

The Metaphor of Traditional Chinese Medicine in TCM Classic *Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine*

Xinyu Chen*

Department of English, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Selangor,
Malaysia

Hazlina Abdul Halim

Department of English, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Selangor,
Malaysia

Zaid M. Mohd Zin

Department of English, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Selangor,
Malaysia

Abstract—Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is extensive and profound, characterized by well-developed and abstract theoretical framework. The first preserved medical canon in China, *Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine*, records the advancements in Chinese medicine. The knowledge system and theoretical foundations can be learned through the analysis of TCM classics. It can be found that the classic applies many metaphors to construct the semantics of the terminological system. Metaphor maps the source and target domains and is essential for human conceptualization, bridging the gap between the linguistic and medicinal realms. This qualitative study takes the metaphors in *Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine* as the research object and utilizes the conceptual metaphor theory by Lakoff and Johnson (2008) and the Metaphor Identification Procedure by Group (2007) to determine conceptual metaphors. The results revealed that the metaphor of battling an army can be used to describe a patient's struggle with illness to simplify complex biological processes and inspire resilience, and human organs can be manifested as officials to emphasize specialization and coordination within the biological system. Additionally, the functions of metaphor in meaning construction and the translation strategies employed in metaphor translation are summarized. The ways of translating metaphors include reproducing the same image, replacing the metaphor with another image, converting it to the sense, and transferring it into a simile. This study identifies various metaphorical expressions related to TCM and summarizes effective translation strategies, offering new insights into TCM translation.

Index Terms—Traditional Chinese Medicine, conceptual metaphors, metaphor translation

I. INTRODUCTION

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is a science that explores disease diagnosis and prevention, as well as human physiological states and pathological conditions. Compared with Western medicine, the theoretical system of TCM has been formed and developed based on Chinese philosophical concepts involving essential qi theory, yin-yang theory, and five phase theory, which makes it difficult for readers to understand. TCM considers the human body as a unity. TCM doctors diagnose and determine the location and cause of the disease through inspection, listening, smelling, inquiry, and palpation, and then apply therapeutic principles, including routine and paradoxical treatment, and adopt therapeutic methods, including acupuncture, dietary therapy, and manipulation, to treat diseases based on syndrome differentiation. Consequently, patients can restore the balance of yin and yang within their bodies and promote overall health.

Metaphor is everywhere, as defined by cognitive linguistics, and is both a linguistic and cognitive phenomenon. Metaphors can help people understand abstract concepts. TCM has not been well understood and accepted by the international community because of its obscure language and unique thinking model. TCM classics that illustrate TCM theories contain various metaphorical expressions. *Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine* is a classic work of TCM. This study reveals the cognitive mode behind the language and theoretical construction of TCM from the perspective of metaphor, which sheds light on TCM and metaphor research.

In terms of metaphor translation, scholars now not only discuss the translatability of metaphor and the translation strategies of metaphor, but also conduct cognitive studies on conceptual metaphors and explore how metaphors can be

* Corresponding Author.

translated on the level of linguistics and conceptualization. This study investigates the metaphor phenomenon in TCM treatise and summarizes the translation strategies of metaphors. Metaphor translation serves as a conduit connecting the distinctive cognitive patterns of TCM and ancient linguistic expressions with foreign languages. This would help readers comprehend and interpret the language of TCM and offer methods and solutions for further study and translation of other classic works of TCM, thus promoting the development of the translation of TCM literature into foreign languages as well as the cross-cultural dissemination of TCM.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are a large number of published studies on TCM, and many researchers have explored TCM from many aspects, including the history and development direction of TCM, therapeutic effect and clinical cases of TCM, education methods of TCM, reception of TCM, and translation methods and strategies adopted in TCM texts (Fang, 2024; Jiang et al., 2024; Shi et al., 2024; Zhao et al., 2024; Shi & Song, 2024; Wu et al., 2023). However, many scholars describe TCM as a mysterious "Chinese wonder". TCM treatises dating back to the fifth century BC pose semantic comprehension challenges that must be tackled because their poetic and figurative language hinders readers' comprehension (Chen, 2023). Terminologies and concepts related to TCM cannot be understood by readers if they are not clearly defined, and serious issues can arise from terminological mistakes (Sun et al., 2024). Because these terms are related to diagnosis and treatment methods, ethical principles, and philosophical concepts, comprehending and applying these medicinal principles and methods is essential for people who want to improve their physical wellness and mental health. The increasing prevalence of TCM practices in healthcare, not only in Southeast Asian nations like China but also in Russia, post-Soviet states, and other nations, makes it more important than ever to utilize TCM terminology correctly (Nichols, 2021; Wang & Kuzmenko, 2023).

