

# Translation of TCM Insert in the Context of the “Belt and Road” Initiative---Taking “Calculus Bovis Bolus for Resurrection” as an Example

*Chen Lei*

*The School of Foreign Languages, North China Electric Power University,  
Beijing, China*

**Abstract:** Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) enjoys good popularity for its natural materials. And under the strategic background of the “Belt and Road” initiative, the export of traditional Chinese medicine has a good prospect. However, the poor quality of the translation of TCM inserts encumbers its further development. Nowadays, TCM is facing a promising future, but the translation quality cannot keep pace with its development. In this study, Calculus Bovis Bolus for Resurrection, the representatives TCM products, is chosen as a case to be analyzed. After analyzing the existing problems of its package insert and providing workable solutions, a new translation can be got, which can serve as an example for other TCM inserts. Furthermore, it can be found that apart from the terminology translation, the attitude of manufactures plays an important role in improving the translation quality of TCM inserts. A more focused attitude will boost sales of TCM products.

**Keywords:** Traditional Chinese Medicine; Translation; Package insert; Calculus Bovis Bolus for Resurrection

## Introduction

Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), as a representative of Chinese culture, plays an important role in the “going out” of Chinese culture. And since the “Belt and Road” initiative has been proposed in 2013, China and nations along the belt and road have kept communicating and cooperating in this field. With laws and organizations that will benefit the export of TCM coming out gradually, the trade of TCM products is getting easier.[8]The construction of the “Belt and Road” initiative brings great opportunities for the export of Chinese medicine. However, the poor quality of the translation of the package inserts blocks the development of TCM export. Insert as an indispensable part of the drug, conveying significant information that guides people to use the medicine properly is quite important. While the translation quality of TCM products today is still far from satisfactory, though TCM products have been exported for many years.[8]A problematic translation of the insert will cause misunderstanding and confusion which has an adverse effect on the sales of TCM products.

The author collects TCM package insert from the internet and pharmacies. By referring to

previous studies about the translation theories and strategies of TCM, this study analyzes one insert selected from 80 pieces of TCM inserts, pointing out the inadequacy of the original version and providing feasible solutions to make improvements to the current version.

## Literature Review

Many experts and scholars conduct in-depth studies on theories of TCM translation. And the approach of TCM translation can be classified into two choice, one is the target-oriented approach and the other is the source-oriented approach.[1]Sinologist and linguist Nigel Wisemen [3] is in favor of the source-oriented approach because using rough Western medical terms to explain the Chinese medicine can destroy the integrity of the Chinese medical concept. However, Chinese scholars pay more attention to the promotion of TCM. And as a medicine insert, the most important role is to guide people to use the medicine correctly. Therefore, most Chinese scholars prefer the target-oriented approach to add readability and acceptability of the insert. Ouyang [6] suggests using a domestication strategy to make consumers understand. Zhang [8] argues that the Skopos theory should be used to guide the translation of TCM insert. Xiao [7] suggests adapting eco-translation theory, and through adding or subtracting words to increase readability. Besides, the standardization of TCM terminology is also crucial for the translation of TCM. Nigel Wisemen [5] mentions that terms have to be translated consistently. Hong [2] mentions that the standardization of TCM terminology is the core issue of TCM English translation and Xiong [9] thinks it is the key to TCM foreign academic exchange with Western medicine. Zhang [8] summarizes the research results of the English translation standardization of TCM terminology such as *International Standard Terminologies on Traditional Medicine in the Western Pacific Region* published by WHO. These achievements provide references for the translation of TCM insert.

## Case Study

### *Case description*

The case selected is Calculus Bovis Bolus for Resurrection manufactured by Beijing Tong Ren Tang Chinese Medicine Co., Ltd. It is famous for its role in curing plague and it is recommended by experts for the treatment of COVID-19. [10] Besides, Beijing Tong Ren Tang Chinese Medicine Co., Ltd. is a manufacturer well recognized by the public, making the case selected more representatives.

### *The Case*

安宫牛黄丸

[药品名称]: 通用名称: 安宫牛黄丸

中文拼音: AngongNiu Huang Wan

[性状]: 本品为金色蜜丸; 蜜丸内呈黄橙色至红褐色;  
气芳香浓郁, 味微苦

[功能与主治]: 清热解毒, 震惊开窍,

用于热病温邪入里引起的中风、痰壅, 高热不退, 牙关紧闭, 惊风抽搐, 神昏谵语。

[用法与用量]: 口服, 一次 1 丸, 一日一次; 小儿三岁以内一次四分之一丸, 四至六岁一次二分之一丸, 本品连续服用不宜超过三天, 或遵医嘱

[注意]: 孕妇慎用

[规格]: 每丸重 3g

[贮藏]: 密封

[有效期]: 五年

[Description]: Golden honeyed pills, But orange to reddish-brown inside, odour, rich fragrant; taste slightly bitter.

