

Strategies for English Translation of Foods with Hebei Characteristics

Caiqiao Huo¹, Xiaomei Du¹, Weichen Gu², Xinfu Yuan¹

¹Foreign Language Department, Baoding University, Baoding, China

²Foreign Language College, Hebei Normal University, Shijiazhuang, China

Email: goofyhuo@163.com

How to cite this paper: Huo, C. Q., Du, X. M., Gu, W. C., & Yuan, X. F. (2017). Strategies for English Translation of Foods with Hebei Characteristics. *Creative Education*, 8, 383-388.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2017.83030>

Received: February 21, 2017

Accepted: March 21, 2017

Published: March 24, 2017

Copyright © 2017 by authors and Scientific Research Publishing Inc.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

Hebei Province covers a vast geographic area and is rich in resources, which provides a variety of ingredients for local foods. With the development of Hebei tourism industry, more and more foreign tourists travel to this province. Eating is an indispensable part of tourism activities. Typical food plays a very important role in the spread of the Chinese culture. How to make foreign tourists understand food culture in Hebei and know the characteristics of food deserves consideration. The translator needs to pay attention to some strategies and methods in translation. This paper mainly introduces three methods of translating: free translation combining material and cooking technique, literal translation combining material and cooking technique, and transliteration according to Chinese pronunciation. The purpose of the author is to spread the local food culture by better translation.

Keywords

Food Method Culture Translation

1. Introduction

Hebei Province is located in the northern part of the North China Plain and is surrounded by Beijing and Tianjin with Zhang River to the north, the Bohai Sea to the east, the Taihang Mountains to the west, and the Yanshan Mountains to the north. Zhangbei plateau is located in the north of Yanshan Mountain. Hebei Province covers a vast geographic area, so it has a long history of food culture with rich connotation. The food style has been invented and innovative for centuries. And at last, it has got unique food style with the combination of domestic and international essence.

Hebei is a province with unique charm and has a long history with a deep-rooted cultural background and splendid civilization. It is rich in tourism re-

sources with World Cultural Heritages, National Heritage Conservation Units, famous historical and cultural cities, forest parks and natural reserves, etc. It can be said that Hebei is the epitome of China. It is the only province with a variety of topography in China. There are not only plateaus, mountains, hills, plains, basins, deserts but also oceans, wetlands, rivers and seas. It attracts more and more domestic and international tourists to travel around. Eating is an indispensable part of tourism activities. On one hand, tasting the local foods meets the high-level cultural needs of tourists; on the other hand, it promotes the local economic and cultural development (Huo, 2016).

There are three main categories of Hebei food, which includes the southern food, the northern food and the coastal food. The southern food is represented by Baoding food, which is characterized by a wide range of materials of fish, shrimp and crab perfect in color, aroma and taste. The northern food is represented by Chengde Food, which is characterized by cooking with a selection of local raw materials and is similar to the old Beijing royal dishes. The coastal food is represented by Tangshan food, which is characterized by a variety of sea foods.

In this paper, the author is going to talk about the translation methods of Hebei food from three aspects: first, free translation methods combining material and cooking technique; second, literal translation method combining material and cooking technique; third, transliteration according to Chinese pronunciation.

2. Research Background

Foreign scholars have done some research on Chinese food culture. Professor Chang, K. C. from Harvard University edited a book named *Food in Chinese Culture: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives* in 1977. This book can be regarded as the pioneering work to combine the ideas and methods of history and anthropology. Professor Chang's remarks about the characteristics of Chinese food include the ecological environment, cooking methods, ideas and beliefs related with food, the essence of food and the symbolic significance of food, and so on (Chang, 1977). However, seen from the contents, the author concerns about the processing of the materials and wants to clarify what the contents are in people's diet in a certain era.

John Anthony George Roberts is a teacher at the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Huddersfield in Yorkshire of England. He wrote a book named *China to Chinatown: Chinese Food in the West* which consists two parts. The first part of the book is about the attitudes of the westerners towards Chinese foods when they eat Chinese food in China according to the relevant records. The second part of the book focuses on the acceptance of Chinese food in North America and Britain and the trends of globalization of Chinese food. Now, there are many fast food restaurants along the side of the expressways in many western countries. Many western families equip their kitchen with Chinese cooking pots. How does Chinese food sweep the world? How can Chinese food which

used to be avoided become accepted? The author of this book integrates and quotes westerners' views, no matter positive or negative. This book explores how Chinese food has become so popular all over the world and it is quite similar to the path of western learning, which has been rejected with strong exclusion and resistance and become popular after long-time collision, communication (Roberts, 2008).

