



Target Language Adaptation in Thai Dish Name Translation

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Abstract

This qualitative paper aims to investigate translations of Thai dish names into English and propose TL adaptation strategies in translations of Thai dish names into English. Most Thai dish names translated into English available on websites were found to contain inappropriate or wrong terms due to the application of literal translation not appropriate for the translation of Thai dish names associated with culture. Available Thai dish names translated into English were collected from five websites. The translated names were analyzed for TL meanings in comparison to SL, and four novel TL adaptation strategies – adding cooking verbs, adding terms in relation to senses, cultural substitution, and substitution of proper/metaphorical names – were proposed, adapted from TL emphasis translation methods which include adaptation, free translation, idiomatic translation, and communicative translation as suggested by Newmark (1988) and translation editing strategies at the lexical level as suggested by Saibua (1999). The result of this study revealed that most Thai dish names were literally translated and could not reach a communicative goal. Four novel TL adaptation strategies were then suggested for the translation of Thai dish names as they could enhance the understanding of TLs reader about what the dishes are like and what they would experience noticing their English names.

Keywords: *Translation, Thai dish names, Target Language (TL), adaptation*

1. Introduction

Thailand is globally considered as a country with hundreds of tourist attractions as well as fascinating and wonderful culture. As one of the major industries of the country, tourism plays a vital role and the government has been trying to promote tourism to the world community to make the country become popular among foreign visitors through the beauty of its tourist attractions, the generosity and the welcome smiles of Thai people, as well as other cultural aspects.

The national tourism promotion through Thai food which is a national culture is one of the government's strategic plans. With its intricacy, good flavor, texture, smell, color, taste, as well as ingredients with health benefits, Thai food has become globally popular, especially among those who love healthy food. However, the introduction and promotion of Thai food is not easy due to some limitations including spiciness of Thai food most foreigners are not familiar with, some ingredients with strong smells, and of course, the translation of the names of Thai dishes.

The impact of tourism promotion on Thai food leads to an attempt to translate local ingredients, food recipes, and menus from Thai into English which is an international language and the first alternative where people from two different countries use in their communication. To introduce or present Thai dishes to foreigners, first of all, translating their names into English is very essential; however, a number of restaurants still communicate with their guests, using different names with the same dishes. For instance, Restaurant A translates “ผัดไทย” /phaːt-thaj/ into English as ‘Thai fried noodle’ while Restaurant B names the dish in English as “Fried Thai noodle with tofu and prawns.” When appearing on the menus, those two names make different dishes. ‘Thai fried noodle’ can be any fried noodle dish – ผัดซีอิ้ว /phaːt-siː-iːw/, ผัดหมี่โคราช /phaːt-miː-khoː-raːt/, etc. – since there are a variety of fried noodle dishes in Thailand. Contrary to “Fried Thai noodle with tofu and prawns,” the name clearly identifies the key ingredients, tofu, and prawns, and gives a clearer picture of what “ผัดไทย” /phaːt-thaj/ is and what a guest can see in the dish if ordering the menu. Considering those two different methods, Restaurant A tries to have their guests understand what the name of the dish means in English; Restaurant B tries to communicate with their guests what they will



eat if they order it. The guests at Restaurant A may have a number of questions about the dish while the guests at Restaurant B may not.

Another phenomenon is, sometimes, a restaurant does not invent their dish names, but selects the names used by other restaurants or available from different online sources. As a result, some incorrect or inappropriate food names are repeatedly and widely used by restaurants. Besides, the same menu is differently named or translated by different Thai restaurants. In such case, a foreign guest could be confused, thinking that those two different names refer to different dishes. Moreover, some food names translated into English contain errors, especially word choice, leading to confusion and misunderstanding.

Hence, this paper aims to discuss the phenomenon of translation of Thai food names into English and demonstrate the necessity of communication of Thai food with foreigners as well as present a methodology for the translation of Thai dish names on the basis of communication and provide recommendations for naming Thai dishes in English.

1.1 Language – the Unit Inseparable from Culture

Language and culture are closely connected to each other. Language marks cultural identity as it forms human culture. Hantrais (1989) views culture as a set of beliefs and practices and language as a vehicle of cultural expression. People live dependently on their language and culture that influences them. Culture is inherited through communication, imitation, teaching, and learning; all of which require language as a vehicle of cultural transmission. Interacting with other cultures, in exchange of cultural knowledge, they need to decide what language they may use. Of course, English is one of the best alternatives as an international language. Undeniably, English is the first priority for cultural transmission in international communicative settings.

