

Analysis of English Translation of Chinese Cuisine from the Perspective of Cultural Difference

-- A Case Study of Shandong Cuisine

Jianbin Zhu*, Yu Chen

Foreign Language Studies, Guilin University of Technology, Guilin, China

*Correspondence: 2017135@glut.edu.cn

Abstract

Chinese food culture is extensive and profound around the world. Shandong cuisine, as one of the four major cuisines in China, has a long history. This paper mainly analyzes the differences between Chinese and Western food culture and takes Shandong cuisine as an example to put forward several specific methods of English translation of Shandong cuisine, such as literal translation, free translation and transliteration, starting from its naming methods and characteristics of cuisines. It aims to enable foreigners to understand the meaning of each cuisine, its raw materials, cooking methods, etc., and understand the profound cultural connotation of cuisines while tasting Chinese food. Standard English translation of cuisine also contributes to the spread of Chinese food culture.

Keywords

Food culture; Shandong cuisine; Cuisine translation.

1. Introduction

As an old saying goes, "Food is important to people's life." Food is the basis for people's survival, and people in any country have no exception to this point.

However, due to the geographical location, natural environment, living conditions, customs and habits, historical differences, and for a long period of time formed by the different values, the East and West make their own food culture different. So in the translation of the names of Chinese cuisine, translator should not only flexibly use various translation skills, but also be aware of diet culture differences between different countries, ethnic. Otherwise, they will not only fail to pass the word expression, achieve the purpose of translation, but also make misunderstandings and cultural barriers.

2. Differences between Chinese and Western Food Culture

Due to the differences in natural environment, geographical conditions, products and other aspects formed for a long time, Chinese and Western food cultures have developed along their own distinctive ways. This paper aims to analyze the differences between Chinese and Western food culture to put forward some suggested and reasonable methods for the translation of Cuisine so as to promote cross-culture exchanges and communication.

2.1. The Names of Western Cuisine and Western Food Culture

Western dishes are usually named after the ingredients, the recipe, and the shape and location of the dish. It is very brief. Have a look at a cuisine name, you can know its raw material immediately, taking fruit salad, vegetable salad, chicken-breast salad for example. What's more,

some western dishes are named after the cooking method, for example plain fried calf ribs, roast veal, grilled mutton chop, saute pork chop, Steamed egg with barbeque sauce, Pan-fried salmon and so on. Swiss Beef Steak, New Zealand Lamb Cutlets, Venetian Cod with Raisins and Pine Nuts, Scotland mutton chop, these dishes are named after location.

2.2. The Names of Chinese Cuisine and Chinese Food Culture

In terms of Chinese cuisine, the names of Chinese cuisine are often more implicit and pleasant, using metaphors, puns and other rhetorical devices. It pursues good luck and are catchy to read, such as "Quan Jia Fu (A tonic recipe of chicken breast fried with sea cucumber, peeled shrimp and squid, carrying the implied meaning of a happy family reunion)", "stir-fried shrimps with peas" and so on. These names make people feel relaxed. Some dishes are named after allusions and hearsay, and the names contain a lot of historical and cultural information. For example, "Guoqiao rice noodles", " Buddha jumps over the wall "(steamed abalone with shark's fin and fish maw(, " Beggar's chicken (baked mud-coated chicken) " and so on. There are also cuisines named after the container, such as Dongpo pork (braised pork created by a famous Chinese poet—Su Dongpo), spicy hot pot and so on. In addition, there are also place names, such as Dongpo pork, Beijing roast duck, West Lake fish in vinegar, Dezhou braised chicken and so on. Shandong cuisine originated in the States of Qi and Lu (modern Shandong Province) in the Warring States period, and was formed in the Qin and Han Dynasties. After the Song Dynasty, Shandong cuisine became the representative of "northern food", covering the largest area of local cuisine in China, covering Beijing, Tianjin and The three provinces of northeast China. There are three factions of authentic Shandong cuisine: the Jiaodong cuisine represented by Yantai Fushan (mainly seafood), the Inland Jinan cuisine, and the kongfu cuisine with its own system.

2.2.1. Naming Methods of Shandong Cuisine in Chinese Food Culture

Some English translation of Shandong dishes reflect the ingredients of the cuisine. Some show the way how to make dishes, while others can sum up the characteristics of the dishes, and some dishes contain a profound historical and cultural background. In a word, the naming methods should include its ingredients, cooking method, characteristics and the deeper meaning of the cuisine.

2.2.2. Characteristics of Shandong Cuisine

Most names of Shandong cuisine are realistic. The characteristics of these dishes are to describe the ingredients, preparation methods and characteristics of the dishes. Meanwhile, a part of the names of Shandong cuisine are "freehand". These dishes are usually combined with the color, aroma, cooking methods and shape of the characteristics of the dishes to take a beautiful auspicious name. While, some Shandong cuisine names are half-realistic and half-freehand. As a result, ingredients and cooking methods are often absent from such dishes.