In China, Liu Qingbo points out that the English translation of Chinese dish names greatly depends on the motivation of naming them and it requires the translator to handle the relations between the headword and the premodifiers or postmodifiers. Meanwhile, some rules for translation, namely the principle of pragmatism, the principle of conciseness and transliteration, must be followed (Liu, 2003).

Li Meng points out that food culture is an important part of China's long history and civilization. With the rapid development of China's economy and the increase of international exchanges, more and more foreign friends want to understand Chinese profound culture, among which, the food culture comes first. While having Chinese food, foreign friends are curious about names of dishes, materials and cooking methods. Therefore, the accurate translation of Chinese dishes plays an important role in spreading Chinese food culture (Li, 2007). Enjoying delicious Chinese food lies not only in paying attention to physical health but also in understanding the history of the nation, customs, people and traditions. Translators have to understand the characteristics of the dishes as well as the cultural connotations. In this way, they can give correct translation of the dish names and make contributions in spreading the Chinese Culture and promote the world cooking culture.

Jia Yan agrees with the idea that China's profound food culture is an important part in Chinese culture. As cultural transmission ambassadors, translators play important roles (Jia, 2014). Because English emphasizes on practicality, the translator should pay attention to materials, ingredients and cooking methods, while doing the translation; at the same time, the English translation conform to the western customs.

In short, the study of Chinese food has become hotter and hotter both at home and abroad. But there is little research on the translation of foods with local flavors. This paper is focused on the translation of typical food in Hebei Province and explores appropriate translation strategies and techniques.

3. Theoretical Foundation

Nord who believes in Skopos Theory argues that both the original and the translated text are of different value and with different purposes and functions. The original text only provides information and the specific requirements depend on the target language culture rather than the original cultural environment in the translation process (Christiane, 2001). Nida's functional equivalence emphasizes the communicative function of translation and the readers' response (Eugene, 1993). Newmark divides the articles into three categories according to different

functions of the articles: the first is articles of expressive function; the second is articles of informative function; the third is of vocative function (Newmark, 2001).

In the translation, the translator can adopt some specific translation strategy in specific context according to the expected function of the translated material, the readers' social and cultural knowledge, and the communication needs. The purpose of food translation is to let foreign friends understand the contents of the dishes, and then stimulate their desire to eat.

4. Translation Methods of Food with Hebei Characteristics

China is a country with a history of more than 5,000 years of civilization. In addition to the eight major cuisines, almost every region has its own special dishes, so our food culture is the most colorful in the world. The main purpose of translating Chinese dishes into foreign languages is to make it easier for foreign customers to understand the contents of the dishes and choose the food they prefer. In the food translation, the following methods can be adopted:

1) Free translation combining material and cooking technique

In the translation of some food names, the translator will find that the dish name is a name with strong ethnic and regional characteristics. There is no similar expression in English. In this case, take free translation combining material and cooking technique.

Example one: Laohu Rou

When people hear the Chinese name of this dish, they will think this dish is made of tiger meat because Laohu in Chinese means tiger in English. In fact, this dish is made of pork and in making this dish, it is very particular about cutting and slicing skill. The pork has to be cut into sharp shape like the tiger's teeth. The pork is cooked chewy and delicious. Even though the pork is fat, there is no greasy feeling when people eat it. In this case, the translator had better take the free translation method combining its main food materials. It can be translated into pork directly, but not tiger's meat.

Example two: Zha Putao

This dish is fried. Putao in Chinese is a kind of fruit which is grape in English. In fact, this dish is made of pork fat. After heating the pork fat into oil, add six different Chinese herbal into the oil. When tasting it, you cannot feel the taste of pork, but taste sweet like jelly. Except pork fat, this dish is made of donkey-hide gelatin, honey and lily. It is good for beauty and health. In this case, the translator can translate the dish name into fried pork with honey, not fried grapes.

