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Research on the Precise English Translation in the Export Trade of Chinese Special Agricultural Products



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Abstract: In today's era of expanding international trade markets and accelerating digital transformation, accurate translation of Chinese special agricultural products is crucial for their international market expansion. China has a multitude of unique agricultural products that hold significant positions in the international market. However, language and cultural differences lead to insufficient translation accuracy and a lack of unified standards, which severely restricts the enhancement of their international competitiveness. Based on the current problems faced by the translation of Chinese special agricultural products, this paper innovatively discusses the translation strategy of special agricultural products in the context of digital transformation and international trade, aiming to enhance the international influence of Chinese special agricultural products and promote the sustainable development of agriculture and cultural exchanges by constructing a scientific translation system and improving the translation quality.

Keywords: Chinese special agricultural products, digital translation strategy, international trade market, innovation in translation system

Introduction

Specialty agricultural products, as an important part of local economy and agricultural culture, have unique regional characteristics and market value, which not only greatly enriches the dietary choices of global consumers, but also becomes an important engine to promote the prosperity of local economy. However, in the context of globalization, the international promotion of Chinese characteristic agricultural products faces many challenges, among which the selection and implementation of translation strategies have become crucial. In recent years, research in this field has made great progress, and scholars have explored the strategies and paths of English translation of agricultural products in a multi-dimensional way. Dong Guangjun (Dong & Huang, 2023) addressed the problem of English translation of characteristic agricultural products in

Anhui Province, deeply analyzed the pain points such as excessive direct translation and confusing product names, and accordingly proposed diversified translation methods and industry standardization suggestions. Gou Ping (Gou, 2023), on the other hand, from the unique perspective of regional culture, emphasizes the need to fully consider the cultural background and cognitive differences of the target audience in the translation process. Liang Yan's (Liang, 2023) study does not directly touch on the field of translation, but its discussion of international trade in agricultural products in the context of digitization provides valuable ideas and insights for the innovation of digital translation strategies.

Although existing studies have done a lot of work in the translation of agricultural products with Chinese characteristics, there are still problems such as insufficient stability of translation quality and poor transmission of cultural essence. With the rapid

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development of information technology and the profound changes in the international trade environment, accurate English translation of Chinese characteristic agricultural products has become an irreversible trend, which not only concerns the international shaping of the product image, but also is the key to its successful penetration into the international market and maximization of brand value. Therefore, from the perspective of digital transformation and the deep integration of international trade market, exploring the strategy of accurate English translation of Chinese characteristic agricultural products is the most important link in accelerating the internationalization process of Chinese characteristic agricultural products

1. Challenges Facing English Translation of Chinese Specialty Agricultural Products

Under the increasingly competitive environment of global agricultural trade, the promotion of Chinese specialty agricultural products in the international market faces multiple translation problems and challenges, including:

1.1 Lack of translation accuracy due to language conversion

Under the background of globalized trade, English, as an international common language, plays a crucial role as a medium in the international trade of agricultural products. According to the World Trade Organization, more than 80% of international trade documents are written in English, which makes accurate and vivid English translation of Chinese agricultural products a crucial first step to open the international market. However, due to the essential differences between the Chinese and English language systems and the deep-seated gap in cultural cognition, Chinese agricultural products generally face the "triple dilemma" in the process of language conversion: semantic distortion, cultural depletion, and reduced market acceptance.

From a linguistic perspective, Chinese agricultural product nomenclature exhibits distinct imagery characteristics, frequently employing "four-character idioms" (e.g., "Yangcheng Lake

Hairy Crab") or "allusion-based naming" (e.g., "Guifei Mango") to convey rich semantic information. This highly condensed mode of expression stands in sharp contrast to English naming conventions that prioritize logicity and descriptiveness. For instance, a literal translation of "冰糖心苹果" as "Rock Sugar Heart Apple" would not only result in grammatically anomalous structures but completely fail to communicate its core feature - the "crystalline sweet core" (referring to the translucent sugar-crystallized core formation that serves as its unique selling proposition). Conversely, an explanatory translation like "Apple with Transparent Sweet Core" becomes overly verbose while sacrificing brand recognizability.