2.3. Differences between Chinese and Western Food Cultures

Chinese and western have a lot of differences in food culture. The differences in their food cultures are mainly reflected in the dietary concepts, dietary content, cooking methods, eating methods and naming of dishes. And I will analyze them respectively.

2.3.1. Differences between Chinese and Western Dietary Concepts

The Western diet pays more attention to the nutritional value of food, for example, adequate protein, fat, calories and vitamins should be taken in three meals a day, while the color, aroma, taste and shape of food take a back place.

In China, it is an artistic and perceptual concept of food. Chinese people's food emphasizes the harmony of taste and pursues an indescribable "artistic conception" of vision and taste.

However, they do not pay too much attention to whether food is excessively nutritious or mismatched, as long as it tastes good, they are willing to accept the food.

2.3.2. Differences between Chinese and Western Eating Habits

Westerners in the diet is to eat meat, mainly animal and Marine fish, such as beef, chicken, pork, lamb, and fish, etc., supplemented by plants, it is with the western nomadic, navigation national cultural features are closely linked, and the influence of agricultural civilization in China, in terms of content of the diet, with the grain is the staple food, supplemented by vegetables and small amounts of meat and plant food accounts for the dominant position in the diet.

However, with the improvement of Chinese people's living standard and nutrition awareness in recent years, the proportion of meat and milk products on Chinese people's table is increasing, while the proportion of vegetables in western diet is also gradually increasing. Chinese and Western diets show a trend of mutual influence and integration.

2.3.3. Differences between Chinese and Western Cooking Methods

The different methods of cooking is mainly manifested in the following aspects: first, the skill of cutting up vegetables and meat. The cutting skills in the Chinese food culture is famous in all ages. Chinese cuisine is skillful in selecting and using ingredients, fine cutting and pure seasoning. By contrast, western dishes are less exquisite art of using saber, multi-purpose large pieces of raw materials, steak, chicken is like the palm of your hand.

In terms of heat, Chinese cuisine has high requirements. It is not cooked until the food is cooked. While western cuisine is short in cooking time, many dishes are cooked in the oven at a moderate temperature. Finally, in terms of seasonings, Chinese cuisine emphasizes the harmony of taste, the mutual penetration of various materials and condiments, and the interweaving, integration and coordination of them. Western cuisines emphasize the independent use of ingredients and seasonings, the various ingredients are unrelated to each other.

3. Research on English Translation of Shandong Cuisine under the Background of Chinese and Western Cultural Differences

Many restaurants in China are unable to offer Menus in English, or the translated Menus are obscure and unintelligible, making it impossible for foreigners to choose Chinese cuisine.

They translated "wine preserved crab" into "drink high crabs", "ants climbing trees(vermicelli with spicy minced pork)" into "pile of ants climbing the tree", "snowballing usury" into "Rolling donkey". Such translations are ironic.

Because of the differences between Chinese and Western food cultures, especially the naming differences of dishes, the translation of dishes should not be translated directly from Chinese to English. It is very difficult to translate the characters, words, rhymes, flavors and cultural deposits of Chinese cuisine into English.

In order to spread Chinese food culture, the translation of Chinese and Western food names should be based on the comparison of Chinese and Western food names, referring to the expression habits of western food names, flexibly and comprehensively using various translation methods, so as to achieve the functional equivalence.

3.1. Basic principles of The English Translation of Shandong Cuisine Names

Translation of Chinese dishes requires translators to not only let foreign guests understand the superficial cultural images contained in the dishes, such as ingredients, cooking methods, taste, etc., but also let them understand the deep cultural connotations, such as the nutritional value of dishes, historical origins, customs and allusions, etc.

In view of Chinese and western diet in the diet concept, diet and cooking methods, cuisine naming, there are large differences in translation, the translator must grasp the characteristics of them, conform to the western cuisine naming conventions, and to embody Chinese characteristics, especially pay attention to translation means or not considering the differences of Chinese and western cultural factors which caused cultural conflicts.

3.2. Three Suggested Methods For Translating Shandong Cuisine

The methods of English translation of Shandong cuisine include literal translation, free translation and the combination of literal translation method and free translation method.

3.2.1. Literal Translation Method

Most of the names of Shandong cuisine are realistic. The characteristics of these dishes are to describe the ingredients, preparation methods and characteristics of the dishes. For "realistic" dish names, literal translation is usually adopted to directly translate the cooking methods of the ingredients and characteristics of the dish.