Metaphors are ubiquitous in language and serve as cognitive schemata to structure conceptual frameworks. Grounded in bodily experience and the perception of familiar entities, metaphors facilitate knowledge construction by mapping domains of concrete physical interactions (source domains) onto abstract conceptual territories (target domains). Readers would establish correspondences between the two and utilize their understanding of one entity to articulate another. Their conception of metaphor can be illustrated by the example "ARGUMENT IS WAR", in which a conception about argument can be developed based on knowledge about war. The argument can be heated and confrontational as war, using combative language and clinching victory, and mappings from the source domain would aid in creating a deeper comprehension of the target domain (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Metaphorical expressions are extensively and artistically employed in literary works. Metaphor is not only a rhetorical device, but also a reflection of our way of thinking and a tool by which we understand noble conceptions and frame our conception of the world. Khadidja and Margaret (2013) found that metaphors can be seen as a means of conveying abstract and complex scientific notions and stress the epistemological function of terminological metaphors that are essential for common readers to understand scientific phenomena and processes, which can promote popular science communication. Ritchie and Zhao (2020) found that metaphors are frequently used in poems, from which readers learn about the cultural conventions of symbolism, allegory, and the poet's situation. Metaphors are believed to play an important role in public education and knowledge transfer in the context of globalization (Montgomery, 2000). Metaphors function as a language tool for acquiring TCM theory (Hartzell, 2005). The metaphorical expression "Over the diaphragm there are parents" exemplifies the mapping process, employing "parents" as the source domain to represent the heart and lungs, which constitute the target domain. The source and target domains were identified. These metaphors perform the function of conceptualizing physiological activities and pathological changes in the human body and their interrelationships. That is, to make abstract thinking more concrete. This will help readers understand the complex TCM theories.

Despite its wide application, the discourse on TCM remains underexplored. Nature metaphors are frequently seen in TCM texts, and the properties of things in the natural world have been mapped onto the target domain (Lai & Jia, 2020; Song & Jia, 2021). The metaphor of an official position is applied to link the duties and social status of an officer with the functions and locations of organs (Ni et al., 2024). War metaphors can be used to vividly narrate the human body's fight against disease (Huang, 2023). Container metaphor mapping organs as the target domain illustrates the functions of viscera in a metaphorical way (Zhu & Jia, 2022). Metaphor research and cognitive science offer a new perspective on theoretical research on TCM. Researchers should attach importance to the language research of TCM (Liu & Jia, 2022). Most scholars only propose one or two conceptual metaphors in their studies, and these studies are not comprehensive; only some adopt a critical approach, investigating the literal and contextual meanings of metaphors in TCM literature, the cultural connotations and ideological perceptions hidden behind the metaphors, and their role in meaning construction. To address this research gap, the present study identifies the metaphorical and non-metaphorical use of words, classifies conceptual metaphors, and illustrates how they are formulated in the ST and their influence on theoretical construction.

Given the widespread use of English and the vast population of Chinese speakers, it is crucial to compare the two languages to enhance the accuracy of metaphor translation and enable communication between these two populations (Yu & Shao, 2023). Many studies have explored the translation of metaphors in various texts. Shehab and Nazzal (2022) stressed the educative role of metaphors in business texts, which facilitate readers' understanding of business situations,

and summarized strategies for translating metaphors: translating the ST metaphor into its equivalent in the TT and transferring an English non-metaphor into an Arabic metaphor. Kruger (1991) emphasized the effect of metaphors on characterization and explored the ways of translating metaphorical expressions in narrative fiction, including substitution, paraphrase, and deletion. However, few researchers have conducted in-depth research on metaphors in TCM texts from a translation perspective, although effective knowledge transmission can be promoted through translation. Li (2024) investigated the translation strategies of metaphors in TCM texts and mentioned that literal and transliteration translation strategies can be used to preserve the cultural elements and aesthetic features of literary works. In addition, Qiu and Wang (2024) found that the untranslatability of TCM metaphors is mainly manifested by cultural differences and the uniqueness of TCM metaphors, explored the translation strategy under the guidance of knowledge translation theory, and stated that explanatory notes should be added to the translation to fully convey the cultural symbolism behind them. These studies describe the translation methods and strategies used in translation works, but the purposes and effects of using translation strategies are underexplored.

