

# Study on the Chinese-English Translation of Dietary Words and Phrases in *Bailuyuan*

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## ABSTRACT

The novel *Bailuyuan* by Chen Zhongshi, with the village of Bailuyuan in the plain of Guanzhong (Shaanxi, China) as the story context and narrating subject, describes the folk life of the two families Bai and Lu who live there for ages, such as their daily life, customs of marriage and funerals and religions. The distinctive features of this area as well as the rich culture it embodies are shown by languages, especially the vocabulary in this story. It goes with no doubt that the vocabularies of folklore culture in the story are the core and soul of our folklore culture in that they reveal the intrinsic nature of the culture. This study makes a classification of its vocabulary of folklore culture in *Bailuyuan*. Probing into some specific dietary culture-loaded words from this novel, it studies the cultural meaning of these words, and tries to analyze their existing English versions or give a new English version from the perspective of eco-translatology. This paper aims to help Shaanxi folklore culture to be better understood by foreign friends.

**Keywords:** *Bailuyuan*, Chinese-English (C-E) translation of culture-loaded words, eco-translatology

## I. INTRODUCTION

*Bailuyuan* is a unique classic novel that has been highly appreciated by critics in China and abroad since its publication in 1992. This is a literary masterpiece that grew out of the soil of Guanzhong's folk culture in Shaanxi, Western China. It fully shows the rich and profound folk cultures there by its language, especially the vocabulary. Studying the C-E translation of these folk culture-loaded words can enable foreign readers to better understand Chinese culture, to avoid misunderstanding of Chinese culture, and to promote cross-cultural communication between Chinese and Western cultures.

## II. BAILUYUAN — AN ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SHAANXI FOLK CULTURE

The novel *Bailuyuan* uses Bailu Plain in Shaanxi as the natural background and narrative object of the story. This novel is like a prevailing social customs "encyclopedia", which vividly and truly depicts the unique regional characteristics and profound folk customs and folk culture of the Guanzhong area.

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This article focuses on the E-C translation of special dietary culture words in Guanzhong area in the novel *Bailuyuan*.

## III. GUANZHONG DIETARY WORDS AND PHRASES IN THE NOVEL

The story in *Bailuyuan* takes place on Bailu Plain in the Guanzhong Plain, which is a famous granary. The unique natural geographical environment, geographical environment, socio-economic, custom properties, and people's psychological conditions there have formed the unique Qin dietary culture. The article focuses on searching the Guanzhong dietary culture vocabulary, and finds that there are 31 pasta words and phrases in this novel, and more than 20 words and phrases on special snacks there.

The novel contains a rich vocabulary of local snacks in Shaanxi province, such as buckwheat noodles, cold skin, beef and mutton soup, crystal cake, tofu pudding, sugarcoated haws on a stick, tea eggs, Laobaijia dumplings, gourd chicken, and so on.

These distinctive dietary culture words in Guanzhong Plateau reflect the colorful dietary civilization. This article focuses on the C-E translation of special snack words and phrases in the Guanzhong Plateau.

#### IV. ECO-TRANSLATOLOGY

Eco-translatology is proposed by Professor Hu Gengshen as "a paradigm of translation studies from an ecological perspective". This theory is an integrated study that explores the ecology of translation, the ecology of texts, and the ecology of "translation communities" and their interactions and interrelationships. It is an interdisciplinary study dedicated to a comprehensive description of translation activities from an ecological perspective.

Eco-translatology believes that translation is "the translator-led, text-based, and cross-cultural communication-aimed. Translation is the translator's selecting activity to adapt to the translation ecological environment and to transplant the text." [2]. In other words, the translator is the key part in the translating ecosystem. In the process of translating, the translator must fully consider the various translating ecological factors and their interactions and correlations in the text ecological environment, and make appropriate adaptation and selection so as to achieve the conversion of cross-cultural information between the source text and the translation, and to promote cross-cultural communication, the fundamental purpose of the translation.

"Adaptation / selection" and "three-dimensional transformation" are the core concepts of eco-translatology. "Adaptation/selection" refers to how translators choose translation strategies and translation methods, which both can be regarded as a choice made by translators to adapt to the translating ecological environment. The adaptive choice of translation does not explain translation activities from the perspective of the author/source text, nor does it define translation from the perspective of the reader/target text, but it comprehensively interprets the phenomena and activities of translation from the perspective of the translator. The "three-dimensional transformation" refers to the dimensions of language, culture and communication. It is these three dimensions that are paid the most attention when the principle of "multidimensional integration" of translation is implemented. The principle of "multidimensional integration" is a criterion for judging the quality of translations. It means that good translations must maintain the ecology of the text, so that the translation can exist in multiple ecological dimensions, especially in the language, culture, and communication dimensions. This requires a high degree of integration and adaptation in multiple dimensions, especially language, culture, and communication dimensions.

#### V. STUDY ON CHINESE-ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF VOCABULARY OF DIETARY CULTURE IN GUANZHONG FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ECO-TRANSLATOLOGY

The following is an analysis of the translation of five Guanzhong-specific dietary culture-loaded words, from the adaptation/selection and three-dimensional transformation in eco-translatology.

##### A. *Hua mo*

*Hua mo* is also called "pasta flower art". It is one of the important representatives of the pasta culture in the Guanzhong area. Its main feature is the variety of shapes and meanings. *Hua mo* has various animal and plant shapes such as flowers, birds, fish, insects, birds, animals, etc. Some people call the pasta flower art in Shaanxi as the "folk art living fossil".

