

Knowledge Translation Framework for Translating the Name of Thai Dishes from Thai into the Chinese Language

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Abstract

The purposes of this research are to determine the causes of specific problems in relation to the translation of menus in Thai street food restaurants into the Chinese language and to establish a framework for the translation of Thai food for the benefit of the catering industry standardization and proposing a new framework of translation for linguistic research. A textual analysis was used to collect and filter Chinese tourists' comments and classify the translation of Thai menus from the Internet, and some Thai street food stalls were selected to conduct interviews in relation to the Chinese translation channels of menus. An academic discussion group composed of Chinese language experts from Thailand and China was established to analyze and create more accurate rules for the translation of names of dishes based on the different word order rules and different terminology between Chinese and Thai. And supplemented by related terminology theories, to create concise and practical proper nouns for some Thai dishes.

Introduction

Recent studies have shown that the experiences of consuming local cuisines has a significant effect on overall tourist satisfaction (Björk&Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2016; Sengel, 2015:429; Tsai, 2016:536). Youn and Kim argue that local food names combined with the history of the meal have a positive impact on consumer perception and interest. This is the key element that all travelers look for in their travels (2017:11). But when new visitors are faced with several similar restaurants in an unfamiliar location for the first time, it can be difficult to make a choice. According to Ha et al. 's study, references to other guests, online reviews and final observations are the most important factors influencing the outcome of a restaurant choice. (2016:396). At this time, visitors can only choose from the menu at the door. When tourists feel confused and confused about the translation of the menu, it will greatly reduce the satisfaction of tourists, especially when more accurate and reasonable translations are available nearby.

A growing number of local Thai restaurants are also designing their own Chinese-language menus to cater to the large number of Chinese tourists. Despite the close relationship between China and Thailand, many Thai restaurants (street food stalls) still do not have their own Chinese-language menu; instead, they choose to use machine translation for Thai food due to input cost and convenience. The advantages of machine translation are twofold, namely, speed and low cost (Conner & Liu, 2017). Most street food restaurants choose to use machine translation because it is more convenient, but the current cross-language translation mechanism is not perfect, and even professional translation software such as Google produces translation errors, which has led to the generation of a large number of wrongly-translated Chinese menus (Mia & Sulis, 2019).

In view of this situation, the aim of this research is to determine the causes of the problems experienced by Thai street food restaurants in translating their menus into Chinese and use them to design a framework for a Chinese translation of Thai dishes based on the word order rules of these two languages. This is expected to result in a more accurate Chinese language translation of some popular Thai dishes, which will not only be of benefit to the Thai catering industry in terms of improving its level of standardization and professionalism but will also be useful material for future linguistic research.

Research purpose(s)/objective (s)

1. To determine the causes of the problems experienced by Thai restaurants in translating their menus into Chinese.
2. To design a framework for a Chinese translation of Thai dishes based on the word order rules of these two languages.

Literature review

Textual analysis

The comments on restaurants made by customers in online forums and travel apps are the most intuitive data source of the problem identification stage in this study. Customers' positive and negative feedback contains a great deal of information, such as environment, price, taste, service, location and so on, which is a clear guide to potential users (Vásquez, 2011:1707). The increasing number of comments from customers make it extremely inefficient and difficult to manually review and make a judgment of each one.

Textual analysis, the examination of document contents, is becoming increasingly common in accounting and finance-related research. Previous researchers used many different methods to classify and filter text, but the most common techniques are Machine Learning and a Lexicon-Based Approach (Hemalatha et al., 2013:105). For example, among the existing accounting and finance literature, a common platform for assessing the tone of a business document is Diction (www.dictionsoftware.com). It can use its own program to parse documents into words. And according to their own analysis needs summarized into a table, and then for further analysis (Rogers et al., 2011:2155; Davis et al., 2012:845; Demers & Vega, 2014). And Loughran and McDonald's work is much better at handling the tone in a business text than Diction is (2011:35).

