



A Study on Foreignizing Translation of Culture-Loaded Words in Chinese Food Culture

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Abstract

Chinese food culture is rich and colorful. It is not only the axis of the Eastern food culture, but also benefits the whole world and shines in the world culture. With the development of tourism, cultural exchanges have become more frequent, and the pursuit of food in China and the West has also risen to a higher level. Therefore, translating food culture-loaded words accurately can not only promote international cultural exchanges but also further enhance the international competitiveness of Chinese food culture. This paper is composed of four chapters. Chapter One makes a general introduction to Chinese food culture and foreignizing translation. Chapter Two is a detailed analysis of the application of foreignizing translation in culture-loaded words. Chapter Three shows the prospect of the translation of culture-loaded words. Chapter Four is the conclusion of this paper, which summarizes the importance of translating culture-loaded words in Chinese food culture.

Key words: Chinese food culture; Culture-loaded words; Foreignizing translation

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1. INTRODUCTION

Chinese food culture has a long history, but it is neglected by researchers sometimes. It is hard to translate the name of Chinese food exactly, because it includes a great number of culture-loaded words. "Culture-loaded words

refer to the words, phrases, and idioms only contained in a culture. These words reflect the uniqueness of certain nations. This kind of uniqueness develops from the long historical process." (Liao, 2002, p.232)

During the process of translation, we have to consider how to translate culture-loaded words because they make distinctions between different cultures. Culture-loaded words can also reflect a country's social background, financial base and culture in a certain period of time. During different historical period, different culture-loaded words occur. What's more, culture can be transmitted from generation to generation. During the transmitting, culture will also develop. As China has a long history, there are abundant culture-loaded words, which is both difficult for translators to translate and for foreigners to understand.

In China, many experts have done researches about culture-loaded words in related fields, such as research from the perspective of relevance, functional equivalence, and from famous literary works such as *A Dream of Red Mansions*. But there are few studies on culture-loaded words in Chinese food culture from foreignizing translation. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the translation of food culture-loaded words from the perspective of foreignizing translation.

Foreignizing translation is a concept that put forward by Lawrence Venuti from the perspectives of politics, culture, ideology and history. Venuti considers "foreignizing translation can be useful in enriching the minority language and culture". (Venuti, 2008, p.20) In other words, the foreignizing method can restrain the violently domesticating cultural values of the English-language world. Venuti points out that "indeed, the foreign text is privileged in a foreignizing translation only insofar as it enables a disruption of receiving cultural codes, so that its value is always strategic, depending on the cultural formation into which is translated" (Lawrence Venuti, 2008, p.34) The foreignizing method highlights the foreign identity of the source language and protects it from the ideological dominance of the target culture.

In some aspects, foreignizing translation can preserve the uniqueness of the source language's culture. Compared with domestication approach, foreignizing translation considers more about the source language's cultural background and is more faithful to the source language's culture. It can keep the exotic flavor of the source language text. Take Chinese food culture as an example, it contains great national characteristics and shows the creative spirit and unique style of the Chinese nation. The words related to the food culture are rich in Chinese culture. Therefore, we could make use of foreignizing translation to preserve Chinese traditional culture.

2. THE APPLICATION OF FOREIGNIZING TRANSLATION

Food culture embodies the creative spirit and unique style of the Chinese nation. Therefore, the culture-loaded words in food culture can be understood as words with distinctive Chinese cultural characteristics, which reflect Chinese specific history, culture and custom.

For example, relevant information such as the birthplace of the dishes and the allusions of the founders. Translating Chinese-style dish's name correctly can convey the implicit Chinese cultural background knowledge, which is of far-reaching significance to the promotion of China-Western cultural exchanges. The naming of Chinese dishes reflects the information of the ingredients, followed by the cultural connotation and artistic characteristics behind the naming. Therefore, the translation of dish names is diverse.

This paper will combine the characteristics of Chinese food culture and divide culture-loaded words into three categories: historical allusions, local custom and food aesthetic. And then it will introduce how to choose appropriate foreignizing translation strategies in according to their characteristics.

