Influence of Cultural and Linguistic Distance on Specific Terminology Equivalent Translation

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Abstract

The present study investigated the cultural and linguistic distance influences on specific terminology equivalent translation. Specific terminology in this research is food terminology. This is because food tradition is an important aspect of human and closed relates to human culture. The languages included in this study are Thai, Lao, and English, and Chinese Languages. The research procedure consists of conducting focus group in order to identify specific food terms of four ethnic community in a province in Thailand, named Ratchaburi Province, equivalent translation procedure, and questionnaire evaluation methods. The focus group method consisted of two groups of participants as ten representatives of ethnic community in the research area and the nine translators, who are native speakers of Lao, English, and Chinese Languages. Then, translation from Thai food terms to Lao, and English, and Chinese Languages by translators, who are native speakers of Lao, English, and Chinese Languages was conducted. Questionnaire evaluation was employed in two groups of subjects: nine translators and thirty bachelor's degree students in translation course to study translation difficulties and 20 native speakers of each Lao, English, either Chinese language who read translation words obtained from translation procedure. The results revealed that translation and understanding difficulties from Thai to Lao was rated at being extremely easy, followed by from Thai to Chinese, and finally, from Thai to English was rated at being difficult. The causes of difficulties were explained in terms of specific cultural and linguistic distance influence. The paper also illustrates the examples of translation items to reveal the influence of cultural and linguistic distance on translation of specific terminology.

Keywords: cultural Influence, linguistic distance, food terminology,
Thai, Lao, English, Chinese

Introduction

In the contemporary world, people from different countries can be connected easily and worldwide. Social and economic activities can be interchanged with different pathways. Languages are important tool in human communication across the world. However, in order to use language as communicative tool effectively, the communicators must understand the nature of language, especially the interconnection between language and culture. Sapir (1921, 1949) proposed that "the real world is, to a large extent, unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group." Translation

is a language activity, which allow people to understand each other without without having to learn a second language. However, in order to comprehend the meaning in a language and translate text from one language to another language, the cultural factors inherent in the culture of that language must be considered, such as its traditions and beliefs. Thus, the task of the translator is to translate all these linguistic and cultural peculiarities into the language and culture of the target. Language and culture are two things, which closed relate and can reflect each other. Therefore, translation must consider both linguistic and cultural meanings of source texts and target texts.

The relationship between language and culture has been studied. The classic book "Language" of Sapir (1921, 1949) stated that relationship between language and culture is homologous. On the other words, a particular language is a reflection of a particular culture and learning a language is learning the behavior of the society and its cultural customs. Another linguist theorist. Wardhaugh (2002, pp. 219-220) also proposed that the culture of any people will be reflected in the language, which they use. Their language is a reflection of their culture. Even in the contemporary study, Vesna Mikolic in the book "Language and Culture in the Intercultural World" (2020) stated the importance of the study of language and culture relation in the intercultural world is to answer significant issues in a modern society.

In the current study of language and culture, the relation between language and culture has been catching the interest of scholars in linguistic disciplinary and in the other fields related to human communication. Therefore, the present study is interested to investigate the influence of language and culture on equivalent translation.

Regarding to concept of equivalent translation, Jacobson (2000) proposed there are three kinds of translation as (1) intralingual (dealing with one language); (2) interlingual (dealing with two languages); and (3) intersemiotic (dealing with sign systems). According to the intralingual translation, translator searches for synonyms and full equivalence between language units does not be implied. Jakobson (2000, p. 233) proposed that "translation involves two equivalent messages in two different codes". The implication is that the task of translator is to find equivalence in messages despite difference in grammatical, lexical and semantic structures of source text and target text. However, if it is not possible to find translation equivalence to the source text, the most suitable way is to translate the text to the most possible equivalence. The example, which Jacobson (2000) proposed to support the concept of "equivalence in difference" is the example of 'cheese' which does not have the same equivalent of the Russian term 'syr.' This is because Russian language does not have the concept of cottage cheese in its dictionary and suggested translating it by 'tvarok' instead.