However, the basis of a textual analysis is sufficient textual data, and the classification and categorization of information are the main techniques used in this study. Firstly, all the comments and articles in relation to Thai restaurants on tourist-associated websites will be saved locally and classified in order to centralise them before extracting the most useful information with the aid of common low-cost textual analysis software. This will involve establishing a set of keywords that are relevant to the research, sifting through thousands of online reviews of visitors to each restaurant to find information relevant to the translation of menus. Finally, the results obtained after sorting and screening the collected data will indicate the causes of the current problems in relation to Chinese menu translation in Thai restaurants. Since the length of online comments is not a large document, some relatively simple screening procedures will be used in this study to screen relevant negative comments according to keywords and calculate the proportion of them.

Grammar rules-Word order

In fact, since the name of a dish is a phrase or proper noun, its structure does not involve the complete grammatical system; therefore, this study takes word order in grammar rules as the basic theoretical support. Word Order is different from syntax, which refers to the language structure above the word level, which is the order of morphemes and word combinations in a language. It includes the order of subject, predicate and object, the order of modifier and central language, and the order of modifier (Gussenhoven & Jacobs, 2017; Hinterhölzl & van Kemenade, 2012). Word order is the sequence of words in a phrase or sentence, namely, the order of modifiers (adjectives, numerals, indicators, all words, and adjuncts) in a noun phrase. A change in word order can change the meaning of a whole sentence or phrase (Schmaltz, 2016; Hawkins, 2014).

The syntax of Thai and Chinese statements is S+V+O (Tomlin, 2014; Enfield, 2013). However, in word order, the two are very different. Generally speaking, the word order in Thai grammar indicates the action to be done and anything to be specified first. All statements and adjectives are followed by the object, while Chinese is the opposite (Draper, 2019:229; Jenks, 2011; Warotamasikkhadit, 2017; Ross & Ma, 2017; Hui, 2012; He, 2019). This characteristic is quite obvious in the menus of China and Thailand. The Chinese-Thai translation of some popular Thai dishes are shown as a case study in Table 1 and Thai and Chinese dishes are divided into parts to compare the word order.

Table 1. Examples of different structures of Chinese and Thai

Names of dishes in English	Names of dishes in Thai	Names of dishes in Chinese
Prawn Fried Rice	ข้าว/ผัด/กุ้ง Rice/Fried/Prawn	仁虾/炒/饭 Prawn/Fried/Rice
Stir-Fried Noodle With Seafood	ก๋วยเตี๋ยว/คั่ว/ทะเล Noodle/Stir-Fried/Seafood	鲜海/烩/面 Seafood/Stir-Fried/Noodle
Bankampu Soup Minced Pork And Soybean Curd	ต้มจืด/เต้าหู้/หมูสับ Soup/Toufu (Soybean Curd)/Minced pork	末肉/腐豆/汤 Minced pork/Toufu/Soup
Stir-Fried Crab With Yellow Curry Powder	เนื้อปู/ก้อนผัด/ผงกะหรี่ Crab meat/Stir-Fried/ Yellow curry powder	喱咖黄/炒/肉蟹 Yellow curry powder/Stir-Fried/Crab meat

The most fundamental cause of the problems with the Chinese translation of menus is the lack of clarity, or even misunderstanding, of the different rules of word order between the two languages. Therefore, the formula and framework of translation in this study will be designed on the different word order and grammatical rules of Chinese and Thai, with the corresponding adjustments.

Terminology

The Concise Oxford English Dictionary gives the official definition of terminology as "terms used in art, etc" and "the science of the proper use of terms". This implies that terminology consists of a very specialised set of concepts used in specific areas of study (Kockaert&Steurs, 2015). In recent years, the volume of research and number of tools of translation have been increasing with the increasing attention to the term "translation" (Yue et al., 2012:276).

However, the study of terminology not only involves establishing corresponding relationships among various linguistic terms, but also borrowing terms from other fields or language systems and even creating new terms as needed. As shown in Table 2, some popular Thai dishes now have their own Chinese terms.

Table2. SomeThaifoods' exclusiveterminologynames

Thai Dishes Name	English Meaning	Chinese Terms	English Pronunciation	Created Method
ต้มยำกุ้ง	Tom Yum Kung (Thai Sour and Spicy Shrimp Soup)	冬阴功	Dong yin gong	Transliteration
ส้มต	Som Tam (Papaya Salad)	当宋	Song Dang	Transliteration
กระเพราหมู	Stir-Fried Minced Pork And Basil	抛打	Da Pao	Transliteration

Hence, it can be seen that a few characters that have no associated meaning in Chinese grammar have specific meanings after being transliterated into Chinese translated names, and these translated names can also be understood and recognized in the catering industry. Therefore, these translations can be considered as new terms that have been created.

