

A Further Discussion on Translation of Chinese Cuisine Names

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Abstract: *As a form of material culture, catering culture is an all-embracing field. Chinese catering culture occupies a highly important position in the Chinese culture. As a thread going through the long history of Chinese catering culture, Chinese cuisine names not only reflect the variety of ingredients, cooking methods, color, aroma, taste, appearance of the dishes, but also contain many cultural elements such as dish inventors, original place, literary images and auspicious words. This paper discusses the practical principles and strategies of Chinese names translation in the light of “functional equivalence” in hope that it can guide the translation of Chinese dish names.*

Key Words: *Chinese cuisine name translation, functional equivalence, culinary culture*

I. Introduction

“Food is for many the most sensitive and important expression of national culture” (Newmark, 2001: 97). Culture may sometimes be defined as a way of life. If so, can we think of anything more fundamental to a culture than eating and drinking? It is especially the case in China. As a country enjoying thousands years of culture with much emphasis on food, China’s various dish names not only reflect the amazing variety of ingredients, cooking skills, seasonings, and ways of cutting, but also deliver much aesthetic values and cultural elements, including folklores, legends, poetic images, etc.

Based on the general study of Chinese catering culture and Chinese dish names, this paper discusses the general and practical principles for the translation of Chinese dish names in the light of the principles of “Functional Equivalence”, it also puts forward the classifications of Chinese dish names and the suggested translation techniques in hope that it can provide some guidance in Chinese cuisine translation.

II. Chinese catering culture and Chinese cuisine names

A. Chinese catering culture

China’s long history, vast territory and extensive contact with other nations and cultures have given birth to the distinctive Chinese culinary art. With thousands of years of creative and accumulative efforts, the Chinese cuisine has become increasingly popular among more and more overseas gourmets, virtually functioning as an envoy of friendship in China’s cultural exchanges with foreign countries.

The three essential factors, or key elements, by which Chinese cooking is judged, are known as “color, aroma and taste”. The “color” of Chinese food, the first of these elements which is so evident in a Chinese banquet, includes the layout and design of dishes, best exemplified in particular by the large elaborately-prepared cold dish served at the beginning of the dinner. “Aroma” implies more than what one’s nose can detect directly; it also includes the freshness of the raw ingredients used and the blending of seasonings. “Taste” is the art of proper seasoning, though it also involves the texture of food and fine slicing techniques. These three essential elements are achieved by the careful coordination of a series of delicate activities: selecting ingredients, mixing flavors, timing the cooking, controlling the heat and finally, laying out the food on the plate for the table. Chinese dishes are commonly served in a manner intended to please the eye as well as the palate, especially on festive occasions. Sometimes fancy decorative arrangements, comparable to flower arrangements, are constructed, for display. These offerings to the visual sense might take the form of delicately carved or engraved fruits, often tinted with pleasant colors and designs.

B. Features and functions of Chinese cuisine names

1. Features of Chinese cuisine names

Owing to the variety of Chinese dishes, Chinese dish names present the features that distinguish them from that of any other countries, either from the linguistic view or from the socio-cultural perspective.

a. Frequent use of abbreviation

As the Chinese dishes are characterized by combining many ingredients and seasonings in a single dish, there often occurs the situation that a dish name is too short to present all the ingredients in it. Thus a shortened name is often preferred. “八宝豆腐”, “炒三鲜”, “八宝冬瓜汤”, “套四宝”, “双片锅巴” are typical examples.

b. Frequent use of rhetorical devices

Metaphor is commonly seen in Chinese dish names, which is used in describing a dish's shape or appearance. It is an effective way to capture and hold on to the reader's attention. For example, “蚂蚁上树” is to compare the appearance of this dish (minced pork with vermicelli) with “ants in the trees”. “石上鸣秋蝉” is to compare the shape of grouper slices with a stone, and the appearance of minced shrimp and mushrooms with cicada in Autumn. The name itself can create a mental image that is arresting and vivid.

c. Frequent use of four-character expressions

The balanced number of syllables in a word or phrase is preferred in Chinese. The Chinese language is composed of many four-character expressions formed by two disyllable words, creating the effect of neat structure, compact meaning and aesthetic value. It is also true of the Chinese dish names, which include many idioms and phrases that emphasize the even effect, such as “子孙满堂”, “群龙戏珠”, “霸王别姬”, “花好月圆”, “孔雀开屏” and “鱼米之乡”.

