



An Analysis of the English Translation of the Culinary Term “Squirrel-Shaped Mandarin Fish”

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Abstract

Huaiyang cuisine, as the main cuisine for Chinese state banquets, still faces problems of inconsistency, lack of uniformity, and failure to accurately convey the connotations of dish names, which seriously hinders the international promotion of Huaiyang cuisine. This paper takes the dish “Sweet and Sour Squirrel-Shaped Mandarin Fish” as the main research object to study dish name translation. It examines the connotations of “Sweet and Sour Squirrel-Shaped Mandarin Fish”, the reasons for the confusion in its translation name, and analyzes it in detail using the method of analogy translation and functional equivalence translation. It suggests that the English name of “Sweet and Sour Squirrel-Shaped Mandarin Fish” should be standardized in the field of translation to promote the standardization and consistency of terminology use and the promotion of Huaiyang cuisine’s international publicity.

Subject Areas

Linguistics

Keywords

Sweet and Sour Squirrel-Shaped Mandarin Fish, Huaiyang Cuisine Names, Functional Equivalence Theory

1. Introduction

As the representative cuisine served at China’s state banquets, Huaiyang Cuisine occupies a pivotal position in Chinese food culture. Divergences in cultural traditions and modes of thinking give rise to stark disparities in the naming conventions of Chinese and Western dishes. Unlike the implicit and understated nomen-

clature of Chinese dishes, Western culinary designations tend to be explicit and straightforward. Where English translations of Chinese menus for international communication carry excessive implicit connotations, the rendered text often becomes obscure and incomprehensible. Conversely, overly literal translations, while easy to grasp, hinder the cross-cultural transmission of profound cultural connotations to a certain extent.

Against this backdrop, adopting appropriate translation strategies for Huaiyang Cuisine in overseas publicity and constructing an accurate, unified glossary of dish names bear profound practical significance. Such efforts serve multiple key objectives: attracting international diners, elevating the global influence of Huaiyang Cuisine, disseminating Chinese food culture, and enhancing China's cultural soft power.

2. Literature Review on Huaiyang Cuisine

According to textual research conducted by American culinary expert Mrs. White, Huaiyang cuisine restaurants emerged in San Francisco as early as 1870, marking a more than 150-year history of Huaiyang cuisine going global [1]. Particularly in the early stage of reform and opening-up in the 1980s, numerous master chefs from Yangzhou took an active part in international culinary exchanges. Huaiyang eateries could be found across a host of countries and regions, including the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Canada, Japan, Singapore, Sudan, Macao SAR (China) and Hong Kong SAR (China) [2].

Nevertheless, swept by the fierce competition and transformative innovations of the modern catering industry, the elaborate manual cooking procedures characteristic of Huaiyang cuisine struggle to meet the demands of mass overseas supply. Furthermore, the external translation and dissemination of Huaiyang culinary culture remain underdeveloped, with an acute shortage of research on its translation and international promotion. As a result, Huaiyang cuisine enjoys limited repute on the global catering landscape, lagging far behind Cantonese and Sichuan cuisines in overseas influence.

From an academic perspective, the author conducted subject searches on the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) covering the period from January 1, 2000 to December 22, 2024. A total of 378 papers were retrieved under the keyword "Huaiyang Cuisine". When the search term was refined to "Huaiyang Cuisine + Translation", only six papers appeared; further narrowing the search yielded merely two relevant studies. These figures demonstrate that there remains substantial room for research on the international communication of Huaiyang cuisine.

Searches for the keyword "huaiyang cuisine" across major international journal databases, including Web of Science, Springer and Ei, returned almost no academic outputs authored by foreign scholars, with only a handful of papers contributed by Chinese researchers. This indicates Huaiyang cuisine has yet to gain traction in global academic circles.

Additionally, domestic publications in China are rife with inconsistent English renderings for the same Huaiyang dish, as no unified authoritative template exists for dish name translations. Lü Xiaohua's statistical analysis of relevant CNKI literature confirms that multiple divergent translations for a single Chinese dish are commonplace in academic writing. Current English translations of Chinese dish names are plagued by ambiguous semantics, omitted or mistranslated content, and insufficient consideration of cross-cultural disparities [3]. The quality of Huaiyang dish name translations directly shapes overseas reception and international outreach of the cuisine.

