



A Rhetoric Study on the C-E Translation of Chinese Cuisines from the perspective of Susan Bassnett's Cultural Translation Theory —A Case Study of Enjoy Culinary Delights: The English Translation of Chinese Menus

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Abstract. Chinese cuisine has gained global recognition due to its rich history and diverse connotations. However, translating the names of Chinese cuisines poses a challenge. Cultural turn theory proposes that translation should transcend the linguistic level and pay attention to cultural interaction and target audience cognition. Compared with traditional studies, Cultural turn theory emphasizes the relationship between translation and cultural dynamics and advocates for the use of multiple methods. This paper re-examines the translation strategy of Chinese cuisine names and advocates for a combination of literal and free translation. The use of images and annotations is suggested to preserve the original information of cuisine names and spread Chinese culinary culture, providing new insights for translation under cross-cultural communication.

Keywords: Enjoy Culinary Delights: The English Translation of Chinese Menus; Cultural turn; rhetoric; English Translations of Chinese Cuisine Names.

1 Introduction

Chinese cuisine is a significant and captivating aspect of Chinese culture. In the global dissemination of Chinese culinary culture, the translation of cuisine names into English is a particularly critical strategy. An ideal English translation scheme should accurately convey the basic information of cuisines, such as main ingredients and cooking techniques, while also preserving and promoting the unique cultural connotation and aesthetic value of Chinese cuisine in cross-cultural communication. Therefore, conveying the charm and artistic conception of Chinese cuisine names to audiences with different cultural backgrounds through English translation strategies is a core concern for translation scholars and culinary culture disseminators. This paper will take *Enjoy Culinary Delights: The English Translation of Chinese Menus* as an example, using the perspective of cultural turn theory analyzes the translation strategies and challenges faced by the rhetorical features of Chinese cuisines.

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2 The Cultural Turn of Translation

Translation is the intricate process of converting a written or spoken expression from one language to another. Translators are required to strive for a clear and fluid style to minimize the foreignness of the original text (Shuttleworth et al., 1997)[1]. However, the cultural turn perspective proposed by Susan Bassnett and Andre Lefevere (1990) in *Translation, History and Culture* poses new challenges to traditional translation studies by emphasizing the role of cultural factors in the translation process[2]. Previous translation studies have focused on the correlation between source text and target text, the ways of language expression and its conversion strategies. The cultural turn, on the other hand, deepens the study of the interaction mechanism between translation and culture, and places translation activities in a broader social, historical and cultural context. This new perspective expands beyond the research limitations of language and delves deeper into cultural aspects, highlighting the crucial role of translation in cross-cultural communication.

The cultural turn theory emphasizes the central role of cultural communication in cross-cultural communication. It asserts that communication involves not only the transmission of information but also the interpretation of cultural connotations, which is deeply rooted in the dialogue, interaction, and integration of different cultures. "Culture and cultural exchange are the origin of translation, and translation is the product of cultural exchange. Translation and culture can never be separated from each other." (Chen Yan & Jingjing Huang, 2014) [3]. Secondly, studies from the perspective of cultural turn not only emphasize the spread of culture, but also pay attention to the expression of culture in language. In-depth analysis of the research from the perspective of cultural turn inevitably involves the characteristics of cultural diversity and its internal coupling with communication and language. Culture is not a static and isolated entity, but a dynamic evolution and development in the process of continuous communication. Some scholars have pointed out that the lack of Chinese culture and the transgression of foreign culture are common in the current English translation of Chinese dish names. [4] Therefore, this study not only focuses on how culture effectively spreads through time and space, but also explores how culture is represented and constructed through the medium of language. As an important carrier of culture, language is an important medium to carry and convey cultural concepts, values, and social customs. "Translation research from the perspective of cultural studies is to study translation as a means of cultural interpretation and cultural formation" (Xifang Zhao, 2017) [5]. From the perspective of cultural turn theory, language is not only a medium of information transmission, but also a shaper of cultural identity and a key link of cultural exchange. Exploring the representation of culture in language can not only help us understand the core of culture deeply, but also reveal the complex interaction and influence between language and culture. In the study of cultural turn, we should pay more attention to the cultural cognition of the target language receiver group. Linguistic content reflects the cognitive model, value orientation, and lifestyle of a particular community. In order to achieve effective cross-cultural communication, translators need to deeply understand the cultural cognitive system of the target audience to ensure accurate transmission and effective reception of information.