[Action]: To clear away the heat, detoxify, relieve convulsion and resuscitate.

[Indications]: Heat-syndrome, the pathogenic heat intervening the interior, apoplexy accumulation of phlegm, sustained high fever lockjaw, convulsions, coma, delirium.

[Usage and dosage]: To take orally, 1 pill, 1 time a day; 1/4 pill for children under 3 years of age; 1/2 pill for children 4-6 years of age. Don't use it for over 3 days or follow the physician's advice.

[Precaution]: Used with caution in pregnancy.

[Specification]: 3g per pill.

[Storage]: Preserve in well closed containers.

[Validity]: Duration 5 years.

主要成分/Major Ingredients:

牛黄	Calculus Bovis	168mg
麝香	Moschus	42mg
珍珠	Margarita	84mg
朱砂	Cinnabaris	168mg
雄黄	Realgar	168mg
黄连	RhizomaCoptidis	168mg
黄芩	Radix Scutellariae	168mg
栀子	Fructus Gardeniae	168mg
郁金	Radix Curcumae	168mg
冰片	Borneolum Syntheticum	42mg

### ***Brief Review of the Translation***

After analyzing the original insert, it can be found that the problems and their solutions are as follows:

**Missing of information:** In the original version, there is only a Chinese name “安宫牛黄丸”, but no English name in the insert. The translation of the drug name is missing. The drug name is a significant part of the insert for it gives people’s first impression of the medicine and it is also an important factor that affects consumers’ purchasing desire. The lack of a drug name will cause confusion and memory difficulty, which is detrimental to the spread and sale of the medicine.

**Solution:** A good name will add attraction to the drug and make it easier to be remembered. Therefore, a good drug name should be added. Jiang Lin [11] offers four translation models to help the translation of the drug name. The Chinese name “安宫牛黄丸” is named after its main ingredient “牛黄” and its function “安宫”, which belongs to the medicine that named after its main ingredient and function. According to Jiang’s theory, the translation formula can be: main ingredient+ dosage form+ for+ function. Therefore, the drug name can be translated into “Calculus Bovis Bolus for Resurrection”.

**Misprint:** The misuse of punctuation marks can be found in this insert in many places. In [Indications] term, a comma space is missing between “sustained high fever” and “lockjaw”, and there is the same problem between “apoplexy” and “accumulation of phlegm”. They are different symptoms, but without a comma space, they seem to be one symptom, which is a big misunderstanding. Besides, the “d” of “Usage and dosage” should be capitalized. And in the [Storage] term, a hyphen is missing between “well” and “closed”.

**Solution:** The missing comma should be added respectively, and the misuse of capital letters should be corrected. The misuse of punctuation marks and the capitalize of words are little mistakes but they are not negligible, because they reflect the attitude of the manufacture, leading to doubts about the safety and efficacy of the medicine. A serious and meticulous medicine insert would earn more trust. Therefore, the manufacture should pay more attention to these details and try to avoid these mistakes.

**Poor readability:** The poor readability is mainly on account of the literal translation. The English part still follows the Chinese grammar habit, using phrases and words to make a sentence without linking words. And in [Action] and [Usage and dosage], there is a mixture of unnecessary prepositions and phrases, such as the “to” ahead of the “clear” in [Action] term and the “to” ahead of “take orally”. This mixture is neither a complete sentence nor a group of phrases, making the sentence difficult to understand. Literal translation also leads to a grammar mistake. In [Description] term, “气芳香浓郁” is directly translated into “rich fragrant”, but “rich” is an adjective, which should not be used to modify another adjective “fragrant”. Besides, some Chinese medicine concepts such as “热病” and “温邪入里” is hard to understand, even though they can be translated, readers still have no idea of the true

meaning of these concepts.