2.1 Words of Historical Allusions

The historical allusions in Chinese "food" culture-loaded words are words formed by Chinese historical figures or events, legends and allusions. A large part of Chinese cuisine is named by Chinese historical figures or allusions, and a few come from historical allusions have long been heard or understood by foreigners, but others are still very unfamiliar. Chinese Pinyin can be used for the translation of food culture load words which is already very familiar to foreign diners. Xu Xianling in her books *Chinese Food Culture* introduces the allusions of "元宵 (Yuan Xiao)".

It's said that a lady-in-waiting called 'Yuan Xiao' during the Han dynasty missed her parents so much that she cried with tears in her face every single day. In order to help her, a minister named Dongfang Shuo lied to Emperor of the Han dynasty that the god of fire with the order of the Jade Emperor would burn Changan (the

Capital of China in Han dynasty) on the 15th of the first lunar month.

The solution to avoid this disaster was to ask the lady-in-waiting named 'Yuan Xiao' to make Tang-yuan, the favorite food of the god of fire, and to ask all the people in Changan to hang lanterns. Emperor Wu approved this plan. Finally, the girl met her parents. Thus, the tradition of Lantern Festival (pronounced 'Yuan Xiao Jie' in Chinese, 'Jie' in Chinese means festival) appeared. (Xu, 2005, p.230)

Cultural words such as "元宵" formed by historical figures can be directly translated into "Yuan Xiao" in Chinese pinyin because they are recognized and accepted by most foreign diners who come to China and even friends abroad.

By the foreignization approach can we achieve most of the unique things with Chinese characteristics. This translation method retains our national language style. In addition, it can also allow foreign diners to arouse their desire for knowledge about the stories and historical background behind the food while tasting the food.

For those historical allusions and culture-loaded words that have not yet reached a certain cross-cultural popularity, annotations, we can be added to supplement cultural information. These allusions with deep Chinese cultural characteristics can be retained to the greatest extent.

Another example cited by Hu Zhishan in his book *Chinese Food Culture* is a famous dim sum "大救驾 (Da Jiu Jia)".

"The famous dim sum "大救驾" in Anhui is an allusion from 956 AD. When Zhao Kuangyin (the emperor of Song Dynasty), who was only a general at the time, conquered Huainan (a city of An Hui province), he was unable to conquer it for a long time at first, and finally he won after several setbacks, but he was also exhausted. For several months, it was difficult for him to eat any food. At that time, a chef in the army tried every means to carefully make a round snack, which was loved by Zhao Kuangyin, quickly recovered his health. Later, Zhao Kuangyin succeed in lots of battles and became emperor. But he was missing about the dim sum, he once said: "The trouble of the pommel horse, the illness after the war, and this dim sum saved my life." And in the Song Dynasty, if one saved the emperor's life, called "Jiu Jia". Therefore, the "大救驾" of An Hui province became famous." (Hu, 2005, p.92)

We used the foreignizing translation to translate "大救驾" as its original Pin Yin "Da Jiu Jia". This not only preserves the characteristics of Chinese culture, but also enhances the diners' attraction to the food and the stories behind the food through simple explanations. Maybe they will try to think about what kind of food would save the emperor? It is unbelievable. Everyone may want to try such attractive food.

Another example is “叫花鸡 (Jiao Hua Ji)”, which is a special dish made by wrapping processed chicken with soil and lotus leaves and baking it. This dish has a long history. According to legend, during a private visit by Emperor Qianlong, he was hungry and sleepy in the wilderness in the south of the Yangtze River. A Jiao Hua Zi (a beggar) kindly gave him a whole chicken wrapped in mud. Being hungry and sleepy, Emperor Qianlong thought that was the best chicken he ever ate, so gave the Jiao Hua Zi the honor to name the chicken. The beggar didn't know what it was called, so he said “Jiao Hua Ji” casually. After Emperor Qianlong returned to the dynasty, he was full of praise for the “Jiao Hua Ji”, so “Jiao Hua Ji” has been spread because of the emperor's praise, and it has become a famous dish. (Xu, 2005, p.234)

So it is appropriate to translate “叫花鸡” into “Jiao Hua Ji” (because it is a Jiao Hua Zi who first cooked it quite accidentally).

In Chinese history, there are lots of allusions which could explain the creation of a famous dim sum. If we want to introduce these dim sums to foreigners, we have to explain the historical background so that we can express the original meaning.