1. Translation of Shandong Cuisines Containing only the Main Ingredients

Such dishes usually introduce the main ingredients and ingredients or the main ingredients and soup. The method of "main ingredient +with/in+ ingredients/soup" should be adopted in translation. For example, "diced chicken with almond", "beef with bean curd", "sea cucumber and pork", "sliced fish with tomato sauce", "diced rabbit with orange peel", "honeyed walnuts" and so on. When translating the names of such dishes, it is necessary to use accurate English words. For example, the "tomato sauce" in "sliced fish with tomato sauce" is not a soup made of tomato, but a kind of tomato sauce that is often used in cooking. The amber in amber-walnuts, which actually means the honey and walnuts that take on the color of the amber when they are made. Therefore, it can be translated into "honeyed walnuts". If you translate it into "amber walnuts", amber might be misunderstood as one of the ingredients. Therefore, try to make sure the real ingredients of a dish when choosing the words in the translation and it should not be taken literally.

2. Translation of Shandong Cuisine with Cooking Methods

Most realistic Shandong cuisine names not only reflect the ingredients of the dishes, but also describe the preparation methods and characteristics.

For example, cooking method + raw materials or ingredients + cooking method + main ingredients etc., the literal translation method is generally adopted, i.e., "cooking method/processing + main ingredients +with/in+ ingredients (condiments)". Take fried spring chicken with vinegar", "braised bean curd with mixed vegetables", "steamed snapper", "deep-fried eggplant with pork stuffing" as example. As for the selection of the preposition "in" or "with", it generally follows the principle of adding the word "with" before the name of ingredients. If the main ingredient is soaked or wrapped in soup or ingredients, the preposition "in" is generally used. For example, "steamed chicken with chestnuts in lotus leaf packets", "steamed spare ribs in black bean sauce" and so on.

3. Translation of Shandong Cuisine with Adjectives for Taste

In addition to following the above principles in translation, the corresponding English words with adjectives for taste should also be put into the names of some Shandong dishes. For example, "crispy fried spareribs", "crispy celery", "tender stewed fish", "crispy rolls of shredded pork, sea cucumber and bamboo shoots" and so on.

4. Translation of Shandong Cuisine Containing the Names of People or Places

In order to commemorate the origin or founder of dishes, some names of Shandong dishes have the corresponding proper nouns. In addition to the above principles, transliteration of the names of such dishes should also be carried out. For example, "Dezhou braised chicken", "Shanxian mutton soup", "Shandong pancake" and so on.

3.2.2. Free Translation Method

Shandong cuisine is also part of the name of the "freehand". These dishes usually combine the characteristics of color, aroma, cooking method and shape to give a dish a pleasant and auspicious name. Therefore, the ingredients and cooking methods are often absent in the names of these dishes, so the method of free translation is easier to understand. There is also a big dish "family photo" in Shandong cuisine, which is characterized by many ingredients and tastes. It is cooked with chicken breast, sea cucumber, shrimp and other raw materials. It is a common dish for festive banquets, so the name "Family photo" means good luck and happiness. Transliteration can be used first in translation, and then the various ingredients used in dishes can be translated out one by one to explain the transliteration. Translated into "Quan Jia Fu (A tonic recipe of chicken breast fried with sea cucumber, peeled shrimp and squid, carrying the implied meaning of a happy family reunion)".

While, another famous Shandong cuisine "double chickens in shell of one watermelon", this cuisine began in the palace of Qing dynasty, with watermelon, chicks and scallops, ingredients such as dried mushroom cooked. It is famous for the fresh taste and rich nutrition. But, it formerly was known as "watermelon chicken", later renamed " double chickens in shell of one watermelon ", namely, taking the watermelon as eggs, two chicken as phoenix, the name of this dish is quite beautiful so that it became the top grade of Shandong food. Therefore, it's confusing to literally translate the name of the dishes, it's more obvious if you translate the ingredients directly.

3.2.3. The Combination of Literal Translation Method and Free Translation Method

Some of the names of these dishes are based on the ingredients, processing methods and the characteristics of the color, aroma and shape of the dishes, to choose an auspicious pleasant to hear "Freehand" name, but basically you can see the ingredients and processing methods. For the translation of these dishes, the method of literal translation and free translation is generally adopted to translate the implication of the dish names. From the "stir-fried shrimps with peas", we can realize the ingredients including stir-fried shrimps and peas and the cooking method is stir-frying. More like shrimps than shrimps. The "fried chicken slices with egg white" which is usually made of chicken breast, eggs and other ingredients. After becoming a dish, the meat is white in color, soft, tender and fragrant, shaped like hibiscus. During this translation, we can not only have a clear picture of the cuisine, but also know the ingredients of the cuisine. It's easy for you to choose your favourite dish.

4. Conclusion

Food culture is an indispensable part of the culture of any country or nation.

The time-honored culture of Shandong cuisine has attracted many fans in the process of Chinese cultural exchange and export. Therefore, the correct translation of The names of Shandong cuisine is of great cross-cultural communication significance, which is conducive to promoting the introduction of Shandong cuisine culture to the world.

The translation of the names of Shandong cuisine should follow the principle of pragmatic introduction, give due consideration to the cultural taboos of the target language, reveal the connotation of food culture, highlight the aesthetic effect of food, and adapt to the needs of foreign communication of Chinese food culture under the background of globalization.

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