The Use of Erudite and Popular Terms while Translating Medical Texts from English into Uzbek

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Abstract

It is an obvious fact that translation is a crucial factor in disseminating knowledge and new discoveries in the medical field. It can also be a critical factor in providing healthcare services to foreigners or minorities, or, vice versa, when foreigners or minorities provide healthcare services to native people. The translators of medical texts face a number of challenges. The method of historical-comparative and semiotic analysis has been used in the process of the research. Thus, the paper aims at investigating the proper choice between erudite (Latin or Greek origin) and popular (Uzbek, or, in general, Turkic origin) terms while translating medical texts from English into Uzbek. This specific issue is discussed in this paper. Considerable attention is devoted to problems in translating medical texts, and other issues, such as classification of medical discourses according to the translational method recommended for it.

Keywords: medical terminology, erudite terms, popular terms, LSP, situational language.

1.0. Introduction

The translation of medical terms (specifically – from English into Uzbek) represents an interesting and rich area for translation studies. The first thing a researcher should take into consideration when starting investigate this issue is the language definition, that is when medical terms (as a part of medical terminology) are translated from English into any other language, or vice versa, actually, there are always the third party – Latin, Greek, internationally adopted words and terms, specific jargon, etc. This article provides a contribution to the characterization of the main translation-related problems encountered in this area. All European languages share the same Greco-Latin roots in medical terminology. The preservation of the Latin language as the language of sciences until the 19th century, contributed to a great range of lexical similarities in medical nomenclature, and its effects can be observed until today.

The knowledge of the Latin roots helps professionals in the field of medicine understand medical texts in different languages. The purpose of this study is not only to describe but also to classify the analyzed examples. We believe that this categorization of cases will help professional translators and students in finding solutions when they encounter certain names of diseases or medicines in English which have to be translated into Uzbek, but, taking into consideration the fact, that transcription and transliteration are still the most effective and careful tools in the sphere of medical terms translation. The main focus of this article is the communication between non-professionals (in particular – common people, discussing medical topics, journalists who write for a general readership that has no special medical background knowledge).

2.0. Correctness in Style and Situational Language

When translating medical terms from English into Uzbek, or from Uzbek into English, translators are often uncertain about whether to opt for the erudite term or the term from everyday language.

During the last decades, the number of scientific publications, in particular publications from the field of health care, has increased enormously. On the one hand, advances in education contributed to the emergence of non-professional, but well-informed readers with a rising interest in health care issues. An ever increasing number is interested in learning more about their own body. On the other hand, the rapid development of media and communication technologies has decisively contributed to the popularization of medical terms, which today form an integral part of everyday language.

Health care is a widespread concern, and patients expect their doctors to provide them with more and more detailed information. The increase in the number of publications of popular science texts has made a very remarkable contribution to the spread of medical language among the general population. However, the use of scientific terms may constitute a comprehension barrier between the doctor and the patient, which is why professionals prefer to use terms from the everyday language when talking to their patients. In translational theory this phenomenon is called "situational language", in more theorized disciplines, such as linguistics, this phenomenon is known under the term "cognitive linguistics". Such

communication may, however, lead to misunderstandings due to the fact that doctor and patient have a completely different notion of one and the same concept. In English, for instance, the doctor normally uses the term Diabetes, whereas the patient in Uzbekistan would rather opt for the word "shakar kasalligi" ("sugar disease"). This term gives a quite general idea of the disease and just underlines one aspect of the whole pathological condition.

The main reason for our research is the specificity of medical terms in Uzbek. While in English, many terms, especially names of diseases (appendicitis, cataracts, conjunctivitis etc.), are used in both professional and non-professional communication, i.e. between doctors as well as between patients, in Uzbek we normally come across two terms that belong to the same concept. One term is of Latin origin and typical of communication between experts, the other one has Turkic roots and is part of everyday language. When translating from English (or from other languages of the same family) into Uzbek, it is evident that the option for either the Latin (or Greek) term or the Uzbek term is by no means arbitrary and depends basically on the scope of the translation. If the text to be translated addresses a general audience, it would be correct to use the term of Turkic origin, whereas in a translation for professionals the erudite term of Latin origin would be adequate.

Although the question of synonymy seems evident, it is a matter of fact that words and their use undergo constant evolution, which may result in additional problems for the translation. As it happened in economics, for example, the dissemination of medicine enriched everyday language with terms that before had been used exclusively by professionals, whereas, at the same time, other Uzbek words fell into disuse and sound antiquated while they are still used in the area of medicine. Apart from that, everyday language also 'absorbed' disease terms which relate to currently discovered diseases and new ways of treatment. Due to all of these reasons, the translation of medical terms may present a translation problem. This is why we intend to contribute to the identification of a set of problems encountered when dealing with medical texts in translation classes and try to offer some possible solutions for particular translation problems.

3.0. Theoretical Background

Medical language belongs to the so-called languages for special purposes (LSP) which differ from everyday language above all in the specificity of the terminology and in that they are used in communication between professionals. These languages for special purposes are part of the language system and can be classified in different ways. This classification is always difficult, since these languages are in constant development and partially overlap with everyday language. Lothar Hoffmann (2015) presents two distinct ways of classifying languages for special purposes: a vertical and a horizontal division. The horizontal division is made on the basis of different knowledge domains and is characterized by its open structure, which means that, due to the evolution of science, new areas are continuously born. As far as the vertical division is concerned, Hoffmann distinguishes according to the level of abstraction, the text genre, the speakers involved etc.