Critical studies on the translation of metaphor in TCM literature that address the reconstruction of linguistic-cultural codes in the target language and illustrate the process of cultural meaning absorption and transformation between texts are largely lacking in the literature. To fill this research gap, the present study categorizes the translation strategies of metaphors in *Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine* based on Newmark's (1981) taxonomy and discusses how cultural images are reconstructed in metaphor translation, which helps readers understand TCM conceptions and thoughts. The abundance of metaphors found in TCM texts stimulates researchers' curiosity about how well they are translated in medical translation and how they help spread knowledge of TCM. The processing effort and contextual effects were analyzed to provide useful recommendations for translation practice.

The present study analyzes metaphors translated into another language and investigates the discursive practice of metaphors in medical discourse. This study investigates the use and translation of metaphors in different contexts, helping readers gain a deeper understanding of the abstract concepts and theories of TCM. Based on the aforementioned information, three research objectives need to be achieved in this study: (1) to identify metaphorical expressions and their translations in the English translation of *Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine*; (2) to classify metaphors and determine types of conceptual metaphors; and (3) to summarize translation strategies used in the translations of metaphors.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Material

The materials used for this study consist of the classic *Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine* in Chinese and its English translation by Li Zhaoguo, published on the 1st of April, 2005. *Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine* is the earliest existing medical literature in China. It is not only a precious medical work but also a philosophical treatise embodying the Chinese philosophy of life, which encompasses astronomy, calendrics, geography, and other realms. This masterpiece elaborates on the fundamental theories of TCM and expounds on the physiology and pathology of the human body and the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of diseases, establishing the unique theoretical system of TCM, which has had a profound impact on future generations.

The classic comprises two different parts: Spiritual Pivot and Plain Conversation. Spiritual Pivot systematically elaborates on the visceral system, disease etiology, and pathological mechanisms, with particular emphasis on meridian-acupoint theory, acupuncture instruments, and needling techniques. Plain Conversation constructs a theoretical framework and introduces diagnostic methods and therapeutic principles. The analysis of TCM texts facilitates the comprehension of TCM's fundamental theories and knowledge hierarchy.

The English version rendered by Li Zhaoguo was selected as the research object. Professor Li is a distinguished translator and scholar specializing in TCM with dual academic expertise in English linguistics and literature. His rendition of *Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine*, a three-volume bilingual edition containing classical Chinese text, modern Chinese interpretation, and English translation published by Xi'an World Publishing Corporation in 2005, exemplifies scholarly rigor. Notably selected for inclusion in the Library of Chinese Classics project by the National Press and Publication Administration in 2007, this work employs multiple translation strategies, offering critical insights into medical research and intercultural communication studies.

B. Method

This qualitative study adopted a descriptive approach to metaphor analysis. The metaphors analyzed were extracted from the classic *Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine* and Li's English version. The researchers observed various metaphorical expressions in this work. The Metaphor Identification Procedure developed by Group (2007) was first adopted to identify the metaphors of TCM and distinguish between metaphorical and non-metaphorical word usage. The following steps were taken to determine whether the terms and phrases are metaphorical expressions:

- 1) Read the book and know the main content of the text.
- 2) Determine what the content means in the language context in relation to other words that precede and follow the lexical unit.
- 3) Determine whether the content has other meanings in other language contexts.

4) Determine whether the contextual meaning differs from its fundamental meaning. If the contextual meaning and its fundamental meaning are not the same, the lexical item is a metaphor.

Metaphors can be identified using this method. The researcher also applied the conceptual metaphor theory by Lakoff and Johnson (2008) and presented the thematic distribution of metaphorical names in TCM texts. Different types of metaphors were manually identified in the Source Text (ST) and their renditions in the Target Text (TT). The researcher identified the translation strategies used to translate metaphors and categorized them according to Newmark's (1981) taxonomy.

IV. RESEARCH RESULT

A. *The Conceptual Metaphors Adopted in Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine*

In the present study, *Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine* and its English translation were analyzed. The analysis revealed that multiple conceptual metaphors are commonly used in the book, which can be divided into four groups: spatial metaphor, ontological metaphor, structural metaphor and relational metaphor. This study provides linguistic examples of these conceptual metaphors and discusses what translation strategies the translator applied to translate metaphors and how the translation enhances the influence of TCM.

(a). *The Physiological Activity of Human Beings Is a Natural Phenomenon*

Nature metaphor is one of the most commonly applied conceptual metaphors. Nature and humanity coexist in harmony, and people can grasp the laws of nature to better understand the world through observation. The language of nature, namely myriad things from the natural world involving the sun, moon, fire, and sea, and natural phenomena such as plant growth and animal crawling, can be used to describe abstract and complex human physiological and pathological conditions. Some linguistic expressions extracted from the ST and their corresponding words in the TT are listed below.