Nord (2005) revealed that there are four types of translation difficulties: 1) text-specific translation problems, such as words, 2) pragmatic translation problems, such as the recipient orientation of a text, 3) cultural translation problems, such as text-type conventions, and 4) linguistic translation problems, such as the translation of a language gerund into another language gerund. In addition, difficulties of translation are specific studied into a concept of equivalence (Kenny, 2009). Pym (2010, p.7) stated the definition of translation equivalence as a relation of equal value between a source text and a target text, and can be occurred on any linguistic level, from form to function. In the classic translation textbook "In Other Words" (Baker, 1992, 2011) divides equivalence at word level and above-word level. For the present study, the translation difficulties will be focused on the level of word.

According to the relationship between languages and equivalent translation, the recent study particularly focused on the concept of linguistic distance and translation. Linguistic distance is referred to the dissimilarity of languages in a multitude of dimensions, such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, scripture, and phonetic inventories (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993, 2003; Hutchinson, 2002). The current researches (e.g. Cargnelutti, Tomasino, & Fabbro, 2021) revealed that the magnitude of difficulties in item translation and cross language comprehension was greatest when both language differed, and smallest when the languages were similar.

Cultural difference included in the present study is specified to food culture. This is because food is important culture in human life. This is supported from the statistics of in the modern communication channels. The statistics of popular issues on Instagram surveyed by Instagram from Accenture revealed that food is the most interesting topic for users (Hutchinson, 2019). Chiaro and Rossato (2015) mentioned that food is closed linked to culture. Food terms are a dominant reflection of culture.

Food terms included in the recent investigation are obtained from the study of food culture of Thai local community in a distinct named Ban Pong in a province named Ratchaburi, which is located in the central part of Thailand (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2022). For the major ethnicity of local people, there are Thai, Mon, Chinese, and Lao Wiang. Mon and Lao Wiang ethnics have settled in the Ban Pong area about four centuries ago. The ethnic Mon citizens in Ban Pong area, Ratchaburi Province are the descendants of groups who migrated from Myanmar to Thailand during the Ayutthaya, Thonburi and Rattanakosin periods. Whereas, the Lao Wiang citizens in Ban Pong area are the descendants of groups who migrated from Vientiane, Laos to Thailand during the Ayutthaya, Thonburi, and Rattanakosin periods. In addition, the town attracted numerous Chinese immigrants. Currently, these ethnicities still continue their culture identity such as kinds of food and dessert, religious places, and cultural activities. Thus, the food culture reflected from the terms is obviously related to a particular culture.

Research Objectives

The present study examines the cultural and language distance influences on specific terminology translation from Thai to Lao, English, and Chinese languages. Specific terminology in this research is food terminology, which will be obtained from research procedure. The translation difficulties in the recent study obtained from translators, who are native speakers of Lao, English, and Chinese and were asked to translate Thai food terms. In conclusion, research purposes are.

1. To identify specific food terms of ethnic community in local Thai community

2. To investigate translation difficulties obtained from Thai-Lao-Chinese-English translation process in translators, who are native speakers of Lao, English, and Chinese languages

3. To evaluate difficulties to understand Thai as source and target language translation pairs in native speakers of Lao, English, and Chinese languages

Related Literature

Translation Equivalence

The study of translation equivalence gets more interest with the birth of a research in machine translation. Leuven-Zwart (1990, p. 227) stated that "It [equivalence] was used then in its strict scientific sense, to refer to an absolute symmetrical relationship between words of different languages."