Our analysis is based on the typology proposed by Loning (2011: 83), in which she differentiates four main levels according to the degree of specialization among the communication partners and the aim of the text or the conversation:

1.1 communication partners: professional - professional (doctor - doctor)
   2 aim: transfer of current specialized knowledge
   3 style: scientific texts
   4. examples: publications, summary reports

2.1 communication partners: professional - semi-professional (doctor - medical student/health personnel)
   2 aim: transfer of basic knowledge
   3 style: instruction
   4 examples: course books, handbooks, monographs

3.1 communication partners: professional - non-professional (doctor - patient)
   2 aim: education and practical instruction
   3 style: education
   4 examples: books and writings on patient education and instruction

4.1 communication partners: non-professional - non-professional (journalist - reader)
   2 aim: arouse interest and turn problems public
   3 style: popular science texts
   4 examples: articles in newspapers, magazines of general interest and health magazines

Löning's typology is very detailed and therefore serves as theoretical framework for this research. Since it is our objective to focus on popular science texts written for a non-professional readership, we will exclusively focus on levels 3 and 4.

4.0. Case Studies

In order to understand the translation difficulties, which arise from translating into Uzbek, we should keep in mind that this Turkic language, especially its scientific lexicon, has been greatly influenced by terms of Arabic and Persian origin. The effective use of Arabic and Persian in medical discourse did not start decreasing until after the 13th century, with the ongoing substitution of these languages to the classical languages (Latin and Greek) with the vernacular.

Nevertheless, specific medical vocabulary still kept a strong influence of the Arabic and Persian etymons, as it happened in with Latin and Greek to other European languages. Nevertheless, in Uzbek, the majority of the specific medical vocabulary derives from Latin and Greek, but these terms did not reach the general language. Non-professionals used a parallel term of Turkic origin to express themselves about diseases or health conditions. So, along the centuries, two different lexicons have coexisted: on one hand the erudite forms used by physicians and, on the other hand, the popular form of Turkic origin. According to the translation situation and/or to the textual genre, it is necessary to take into account the different register levels and possible changes in vocabulary, especially when translating from languages like English, which sometimes have only one term, of Latin origin. Recent evolution in the influence of Anglo-American terms in science should also be taken into account. The English language has strongly influenced, and is still influencing, scientific language and, through this influence, many terms (some of them from a Latin or Greek origin) were introduced into the Uzbek language, both in specialized and popular discourse.

According to the translation situation described in this article, the translator should make a choice between the Uzbek term and the Greek / Latin equivalent when translating popularizing texts. It is possible to characterize three major situations: A - translations in which only the term derived from Greek or from Latin is adequate; B - translations in which both terms appear, the Uzbek popular word followed by the erudite term in brackets; and finally C - translations in which only the Uzbek term is adequate, because the erudite term is known only by the specialist.

4.1. Use of the Erudite Term (Greek and Latin Origin)

Sometimes it is only possible to use a word derived from Greek or Latin, because there is no other term of Turkic origin to designate this illness. In this case, there is only one equivalent, and it does not represent a translation problem. In several other cases, the erudite term is the only one adequate for the popular science text, although the popular term also exists. The reasons for that are not always the same, therefore in the next part the different options are as following:

1) Inexistence of a Turkic term
2) Preferential use of the erudite term (of Greek / Latin origin) because of its scientific precision
3) Preferential use of the erudite term (of Greek / Latin origin) to prevent possible negative connotations
4) Preferential use of the erudite term (of Greek / Latin origin) due to an old-fashioned Turkic term
5) Use of the erudite term (of Greek / Latin origin) due to the rareness of the disease (orphan diseases)

4.2. Use of Popular Term and Introduction of Erudite Term as Additional Explanation

In an attempt to elucidate the term or educate the public, popular science journalists sometimes use the common term and add the erudite term in order to clarify the meaning. These terms often refer to health problems for which new treatments have been found and that are at the moment being disseminated among the general public. Others simply reveal that the Turkic word is becoming old-fashioned. This group of terms characterize a transition phase, in which the erudite term is progressively becoming part of common language.

4.3. Use of the Popular Term (of Turkic Origin)

Some medical terms refer to common health complaints and non-specific health problems, which have long been known by the general public. The translation of these terms from English into Uzbek represents a problem, because the erudite word in Uzbek, similar to the English word, is not used or completely unfamiliar to the non-professional. It is advisable to make translation specialists aware of these cases, so that they may select the adequate word according to the genre.

5.0. Conclusion

When translating medical terms from English into Uzbek in popular science texts, translators are often uncertain about whether to opt for the erudite term or the term from everyday language. It is exactly this synonymy that presents a challenge for the translator. According to the translation scope, it is necessary to decide on one term. For better understanding of this tricky translation problem, we analyzed different popular science texts and came up with a typology consisting of three main cases, one of them divided into several subgroups. This classification shall contribute to improving transparency when translating medical texts written for a non-professional readership.

We also observed a very strong tendency of popularization of erudite terms in popular science texts. These texts are often written by technical translators for non-professionals in order to inform or instruct them. It is, however, important to underline that today's non-professionals are different from those of some decades ago. Nowadays, it has become more and more important for a patient to learn about the most common diseases, their symptoms and how to protect themselves against them. The modern patient is more curious and also more demanding. This fact is closely linked to the general tendency of popularization in science. It can therefore be expected that Latin terms will become more widespread in popular science texts in the future.

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