

Lexical Level Problems in Translating Texts on Preventive Medicine - A Study Based on the Book *Health In These Times*

Tharsika Muruganantham

B.A. in Translation Studies

158B, GPS Road, Kalviyankaaadu, Jaffna, Sri Lanka

0094779257933

tharshikamuruganantham@gmail.com

Abstract

Translation is a fundamental aspect in circulating acquaintance and fresh innovations in the medical field. It can also be a serious element in providing healthcare services to patients or laypeople. The translators of medical texts encounter numerous complications, some of which includes the subject of research. They include medical terminology, lexical equivalence of medical texts, readability, quality issues. This study presents a common overview of the problems in lexical level of medical translation. It discusses certain problems related to characteristic features of medical language and inconsistency of equivalents: terminology, medical terms, medical equipment or tools, treatment or diagnosis, drug names, scientific names etc. Translating for lay-readers and professional audiences is the next issue that is considered in this paper. Considerable attention is paid to problems in translating medical texts, and other issues, such as verification and review.

Keywords: Translation, medical texts, lexical level, equivalents, lay-readers,

List of Abbreviations

SL	-	Source Language.
TL	-	Target Language.
ST	-	Source Text.
TT	-	Target Text.

1. Introduction

Translation is a means of communication and a process of rendering meaning, ideas, or messages of a text from one language to another language. There are some factors which follow this process, which are primarily associated with the accuracy, lucidity,

and artlessness of the meaning, concepts, ideas, or messages of the translation. Achieving perfect equivalence in rendering ST properties into TT ones is not possible since each language has its own grammatical, lexical, and textual systems which differentiate one from the other.

In the context of the translation of medical texts, the principal difficulty originates from the lexical sources which mean the problem of reproduction of lexical content of SL terms into TL terms.

This study is based on “HEALTH IN THESE TIMES”, is a book written by DR.SanjiwaWijesinha, MBBS (Ceylon), MSc (oxford), FRCS, FACS. The book contains a wide variety of health care and medical precautionary articles that are likely to interest the choosiest reader. The style is Srilankan reader-friendly and suffused with a delightfully impish sense of humour that serves to reinforce the important messages that the author wants to convey. The author’s approach is to emphasize the promotive and preventive aspects of the diseases that he deals within this book. This study deals with problems arises at lexical level while translating medical texts for laypeople analysing several translation procedures and issues encountered in the translation of medical texts providing a theoretical basis, as well as examples to support the ideas presented, proving thus that any translator or linguist must know the basics of the work he or she becomes bound to.

2. Purpose of the Study

Medical translation belongs to a prominent group of technical translation hence the purpose of the study is to identify the problems at lexical level and tangle them in an effective manner to produce the medical and healthcare articles that sounds reader friendly as original and the main target readers of the translation will be lay people of the society.

3. Limitation of the Study

The study is carried out to identify the lexical problems in the medical and health care articles by analysing the translated Tamil version of “HEALTH IN THESE TIMES”. Since the translation difficulties have involved terminology and cultural aspects this research tries to cover all the attainable lexical level problems related to medical and healthcare field.

4. Analysis of Problems in lexical level

In the context of translation of medical texts, the central difficulty arises from the lexical sources which means the problem of representation of lexical content of SL terms into TL terms.

4.1 Identifying a term: First of all identifying a term can sometimes be difficult, especially when the form coincides with that of a general language word. This is what happened with the very specific medical terms or specialized terms.

Example- 1:

Source: “These tests may include a measurement of the level of cardiac enzymes in your blood (because these enzymes are increased if your heart has suffered any damage)....”

In the above sentence when the word ‘enzyme’ is concerned there comes a need to understand the term correctly. To overcome the confusions the dictionaries were referred.

The following definitions are from various dictionaries that is from simple dictionaries to specialized dictionaries.

1. Enzymes are biocatalyst that speeds up digestion and metabolism
2. Enzymes are both proteins and biological catalysts.
3. A substance produced by a living organism which act as catalyst to bring about a specific biochemical reaction.

Here the term Enzymes means நொதியம் in Tamil.¹ Hence cardiac enzymes means the enzymes produced from heart. Even though it is a scientific term in Tamil no other equivalent or familiar terms were found. It is rendered as இதயத்திலிருந்து உற்பத்தியாகும் நொதியங்கள்.