The structuralist Jacobson (2000, p. 114) is one of the earliest theorists who concentrated on the study of translation equivalence. The concept of "equivalence in difference" is introduced by Jacobson as "there is ordinarily no full equivalence between code units" (Munday, 2001). Regarding to Jacobson (2000), there are three kinds of translation as (1) intralingual (dealing with one language); (2) interlingual (dealing with two languages); and (3) intersemiotic (dealing with sign systems). According to the intralingual translation, translator searches for synonyms and full equivalence between language units does not be implied.

Jakobson (2000, p. 233) proposed that "translation involves two equivalent messages in two different codes". The implication is that the task of translator is to find equivalence in messages despite difference in grammatical, lexical and semantic structures of source text and target text. However, if it is not possible to find translation equivalence to the source text, the most suitable way is to translate the text to the most possible equivalence. Jakobson (2000) proposed that the problem of translation equivalence is related to the differences between structures, terminology, grammar and lexical forms of languages (Munday, 2001). The example, which Jacobson (2000) proposed to support the concept of "equivalence in difference" is the example of 'cheese' which does not have the same equivalent of the Russian term 'syr.' This is because Russian language does not have the concept of cottage cheese in its dictionary and suggested translating it by 'tvarok' instead.

Nida and Taber (1982) distinguished two types of equivalence as formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. Formal equivalent translation focuses on a close similarity between the source text and the target text message (Nida, 1964). Formal equivalent translation is described by Kelly (1979, p. 131) as an approach, which "depends on one-to-one matching of small segments, on the assumption that the center of gravity of text and translation lies in the significance for terminological and artistic reasons." On the other hands, dynamic equivalence is based on "the principle of equivalent effect." Nida (1964, p. 159) explained this type of equivalent translation as an approach in which "the relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptor and the message." In conclusion, dynamic equivalence is focused on the equivalent effect; whereas, formal equivalence is focused on the message. In Nida's book "Towards A Science of Translation", there is an argument that formal translation are possible to misinterpret the "intention of the author" and more apt to "distort the meaning" (Nida, 1964). Nida gives preference to the dynamic equivalence because the purpose of 'equivalent effect' is to reach "the closest natural equivalent to the source language" (Nida, 1964). Natural equivalence is a fundamental notion in Nida's theory relies on the adaptation of grammar, cultural references and lexicon of the source text. Regrading to Nida (1964), the dynamic translator is more faithful than the formal one because Nida's notion of 'equivalent response' is important for translators to achieve a successful translation (Munday, 2001).

Nida's distinction between formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence is similar to Newmark's distinction between 'communicative translation' and 'semantic translation' in his book Approaches to Translation (1981). Newmark proposed the distinction between communicative and semantic translation in contrast to literal translation. According to Newmark (1981, p. 5), translation is "rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text." Communicative translation tends to create the same effects on the readers of the target text as those obtained by readers of the source text. Communicative translation is similar to Nida's notion of dynamic equivalence; whereas, semantic translation focuses on rendering the contextual meaning of the source text according to the syntactic and the semantic characteristics of the target text. Semantic translation is similar to Nida's formal equivalence. Not leaving ideas of equivalence and literal translation, Newmark gives preference to semantic and communicative translation.

The notion of equivalence was changed and developed. Baker (1997) distinguishes equivalence at the level of the word, at the grammatical level, and at the level of the text. According to Baker (1997), these levels are important for the translation and should be considered during the translation process.

Furthermore, Leuven-Zwart (1990, p. 228) proposed that the concept of equivalence "not only distorts the basic problem of translation, but also obstructs the development of a descriptive theory of translation". Similarly, Mehrach (1997) claims that no two languages share the same linguistic structures and social or cultural aspect. He proposes the use of the term 'adequacy' referring to "a translation that has achieved the required optimal level of interlanguage communication under certain given conditions."

In conclusion, the above theories concerning translation equivalence reveal that the notion of equivalence is controversial and relative in nature. Most translation theorists and researchers pay attention to the importance of equivalence in translation, eventually their opinions on translation equivalence are different as the agreement that the equivalence is as a synonym of the translation process and the agreement that the equivalence should not cause the loss of main message of the text. Despite, there are different approaches, the equivalence has been concerned as an important notion in the translation process.