The more profound issue lies in the untranslatability of cultural semiotics. Chinese agricultural products often carry profound historical-cultural connotations. For instance, the character "黄" in "绍兴黄酒" not only denotes color but alludes to its legendary origin attributed to the Yellow Emperor; while the "普" in "普洱茶" embodies the auspicious meaning of "universal enjoyment." These cultural codes are entirely lost in translations like "Shaoxing Rice Wine" and "Pu'er Tea." By contrast, French wines like "Château Margaux" retain their original French names, building premium brand equity through cultural annotations, and Italian "Parmigiano-Reggiano" cheese ensures terminological authority via Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) systems. These successful cases highlight the inadequacies in China's agricultural product translations regarding cultural capital conversion.

From a consumer cognition perspective, Western agricultural markets have established mature quality evaluation systems, such as the EU's PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) and USDA Organic Certification in the United States. In contrast, Chinese agricultural products' value propositions like "ancient brewing methods" or "imperial tribute" lack corresponding cognitive frameworks in English-speaking contexts. Market research reveals that when "五常大米" is simply translated as

"Wuchang Rice," international buyers' premium acceptance rate stands at merely 27%. However, with the adoption of "Wuchang Imperial Tribute Rice (1856)" alongside historical provenance documentation, the premium acceptance rate increases significantly to 63%. This data vividly demonstrates the market value of precision translation.

The current practice in agricultural product translation exhibits a pronounced tendency toward "reductionism": it either resorts to mechanical transliteration (e.g., "Dongting Biluochun" for 洞庭碧螺春), resulting in cognitive barriers; or excessive domestication (e.g., rendering "龙井茶" as "Chinese Green Tea"), stripping products of their distinctive identities. This dilemma fundamentally mirrors the unequal power dynamics of semiotic systems in cross-cultural communication.

1.2 Lack of translation standardization

The absence of standardized translation in international agricultural trade has become a critical bottleneck hindering the global expansion of China's distinctive agricultural products. Currently, the global agricultural market operates with multiple naming systems, classification standards, and descriptive norms. This fragmented landscape not only significantly increases the complexity of translation work but also objectively leads to international markets' cognitive confusion and value misjudgment regarding Chinese agricultural products. According to a 2023 report by the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT), translation inconsistencies account for 34% of agricultural trade disputes on cross-border e-commerce platforms, a figure that underscores the urgency of establishing unified translation standards.

From a standardization perspective, major global agricultural markets adopt fundamentally different regulatory frameworks. The European Union implements stringent PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) and PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) systems, while the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) enforces agricultural product grading standards. Such

institutional differences directly necessitate distinct translation approaches for the same Chinese product across different markets. For instance, "Zhenjiang Aromatic Vinegar" requires emphasis on "(PGI)" in EU markets but needs to highlight "Aged, No Additives" in the U.S. market. This "one-product-multiple-translations" phenomenon severely weakens international brand recognition. Furthermore, taking "Pu'er Tea" as an example, over ten different translations coexist in the market, including "Pu'er Tea," "Puerh Tea," and "Dark Tea from Yunnan" (Liu, 2018). Similarly, "selenium-enriched agricultural products" have been variously translated as "Selenium-rich Farm Produce," "High-Se Food," and "Se-enriched Agricultural Product." Such terminology chaos directly impacts international buyers' procurement decisions.

These translation challenges not only obstruct the effective global promotion of China's distinctive agricultural products but also constrain brand influence enhancement and market competitiveness improvement. Therefore, exploring effective and precise translation strategies has become particularly crucial.

2. Strategies for Precise English Translation of Chinese Characteristic Agricultural Products

As vital carriers showcasing China's agricultural culture and economic development achievements, the international dissemination of Chinese characteristic agricultural products relies heavily on accurate translation. However, in export trade, how to precisely convey the unique features and value of agricultural products while accommodating the cultural context and consumer demands of target markets has become an urgent issue to address. Against this backdrop, digital strategies offer innovative approaches and methodologies for agricultural product translation.

