

# ***A Comparative Study of Tea Culture in Chinese English Translation: Pedagogical Translation in Second Language Acquisition***

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**Abstract:** Tea culture is very vital in the Chinese geographical and economic setting. Apart from being a high-selling brand, Chinese tea culture is inseparably associated with Chinese culture which is almost as old as tea cultivation history in China. As Chinese tea is sold all over the world, especially in western countries, the tea terminology becomes more significant in the age of globalization and international tea export. However, as the Chinese language is very much distinct from English including grammatical, syntactic, and semantic aspects, the translation of Chinese tea terminology into English has always been a challenge that hampers the tea export and consequentially, the Chinese tea culture. It has been found that with the use of some identified translation norms, translation strategies, and translation ethics, the Chinese tea culture may be globalized through the tea export from China. The paper has dealt with the inherent and external pedagogical issues found in the translation of Chinese-English translation of Chinese tea terminology and how these impact the tea culture and tea trade in China.

**Keywords:** Tea culture, tea terminology, Chinese English translation.

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Research Background**

Tea culture is very vital in the Chinese geographical and economic setting. Apart from being a high-selling brand, Chinese tea culture is inseparably associated with Chinese culture which is almost as old as tea cultivation history in China. The difference between the tea culture in China and in other western countries lies in the fact that tea is associated with China not only for its economic or medicinal properties but also for its spiritual significance.

Therefore, how to accurately translate professional tea vocabulary and ensure the normal exchange and communication between the two sides has become the key point in tea foreign trade.

Tea originated in China, and as early as in the Western Han Dynasty, China's tea has been exported to India, and then directly or indirectly enters other countries. With the precipitation of time, the corresponding tea ceremony culture has been formed. Nowadays, China is a big exporter of tea. In

order to better complete the trade in international trade, smooth and unmistakable language communication must be the top priority.

## **1.2. Research Significance**

As Chinese tea is sold all over the world, especially in western countries, the tea terminology becomes more significant in the age of globalization and international tea export. However, as the Chinese language is very much distinct from English including grammatical, syntactic, and semantic aspects, the translation of Chinese tea terminology into English has always been a challenge that hampers the tea export and consequentially, the Chinese tea culture [1]. Here are three research questions in this research: 1. What is the role of translation norms in Chinese English translation? 2. How is Transliteration hampering the translation of Chinese tea terminology? 3. How do translators impact the translation process? The first question is to identify the role of translation norms in Chinese English translation and the second one is to understand the negative impact of Transliteration in the translation. The last question is to understand the impact of translators on the Chinese tea terminology.

The main pedagogical issues in the Chinese-English translation have been described in the paper. The impact of the erroneous translation in the external tea export has also been discussed here. Additionally, the identified problems have been analyzed from a theoretical standpoint and some recommendations have been proposed that will be helpful in bridging the gaps found in the Chinese English translation of the tea terms.

## **2. Case Description**

Chinese tea culture is almost four hundred years old and the entire process of tea making from the time of brewing to the tea ceremony in China is strikingly different from other Western tea producers.

While translating the Chinese tea terms into English, several pedagogical issues arise such as the unavailability of translation norms in tea terminology [2], the mistranslation of tea terms, the translator's incapability and unawareness of differences in culture, grammatical differences [3], use of transliteration instead of translation and multi-translation of one tea term.

Solving these pedagogical issues of the translation will not only improve the tea export but will also serve as an agent of global transmission of Chinese culture through which people all over the world will be able to understand the value of Chinese tea culture.

## **3. Analysis of the Problem**

### **3.1. Tea Terminology**

Tea terminology in China includes different categories of words with different levels of meaning. These include the words whose meaning are based on specific literal features of the tea words, the same words but with different connotations [4], words related to Chinese tea culture, tea terms for different types of consumers or readers, tea terms related to the tea making process, and common tea terms popular in the English-speaking countries.

### **3.2. Analysis and Results**

#### **3.2.1. The Role of Translation Norms**

The first issue in the translation of the tea terms from Chinese to English is that there are no official and educational translation norms or standards in the Chinese tea terminology [5]. Thus, different translators translate these terms as per their personal abilities and choice which creates problems in understanding these terms [6].

According to Yang and Guo [4], in order to improve the quality of translation, tea terms can be divided into five categories according to different translation tasks. They are tea terms named according to the characteristics of tea genus, tea terms with specific cultural connotations, tea terms with different meanings in Chinese and Western cultures, tea terms for different levels of readers, and tea terms generally accepted in the West. It also analyzes the application of Chesterman's five translation ethics in the translation of tea terms.