The pasta flower art mentioned in *Bailuyuan* has the shapes of pomegranate, crab apple, wheat ears, cotton, rabbit, pig, etc. When Ling Bai (the daughter of Jiaxuan Bai, the hero in the novel) had her dinner party for full month birth in the text, relatives and friends came with elaborate clothes, shoes and socks and various shapes of *huamo* (Chapter 6 in the novel). *Huamo* (the pasta flower art) is very popular in the rural areas of Guanzhong. It is a precious gift for relatives and friends at festivals, birthday party, or full month birth party.

*Hua mo* can be transliterated as *Huamo*, or free translated as *bread in various shapes*. From a linguistic perspective, translators should adapt to the meaning of the language form "hua mo", and must choose the appropriate language expression when translating. The word *Huamo* does not exist in English. From the perspective of word meaning, *bread in various shapes* more clearly expresses the meaning of the source language. From the perspective of cultural dimension, the second translation is better than the first one to fully express the special images. From the perspective of communication, the author believes that if only "Huamo" is used without any annotations, this translation may not be understood by the target readers. Adding the annotation "a kind of bread in various shapes to show one's best wishes", it can be a good translation. However, in the process of novel reading, you cannot frequently add annotations, which will greatly hinder the reader's enjoyment of reading. "*Bread in various shapes*" does not have the above problems. Through the three-dimensional adaptation of language, culture and communication, "*bread in various shapes*" is a qualified translation.

##### B. *Pao mo*

*Pao mo* is a famous food in Shaanxi. The winter in Guanzhong area is cold and long. *Paomo* is hot and delicious, which can make people warm instantly and is

very popular with the locals. It can be known from several details in the novel: the political commissar Jiang encouraged the soldiers with paomo. Lu Zilin has a hobby to have paomo(the shredded pancakes in mutton or beef broth) when watching the Qin Opera.

There are two translations of paomo: *the shredded pancakes in mutton or beef broth*, or *paomo*. From the perspective of vocabulary and meaning, paomo is difficult to understand without context, and it is difficult to adapt to this translation ecological environment. If there is an illustration, it is a good translation. From the perspective of culture, these two translations can adapt to and transform this Guanzhong dietary culture, and the version *paomo* is more expressive. From the perspective of communication, *the shredded pancakes in mutton or beef broth* can survive in this translating ecological environment as a part of novel translation

#### C. *Tuo tuo mo*

Tuo tuo mo is a must when you have paomo(the shredded pancakes in mutton/beef soup). It is a kind of pasta bun made by smart Chinese Muslims on the basis of Arabic flatbread, using traditional Chinese baking technology.

There are two English versions: *Arabic turml* or *baked cake*. From a linguistic perspective, both translations fit well in vocabulary and semantics. From the perspective of culture, the first version is more suitable to show the cultural information-- the developing history such baked cakes. Therefore, *Arabic turml* is a better translation. From the perspective of communication dimension, novel translation should emphasize fluency, literary nature of the text, and remaining relevant images. *Arabic turml* and *baked cake* are both good translations. Therefore, from the perspective of this three-dimensional transformation, both two versions are Ok.

#### D. *He le*

He le is made of buckwheat flour, and it is a widely-favored Guanzhong pasta. In the novel Chapter 21, Mang's father bought him tofu pudding, hele and other snacks.

The English translation of hele is *buckwheat noodles*, but also transliterated as *Hele*. The word *Hele* does not exist in the target language. The version *Buckwheat noodles* has no problem of understanding, which can adapt to the target readers, and can also express the original meaning of the word "hele", which is a good translation. From the perspective of culture, *Hele* and *buckwheat noodles* can both fully convert the cultural information in the source language. From the perspective of communicative dimension, if it is an illustrated brochure or menu translation of Guanzhong

Food, the translation of Hele is easy to understand. However, in the translation of novels, in order to adapt to the target readers, the author thinks that the version *buckwheat noodles* has a higher degree of integration and conversion and is a better translation.

#### E. *Shui jing bing*

Shui jing bing is one of the traditional cakes in Shaanxi, and has a history of 800 years. It is a kind of pastry, shaped like a crystal stone. Around the late 19th century, the technique of making crystal cakes was introduced into the ancient city of Xi'an, and the Demao Kung Foods Store(a China Time-honored Brand) in Xi'an got and inherited this technology. "shui jing bing" appears 7 times in the novel, which is very rare delicious snacks for Lu Zilin, Heiwa and Lu Zhaohai(the main heros in the novel).

The English translation of *shui jing bing* is *crystal cake*. From the perspective of language, this translation can adapt to the original meaning of "*shui jing bing*" (a kind of cake like crystal stone); from the perspective of culture, this translation can successfully transform the characteristic cakes of Guanzhong dietary culture; from the communication dimension, this translation has largely achieved the transformation of the unique image of Guanzhong dietary culture, such as "Crystal Cake", and there are no difficulties or obstacles in cross-cultural communication. In short, this translation is the result of translator's proper adaptation / selection.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The C-E translation of several typical Guanzhong dietary words in Bailuyuan has been analyzed from the perspective of Eco-translatology. From the analysis above, it can be seen that in the translating process of such words, regardless of the choice of foreignization or domestication translation strategies, the translator should be the key part, considering the language, culture, the translation effect of the three dimensions of communication, in order to make adaptive choices and ensure the translation survive longer in multiple dimensions. Only in this way can a good translation be made and a better communicative effect can be achieved. Both the original author and the target readers are taken into account, so as to adapt to the selection in multiple translation ecosystem.

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