To date, no unified translation standards have been formulated for Huaiyang dish nomenclature. Translations adopted by well-known high-end restaurants vary wildly and contain frequent mistranslations. For instance, Lion Mansion, an upscale Huaiyang restaurant, renders Yangchun Noodles as "Noodles in summer" and Crab Roe Soup Dumplings as "Crab Roe Soup Bun", among other blatant translation errors. Such widespread inaccuracies reflect a general lack of due attention to the standardized translation of Chinese dish names.

3. Research Methods

This study systematically collected English translation variants of "Squirrel-Shaped Mandarin Fish" to guarantee replicable comparative analysis. Data were retrieved from CNKI, Web of Science, SpringerLink, official diplomatic catering documents, bilingual menus of representative Huaiyang restaurants and mainstream online food resources between January 2000 and December 2024, with bilingual search terms targeting the dish and Huaiyang cuisine translation. All retrieved renderings were filtered under unified inclusion standards: only versions directly corresponding to the source term, published in academic papers, official materials or formal restaurant menus were retained, whereas fragmentary, misspelled and unused machine translations were excluded. Eight valid translation variants were finally compiled as the research corpus. This paper then adopted two analytical approaches: analogical translation drawing on Western dish naming corpus from Food Network and established translations of classic Chinese fish dishes, and a four-dimensional assessment under Nida's Functional Equivalence Theory covering lexical, syntactic, textual and stylistic equivalence to screen the optimal standardized rendering. Food Network is selected as the Western comparative corpus for sufficient representativeness: as a mainstream authoritative Western gastronomic media platform, it releases massive standardized home and restaurant recipes oriented to ordinary English-speaking consumers, whose dish naming expressions reflect authentic, widely accepted daily English culinary discourse rather than niche professional culinary jargon or limited single-holiday catering vocabulary. Its recipe collection covers complete descriptive logic of Western dish nomenclature, including ingredients, flavors, shapes and cooking procedures, which matches the multi-dimensional semantic composition of complex Chinese figurative dish names such as squirrel-shaped mandarin fish, enabling objective parallel contrast of cross-lin-

guistic dish-naming rules and avoiding biased conclusions derived from narrow, non-universal recipe samples.

4. An Overview of Squirrel-Shaped Mandarin Fish

Squirrel-shaped mandarin fish, also spelled squirrel guiyu fish, is a signature dish of Huaiyang cuisine (a branch of Jiangsu cuisine) celebrated for its perfect integration of appealing color, fragrant aroma, exquisite taste and delicate shape. Historical records trace the dish's fame back to the Qianlong reign of the Qing Dynasty, when it emerged as one of Jiangsu's iconic local delicacies. In 2018, it was officially listed among Jiangsu's Top Ten Classic Dishes. The dish takes fresh mandarin fish, tomato ketchup, vinegar, white granulated sugar and green peas as core raw materials, and its preparation entails sophisticated craftsmanship: the fish is deboned, scored all over the flesh, lightly marinated with seasonings, coated with egg yolk batter, deep-fried in hot oil until tender and crisp, then drenched with boiling sweet-and-sour sauce. The finished dish boasts crispy skin, tender flesh, a pleasant sweet-sour flavor and succulent juice.

The dish derives its distinctive name from two visual and auditory traits. When piping-hot sauce is poured over the deep-fried fish at the table, it emits a squeaking sound reminiscent of a squirrel's chirp. Meanwhile, the fish stands with its head raised and tail curled, bearing a striking resemblance to a squirrel. Beyond its literal visual parallel, the name carries auspicious cultural connotations. The word "squirrel" evokes liveliness and agility. The character gui (mandarin fish) echoes the idiom changong zhe gui ("pluck the laurel branch from the Moon Palace"), a metaphor for academic success; the character yu (fish) is a homophone for "surplus" in Chinese. The combination of these symbolic meanings embodies people's sincere wishes for abundant, vibrant and fulfilling lives. Thanks to its propitious implications and elaborate presentation, this dish has become a regular staple at China's state banquets.