3 English Translations of Chinese Cuisine Names

Many translation scholars have made extensive and in-depth discussions on the strategies for translating Chinese cuisine names into English from a variety of theoretical perspectives, and put forward a series of innovative viewpoints. Among them, domestication and foreignization strategy have attracted wide attention. Domestication emphasizes that the translation should conform to the cultural norms and expressions of the target language in order to facilitate readers' understanding and acceptance. In contrast, foreignization advocates retaining the cultural characteristics and linguistic styles of the original text in the translation to enrich the cultural connotation of the target language. In the practice of translating cuisine names into English, it is important to flexibly integrate domestication and foreignization and seek a dynamic balance between them (Xiaoli Ni, 2022) [6]. In addition, the analysis of English translations of Chinese dish names has been explored from the perspective of Reception Aesthetics, emphasizing readers' aesthetic needs and aesthetic expectations in reading[7]. Some scholars have also analyzed the English translation of Chinese dishes from the excellent Chinese TV program *A Bite of China* through Naida's theory of functional equivalence, stating that "the translator can sacrifice formal functional equivalence and give priority to achieving content equivalence, so that the readers of the translated language can have a clear understanding of the raw materials, texture, and flavor of the dishes, and will not cause any confusion or misunderstanding." [8]

In fact, Chinese culinary culture is profound, with cuisine names revealing ingredients, metaphors, and anecdotes. The English translation of these Chinese cuisine names presents a variety of controversies and strategic differences, each of which carries a unique narrative and symbolic meaning that reflects Chinese food philosophy, historical context, and cultural heritage. These names are cultural embodiments that explore China's civilization and the Chinese people's wisdom. Their translation involves considerations of cultural connotations, rhetorical devices, and target audience perception. When translators translate the names of Chinese dishes into English, they should not only interpret them correctly from a linguistic point of view, but also deeply understand the cultural connotation of the names. [9]

Therefore, this paper studies the translation of rhetorical cuisine names from the perspective of cultural turn, aiming to better understand how to preserve the unique cultural charm of Chinese cuisine names in cross-cultural communication, achieve effective dialogue with English culture, and provide inspiration for the translation of cuisine names.

3.1 Cross-cultural Communication in the Translation of Chinese Cuisine Names

As an important part of Chinese culture, Chinese cuisine not only carries a wealth of history, tradition and regional characteristics, but also demonstrates a deep cultural heritage through the unique form of cuisine names. In the context of globalization, the

dissemination of Chinese cuisine names not only has the practical significance of promoting Chinese cuisine, but also becomes an important bridge for cultural exchange. However, this process also faces many opportunities and challenges.

The trend of globalization and the spread of digital technology have brought unprecedented opportunities for the dissemination of Chinese cuisine names. The popularization of the Internet and social media has greatly expanded the speed and scope of information dissemination, allowing Chinese culinary culture to spread to every corner of the world more quickly and easily. This not only meets the diversified needs of different groups of people for culinary culture, but also promotes the wide recognition and acceptance of Chinese cuisine in the international market, and provides a brand new platform and carrier for the inheritance and promotion of Chinese culture. It can be said that the combination of globalization and digital technology has brought infinite opportunities and challenges for the dissemination of Chinese cuisine names, as well as injected new vitality into the international influence of Chinese culture.

At the same time, Chinese cuisine names face many difficulties in the process of spreading. When it comes to Chinese and English, two languages belonging to different language families, there are significant differences in their lexical choices, grammatical constructions, semantic expressions and rhetorical devices. To overcome the obstacle, translators must adroitly navigate the nomenclature of dishes, maintaining linguistic and artistic nuances while ensuring that English readers comprehend. This necessitates the utilisation of a variety of translation techniques, including but not limited to the flexible selection and use of literal translation, free translation, literal translation with annotation and other strategies. In addition, we also need to pay special attention to the connection between translation and society, fully understand the sociality of translation and social translatability, and take into account the social culture and influence of both Chinese and English languages[10]. Consequently, in the translation of Chinese cuisine names, it is imperative that translators possess a profound understanding of both cultures, employing strategies to ensure the preservation of cultural meaning. It is of the utmost importance to consider the language habits and cultural preferences of the target audience when translating Chinese cuisine names. This ensures that the names are easily understood, avoiding any potential conflicts and promoting the accurate dissemination of Chinese cuisine globally.

3.2 Analysis of Translation Strategies of Rhetorical Means of Chinese Cuisine Names

The names of Chinese cuisines not only convey the essential characteristics of the cuisines, but also show a unique artistic charm through rich rhetorical techniques. In Chinese food names, the common rhetorical devices include metaphor, hyperbole, pun, and allusion. The wonderful use of these techniques makes the names of the cuisines descriptive as well as imaginative and creative.