4.2 Medical Terms

The translated text is aimed at lay people, semi experts and also professional medical or translation studies students. The analysis shows a wide variety of terms related to the medical field and particular method of translation when it comes from English to Tamil.

Translating certain body organs can be difficult to some extent since there are no peculiar or names in Tamil as English. In such cases it can be paraphrased or given explanations in Tamil. If there is no equivalent in the TL, the translator could give an explanation for the term. This Explanation would depend on his/her understanding of the subject matter. This shows that, in technical and scientific translation, problems of terminology occupy a central position. The feature of scientific and technical translation hinges depend on the accurate rendering of concepts and their terms.

¹ Medical Dictionary (North Ceylon Pharmasists Union)

Examples: Body organs

Cervix	கற்பப்பைவாய்
Calf muscles	கென்றைக்கால் தசைகள்(கீழ்க் காலின் பின்புறத் தசைகள்)
Abdomen	அடிவயிற்றுப் பகுதி
Cardiac enzymes	இதயத்தில் காணப்படும் நொதியங்கள்
Placenta	நச்சுக்கொடி

Some diseases can be translated simply as they are well known in the target language community itself.

Examples:

Small pox	சின்னம்மை
Gallstone	பித்தக்கல்
Constipation	மலச்சிக்கல்
Anaemia	குருதிச் சோகை
Heart burn	நெஞ்செரிச்சல்
Brain tumors	மூளைக் கட்டிகள்
Diabetes	நீரிழிவு

When it comes to treatments or diagnosis translator may feel literal translation of medical terminology is a real boon.

Examples:

Hormone replacement therapy	-ஹோர்மோன் மாற்றுச் சிகிச்சை
X ray tube	-Xகதிர் குழாய்
Hidden Collection of pus	- மறைந்துள்ளசீழ் சேர்க்கைகள்

4.3Problem of inconsistency of equivalents

Terminological inconsistency in medical translation involves the alteration between transliteration and descriptive translation. Haddad (1997: 49-50) has pointed out that descriptive approach to translation can be a reasonable solution between the unnatural use of transliteration and the low familiarity, clarity and simplicity.Hence here descriptive translation can be the solution.

In the following example some terms are given a descriptive examples in order to overcome such a difficulty.

Premature heart disease	பருவத்திற்குமுந்திய இதயநோய்கள்
-------------------------	--------------------------------

Pancreatic tumors	கணையத்தில் ஏற்படும் கட்டிகள்
Secondary deposits of cancer	புற்றுநோய்க்கானதுணைக் காரணி
Intracranial blood clots	மண்டையோட்டினுள் இரத்தம் உறைதல்
Hidden collections of pus	மறைந்துள்ளசீழ் சேர்க்கைகள்
Blackout	நினைவிழந்தநிலை
Hemophilia	தசைநார் தேய்வு

Sometimes it is only possible to transliterate the term because there are no other terms in Tamil. In the process of actually transliterating a text, the translator replaces each SL letter or other graphological unit by a TL letter, or other unit.

The following examples the diseases, equipment, health problems or other medical terms are well-known to the general public. Hence transliterating or loan words only can serve its purpose or there will be no equivalents or no replacements in Tamil.

1. Diseases

Polio	போலியோ
Ulcer	அல்சர்
Mongolism	மொங்கோலிசம்
Bypass	வைப்பாஸ்
Malaria	மலேரியா
Aids	ஏயிட்ஸ்
Pneumonia	நிமோனியா
Atrophic vaginitis	அற்றோபிக் வர்ஜினிற்றிஸ்

2. Medical equipment or tools

Due to the impact of medical devices on people's lives, it is especially important to avoid errors in comprehension or suppression of information. For given medical devices, in the situation the information needs to be explained clearly. Some medical tools are well known in the source language among the lay people and semi experts that can be transliterated rather than giving Tamil equivalents.

Examples:

Some medical equipment have specialized terms in Tamil.

Stethoscope - இதயத் துடிப்புமானி Syringe - பீச்சுமருந்துசிக் குழாய்
Scanner - துருவப்படக் கருவி

As the source text is focused on the lay people and semi experts it is better to use ordinary meaning or better to transliterate.

