

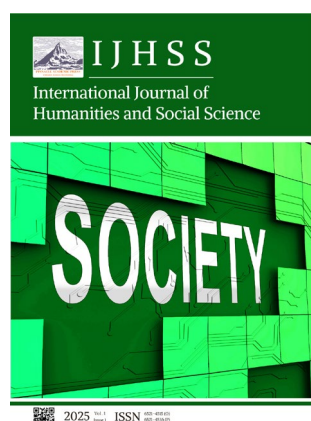
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English Translation of the Dish Names of Jilin Cuisine from a Cross-Cultural Perspective

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Abstract: Culinary culture is an outstanding component of traditional Chinese culture, with a long and profound history. The diverse geographical climates, varied resources, and differences in dietary habits across China have given rise to the well-known "Four Major Cuisines" and "Eight Great Culinary Traditions". With the deepening of globalization and increasing international exchanges and cooperation, Jilin Province has also engaged in global interactions in various forms. As Jilin steps onto the world stage, it becomes particularly important to help Western audiences understand Jilin's culinary culture and local customs through the English translation of the dish names of Jilin cuisine, thereby promoting Jilin cuisine globally. This paper analyzes the methods of translating the dish names of Jilin cuisine from a cross-cultural perspective, aiming to provide guidance for future practices.

Keywords: dish names of Jilin cuisine; cross-cultural; English translation

Received: 15 May 2025

Revised: 18 May 2025

Accepted: 09 June 2025

Published: 10 June 2025



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1. Introduction

Contemporary German translation theorist Mary Snell-Hornby elaborates in her book *Translation Studies: An Integrated Approach* on the theory of cross-cultural translation. She argues that linguistic research should focus on the translation of texts within their situational and cultural contexts, emphasizing that translation must be conducted within specific cultural frameworks to achieve a bicultural rendering of both the source and target languages [1]. This perspective shifts the emphasis from purely linguistic correspondence to a broader interpretive framework that encompasses sociocultural factors, audience expectations, and genre conventions. Translation theorist Eugene Nida also contributes significantly to this discourse, positing that translation should be broadly regarded as an act of cultural exchange rather than a mere transfer of words or grammar. His model of "dynamic equivalence" suggests that the target text should elicit the same response in its audience as the source text does in its original cultural context. It is evident, therefore, that translation is an act of interlingual transfer that aims for both semantic equivalence and cultural alignment, requiring the conveyance of information as well as sensitivity to embedded cultural elements in order to achieve meaningful cross-cultural communication. This dual-layered responsibility of the translator becomes even more crucial in contexts where culture and identity are tightly intertwined, such as in culinary translation [1].

Jilin cuisine is a regional culinary tradition that has its roots in Northeastern Chinese cuisine (Guandong cuisine), known for its hearty flavors, generous use of pickled ingredients, and techniques suited to cold climates. With a unique geographic position adjacent

to Russia and North Korea, and a deeply agrarian history, Jilin cuisine incorporates elements from ethnic minorities such as the Manchu and Korean-Chinese communities, making it both diverse and distinctive. At the 2001 China Food Festival, Jilin cuisine was recognized as one of the "New Eight Great Cuisines" due to its signature techniques — such as stewing, braising, and fermenting — as well as its rich selection of wild mountain vegetables and freshwater fish. In recent years, Jilin Province has increasingly engaged with the international community through platforms such as the Northeast Asia Expo and the Changchun Vasa International Ski Festival, enhancing not only economic cooperation but also cultural visibility. Concurrently, foreign visitors to Jilin have shown growing interest in its culinary culture, often seeking translated menus and explanations of local specialties. Therefore, standardizing the English translations of the dish names of Jilin cuisine is not merely a linguistic task but a strategic cultural initiative. It will not only facilitate the dissemination of Jilin food culture but also contribute to the broader project of cultural branding and heritage diplomacy in the global arena.

2. Characteristics of the Dish Names of Jilin Cuisine

Based on the analysis of the dish names from Modern Jilin Cookbook, this study finds that the dish names of Jilin cuisine can be primarily categorized into two types: those without cultural elements and those containing cultural elements. This classification provides insight into how language serves not only as a tool of communication but also as a reflection of local heritage and culinary philosophy [2].