On the other hand, in the long history of Chinese food development, Chinese food names have also had their own symbolism based on freehand painting terminology (Cui, 2014:76), as seen in Table 3.

Table3. Termsused in thenamesofsomeChinesedishes

Chinese Term	English Translation	Practical Implications	Naming Reasons
玉白	White Jade	Shrimp or Tofu	Similar Colors
翠绿	Jadeite	Green beans peppers	Similar Colors
晶水	Crystal	Meat Jelly	Similar shape
彩五	Colorful	Five different colors of vegetables	Colorful
头子狮	Lion head	Meat Ball	Similar shape

It can be seen from the special affixes in the names of Chinese dishes that, in the culture of Chinese dishes, more attention is paid to the beauty of short, but freehand brushwork to add the artistic content of Chinese food culture. Therefore, the relevant terms of Chinese dishes not only function to transmit information, but also to add aestheticism to the menu (Wei, 2010:91; Huo et al., 2020:423). In order to cater to the growing number of mainland visitors in a strong Chinese-style atmosphere, the process of translation needs to focus on the provision of accurate information of the ingredients, taste and way of cooking Thai dishes, as well as the symmetry of the translation. The names of the elements should also be beautiful based on their characteristics (shape, color, etc.) to give some abstraction of the proper nouns.

Therefore, this study is not only focused on the results of the translation formula to produce a framework based on the theory and application of related terminology, but to simplify the Chinese translation of some Thai food due to the need to design more artistic proper nouns for some unique local dishes and specialties in order to standardize the menus of Thai restaurants for circulation in the Chinese tourist market.

Method

Data Collection and Problem Identification

At the initial stage of the study, sufficient relevant data should be collected to determine the status of the Chinese translation of Thai restaurant menus, identify the problems and analyse the causes of those problems. The data was obtained from Dianping App-China's leading local lifestyle information and trading platform and the world's first independent third-party consumer review website. A large number of Thai restaurants (street food stalls) currently appear on the Dianping platform and are accompanied by an accumulation of tourists' comments and posts. The data was downloaded in October 2020 (the number of tourist reviews on the Thai restaurant page is still rising, but only slowly due to the Covid-19 pandemic).

Chiang Mai was chosen as the main search city and Thai restaurants were ranked based on popularity (over 1000 comments) by browsing the Thai restaurant information on Dianping and menu information was derived from the top 10 most popular restaurants on the list. The text on the website page is protected by relevant measures. Users' comments are different in length and there is a huge amount of information; hence, a webpage text extraction procedure was used to extract all the users' comments and save them as local documents. Then, a relevant text analyser or software (Web Scraper, TS Analyser, etc.) was used to select a set of keywords from a large number of comments related to the translation of the menu (keywords included menu, translation, name, and not understood) before categorising those comments as positive or negative. The proportion and content of negative comments were used to judge the Chinese language translation of the restaurant menu and the statistical results of the restaurants are shown in Table 4.

Table4. Statisticalresultsofthe menu translationinformationofthe top 10 restaurants in Dianping

Number of Restaurants	Have Chinese menu or not	Accuracy Level of the Menu	Online Comments	Number of comments related to menu translation	Number of negative comments related to menu translation
R#1	Yes	5	1645	33	1
R#2	Yes	4	1944	59	1
R#3	Yes	5	1771	77	1
R#4	Yes	5	2044	154	0
R#5	Yes	5	1138	84	0
R#6	Yes	4	3671	125	6
R#7	No	-	1057	85	6
R#8	Yes	5	1085	60	1
R#9	Yes	4	1421	59	5
R#10	Yes	4	1196	78	4

On the other hand, Chiang Mai also has a large number of small local restaurants in several large night markets and popular tourist areas. Most of them are as street food restaurants. However, the Thai restaurants that have no commercial partnership with Dianping still attract large numbers of Chinese tourists; therefore, ten Thai street food restaurants in these areas were also selected to obtain information related to their Chinese language menus through field interviews and the results are shown in Table 5.

