of dynamic equivalence. Three levels, namely lexical level, syntactic level, and textual level are introduced respectively to support the analysis of the translated text. After the analysis of the translation, an experimental survey is carried out to test the acceptability of the original translation and the translation processed under the concept of dynamic equivalence. It is envisaged that the analysis of translation issues with dynamic equivalence could raise the awareness of improving the quality of official translation for public health purposes.

Keywords: dynamic equivalence; lexical; syntactic; textual; componential analysis; kernel model; statistical analysis; empirical likelihood

1. Introduction to the original and translated articles

The original article, which was published officially in 2016 and last reviewed in 2019 by the Multicultural Health Communication Service of NSW Government Australia, conveys informative health message concerning bladder control check-up (Bladder control check-up, 2013)[1]. Being neutral in style and warm in tone, the article, with a few technical terms, is intended to give patients accessible knowledge about bladder control check-up and preparation for a check-up.

The article was translated into different languages other than English in order to help assist culturally diverse communities in successfully engaging in healthcare information sharing. However, the Chinese version of the article was badly worded and phrased, and was literally translated, which affect the seamless communication of the health message for Chinese language receptors. The unsatisfying translation of the article is not a single case but there are many more translations of other articles with similar poor translating output. Therefore, with the publication of this paper, it is hoped that it could contribute to the translation quality improvement of official writings facing the masses for public health purposes.

2. A brief about Nida's dynamic equivalence

Dynamic equivalence, according to Eugene Nida and Taber Charles, is a theoretical approach to non-literal translation, in which the response of the target language (TL) receptor is almost the same as that of the source language (SL) receptor (2003)[2]. This theory allows translating professionals to throw off the shackles of word-for-word translation and reconstruct the TL into a more readable form for TL receptor. In order to realise dynamic equivalence and produce a similar response in the TL communities, there are four prerequisites for successful communication: making sense; conveying the spirit and manner of the original text; having a natural and easy form of expression; producing a similar response (Munday, 2016)[3].

3. Analysis of the Chinese translation

While the original article aims to provide health information to the multicultural audience with a writing style that is plain and understandable, the Chinese translation deviates from the manner of expression with an unsatisfying translating output. In the following part, three main levels are

introduced to analyse the awkwardness of the Chinese text, so as to demonstrate how Nida's dynamic equivalence can be applied as an essential guideline to translation practice. It should be noted that, during the whole process of the analysis, all the Chinese translation texts, whether they are original or edited with dynamic equivalence, have already been uploaded and stored on Ethereum Network, which is a decentralised platform that enables the possibility of permanent data storage.

3.1. The retrieval of all the Chinese translations

As described above, all the Chinese translations have been stored on the Ethereum blockchain. The reason why the Chinese translations are being presented in such way is that there are some criteria applied to the publication of this paper that make it unlikely to present the Chinese characters and Pinyin. Here is the instruction on how to retrieve the Chinese information through Etherscan.
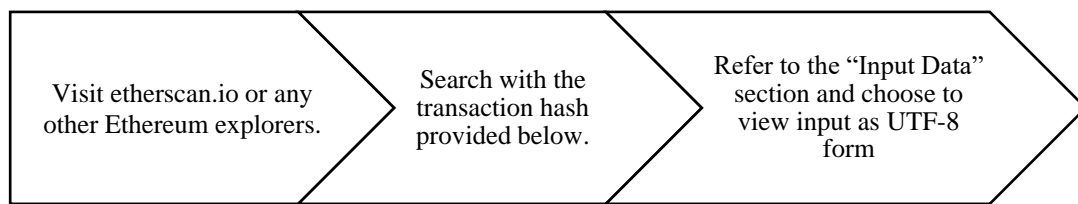

Figure 1: The Flow of Searching the Chinese Translations (2022)

Transaction Hash [0x307c85b2123e4507d031be27dec798cb3434796f1abde48d1a855d35192a143c]

3.2 Lexical level

Componential analysis in dynamic equivalence, which is a practical way to "identify and distinguish specific features of a range of related words" (Munday, 2016)[3], is used to analyse the lexical problem of the translated text. The technique guides translators to distinguish words in lexical level and decide which word to use in a translation. In order to realise dynamic equivalence, correct lexical meaning that makes sense to TL receptors must be achieved (Kim, 2015)[4]. In addition, "a translator must ensure that the translation matches the register expectations" (Baker, 1992)[5] of its target receptors as the purpose of the translation is to convey a sense of the source culture.

Example A

Source text (Bladder control check-up, 2013)[1]:

Urine sample may be taken for testing.

For the original translation (A), please refer to the source PDF document published by the Multicultural Health Communication Service of NSW Government Australia, or the text stored on Ethereum Network. Back translation is provided for the Chinese translation: Urine sample may be collected for testing.