English, hence, plays a vital role as a medium or so-called *lingua franca* which people from two different cultures in which English is not their mother tongue use in their cultural communication. This concept is supported by Seidlhofer (2004) stating that English in the early 21st century is in the state of delicate balance where the majority of users of English are found in countries where English is a foreign language, not a native one. That is, not only native speakers but a number of non-native speakers worldwide also use English.

Similarly, Firth (1996) views English as a contact language chosen by interlocutors who do not share the same native language. Undeniably, English used by non-native speakers is considered to be non-standardized, meant for communication only. Inevitably, in L2 communication, the influence of L1 and the culture it embraces on L2 exist, leading to language transfer compared to other processes where L1 is used for L2 communication including borrowing, code-switching, especially translation. The term “interlanguage” as defined by Gass and Selinker (1994) refers to the linguistic systems which incorporate the linguistic characteristics of L1 and L2 used in L2 communication.

Likewise, Agar (1991) identifies that language and culture are sociologically, psychologically and linguistically related. Language and culture can be sociologically separable but psychologically and linguistically inseparable. Especially in the linguistic perspective, language and culture are closely connected; they can be separable only when language is analyzed out of the cultural contexts it belongs to. Similarly, Emmitt & Pollock (1997) view language as the root of culture, and language is compared to a culture carrier from one to the next generation. That is, cultural matters have infinitely been passed from ancestors from time to time.

Thai culture is totally different from others, especially western cultures. Thainess in cultural matters is quite delicate. Consequently, the transfer of Thai cultural knowledge through English communication could be problematic because there are times when the cultural message delivered to the receiver from another culture does not carry some cultural characteristics due to language limitation. Dealing with L2 communicative settings, hence, Thai people could find using English to communicate Thai cultural matters very difficult. Among business types, culinary business, especially the restaurant business, is one where English is frequently used.



One of the cultural matters which is hard to be communicated in English is food. For many countries, food is their national heritage as it is considered to be a cultural matter which embraces their cultural uniqueness and characteristics. Thailand, like other countries, possesses its own culinary culture. Nowadays, Thai food information is still inappropriately given to foreign customers due to cultural gaps. When Thai food information is transmitted to people in another culture, English is the priority. However, due to language limitations, Thai people still could not communicate such cultural information in English properly. Those in food businesses ranging from vendors to restaurant owners, especially in the areas daily visited by foreigners, all need to use English in their communication. For instance, vendors on Khaosan Road, Bangkok, always tell the ingredients of the food they are vending in English if their foreign customers want to know the food details. Similarly, a waiter at a restaurant on Sukhumvit Road needs to food information of each of the single dishes available when asked by a foreign guest.

1.2 Cultural Translation

Many times, food details and names written in English found in Thai restaurants are confusing because they are translated with no adaptation in the translated text. Most restaurants choose to translate their food items into English. Translation of Thai food names is very different from that of other works as Thai food is a set of Thai culture.

Translation is a transfer of the meaning of the message from the source language or 'SL' to the target language or 'TL'. According to Newmark (1988), translation is not only the rendering of the meaning of a text into another language as intended by the author of such text but also a tool of cultural transmission. That is, it is as a means of linguistic communication as well as cultural communication. Therefore, a translator needs to understand the meaning of the text and the intention of the text. Newmark (1988) also points out that, in the translation of cultural words, denotative and connotative problems of translation need to be distinguished by the translator. A translator can denotatively translate a cultural word but not connotatively. That is why cultural words need to be translated with the integration of different translation processes and methods. Cultural translation then should be on the basis of semantic and pragmatic equivalences.

Cultural translation needs specific methods and process. Translation theorists suggest translation methods specifically appropriate for cultural translation. Newmark (1988) introduces four methods with an emphasis on the target language as follows:

1.2.1 *Adaptation* – This is the freest form of translation mainly used for plays and poetry; the culture of the source language is converted to the target language culture.

1.2.2 *Free translation* – The target text is reproduced having no forms of the original text; the target language is usually a paraphrased form of the source text.

1.2.3 *Idiomatic translation* – The order of words or sentences in the target text is different from the original message; use of target language idiom and colloquialism as well as adaptation of culture, tone, and the beauty of the original language is found.

