

# English Translation of Shaanxi Noodles in Cross-cultural Communication

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**Abstract:** In the realm of culinary arts, Shaanxi noodles, with their rich history and unique flavors, represent a vital aspect of Chinese food culture. As globalization develops, the translation and dissemination of these traditional dishes in English have become crucial for fostering cross-cultural communication. This paper delves into the nuances of translating Shaanxi noodles into English, emphasizing the importance of cultural fidelity, linguistic accuracy, and appeal to international audiences. By analyzing existing translations and proposing refined versions, this study aims to contribute to the effective communication of Shaanxi's culinary heritage in a global context.

**Keywords:** Shaanxi Noodles; Cross-cultural Communication; Chinese Food Culture.

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## 1. Introduction

Shaanxi Province, widely recognized as the “Cradle of Chinese Civilization”, possesses a rich and diverse culinary heritage that spans thousands of years. This culinary landscape is deeply rooted in the province's long history and cultural traditions. Among the myriad of delicious dishes that Shaanxi offers, the province's characteristic noodles occupy a prominent and cherished place. These noodles not only represent the local culinary art but also embody the traditions, ingredients, and cooking techniques that have been handed down through generations. Shaanxi noodles are not merely a meal; they are a cultural narrative that tells the story of the province's historical evolution, geographical adaptation, and social customs. Each type of noodle, from the thick and chewy *Biangbiang* Noodles to the fragrant *Pita Bread Soaked in Lamb Soup*, carries its own unique tale. These noodles serve as a mirror reflecting Shaanxi's agricultural heritage, dietary preferences, and festive traditions, making them an invaluable part of China's intangible cultural heritage. As China continues to open its doors wider to international tourists and cultural exchanges, the accurate and appealing English translation of Shaanxi noodles' names and descriptions becomes increasingly important. This is crucial for promoting cultural tourism and culinary diplomacy, as it helps to bridge cultural gaps and enhance the international influence of Shaanxi's culinary culture. The translator will explore the challenges and strategies involved in translating Shaanxi noodles' names and descriptions into English. It aims to provide insights into how to effectively communicate the unique charm and cultural significance of Shaanxi noodles to a global audience, thereby fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of China's culinary heritage.

## 2. Research Status

Chinese traditional culture is extensive and profound, there are still some problems in the translation of food culture in cross-cultural communication, such as inaccurate translation and no English translation. Therefore, the English translation of food culture needs to be improved. Therefore, some scholars have explored the translation of food culture research. In “Research on the Translation of Shaanxi Characteristic

Food from the Perspective of Ecological Translation”, Guo Jing studied the English translation of Shaanxi characteristic food from the theoretical framework of ecological translation, providing a new translation perspective and principle for the translation of food culture. In “Translation Strategies and Principles of Xi'an Characteristic Food Culture”, Chu Liang put forward the translation strategies and principles based on the Chinese characteristics of Xi'an local characteristic food. Wang Hesi and Chen Ying, in analyzed the English translation of Shaanxi pasta under the guidance of Skopos Theory, and explored the translation strategy suitable for Shaanxi cuisine in Research on the External Publicity Translation Strategy of Shaanxi Characteristic Pasta under the guidance of Skopos Theory.” To sum up, the translation of food has attracted the attention of many scholars. Scholars have studied and explored the translation strategies of Shaanxi characteristic food, but it is still not comprehensive. Therefore, it is necessary to study the English translation of Shaanxi characteristic noodles under cross-cultural conditions, which can better demonstrate cultural heritage, demonstrate “cultural confidence” and expand international influence.

## 3. Challenges in Translating Shaanxi Noodles

Shaanxi is known as the “Noodle Kingdom” and there are hundreds of ways to cook noodles. People began to grow wheat from the Han Dynasty, and it became popular. By the Song Dynasty, noodles became people's fast food and a favorite pasta in the daily life, because of the simple and convenient preparation. Nowadays, there are many different ways to cook noodles in Shaanxi. As we all know, Shaanxi has many scenic spots and historical sites, attracting many foreign tourists. In addition to scenic spots and historical sites, food also plays a vital role in cross-cultural communication. As one of the ancient capitals of 13 dynasties, Shaanxi has preserved a rich food culture and a wide variety of delicacies. As a “high-carbohydrate province”, Shaanxi has a wide variety of noodles. How to accurately and appropriately translate Shaanxi noodles is the most urgent need at present, and contributes to the communication around the world. In cross-cultural communication, many places of interest in Shaanxi have standard English introductions, but many

delicacies don't have an uniform standard in Chinese to English translation. Only the famous snacks such as "biangbiang noodles" and "mutton soup with steamed buns" have official English translations. "Biangbiang 面" is translated as "Biangbiang noodles" and "羊肉泡馍" is translated as "Pita Bread Soaked in Lamb Soup". However, there is no official English translation or translation standard for other Shaanxi noodles, and the translation of some delicacies is inaccurate. For example, "蘸水面" is translated as "dip surface" and "搅团" is translated as "the group up". The translation not only makes people feel confused, but also causes ambiguity and misunderstanding of meaning. It fails to reflect the cultural heritage and rich connotation of Shaanxi noodles, and seriously hinders cultural exchanges. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to how to standardize the English translation of Shaanxi noodles and how to correctly translate the name of Shaanxi noodles, so as to promote cross-cultural communication.