The ambiguity inherent in a word is one of the most challenging parts of translating on the lexical level, and thus a translator should endeavour to perceive the meaning of a word accurately in order to reproduce them into another language (Baker, 1992)[5]. The inappropriate word choice the translator made is "ceshi" when translating the word "testing". In simplified Chinese, the phrase "ceshi" in the original translation, in general context, refers to the process of checking one's learning performance, while in a more technical sense, it refers to the experimental measurement of the performance and accuracy of a piece of equipment. However, "testing" herein is used in the public healthcare field and the Chinese translation contradicts the perspective where dynamic equivalence demands "making sense" as a prerequisite, and thus the Chinese translation should be reconsidered. A more proper and accurate translation can be "jiance" as edited, which refers to the use of specified methods that can be applied to assessment in various domains and is frequently used in health and medical register. A table

of componential analysis is shown below to help specify the concept:

Table 1: Usage Scenario of the Chinese Translation for "testing"

Usage scenario	Chinese translation for "testing"	
	The original	The edited
Measuring one's knowledge/ability	√	√
Experimentally measuring a piece of equipment	√	√
Analysing a medical sample	×	√

Therefore, the edited translation for "testing" is in sync with the context and purpose of the source text and makes justified sense to native Chinese receptors, achieving dynamic equivalence in lexical level. For the edited Chinese translation (A), please refer to the text stored on Ethereum Network. Back translation for the edited translation is provided: Urine sample may be collected for testing.

3.3 Syntactic level

In this session, the Chinese translation is analysed in syntactic level, with the technique of Nida's kernel model. Nida's kernel model provides translators with a useful tool for decoding the SL and encoding the TL (1964)[6]. If we aim at achieving dynamic equivalence, it is "the level at which the message is transferred into the receptor language before being transformed into a surface structure through the process of 'literary transfer'" (Munday, 2016)[3].

Example B

Source text (Bladder control check-up, 2013):

A bladder control check-up includes some questions and a physical check by a doctor or a trained health worker.

For the original translation (B), please refer to the source PDF document published by the Multicultural Health Communication Service of NSW Government Australia, or the text stored on Ethereum Network. Back translation is provided for the Chinese translation: Bladder control includes from doctor or trained health worker asking some questions and doing physical check.

The translator of the Chinese text translated the English sentence in a very literal way. In addition, the translator did not consider altering word order and sentence structure to make the Chinese sentence native to Chinese receptors. According to Panou, Nida's dynamic equivalence in translating practice goes beyond accurate word-for-word communication (2013)[7]. By viewing the sentence syntactically, we can know that the subject being tested for bladder control is a patient, and those who conduct the test are doctors or health workers. Hence, we can divide the source sentence into the following kernel sentences:

Table 2: Kernel Sentences for Example B

(1) A bladder control check-up includes something;
(2) Some questions might be asked;
(3) A physical check might be carried out;
(4) A doctor or a trained health worker will be doing the above mentioned.

Based on the kernel sentences, we can clearly see that the translator discarded the Chinese ideological way of expression that emphasizes putting the human being first, and expanded the chunk of concept by bringing (2)-(4) together in the target text. In order to make it more legible for Chinese receptors and suit target culture ideology, we can restructure the sentence by putting "a doctor or a trained health worker" first and reassembling the remaining sections in a logical way that not only suits target culture but keeps faithful to the original text. Just as Fawcett stated, the theory implies that "different translations should be 'correct' for different readerships" (1997)[8]. Therefore, with the help of the kernel sentences, we can produce an alternative translation version that has a more natural expression. For the edited Chinese translation (B), please refer to the text stored on Ethereum Network. Back translation for the edited translation is provided: Doctors or healthcare professionals may ask you some questions and help do a physical check during a bladder control check-up.

3.4 Textual level

Nida's dynamic equivalence requires translated texts to be coherent, readable, and native to target language receptors, and lays focus on equivalent effect in textual level. Translation is a specific form of communication, and any effective communication relies on the source language speakers or writers ensuring that the receptors can comprehend based on their communication purpose (Gutt, 2004)[9].

Example C

Source text (Bladder control check-up, 2013):

To arrange for an interpreter through the Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS), phone 13 14 50 Monday to Friday and ask for the National Continence Helpline. Information in other languages is also available from continence.org.au/other-languages.

For the original translation (C), please refer to the source PDF document published by the Multicultural Health Communication Service of NSW Government Australia, or the text stored on Ethereum Network. Back translation is provided for the Chinese translation: If need through telephone interpretation service (TIS) to arrange an interpreter, please from Monday to Friday call 13 14 50, and ask for the National Conference helpline. You can still from the website get Chinese information org. au/other-languages.