1.2.4 *Communicative translation* – The method retains conceptual meanings as well as the beauty and nature of the original text; the target text is acceptable, grammatical, and readable for the target reader.

Similarly, Larson (1984) proposes two translation methods for better TL communication: *modified literal translation* in which the source grammar and word order are modified to be acceptable in the target language, and *unduly free translation* that adds extraneous information and changes the meaning as well as distorts the culture of the source text.

Both of the theorists similarly point out that translation is meant for TL communication, especially Newmark (1988) who proposes that translation procedures should emphasize cultural equivalence not aiming at finding a word with an exact meaning of the SL term but the most possible word with the closest meaning in TL.

A study of the translation of Thai cuisine terms into English conducted by Watanapirom (2001) revealed that most Thai food names available on www.siamcook.com were literally translated into English. Considering the literal translation, every single word in SL is translated while the grammatical construction



of SL appears in TL. Noticeably, such method is not suggested for cultural translation by translation scholars. The study also found that most food names investigated were based on translation couplet or a combination of translation and transcription, e.g. “ขนมปุยฝ้าย”/k^ha| -no<m-pu| j-fa|:j/ as Cotton ball cake (Kanom Pui Fai), followed by transposition (the replacement of SL grammatical units with the units of TL), e.g. “ไข่เจียวหมูสับ”/k^ha|j-cia| w-mu<:-sa|p/ = Minced pork omelette (rearrangement of words from Thai “Omelette minced pork”) and paraphrase (giving a description with lexical adding), e.g. “ก๋วยเตี๋ยวคั่วหมู”/kua<j-tia<w-k^hua| -mu<:= Pan-fried spicy noodle, respectively. In addition, some translated terms contained no cultural equivalence. For instance, “ลอดช่อง”/lɔ| :t-c^hɔ| ɿ/, a Thai dessert, was translated into Pandan noodle. Even though the term noodle could represent the appearance of the dish, the term ‘noodle’ sounds to be a main dish rather than a dessert.

1.3 Phenomenon of the Translation of Thai dish Names into English

Nowadays, sources where Thai food names in English are available include websites, Thai restaurants’ menus, supermarkets, street vending, etc. The food items found are named differently as they are acquired from different sources and methods by their owners. Some are appropriately translated or named and sound communicative while some are not. The problem is a number of Thai food names are still based on literal or word-for-word translation not appropriate for cultural terms like Thai food names. Some names are specific and proper and do not represent the characteristics of the dishes. Moreover, some improper translations have continuously been imitated among those in this food business circle.

One of the causes of such problems is, first of all, Thai dish terms available from different sources and restaurants do not share the same English names. This leads to misunderstanding and confusion about Thai dishes. A foreigner never knows that Pad Thai, Thai fried noodle, and Stir-fried noodle with shrimps are the same dish due to different English terms. Another example is ‘Tom Yam’ which is differently named or translated among Thai restaurants in Thailand and abroad as Tom Yam Soup, Spicy lemongrass soup, Spicy and sour soup, etc. Though transcribed into English, the Japanese food term ‘sushi’ is internationally known as rice balls topped with meat or seafood. That is why each Thai restaurant should use the same name, having Thai dishes internationally acknowledged and recognized. Thai dish names translated into English sometimes sound inappropriate as the names need to include more details about the dish.

In addition, Thai dish names in English appearing on menus or in a variety of sources do not align with cultural communication. Rongthera (2018) stated that the translation of Thai food names is different from the translation of other document types due to cultural difference between the source culture and the target culture. Thai food is totally different from food from other cultures, especially western cultures as it is characterized by Thai culture, so the translation of Thai food cannot follow translation methods generally applied for general works. Due to such difference, a number of Thai dish names are inappropriately translated or named, not meeting communicative purposes. An example of a Thai dish name Watanapirom (2001) found was “ทองหยิบ” /t^hɔ| :ŋ-jɿ|p/ which was translated into ‘Golden flower.’ Even though the translated name sounds beautiful, grammatically correct, and meaningful, a foreigner may get confused noticing its name, having no idea about what the ingredients are and what dish type it is – a dessert or a non-dessert. A previous study of Thai food name translation into English conducted by Arunthat (1999) revealed that many Thai food names were not translated correctly, and the translations available from different restaurants did not refer the same dishes and were not standardized. Such finding is consistent with the study of the translation of Thai food names into French conducted by Rongthera (2018) revealing that a number of Thai food names lacked cultural characteristics when translated into French, and the translations were based on French rather than Thai culture.