### 3.2.2. Transliteration Hinder

Secondly, some tea terms are mistranslated while being translated to English. The main reason behind this is the tendency of transliteration where the literal meaning does not get translated [7]. So, the words that require literal translation get ambiguous translations.

For example, the literal translation of black tea from Chinese is "red tea". There are two versions of the meaning of this translation: One is that Wuyi black tea, which was acquired by the British in Xiamen, Fujian Province in the 17th century, the color of the tea was so dark that it was called "black" tea; the other is that, when black tea is processed, the color of the tea leaves becomes darker and darker, eventually turning black, hence we call it "black tea".

However, there is also "red tea", which refers to "rooibos" tea. This tea grows in South Africa and is a wild plant different from the tea plant. "Rooibos" is a South African slang, meaning "red bush" in Dutch, but there is not much introduction to this kind of tea in China. We usually pronounce "Rooibos" tea as "Italian Persian tea" [8]. If the speaker does not understand some knowledge of tea terminology, he or she will make mistakes when communicating with people.

Dark tea is also called "brick tea" because it is mostly pressed tea. There is also a proposal to change the name of "Dark tea" to "heicha (黑茶)" because the Chinese word "Hei (黑)" implies darkness, gloom, and impurity.

Most of the tea term can be translated literally, i.e., "chrysanthemum tea," "Jasmine tea," Many translations also come from transliterations, such as "Tunxi tea" translated into "twankay tea", and "Qimen tea" translated into "keemun tea".

### 3.2.3. The Influence of Translators

Tea culture is rich in connotation in China. It integrates the cultural essence of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, and embodies the core culture of Chinese tradition. At the same time, the inheritance and development of tea culture in China has a close relationship with the ancient Chinese literati, the Han Dynasty began to enjoy the trend of tea, but at this time, tea is still as a royal aristocrats and dignitaries can enjoy things, tea drinking is extremely fashionable behavior. In the Tang Dynasty, tea was popularized and more people began to drink tea. At this time, ordinary people could also drink tea at will. Therefore, at this time, the spirit of the tea ceremony is enriched in more levels, and it is also regarded as a way to express elegant taste, express emotions and express self-worship. The unique Oriental color of Chinese tea culture is inseparable from ancient Chinese literati. At the same time, based on the love of literati and ordinary people for tea, tea culture has a deeper artistic conception and connotation. Starting with Chinese literati, tea culture began to spread to thousands of households, and ordinary people also began to drink and taste tea and developed a strong emotion for tea. The reason why tea culture can be passed down to the present depends on a wide mass base, and it is because of people's love for tea that it has been inherited and developed till now [9].

What is more worthy of study is that Chinese people worship tea drinking even if there are no exquisite utensils or complex forms. And the national spirit contained in the tea culture still exists. Putting aside these superficial things, it does not affect the Chinese people to express their feelings

and pursue spiritual enjoyment through tea drinking [10]. But the British tea essence is totally different with China, although the British tea has already fallen, to the very same from many literature works, also can see the very distinctive British tea culture, but they are more of a real enjoyment, is a kind of exquisite taste, stereotyped way of drinking tea, it also has a lot to do with social needs.

However, due to a lack of cultural training [11], most translators fail to understand the cultural connotations that some tea terms carry with them. Consequentially, the readers fail to grasp those connotations and that may lead to inappropriate advertising of those products.

## 4. Analysis

### 4.1. Learn the Chinese Tea Culture

The first suggestion to solve the translation issues is that the translators must learn the Chinese tea culture and its historical background so that they can understand the hidden cultural connotations of the Chinese tea terms.

Based on the above comparative analysis of Chinese and English tea culture, these contents can be effectively used to enhance students' interest in learning, enrich classroom content and improve classroom teaching effect when carrying out translation teaching. As a core part of the English language system, idioms include figurative phrases, slang, proverbs and so on. They are a comprehensive reflection of a nation's cultural characteristics [12]. There are a lot of proverbs related to tea in English, among which the most representative one is "A cup of tea". It does not mean a simple cup of tea, but a person's love for something or something he is good at.