For the present research, the translation equivalence across languages is based on communicative translation type of Newmark, which will be examined using bidirectional translation method.

Linguistic Distance

In this section, the definition of linguistic distance, which is a main effect investigated in the present study will be revealed. Then, the ways to measure linguistic distance are presented and leads to the way of linguistic distance used in the present research will be summarized.

Definitions of Linguistic Distance

The term "Linguistic Distance" is defined by Crystal (1987, p. 371) in The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language as.

"The structural closeness of languages to each other has often been thought to be an important factor in FLL (foreign language learning). If the L2 is structurally similar to the L1, it is claimed, learning should be easier than in cases where the L2 is very different. However, it is not possible to correlate linguistic difference and learning

difficulty in any straightforward way, and even the basic task of quantifying linguistic difference proves to be highly complex, because of the many variables involved." (Crystal, 1987, p. 371).

Linguistic distance is referred to the dissimilarity of languages in a multitude of dimensions, such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, scripture, and phonetic inventories (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993, 2003; Hutchinson, 2002).

In psycholinguistics, language distance is supposed to be a strong predictor of the development of second language and additional language proficiency. In the study of psycholinguistics, the study of linguistic distance is well known issue. The influence of language distance is initially introduced because of the studies of immigrants' host or destination language development. Studies of immigrant adjustment (e.g. Corder, 1981) revealed that immigrants from some countries of origin have low proficiency in the language of the destination country or host or destination language comparing to other immigrants. Eventually, the other variables affecting host or destination language development are constant.

The hypothesis is that language immigrant groups can develop different proficiency of host or destination is influenced from the "distance" between the immigrant languages and the destination language. For example, English language is linguistic closer to Western European languages such as French and German rather than to East Asian languages such as Korean and Japanese.

Measuring Linguistic Distance

The dissimilarity of languages is complex because the languages can be differed in vocabulary, grammar, written form, syntax and myriad other characteristics. Thus, there is a difficulty to construct measures of linguistic distance. McCloskey (1998, pp. 104-106) illustrated the examples such as eventually, if a person intuitively knows that English language is linguistic closer to Western European languages such as French and German rather than to East Asian languages such as Korean and Japanese. The question is how to measure the closeness between two languages. In addition, it is easy to rank French as closer to English than Chinese is to English; however, a quantitative scalar measure of linguistic distance among the languages may be more difficult. In addition, the distance between two languages also depends on whether the difference is based the written or spoken form. Alternatively, two languages are closed in the spoken form but may differ in the written form.

According to models of the origins of languages, the concept of Language tree is used to explain the historical relationship of the language *family* or *family tree."* (Crystal 1987, p. 292 italics in original). In principle, a language tree explains the evolution of languages. Thus, through a language tree, it is possible to "trace" modern English back to its origins; however, a language tree does not provide how to measure of how different modern English is from its predecessor languages, or other languages on the same or different trees. Therefore, the concept of language tree does not provide a quantitative measure (Chiswick & Miller, 2004).

A widely used approach for quantitative measure of linguistic distance has been introduced by Chiswick and Miller (1998, 2001), who implied data on the average test score of U.S. American language students after a given time of a certain foreign language instruction. The assumption is that if the average score is low, the linguistic distance between English and another language is high. Even though, this data is

obtained from the measure of the distance to English, this measure can be used for a comprehensive comparison of languages across different dimensions.