Considering the translation phenomenon, first of all, Thai dishes should share the same English name for mutual understanding among foreigners. This strategy could contribute to better food recognition among foreigners. If all Thai restaurants either in Thailand or abroad agree to use the same English terms for their dishes, their foreign guests will no more get confused and gradually know the name of each Thai dish. This could also make Thai dishes become as internationally recognized as pizza, sushi, etc. In



addition, translation of Thai dish names needs different translation methods and procedures so that the English terms obtained can correctly refer to the food characteristics including appearances, tastes, and ingredients. Moreover, translation needs to be conducted as a means of communication.

To communicate Thai food information or ideas, then, may seem difficult for Thai people in their communication with foreigners who have no idea about Thai food. A Thai dish “ทอดมันปลา” /tʰɔːt-maːn-plaː/ is widely translated into “fish cake” and widely adopted by Thai restaurants. According to Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, the word ‘cake’ is defined as a sweet food made from a mixture of flour, eggs, butter, sugar, etc. that is baked in an oven [1] and a food mixture that is cooked in a round flat shape [2]. The translated term, “fish cake,” then seems to be correct based on [2] as it is flat-shaped fish meat mixed with chili paste. However, this can be confusing for foreigners. Seeing only the translated term, the foreigner reading the menu may misconceive the dish type. English native speakers may know the term can be either a dessert or a non-dessert dish while non-native English speakers generally understand that cake is a dessert only, not other dish types.

As previously discussed, not all translation methods and procedures are appropriate for cultural translation. One aspect of translation is to remain the intention of the SL; therefore, TL should be tailored to meet such intention. Saibua (1999) proposes a translation editing theory which can be applied to translation in TL and integrate TL adaptation to make TL understandable. The theory emphasizes translation editing in two levels: lexical and syntactic: Considering both Thai dish names, editing in the lexical level is the most appropriate. Table 1 presents Saibua’s translation editing at the lexical level which comprises five strategies.

Table 1 Saibua’s translation editing at the lexical level

Lexical level editing	Source Language	Target Language	Back Translation
1. Adding an explanation	conifer	ต้นสนคอนิเฟอร์	the pine tree ‘conifer’
2. Using a phrase or a sentence to substitute a word	The air had been so <u>sultry</u> that...	อากาศร้อนชวนง่วง	so hot that I felt sleepy
3. Substituting a word with another with a broader meaning	crimson	สีแดง	red
4. Adding a conjunction	Arriving in Paris, he...	พอมาถึงปารีส	when
5. Omitting a word/phrase	Are you hungry?	หิวไหม	hungry?

According to previously mentioned theories, the translation of cultural matters cannot always be straightforward. TL adaptation is necessary when a number of influential factors, e.g. cultural difference, exist.

Integration of cultural terms, such as Thai ingredients or cooking methods, are specifically found in Thai dishes. Thai dish names are all filled with Thai cultural identity. Culturally, Thailand is divided into four regions: North, Middle, Northeast, and South; and Thai dishes are specialized by region as well. Thai Northern dish names containing a number of terms influenced by northern dialects while Thai Northeastern dishes contain some dialectical terms. Therefore, overlooking those terms in translation is compared to the communication through language from which culture is separated. ซ้า /jaːm/ is a Middle Thai dish while ลาบ /laːp/ and น้ำตก /naːm-toːk/ are Northeastern Thai ones. All of them share the same flavors: sourness, spiciness, and saltiness; however, they are a bit different. Obviously, those three dishes with เนื้อ /nMaː/ (beef) as the main ingredient are translated into the same name – Spicy beef salad. However, they look different. ลาบ /laːp/ and น้ำตก /naːm-toːk/ contain roasted ground rice while ซ้า /jaːm/ does not. In addition,



ลาบ /la:p/ is a bit different from น้ำตก /na(m-to\k/; any meat in ลาบ /la:p/ is minced but that in น้ำตก /na(m-to\k/ is grilled and sliced.