Stethoscope - ஸ்டெதாஸ்கோப்

Syringe - சிரிஞ்

Treadmill - ட்ரெட்மில்

Scanner - ஸ்கானர்

In some circumstances there can be a Tamil equivalent but those equivalents may not be well known to the target reader. Hence giving the transliterations within the bracket can be helpful to eliminate any ambiguities or confusions. (English terms are more popular than Tamil terms among Tamil community.

Examples:

Angina Pectoris	மார்புமுடக்குவலி (ஆஞ்சினாபெற்றோரிஸ்)
Hypertension	உயர் குருதிஅழுத்தம்
German measles (rubella)	ஜேர்மன் சின்னமுத்து (ருபெல்லா)
Syphilis	மேகநோய் (சிபிலெஸ்)
Tetanus	ஈர்ப்புநோய் (ரெற்றேனஸ்)

Some medical terms have Tamil equivalents that may be unfamiliar to the target readers hence the explanations are given in Tamil in the bracket. The mentioned examples demonstrate the effects of time and language change. Some terms become old-fashioned and tend to disappear from the discourse used in the target language. In some other cases the term only known to the language specialist of the target language or investigator or certain speech community of the target language, thus the explanations given in the bracket will clarify the terms.

Examples:

Hitatus hernia	- இரைப்பை இறக்கம் (ஒருவகையானகுடலிறக்கம்)
Stomach ulcer	- வயிற்றுப் புண்
Duodental ulcer	- வயிற்றுஅல்சர்
Gastric ulcer	- முன் சிறு குடல் அல்சர்

Particular medical terms are purely technical and that can be a new entered disease or germs or equipment, in those circumstances there is no way rather than transliterating but explanation in the source language can be given within the bracket so the target readers can capture the idea of the terms.

Examples:

1. Diseases

- Spina bifida - ஸ்பைனாவிபிடா(ஒருவகையானமுதுகுத் தண்டுபிடிப்பு)
Dementia - டிமென்சியா (நினைவாற்றல் குறைதல்)

2. Treatments or diagnosis

Amniocentesis and chronic villous sampling- அமினோசென்ரசிஸ் அன்ட் குறோனிக் விலோஸ் சாம்பிளிங் (பனிக்குடத் துளைப்புஎனப்படும் குழந்தையைச் சுற்றியுள்ளதிரவத்தினைப் பரிசோதிக்கும் முறை)

- Foetal echography - நச்சுக்கொடிதிசுவினைப் பரிசோதனைசெய்தல்
Echo cardiography - மின் ஒலி இதயவரையி

4.4 Translating Drug names

Translating drug name is an especially difficult part in the field of medical translation because every year new lists of drugs are marketed.

To tangle this challenge transliterating the names is the only way.

Examples:

- Radiopaque Barium - ரேடியோபாக் பேரியம்
Chloroquine - குளோரோகுயின்
Quine - குயின்
Glyceryltrinitrate - கிளிசரில் ரைநைட்ரேற்
Aerosol spray - ஈரோசோல் ஸ்பிரே

5. Conclusion: Medical language is continually altering and facing developments. Hence, there are plenty of complications translators have to face when translating medical texts. In this level the problems in identifying the terms, inconsistency of equivalents and translating scientific names were encountered. However, as Tamil terminology is inadequate to label current advances in medical field. Hence many strategies were used to overcome the lexical problems.. Further if needed short explanations or paraphrases seems to be the best choices,

when it comes to medical specific technical terms. Since many such terms describe new realities, introducing the word as a loan word seems to be the best choice in covering the lexical gap. When transliterated forms are found unfamiliar to the target audience such terms can be explained within the brackets.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Catford, J.C. (1965). *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*. London: Oxford University.
2. Duff, Allan (1989). *Translation*. London: Oxford University Press
3. Hatim, B and Mason, I. (1990). *Discourse and the Translators*. New York. Longman.
4. Larson, M.L. (1984). *Meaning-Based Translation: A Guide to Cross - Language Equivalence*. Lanham Md: University Press of America
5. Newmark, P. (1988). *A Text book of Translation*. London: Prentice Hall International.
6. Tou, A.B. (1989). "Some Insights from Linguistics into the Processes and Problems of Translation". *TEFLIN Journal*
7. Ambihapahar (Ambi), R. (1988). *Scientific Tamil Pioneer- Dr Samuel Fisk Green*. Dhuhlasi Publications.
8. Baker, Mona. (ed), (2005), *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Translation Studies*. London: Routledge.