Among classic dishes of China's Eight Major Cuisine Schools, Huaiyang cuisine (Jiangsu cuisine) features the highest proportion of dishes named after their sculpted shapes. Another hallmark distinguishing Huaiyang cuisine from other Chinese culinary traditions is its rigorous pursuit of meticulous knife skills and artistic food sculpting, both of which are fully exemplified by squirrel-shaped mandarin fish. Integrating the squirrel-like silhouette with the core ingredient mandarin fish poses a major translational hurdle. Translators must strike a careful balance between retaining the identity of the fish, highlighting its squirrel-shaped form, and deciding whether to incorporate details of its flavor profile and cooking techniques. This research provides valuable references for tackling complex compound dish names, coordinating multiple descriptive elements in translation, and standardizing renderings of other shape-themed Huaiyang dishes such as lion's head meatballs and pagoda pork. It also facilitates the global outreach of Huaiyang cuisine and reinforces cultural confidence in traditional Chinese civilization.

For the above reasons, the author selects squirrel-shaped mandarin fish as a case

study for culinary name translation in this paper.

5. Root Causes of Chaotic English Renderings of Squirrel-Shaped Mandarin Fish

The inconsistent and fragmented translations of squirrel-shaped mandarin fish stem from three primary factors elaborated as follows.

First, the dish name carries profound indigenous cultural connotations unique to China. Within Chinese cultural context, sculpting ingredients into animal forms and naming dishes after those figurative shapes constitutes a distinctive culinary expression. The modifier “squirrel” vividly depicts the fish’s sculpted appearance, yet animal imagery rarely features in Western dish nomenclature, and animal-related metaphors carry vastly different cultural associations overseas. Western cooking methods are far simpler than those of China, largely limited to pan-frying, deep-frying and roasting, with Western gastronomy prioritizing nutritional balance above artistic presentation. Analysis of over a thousand British dish names identifies three dominant naming patterns, accounting for the following respective proportions: names specifying both ingredients and food category (17.07%); names only indicating raw ingredients (12.20%); names combining ingredients and cooking techniques (8.54%). Figurative names constituted the smallest share at merely 5.50%. Figurative names constituted the smallest share at merely 5.50%. Such statistics indicate British dish labels generally prioritize ingredients, categories and cooking procedures, making the squirrel metaphor in this Chinese dish name confusing and unintelligible to Western audiences.

Translators thus face a tough dilemma when mediating such cultural gaps. A literal translation preserving the cultural squirrel imagery may confuse foreign diners, while a free translation abandoning the figurative symbol strips the original name of its inherent cultural charm. The dish’s rich symbolic undertones, compounded by cross-cultural barriers to accurate transmission, lead to inconsistent translations and hinder the precise global dissemination and promotion of squirrel-shaped mandarin fish.

Second, translators adopt divergent priorities when rendering the dish’s name. Some translators emphasize the sculpted silhouette and adopt Squirrel-Shaped Mandarin Fish, which intuitively conveys the fish’s squirrel-like shape after deep-frying. Others prioritize its flavor profile and use Sweet and Sour Mandarin Fish, highlighting its signature sweet-sour taste yet omitting the iconic squirrel-shaped feature. A third group only references the primary ingredient with the simplified translation Mandarin Fish, entirely disregarding the defining squirrel motif and the special cooking craft that creates the unique shape. Without unified guidelines specifying which descriptive element to prioritize, translations proliferate into a disjointed array that fails to deliver complete and accurate information about the dish to international consumers.

Third, there exists no unified authoritative template to standardize translations of squirrel-shaped mandarin fish. Conflicting versions persist even for the core

ingredient “mandarin fish”, including Mandarin Fish, Chinese perch and Aucha Perch. Descriptions of its deep-fried squirrel silhouette range from elaborate elaboration to complete omission, and no established benchmark governs the translation of the culturally loaded “squirrel” imagery. Furthermore, no consistent rules determine whether translators should emphasize flavor, sculpted form, cooking methods, or integrate all features when translating multi-characteristic dishes. This lack of regulatory standards creates extreme arbitrariness at every stage: from translating individual descriptive components to synthesizing a full dish name. The resultant absence of standardized, precise and consistent renderings creates substantial obstacles for cross-cultural communication and the international promotion of Huaiyang cuisine.

