

## Research Article

### Uighur Local Food in China and Its English Translation Strategy

Rongrong Liao

Qiongtai Teachers College, Haikou, Hainan 570203, China

**Abstract:** This study is designed to study Uighur diet culture and Chinese-English translation of its local food names. After deeply analyzing Uighur diet structure, content, pattern and nutrient functions of Uighur local foods, this study concludes several practical strategies based on Chinese-English translation of local food names, including functional equivalence and formal equivalence, domestication and foreignization, borrowing translation, transliteration, free translation and combination of transliteration and free translation. All strategies mentioned above are according to cultural comprehension, which maintains the originality of Sinkiang foods to widely spread Chinese food culture.

**Keywords:** Culture, food, translation, uighur ethnic group

#### INTRODUCTION

Food culture, a vital part of ethnic culture, performs local material life and custom that gradually formed in a long term by people in specific areas. Speaking from Sinkiang where lives 47 nationalities, its geographical environment and human conditions bring about rich and unique Uighur food culture. Born with the advantage of cultural communication between China and the West, Uighur food custom enriched by regional features acts decisively in boosting local economy.

Cross-cultural communication is mediated by linguistic translation, which faces challenge caused by differences between Chinese and Western cultures (Li, 2011). Therefore recent focus on food culture translation lies in obtaining balance between language and culture. Pointing at English-Chinese translation of regional foods, scholars came upon relevant comments and opinions. Take Jin Xiaohong and Sun Xue'e for example, they came upon principles and ways for name translation of Shangluo local foods, including literal translation along with Pingyin and notes (Jin and Sun, 2011). Based on features of Fujian cuisines, Wen (2011) divided the cuisine into four types, namely realistic, freehand, semi-realistic and semi-freehand and classical type, followed by proposal of relevant translation principles. Besides, in the view of foreignization, Chen (2012) researched skills and strategies on translation of Hakka food in Jiangxi province. As specified translation practices with strong pertinence, those researches would be fine references for translation of Uighur local food culture in Sinkiang.

Uighur food culture is not translated in a detailed, strict and standard way, resulting in translation disadvantages referring to various target texts, simple

transliteration and blind literal translation. Thus this study aimed to have semantic definition of Uighur local food and came upon effective and reasonable translation strategies. Besides, the paper was supposed to promote normalized and standard Chinese-English translation, pushing forward promotion of Uighur local food culture.

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

For a long time, Uighur people have been working on their own food culture with ethnic and regional features based on their survival environment.

**Uighur diet structure:** Principal food for Uighur people is cooked wheaten food that accompanied by meat and fruit; as for drinking, milky tea that can be added various seasonings ranks first.

In Sinkiang, people can access to abundant crops, such as rice, wheat, corn and sorghum, but cooked wheaten food is regarded as staple food. Yet on the other hand, crops are made into plenty of foods with unique tastes including Nang (a kind of crusty pancake), Poluo (pilaf with sweet or salty taste) and Paititaman (thin-skinned bun). In addition, Yugule is made by combination of egg and wheat flour, which is called silver noddle; Halewa refers to a kind of dough made by mutton oil, surge and wheat flour; Huangmian means hand-pulled noddle coming from the combination of wheat flour and boron ash water; Michang is the sheep intestinal infused with rice and mutton; and Mianfei is the sheep lung infused with specifically-made starch. With regard to subsidiary foods, they are basically made of beef and mutton, such as roasted whole lamb, Kawafu (toast), mutton bolus, mutton mixed with peach seed, mutton eaten with

hands, soup of sheep's chopped entrails and saute spicy chicken. When it comes to drinking, black tea and milky tea are put in the first position, followed by self-made yogurt and various kinds of wine, such as oleaster wine, mulberry wine and kumiss.

**Uighur diet pattern:** Diet pattern of Uighur and Han nationality with three regular diets a day does not differ in a great way, but foods for both nationalities vary a lot. For instance, breakfast for Uighur people is mainly "Nang" mentioned above, along with jam and milky tea. As for lunch, the choice is principal food and fried dishes; while dinner prefers noodle soup. Besides principal diets, leisure times are accompanied with different local snacks.

**Uighur diet effects:** Uighur people put great attention on health preserving, which can be noticed from ways of food making and pairing. For instance, charcoal-baked "Nang" made of wheat-meal and corn meal shows pursuit of internal balance cared by Uighur people living in the cold northwest. Firstly, oil and milk are mixed with flour in a proper percentage, which is designed to have flat and round cakes. Secondly, cakes are covered with sesame and baked in a hole specially designed for Nang making (Wang, 2012). To maintain different diet effects, it is necessary to make "Nang" with accessories, among which Guoxi Nang is a perfect example. Covered by wheat-meal, Guoxi Nang has mutton inside with black pepper, cumin, yeast, onion and salt. Since ancient time, mutton has been regarded as a nutritious treasure, which is used as medicine by Zhang Zhongjing, well-known doctor in Han dynasty (Zhang, 2005). Modern researches indicated that mutton with hot nature and traditional taste had rich protein, vitamin and trace elements needed by human body. Accordingly, mutton is good for maintaining Promordial Qi, warming stomach and kidney, treating lag, improving lactogenesis and extending lifespan. On the other hand, onion contained in "Nang" is the best nutrient for health preserving. With warm nature and hot taste, onion display function on several aspects including spleen and stomach strengthening, cold-phlegm removal, blood circulation promotion, diuresis improvement, bacterium killing and blood fat reduction. Besides, selenium in onions becomes anti-cancer glutathione once digested, which reduces gastric cancer occurrence.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Uighur food culture with refined information is born to be international, yet due to its multi-ethnic nature and complicated culture, the translation of its delicacy names is facing great challenge and difficulty. So this study is expected to figure out reasonable Chinese-English translation strategies based on specific food translation.

