

Original Paper

Study on C-E Translation of Dish Names in Shandong Cuisine from Perspective of Frame Semantics

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Abstract

Shandong cuisine plays a crucial role in promoting its international presence as an important component of Chinese culinary culture, serving as a significant avenue for spreading traditional Chinese culinary culture. This paper analyzes the English translation of Lu cuisine dish names from the perspective of frame semantics, exploring the frame relationships between the original Chinese names and their English translations. Subsequently, based on frame semantics, the paper propositionally puts forward several standardized English translation strategies for Lu cuisine dish names. These strategies aim to ensure that the English translations not only conform to the standards of the English language but also effectively convey the unique culinary culture of Shandong.

Keywords

Frame Semantics, Dish names, Translation studies

1. Introduction

In the current context of globalization, China's cultural industry must expand into the international market to better achieve its own development. As a vital carrier of traditional Chinese culture, culinary culture plays a crucial role in promoting its "going global," which has long been a significant mission. As widely acknowledged, China boasts eight major culinary styles, with Shandong cuisine taking the lead among the eight. Over the course of thousands of years, Shandong cuisine has developed a culinary technique framework characterized by "steaming, boiling, roasting, brewing, frying, stir-frying, pan-frying, braising, and simmering." Shandong cuisine places a strong emphasis on skilled use of fire, particularly showcasing its expertise in stir-frying and quick-frying techniques. Hence, there is a saying, "Food is in China, but fire is in Shandong."

Despite the ongoing trend of fusion between Chinese and Western cuisines in the process of globalization, there still exist numerous differences between the two in terms of dish naming. In recent

years, some scholars have undertaken research on the English translation of dish names, mostly employing translation theories. Qilin Zhou (2016) approached the translation issues of Guizhou ethnic minority recipes from a functional perspective. Lan Lv (2008) analyzed the English translation of Guangxi dish names and staple foods from the perspective of domestication and foreignization, proposing corresponding translation strategies. Yi Chen (2017) explored the English translation strategies of Chinese dish names based on the theory of functional equivalence. Through a review of literature, it is evident that few have applied the theory of frame semantics to the field of dish name translation. Frame semantics aims to elucidate the relationship between language and human cognition, holding significant importance for translation studies. Based on this, the present study intends to analyze the problems encountered in the English translation of Shandong cuisine names from the perspective of frame semantics and propose corresponding translation strategies.

2. Frame Semantics

Frame Semantics was proposed by the renowned American linguist Charles J. Fillmore in the late 1970s. Building upon case grammar and paving the way for construction grammar, it directly challenged the prevailing theories of semantic decomposition and truth-conditional semantics. Frame Semantics shifted the focus of semantic description from the internal relationships within a language system to the conceptual relationships based on understanding and experience. This shift laid the foundation for the later development of cognitive linguistics, including the conceptual integration theory and the lexicon-syntax continuum. Positioned as a semantic of understanding, Frame Semantics asserts that the essence of semantic research is to reveal how speakers and listeners achieve mutual understanding by activating shared frame knowledge through language. Considering its characteristics, translation is also a cross-linguistic communicative activity based on understanding. Therefore, the ideas of Frame Semantics can provide valuable insights for translation studies.

Frame Semantics asserts that language is evocative rather than panoramic. In the process of understanding specific semantic frames, the linguistic elements such as words and syntactic structures serve as mere indices. These indices can guide the interlocutor to the semantic scene behind the discourse, a phenomenon known as the activation of language. The meaning of language primarily depends on the language user's understanding of the conceptual frame underlying the language. For translators, translation is not only the psychological process of comprehending the source text but also the process of reconstructing the frame of the source language text in the target language. In the translation of dish names, translators need to have a thorough understanding of the semantic framework, cultural context, historical context, and other aspects related to Chinese cuisine. This understanding allows language to function as an index, accurately activating the frames corresponding to the source language concepts in the minds of the audience.