In this present research, the quantitative measure of linguistic distance of Chiswick and Miller (1998, 2001) will be used to represent the linguistic distance among the stimulus languages used in this study. This quantitative measure of linguistic distance is obtained from the data from the 1990 U.S. Census, which includes a measure of linguistic distance based on test score of languages. This measure has been used in the following analysis as in the 1991 Census of Canada (Chiswick & Miller, 2001), the 2000 U.S. Census (Chiswick & Miller, 2001), and a report entitled "Linguistic Distance: A Quantitative Measurement of the Distance between English and Other Languages" (Chiswick & Miller, 2004). Using this ordinary data, the paper by Hart-Gonzalez and Lindemann (1993) reports language scores for 43 languages with their matching Census of Population Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) language codes for the 1990 and 2000 Censuses using the Ethnologue Language Family Index published by Grimes and Grimes (1993). The linguistic scores for 43 languages are ranged from a lowest score (1.00) to a highest score (3.00). These scores are used to rank linguistic distance from English among these languages and from one language to another language, not only focused on the distance from English. The data on language scores of 43 languages is also extended to a much longer list of languages using "direct code" of the Ethnologue Language Family Index published by Grimes and Grimes (1993).

Based on Chiswick and Miller (2004), the linguistic distance from one language to another language rather than English language is measured as the inverse of the linguistic score (LS) using ordinary least squares regression analysis (OLS).

Research Methodology

The recent investigation is a mixed method research. There are three research methods as focus group, bi-directional translation, and questionnaire evaluation methods.

The Focus Group Method

The focus group was organized with ten representatives of ethnic community in the research area. The purpose of the focus group is to identity local food terms in the source text, which is Thai language.

Participants

Participants are ten representatives of four ethnic community in Ban Pong Subdistrict, Ratchaburi Province, Thailand. The participants are descended from Thai, Lao, Mon, and Chinese ethnics. There are two criteria for selecting participants of the focus group.

The first criteria include those who are recognized by the community and well-known, having a good knowledge of the culture and language of their ethnicity, and were pleasure to attend the focus group.

The second criteria are using a snowball technique to select a group of people recommended by participants selected from the first criteria that they have a good knowledge of the culture and language of their ethnicity, and were pleasure to attend the focus group.

Research Instrument

Open ended questions concerning types of food in their culture

Research Procedure

The focus group was interviewed with open ended questions concerning types of food in their food culture. Then the food terms obtained from the focus group will be translated to the target language using bi-directional translation method.

Bi-directional Translation Method

In the present study, Thai is a source language and Lao, English, and Chinese languages are target languages. The procedure of bi-directional translation from Thai to Lao, English, and Chinese languages are presented below.

1. Three native speakers of target language translated Thai food terms to the target languages by bringing images of food to the translators and asked them to tell the words referring to these foods in their native language.

2. Translated words in the target language will be translated into the source language.

3. Verification of translation from target language to source language uses the reverse translation process. Translated words in the target language, which can be translated back to the original word in the source language will be selected as the translated words.

Questionnaire Evaluation

There are two phrases of questionnaire evaluation. First, the questionnaire concerning translation difficulties obtained from Thai-Lao-Chinese-English translation process was used. The data was collected in nine translators who are native speakers of Lao, English, and Chinese languages and involved in the present research translation procedure and thirty bachelor's degree students in translation course. Second, the questionnaire concerning difficulties to understand Thai as source and target language translation pairs in native speakers of Lao, English, and Chinese languages was used. The data was collected in native speakers of Lao, English, and Chinese languages who read translation words obtained from translation procedure. The details of each phrase are as follow

Phrase I

Participants

Nine translators, who are native speakers of Lao, English, and Chinese Languages. There are three translators of each language. Thirty bachelor's degree students in translation course

Research Instrument

Opened end questions concerning the problems of translation difficulties they obtained

Research Procedure

After they finished translation tasks, they were asked to evaluate the translation difficulties of 47 translation items on a 1–5 Likert scale, with 1 being extremely easy and 5 being extremely difficult. Then they were interviewed with the opened end questions concerning the obtained problems of translation difficulties.

Phrase 2

Participants

Native speakers of Lao, English, and Chinese Languages. There are twenty participants of each language.