**Functional equivalence and formal equivalence:** Functional equivalence and formal equivalence were

proposed as vital concepts by American famous linguist and translator Nida (2004) in the 1960's. Formal equivalence puts emphasis on relation between target text and source text, requiring target text to maintain original linguistic features of source text, such as vocabulary, grammar and sentence structure. For another thing, functional equivalence focuses on accordance of semantics, style and version between source text and target text, meaning that translation is required to deliver cultural information of source text. Actually, it is expected that through functional equivalence and formal equivalence, target readers with target text can have the same actions source readers have once facing source text, the nature of which is the passage of cultural implications in source text to target readers (Zhang, 2014).

**Domestication and foreignization:** In 1995, Venuti (2009), an American well-known translation theorist came upon a group of translation concepts, namely domestication and foreignization; the former, caring more about target readers, localizes source language and expresses source meanings in a way target readers are familiar with, enabling target text to be more readable. While for the later, it accommodates to foreign cultures and directly adopts expression practices of source text, which preserves foreign cultures. In a sense, domestication and foreignization are similar to literal translation and free translation; but with broader sense, domestication and foreignization identify themselves from several aspects among which language, culture and beauty appreciation are included. Theoretically speaking, domestication and foreignization run in an opposite direction, but they can be crossly used in practical applications.

Moreover, domestication and foreignization should also be applied flexibly in the translation of Uighur local foods. To make target audiences remember foods' external features, such as color, taste and look, domestication is available; and foreignization will be more suitable once target audiences are expected to know more about ethnic cultures besides foods themselves. To realize best translation effects, domestication and foreignization should be used as the complementary for each other.

**Borrowing translation:** A lot of Muslims live in the region where Uighur people live, leading to the import of diet customs in Arab countries whose language is one of the six major languages in the world. By taking advantage of the language that is influential, Arab traditional foods are known by Westerners and concluded in English dictionaries. This makes it possible to borrow some existing words to present Uighur foods. For example, Arab countries are known by "shish kebab", a kind of toast, which is toasted with a fine braze through it after raw meat is pickled with seasonings for half a day. In fact, Xinjiang shish kebab, a Uighur food, borrows the name because they are quite similar in making process and product appearance. So if

target readers notice that name, they can have a pre-association and sense.

**Transliteration:** Commonly adopted in translation, transliteration fully presents foreign cultures and maintains source culture practices. Take “Nang” for example, it is translated as “nan” in another version. According to the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary, “nan” means a type of flat Indian bread (Hornby, 2014), so it makes sense to translate “Nang” as “nan”. When westerners read “nan”, a vivid version occurs to their mind, leading to association and equivalence of Indian bread (Yuan *et al.*, 2010). However, “Nang” and “nan” are two totally different foods in the view of region, ethnic and culture and the translation of “nan” is easy to cause confusion, killing unique Sinkiang cultures. Therefore it is more proper to translate it into “Nang” according to Chinese pinyin. With the knowledge of “nan”, westerners are easier to get the meaning of “Nang” with ethnic features.

**Free translation:** Instead of the concern on speed sound, free translation completes equivalent language transfer in the view of meaning, through which food information like cooking method and material can be integrated into a food name to enrich the food's connotation. Target names putting attention on raw materials are exemplified as “Garlic Chicken with Broccoli”, “Chicken with Hot Garlic Sauce” and “Beef with Mixed Vegetables”. Free translation is also available in translating Uighur foods; for instance, “Mix Long Noodles with Vegetables” presents making pattern and jardinière of that noodle. With adjectives, a food name can be translated more vividly, such as thin-skinned bun.

**Combination of transliteration and free translation:** The combination of transliteration and free translation effectively avoids either's shortage to make target text as perfect as possible, which is in demand of higher translation quality of translators and full understanding of both languages' backgrounds and cultures. Examples can be noticed in the book English translations for Chinese menus, such as “Yu-Shiang Prawns (Sauteed with Spicy Garlic Sauce)” and “Mapo Tofu (Stir-Fried Tofu in Hot Sauce)”. With the reference, some Uighur foods also adopt this method when translated, like Youtazi (Steamed Muffins with Oil)” and “Dingding Saute Noodles (Saute the Diced Noodle)”.

## CONCLUSION

Sinkiang is a colored treasure place where lives Uighur people who create charming and attractive food

cultures on the condition of specific geography and humanity. Featured by various types and unique taste, Uighur foods should be introduced to the world as cultural communication among countries develops. For Chinese and Western cultural differences, proper translation strategies are adopted according to different situations when languages are transferred, aiming to spread cultures externally. Translation theories mentioned in this study are supposed to be used flexibly in the translation of Uighur local foods, keeping original meanings and cultures of those foods that are stepping into globalization.

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