In Chinese cuisine, metaphors are often used to vividly portray the color, shape or taste characteristics of the cuisines, giving the names an intuitive image, artistry and culture. However, the use of metaphors in the names of the cuisines requires that diners have rich cultural connotations in order to be able to read and associate them with the

ingredients, which inadvertently creates a lot of difficulties for foreign diners: It's hard for them to associate words like jade and amber with Chinese ingredients they're not familiar with. Therefore, when translating the names of Chinese cuisines that use metaphors, it is necessary to focus on simplicity and conciseness, and clearly indicate the main ingredients and cooking methods of the cuisines. Such translations help to eliminate understanding barriers caused by cultural differences, making it easier for foreign diners to understand and order accurately.

Secondly, there are many different styles of Chinese cuisines, and each style has its own unique characteristics and flavors. Through the technique of hyperbole, the name of the cuisine can magnify these characteristics and flavors, so that when people hear or see the name they can quickly associate it with the corresponding cuisine and form a deep impression in their minds. The use of hyperbole not only enhances the memorability of the cuisine name, but also gives the name more cultural connotations and symbolism. Taking "千层耳丝" as an example, the word "千层" is used to describe the pig ear that is finely sliced. This description not only vividly outlines the unique shred shape of the pork ear, but also highlights the rich texture and clear hierarchy of the food material. When translating the names of such culturally rich cuisines into English, we do not need to completely retain the rhetorical style of the original Chinese names, but should pay more attention to conveying the essential information and basic characteristics of the ingredients. Therefore, for the name "千层耳丝", we can simply translate it as "sliced pork ear" or "thinly sliced pork ear" to clearly indicate that the main ingredient is pork ear and emphasize its sliced character. This translation not only respects the basic meaning of the original name, but also conforms to the language habits of English readers, helping them to accurately understand the characteristics and flavors of the cuisine. However, such translation strategy ignores the hyperbole contained in the original cuisine name when expressing, resulting in the hyperbolic elements of the original name being ignored or downplayed, which makes the original imaginative and artistic cuisine name become plain after translation, and may even cause misunderstanding or cultural estrangement, thus affecting the diners' understanding and experience of the cultural significance behind the cuisine.

In the naming of Chinese cuisine, we can often see that the allusions with strong cultural colors are cleverly incorporated into them, which mostly originate from ancient historical events, literary works or anecdotes of celebrities. Through the use of these allusions, the names of the cuisines not only convey information about the ingredients and cooking methods, but also contain deep cultural connotations and rich emotional colors. Taking "霸王别姬" as an example, its name draws from the romantic legend of Xiang Yu and Yu Ji, the overlord of Chu in ancient China. This allusion enjoys high recognition and wide recognition in the field of Chinese culture, and is widely used in various cultural and artistic expressions. For diners who are familiar with this allusion, the name of the dish "霸王别姬" can undoubtedly inspire cultural resonance and emotional commonality in their hearts, thus strengthening the cultural connotation and symbolic significance of the dish itself. When translating the names of Chinese cuisines that are rich in cultural meanings, we should strive to preserve their cultural core and narrative background, so that when foreign diners taste the food, they can simultaneously perceive the narrative content and cultural connotations behind it. This is not only

conducive to the promotion of Chinese culinary culture, but also has a positive effect on the enhancement of intercultural exchanges and mutual understanding.

4 Translation of Rhetorical Cuisine Names in Enjoy Culinary Delights: the English Translation of Chinese Menus

4.1 叫化鸡-Begger's Chicken

The English translation of 叫化鸡 does not simply follow the naming rules of general recipes, which only describe the cooking method and the main ingredients of the dish. On the contrary, its naming method is unique, adopting the strategy of literal translation. This naming scheme not only accurately conveys the historical background and uniqueness of the dish, but also successfully preserves the historical and cultural significance embedded in the original name. Through literal translation, the historical story and cultural connotations of this dish are fully demonstrated, providing diners with a new perspective to understand and appreciate Chinese cuisine. In terms of the dish itself, the name "Beggar's Chicken" complements its image. The dish, with its unique cooking method and presentation, has a rustic yet flavorful quality that fits the image described by the word "beggar". This naming method not only makes the image of the dish more distinct, but also provides an intuitive way for foreign diners to understand and appreciate the dish.