1) ST:

秋日下肤，蜚虫将去；冬日在骨，蜚虫周密。

qiu ri xia fu, zhe chong jiang qu; dong ri zai gu, zhe chong zhou mi.

'On autumn days, the pulse is slightly sunken under the skin, **like worms going into the hole**; In winter, and the pulse sinks to the bone, **like worms lying dormant in the hole.**'

TT:

In autumn, [the pulse is beating] beneath the skin just **like the insects going into hiding**; In winter, [the pulse] is near the bone just **like animals in hibernation**.

Natural metaphors can be used to describe the physiological activities of the human body. The pulse of a person changes with the seasons. The two terms describing animal behavior, "蜚虫将去" and "蜚虫周密", are employed to highlight the feature of pulse condition felt on examination by pulse diagnosis. Traditional Chinese physicians have constantly explored the relationship between the natural world and human activity and applied nature-related words and phrases to conceptualize complex medical phenomena, providing numerous metaphorical expressions for TCM.

The first example transfers metaphor into simile and applies the explicit comparison marker "like", clarifying the logical relationship and reducing ambiguity while maintaining rhetorical effectiveness. The literal meaning of "蜚虫周密" is "worms hibernating in the hole", which is literally translated as "animals in hibernation". The more general word "animal" is used as substitute for the specific term "insects" to avoid repetition.

(b). *The Process of Treating Disease Is a War*

In ancient times, powerful figures contended for dominance over the land. A time of constant conflict and destruction brings great disasters to society, and war is related to the life and death of people. Therefore, ancient people in China recognized the similarity between disease and an enemy, as well as between medical treatment and warfare, and used war-related terms to conceptualize diseases as enemies and treatments as combat strategies, highlighting the invasion mode of pathogenic factors and the process of fighting illness. This metaphor shapes both professional and public understanding of health and illness.

2) ST:

毒药攻邪，五谷为食，五果为助。

du yao gong xie, wu gong wei shi, wu guo wei zhu.

'Medicines can be used to **treat** diseases. The five kinds of grain can be eaten as food to nourish the body, and the five kinds of fruit can be consumed to supplement the diet.'

TT:

Duyao (drugs) [can be used] to **attack** Xie (Evil), the five kinds of grain [can be used] to nourish [the body], the five kinds of fruit [can be used] to assist [the five kinds of grain to nourish the body].

In the second example, "邪" refers to the devil and means pathogenic factor in this context, which is literally rendered as "evil", preserving the term's cultural identity and avoiding distortion. "攻" refers to the aggressive attack action taken by enemy forces in a war and means medical treatment in this context. This term is literally translated as

"attack", preserving the unique worldview and values of the culture. The process of fighting disease is metaphorically described as an armed conflict. Medicine and pathogen are portrayed as two sides of a battle. Medicinal herbs are compared to armed forces fighting against illness, which is the army of physical health. Such retention in the translation duplicates the promising therapeutic effect of Chinese medicines and their treatment course.

(c). *The Organ in the Body Is a Social Role in Society*

In Chinese society, every Chinese person forms close social bonds and family relationships with each other. Various types of social relationships and kinship networks have been developed. Metaphors about social relationships could be seen as an effective tool for comprehending the relationships and functions of organs and viscera based on readers' understanding of social relationships, including parent-child relationship and monarch-subject relationship, providing a vivid explanatory model for readers.

3) ST:

三阳为父..... 三阴为母.....

san yang wei fu... san yin wei mu...

'Three-yang meridian is like a **father** taking an important position in the family, and three-yin meridian is like a **mother** raising her children.'

TT:

Triple-Yang [is equivalent to the position of] **father**... Triple-Yin [is equivalent to the position of] **mother**.

In the third example, "三阳" and "三阴" refer to the three-yang meridian and three-yin meridian respectively. Three-yang meridian is a generic term for the three yang meridians of the hand and foot, which are important components of the conduit system. Three yin meridians is a generic term for three yin meridians of the hand and three yin meridians of the foot, together forming the meridian network. TCM theory holds that meridians and channels connect the intestines, viscera, extremities, and tissues. Qi and blood circulating in meridians nourish the human body. "父" and "母" literally mean father and mother, emphasizing the importance of the three-yang meridian and three-yin meridian in the human body. The translation transfers metaphor into simile, retaining artistic impact and bridging cultural gaps by clarifying comparative relationships.

(d). *The Organ in the Body Is a Container*

People regard themselves as entities independent of the external world, and their activities, including leaving the room, entering the classroom, and walking into the supermarket, are similar to entering and exiting various containers. In addition, the human body can be considered as a container with space and external boundaries, and the container metaphor can be used to narrate people's physiological activities, such as exhaling and excretion.