Research Instrument

Opened end questions concerning difficulties to understand, which they obtained from reading translation pairs.

Research Procedure

After they were asked to read 47 translation pairs, they were asked to evaluate the understanding difficulties of 47 translation items on a 1–5 Likert scale, with 1 being extremely easy and 5 being extremely difficult. Then they were interviewed with the opened end questions concerning the obtained problems of understanding.

Research Results

To identify specific food terms of ethnic community in local Thai community.

According to focus group of ten representatives of four ethnic community in Ban Pong Subdistrict, Ratchaburi Province, Thailand. The participants are descended from Thai, Lao, Mon, and Chinese ethnics, a list of local food menu in community and its ingredients was developed. The example of a list of local food menu in community and its ingredients is presented below.

Figure 1

Example of a List of Local Food Menu in Community and Its Ingredients

Figure 1 shows terminology example of local food menu in community and its ingredients. This kind of food is a curry menu of Mon ethnic group. Its special ingredient is Elephant Apple, which can be found in some areas. This special ingredient

and the way to cook it make this menu specially and is difficult to find in the general restaurants.

Translation Difficulties of Local Food Terms across Languages used by Native Speakers with Different Cultures

Regarding to the translation difficulties of local food terms among languages used by native speakers with different cultures, the results are presented in Table 1. The mean and S.D. were calculated from translation difficulty rating of 47 translation items in three translators of each language. Thus, the number of raw data for each language is 1,833 items, which is obtained from evaluation of 47 translation items by 39 participants.

Table 1

Mean and S.D. of the Translation Difficulties of 47 Translation Items

Source Language	Target Language	Mean	S.D
Thai	Lao	1	0.38
	English	4	0.42
	Chinese	3	0.46

From Table 1, the mean of translation difficulties from Thai to Lao was rated at 1 or referring to being extremely easy, followed by the mean of translation difficulties from Thai to Chinese was rated at 3 or referring to being moderated, and the mean of translation difficulties from Thai to English was rated at 4 or referring to being difficult.

Difficulties to understand Thai as source and target language translation pairs in native speakers of Lao, English, and Chinese languages

Regarding to the difficulties to understand Thai as source and target language translation pairs in native speakers of Lao, English, and Chinese languages, the results are presented in Table 2. The mean and S.D. were calculated from translation difficulty rating of 47 translation items in 20 native speakers of each language. Thus, the number of raw data for each language is 940 items, which is obtained from evaluation of 47 translation items by 20 native speakers.

Table 2

Mean and S.D. of the Understanding Difficulties of 47 Translation Items Rated by 20 Participants

Source Language	Target Language	Mean	S.D
Thai	Lao	0.25	0.21
	English	4.2	0.56
	Chinese	3.1	0.38

From Table 2, the mean of understanding difficulties from Thai to Lao was rated at 0.25 or referring to being extremely easy, followed by the mean of understanding difficulties from Thai to Chinese was rated at 3.1 or referring to being moderated, and the mean of understanding difficulties from Thai to English was rated at 4.2 or referring to being difficult.

Translation Difficulties Problems based on Cross-Language Translation

The translation and understanding difficulties of local food terms among languages used by native speakers with different cultures and languages was analyzed from the interview of translators presented following.

The problems obtained from word meanings are.

a) Food with specific local ingredients

According to the study, it was found that translation of food terms, which food menus are made of local ingredients, was rated as difficult tasks. The translators have to find words in the other languages, which can exactly refer to the meaning and characteristics of local specific ingredients. The examples of these words and their translated words are below:

Figure 2
Three Flavoured Dried Kaffir Limes

A dessert menu is called in Thai as /ma krut op h ɛ ŋ sa:m rot/. It was translated to Lao as / sa:m rot kho ŋ ma krut op h ɛ ŋ/, which is cognate to Thai word. It was translated to English as three flavoured dried kaffir limes and Chinese as /sān wèi qīng níng gàn/. Its specific main local ingredient is /ma krut/, which is closed translated to kaffir limes in English.