Solution: First, using complete sentences is a wise choice to add readability. Make a sentence with only phrases and words is a typical Chinese style which is inappropriate to use in the English part because Chinese sentence and English sentence are organized in different ways. Chinese stress parataxis. With a loose sentence structure. It does not need many connectives to complete the meaning. However, English stresses hypotaxis, which means that the structure of the sentence is strict.[12] A different position and different punctuation can result in the change of the meaning. Thus, the literal translation will confuse English readers who are used to the strict structure of sentences. While as a part of the commodity, the priority of the insert is to help customers to use the commodity correctly so that the medicine can sell well.[4]Hence, the target-oriented approach should be adapted to make it easy for readers to understand. The use of complete sentences is more consistent with the habit of readers. And grammar mistakes that cause by word-to-word translation should be avoided. Second, the description of the cause of the disease can be left out. Chinese medicine is based on philosophical foundations and it is a different medical system with western medicine, [1] so it is hard to explain some concepts in short sentences. And for those who only care about the curative effect of the medicine and lack of enough Chinese medicine knowledge, the description of the cause of the disease is unnecessary and should be omitted to increasing the readability.

Improper Translation of Terms: This problem is caused by two reasons. One is the misunderstanding of the terminology. For example, “珍珠” in the [Major Ingredients], as a material of Chinese medicine, is a substance formed from the sac of pearls in shellfish, and it can be translated into “pearl”. But its translation here is “Margarita”, but “Margarita” is a human name or the name of a kind of cocktail instead of a material of traditional Chinese medicine. The other reason is that some translation is not unified with authoritative documents and dictionaries. For example, “中风” is translated into “apoplexy” in this insert, but according to the *International Standard Terminologies on Traditional Medicine in the Western Pacific Region* published by WHO, “中风” should be translated into “wind stroke”.

Solution: The translator should correct the wrong translation in time, learn more about the concept of TCM to improve his proficiency in Chinese medicine in case of misunderstanding.[4] It is always difficult to translate the TCM terminology because the Chinese medicine language is complex and vague and contains profound cultural background. However, translators cannot invent new expressions at will, so it is necessary to refer to international standards of the translation of terminologies. The Chinese government and WHO have been promoting the standardization of TCM terms actively.[13] And there are many standardization achievements made by Chinese and foreign scholars. When translating, translators should refer to those authoritative dictionaries and documents such as *International Standard Terminologies on Traditional Medicine in the Western Pacific Region* published by WHO and *International Standard Chinese English Basic Nomenclature of Chinese Medicine* published by the World Federation of Chinese Medicine Society

(WFCMS).

According to the problems and solutions mentioned above, a new version of the insert can be written.

*New version of translation*

[Drug Name]: Calculus Bovis Bolus for Resurrection

[Description]: They are golden honeyed pills with a fragrant odor, and the pill is orange to reddish-brown inside; taste slightly bitter.

[Action]: It can clear heat, detoxify, relieve convulsion, and resuscitate.

[Indications]: Effective in wind stroke, accumulation of phlegm, sustained high fever, lockjaw, convulsions, coma, and delirium.

[Usage and Dosage]: Take orally, 1 pill once a day;

1/4 pill for children under 3 years old;

1/2 pill for children 4-6 years old.

Don't use it for over 3 days or follow the physician's advice.

[Precaution]: Used with caution in pregnancy.

[Specification]: It is 3g per pill.

[Storage]: Preserve in well-closed containers.

[Validity]: Duration is 5 years.

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黄芩	Radix Scutellariae	168mg
栀子	Fructus Gardeniae	168mg
郁金	Radix Curcumae	168mg
冰片	BorneolumSyntheticum	42mg

## Conclusion

The problems of the package insert of Calculus Bovis Bolus for Resurrection include the missing of information, misprint, poor readability, and improper translation of terminologies. And these problems also exist in other TCM inserts as Liu Ming mentioned. [14] The problems are mainly due to the complexity of TCM language, the approach of literal translation, and the irresponsible attitude of the manufacture. To settle the problems, the key point is to give full consideration to consumers' feelings and strive to make the translation concise and convey the whole meaning. Besides, manufactures should pay more attention to details. If they want to gain more popularity among the "Belt and Road" market, the insert would be written in a more readable way and there would not be misprints and the missing of information that may arise distrust of consumers in the insert. Obviously, spelling mistakes and misuse of punctuation marks cannot convince the consumers to buy the medicine without anxiety. Beijing Tong Ren Tang Chinese Medicine Co., Ltd. is one of the biggest Chinese medicine manufacturers in China, but its package insert still makes mistakes on spelling and punctuation marks, which shows Chinese manufactures' hasty attitude towards the English insert. Chinese companies really should do more than simply increasing investment and publicity. They should change their attitude and pay more attention to details such as spelling and the use of punctuation marks so that the TCM products can gain more recognition and Chinese culture can be spread.

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