Etymologically, Thai food names were obtained through a variety of naming methods. Generally, Thai dish names contain terms divided into six categories as follows:

Table 2 Categories of Thai dish names by term

No.	Name Category	Thai Dish Name	Meaning
1.1	Cooking Method	ข้าวผัด /kha :w-p ^h a\ɔ̃t/	stir-frying
1.2	Ingredient	ไข่ตุ๋น /k ^h a j-tu<n/	egg
1.3	Taste	ผักเปรี้ยวหวาน /p ^h a t-pria w-wa<n/	sweet and sour
1.4	Appearance (color, form, etc.)	หม้อฟอย /mu<:-fɔ̃<j/	floss
1.5	Proper/Metaphorical Name	ไข่ลูกเขย /kha j-lu :k-k ^h ≡<j/	son-in-law
1.6	Foreign Name (Borrowing)	หมูสะเต๊ะ /mu<:-sa -te /?/	borrowed from Indonesian Bahasa

Table 2 presents Thai dish names in six categories divided by term appearing in the names. In addition, a lot of Thai food names comprise a combination of terms from different categories. According to Table 2, all categories hide some cultural matters, especially category 5 which seem to be problematic for translators as the terms in this category refer to people and places associated with Thai culture. The dish in 1.5, “ไข่ลูกเขย” /kha|j- lu|:k-k^hM<:j/, is translated into “Son-in-law eggs” of which the original meaning is literally retained; however, it does not provide any information about the dish.

As Thai dishes are associated with Thai culture due to the specification of local ingredients and tastes, the author’s proposal for the solution is to apply TL adaptation in Thai dish name translation to meet communicative purposes. An adaptation which includes lexical adding in TL to enhance understanding and clarifying the characteristics of Thai dishes would contribute to the enhancement of foreigners’ understanding of the dish they are ordering.

Adaptation in TL can be carried out by considering the dish characteristics which include cooking methods, ingredients, tastes, and appearances. In addition, adaptation by adding terms or providing terms closely equivalent to their international cultural counterparts could help them decide whether to order the dish when seeing its translated name in the menu.

2. Objectives

1. To investigate the translation of Thai dish names on websites
2. To propose target language (TL) adaptation strategies in Thai dish name translations

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Thai dish names translated into English available were collected from five websites in two categories: two Thai tourism websites and three Thai restaurant websites. As this study includes samples of inappropriate or incorrect English translations collected from those websites, those websites’ names or URLs need to be kept confidential for research ethical purposes.

3.2 The translated names were transcribed and analyzed for TL meanings in comparison to SL.

3.3 Four novel TL adaptation strategies, including 1) adding cooking verbs, 2) adding terms in relation to senses, 3) cultural substitution, and 4) substitution of proper/metaphorical names, were proposed. Such strategies have been adapted from TL emphasis translation methods which include adaptation, free translation, idiomatic translation, and communicative translation as suggested by Newmark (1988) and translation editing strategies at the lexical level as suggested by Saibua (1999).

3.4 The available Thai dish names translated into English were adapted using the proposed strategies.



4. Result and Discussion

A number of Thai food names in English available from the websites were found grammatically correct and reflect the main ingredients of the dishes; however, some were wrongly translated as they were literally translated. Thai dishes are quite special and associated with Thai culture. Target language (TL) adaptation would let foreigners know how the dish is cooked. Saibua (1999) presents TL editing strategies at the lexical level. One of those is adding an explanation in TL; however, a translator may find translation from Thai to English difficult as the theory is designed mainly for translation from English to Thai, not Thai to English. A translator may wonder what words and short messages should be added in the target text. According to Table 2, Thai dish names were divided into six categories. Translating a Thai dish with those categorized terms could be possible.

This paper emphasizes the proposal of TL adaptation providing more food details including cooking methods and characteristics of the dishes as well as resolution to translation problems caused by cultural difference, proposing four TL adaptation strategies adapted from TL emphasis translation methods which include adaptation, free translation, idiomatic translation, and communicative translation as suggested by Newmark (1988) and translation editing strategies at the lexical level as suggested by Saibua (1999). Four TL adaptation strategies proposed for the translation of Thai dish names include:

4.1 Adding cooking verbs

Terms that identify cooking methods should be added into the translation to enhance the understanding as well as reduce confusion caused by cultural differences. Many Thai dish names are literally translated. Though grammatically correct, the menu reader may ask more questions about how a dish is cooked. Not having enough information about a dish, a foreigner always asks a question. Adding cooking methods would free a Thai waiter or a waitress from answering many questions made by foreign guests. Thai cooking verbs uniquely reflect the way Thai dishes are created, so adding cooking verb can enhance the understanding of the target text. Some cooking verbs are not available in their cultures, so finding a closest term could be helpful.