2. Functions of Chinese cuisine names

A dish name normally informs the receptors of the main ingredients of this dish, and sometimes uses the beautiful words to add aesthetic value, with the final objective to stimulate the diners to taste the dish. Therefore, this writer proposes three major functions of Chinese dish names, namely, informative, aesthetic, and social-cultural functions

a. Informative function

The informative function means that the communicative aim of language is to provide readers or listeners with information. As the fundamental function of Chinese dish names, it is a process of transmitting the basic information of a dish, including the ingredients, seasonings, cooking methods, etc. to the receptors.

b. Aesthetic function

If a dish were a work of art, the dish name would be the art of art. Besides the informative function, a dish name deserves an aesthetic value. The aesthetic value of a dish can be judged according to its color, aroma, taste, and appearance. But a dish name's aesthetic value can only be appreciated through the name itself.

Dish names with metaphors, and the auspicious names, such as “百花朝凤”, “游龙戏凤”, “锦绣中华” and “满园春色” are associated with adorable nature, animals, flowers, which induce the diners to image, to acquire an enjoyment.

c. Social-cultural function

There is often more to the name of a Chinese dish. And some Chinese dish names offer little clues as to what is presented on a plate. Sometimes people's emotions are embodied in the dish names. As cited in the socio-cultural feature, “油炸烩” is not merely a dish “Deep Fired Twisted Dough Sticks”, it shows the profound hatred of people to the vicious historical figures.

Moreover, the names of the dishes are often related to the status of the diners. At banquets attended by businessmen, the dishes are often named to promote their business and their profitability, such as “发财好市”, “金银满地”, “元宝大虾”, and “锦绣大利”.

III. Theoretical basis of the translation of Chinese cuisine names

A. Nida's theory of functional equivalence

1. Priority of meaning over form

Some translators have been quite unwilling to sacrifice the formal elements of the target language text for the sake of preserving what they regard as the integrity of the source text. They insist upon literal translation by trying to reflect every meaningful features of the text in a form which is as similar as possible to the source language structure, for they are convinced that only in this way can they produce the most accurate reflection of the original. These translators defend their literal translation because they do not want to bring into the text any possible excuse for divergent interpretation. This idea is quite misleading since what should be translated is the content not the form.

2. Complete intelligibility to the readership

A satisfactory functional equivalence translation requires a high degree of intelligibility with the receptors. To ensure the complete intelligibility to the readers, the translators shall take the readers' cultural background and decoding ability into consideration and free him from the form of the original text. The translation must fit in with the target receptors' decoding ability; otherwise, it will not be properly understood by the readers. Nida puts forward the idea of changing the original form for the sake of meaning partially out of consideration for the

readers since a close, formal translation is likely to result in an awkward translation or be understood by its readers. However, complete intelligibility does not only lie in whether the TL language is understandable to the readers, but also whether the original meaning can be conveyed to them.

3. A similar effect to the original text

Functional equivalence can be interpreted in such a way that the target language receptors must not only know the original receptors have understood the content of the text, but they should also be able to appreciate some of the impact and appeal which such a text must have had for the original receptors. In other words, priority shall be given to target receptors' intelligibility. However, intelligibility is not merely informative. The response can never be identical, for the cultural and historical settings are too different, but there should be a high degree of equivalence of response, or the translation will fail to accomplish its purpose (Nida&Taber,1996:24). "Henry is left, at the end, with nothing. A man is trapped, Hemingway seems to be saying. He is trapped biologically and he is trapped socially; either way it can only end badly, and there are no other way" (Ibid., 274). Will Henry start a new life or will he give up his hope for rebirth? Hemingway finally portrays him as the "lost generation".

B. Practical principle

1. Introduction of dish's basic information

Since the first function of Chinese dish names is informative, their translations should, first of all, be informative to achieve the functional equivalence in this regard. Whether the original dish names are self-descriptive or not, their translations must be informative since the TL receptors have the right to know what ingredients or cooking techniques are used in a certain dish. The following aspects often set obstacles for correct comprehension:

a. Cooking methods

Dozens of cooking methods in Chinese cuisine are not to be confused in the dish name translating. There are 煮、煨、炖、焖、熬、涮、扒、焯、炒、烩、熘、烹、蒸、炸、煎、煊、煲、熏、卤、酱、腌 and many other techniques

b. Ingredients

Apart from the basic knowledge of cooking skills, the translator should also analyze the ingredients of a dish accurately. Mistakes will be made if the translator just translates according to the name itself. For example, "扒猴头" is by no means "Stewed Monkey's Head". "猴头" is just a abbreviation of "猴头菇", and the version should be "Stewed Hedgehog Hydnum".