#### (1) Cultural-Specificity

Many names of Shaanxi noodles embed rich cultural references or allusions that may be obscure to English speakers, reflecting the profound historical and social tapestry of the region. Take "Biangbiang Noodles" as a quintessential example. This renowned Shaanxi dish derives its name from a highly complex character, which is both a visual marvel and a auditory representation, symbolizing the distinctive sound of slapping the dough during its preparation. This enigmatic character, composed of over 50 strokes, is a unique creation in Chinese typography and simply has no direct equivalent in English, posing a significant challenge for translators who strive to convey its essence and significance.

#### (2) Linguistic Complexity

The names of Shaanxi noodles frequently incorporate descriptive elements that capture the essence of the dish in a way that is deeply rooted in the local culinary lexicon but is incredibly difficult to replicate in English without diluting their evocative power. Terms like "spicy," "sour," and "oily" are but a fraction of the descriptors that need to be meticulously nuanced to reflect the specific flavors, textures, and cooking techniques unique to Shaanxi cuisine. For instance, "油泼面" (Youpomian), renowned for their oily and slightly tangy taste, requires a translation that hints at both their rich greasiness and the delicate sourness that balances the flavor, creating a harmonious symphony on the palate. Similarly, "酸汤面" (Suantangmian), which literally translates to "Sour Soup Biangbiang Noodles," must convey not only the acidity of the soup but also the intricate layers of flavor and complexity that give the dish its signature taste, a task that demands both culinary understanding and linguistic prowess.

#### (3) Preservation of Authenticity

Maintaining a delicate balance between cultural authenticity and accessibility for foreign audiences is another formidable challenge in translating the names of Shaanxi noodles. Translations must respect the original meaning and cultural context, preserving the heritage and traditions embedded within the dish names, while simultaneously appealing to non-native palates and expectations. For example, "羊肉泡馍" (Yangrou Paomo), a shredded bread soaked in mutton soup, presents a unique translation dilemma. While a literal translation like "Mutton Bread Soup" might convey the basic components, it fails to capture the dish's historical significance, the unique preparation method, and

the rich tapestry of flavors that make it distinctive. A more creative and culturally sensitive approach, like "Ancient Mutton-Infused Bread Soup," might better bridge the cultural gap, resonating with foreign diners while still conveying the essence and authenticity of the dish, ensuring that the culinary heritage of Shaanxi is honored and appreciated on a global stage.

## 4. Translation Strategies and Methods in Translating Shaanxi Noodles

This article explores the translation research of Shaanxi noodles through the translation strategies of domestication and foreignization, in order to find accurate and appropriate English translations. The strategies of domestication and foreignization were proposed by the renowned American translation theorist Lawrence Venuti in "The Translator's Invisibility" in 1995. Domestication aims to localize the source language for the target language or readers, using expressions familiar to the target language readers to convey the content of the original text. Domestication translation requires the translator to approach the target language readers, speaking like a native author, with the original author speaking directly to the readers, and the translation must become authentic in the target language. Domestication translation helps readers better understand the translated text, enhancing its readability and appreciation. Foreignization is when the translator tries not to disturb the author, allowing the readers to approach the author. In translation, it means accommodating the linguistic characteristics of foreign cultures, adopting foreign language expressions, and requiring the translator to approach the author by using expressions corresponding to those used by the author in the source language to convey the content of the original text, with the source language culture as the destination. The purpose of using the foreignization strategy is to consider the cultural differences, preserve and reflect the characteristics of foreign national features and language styles, and retain the exotic charm for the readers of the translated text.

Therefore, this article studies Shaanxi's characteristic noodles through the translation strategies of domestication and foreignization, using literal translation, zero translation, free translation, and paraphrase and other translation methods, in order to achieve accurate and appropriate English translation expressions and promote the development of Shaanxi noodles culture.

#### (1) Foreignization

Foreignization is the translator does not disturb the author as much as possible, so that the reader can get closer to the author. Foreignization is to accept the linguistic and cultural differences of foreign texts, try to convey the foreign cultural characteristics of the original, and bring the readers into the foreign context. The translation methods under the foreignization strategy include literal translation, zero translation, transliteration, word-by-word translation and so on. Therefore, the translator mainly analyzes Shaanxi noodles through translation methods of literal translation and transliteration, so as to make Shaanxi noodles culture spread.