In addition, there are phrases such as "dish of tea", which are very common in Britain, and the idiom "for all the tea in China", which reflects the influence of Chinese tea culture on British tea culture, and can also be regarded as the influence brought by Chinese tea in the world. It is because tea culture originated in China, and tea is imported from China, so although tea has been very popular. However, in the world, Western countries still regard tea as a relatively precious object, it symbolizes a kind of wealth, so "all the tea in China" means a great deal of wealth [13].

### 4.2. Strategies

Some translation strategies can be utilized to solve the diverse translation issues identified earlier [10]. These strategies may include amplification, literal translation, free translation; consumer-centered translation, and annotated translations.

As mentioned above, the connotation of tea culture is rich, and the way of naming tea names is varied, and their meanings are naturally different. The meanings of seemingly similar names are quite different. And it cannot be speculated at will, there are things with the same name cannot be lazy to use the translation of things with the same name, otherwise it is easy to cause readers' understanding error. This requires translators not only to have a deep understanding of tea culture, but also to integrate the advantages and disadvantages of various specific translation methods for flexible use. For example, for tea names that directly express certain characteristics of tea in terms of form, color, picking season, etc., literal translation can be adopted.

Most of these limited words have corresponding words in English, and their meanings directly do not have too much meaning, so there is no need for translators to create themselves. For example, "pre-rain" tea named after the picking season can be translated as "pre-grain rain" tea. If it is still difficult for readers to understand, appropriate annotations can be added. For instance, named tea by the source area, but the Chinese city's name is complicated, and may not have a corresponding vocabulary in English, in this case, translator can try to retain the original or traditional meaning and relatively concise.

Finally, some “common words” should be paid attention to in the translation of tea culture. For example, as mentioned above, black tea has a corresponding word in English for a long time. Although it is not nearly accurate, it is still necessary to use this word instead of creating red tea by ourselves.

### 4.3. Learn the Chinese tea culture

If the translator did not form a unified opinion, but to take the idea of personal preference, the free translation, transliteration, literal translation method in the selection preference for yourself, not pay attention to the accuracy of the translation. There is even a brand of tea that shows the characteristics of tea, whose name has nothing to do with the translated vocabulary. This is obviously contrary to the purpose of the translation of the tea culture, tea culture translation is for the sake of tea culture can better spread in the world, the masses of overseas tea culture of blessings, let them feel the baptism of the classic Chinese tea culture thought, which resonate with and understanding of tea culture, promote the tea culture and tea culture in the new era to create rich. The difference of good and bad terms in translation will reduce the connotation of tea culture, so it is particularly important to unify translation terms [4].

Finally, the translators must be taught some translation ethics such as the five-translation ethics coined by Chesterman so that each translator can maintain the same ethics while translating the Chinese tea terms. From this, certain translation norms may generate that can be followed worldwide for Chinese tea products.

## 5 Conclusion

The essay has dealt with the inherent and external pedagogical issues found in the Chinese-English translation of the Chinese tea terminology and how do these impact the tea culture and tea trade in China. It has been found that with the use of some identified translation norms, translation strategies, and translation ethics, the Chinese tea culture may be globalized through the tea export from China. The importance of coming up with a pedagogical solution to the Chinese English translation issue has also been established in the paper.

As an excellent traditional Chinese culture, tea culture enjoys a good reputation at home and abroad and has been highly recognized. In the context of globalization, the spread of tea culture is also easy to be accepted by people. However, the misunderstandings in the translation process of tea culture drag its steps to the world.

Three solutions have been recommended through the study that answers the research questions posed earlier in the paper. The successful implementation of the suggested solutions to the translation issues will not only benefit China economically but will also be able to spread Chinese tea culture and its value to Western countries [15]. This cultural transmission will help improve the international relationship between China and other foreign countries. Also, for foreign people, especially the Western countries, gaining Chinese language acquisition skills will be easier to understand the Chinese tea terminology [16]. Finally, the marketers will be able to train the translators in the right direction so that they can take an active part in solving the pedagogical issues found in their translations.

Although adequate research has been done on the topic of translation in the context of second language acquisition, hardly any researchers focused on coining translation theories and strategies. As tea culture is directly connected with trading and economy, its linguistic implications have not yet been discussed widely. Due to a lack of theories coming from Chinese researchers or linguists, it becomes difficult to give actionable solutions to the issues regarding Chinese tea terminology. This

gap has not been filled through this study. However, relevant participation of Chinese researchers will be able to give a firsthand solution to the identified pedagogical issues.

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