2.2 Words of Local Customs

Folklore, as a direct reflection of people's lifestyle, also contains rich symbolic meaning. On the Dragon Boat Festival, people eat rice dumplings to express their memory and remembrance of Qu Yuan (a famous poet in Warring state period); on the Mid-Autumn Festival, Mid-Autumn moon cakes and reunion dinners embody people's strong desire for a happy family. In China, all ethnic minorities have their own unique eating customs, which can be said to be diverse and different. Therefore, the folk customs contained in food culture-loaded words show the typical nationality of Chinese culture.

The strongest dietary customs should be the festival customs. There is a habit of eating specific foods in various traditional Chinese festivals. The translation of such words can directly express the content so that the target language readers can understand.

Such as: eating “重阳糕(Double-ninth Cake)” the custom in the Han nationality, Double Ninth Festival is September 9th in the day, so it can be directly translated into “Double-ninth Cake”.

In addition, expressing prayers for various good wishes is also one of the characteristics of folk custom words.

“清汤全家福(family gift)” is a famous dish in Shandong province. The ingredients are more diverse, mainly including abalone, sea cucumber, chicken, duck, fish maw, mushrooms and cabbage heart. “清汤全家福” is often used to celebrate the birthdays of the elderly and wedding banquet, family reunions, and even baby full moon banquets, so we can translate it into “family gift” to express auspicious meaning.

For example, the “合欢汤 (Happy-Reunion Soup)”

mentioned in *A Dream of Red Mansions* expresses the yearning for the joy of family. Mr. Yang Xianyi directly translated it into “Happy-Reunion Soup”. “Happy-Reunion” not only achieves equivalence in language form, but also fully conveys cultural connotation.

Foreignizing translation shows the traditional customs behind the food. Such as: eating jujube buns for newlyweds in Shanxi, eating Zhu Zi Baba on March 3rd in Anhui and so on. The nationality, regionality and history of traditional customs are difficult points in the translation of food culture.

The creation of food is an inevitable accident, and is the result of the hard work and wisdom of the people of all ethnic groups. Foreignizing translation implicitly and euphemistically re-exhibits emotions, which is more helpful for target language readers to understand the development process of Chinese food culture.

2.3 Words of Aesthetic

The food aesthetics of Chinese food culture has been analyzed in detail in Xu Wanbang's article “Aesthetic Interest in Chinese Food Culture”. In this paper, in addition to mention the beauty of the Chinese people's image of food, the beauty of the food environment, the beauty of food utensils, and the aroma of food, he also listed the aesthetic appeal of name, sound, beauty, etc., in particular, the naming methods of various dishes such as colors, flowers, etc., from which we can see the Chinese people's pursuit of “true to the name”, and strive for beautiful dishes, tastes, and better names. (Xu, 2005, p.36)

The wonderful feeling that diners can enjoy both materially and spiritually. Because a wonderful name is not only a vivid description of the dish, but also an organic part of the dish itself, which often plays an unexpected function.

For the translation of dishes with beautiful names, some people think that the main ingredients of food should be directly translated to ensure the faithfulness of the translation. In fact, this is not the case. In Chinese food culture, thinking style and language characteristics embodied in such words are more abundant.

For example, the Chinese cuisine “鸟语花香”, can be translated into “Singing Birds and Fragrant Flowers(Steamed mandarin fish and bird-shaped shrimps)” and “青龙过海” can be translated into “Green Dragons Crossing the Sea(Soup with green onion)”. (Kong, 2019, p.178) Foreignizing translation not only allows foreign diners to appreciate the good name of the food, understand the Chinese thinking mode and word habits, but also shows the true content of the food in the annotation part clearly.

The name of the dish is beautiful. Chinese food is delicious but some of them has a strange name. The name of a lady is beautiful and moving, which can reflect the person's personality, hobbies, and cultural accomplishments. The same is true for the name of the

dish. It has to be repeatedly scrutinized and not far-fetched, and strive to be elegant and relevant to the title. The name of the dish can reveal the characteristics of the dish and reflect the whole picture of the dish.

After discussing these categories of culture-loaded words in Chinese food culture, we could have a basic understanding about these specific words and learn how to translate it properly. Foreignization approach can preserve the beautiful image of these cuisines and the explanatory note can also prevent foreigners from being confused.