Another example of translation difficulty obtained from translating food menus with specific local ingredients is shown in Figure 1. A curry menu is called in Thai as / kɛ:ŋ sôm ma ta:t/. It was translated to Lao as /ma:k khuŋ/. It was translated to English as sour elephant apple curry/ sour curry with elephant apple and Chinese as /dì lún táo suān kā lí tāng / or /suān là dì lún táo/. Its specific main local ingredient is /ma ta:t/, which is closed translated to elephant apple in English.

b) Food with specific local cooking method

Regarding to the results, it was found that translation of food terms, in which local cooking method is used, obtained the translation difficulties. The examples of this type of words are.

Figure 3

Food with Specific Local Cooking Method: Bamboo Tubes of Sweet Custardy Sticky Rice and Fried Bean Burd

Figure 3 showed a picture of menu named /khao la:m/ or bamboo tubes of sweet custardy sticky rice. This word is pronounced in Thai as /khao la:m/, was translated to Lao as / khao la:m/, which is closed to Thai word. It was translated to English as bamboo tubes of sweet custardy sticky rice and Chinese as /yē nǎi zhú tǒng fàn/. It is sticky rice mixed with sugar, sweet red beans, and coconut cream and baked in cylinders of hollow bamboo. Its distinguished cooking method is baking the mixture of sticky rice in cylinders of hollow bamboo and this leads to the name of this menu.

Figure 3 showed a picture of menu named /taw hu: th ɔ:t/ or fried bean burd. This word is pronounced in Thai as /taw hu: th ɔ:t/, was translated to Lao as /taw hu: thov/which is cognate to Thai word. It was translated to English as fried bean burd and Chinese as 炸豆腐 /zhà dòu fu/. This menu is fried bean curd or Tau Hu Tod in Thai. Beancurd is cut into slices and fry over medium heat until golden brown. Fried bean curd is served with different sauces such as soy sauce and special sauce for fried bean curd.

c) The difficulties obtained from food terms related to local tradition

An example of difficulties is a dessert menu named / kha:w maw/, translated to Lao as / kha:w maw/, translated to English as Pounded Unripe Rice or Khao Mao, translated to Chinese /suì mǐ lì/. This dessert is pounded unripe rice or Khao Mao in Thai. Khao Mao is made from young glutinous rice. Khao Mao is a rice dessert in several Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam (Ekasit, and Jiraporn, 2013). Khao Mao is roasted and pounded shredded rice grain.

Another example is Khao Lam. According to the focus group, the representatives of Lao ethnic revealed that this kind of dessert is related to the merit-making tradition of "Bun Khao Lam" of the descendants of Lao in the research area and also, the other groups of Lao descendants in Thailand and Laos. The tradition is in the third month and crops are ready for harvest. Khao Lam will be cooked with the

main ingredient of harvested, fragrant sticky rice. In the tradition of "Bun Khao Lam", the people would make khao lam and presented it to the monks

According to the local tradition of native speakers who speak Thai, Lao, English, and Chinese languages, the previous studies showed the closed relation between Thai and Lao people in many aspects; for example, Li and Solnit (2007, August 14) in *Encyclopedia Britannica* Thai and Lao, the official languages of Thailand and Lao, respectively, are the best known of the languages in Tai languages.

Draper et al. (2019) revealed that Thai and Lao identity are closely related and this work focused that Lao culture and identity persisted at local, regional, and national levels in Thai. As Keyes (1967) mentioned to "a Northeast Thailand-based ethno-regionalism", as 'Thai Lao'. According to these studies, Thai and Lao languages are closer in every aspects rather than Thai and English, and Chinese languages.

As a result, translation of Thai and Lao food terms, which are related to local festival and tradition are easier to find equivalent translation pairs rather than translating from Thai to English and Chinese language.