3. The Frame Comparison of Shandong Cuisine Names and English Translation Names

Translation is the process through which a translator interprets the source language and constructs the target language text. In the process of interpreting the source language text, the translator must place each word of the source language text within a specific semantic framework for understanding. When constructing the target language text, the translator, based on the semantic frameworks provided by each word in the source language text, reproduces or reconstructs the semantic frameworks in the target language. This is because both the source language and the target language have their own semantic framework systems, each composed of different subframes, such as emotional frameworks, cultural frameworks, social frameworks, etc., each containing different factors. There are approximately four types of relationships between source language and target language frameworks: framework overlap, framework inclusion, framework intersection, and framework independent. This article intends to explore the framework relationships between Shandong cuisine dish names and their English translations from these four aspects.

3.1 Framework Overlap

Framework overlap refers to a situation where the frameworks and their internal factors in both the source language and the target language are consistent. In this case, the translated text accurately expresses the meaning of the source language. Through the organized analysis of English translations of Shandong cuisine dish names, it is observed that framework overlap commonly occurs in names that consist solely of simple ingredients and cooking methods.

Case 1

SL: “大蒜炖甲鱼”

TL: “Stewed Turtle with Garlic”

Case 2

SL: “沂蒙炒鸡”

TL: “Yi Meng Fried Chicken”

Both examples involve dish names composed of simple ingredients and cooking methods. In Case 1, “大蒜” corresponds to “garlic” in English, and “甲鱼” corresponds to “turtle”. In Case 2, “鸡” translates to “chicken” in English. Both semantic frameworks include the factor “鸡” (chicken), but the dish names do not specify whether it's “雏鸡” (young chicken), “母鸡” (hen), or “公鸡” (rooster). Therefore, translating it as “chicken” is sufficient. Regarding cooking methods, although Shandong cuisine encompasses numerous cooking techniques such as “煸” (stir-fry), “爆”(quick-fry), “炸” (deep-fry), “煎” (pan-fry), and “蒸” (steam), the translation of these methods is relatively fixed, and the semantic frameworks for these methods are generally understood similarly by both Chinese and Western audiences.

In both examples, the semantic frameworks for the ingredients and cooking methods are consistent between the source language and the target language. In other words, there is framework overlap between the source language and the target language, making the English translations relatively

accurate.

3.2 Framework Inclusion

Framework inclusion refers to a situation where there is a relationship of inclusion between the frameworks in the source language and the target language. This means that the framework category in the original text is either broader or narrower than the framework category in the translated text. Due to various factors such as cultural, historical, and environmental influences, different languages often exhibit significant differences in the level of detail in their understanding of the same conceptual framework. This diversity results in variations in the categorization of seemingly similar language expression frameworks during the translation process. Framework inclusion often occurs in dish names containing modifying phrases and qualifiers. Examples are provided below.

Case 3

SL: “风味老鸭煲”

TL1: “Special-flavored Duck in Casserole”

TL2: “Special-flavored Old Duck in Casserole”

In this example, there is a slight difference in the semantic frameworks for “老鸭”(old duck) between the source language and the target language. From the perspective of Frame Semantics, the term “老”(old) in “老鸭” serves as a qualifier for “鸭”(duck), and its framework includes factors such as “animal, feathers, old age, firm meat.” On the other hand, the “duck” framework includes factors like “animal, feathers.” It is evident that “老鸭” belongs to the subframe of “duck” indicating an inclusion relationship rather than a direct correspondence. Therefore, it should be translated as “old duck”.

Case 4

SL: “油烹雏鸡”

TL1: “Fried Chicken”

TL2: “Fried Chick”

In the example mentioned above, the term “雏鸡” involves a qualifier “雏” for “鸡”, and its framework includes factors such as “animal, feathers, young age, tender meat”. On the other hand, the “chicken” framework includes factors like “animal, feathers.” It is evident that “雏鸡” belongs to the subframe of “鸡”, indicating an inclusion relationship rather than a direct correspondence. Therefore, it should be translated as “chick”.

3.3 Framework Intersection

Framework intersection refers to a situation where there is partial similarity between the semantic frameworks in the source language and the target language. Despite significant cognitive differences among people from different regions and cultures, there are still some commonalities in certain universal concepts. Framework intersection mainly occurs in dish names containing characteristics such as shape, smell, etc., as illustrated in the following examples.