6. An Exploration of English Translations for Squirrel-Shaped Mandarin Fish

The lack of standardized translations for this dish gives rise to considerable concerns, making the determination of an optimal official rendering a subject worthy of in-depth deliberation [4]. After conducting comparative analysis of existing English renderings of the culinary term, translators may select a semantically consistent translation as the definitive appellation. The exploration of standardized translations aims to enhance the accuracy and credibility of rendering, so as to guarantee the correct comprehension and application of terminology during cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication [5].

Within this chapter, the author enumerates all prevailing English versions of the name for squirrel-shaped mandarin fish. Guided by two evaluative frameworks—Eugene Nida’s Functional Equivalence Theory for culinary name translation and analogical translation methodology—the paper carries out detailed comparison, evaluation, comprehensive analysis and sequential screening of the existing translations, with the ultimate objective of identifying the most appropriate rendering.

6.1. Existing English Terminological Renderings of Squirrel-Shaped Mandarin Fish

As elaborated in the preceding section regarding the root causes of inconsistent translations of the dish, the core controversy surrounding its English rendering lies in deciding which dimension of the dish to prioritize in nomenclature. It merits thorough reflection whether culinary translation should prioritize flavor description, cooking techniques, sculptural appearance, or a holistic presentation of all dish characteristics. Centering on this core dimension of “prioritization orientation” in dish name translation, the author collates and tallies all existing English translations of “squirrel-shaped mandarin fish”. The collated statistics are presented in **Table 1**.

The full name of the dish consists of three core semantic components: the main ingredient mandarin fish, its sweet-and-sour flavor, and its squirrel-like sculpted

Table 1. Statistics of existing English renderings for squirrel-shaped mandarin fish.

Translation Priority for Squirrel-Shaped Mandarin Fish	English Rendering of the Dish	Source of Translation Version
Simplified Rendering	Mandarin fish	Online Resources
Focusing on the Dish's Flavor	Sweet and Sour Mandarin Fish	Official Website of China Foreign Affairs Administration/Online Translation Versions/CNKI Journal Papers/Bilingual Menus of Songhe Tower, a High-end Huaiyang Cuisine Brand
	Sweet and Sour Sauce Pomfret	Bilingual Menus of Red Mansion, a High-end Huaiyang Cuisine Brand
Focusing on the Dish's Sculpted Shape	Squirrel Fish	Online Resources
	Squirrel Mandarin Fish	Online Resources
	Squirrel-Shaped Mandarin Fish	CNKI Journal Papers
Comprehensive Rendering (Integrating Shape, Flavor & Cooking Method)	Sweet and Sour Squirrel-Shaped Mandarin Fish	CNKI Journal Papers
	Squirrel-Like Fried Boned Mandarin Fish	

form. Therefore, the standard rendering of these three individual elements should be finalized prior to identifying the optimal full translation of the dish name.

Mandarin fish (also transcribed as gui fish) serves as the primary ingredient of the dish. Red Mansion mistranslates the fish as “Pomfret”, which actually refers to silver pomfret. Silver pomfret bears stark differences from mandarin fish in both physical form and texture. Furthermore, the illustrative photograph of this dish on Red Mansion’s menu confirms that the fish used is definitely not silver pomfret, which means the restaurant’s English name for squirrel-shaped mandarin fish contains a severe factual error. Baidu Encyclopedia lists “Aucha Perch” as the English name for mandarin fish, yet searches of academic literature and official standardized translation documents consistently yield the term “Mandarin Fish”. Following the principle of established conventional usage, this paper adopts Mandarin Fish as the standard translation for the ingredient.

The dish features a distinct sweet-and-sour taste, which is uniformly rendered as Sweet and Sour without dispute. As for describing its sculpted silhouette, the author holds that the compound modifier Squirrel-shaped outperforms the standalone noun Squirrel when placed before the main ingredient. Naming dishes in the format of “animal + raw ingredient” creates confusion for target-language readers; appending the suffix “-shaped”, by contrast, delivers an unambiguous visual cue about the dish’s molded appearance [6].

To sum up, the author deems four renderings logically viable: Sweet and Sour Mandarin Fish, Squirrel-Shaped Mandarin Fish, Sweet and Sour Squirrel-Shaped Mandarin Fish, and Squirrel-Like Fried Boned Mandarin Fish. The ultra-brief version of Mandarin Fish is discarded, as it fails to convey any distinctive traits of the dish.