c. Ways of cutting

Chinese dish names also contain various forms of ingredients due to the different cutting skills. The cutting skills normally cover "切" (cutting), "剁"(chopping), "切末"(mincing), "切丁"(cutting into dices), "切块"(cutting into pieces), "切丝"(shredding), "刨丝"(grating), "切片"(slicing), "片肉"(filleting), "切条"(cutting into straps), "切段"(cutting into chunks) (Wang, 1997:260). As for the forms of ingredients often appear in the dish names, there are "块", "片", "丝", "丁", "茸", "末", "条", "段".

2. Transmittance of aesthetic value

Since a dish name may acquire the aesthetic function, its translation should be equally or approximately functional in transmitting the aesthetic value. Quite a few dish names share the high level of aesthetic value. Therefore, the translator should exert efforts to make their translations retain the beautiful image. In this way, the translation of a Chinese dish name may achieve the same or similar commercial function as the original name does. To reach this goal, the translation should be in conformity with functional equivalence, being attractive and aesthetically pleasing.

3. Conveying of cultural elements

Translation is regarded as a form of intercultural communication. It is not only a transfer of language, but also a transfer of culture. If the translator has a wider, international readership in mind, cultural features are usually made more explicit. Cultural equivalence, as part of functional equivalence, refers to equivalence in cultural response to a dish between the TL readers and the SL readers. That is, translation should be done with cultural awareness of the TL readers. In terms of Chinese dish names, there are cultural-loaded words and historical stories behind them, which convey the Chinese cultural elements. The translations of such names should also abide by the informative, aesthetic functions.

IV. Classification of the Chinese cuisine names and suggested translation techniques

Chinese dish names can be classified into six groups: self-descriptive names, names with metaphors, names after a person/place, names with literary images, auspicious names and names of common practice. They are further subcategorized except for the last group. The most suitable techniques of each sub-group are discussed and the versions will be suggested in light of the discussed principles.

A. Self-descriptive names

1. Basic type

a. Description

In this type, only the ingredients and seasonings of a dish are reflected in the name, and the major ingredient is often placed after other ingredient or seasonings. Two nouns form a coordinate word group. Examples: “青椒肉片”, “海米白菜”, “豆豉桂鱼”, “椒盐排骨”, “青豆虾仁”.

b. Translation techniques and suggested versions

In fact, the translation of this type of dish names adheres to the semantic equivalence. Under most circumstances, literal translation is able to convey the content of a dish faithfully. But it is not merely a word-for-word or unit-for-unit translation. When the grammatical and lexical structures of Chinese and English do not coincide, word order, construction and part of speech then have to be adjusted to the grammatical and lexical structures of the receptor language so as to keep the translation natural and smooth.

To translate this type of dish names, the main ingredient is placed as the headword, with a phrase (with/in + seasonings) following closely. The suggested versions would be:

青椒肉片 Sliced Pork with Green Pepper
海米白菜 Chinese Cabbage with Dried Shrimps
豆豉桂鱼 Mandarin Fish in Black Bean Sauce
椒盐排骨 Spare Ribs with Pepper and Salt
青豆虾仁 Shrimp with Green Bean

2. Names of abbreviation

a. Description

Numbers are used to refer to several ingredients contained in this group of dishes. As one of the features of Chinese dish names, it is a good way to simplify the dish name. But its shortage lies in that the indication is implicit, that is, the indicated ingredients are too obscure to inform the readers. Examples: “八宝菠菜” “白扒三珍”, “拌三鲜”, “炒四季”, “炆三白”.

b. Translation techniques & suggested versions

Literal translation can be adopted as the first step, for instance, “八宝菠菜” should firstly be literally translated as “Spinach with Eight Delicacies”. But the English receptors will be thrown into confusion at such an incomplete version. What are “eight delicacies”? They may question. The translator has the responsibility to stand in the receptor’s position and provide the satisfactory solution. An explanation, or description of these eight ingredients is needed: fresh almond, walnut kernel, sesame, mushroom, carrot, winter bamboo shoots, needle mushroom and egg. Hence the technique of literal translation plus explanation should be adopted, as in:

白扒三珍 Stewed Three Delicacies (land & sea delicacies and stuffed duck) in White Sauce
拌三鲜 Three Delicacies (sea slug, lobster and chicken breast)
炒四季 Fried “Four Seasons” (chicken, jumbo shrimps, roast pork and broccoli)
炆三白 Quick-boiled Three “Whites” (bean curd, pork tripe and cauliflower) in sauce

3. Names with cooking methods

a. Description

The variety of Chinese cooking methods is clearly seen in this kind of names, together with an ingredient. The basic structure would be a verb-object word group, begins with a verb and ends in its object, as in the examples: “炒鱼片”, “炖牛肉”, “清蒸鱼”, “炸明虾”, “红烧猪肉” and “熏黄鱼”. In a more complex name, another minor ingredient would be added, forming the structure of an object-verb-object group, such as “菜炒鸡球” and “鸡丝烩鱼肚”.

b. Translation techniques & suggested versions

(1) The literal translation and even word-for-word translation can be adopted for the basic structure, with the mode of “cooking method + ingredients”. As for the complex name, minor changes should be made under the mode of “cooking method + main ingredient + with/in minor ingredient”. As discussed in the Chapter 3, the first practical principle for the translation of Chinese dish name is introduction of dish’s basic information, and the cooking methods should be understood without the semantic conflict. Mei (2000: 286) gives the Chinese-English list of some commonly seen cooking methods:

Chinese	English
煸; 炒	Stir-frying; sautéing
爆	Quick-frying
炸	Deep-frying
煎	Pan-frying
清炒	Plain-frying
清蒸	Steaming
红烧	Braising with soy sauce
煲; 焖; 炖; 煨	Braising; Stewing; Simmering;
白灼	Scalding
焙	Roasting; Broiling
铁扒	Grilling; Broiling
熏	Smoking
汁卤	Stewing in gravy
腌	Pickling; Salting
卤制	Marinating

We can take the list as a reference and give the versions to the above examples accordingly:

炒鱼片 Fried Sliced Fish
 炖牛肉 Stewed Beef
 清蒸鱼 Steamed Fish
 炸明虾 Deep Fried Prawns
 红烧猪肉 Braised Pork with Brown Sauce
 熏黄鱼 Smoked Yellow Croaker
 菜炒鸡球 Stir-fried Chicken Meatball with Vegetables
 鸡丝烩鱼肚 Stewed fish maw with shredded chicken

(2) Free translation will be suitable for a special group of self-descriptive dish names---Chinese medicated food names. As stated in Chapter 2, Chinese medicated food takes up a special place in Chinese catering culture. But in terms of translation, many traditional Chinese medicines find no equivalence in the English language. It is still translatable, however, by adopting their Latin names. Here are some examples: “当归炖羊肉---Stewed Mutton with *Angelicae Sinensis*”, “天麻炖鸡---Stewed Chicken with *Gastraodia Tuber*”, “清蒸虫草鸽---Stewed Pigeon with Chinese Caterpillar Fungus”.

However, it is believed that the majority of English readers would have little knowledge of these medicines, let alone their tonic effect. In front of this cultural barrier, this writer tends to simplify the medicine’s names into “herbs”, and explains their nutritional effect in the brackets. Here are suggested modifications for the above three examples:

当归炖羊肉 Stewed Mutton with Herbs (nourishing the stomach and kidney)
 天麻炖鸡 Stewed Chicken with Herbs (invigorating the circulation of blood)
 清蒸虫草鸽 Steamed Pigeon with Herbs (nourishing the lung, liver and kidney)

4. Names with flavor

a. Description

Word group consisting of a modifier and the word it modifies is very productive in forming this type of dish name. The form is basically “modifier + headword”, with the first half as the attribute to clarify the flavor of the dish, and the latter half as the name of the ingredient. It still belongs to the self-descriptive names. Examples: “麻辣豆腐”, “鱼香肉丝”, “怪味鸡”, “糖醋石斑鱼”, “香酥鸡” and “五香牛肉”.

b. Translation techniques and suggested versions

Literal translation is still the dominant method under the mode of “flavor + ingredient”. But free translation is used in some names such as “鱼香肉丝” and “怪味鸡”. There are common practices to follow, thus “shredded pork with chili sauce” and “special-flavored chicken” should be adopted instead of “Fish-flavored Shredded Pork” and awkward “Strange taste Chicken”.