4) ST:

头者，精明之府，头倾视深，精神将夺矣。

tou zhe, jing ming zhi fu, tou qing shi shen, jing shen jiang duo yi.

'The head is **where** the spirit and intelligence **are located**. If the head is tilted to the side and the eye sockets are sunken, the spirit will be declined. This indicates that the patient is in a serious condition.'

TT:

The head is the **house** of Jingming. Drooped head and sunken eyes [are the signs] that Jingshen (Essence-Spirit) is on the verge of exhaustion.

In the fourth example, "府" refers to government offices where officials handled administrative affairs, the residences of high-ranking officials, or repositories for official papers or valuables in ancient times. This classic portrays bodily parts, involving head, kidney, and bladder, as containers with the functions of storage and accommodation. "精明" is transliterated as "Jingming" which refers to intelligence. The organs serve as the convergence point for matter and energy, and the head is regarded as a dwelling where the spirit and intelligence are located. "府" is directly translated as "house". The metaphor that remains in the TT maintains the cultural uniqueness of TCM and enables learners to explore the culture and knowledge system of TCM, deepening their understanding of its fundamental theory.

B. *The Translation Strategies Used in the Translation of Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine*

Metaphors and their translation strategies should be summarized through researchers' analyses of TCM texts, and these translation studies should be conducted under the guidance of linguistic and translation theories (Zhao & Kuang, 2023). Newmark (1981) proposed methods of translating metaphors, including replicating the same image in the target language (TL), substituting a standard TL image for the image in the source language (SL), transferring a metaphor into a simile, translating a metaphor by simile with sense, converting a metaphor to sense, deleting metaphor, and combining the same metaphor with sense. The translation strategies used for translating metaphors are summarized. Furthermore, the purposes and effects of employing various translation strategies and the language contexts in which these strategies are most effectively utilized are analyzed.

(a). *Reproducing the Same Image in the TL*

The more universal the sense, the more likely the figurative sense is to be transferred (Newmark, 1981). The metaphor would be retained in the TT if the sense of metaphor can be understood in the language context or the readers can easily make a connection between the source domain and the target domain without much effort, thus preserving cultural characteristics and the charm of language.

5) ST:

开阖不得，寒气从之，乃生大倮。

kai he bu de, han qi cong zhi, nai sheng da lou.

'When the interstices can not **open and close** normally, the human body will be infected by wind and contract hunchback.'

TT:

[When sweat pores] **open and close** abnormally, Hanqi (Cold-Qi) [will invade the body] through the sweat pores, making the body unable to straighten up.

6) ST:

故伤于风者，上先受之；伤于湿者，下先受之。

gu shang yu feng zhe, shang xian shou zhi; shang yu shi zhe, xia xian shou zhi.

'When the body is infected by wind, the upper part of the body will contract wind first; when the body is infected by dampness, the lower part of the body will contract dampness first.'

TT:

So when Wind **invades [the body]**, it attacks the upper [part of the body] first; when Dampness **invades [the body]**, it attacks the lower [part of the body] first.

In the fifth example, the two verbs "开" and "阖", which mean removing and closing the lid of a container, are used to describe the dilation and contraction of sweat pores in the context. Sweat pores are regarded as the lid of container through which pathogenic factors enter the human body. Container is familiar to readers, and container metaphor can remain in the translation. In the sixth example, the verb "伤" is translated as "invade" which means an armed force entering a region and causing damage. The translation preserves the cultural image, implying that the pathogenic factor acts harmfully on the body part in the context. The war metaphor is retained in the TT to show the process of disease spreading in the human body.

Retention of metaphorical expressions in the TT is to maintain the original flavor of the TCM culture. These metaphors are drawn from source domains closely related to personal life and social experiences. Readers can understand the metaphor translation based on their life experiences and find connections between the metaphor used and everyday practice.

(b). *Replacing the Image in the SL With a Standard TL Image*

This translation strategy is helpful when languages operate in different cultural and social contexts. Metaphorical expressions with distinctive cultural features, including metaphors mapping onto official positions in the source domain, are frequently found in this classic. The cultural image could be replaced by an equivalent, causing a similar reading effect on readers with different backgrounds.

7) ST:

心者，君主之官也，神明出焉。

xin zhe, jun zhu zhi guan ye, shen ming chu yan.

'The heart is functioned as **central ruler**, governing mental-spiritual functions.'

TT:

The heart is the organ [similar to] a **monarch** and is responsible for Shenming (mental activity or thinking).