Although the foreignization approach can be of great help to pass the source language's culture to the target readers, it also requires the translator's great knowledge between the two cultures. Therefore, translators have to do a good preparation and be familiar with cultural background before translating.

3. THE PROSPECT OF THE TRANSLATION OF CULTURE LOADED WORDS

In the future, the extent of cultural exchanges will be larger and more diversified. The cultures of all countries are constantly pursuing similarities and seeking differences. What's more, we have to learn to accept foreign cultures with tolerance and an open mind. Foreignizing translations will gradually be accepted by readers. In spread of the characteristics of food culture, it is an inevitable trend to adopt foreignizing translation strategies. However, the research on the translation of culture-loaded words of Chinese food culture is still a relatively new topic. The paper has made considerations on its future development in the following aspects.

3.1 Translation Strategy

First, the choice of translation of culture-loaded words should also kick out the old and welcome the new. Of course, the old here refers to those culture-loaded words that are too old and rarely used or limited to a small range. It is unnecessary to translate such culture-loaded words. In addition, the development of food culture is not stagnant, and it will be updated with the changes of the times. For example, the classification of cuisines may be expanded; new dishes will continue to appear; eating habits will also change, and so on. All of these require researchers or translators to have an attitude of studying hard and keeping pace with the times.

Therefore, we have to try to use different translation methods to translate these culture-loaded words. In addition, taking untranslatability into consideration is also very important.

Catford thought that untranslatability is caused by the target language's lack of lexical or syntactical substitute. Different languages differ from each other in the phonetic, grammatical, semantic, pragmatic aspect and etc. When translating culture-loaded words, it is hard for translators

to translate the culture behind these words in a perfect way. (Liao, 2002, p.153)

Cultural untranslatability comes from cultural differences. Although it is hard to translate culture-loaded words into target language in a perfect way, translators still need to try to discover the translation of culture-loaded words. Translators can also add some explanations after the translated sentences or words to make the meaning and culture behind the source language text be understood by target readers.

Under the great progress of globalization, different cultures have more accesses to communicate with each other. According to Eugene Nida, "Translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style." (Eugene, 1982, p.14)

Guo Jianzhong, in his paper point out that there are three approaches to translate culture-loaded words, namely foreignization, domestication and literal translation. The translation of culture-loaded words belongs to the micro aspect of cultural translation. (Guo, 1998, p.13) In the context of globalization, the fundamental standpoint of exploring the translation approach is to preserve the unique cultural significance carried by culture-loaded words, which determines that we should use foreignization and literal translation as the main translation approaches to translation culture-loaded words.

Different translation methods can be used to translate different words or sentences. The most important thing is that we have to consider the real situation and whether the target readers can understand it or not.

3.2 Translation System

We need to form a systematic translation system of food culture-loaded words. The system should not only include translation theories for the proper definition of culture-loaded words, but also a corpus of culture-loaded words. Among them, though the establishment of a corpus of culture-loaded words is a huge systematic project, the advantages that the corpus brings to translation work are immeasurable. Translation scholars should consciously collect the corpus of culture-loaded words related to food in their daily research and practice to achieve accurate and efficient translation as soon as possible.

With the development of technology and science, it is convenient for us to use machine translation to finish translation works. That means that it is possible to introduce Chinese food culture to the whole world by machine translation. What we should to do is to improve and supervise the quality of the translation of culture-loaded words. Maybe in the beginning, these will have lots of mistakes during the process of translation, but I believe it will become more accurate gradually.

Forming a systematic translation system is really important for us. In Hu Bin's paper "The Spreading

Skills of Chinese Food Culture”, we could notice he put forward many strategies to introduce food culture to the international market. It is obvious that we will encounter unpredictable problems, but if we set up a system, and it will make things become easier. (Hu, 2008, p.99)

In Zhao Min’s paper “A Study of Translation of Chinese Dishes Names”, she pointed out that there is no relatively complete food translation system in China. As a result, when you encounter some word problems in the translation process, you often cannot find a reasonable and unified standard. Translators of the translated content can justify themselves, but it will cause foreign readers to be puzzled, and ultimately unable to accurately and systematically spread Chinese food culture. (Zhao, 2021, p.88)

This paper has summarized the strategies and methods for the translation of staple food content, and found that the translation of such names and related cultural words can follow certain translation rules, but this is only a point in many food translations. Translation strategies and methods at this point are expanded and improved, and on the basis of this point, through joint efforts to establish a comprehensive and detailed Chinese food translation system, the current Chinese food is classified as a whole, such as cold dishes and hot dishes. Categories, soups, staple foods, specialty snacks, Chinese wine and Chinese tea, and then continue to refine. In the process of sorting and summarizing, the criteria for recurring or culturally characteristic names are determined, so that fixed and key food content can be translated.

