

Epistemic Stance in Chinese Medicine Translation: A Systemic Functional Perspective

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Abstract : Epistemic stance refers to the writer's judgement about the certainty of the proposition, which demonstrates writer's degree of commitment and confidence to the status of the information. Epistemic stance can exert great consequence to the validity or reliability of the values of a statement, however, to date, it receives little attention in translations studies, especially from the perspective of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) and with the relation to translator's domain knowledge. This study is corpus-based research carried out in SFL perspective, which investigates translator's epistemic stance pattern in Chinese medicine discourse translations by translators with and without medical domain knowledge. Overall, our findings show that all translators tend to be neither too assertive nor too doubted about Chinese medicine statements, and they all tend to express their epistemic stance in a subjective rather than objective way. Individually, there is a clear pattern of epistemic stance marked off by translators' medical expertise, which further consolidates the previous finding that epistemic asymmetry is found most salient between lay people and professionals. However, contrary to our hypothesis, translators as clinicians who have more medical knowledge are found to be more tentative to TCM statements than translators as non-clinicians. This finding could serve to refine the statements about the relation between writer's domain knowledge and epistemic stance-taking and the current debate whether Chinese medicine texts should only be translated by clinicians.

Keywords : epistemic stance, domain knowledge, SFL, medical translation

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