8) ST:

膻中者，臣使之官，喜乐出焉。

tan zhong zhe, chen shi zhi guan, xi le chu yan.

'The chest center is functioned as **messenger**, transmitting joy and happiness.'

TT:

The pericardium is the organ [similar to] an **envoy** and is responsible for happiness and joy.

In the seventh example, "君主" refers to the Chinese emperor who was regarded as the son of heaven in ancient times and held supreme authority in imperial China and it is translated as "monarch" which refers to a king or queen reigning over a kingdom. In the eighth example, "臣使" refers to a messenger conveying imperial edicts and it is translated as "envoy" which refers to a minister plenipotentiary in a foreign government. The heart and pericardium are depicted as officers in the Chinese court in the ST. However, the names of ancient Chinese official positions do not have equivalent terms in English. The imperial bureaucratic system of ancient China shares common ground with the hierarchical structure in the Western political system. Thus, foreign readers with different social backgrounds can understand the meanings of the metaphors through reading their counterparts in translation.

These two examples adopt the official titles of foreign government positions instead of those of ancient Chinese government because the translator must consider the needs of readers who lack relevant background knowledge, and their formal equivalents cannot be found in the TT. Titles vary by country, and substitutes are used in the TT to make

the translation more accessible to readers. This approach enhances clarity in cross-cultural communication by ensuring that readers accurately understand figurative language containing cultural connotations.

(c). *Translation of Metaphor by Simile*

The similarity between the source and target domains is unclear, and readers may feel puzzled and have difficulty understanding the text if the metaphorical expression is translated directly. In this case, the metaphor must be transferred into a simile. This translation strategy can modify the shock of a metaphor, especially complex metaphor (Newmark, 1981). This could retain the image and indicate the logical connection and similar points between the source and target domains.

9) ST:

三阳为父..... 三阴为母.....

san yang wei fu..... san yin wei mu.....

'Three Yang roles as **father** and Three Yin roles as **mother**, regulating yang and yin energy and governing internal nourishment.'

TT:

Triple-Yang [is equivalent to the position of] **father**... Triple-Yin [is equivalent to the position of] **mother**...

10) ST:

六经为川，肠胃为海，九窍为水注之气。

jing wei chuan, chang wei wei hai, jiu qiao wei shui zhu zhi qi.

'The six meridians are like **streams**, circulating vital substances to nourish the organs. The intestines and the stomach are like the **seas**, storing the cereals and absorbing nutrients.'

TT:

The Six-Channels act as **mountains and valleys**, the intestines and the stomach act as **the seas**.

In the ninth example, the Triple-Yang and Triple-Yin meridians, which nourish other channels, are presented as parents raising children. The original image is preserved, and the phrase "be equivalent to the position of" is used to establish a clear connection between the source and target domains. In the tenth example, the Six-Channels are depicted as flowing rivers that continue endlessly, and the intestines and stomach are likened to seas that contain everything. The translation uses the phrase "act as" to illustrate the conceptual relationship between natural elements and organs, thereby clarifying their roles and physiological functions. This conceptual mapping signifies the importance of viscera and meridians within the human body.

When the source domain of a metaphor and its target domain share some similarities in function and role, the translator needs to translate the metaphor into a simile to clarify the target and source domains and their similarities to accurately convey the information. Overly literal translations may mystify TCM theory, making it unintelligible to readers. Translation of metaphor by simile prioritizes reader comprehension, clarity, accuracy, and cross-cultural accessibility. By explicitly marking comparative relationships, similes retain the structural beauty of the language while preventing the loss or distortion of TCM's unique concepts.

(d). *Translation of Metaphor by Simile Plus Sense*

This is a compromise procedure that combines the advantages of communicative and semantic translation, satisfying the needs of both common and professional readers (Newmark, 1981). If the metaphor is transferred into a simile and readers still cannot understand the symbolic meaning of the metaphor, the tenor and vehicle of the metaphor should be clarified, and the connotation of the metaphor the text omits needs to be further explained in the TT.

11) ST:

此四支八溪之朝夕也。

ci si zhi ba xi zhi zhao xi ye.

'The qi, blood, tendons and vessels are like **the tide** flowing into four limbs and eight joints, i.e., elbows, armpits, hips, knees, arms and legs.'

TT:

[The Qi, blood, sinews and vessels flow into and run along] the four limbs and the Baxi (eight joints) are like **morning and evening tides**.

12) ST:

目盲不可以视，耳闭不可以听，溃溃乎若坏都，汨汨乎不可止。

mu mang bu ke yi shi, er bi bu ke yi ting, kui kui hu ruo huai du, gu gu hu bu ke zhi.

