

# English Translation of Culture-Loaded Words Concerning Food in *A Bite of China* from a Perspective of Eco-Translatology

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Chinese food culture boasts a long history and rich connotations. As an important window for disseminating Chinese food culture, *A Bite of China*'s English translation plays a crucial role in the international spread of culture. Culture-loaded words concerning food carry profound cultural heritages, posing numerous challenges to translation. This study takes Eco-Translatology as the theoretical framework, and adopts the case-study method to explore English translation of such words. It selects a large number of translation cases of culture-loaded words related to food from the English version of *A Bite of China* and deeply analyzes them. This study demonstrates that Eco-Translatology has significant guiding value for the English translation of culture-loaded food words in *A Bite of China*. Its multi-dimensional transformation strategies contribute to improving translation quality, providing practical references for the translation of Chinese food culture into foreign languages, and playing a positive role in promoting food culture exchange.

**Keywords:** Eco-Translatology, *A Bite of China*, culture-loaded words concerning food, English translation strategies

## Introduction

Chinese food culture has a long-standing history, which is vividly presented in the documentary *A Bite of China*. Amid global cultural exchanges, its English translation plays a crucial role in promoting this culture worldwide. However, traditional translation methods face multifaceted challenges. Therefore, there is an urgent need for new theories to provide guidance, and Eco-Translatology emerges as the times require.

This study applies Eco-Translatology to analyze the English translation of food culture-loaded words in *A Bite of China*, exploring optimization strategies across linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions. Theoretically, this study expands the application of Eco-Translatology to audiovisual translation, verifying its value in translating food culture-loaded words. Practically, it offers actionable strategies to enhance translation quality and significantly improve translation quality, facilitate the globalization of Chinese food culture, and strongly promote food culture exchanges.

This study involves two key issues:

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(1) How do translators of *A Bite of China* adapt to culture-loaded words concerning food from three dimensions: language, culture, and communication?

(2) To what extent does eco-translatology promote the preservation of cultural connotations and cross-cultural communication in the translation of food culture?

## **Literature Review**

### **Abroad Research**

Foreign scholars' research on the translation of culture-loaded words started earlier and achieved fruitful results, providing important theoretical support for related fields. When Eugene Nida put forward the theory of "dynamic equivalence" in 1964, he studied the translation strategy of culture-loaded words and found that it needs to focus on the response of target language readers. When Peter Newmark distinguished between "semantic translation" and "communicative translation" in 1981, he further pointed out that the processing of culture-loaded words should adapt to the text type. After Hans Vermeer put forward Skopos Theory in 1989, he emphasized that the translation of culture-loaded words should be subject to the purpose of translation. When Stefan Gambier analyzed the "translatability" boundary of culturally loaded words through a corpus in 2021, he found that about 60% of Chinese culturally loaded words could be translatable through "annotation + substitution". These studies provide methodological guidance for the translation of culture-loaded words from different theoretical perspectives.

### **Domestic Research**

Guo Xuming (2011) earlier proposed that improving the translation ecological environment. Wu Chunyu and Wang Yinquan (2015) studied the translation of culture-loaded words in *The Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine* under the guidance of eco-translatology and found that this theory could provide a reference for the translation of TCM classics. In 2016, Liu Ruiling and Yang Siyu took the English version of "Alive" as an example to analyze the applicability of eco-translatology to the translation of culture-loaded words; In 2020, Jiang Xiaoping and Luo Yun took the food culture-loaded words in Ma Ruizhi's English version of *Shi Shuo Xin Yu* as the object, and explored their translation processing from the perspective of adaptive selection of language dimension, culture dimension, and communication dimension. Sun Lin and Han Caihong, taking Liu Yukun's English version of Beijing folding as an example, studied the translation of culture-loaded words from the perspective of eco-translatology. Wang Linlin and Chen Lei (2022) finally focused on the English translation of TCM culture-loaded words from the perspective of eco-translatology, they could promote the communication and dissemination of TCM culture while preserving the national characteristics of TCM. Existing scholars have explored cultural translation strategies from the perspectives of Nida's dynamic equivalence theory and Skopos Theory. However, few studies have integrated these frameworks into the eco-translatology paradigm to systematically analyze the food culture-loaded words in audio-visual media.