In this proposed strategy, a Thai cooking verb in the past participle form is added to the target text before the main ingredient. See Table 3.

Table 3 Examples of cooking term adding in TL

Item	Thai Dish	Available Translation	Proposed Translation
C1	ข้าวขาหมู /k ^h aʔ:w-k ^h a<:-mu<:/	Rice with pork leg	Rice with <i>stewed</i> pork leg
C2	หมูแดง /mu<:-dE :N/	Spicy red pork	<i>Roasted</i> pork with five spices
C3	ไก่ทอดใบเตย /kaʔj-hɔ̌ \(:-ba j-tM :j/	Pandan leaf chicken	<i>Fried</i> chicken in Pandan leaves

Table 3 displays three Thai dish names of which the available translations were found not to provide sufficient information about the dishes. In the presence of cooking verbs as suggested, the target texts could clearly identify how the dishes are cooked. ‘Rice with pork leg’ in C1 is not much attractive and could be confusing; adding ‘steamed’ could help the menu reader imagine the tenderness of the pork leg. ‘stewed’, was then added. Another example in C2 is too vague, so adding ‘roasted’ could help the menu reader understand the food details. The available translation in C3 could get the menu reader confused. The menu reader could understand by the term ‘wrapped’ but the term is not less significant than the term ‘fried.’ In addition, it was found that some cooking verbs were misleadingly translated.

4.2 Adding terms in relation to senses

Senses are significant as they give the guests a clearer picture of the dish they may place an order for. Thai food is famous for its delicacy and unique tastes, so their presence in translated names can be helpful. The terms can be added to TL translation include three significant senses:

4.2.1 Seeing – e.g. major ingredients, colors, and forms



4.2.2 Tasting – e.g. sweetness, saltiness, sourness, bitterness, etc.

4.2.2 Touching – e.g. softness, tenderness, crispiness, etc.

Adding a sense-related term, however, a translator should consider their tones when they appear in the target language. Though correct and meaningful translation, the translated dish name may give a negative picture of the dish or may not attract the guest to order the dish. For instance, “ไข่พะโล้” /kha\j-phal-lo/:/ may seem unattractive if translated into ‘Boiled eggs in dark soup’ instead of ‘Boiled eggs in five-spice soup.’ The term ‘dark’ is an unpleasant color while ‘five-spice’ could provide a sense of aroma and healthiness which sounds more positive.

A sense-related term can be a noun or an adjective, so the position where it is added depends on its part of speech. In addition, adding more than one term is possible. See Table 4 below.

Table 4 Examples of sense-related term adding in TL

Item	Thai dish	Available Translation	Proposed Translation	Sense
S1	ยำปลาคูท /jal m-plal :-du\k-ful :/ ข้าวต้ม /kha[:w-jal m/	Crispy catfish salad	<i>Crispy</i> catfish <i>floss</i> salad	Touching / Seeing (form)
S2	ข้าวต้ม /kha[:w-jal m/	Rice salad	Rice salad <i>with assorted vegetables and herbs</i>	Seeing (ingredients)
S3	หมูสะเต๊ะ /mu<:-sa\ -te(?)/	Pork Satay	Barbecued pork <i>sticks</i> with <i>sweet</i> peanut <i>curry</i> sauce	Seeing (form)/ Tasting

Table 4 presents the use of sense terms. The terms ‘crispy’ and ‘floss’ in S1 were added to identify the texture and the form of the catfish, respectively, signaling the guest that the catfish meat, not the whole body, would be served. Similarly, ‘Rice salad’ in S2 is not understandable in the absence of those additional ingredients. Finally, ‘Satay’ in S3 is a borrowed term, so it could not give a better picture than the suggested translation with ‘sticks’, ‘sweet’, and ‘curry’.

