

“Menopause is walking across a snow-capped mountain”: a corpus-assisted study of metaphor and menopause in institutional discourse in English and Chinese

This metaphor analysis of healthcare discourse on menopause in English and Chinese approaches inclusivity in two dimensions. Firstly, it illuminates a prevalent concern that overly focusing on a medical framing of the menopause risks alienating women by underplaying the social and cultural experience of menopause. Secondly, it highlights a potential need for cultural inclusivity. By comparing English data from the Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists (RCOG) and Chinese data from websites of health commissions in China, I uncover a stark disparity in the metaphorical framings. Analyses of frequent words and menopause-related concordances & collocations suggested that a problem-solving focus (e.g., *managing, going through, dealing with, undergo*) was pronounced in English, whereas in Chinese linguistic features were more nuanced, including, for instance, the JOURNEY scenario (e.g., *walking across snow-capped mountain, watershed, smart traveller*) and the debated metonymy “male menopause”.

This suggests that the strong medical focus of the English data may also alienate those from other cultural backgrounds; significant, given there was a rapid increase of Chinese ethnicity in the UK – by 0.3% between 2001 and 2011 (Gov.UK 2021). This further suggests there may be validity to the concern around professional discourse shifting away from the social and cultural aspects of menopause (Orgad and Rottenberg, 2023). These findings open up future directions for research in ageing discourse for professional communities like RCOG in reaching ethnic minorities.

References

Gov.UK, (2020). Chinese ethnic group: facts and figures, <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/summaries/chinese-ethnic-group> .

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