2.1. Dish Names without Cultural Elements

Some dish names of Jilin cuisine do not involve cultural factors but instead directly reflect the dish's tangible features, such as ingredients, cooking methods, or visual form. These naming strategies reflect a pragmatic and descriptive approach that prioritizes clarity and immediate comprehension for the diner. The naming approaches can be classified as follows:

1) Ingredient-Based Names

This type of naming primarily lists the key ingredients in a straightforward manner, aiming to highlight the raw materials used in the dish. Dishes named this way typically use direct combinations of ingredient names, such as "beef and potato stew" or "corn and pork ribs soup", making them easily understood by both local and foreign diners.

2) Cooking Method-Based Names

These dish names combine the primary cooking method with main ingredients, allowing diners to identify not only the components but also the culinary technique involved. For example, terms like "braised", "stir-fried", or "steamed" appear prominently in such names. This method helps diners form an expectation about the texture and flavor profile of the dish.

3) Flavor-Based Names

Jilin cuisine is known for its distinctive flavor profiles, developed through the integration of Manchu, Mongolian, and Han culinary influences. Flavor-based names aim to evoke sensory expectations by directly referencing taste elements, such as "spicy chicken" or "sweet and sour perch". These descriptors play an important role in guiding diners' choices and establishing a sensory connection [3].

2.2. Dish Names with Cultural Elements

Dish names containing cultural elements refer to those that reflect specific historical, regional, or symbolic meanings, often rooted in the traditions, customs, and linguistic expressions of Jilin's local culture. These names add depth and narrative to the dishes, connecting the cuisine to broader cultural memories and identities [3]. The key categories include:

1) Dishes Named After People, Places, or Restaurants

It is quite common for Jilin dishes to be named after individuals, locations, or restaurants. Such naming serves both commemorative and geographical functions. Examples include "Lǐ Liánguì xūn ròu dà bǐng", which likely pays homage to a well-known chef or culinary innovator, and "Qián Guō yáng tuǐ", which emphasizes regional origin and local authenticity. These names help situate the dish within a specific cultural and historical framework.

2) Use of Metaphorical Rhetoric

The most widely used and evocative rhetorical device in Jilin dish names is metaphor. By comparing ingredients' shape or color to familiar objects, these names create a poetic and visually rich effect. For example, the dish "shuǐ jīng ròu" (crystal meat) captures the delicate, translucent appearance of steamed pork. Such names stimulate curiosity and imagination, enriching the dining experience beyond the physical act of eating [4].

3) Frequent Use of Numbers

Numbers are often employed in Jilin dish names to convey a sense of variety or complexity. When a dish includes numerous ingredients or steps, listing them all becomes impractical, rendering it infeasible to enumerate each one individually. Instead, numbers like "three", "five", or "eight" are used for summarization and symbolic effect. For example, "Chá Gàn Hú tóu yú sān chī" (Three ways to cook the first fish caught from Chagan Lake) illustrates three culinary methods applied to different parts of the same fish — each representing a traditional technique and flavor unique to the region [5].

3. Case Analysis of English Translation Methods for the Dish Names of Jilin Cuisine

Dish names in Jilin cuisine (Jílín cài) offer a rich tapestry of culinary language shaped by both utilitarian needs and cultural expression. Understanding the naming conventions is critical not only for accurate translation but also for the effective dissemination of local food culture on the international stage. This section explores how different types of dish names — those devoid of cultural elements and those imbued with them — are approached in translation practice [6].

3.1. Dish Names without Cultural Elements in Different Types

Many traditional dishes in Jílín cài are named in a straightforward manner, with the primary goal of informing diners about the key ingredients, preparation method, or appearance. Such names are typically easier to translate as they rely less on metaphor or cultural references. However, achieving clarity and naturalness in the target language still requires deliberate structuring. The following are commonly used translation patterns:

1) Main Ingredient (Name/Shape) + with/in + Supplementary Ingredient

This method reflects a practical approach by foregrounding the dominant ingredients, supplemented by secondary items.