4.3 Cultural substitution

Many times, a translator cannot find a TL term equivalent to SL due to cultural difference. Substitution, then, plays a significant role in this difficult situation. Due to its cultural uniqueness, Thai dishes are different from their international, especially western, counterparts. A number of Thai dishes include cultural terms in their names, e.g. cooking methods, eating methods, ingredients, etc. For instance, the term ‘แกง’ /kE| :ŋ/, a type of Thai dish, appears in many Thai dishes, e.g. แกงเขียวหวาน /kE| :ŋ-khia<w-wa<:ŋ/, แกงคั่ว /kE| :ŋ -khuɑ|/, แกงจืด /kE| :ŋ -cM\ :t/, etc. Such Thai term refers to a dish with soup always eaten with rice; however, it is always misleadingly translated into ‘curry’. Culturally, the term ‘curry’ reflects the creamy soup with chilies and herbs in foreigners’ perception. Considering ‘แกง’ /kE| :ŋ/ dishes in Thai culture, not all of them combine creamy soup and chilies.

As previously stated, this strategy should be used when finding an equivalent term in the target language is impossible. The translator needs to help the target readers to have the conceptual meaning of the original message through the use of the closest term available in their culture. See Table 5 below.

**Table 5** Examples of substitution in TL

Item	Thai Dish	Available Translation	Proposed Translation
CS1	แกงส้ม /kE: ŋ-som/	Vegetable curry	Chili soup with vegetables
CS2	เมี่ยงคำ /mia ŋ-k ^h a m/	Leaf with coconut and herbs	Leaf snack with assorted herbs and sweet sauce
CS3	หลนปลาเค็ม /lo<n-pla :-k ^h e m/	Salted fish in coconut milk	Salted fish coconut cream dipping sauce

In order to deal with such difficulty, a translator needs to come up with a bridge of meaning that connects one culture to another and mutually shares a cultural similarity. Table 5 presents three dishes with three cultural terms. The term “แกง” /kE:|ŋ/, in general, cannot always be translated into ‘curry’ since some of the dishes contains no coconut milk. For Thai people, “แกง” /kE:|ŋ/ refer to Thai dishes with soup eaten with rice. That is, not all Thai soups are called “แกง” /kE:|ŋ/ and not all “แกง” /kE:|ŋ/ contain coconut milk. Using ‘curry’ in TL may, then, get the reader confused because this term originated in India. Indian curries normally contain hot spices and creamy soup. Using curry whenever “แกง” /kE:|ŋ/ exists in the dish name is not always correct. Therefore, ‘chili soup’ should be used as it could give a clearer picture of the dish, sounding more familiar for TL readers.

CS2, “เมี่ยง” /mia|ŋ/, is not available in western cultures, so the word ‘snack’ could represent the dish type. In addition, there are a variety of ingredients in the dish “เมี่ยงคำ” /mia|ŋ-k^ha| m/ and one of which the name is not available in English is a local plant leaf called “ใบชะพลู” /ba|j-cha| -phlu| :/; therefore, substitution is necessary.

The term “หลน” /lo<n/ in CS3, a dish type with a combination of coconut cream and a fermented ingredient (e.g. salted fish, fermented bean, fermented pork or fish, etc.), is a cultural term. The substitution of such term by dipping could help the target reader understand about how to eat the dish. In addition, the word ‘sauce’ is a bridge leading to the understanding of what the dish is like in comparison to western sauces.

4.4 Substitution of proper/metaphorical names

Many Thai dish names contain proper nouns including names of people, places, characters in Thai novels, etc. as identified in Table 2. Those names are always transliterated in the translation. Transliteration is always used when the translation of a proper name is impossible. Apart from proper names, Thai dish names were found to contain metaphorical names providing an implied comparison.

A number of translators were found to transliterate metaphorical or proper names in the same way as they translated other documents. However, transliteration is not suggested for the translation of food names. Many names refer to people or places in the source culture, so transliteration cannot clearly give information about the dish to the target reader. For instance, a Thai dish, พระรามลงสรง /phra|? -ra| :m-lo| ŋ-so<ŋ/, should not be transliterated to Phraram Long Song. Actually, Phraram is a character in a Thai masterpiece novel, Ramayana.” Very few target readers know this character. On the contrary, if they know the name, they still cannot imagine what they will see on the dish after ordering it.

This technique, hence, aims at substituting such names using an integration of terms to help the target reader conceptualize the appearance, taste, as well as ingredients of the dishes.