6.2. Analogical Translation

6.2.1. Analogical Analysis of Western Dish Naming Conventions

The author conducted research on Food Network, a leading Western gourmet website, and compiled statistics on the naming patterns of dishes featured in the collection 100 Christmas Dinner Recipes to Fill Your Table. The data reveals that 63% of the 100 dish names contain four or more words, while the remaining 37% consist of fewer than four words. Detailed statistics are presented in **Table 2** and **Figure 1**.

In addition, the author selects several representative dish names from this recipe series together with their corresponding Chinese translations, as presented in **Table 3**.

Table 2. Word count statistics of dishes in the series 100 Christmas Dinner Recipes to Fill Your Table.

Word Count of Dish Name	1 Word	2 Words	3 Words	4 Words	5 Words	6 Words	7 Words	8 Words	9 Words	10 Words	11 Words
Statistical Frequency	5	2	30	27	8	11	9	4	2	1	1

Word Count Statistics of Dish Names in “100 Christmas Dinner Recipes”

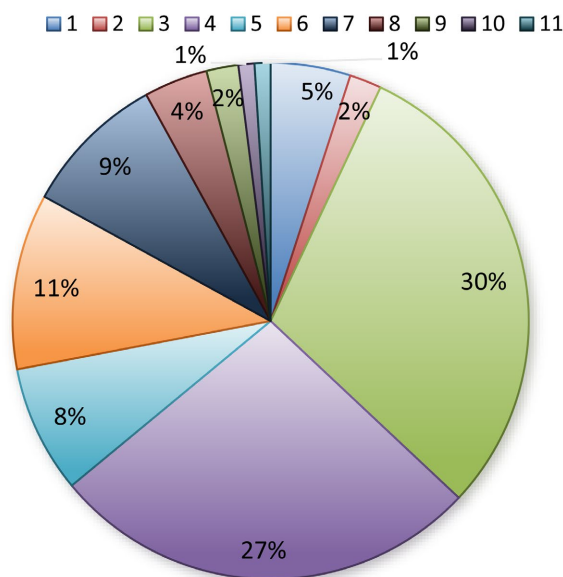


Figure 1. Word count statistics of dish names in “100 Christmas Dinner Recipes”.

Table 3. Representative dish names and their Chinese translations from the series 100 Christmas Dinner Recipes to Fill Your Table.

Original English Dish Name	Literal Chinese Translation
Pineapple honey-glazed ham	菠萝蜜汁火腿
Brussels Sprouts with Balsamic and Cranberries	孢子甘蓝配香醋和蔓越莓
Rachael’s Broccoli and Cauliflower Gratin Mac ‘n’ Cheese	瑞秋牌西兰花、花椰菜奶酪焗通心粉
Toasted Spiced Ham Drizzled in Honey	淋上蜂蜜的烤五香火腿
Horseradish-Crusted Steak Roulade	辣根脆皮牛排卷

Analysis of the above tables reveals that Western culinary naming adopts a comprehensive logic that aims to fully present all distinctive attributes of a dish to diners, without being restricted by name length or conciseness. Specifically, Western dish names tend to enumerate ingredients, cooking techniques, flavor profiles and other elements. This cumulative descriptive approach enables consumers to grasp a full picture of each dish to the greatest extent.

Squirrel-shaped mandarin fish is a signature Huaiyang dish celebrated for its balanced color, aroma, taste and sculptural form, distinguished by its squirrel-like silhouette, sweet-and-sour flavor, and crispy texture derived from deboning and deep-frying. Drawing an analogy to the comprehensive naming convention of Western dishes, translations for squirrel-shaped mandarin fish ought not to prioritize excessive brevity alone—such as the oversimplified rendering Mandarin Fish—nor should they overemphasize merely one single attribute, for instance, focusing exclusively on flavor (Sweet and Sour Mandarin Fish) or appearance (Squirrel-Shaped Mandarin Fish). Instead, translators should integrate multiple dish characteristics. For intricate dishes with diverse defining features like squirrel-shaped mandarin fish, a holistic, all-inclusive translation strategy is preferable. Such a rendering delivers exhaustive information to international diners, allowing them to form a complete, clear understanding of the dish prior to ordering, while also facilitating the global communication and promotion of Huaiyang cuisine.