Here are some common flavors translations:

辣, 麻辣: spicy, hot, peppery

糖醋: sweet& sour

怪味: special-flavored

脆, 酥: crispy, crisp

咸: salted

鱼香: with garlic/ chili sauce

五香: spiced

Correspondingly, the above examples are translated as:

麻辣豆腐 Spicy Tofu

糖醋石斑鱼 Sweet and Sour Garoupa

香酥鸡 Crisp Deep-fried Chicken

五香牛肉 Spiced Beef

B. Names with metaphors

Metaphors are usually used in the Chinese dish names, which have the advantages of expressiveness, vividness and humor. Two groups can be further divided as names with ingredients and names without ingredients.

1. Names with ingredients

a. Description

With its name explicit, the main ingredient (A)'s is compared with an animal, an object or anything (B), under the format of “B+A”. “A” is in the shape of “B”. For example, “松鼠(B)黄鱼(A)” is a dish in which “黄鱼” is in the shape of “松鼠”. Similar examples are “玉簪田鸡腿”, “元宝肉”, “桂花鱼翅”.

b. Translation techniques and suggested versions

It is not a word-for-word translation for this group. Otherwise, “Squirrel & Fish” and “Butterfly & Chicken” would be too scaring. However, the metaphor should not be ignored in translation either. Here are two negative examples,

松鼠黄鱼 Sweet & Sour Boneless Yellow Croaker (Zhu, 1992: 282)

玉簪田鸡腿 Fried Frog Legs (Zhu, 1992: 289)

The vivid images of “squirrel” and “jade hairpin” are abandoned in the above examples. In fact, the problem is not difficult to solve. This writer suggests using the word “shape” or phrase “in the shape of” in the name as addition, which belongs to the free translation. It can be used to clarify the relations between the two objects in a single name. Here are suggested versions:

松鼠黄鱼 Yellow croaker in the shape of a squirrel

玉簪田鸡腿 Jade-hairpin shaped fried frog legs

元宝肉 Gold/silver Ingot Shaped Pork

桂花鱼翅 Osmanthus-shaped Shark's Fin

2. Names without ingredients

a. Description

With its name omitted, the ingredient is compared with an animal, an object or anything. No definite format can be followed. In this category, many beautiful images can be created. For instance, “蚂蚁上树”, a well-known dish, is to compare the minced pork with “ants”, and vermicelli with “trees”. “乌云托月” is to compare laver with “dark clouds”, and poached egg with moon. Other names, like “掌上明珠”, “七星伴月”, “雪塔观燕”, “雪夜桃花” and “雪映红梅” fall into this group.

b. Translation techniques and suggested versions

For the metaphorical names without the explicit mentioning of ingredients, the translator should first

convey the vivid image expressed in these names. To our disappointment, many current translations fail to transmit the aesthetic value of these dish names, such as:

- 蚂蚁上树 Vermicelli with Spicy Minced Pork (Zhu, 1992: 273)
乌云托月 Poached Egg with Laver (Guo, 2003:269)
雪塔观燕 Egg-white Cake with Bird's nest (Guo, 2003: 292)
雪夜桃花 Fried Moon-shaped Shrimp Cake (Guo, 2003:292)
雪映红梅 Shelled shrimp, Mashed shrimp and Winter mushroom (Guo, 2003: 292)

In this way, the English readers have been deprived of the rights to enjoy the humor or images conveyed in the dish names. These versions do not comply with the second practical principle of transmitting aesthetic value discussed in their mind but also spread Chinese culture in a special way. We shall never underestimate the foreign reader's imagination. Literal translation plus explanation is suggested to give the versions more flavor:

- 蚂蚁上树 Little Ants In a Tree (Vermicelli & Spicy Minced Pork)
乌云托月 Moon on Dark Cloud (Poached Egg with Laver)
掌上明珠 Pearl on the Palm (Shrimp Balls on Duck Webs)
七星伴月 Seven Stars with the Moon (jumbo shrimp, chicken, beef, etc.)
雪塔观燕 Birds on the Snow Tower (Egg-white Cake with Bird's nest)
雪夜桃花 Peach blossom in Snowy Night (Fried Moon-shaped Shrimp Cake)
雪映红梅 Plum-flower on Snow (Shelled shrimp, Mashed shrimp and Winter mushroom)

C. Names after a person/place

1. Names after a person

a. Description

Such dishes are normally named in honor of their inventors or relevant people in history. Many historical figures, widely known or anonymous, connect themselves with dish names. It is the unique feature of Chinese dish names. Lin (1998:331) says, "In England, a Wordsworth steak or Galsworthy cutlet would be unimaginable". Typical Examples are "东坡肉", "宫保鸡丁", "叫化鸡".

