

A Comparative Analysis of Chinese and Thai Dental Terminology

Abstract

Along with the frequent communication between China and Thailand, the mutual cooperation has deepened in various fields, including the field of dentistry. In order to promote cooperation and exchange in the area of dentistry between Chinese and Thai, it is necessary to establish a cross reference list of Chinese-Thai dental terminology, which will help the dental professionals and related personnel to understand the corresponding dental terminology in both languages, to be familiar with the word formations of stomatology terms and their sources as well as their relationship with their origin- English.

One thousand six hundred and thirty six terms published in the “Thai Dental Terminology” (Revised edition 2010, Chulalongkorn University Printing House) and the “English-Chinese Dictionary of Stomatology” (2010, Peking University Medical Press) have been compared and analyzed in this paper. These 1,636 terms can be classified into five categories according to their denotations: 1) those “related to dental diseases and their symptoms”, 2) those “related to dental equipments”, 3) those “related to dental materials”, 4) those “related to dental anatomy”, and 5) those “related to dental treatments”. Based on linguistic and terminological theories and through a combination of qualitative and quantitative analyses as well as contrastive analysis, this paper attempts to explore the similarities and differences between dental terminologies in Chinese and Thai in terms of the source of terms, the principle of word formation and the principle of translation.

After investigation and analysis, we arrived at the following conclusion:

1. In terms of the principle of word formation, both Chinese and Thai dental terminologies have similar characteristics whereby the majority of the terminology are compound words with a ‘modifier+key word’ structure. However, because of different rules in forming compound word in Chinese and Thai, the modifier precedes the key word in Chinese terms and vice versa in Thai;
2. As for the translation method, ‘literal translation + free translation’ method is the most frequently used one in translating Chinese and Thai dental terminology;
3. With respect to the source of terms, the proportion of the origin words and the borrowing words in the category of “related to dental materials” in Thai terms, their ratio difference is less than the other four categories, whereas most of the Chinese dental terms in this category are origin words. However, both Chinese and Thai dental terms in the other four categories, have almost the same proportion of terms from these two sources;
4. As for the Chinese dental terms, the ‘modifier+key word’ structure dominates in all five categories. The Thai dental terms in the category of “related to dental treatments” the ‘derivative’ structure forms the biggest part, whereas the ‘modifier+key word’ structure dominates in the other four categories.

Keywords: Dental Terminology; principle of word formation; principle of translation; source of terms