Whereas, some menus of Thai food obtained from the recent study get influence from Chinese menu and some menu is originally Chinese. For example, Wong Fa Moo Pun, which is originally the ancient luck desserts of Hakkas Chinese and still desserts of people descending from Hakkas Chinese living in the research area. Another example is fried bean burd or/taw hu: th ɔ:t/ in Thai. Its translation into Chinese is /zhà dòu fu/. The main ingredient of this menu is bean burd, which is also cooked as Chinese menu. The names of these menu in Thai language borrow the meaning and pronunciation from Chinese language. Thus, there is no difficulties to translate from Thai terms to Chinese terms.

Discussions

The translation study of food terms is accepted that it is important in both language study and the other social and economic activities. An example of the importance is the study of Al- Rushaidi, and Ali (2017), which proposed that food menu translation is a basic communication tool for restaurants and coffee shops for product marketing and giving food product information to their costumers. However, the success of food term translation requires translators to consider the cultural associations embedded in these terms (González–Vera, 2015).

According to the present study, Thai local food menus used for translation were obtained from the focus group procedure of representatives of four ethnic community as Thai, Lao, Mon, and Chinese ethnics in Ban Pong Subdistrict, Ratchaburi Province, Thailand. Therefore, the menus are distinguished and locally specific. The translation of the names of these menus was from Thai as the source language and to Lao, English, and Chinese as the target languages. The translation difficulties was obtained from the specific food menus related to specific local ethnic food culture. These were supported by the work of Pillsbury (1998), which mentioned that two fundamental elements of food culture are what humans eat they can find from their environment and they eat what their ancestors ate. The results revealed that food menus with local ingredients and cooking methods in Thai local culture, which are different from the culture of people in target language society, produced the translation difficulties. This finding leads to the significance of investigating translation strategies,

which are appreciated and effectively used to translate food menus from a specific culture into the other languages.

In addition, the results also revealed that the influence of interchange between at least two cultures in food menus provides different levels of translation difficulties. For example, the Thai food menus, which is similar or nearly the same as Lao menus, will be very easy to translated and most of the menus have similar food name pronunciation. The closed cultural relation of Thai and Lao is supported from the research in cultural aspects such as Draper et al. (2019), which revealed key cultural components include food and key identity markers of Thai and Lao.

Also, the Thai food menus, which are adapted from Chinese foods, will be easily translated from Thai language to Chinese language. In addition, the local food menus in the present study are rooted from four ethnics as Thai, Mon, Lao, and Chinese in the local community of Ratchaburi province, Thailand. Thus, the menus descended from the menus of Lao and Chinese ethnics Whereas, translating local Thai food terms to English language obtained the higher level of translation difficulties. This can be explained based on the cultural difference.

In addition, the findings also related to the assumption of linguistic distance, which refers to the dissimilarity of languages in a multitude of dimensions, such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, scripture, and phonetic inventories (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993, 2003; Hutchinson, 2002).

The quantitative measure of linguistic distance by Chiswick and Miller (1998, 2001), who implied data on the average test score of U.S. American language students after a given time of a certain foreign language instruction. The data obtained from the measure of the distance to English can be used for a comprehensive comparison of different languages. The quantitative measure of linguistic distance of Chiswick and Miller (1998, 2001) calculated the linguistic distance as scores. The linguistic scores for 43 language are ranged is from a lowest score (1.00) to a highest score (3.00). Based on the scores of 43 languages, Thai language and Lao language obtain linguistic distance closer than Thai language and English or Chinese language.

These results illustrate that translation across different languages have to consider both language characteristics and cultural differences, which related to meanings of texts.

Recommendations

1. The influence of culture and linguistic distance must be considered as a distinguished factor in multilanguage study; for example, language acquisition, and language teaching.

2. The development of tools for culture and linguistic distance measurement in both quantitative and qualitative is an interesting issue for further study.

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