b. Translation techniques and suggested versions

A person's name is easy to translate, but the background information of this person and the origins of the dish are by no means an effortless job to accomplish. Since all the dishes in this group have origins, a simple literal translated or transliterated name would be insufficient to convey the cultural elements. To transmit the cultural factors, translation of this type of dish name should be done with the brief introduction of the person, the historical period in a possible short sentence. As there are various settings for the English translation of Chinese dish names, the comparatively short version can be given in menus, and the longer introduction can be provided in the footnotes of menus, literary works or tourist books. The technique of literal translation plus explanation is again chosen.

Take "东坡肉" for example, it can be literally translated as "Dongpo Pork", and then the short explanation "stewed pork initiated by the famous poet Su Dongpo in Song Dynasty" will be enough. The origin of the dish name can be briefed further as Dongpo Pork---it is invented by Su Dongpo, a famous man of letters in the Song Dynasty (960-1279), when he was an official in Hangzhou. He once mobilized the local people to dredge the lake, and he served stewed pork in Shaoxing rice wine with special flavor instead of water to reward them. The pork dish was praised as Dongpo's number one dish. Here comes the dish name.

Such kind of names is limited in number, thus the relatively long translation are worthy of being kept for the sake of cultural spreading.

2. Names after a place

a. Description

Local flavors and specialties are commonly reflected in these dish names. The format is "Place + ingredient" as shown by "广东香肠 (Guangdong Sausage)", "北京烤鸭 (Pekin Roast Duck)" and "南京板鸭 (Nanjing Dried Salted Duck)".

b. Translation techniques & suggested versions

Literal Translation can be applied, with a slight adjustment in different situations. The following three modes can be followed:

- (1) Place + (cooking method) + ingredient
北京烤鸭 Beijing Roast Duck
湖南腊肉 Hunan Smoked Pork
广东香肠 Guangdong Sausage
(2) (Cooking method) + ingredient + place + style
徽州蒸鸡 Steamed Chicken, Huizhou Style

潮州豆腐鸡 Chicken and Tofu, Chaozhou Style
江津肉片 Sliced Pork, Jiangjin Style
北京酱牛肉 Beef Cooked in Soy Sauce, Beijing Style
(3) Cooking method + place + ingredient

This form is used when the ingredient is the specialty of a specific place, such as “南京板鸭---Steamed Nanjing Duck”. Nanjing Duck is a specialty of Nanjing, thus it is different from the translation of “北京烤鸭”.

D. Names with literary images

This kind of names borrows the images from legends, poems, or other types of literary works to express a certain emotion or aesthetic value. But these images are not related to the invention of the dishes, which differentiate themselves with the last group. Some of them may be metaphorical, but they still fall into this group because of the cultural elements they have loaded. Two subcategories can be further classified, that is, names after a legend and names after a poem.

1. Names after a legend

a. Description

Legendary images of ancient figures are included in dish names, which constitute a popular element in the secular Chinese culture. The typical examples are “八仙过海闹罗汉”, “贵妃出浴”. They are also the subject of many artistic creations, like paintings and sculptures.

b. Translation techniques and suggested versions

To the Chinese people, this category of names includes abundant cultural images with high level of aesthetic value. However, as far as the dish-name translation is concerned, the aesthetic value and cultural elements are difficult to be transferred. Even if the translator gives full account of the background information, English readers may still find it incomprehensible. The paper attempts to prove it through the detailed analysis of the above three dish names.

“八仙过海闹罗汉(Eight Immortals Cross the Sea)” is the first course in the Confucius banquet. The dish’s name has borrowed the literary image of “Eight Immortals”, who are legendary figures in the Chinese culture. It tells the story that the eight fairies each used a tool of power to cross the broad ocean. Nowadays, it has become an idiom indicating the situation that everybody shows off their powers to achieve a common goal. Since immortals permanently live, people use the dish name to express their yearning for a long life. The dish name also contains “eight Arhat”, which only increases the hilarious effect in a banquet. In fact, this dish is made of eight delicacies and chicken.