4.2 佛跳墙-Fotiaoqiang(Steamed Abalone with Shark Fin and Fish Maw in Broth)

Due to the cultural connotations and unique cooking techniques of this dish, its English translation process needs to comprehensively consider a number of aspects. First of all, the translation should respect the cultural originality of the dish and maintain its Chinese flavor. Because the names of dishes often carry rich cultural information and historical background, if a literal English translation is adopted, it may result in the loss of the original cultural information. Therefore, in the process of translation, it is necessary to find a translation method that retains the Chinese flavor and is understandable to foreign diners. In order to achieve this goal, the literal translation with annotation becomes an ideal choice. The literal translation method can maximize the retention of the Chinese flavor of the name of the dish, while the annotation provides foreign diners with the necessary explanations to help them understand the main ingredients (e.g., abalone, sea cucumber, etc.) as well as the cooking method (e.g., steaming, etc.) of the dish. However, when exploring this translation in depth, it is not difficult to find its inherent limitations. Although such translation do faithfully reproduce the phonetic characteristics and basic ingredients of the name of the dish to a certain extent, it is still insufficient in revealing the deep cultural and symbolic meanings of the original names, such as "the dish is delicious enough to make Buddha break his precepts and cross the wall to taste them". The directness of such translations inevitably undermines the expressive tension of the original names and their cultural connotations to a certain extent,

making it difficult for foreign diners to capture the hyperbole and deeper symbolism of the names when trying to understand them. In order to better convey this part of the cultural connotation, the origin and significance of the name can be briefly depicted near the name of the dish in vivid and funny language or drawings, so that foreign diners can deepen their understanding of Chinese culinary culture in the process of ordering food in a light-hearted and witty way.

4.3 赛螃蟹-Crab-Flavored Fish

This dish is named "赛螃蟹" because the texture and flavor of the yellow croaker meat is similar to that of crab meat. However, since the dish does not actually contain crab, a literal translation may be misleading. In the English cultural context, the "something is as good as something" nomenclature is less commonly used, and more specific and explicit descriptions are preferred when naming dishes. Therefore, the English translation of this dish is based on the original ingredients with the interpretation of "crab flavor" so that diners can clearly understand the flavor characteristics of the dish, which is similar to the texture and taste of crab meat. This method of translation not only respects the cultural connotation of the original name, but also ensures that the message is conveyed accurately and effectively removes the barriers to understanding for diners. However, the cultural significance of the word "赛" in the original name of the dish is not fully reflected and conveyed in this translation. Although this method of translation is concise and clear, it is weak in conveying the cultural and deeper meanings of the original name. For this reason, the name of this dish can be translated as "fish as tasty as crab", using the English phrase "as...as" to do the Chinese phrase "赛" to maximize the equivalence of meaning.

5 Conclusion: Insights and Perspectives

Conveying cultural connotations in the translation of cuisine names is a complex and crucial task, which involves not only language conversion, but also the level of cultural communication and understanding. Chinese cuisine names often go beyond simple descriptions of ingredients, but are deeply rooted in a rich cultural heritage, carrying deep historical, regional, humanistic and aesthetic values. At a time of increasing globalization, promoting Chinese cuisine names and the food culture behind them has become an important way to showcase the charm of Chinese culture and enhance international understanding and exchanges. This promotion process is not a simple transfer of information, but a complex activity involving cross-cultural communication, cultural awareness and acceptance. Therefore, it is especially important to fully consider the cultural background and cognitive habits of the target audience and adopt appropriate strategies and methods.

From the above examples, it is easy to see that the cultural background of the target audience is a key factor influencing their understanding of Chinese cuisine names and food culture. There are significant differences in people's perceptions of ingredients,

cooking methods, taste preferences, and table manners across cultures. When promoting Chinese cuisine names, it is important to have an in-depth understanding of the cultural characteristics of the target audience to avoid misunderstandings and disconnections caused by cultural differences; The cognitive habits of the target audience determine how they receive, process and interpret information. In the promotion process, it is necessary to adjust the promotion strategy according to the information acceptance habits of the target audience, such as the use of multimedia forms or analogical explanations in combination with local eating habits, in order to improve the acceptance and understanding of the audience. At the same time, it is also necessary to continuously explore and innovate the ways and means of cultural dissemination, such as using new media channels like social media to enhance the interactivity and participation of dissemination, so as to make Chinese cuisine names and the dietary culture they carry more deeply integrated into the daily life scenes of the target audience.

As a tool for communication, language is not only a bridge for information transfer, but also a link for emotional exchange. Through language, people can share their respective cultural experiences, transfer knowledge and wisdom, and express their thoughts and feelings, thus building deep cultural ties. Linguistic diversity offers the possibility of cultural plurality, allowing individuals from different cultural backgrounds to understand and respect each other.

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