Example:

Jī sī jué cài – Shredded Chicken with Young Fiddlehead Ferns

Here, the texture and shape of the chicken (shredded) and the unique character of the fern (young, curled) are highlighted, offering clarity to foreign audiences unfamiliar with wild edible plants like jué cài.

2) Cooking Method + Main Ingredient (+ Supplementary Ingredient)

This structure places emphasis on how the dish is prepared, appealing to culinary tourists or gastronomes interested in cooking techniques.

Examples:

Bào fǔ pá sōng róng – Braised Abalone with Tricholoma Matsutake Mushrooms

Shēng bàn Sōngjiāng lǐ yú – Raw Marinated Carp in Vinegar

These names not only convey preparation methods such as braising or raw marination but also highlight prized ingredients like sōng róng, known for their scarcity and aroma.

3) Cooking Method + Shape/Taste + Main Ingredient

In this format, descriptors of shape or taste play a central role, evoking visual or sensory appeal.

Example:

Xuě yī dòu shā – Deep-Fried Bean Paste Balls with Snowy Crust

This name conveys the delicate, snowy-white appearance of the fried coating, creating a poetic image in the mind of the diner, even without metaphor.

3.2. Dish Names with Cultural Elements in Different Types

Some dishes in Jílín cài are deeply embedded in regional culture, history, or folklore. These names often present challenges in translation due to their symbolic, historical, or rhetorical connotations. Literal translation may obscure their meaning or confuse international audiences [5].

1) Personal, Regional, or Institutional References

Dishes named after individuals, places, or well-known restaurants indicate prestige or origin.

Examples:

Lǐ Liánguì xūn ròu dà bǐng – Li Liangui Bacon Pie

A dish named after its reputed inventor. Including the name retains authenticity.

Qíánguō yáng tuǐ – Roasted Lamb Leg, Qianguo Style

The regional style signifies a specific seasoning and preparation typical of the Qianguo area.

2) Figurative or Metaphorical Names

These dishes use metaphor or visual rhetoric, often drawing from appearance or symbolic meaning, but such names are difficult to decode for international audiences.

Example:

Jīnqián niúròu – Steamed Beef with Chicken Meatballs and Golden Oyster Mushrooms

Literal translation as "Money Beef" lacks context and clarity. The metaphor is de-emphasized in favor of ingredient transparency.

In such cases, conceptual fidelity is more important than literal equivalence.

3) Numerals in Dish Names

Dishes with numbers often use them to indicate quantity, variety, or complexity.

Example:

Liū sān yàng – Sautéed Pig's Tripe, Liver, and Chitterlings with Pepper

Here, "sān yàng" (three kinds) is implicit and explained in the translation. Numbers may also reflect symbolic meaning (e.g., "eight" for prosperity), which can be noted in a footnote or interpreted based on context [7].

4. Conclusion

Though dish names may appear concise at first glance, they often encapsulate multiple layers of cultural, historical, and gastronomic significance that go far beyond mere nomenclature. Their translation into culturally accessible English is thus a multifaceted and nuanced task that requires not only linguistic skill but also a deep understanding of both source and target cultures. Translators must undertake a comprehensive analysis of each dish's ingredients, cooking techniques, presentation style, and most importantly, the cultural, regional, or symbolic connotations embedded within the name. This holistic approach enables translators to select the most appropriate translation methods — whether literal, adaptive, or explanatory — that faithfully convey the essence of the dish without causing confusion or loss of cultural identity.

Moreover, successful translation plays a pivotal role in facilitating cross-cultural communication and appreciation, acting as a bridge that introduces and preserves the

unique culinary heritage of Jílín cài for global audiences. It not only serves practical purposes of menu translation and food tourism promotion but also contributes to the broader discourse on cultural exchange and globalization. As such, translators, culinary experts, and scholars must collaborate closely, continuously refining translation strategies to balance faithfulness with readability, cultural resonance with clarity. Future research may further explore the integration of multimedia tools, consumer feedback, and evolving linguistic norms to enhance the effectiveness of dish name translation and thereby enrich intercultural culinary experiences worldwide.

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