

## SIMILARITIES AND DEFERENCES OF ENGLISH LGP (LANGUAGE FOR GENERAL PURPOSES) AND CM (CHINESE MEDICAL ORIGIN) EQUIVALENTS

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**Abstract:** The theory of traditional Chinese medicine is totally different from that of modern medicine and has a unique system of its own. Some of the terms are rather difficult to express in other languages, nor is it easy to find an exact translation of the original. Some words that convey the concept of the Chinese' terms convey it only in part.

**Key word:** Medical concepts, brain (nǎo) (脑), forehead ( 'e) (额), ideograms, heart (xīn) (心), tongue (shǐ) (舌), shoulder (jiān) (肩), rib (lè) (肋), Chinese medical concepts, English and Chinese terminology.

The analysis covers nearly a thousand terms (including commonly used combining forms) drawn from a terminology textbook for first-year medical students (Wiseman & F'eng 1998b). The terms denote anatomical, physiological, pathological, and therapeutic concepts spanning all the major systems of the organism.

The English terms were divided into simple terms, combining forms, and complex terms. Variant forms such as *derm-* and *dermat-* considered the same. Combining forms that share the same root as a simple term, e.g., *cut (an)-* and *cutis* were also counted as being the same. Cognates, such as English *heart*, Latin *cord-*, and Greek *cardi-*, were considered as being different.

LGP/CM equivalents include TL terms that are everyday words used in their everyday sense (LGP) and terms of Chinese medical origin (CM). The inclusion of terms of two origins in one category will be discussed further ahead.



brain 腦 nǎo

forehead 額 é

skin 皮肤 pífū

heart 心 xīn

tongue 舌 shé

shoulder 肩 jiān

rib 肋 lè

bone 骨 gǔ

ear 耳 ěr

wrist 腕 wǎn

knee 膝 xī

wart 疣 yóu



In the examples above, both the English terms and the Chinese terms are used in their primary sense, having no literal meaning (or so far as we know, no etymological meaning that speakers might be aware of) other than this primary sense. Some LGP equivalents, however, do differ in their literal meaning. The English and Chinese terms 呼吸 *hūxī* and *respiration* share exactly the same reference, but are conspicuously different as regards both structure and meaning. The English term is composed of one word, with a stem (Latin *spir*, breath), the prefix (*re-*) implying repetition, and a complex suffix (*-ation*) serving to mark nominalisation. The Chinese, on the other hand, is composed of two characters, 呼 to exhale, and 吸, to inhale, which combine to describe the biphasal process of breathing. The English and the Chinese terms are semantically equivalent but not literally so. More examples revealing differences in literal meaning between LGP terms that are referentially equivalent are given below:

measles 麻疹 *mǎzhěn*, ‘hemp rash’scar 瘢痕 *bānhén*, ‘scar mark’burn 燒傷 *shāoshāng*, ‘burn injury’penis 陰莖 *yīnjīng*, ‘yīn stem’uterus 子宮 *zǐgōng*, ‘infant’s palace’respiration 呼吸 *hūxī*, ‘inhale-exhale’pupil 瞳孔 *tóngkǒng*, ‘pupil hole’

forehead 額 *forehead*, primary in Chinese

When Western medicine was introduced into China, it encountered an exist in body of medicine that had its own terminology Some Chinese medical terms found their Translation of Chinese Medical Terms way into the terminology of Western medicine. Nevertheless, given the constant interaction between LGP and LSP, it is often difficult to say whether a term was chosen because it was widely used by the general population. Hence, terms of Chinese medical origin cannot easily be separated from regular LGP equivalents. It is not possible to draw a clear line between LGP and LSP-bound terms.



Apoplexy, stroke, 中風 *zh`ong f`eng*, lit.

‘wind stroke’

impotence 陽萎 *y`ang w`ei*, ‘y`ang wilt’

tinea 癬 *xi`an*, ‘lichen-disease’

wheal 風塊 *f`eng ku`ai*, ‘wind lump’

psoriasis 牛皮癬 *ni`u p`i xi`an*, ‘ox-hide

lichen-disease’

beriberi 腳氣 *ji`ao q`i*, ‘leg q`i’

A few of the above examples reflect characteristically Chinese medical concepts, such as ‘wind’ as the cause of disease. No doubt, Chinese scholars translating the terminology of Western medicine into Chinese were much aware of the need to translate terms in such a way as to reflect the concept in its Western medical conceptual system and avoided, as far as possible, those which, though possibly sharing the same objective referent, reflected a Chinese conception of it. They did not, for example, translate ‘acute conjunctivitis’ as 風火眼 *f`eng hu`o y`an*. Instead, they devised a term that reflects the literal meaning of the English term (急性結膜炎 *j`i*

*x`ing ji'e m'o y'an*). It might be reasonable to suppose that the above terms were commonly used enough in the LGP for their Chinese medical components to have no significance ('wind stroke', for example, being considered as a dead metaphor, at least for those not acquainted with Chinese medicine). For the purpose of this study, LGP equivalent means LGP equivalent in the TL of any term in the SL, whether or not the SL term is an LGP word or not. Many Chinese LGP terms are the equivalents of classical terms that have been adopted in English medical terminology and that to some extent are LSP-specific. For example, 癢 *y`ang* is an LGP used as the equivalent of *pruritis*, which in English is an LSP-bound term. The Chinese 突 *t'u* is an LGP word equivalent to the English 'process', which is here not used in its LGP sense (a series of events or actions), but in a less familiar sense of 'a part that sticks out'. Other examples are listed below:

# 癢

pruritus 癢 *y`ang*

pharynx 咽 *y`an*

gingiva 齒齦 *ch`i y`in*

meatus 道口 *d`ao, k`ou*

foramen 孔 *k`ong*

process 突 *t'u*

# 突

In compound terms, many LSP-specific adjectives borrowed from Greek and Latin are translated with LGP terms.

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