Case 5:

SL: “蒜泥鱼”

TL1: “Fish with Garlic mud”

TL2: “Fish with Mashed Garlic”

“蒜泥鱼” is a classic Shandong cuisine dish. The preparation involves lifting the cooked fish onto a plate, allowing it to sit for about two minutes, draining excess moisture, gently pressing it with a spatula, sprinkling seasoning on top, and finally layering finely chopped garlic. Therefore, the framework for “泥”(mud or mash) in “蒜泥鱼” includes factors such as “mud-like, edible” while the English term “mud” has a semantic framework with elements like “soil, brown, mud-like, not edible”. It can be observed that for the “泥” framework, the Chinese and English versions share only the common element of “mud-like”, while the remaining factors within the framework differ significantly.

Case 6

SL: “余芙蓉黄管”

TL1: “Quick-boiled Pig Throat with Lotus”

TL2: “Quick-boiled Pig Throat with the Shape of Lotus”

The dish “余芙蓉黄管” employs metaphorical rhetoric. In this context, “芙蓉” does not refer to the inclusion of hibiscus flowers in the raw materials; instead, it signifies the exquisite craftsmanship, skilled knife work, and innovative presentation of the dish, resembling the freshness of a lotus just emerging from the water. Therefore, the semantic framework for “芙蓉” in the Chinese dish name includes semantic elements such as “resembling a hibiscus flower, beautiful, delicate”. On the other hand, the English translation “lotus” has a semantic framework that includes elements such as “herbaceous plant, beautiful, delicate” Although there is some intersection between the semantic frameworks, they are still quite distinct. Therefore, the translation should be adjusted according to the semantic framework.

3.4 Framework Independent

Framework independence refers to a situation where the semantic frameworks in the source language and the target language are entirely independent, with no common factors. This mainly occurs because people from different cultural backgrounds in the East and the West have different cognitive foundations for the same concept, leading to distinct semantic frameworks and resulting in a mismatch of language frameworks during the translation process. Framework independence often arises in dish names that involve figurative meanings or cultural allusions. For example:

Case 7

SL: “乌云托月”

TL1: “Moon on Dark Cloud”

TL2: “Poached Egg with Laver”

Case 8

SL: “纱窗明月汤”

TL1: “Screen Window Moon Soup”

TL2: “Dictyophora and Quail egg Soup”

In the two cases mentioned above, Chinese dish names carry profound cultural connotations, but from the perspective of Frame Semantics, the semantic frameworks for “云” (cloud) and “月” (moon) in Example 7 are entirely different from the semantic frameworks for “mone” and “cloud” in English. The dish name “乌云托月” includes semantic factors like “purple seaweed, eggs” while the English terms “Mone” and “cloud” have semantic factors related to natural phenomena, which are entirely unrelated to the original semantic framework.

Similarly, in Case 8, the semantic framework for “纱窗明月汤” includes elements like “bamboo fungus, quail eggs” which are entirely different from the semantic frameworks for “screen window” and “moon” in the translation. This also falls under the case of framework independence, primarily because the translator did not consider the cultural connotations behind the dish during translation.

4. Strategies on C-E Translation of Shandong Cuisine Names from the Perspective of Framework Semantics

In the process of translating Shandong cuisine dish names, different framework relationships may arise, and various translation strategies should be employed based on the specific situations. For cases of framework overlap, minimal modifications are needed in the English translation, adopting a strategy of frame correspondence and literal translation. In instances of framework inclusion, adjustments to the framework categories in the English translation are required to align with the original framework categories. In cases of framework intersection, the translator needs to make adjustments (additions or deletions) to the factors within the framework. Lastly, for framework independence, where the Chinese and English versions exhibit extreme mismatch, the existing English translation framework needs to be entirely replaced.