'Dysfunction of human organs causes sensory impairment. Blindness renders the eyes incapable of vision, and blocked ears deprive one of hearing. The patient is seriously ill and the body condition cannot be controlled, which is like **the rushing water** breaching the embankment that cannot be stopped.'

TT:

...marked by blurred vision and loss of hearing. [This disease occurs suddenly] like **the overflow of a river** that is impossible to be brought under control.

In the eleventh example, "溪" refers to streams. "八溪" is transliterated as "Baxi" and refers to the eight joints in the context. Eight joints and four limbs are channels for qi and blood circulation that are portrayed as tides, continuous flow of liquid. The translation transfers the metaphor into simile and provides the sense of metaphor in the translation. In the twelfth example, "溃溃乎" can be used to describe rushing and surging water and "汨汨乎" is the onomatopoeia that can be used to modify the water with an unstoppable and rapid flow. This indicates that the patient is in a critical state and the illness has become life-threatening. A patient's rapidly deteriorating condition that cannot be halted is depicted as water that cannot be stopped.

Readers cannot grasp the entire meaning of the text through onomatopoeia translation, so the translator chooses to clarify the tenor and vehicle of the metaphor and provides its explanation in the TT. When the connection between the source and target domains and the complied meaning of metaphors need to be further clarified, the metaphor can be transferred into a simile, and its sense should be elucidated. In TCM text translations, converting metaphor into simile plus sense is a strategic choice that helps target readers navigate the cultural and conceptual complexity of TCM metaphors, ensuring that cultural connotations can be preserved and understood. This could facilitate cross-cultural communication and acceptance.

(e). *Conversion of Metaphor to Sense*

This is a common procedure that is preferred when the essence of an image is multidimensional and the term has a broad meaning, so readers have difficulty inferring the actual sense of the metaphor. The sense must be analyzed contextually and componentially (Newmark, 1981). Additionally, replacing the metaphor with another would lead to inaccuracy and this translation approach can only be valid for translating metaphors with unique cultural characteristics in the SL.

13) ST:

得守者生，失守者死。

de shou zhe sheng, shi shou zhe si.

'The five viscera **function normally**, which are like soldiers guarding a country. Hence, the patient's health can be restored. Otherwise, **dysfunction** of the five viscera causes the patient's death, which is like military defeat because of the soldiers failing to defend the city.'

TT:

Normal functions [of the viscera] ensure life while **dysfunctions** [of the viscera] cause death.

14) ST:

开鬼门，洁净府，精以时服。

kai gui men, jie jing fu, jing yi shi fu.

'Treatment methods, diaphoresis and diuresis, should be applied to cure edema, like opening **the ghost gates** and purifying **the pure mansion** to expel evil.'

TT:

[Besides,] [the therapeutic methods for] opening **Guimen (sweat pores)** and cleaning **the Jingfu (the bladder)** can be used [to eliminate the retention of fluid].

In the thirteenth example, the verb "守" means to protect the country and "失守" means failure in protecting the country and territorial loss in the source text. Biologically non-functional human is portrayed as the country losing its sovereign territory. Readers may have multiple answers in mind and infer that the patient may lose normal bladder function or may be mentally disordered and lose his or her mind. In the fourteenth example, "鬼门" literally means the gate of hell and "净府" literally means a cleansing house, which are unfamiliar to the readers. The image with mysterious color cannot be fully understood by the readers if the image is retained in the TT, so the sense of metaphor and its transliteration are provided in the TT.

Readers would feel confused and quite strange if the metaphorical expressions are maintained in the TT because it seems that there is very little correlation between the source domain and the target domain of these metaphors, and readers cannot immediately form associations between the two domains and interface two systems. The metaphors in these two translations are all converted to sense, and the connotative meanings of expressions are presented in the translation instead of their referential meanings. When the translator explains the implied meanings and connotations of culture-bound metaphors, the readability and understandability of translation could be enhanced.

(f). *Same Metaphor Combined With Sense*

The tenor could be retained in the TT, and the sense of the metaphor could be supplemented to maintain the cultural image and achieve the communicative effect. By adopting this approach, the translator not only transfers the same image but also hopes that the translation will be well understood by readers because the metaphor is obscure. The translation could be reader-friendly and instructive if further illustrations are provided (Newmark, 1981).

15) ST:

君一臣二，奇之制也；君二臣四，偶之制也。

jun yi chen er, ji zhi zhi ye, jun er chen si, ou zhi zhi ye.

'One **main drug** and two **adjuvant drugs** constitute an odd formulation and two **main drugs** and four **adjuvant drugs** constitute an even formulation.'