3.3 The Training of Translators

The cultivation of relevant talents needs to strengthen the cultivation of cultural awareness. In the process of foreignizing translation of food culture-loaded words, the understanding of the cultural knowledge of the source language and the target language is the basis of translation. Nowadays, most of the random translations are caused by the lack of cultural background knowledge. Therefore, in the process of training talents, we should grasp cultural background knowledge and cultivate cultural awareness throughout the entire process of language learning.

Since the content of the translation involves traditional Chinese and Western cultures, especially Chinese people are very sophisticated in all aspects of food, including the choice of ingredients, cooking skills, color matching, taste pursuit, etc. Therefore, the translator is required to choose proper vocabularies and translation methods and to convey the meaning of the cultural and atheistic meaning in original country very carefully.

However, the author found that in the translation process, there are often several English words corresponding to a Chinese word, so it is more confused when we have to choose a word. It is difficult to clearly point out the difference between each word. It is necessary to carefully consult the dictionary and view the relevant

example sentences, consider each word in the specific application language environment, and find out the key points emphasized by each word in a set of synonyms through comparative analysis. This requires translators not only to expand their vocabulary, but also to grasp the most accurate meaning, applicable context, and key points of each English word, so as to make the translation process more smoothly and express the content more accurately.

When many translators re-translate culture-loaded words, their translations are still inadequate and have a translation style. At the same time, the curriculum system needs to be reformed to meet the demand for talents. Today’s tourism industry continues to develop. Catering is an indispensable part of the tourism industry, and its market demand will also grow rapidly. Enterprises will integrate international standards from food translation, dish innovation, and even service management. This shows that the demand for translators in food-related fields is rising. Therefore, relevant courses or teaching content can be added to the curriculum to train outstanding professionals for the external communication of Chinese food culture.

4. CONCLUSION

In short, Chinese food culture not only plays an important role in people’s life, but also continuously expands its influence in the world environment. Although the food of China and the West is very different in all aspects, under the situation of globalization, the culture is constantly merging and spreading. Enjoying the cuisine of different countries has become an indispensable part of the daily life of contemporary people.

The culture-loaded words in food culture are rich in Chinese characteristics. During the translation process, we should try to adopt foreignizing translation strategies, and appropriately adopt different foreignization methods according to different culture-loaded words. Therefore, we could retain their own cultural characteristics to the maximum extent and introduce them to the whole world. In addition, we also give foreigners opportunities to experience the splendid food culture while experiencing the same wonderful language features and profound cultural connotations of China. The world-famous Chinese cuisine attracts food lovers from all over the world.

Chinese traditional food culture is broad and profound, has a long history with rich and diverse cuisines, different cooking styles, and distinctive ethnic characteristics. When we enjoy delicious food with all colors, flavors, we can learn about the historical allusions, humanistic customs, legends and traditional culture of our nation, and spread our customs and food to other countries. When translating Chinese traditional food culture, it is not only necessary to understand the food characteristics, but also to understand the basis of the naming of dishes from the connotation of our traditional culture. Only when we have

a rich knowledge in Chinese food culture, can we make a correct translation of Chinese dish and contribute to the spread of Chinese food culture.

In foreign cultural exchanges, translation is an important means and carrier. It is a huge challenge for translators to let foreign audiences understand Chinese culture, while retaining and reflecting cultural characteristics. With the development of social economy and cultural exchanges, we are required to innovate and use a variety of translation methods to effectively draw readers, and explore the common emotional attributes in the different culture. To stimulate emotional resonance in different contexts, so that we can fully and accurately show our country's cultural characteristics and gain the initiative status in the increasingly fierce cultural competition.

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