Unlike the translation of the dish names in honor of the inventors, the extensive explanation of the background information for this dish name seems unnecessary because the literature-flavored name is purely out of people’s imagination, with no clues of the ingredients. Therefore, Guo (2003:35) has reason to translate it into “assorted sea food, ham and chicken”. But there is still a cultural connotation, that is, yearning for longevity behind the name. The writer suggests retain this cultural factor in a short possible version, “八仙过海闹罗汉---Immortals Bring Longevity (Assorted sea food, ham and chicken)” by adopting free translation.

2. Names after a poem

a. Description

Poems, a representative of literary works, are often quoted in the Chinese dish names. The poetic image will be created by citing a line from a famous poem. Like the dish names “霜叶红花” and “黄鹂鸣翠柳” come from a line “霜叶红于二月花” and “两个黄鹂鸣翠柳”, which connect the common ingredients with the beautiful poetic image. The dish name “佛跳墙” comes from a poetic line “坛起荤香飘四邻，佛闻弃禅跳墙来”.

b. Translation techniques and suggested versions

Free translation plus explanation is recommended. Since a line of a certain poem is quoted, the translation of a dish name can directly borrow the version of that very line. Then, a short explanation can be provided to state the origin of the dish name. In this way, the beautiful poetic image can be reserved along with the spreading of literary elements.

For example, “霜叶红花” is made of shrimp with ketchup, which are compared to leaves after frost and crimson flowers. The version of “霜叶红于二月花” is “The leaves after early frost are as crimson as spring flowers”, which can be used in the dish name translation as:

霜叶红花 Leaves after early frost are as crimson as spring flowers (shrimp with ketchup, named after a famous poem in Tang Dynasty)

As for “佛跳墙”, literal translation plus explanation is suggested. The dish is made of an assortment of ingredients: shark's fin, shark's lip, fish maw, abalone, squid, sea cucumber, chicken breast, duck chops, pork

tripe, pork leg, minced ham, mutton elbow, dried scallop, winter bamboo shoots, mushrooms, and so on. Unlike the above two dish names, the ingredients are not compared to “Budda” or “Wall” in the dish name. It has its name from a poetic line, and has origin that should be explained.

The origin of the dish is explained by a local story. A Fuzhou scholar of the Qing Dynasty went picnicking with friends in the suburbs and he put all the ham, chicken, etc, he had with him in a wine jar which he heated over a charcoal fire before eating. The attractive aroma of the food spread in the air all the way to a nearby temple. It was so inviting that the monks, who were supposed to be vegetarians, jumped over the temple wall and partook heartily of the scholar’s picnic. One of the party participants wrote a poem in praise of the dish, of which a line reads: “坛起荤香飘四邻，佛闻弃禅跳墙来”(“The aroma is flowing around the neighborhood after the cap is taken off. Even Buddha himself would jump over the wall to come over.”) To summarize so much information in a line or two is not an easy task, but we should try our best to reflect a dish ingredients and cultural connotation at the same time. Here is a suggested translation for this dish:

佛跳墙 Buddha Jumps Over Wall (assorted meat and vegetables invented in Qing Dynasty, even Buddha cannot resist its aroma)

Names with literary images perfectly state the splendid cultural connotation behind Chinese dish names. They convey both the cultural and historical glory of China, rather than just being rhetorical devices such as metaphor, used to decorate the names as “玉簪田鸡腿”，“元宝肉”，“桂花鱼翅”，“荷花鱼肚”，“蝴蝶香酥鸡”，“太极芋泥”，“香葱琵琶翅”，although like “八仙过海闹罗汉”，eight immortals are compared to the eight delicacies and willow to celery in “黄鹂鸣翠柳”. With this respect, the two categories have different emphasis, one for the rhetorical, the other for the introductive, despite the seeming repetition. On the other hand, the writer differentiates them on purpose in case of incompleteness of dish names coverage.

E. Auspicious Names

1. Description

The Chinese people like lucky names, whether on a person, place or a dish. As elaborated in cultural context, the feature of Chinese dish names in Chapter 2, the writer introduces the six themes of Chinese culture “Fu, lu, shou, xi, cai, ji”. The auspicious names of Chinese dishes also cover these six areas, with different emphasis and a common goal--to express the yearning for auspiciousness. They constitute an important group to transmit the cultural elements to the receptors. The typical dishes are: “全家福”，“满堂五福”，“锦绣中华”，“五子登科”，“带子上朝”，“龟鹤延年汤”，“菊花延龄饮”，“鸳鸯戏水”，“百年好合”，“连年有余” and “发财好市”.