Table5. Basic informationof 10 Thairestaurants in popular touristareasandnightmarkets in Chiangmai

Number of Restaurant	Location	Have Chinese Menu or Not	Accuracy Level of the Menu	Methods of designing Chinese Menu
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R#11	Chiangmai Weekend Night Market	Yes	3	Hire local Chinese teacher in Thailand.
R#12	Malin Plaza	Yes	2	Translation Software.
R#13	Malin Plaza	No	-	Translation Software.
R#14	Suthep Road	Yes	3	Hire local Chinese teacher in Thailand.
R#15	Suthep Road	No	-	Search Online
R#16	Suthep Road	No	-	Thai students who have studied Chinese
R#17	Nimman Road	Yes	3	Thai students who have studied Chinese
R#18	Nimman Road	No	-	Translation Software.
R#19	Ancient City	Yes	3	Hire local Chinese teacher in Thailand.
R#20	Ancient City	No	-	Translation Software.

The term "accuracy level", which can be found in both tables, refers to a so-called accuracy level set by the Expert Focus Group established in this study after discussion and used to rate the translation of Chinese language menus in each restaurant. A detailed explanation of the accuracy levels is provided in Table 6.

Table6. Standard of accuracy of Chinese translation of Thai food

Level	Description
Level 1	More than 40% of vocabulary translation and word order problems.
Level 2	Some of the words were translated incorrectly, and the word order was quite serious. Less than 40% of the dishes were translated incorrectly.
Level 3	Some words were translated incorrectly, with improper word order. Less than 25% of dishes were translated inappropriately.
Level 4	Vocabulary translation correct, slightly improper word order problem, the translation of improper dishes less than 10%.
Level 5	Vocabulary translation is correct, word order is in line with Chinese grammar, and there is no improper translation on the whole.

The Expert Focus Group was an important learning group in this study. The members of the group comprised two parts. The members of the first part were all Thais who had been learning Chinese for more than 5 years and were currently engaged or had been engaged in Chinese education. These members could help to compile and translate the Thai menus. The members of the second part were Chinese and had majored in Chinese language and literature; hence, they were able to analyze the rules of Chinese word order and adjust the new translation framework produced in this study. The main work of these experts was limited to the data analysis, entry translation, theoretical assistance and evaluation of the results. This facilitated the provision of technical support to establish a framework of bilingual characteristics and translation and guarantee the accuracy and credibility of the research.

Interviews with Thai restaurateurs reveal that they use one of four methods when designing Chinese menus:

- Employed linguistics or catering experts to translate and design the menu.
- Hired native Thai Chinese teachers or students who had studied Chinese for the translation.
- Searched the Internet for relevant Chinese translation information.
- Used translation software (Thai - Chinese, Thai - English - Chinese).

Therefore, the Thai restaurants whose Chinese menu is not translated correctly or those who have no Chinese menu, need to solve the problems of their current translation method with a more accurate and appropriate Chinese menu collection.

Designing and Creating translation framework

At this stage, the researchers had to complete two pieces of work to prepare sufficient basic materials for the translation framework:

- Divide the names of Thai dishes based on the order of word joining and translate each part with the assistance of Thai experts.
- Work out the naming patterns and structures of Chinese dishes with the help of Chinese linguistic experts.

After sorting the results of the Expert Focus Group on the structure of Chinese cuisine names, it was concluded that the general structure of the Chinese cuisine names was roughly as follows:

- $(N1)+V+N2$
- $(N1)+N2(+V)+N0$
- $A(+N1)+N2$

$N0$ is staple food, such as rice, noodles, soup, dumplings and so on.

$N1$ and $N2$ are respectively food materials, which were sorted based on the proportion and importance of the components. $N1$ is the second most important, while $N2$ is the most important. In some cases, $N1$ can be omitted.

V refers to cooking techniques, including stir-frying, frying, stewing, stirring, steaming, etc.

A is an adjective, which can be taste (e.g., sour, spicy), form (e.g., crystal, pearl), or other prefixes (e.g., names of people and places).