**Table 6** Substitution of Proper/Metaphorical Names

Item	Thai dish	Available Translation	Suggested translation	Substitution
SP1	ลอดช่องสิงคโปร์ /lɔːt-çɔŋ ʃɪŋ-sɪl ɲ- kʰal -pɔlː/	Singaporean dessert	Tapioca noodle in sweet coconut milk	Ingredients
SP2	ตำทวาย /jaːl m-thaːl -waːlːj/	Tawai spicy salad	Chicken and shrimp salad with assorted vegetables	Ingredients
SP3	ขนมสามเกลอ /kʰaːl -no<m-sa<:m- klɪmː/	Three-friend dessert	Fried sweet triple dumplings	Cooking method + appearance

Table 6 presents the substitution of proper/metaphorical names. Singapore in SP1 should not be transliterated but should be substituted by its key ingredients as the name cannot reflect the characteristics of the dish. Actually, Singapore in the dish name is not a country but an old movie theatre in Bangkok. Using transliteration, hence, may mislead the menu reader.

As well as Tawai in SP2, adding key ingredients and removing spicy is suggested as the dish is not spicy. For Thai people, ตำ/jaːl m/ dishes are generally spicy, but this dish is not much spicy and contains coconut cream. Tawai is the name of an ancient ethnic group, so transliteration is not suggested.

Finally, “Three-friend” in SP3 is a metaphorical name representing the look of the dish: three balls attached to each other. The available translation showed no connection with the dish characteristics, so adding a cooking method and appearances of the dish could help the menu reader imagine the taste and look.

The result of the study revealed that some Thai dish names, especially those embracing cultural terms, were still mistranslated or inappropriately translated as they hardly hinted the concept of Thai culture in the target text. In addition, some Thai dish names were translated in the absence of Thai cultural characteristics and concepts. For instance, Pandan noodle translated from the Thai dessert, “ลอดช่อง” /lɔːt-çɔŋ ʃɪŋ/(back translation = ‘go through a hole’), could not give a concept of dessert. Instead, the translation refers to a main dish rather than a dessert due to the term ‘noodle’. This finding is consistent with that of Rongtheera (2018) who found that translation of Thai food names was not easy since the translator needed to translate a cultural matter that did not exist in the target culture, and translation in the absence of the source culture could eliminate or destroy cultural value and beauty. Therefore, translation should incorporate a number of translation strategies to ensure that the target reader understands the meaning of the target text and cultural value and beauty is retained in the target language.

5. Conclusion

The result of this study revealed that most Thai dish names were literally translated and could not reach a communicative goal since most Thai dishes available on some websites and in some restaurants were translated incorrectly or inappropriately. Some Thai food names were correctly translated, but they were inappropriately translated, leading to misunderstanding and vagueness. Thai dishes were differently named after cooking methods, ingredients, tastes, appearances, and people, places, or characters. In addition, many dishes were adopted from other countries and named after their names in those foreign languages. Obviously, many dish names did not reflect the food appearance, ingredient, or tastes. Due to such naming methods applied to the naming of Thai dishes, translation needs to be conducted as a means of communication, not only translation.

In translation, TL texts need to retain SL meaning and culture. This fact is generally acknowledged by translators and translation scholars. Therefore, in the translation of Thai dish names, four novel TL



adaptation strategies were suggested as they could enhance the understanding of TLs reader about what the dishes are like and what they would experience noticing their English names.

TL adaptation is one of the alternatives the author wishes to suggest for Thai dish name translation to facilitate communication with Thai food lovers from different cultures. In summary, the four TL adaptations proposed in this study have been adapted from Newmark's TL emphasis translation theory (1998) and Saibua's translation editing in the lexical level (1999). The four novel TL adaptations include adding a cooking verb, adding terms in relation to senses, cultural substitution, and substitution of metaphorical or proper names. A Thai dish name may be translated by using one of those four TL adaptations or integrating two or three adaptation methods as mentioned in this paper. The four novel TL adaptation strategies would help lessen or eliminate translation problems caused by cultural difference and insufficient information given by the food name. As previously mentioned, language is inseparable from culture, so culture should not be overlooked in translation.

Further research was recommended to investigate the translation of other terms incorporated by culture to reduce limitations in cultural translation.

6. Acknowledgment

I would like to extend my gratitude to Asst. Prof. Dr. Piyasuda Mawai as well as members of the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Rangsit University who support the publication of this article. My deepest thanks also go to Dr. Nakonthep Tipayasuparat, who initiated the course "English for Restaurants" inspiring me to conduct this paper as well as my colleagues at English Language Department for their support and guidance.

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