4.1 Framework Corresponding Strategy

The frame correspondence strategy refers to a translation approach where the corresponding frames in the source language and the target language are directly translated when the framework elements are the same. In cases of framework overlap, where the source language and target language frameworks and their internal factors are consistent, the frame correspondence strategy is employed, allowing for a straightforward literal translation. Examples include “大蒜炖甲鱼” and “沂蒙炒鸡”, where the frame correspondence strategy is applied, and direct translation is sufficient without the need to adjust the framework elements.

4.2 Framework Transition Strategy

Framework regrading involves adjusting the hierarchy of a framework system, encompassing both downward, known as framework demotion, and upward adjustments, known as framework promotion.

4.2.1 Framework Demotion

Framework demotion involves translating the source language framework into one of its subframes in the target language, expressing the meaning corresponding to the source language imagery.

For instance, in the source language expression “风味老鸭煲”, where the framework element “老鸭”

is clearly a subframe of the target language framework element “duck” the translation requires framework demotion, resulting in the more accurate expression “old duck”. Similarly, the dish “油烹雏鸡” demands the framework demotion strategy as “雏鸡” is a subframe of “chicken”. Given their inclusion relationship, “chicken” needs to be demoted to 'chick' to precisely convey the implied meaning in the dish name.

4.2.2 Framework Promotion

Framework upgrading involves elevating the source language framework to a larger or superordinate framework in the target language.

For example, in the case of the renowned dish “单县羊肉汤” from Shan County, the semantic framework for “羊肉” encompasses various parts of the lamb. In the English translation “Shan Xian Mutton Soup” a superordinate term “mutton” is employed to refer to the different parts of the lamb. From the perspective of Frame Semantics, the translation adopts a framework upgrading strategy, rendering the translation concise, clear, and more easily understandable.

4.3 Framework Adjustment Strategy

The Framework Adjustment Strategy involves removing redundant elements from the target language framework or supplementing missing elements when there is partial alignment between the source language framework and the target language framework.

For example, in the case of 'Fish with Garlic mud,' the English framework includes additional elements like “mud” and “brown” compared to the Chinese “蒜泥鱼”. In the translation, it is necessary to remove these elements. To preserve the original meaning, the author, taking inspiration from the translation of “土豆泥”(Mashed potatoes), translates it as 'Fish with Mashed Garlic. Similarly, in the translation of “余芙蓉黄管”, the English framework “lotus” includes the additional semantic element “herbaceous plant”. In the translation, adjustments to the original framework are made by removing the redundant elements to ensure a more accurate translation.

4.4 Framework Reconfiguration Strategy

Framework reconfiguration strategy refers to the process of reconstructing the framework of the translation when the elements in the source language framework and the target language framework are entirely unrelated, addressing translation challenges.

Based on the previous discussion, the semantic framework of “马头烤排” (Matou Baking Plate) and its English translation “Horse head” is entirely different, lacking common elements within the framework. Therefore, in translation, there is a need to reconstruct the semantic framework of “马头” (Matou). In light of this, the English translation can be replaced with “Matou Baking Plate”. Similarly, the dish names “乌云托月” and “纱窗明月汤” belong to the same category of metaphorical names. In naming these dishes, metaphorical techniques are applied. When translating, it is crucial to fully understand the cultural framework behind these dish names. Adopting a framework reconstruction translation strategy is necessary, reconstructing the semantic framework of the original text to better align with the cultural framework of the target language.

5. Conclusion

This paper examines the issues and translation strategies in the English translation process of Shandong cuisine dish names from the perspective of frame semantics. The study reveals that when dish names are composed of simple ingredients and cooking methods, the semantic frameworks of the source language and target language overlap, allowing the English translation to accurately convey the original meaning. In cases where dish names contain modifiers or qualifiers, there tends to be a relationship of frame inclusion between the source language and the English translation. When dish names involve attributes or characteristics of the dish (such as appearance, aroma, etc.), there is an intersection relationship between the semantic frameworks of the source language and the English translation. In instances where dish names incorporate extended meanings or historical and cultural allusions, the semantic frameworks of the source language and the English translation are independent. Corresponding to these four types of frame relationships, this paper proposes four translation strategies, namely, frame correspondence strategy, frame upgrading strategy, frame adjustment strategy, and frame reconstruction strategy.

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