Literal translation maintains both the original content and the original form. Target language and origin language often use the same expression to reflect the same content, and can produce the same effect. The counterpart of "面" in English is "Noodle", which can be directly translated as "Noodles". Therefore, the translation of noodles can be based on the raw

material or the combination of ingredients. For example, “菠菜面” is made by mixing spinach and flour together and the raw materials are spinach and noodles, “菠菜” and “面” both have a corresponding word in the translated language, which can be directly translated as “spinach noodles”. Also, “洋芋面” comes from a kind of folk noodles in Huaxian County. “洋芋” means “potato” in the dialect, which is added with potatoes or potato cubes in flour. According to the raw materials, it is directly translated as “potato noodles”. “荞麦” also has the corresponding word “soba” in English, so “荞麦面” can be translated as “soba noodles”. Through the literal translation method, tourists can directly understand different kinds of noodles, which promotes cross-cultural communication.

Zero translation refers to the direct introduction of elements of the source language into the target language without any translation operation. For example, “biangbiang 面” is a kind of Hand-Pulled Wide Noodles with Spicy Oil and Vinegar Sauce. The noodles are called biangbiang noodles because they make a biangbiang sound when they fall on the cutting board. Because of its cutting and texture, it is called “削筋面”. There is no corresponding word in the target language, so it is translated as “Xuejin mian” in order to highlight the local characteristics. In this way, visitors can know about Chinese food culture.

## (2) Domestication

Domestication refers to the localization of the source language, taking the target language or target readers as the destination, and adopting the expressions used by the target language readers to convey the contents of the original text. Domestication helps readers to better understand the target text and enhance the readability and appreciation of the target text. Domestication strategies include free translation, interpretive translation, modified translation, imitation translation and so on. The translator mainly adopts free translation and interpretive translation methods.

Free translation maintains the original content, but change the original form. In many cases, the target language and the origin language do not use the same expression to reflect the same content, producing the same effect. In this case, free translation is generally better. Chinese cuisine names are often named by historical stories to express good wishes. Only relying on literal translation can not reflect the ingredients and characteristics of the cuisine. Therefore, free translation is more appropriate. For example, “油泼面” is a very local characteristics of Xianyang, Shaanxi Province. The key process is oil splashing, so it is called oil splashing noodles. It is necessary to highlight the feature of the word “oil spread”. Besides, it belongs to the manual noodles, so it is translated as “Hot oil spread hand-ripped noodles”. The most important point of “户县摆汤面” is the soup, and put a small chopsticks noodles in the soup, so it is named as “摆汤面”. For the noodles and soup are separated, it can be translated as “Noodles and Soup, Huxian style”. As for “乾县酸汤面”, “sour” refers to the main taste of the soup and it belongs to soup noodles, so it can be translated as “Noodles in sour soup, Qianxian style”. Through free translation, readers can have a deeper understanding of the production process and cultural connotation.

Paraphrase has a certain degree of freedom, without the need for word-to-word translation. The translator's translation can be supplemented and explained under the premise of the original idea unchanged. These dishes with rich cultural connotations can be translated by means of paraphrase. “臊子面” is translated as “Qishan Saozi Noodles” in *The Chinese Daily*. However, foreign tourists don't understand the meaning of the “Saozi”. “Saozi” is the minced or cut pork, so it is translated as “Mount Qi Pork Hand-ripped Noodles”. “蘸水面” is famous noodles in Yangling, like a wide and long belt. Then, the noodles are dipped in the soup with fried tomatoes, eggs, garlic and other ingredients. It can literally be translated into “Dipping Noodles, Yangling Style”, but doesn't reflect the raw materials, the translator add explanations “long, wide and flat noodles dipped in tomato sauce with green vegetables”. It not only propagates Chinese noodle culture, but also attracts readers to understand the rich cultural connotation.

## 5. Conclusion

The translation of Shaanxi noodles into English is indeed a delicate and nuanced task, necessitating a meticulous balance of linguistic precision, cultural sensitivity, and innovative adaptation. It involves not just a straightforward conversion of words but a thoughtful consideration of the cultural context and historical significance behind this iconic culinary delight. By skillfully employing translation strategies such as foreignization and domestication, it can effectively bridge the gap between the unique flavors and traditions of Shaanxi's culinary heritage, and the diverse palates and cultural backgrounds of a global audience. Foreignization helps preserve the authenticity and exotic appeal of Shaanxi noodles, while domestication ensures that the translation resonates with target language readers and is accessible to international readers. As China increasingly engages with the world through its rich culinary landscape, accurate and engaging translations of Shaanxi noodles will undoubtedly serve as a vital bridge in fostering mutual understanding, appreciation, and cultural exchange across borders. These translations will not only satisfy the culinary curiosity of foreigners but also deepen their connection to and respect for China's diverse and vibrant culinary traditions.

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