### **Analysis of the English Translation of Culture-Loaded Words Concerning Food in *A Bite of China***

Based on the theoretical framework of eco-translatology proposed by Hu Gengshen (2004), this study selects 50 typical food culture-loaded words in the third season of the English translation of *A Bite of China* as

the analysis object. Through the establishment of a source text translation two-way comparative corpus, this paper systematically investigates the translator's adaptive processing strategies for Chinese food cultural symbols in the process of cross-language conversion. It is particularly important to combine the characteristics of audio-visual translation, introduce Newmark communicative translation theory in the communicative dimension, and evaluate the communication adaptability of simplification strategies and context compensation strategies.

### **Linguistic-Dimension Transformation**

For example, in the translation of “Dongpo Rou”, the translator shows the combination of cultural specificity and language economy. Through “东坡肉”, the catering aesthetics of literati in Song Dynasty is integrated into the international meat classification system, so that Western readers can not only associate Chinese literati culture with transliteration, but also avoid cognitive barriers through the universality of pork.

In contrast, the translation of “四川火锅” highlights the value-added effect of regional symbols. The translator not only strengthened the independent status of Sichuan cuisine in the international diet map through the dual geographical indications of “Sichuan hot pot”, but also achieved cultural adjustment through the localized expression of hot pot. This translation strategy creates cultural added value through semantic extension.

When dealing with polysemy, the translator shows greater strategic flexibility. “蚂蚁上树” is literally translated as “ants climbing trees”, which not only retains the unique characteristics of dish naming but also matches the cognitive habits of English readers through the concrete expression of trees rather than stacks. In general, these translation strategies have realized the creative transformation of food culture from local context to global discourse through the three-level communication path of “cultural symbol recognition-functional information transmission-aesthetic experience reconstruction”.

### **Cultural-Dimension Transformation**

In the adaptive transformation of cultural dimensions, translators need to seek a delicate balance between cultural fidelity and audience acceptance.

For historical allusion type food names, taking “叫花鸡” as an example, its translation is “Beggar's Chicken”. From the perspective of cultural connotation transmission, it preserves the unique context in which this dish was born in Chinese culinary culture, which is in line with Hu Gengshen's (2004) emphasis on preserving cultural exclusivity in translation.

In terms of regional folk diet names, the translation “驴打滚” of “Lvdagur (Glutinous Rice Rolls with Sweet Bean Flour)” is a model of functional equivalence and cultural metaphor. Firstly, ‘Cake’ clarifies that this is a food category, allowing foreign audiences to quickly understand its basic attributes; And ‘Donkey Rolling’ vividly preserves the unique folk cultural element of this snack named after its appearance resembling a donkey rolling during the production process.

For food names with special cultural implications, the translation of “长寿面” shows the accurate transmission of cultural connotation. In translation, it achieves functional equivalence of cultural connotations, which meets the requirements of accurately conveying cultural core information in food culture translation.

These different types of food name translation cases avoid translation methods that may lead to cultural misunderstandings. However, further research can still collect actual feedback from foreign audiences on these translation methods to further improve the research and practice of translation strategies.

### Communicative-Dimension Transformation

In the adaptive transformation of communicative dimensions, translators use two strategies: core information extraction and cultural image compensation. Core information extraction simplifies the background by retaining key elements, such as translating “立夏吃蛋” as “On the Beginning of Summer, people eat eggs.” Only retaining the core association of eating eggs at the beginning of summer reduces the difficulty of the audience’s questioning of why eat eggs at this time. “年夜饭” translated as “The New Year’s Eve Dinner, a reunion meal shared by families on Chinese New Year’s Eve,” directly points out the core meaning of “reunion dinner” through “reunion meal,” avoiding Western audiences from ignoring its emotional value due to unfamiliarity with the Spring Festival. These strategies allow Chinese food culture to integrate into the target language context in a more natural way.

### Conclusion

The results of this study not only provide actionable strategic references for the English translation of subsequent versions of *A Bite of China* and other translation practices of Chinese food culture, but also expand the application boundaries of ecological translation studies in the field of food translation in film and television media.

However, this study still has certain limitations. Firstly, the case selection focuses on the third season of *A Bite of China* and does not include other seasons. In the future, the universality of the strategy can be further verified by comparing translations from multiple seasons. Secondly, the discussion on translation strategies focuses on macro effectiveness. Subsequent research can refine strategies through audience surveys; Then, research can be further validated by combining multimodal corpora in the future.

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