6.2.2. Analogy with Translations of Other Fish Dishes

The author conducted extensive research on English renderings of comparable fish dishes and identified the most widely accepted translations for two iconic Chinese fish specialties: *West Lake Fish in Vinegar Sauce* for West Lake Vinegar Fish and *Pickled Mandarin Fish* for Stinky Mandarin Fish. Both Chinese names highlight core flavor traits—vinegar and fermented pungency, respectively—whose English equivalents *Vinegar Sauce* and *Pickled* are retained in their translations to maintain one-to-one correspondence with the original flavor descriptors. When a Chinese dish name foregrounds its flavor profile, the English translation must correspondingly emphasize that gustatory feature. By contrast, the name “squirrel-shaped mandarin fish” centers on its sculpted squirrel motif; under analogical translation principles, this defining visual characteristic ought to be preserved in its English rendering. The version *Sweet and Sour Mandarin Fish* omits the critical squirrel-shaped feature entirely, making it incomplete.

Synthesizing the two analogical analytical frameworks outlined above, the author identifies two optimal candidate translations: Sweet and Sour Squirrel-Shaped Mandarin Fish and Squirrel-Like Fried Boned Mandarin Fish.

6.3. Dish Translation Guided by Functional Equivalence Theory

Functional Equivalence Theory was put forward by American linguist Eugene A. Nida in 1964, with “functional equivalence” serving as its core tenet [7]. Oriented toward target recipients, the theory permits flexible correspondence across grammar, lexis and cultural connotations rather than rigid literal word-for-word match-

ing. Its ultimate goal is to achieve functional parity between source and target texts to preserve the original intended message. Waard and Nida define translation as the reproduction of source-language meaning and stylistic register using the closest, most natural equivalent expressions in the target language [8].

Given the inherent disparities between two linguistic systems and the necessity of conveying complete content, translators should not seek rigid textual uniformity but prioritize functional equivalence. Distinct historical and cultural backgrounds endow each language with unique expressive forms and conceptual frameworks, resulting in divergent ways of describing identical objects. Translators must therefore acknowledge such discrepancies to sustain consistent functional equivalence between source and target texts. Per Nida's Functional Equivalence Theory, translation success hinges on whether the target audience fully receives the original information, rather than strict adherence to source text form. Overly rigid formal fidelity may distort the cultural implications embedded in the source language and hinder cross-cultural exchange.

Furthermore, Nida first introduced the concept of dynamic equivalence in his 1964 monograph *Toward a Science of Translating*. He argued that translation priority should lie not in linguistic form, but in the target reader's response to the translated text. Dynamic equivalence is achieved when target readers' reactions to the translation closely mirror source readers' responses to the original text, requiring translators to compare the two sets of reader responses. Nida subdivided dynamic equivalence into four dimensions: 1) lexical equivalence, 2) syntactic equivalence, 3) textual equivalence, and 4) stylistic equivalence. The following section evaluates the two candidate translations—Sweet and Sour Squirrel-Shaped Mandarin Fish and Squirrel-Like Fried Boned Mandarin Fish—against these four criteria to determine the most appropriate standardized English name for squirrel-shaped mandarin fish.

6.3.1. Lexical Equivalence

In *Sweet and Sour Squirrel-Shaped Mandarin Fish*, the phrase *sweet and sour* precisely mirrors the Chinese flavor descriptor “酸甜”, establishing full lexical parity for gustatory vocabulary across English and Chinese. The compound modifier *squirrel-shaped* accurately conveys the meaning “shaped like a squirrel”, with the bound morpheme *-shaped* semantically aligning perfectly with the Chinese descriptive phrase “squirrel (in shape)”. The term *mandarin fish* also satisfies lexical equivalence for the core ingredient.

In the alternative rendering *Squirrel-Like Fried Boned Mandarin Fish*, squirrel-like also adequately communicates the dish's squirrel silhouette, delivering partial lexical equivalence for its visual attribute. However, *fried* adds supplementary information regarding deep-frying—a cooking method unstated in the original Chinese name—while *boned* introduces an extra detail about deboning the fish. Though *mandarin fish* accurately translates “鳊鱼”, this version incorporates extraneous lexical items describing preparation and cooking techniques, reducing its overall alignment with the source text in terms of information density and fi-

delity.