TT:

Odd [prescription is] composed of one **Monarch [drug]** and two **Minister [drugs]**; even [prescription is] composed of two **Monarch [drugs]** and four **Minister [drugs]**.

16) ST:

此六者，地气之所生也.....此五者，天气之所生也.....

ci liu zhe, di qi zhi suo sheng ye..... ci wu zhe, tian qi zhi suo sheng ye.....

'The six organs **are generated by** earth qi... and the five organs **are generated by** heaven qi...'

TT:

The brain, marrow, bones, vessels, gallbladder and uterus **are all produced** [under the influence of] Diqi (Earth-Qi) ... The stomach, the large intestine, the small intestine, the Sanjiao (triple energizer) and the bladder **are all produced** [under the influence of] Tianqi (Heaven-Qi) ...

In the fifteenth example, "君" and "臣" refer to the emperor and court official in ancient times and to the medicine in the context. Metaphor mapping onto official positions in the source domain helps readers differentiate the functions of different medicinal materials in the description. The sense of the metaphor "drug" is supplemented in the TT, and the metaphors "monarch" and "minister" are also retained and used as adjectives to modify the word "drug", indicating the different roles that different drugs play. Additionally, in this translation, the sense of the metaphor is supplemented, and the metaphorical expression mapping onto the medicine as the target domain is translated as "monarch" which is retained as an adjective in the TT to modify the term "drug", indicating the function and use of this drug.

In the sixteenth example, "生" means giving birth to a child and means the relationship in which each phase and its associated phenomena promote another sequential phase in the context. The metaphor is produced based on the Five Phrase Theory of TCM, so readers need to grasp the cultural knowledge background and understand the cultural connotation and the actual meaning of the metaphor by supplementing the sense of the metaphor in the TT. This translation strategy helps readers with different cultural backgrounds comprehend its meaning.

V. CONCLUSION

The metaphors used in the TCM classic *Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine* are a great way of learning TCM abstract theory, evoking readers' understanding of themselves and the natural world in a particular way. TCM conceives the harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature as the operating rule of the universe and integrates Chinese philosophical thought into TCM theory. Given the nature of conceptual metaphors, the use of metaphorical expressions in TCM classics provides insights into how the theoretical framework of TCM knowledge can be constructed in text and how this cognitive mechanism shapes the worldviews of readers. The present study is important as it reveals the cognitive-linguistic mechanism and strategies that can be adopted in different situations for disseminating TCM culture. Future studies can focus on the effect of metaphor usage on spreading culture, translation methods, and strategies different translators employ for meeting different translation purposes and satisfying different needs of readers.

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Chen Xinyu has a solid academic foundation in translation and interpretation. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in English with a specialization in medicine English from Guangzhou University of Chinese Medicine. She then pursued a Master of Interpreting and Translation at Guangxi University. Now she is a PhD candidate in Translation and Interpretation at the University Putra Malaysia. She holds the position of Lecturer at Guangzhou College of Applied Science and Technology, responsible for teaching College English to non-English major students. Her research focus on translation theory and practice. She published academic works such as *On the Application of Connection Methods in the Translation of Government Work Reports* and *On the Construction Model of English Translation Ability Based on Blended Teaching*.



Hazlina Abdul Halim holds an extensive academic background in linguistics and related fields. She completed her post-doctoral studies in Applied Linguistics at the Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations in 2014. Prior to this, she earned a PhD in Malay Language with a specialization in Malay-French Applied Linguistics from University Putra Malaysia in 2011. She has served at University Putra Malaysia, holding positions as an associate professor in the Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication since 2017. Her research and publication contributions are prominent in the field of linguistics and translation studies. Representative works include the book *Penterjemahan dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa* published in 2021 and journal articles such as *The integration of affective domains in French language learning: translating Molière into Malay*. ORCID iD: orcid.org/0000-0003-3599-9195.



Zaid M. Mohd Zin holds an extensive academic background in Japanese language and linguistics. He earned a PhD in Japanese Language Studies from Aichi Gakuin University. He works as a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication of University Putra Malaysia. His key publications include *Picture Dictionary: Malay-English-Spanish-Arabic-Chinese-Japanese* and the journal article *The Japanese Adjectives Tokui and Tokui*. His current and previous research interests center on Japanese language education, comparative vocabulary studies, and translation of Japanese-Malay cultural and linguistic materials. Dr. Zaid is an active member of multiple professional societies, including the Malaysia Japanese Language Instructors Society and the Association of Vocabulary Studies in Japan, and he has served on organizing committees for international conferences like the Malaysia International Conference on Foreign Languages (MICFL).