In summary, three methods can be used to translate Thai food into Chinese and create the terms of Thai food, as follows;

- Translation formula. The translation formula is $A+N1(+V)+N2+V+N0$. The corresponding parts can be shortened or deleted for dishes with too many ingredients, according to their importance.
- Transliteration. Homophonic pronunciation can be used to translate ingredients or localised nouns that have no corresponding words in the target language.
- Reprocessing translation. After the initial Chinese translation, new proper names can be given to some Thai dishes based on their distinctive features (such as colour, appearance, culture, etc.) in a metaphorical way in order to cater to diners' desire and positive psychology.

Results and Discussion

Research result

The first objective of this study was to identify the reasons for the problems involved in translating the menu in Thai restaurants into Chinese. This objective was achieved by interviewing some restaurant owners and conducting a textual analysis of online comments based on keywords. The findings were as follows;

Chinese menu translation is problematic for the following three main reasons;

- The thesaurus of the translation software contains insufficient proper nouns and professional terms, which leads to the associative function of the software generating incorrect meanings.
- Although some informal translation software is convenient and free, the translation steps are not as perfect as Google translation and other official software.
- In some cases, the complete steps and ingredients can be translated, but the words are too long and the word order is unsatisfactory.

Based on the conclusion of the first part of the survey, the new translation framework should focus on the three points, namely, correctness, proper word order and simplification.

After the above bilingual Chinese and Thai word order analysis, as well as the dismantling and sorting of the structure of Chinese and Thai dishes, a prototype framework for the translation of Thai menus into the Chinese language was designed. The key steps of translation were as follows;

- If there was no corresponding Chinese translation of the name of the Thai food, transliteration was used; otherwise, the words were disassembled by category and the next step was carried out based on the translation formula.
- The dishes were classified according to whether they contained staple food or not. Here, so-called "staple food" mainly referred to rice, glutinous rice, noodles, rice noodles, dumplings and so on.
- The dishes were classified by the style of cooking.
- The dishes were classified according to whether their names included adjectives, such as taste, colour, shape, region and so on.
- The dishes were classified according to whether they included one or more minor ingredients. Three secondary ingredients were able to be translated simultaneously in some indistinguishable cases.

base for the entire translation framework. Terminology is the main theoretical basis of translation. The evaluation of the translation results ensures accuracy and practicality. Expert focus groups enable knowledge sharing and reuse.

Conclusion

It can be seen from the Results section that the two objectives of this study were achieved. Based on the current status of translation research, there are few cultural studies in the real sense, and research focused on Thai-Chinese translation is even rarer. Therefore, the current translation theories and tools of Thai-Chinese translation are inadequate to provide professional support for work related to menu translation. The existing literature mainly consists of the general theory of improving Thai-Chinese menu translation and analyses of the methods of foreign language translation of Chinese dish names; for example, literal and transliteration methods elaborated by H. Li. However, after the general introduction of the relevant meaning and principles, there are no details of the operation mode or translation formula (Li, 2017:106). On the other hand, some scholars have not formed a unified standard for the structure of Chinese dish names (Cui, 2014:76), which can be difficult for a cross-lingual reader to understand and apply. The translation framework produced in this study more intuitively and easily explains the steps of translation and how to put them into use. Even if the user does not understand the Chinese language, the translated words or phrases can still be combined based on the translation framework. In this way, the high accuracy of the word translation is retained, and special adjectives can be added according to the characteristics without affecting the word order rules. Moreover, the translation results obtained based on the formula are basically fixed and to some extent, create a certain range of technical terms that can be used to enrich the application of nomenclature (Yue et al., 2012:276).

Recommendations

This study has many obvious limitations, the first of which is the incomplete types of Thai food covered by this new translation framework. Some local Thai specialties are not included in the translation research due to their lack of popularity, and Thai desserts, hot pot and street food are also excluded. Some names can be translated according to the similarity of their structure using the above translation framework, which may need to be improved in future research.

On the other hand, the number of mainland Chinese tourists visiting Thailand has dropped significantly and is close to zero due to the impact of COVID-19. Therefore, it was not possible to test the new translation framework and new version of the Chinese menu in Thai restaurants to collect feedback from customers on the translation results. Instead, they will be tested in two ways, one of which will involve obtaining the relevant feedback from Chinese nationals stranded in Thailand by the pandemic, while the other will involve inviting some Chinese citizens to comment on the translation results of different versions on the Internet. This feedback will be used to evaluate, improve and strengthen the new translation framework.

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