2) Literal translation combining material and cooking technique

When there is a certain degree of commonality between the two languages, the two languages are basically corresponding in terms of content and form, which is better. However, if you encounter something typical in one place, there is no such equivalent in the target language, literal translation with additional translation can be adopted.

Example one: Lvrou Huoshao

This food is very popular in Hebei Province, especially among the Han people. There is an old saying, “dragon meat in the sky, donkey meat on the ground”, which is a praise for the delicious flavor of donkey meat. The donkey meat is more tender than beef, no as fat as pork, and not as smelly as mutton. So donkey meat is the best among animal meat. In translation, it can be translated directly into donkeyburger, which is similar to hamburger and easy to understand.

Example two: Songhua Dan

Songhua Dan is one of the specialties in Baiyang Lake. Choose the duck eggs of high quality in local area and make after more than ten procedures. After peeling off the shell, the egg white looks like dark brown jelly with pine-like pattern. So Songhua Dan is very popular in the market. It can be translated into preserved eggs or fossilized eggs according to the making process.

3) Transliteration according to Chinese pronunciation

There are some foods only existing in a certain region. When translating the names, the translator can adopt transliteration method to maintain its authentic geographical features.

Example one: Qizi Shaobing

This food is a specialty in Tangshan in Hebei Province. The fillings inside include meat, sugar, sausage etc. Its color is golden and tastes delicious. In English, there is no such word proper for its name. In this case, the name can be translated with Chinese Pinyin, that is QiZi Shaobing. When introducing to foreigners, we can tell them the ingredients and making process so they can enjoy it with curiosity.

Example two: Bagou Yangza

This food is a special snack in PIngyuan County of Chende. It is a kind of chop suey soup made with a variety of seasoning. It tastes fragrant with rich nutrient and it is easy to digest. When translating it, the translator can use its Chinese name, Bagou Yangza which is more authentic and can reflect local characteristics.

5. Conclusion

This paper analyzes the strategies for English translation of food with Hebei characteristics after the author has done some research. There are still some limits of this study. In this paper, the author only introduces some common strategies in the process of translation. There are names of some special foods with no corresponding English translation. All in all, in the process of food translation, these methods are interrelated and can be used together. But no matter what kind of methods is adopted, the translator should try to figure out the materials and process of making the food and translate with a serious attitude. In order to spread our unique food culture and be a qualified translator, a language learner should be proficient in English and Chinese and learn more about the culture.

Acknowledgements

The paper is under the project of *Research on the English Translation Skills of*

Special Rural Foods in Tourist Attractions in Hebei Province (project No. 201603050205) which is sponsored by Social Science Association of Hebei Province. All the project members made their contributions to the paper. I also thank all my friends and classmates who work in different universities, which made the investigation possible.

References

- Chang, K. C. (1977). *Food in Chinese Culture: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Christiane, N. (2001). *Translation as a Purposeful Activity*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Eugene, N. (1993). *A. Language, Culture, and Translating*. Shanghai: Foreign Language Education Press.
- Huo, C. Q. (2016). A Study on the English Translation of Special Dishes along Taihang Mountainous Areas in Hebei Province. *Global Journal for Research Analysis*, No. 4, 353-354.
- Jia, Y. (2014). The Principles and Methods of Translating Chinese Dishes. *English on Campus*, No. 33, 234-235.
- Li, M. (2007). Chinese Translation of Chinese Cuisine and Chinese Food Culture. *Journal of HuBei TV University*, No. 3, 94-96.
- Liu, Q. B. (2003). The Skills and Principles of Translating Chinese Cuisine. *Chinese Science & Technology Translators Journal*, No. 4, 52-53, 6.
- Newmark, P. (2001). *A Textbook of Translation*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Roberts, J. A. G. (2008). *China to Chinatown: Chinese Food in the West*. Beijing: Contemporary China Publishing House.



Scientific Research Publishing

Submit or recommend next manuscript to SCIRP and we will provide best service for you:

Accepting pre-submission inquiries through Email, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.
A wide selection of journals (inclusive of 9 subjects, more than 200 journals)
Providing 24-hour high-quality service
User-friendly online submission system
Fair and swift peer-review system
Efficient typesetting and proofreading procedure
Display of the result of downloads and visits, as well as the number of cited articles
Maximum dissemination of your research work

Submit your manuscript at: <http://papersubmission.scirp.org/>

Or contact ce@scirp.org