6.3.2. Syntactic Equivalence

The structure of *Sweet and Sour Squirrel-Shaped Mandarin Fish* consists of stacked attributive modifiers (*sweet and sour*, *squirrel-shaped*) preceding the head noun *mandarin fish*. This syntactic pattern is ubiquitous in English culinary nomenclature, arranging dish attributes in a natural priority sequence: flavor first, followed by shape, then primary ingredient. It faithfully replicates the attributive-head syntactic relationship of the original Chinese phrase “松鼠鳜鱼”, in which “松鼠” acts as a descriptive modifier and “鳜鱼” functions as the central noun.

By contrast, Squirrel-Like Fried Boned Mandarin Fish also uses adjectival and participial modifiers to qualify the head noun. Nevertheless, since the original Chinese name does not emphasize deep-frying or deboning, this syntax reshuffles the hierarchy of information: visual shape precedes cooking/preparation details, with the fish ingredient listed last. This reordered emphasis deviates from the weight of information embedded within the source Chinese syntax, yielding weaker syntactic equivalence.

6.3.3. Textual Equivalence

Sweet and Sour Squirrel-Shaped Mandarin Fish concisely integrates the dish's flavor, silhouette and core ingredient, enabling readers to immediately grasp its defining traits within textual contexts such as menus or food articles. It fulfills identical communicative functions as the original Chinese name, presenting core dish characteristics in a compact, accessible format.

When deployed within a textual context, Squirrel-Like Fried Boned Mandarin Fish overemphasizes cooking and deboning details, diverting readers' attention from the dish's primary identifying features—its squirrel shape and main ingredient—as highlighted in the original Chinese nomenclature, thus weakening textual functional equivalence.

6.3.4. Stylistic Equivalence

Stylistically, *Sweet and Sour Squirrel-Shaped Mandarin Fish* maintains concise, straightforward phrasing consistent with standard culinary naming conventions in both English and Chinese, achieving full stylistic parity with the succinct original term “*Sweet and Sour Squirrel-Shaped Mandarin Fish*”.

Conversely, Squirrel-Like Fried Boned Mandarin Fish carries a more verbose stylistic register due to its added technical preparation descriptors. Relative to the concise source name, it reads overly detailed and elaborate, resulting in marginal stylistic imbalance and compromised stylistic equivalence.

Evaluated across all four dimensions of Nida's dynamic equivalence framework, *Sweet and Sour Squirrel-Shaped Mandarin Fish* demonstrates superior alignment with the Chinese source name “*Sweet and Sour Squirrel-Shaped Mandarin Fish*” in lexical, syntactic, textual and stylistic equivalence, making it the rendering that best conforms to dynamic equivalence principles.

7. Conclusions

This paper adopts two analytical frameworks—analogue translation and dynamic equivalence under Functional Equivalence Theory—to conduct its research. As a distinctive Huaiyang dish distinguished by its integrated color, aroma, taste and sculptural form, squirrel-shaped mandarin fish is most accurately represented by the standardized English translation *Sweet and Sour Squirrel-Shaped Mandarin Fish*, which comprehensively conveys all core attributes of the dish [9].

The inherent complexity of culinary terminology and translation practice constitutes the primary obstacles to establishing unified, standardized dish name renderings. Professional terminology translators bear a critical responsibility to continuously strengthen terminological sensitivity and translation proficiency, resolve persistent challenges in culinary term translation, and thereby advance academic exchange and industrial development within the gastronomy sector.

This paper adopts analogue translation and Nida's Functional Equivalence Theory to analyze translations of squirrel-shaped mandarin fish, identifying Sweet and Sour Squirrel-Shaped Mandarin Fish as the theoretically optimal standardized rendering that fully reflects the dish's flavor, shape and core ingredient. Complex cultural semantics and absent unified industrial norms remain major barriers to consistent culinary terminology translation; translators should enhance terminological competence to facilitate cross-cultural communication of Huaiyang cuisine.

This research relies solely on textual and theoretical analysis without empirical evidence, including audience reception tests, translator questionnaires or industrial standard research. The recommended translation is theoretically derived rather than empirically validated, and follow-up empirical studies are needed for further verification.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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