2. Translation techniques & suggested versions

Free translation plus explanation is suggested to deliver the cultural connotations. Take “全家福” for example, this reputable Shandong dish is cooked with over 20 ingredients. Without the hint of ingredients or cooking methods in the name, the translation should be informative at first. Zhu (1992: 275) gives the version “Stewed Assorted meat” without auspicious meaning. This writer gives the suggested version as “全家福---Happy Family(mixed meat & vegetables)”.

“五子登科”，“带子上朝” reflect people’s wish for higher social status. It was scholar’s dreams to obtain an inheritable royal position. Literally, the above two name are translated as “Five Sons Pass the Exam” and “Father and Son Serve at Royal Palace”. As for a dish name, such version can hardly convey the cultural connotation. Thus, Guo (2003: 272) avoids the cultural factor by rendering “五子登科” into “Soft-fried chicken, duck, fish, shrimp and pork”. If the translator discards the connotation of every culturally-loaded name, all the translation of Chinese dish names will follow the same pattern. The writer suggests adopting the technique of free translation to transmit the auspicious implication. “登科” is to pass the imperial exam while “上朝” is to be presented at royal court, indicating people’s wish for fame and aristocracy. Since the ingredients are not connected with the culturally-flavored “登科” and “上朝”，the translator needs only to retain the connotation they present. Then, these two dish names and other names within this category can be translated as,

五子登科 Scholars Acquire Fame (Soft-fried chicken, duck, fish, shrimp and pork)
带子上朝 Generations of Aristocracy (Stewed duck with quail)
满堂五福 Happiness Overflows (Steamed sheep trip liver, heart, lung and intestine)
锦绣中华 “Beautiful China” Assorted Dish
龟鹤延年汤 Tortoise and Chicken Soup for Longevity
菊花延龄饮 Chrysanthemum Drink for Prolonging Life
百年好合 Sweet Marriage (Sweet corn soup with lotus)

The English translation of this dish name combines the techniques of transliteration, free translation, literal translation as well as explanation. It is a faithful version, culturally-functioning and aesthetically-pleasing.

F. Names of common practice

1. Description

There are many traditional Chinese food that has entered into the English language, such as “点心”, “炒面”, “饺子”, “锅贴”, “杂碎” and “包子”. They have been widely used in the Chinese-English menus and dictionaries. Due to these common practices, it is unnecessary for us to start all over again.

2. Translation techniques and suggested versions

As for the names of common practice, transliteration is the common approach applied. Due to their feature in popularity, these dishes establish their own identity as common practice, and they can be translated directly through their Chinese pronunciations. Here are some examples

“点心”---“din sum”
“炒面”---“chou mien”
“饺子”---“Jiaozi”
“锅贴”---“Guotie”
“杂碎”---“Chop Suey”
“包子”---“baozi”

We can still find the translation of “炒面” to be “fried noodle” (Chen, 1999:215), “包子” to be “steamed stuffed bun” and “饺子” to be “dumpling or Chinese-style ravioli” (Zhu 1992:295). For the established name of a dish, it is advisable not to use an alternative name.

From the above abundant examples and different combinations of translation techniques, we can conclude that there is no fixed translating mode for any type of Chinese dish names. Some are subject to keeping the original cultural image or rhetorical devices; some are subject to lose them.

The translation techniques explored in this chapter is in light of the classification, features, functions of Chinese dish names and the general and practical principles discussed in Chapter 2 and 3. They are not the only effective methods, though, in translating Chinese dish names. The translator should apply different methods flexibly during the course of translating while bearing in minds the target reader’s intelligence and requirements.

V. Conclusion

Chinese dish names are rich in meaning, style and connotation, vividly reflecting China’s catering culture. Their English translations are an effective means to inform foreign readers of China’s culture as well as customs. Therefore, it is of great value to make a study on translations of these dish names. The current studies in this field, however, do not give a systematic analysis to Chinese dish names’ classification, features, functions as well as the general and practical principles for their translation. This paper has made the tentative study of Chinese dish names that appear in dictionaries, articles and literary works. The study covers the analysis of their features from linguistic and socio-cultural perspectives, the introduction of their informative, aesthetic, socio-cultural and commercial functions, the discussion of general and practical principles that can guide the dish name translating, and the analysis of the appropriate translation techniques according to the classification of these names.

With no intention to further elaborate on these dish names, this paper, however, calls for appropriate dish names that suit both refined and popular tastes. Only in this way can the translation of Chinese dish names be meaningful.

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