In this short paragraph translation, the translator made several errors regarding wording and discourse. This paragraph aims to help Chinese language receptors know the way to seek help from translators and medical professionals, thus the tone and the discourse are required to be assistive, supportive, and practical. The language the translator worded, especially in the first sentence, sounds foreign and abrupt to native Chinese receptors, betraying Nida's equivalent effect. The translator started the sentence without addressing the subject in a polite way and directly guide Chinese receptors to the contact information. Moreover, the translator made a serious omission with the translation of the phrase "National Continence Helpline" denoted as a hotline for patients with bowel and bladder control. The translator directly put the source phrase "National Continence Helpline" in the translation and such omission shows the lack of professionalism of the translator. The original translation is less communicative in textual level, and an alternative translation processed with dynamic equivalence in textual level is produced. For the edited Chinese translation (C), please refer to the text stored on Ethereum Network. Back translation for the edited translation is provided: If you need an interpreter to assist in translation, you can arrange through the telephone interpretation service centre (TIS). Please from Monday to Friday call 13 14 50 and ask to transfer to the National Conference Helpline. You can also from the following website get more relevant Chinese information continence.org.au/other-languages.

4. Experimental survey of the above original and edited translations

Three examples of the translation text have already been analysed in the previous sections. Stepping further side of evaluation, in order to test the acceptability and validity of both the original and the edited translations, an experimental survey is conducted as follow.

4.1 The design, preparation, and conduct of the survey

As the target text is received by the Chinese language receptors, native Chinese speakers are chosen to participate in this survey. A total number of 156 Chinese students from Guangzhou Huali College, who major in any subjects except foreign language studies, have taken part in the survey. All the students have been asked to rate, from zero to ten based on their common sense of their mother tongue, the readability and legibility of the original and the edited translations from the three excerpts analysed above. In order to understand whether the edited translation with dynamic equivalence, compared with the original translation, does have an improved communication effect on the target readership, the data collected are being processed and analysed with the use of statistical methods, such as R, the programming language, for statistical computing, and SPSS for descriptive statistics. The results of statistical data obtained are illustrated as follow:

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of the Survey

	Original Translation (A)	Edited Translation with Dynamic Equivalence (A)	Original Translation (B)	Edited Translation with Dynamic Equivalence (B)	Original Translation (C)	Edited Translation with Dynamic Equivalence (C)
N	156	156	156	156	156	156
Mean	5.79	7.71	4.95	8.00	5.49	8.01
Std. Deviation	2.245	1.867	2.254	1.696	2.078	1.741
Sum	904	1202	772	1248	857	1250

4.2 Analysis of the results

As the results illustrated in table 3 and Figure 1, several statistical indicators can be obtained, such as mean, standard deviation, and sum. To further investigate, let $X1, X2, X3, X4, X5, X6$ represent respectively Original Translation (A), Edited Translation with Dynamic Equivalence (A), Original Translation (B), Edited Translation with Dynamic Equivalence (B), Original Translation (C), and Edited Translation with Dynamic Equivalence (C). Further, let $Y1, Y2, Y3, Y4$ be respectively equal to $X2 - X1$, $X4 - X3$, $X6 - X5$, and $X2 + X4 + X6 - (X5 + X3 + X1)$. The variable Y can be used to measure whether the edited translations with dynamic equivalence are more acceptable to Chinese language receptors. The edited version is more legible than the original one when the variable Y is greater than zero, additionally, the greater the Y is, the far better the edited translation is than the original one.

In the data collected through the survey, we have 156 samples and six measurements. The new indicators Y1, Y2, Y3 and Y4 can be calculated according to the method introduced above. We perform interval estimation on the population mean of these indicators. The edited translation can be considered better than the original one, if the interval estimation for a given significance level does not contain numbers less than or equal to zero. While some classical statistics methods may not be suitable for analysing the data, as the exact distribution of the data is unknown and is different from the normal distribution or other commonly used distributions, we can apply the method of Empirical Likelihood, which was proposed by Owen and is "a popular nonparametric or semi-parametric statistical method with many nice statistical properties" (Liu and Chen, 2010)[10]. Therefore, we can use this method to perform interval estimation on the expectations of Y1, Y2, Y3, and Y4, and the 0.95 confidence interval can be obtained as follow:

[3.50, 3.55], [3.76, 3.83], [3.29, 3.36], [9.03, 9.20]

From the above statistical analysis, we can conclude that the translation processed under the concept of dynamic equivalence better suits the target language receptors.

5. Conclusion

Nida's dynamic equivalence lays emphasis on equivalent effect, but the Chinese version of the article Infant of a Diabetic Mother goes against the theory. The text is analysed from the perspective of Nida's dynamic equivalence in lexical, syntactic, and textual levels, revealing how the theory can help improve our future translation work through an experimental survey with the statistical application of Empirical Likelihood. In conclusion, in the future work of translation, it is recommended to professionally perform translating tasks by following the theory of Nida's dynamic equivalence as an important guideline to our translation quality.

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