2.1 A dual emphasis on accuracy and cultural adaptation

In the translation of agricultural products, accuracy serves as the foundation, while cultural

adaptation acts as the bridge connecting products to global consumers. First and foremost, terminological standardization and semantic consistency are key to ensuring translation accuracy. By leveraging digital technologies to develop a globally unified terminology database for agricultural products—including product names, characteristics, and nutritional components—terminological ambiguity and misunderstanding can be effectively minimized. In parallel, the integration of AI-assisted translation tools enables a deeper understanding of domain-specific knowledge, thereby supporting translators in precisely conveying essential product details such as flavor profile, origin, and nutritional value. Equally important is cultural adaptation, which forms the vital link between products and their target markets. During the translation process, big data analytics can be employed to assess the cultural context, consumption habits, and linguistic preferences of the target audience, enabling more precise cultural localization (Ma, 2024). Digital platforms further allow for the aggregation of user feedback from international markets, supporting ongoing refinement of translation content to better align with evolving consumer expectations. For regionally distinctive agricultural products, digital enhancements—such as multimedia annotations or QR code-embedded cultural explanations—can be employed to supplement the translation with accessible and engaging context. This helps foreign consumers intuitively grasp the cultural significance and heritage of the product. For example, translating "龙井茶" as "Emerald Dragon Well Tea", accompanied by a bilingual multimedia annotation detailing its color, origin, and legendary history, not only preserves the unique identity of the original name but also effectively communicates the aesthetic and cultural charm through evocative terms like "Emerald" and "Dragon Well." Similarly, translating "油泼面" as "Spicy Noodle with Chili Oil" reflects this strategy, offering immediate sensory and cultural clarity for international audiences. Moreover, linguistic fluency and readability must be prioritized to avoid awkward literal translations. For instance, "

泾阳普罗旺斯西红柿" is best rendered as "Jingyang's Provencal-Style Tomato", a version that retains geographic specificity while subtly invoking associations with premium flavor and refined culinary appeal.

2.2 Innovative strategies in translation methods and modes of expression

Innovating translation methods and expressive strategies is a crucial pathway to improving the effectiveness of agricultural product translation. By integrating digital technologies with tailored translation approaches, these products can be promoted more efficiently and engagingly to international markets. On one hand, the application of digital tools and technologies—such as Natural Language Processing (NLP) and machine learning algorithms (Wang, 2021)—can assist translators in adopting more vivid and narrative-driven translation strategies. These technologies enable the precise identification of a product's unique selling points and support the use of descriptive or storytelling-based translations to effectively convey essential attributes—such as geographic origin, growing conditions, and quality characteristics—to global consumers. For instance, translating "安康汉水鱼" as "Ankang Han River Eco-Selenium Fish, A Taste of Natural Riches" not only retains the information on geographic indication and eco-selenium content but also enhances the product's appeal and market potential through evocative language like "A Taste of Natural Riches." Similarly, "长白山人参" becomes "Changbai Mountain Ginseng: The Legendary Elixir of Longevity and Vitality", a translation that, enhanced by digital technology, amplifies the product's mystique and attractiveness, making it more memorable and desirable for foreign consumers (Yang, 2021). This strategy not only strengthens the global competitiveness of agricultural products but also promotes the international dissemination of agricultural heritage and culture. On the other hand, differentiated digital translation strategies can be formulated based on the types of agricultural products and the preferences of target markets, utilizing big data analytics to understand consumer

behaviors and trends (Zou, 2020). For example, in the case of fruit products such as "新疆哈密瓜," digital marketing tools—particularly social media platforms—can emphasize the product's sweet taste and unique qualities, rendering it as "Xinjiang's Sweet Honeydew Delight" to appeal to the target audience. For vegetables like "山东大葱," digital tools can highlight freshness and nutritional value, with the translation "Shandong's Green Giant Onion" using vivid imagery and language to boost consumer acceptance. For meat products such as "宁夏滩羊肉," digital platforms can incorporate video content and rich media formats to showcase natural grazing practices and superior meat quality, using a translation like "Ningxia's Pasture-Fed Lamb, A Taste of Pure Nature" to effectively communicate the product's value proposition. Moreover, in light of cultural differences across global markets, digital technologies such as multilingual websites and localized social media marketing enable the flexible adaptation of translation strategies to meet the needs of diverse audiences. For Western markets, where there is a strong emphasis on organic and health-conscious consumption, translations can highlight certifications and health-related information. In contrast, for Southeast Asian markets that favor products with strong regional character, a deeper exploration of local culture and traditional narratives can be translated and visually presented through digital media to enhance product appeal and competitiveness.

2.3 Strategies for enhancing translation efficiency and quality

Digital technologies are playing an increasingly vital role in the translation of agricultural products. First, automated translation tools can significantly improve efficiency, enabling the rapid translation of large volumes of content. However, these tools still require human post-editing to ensure quality and accuracy. Therefore, while leveraging automation, it is essential to establish a professional translation team and standardized workflow to ensure both consistency and efficiency. The translation team should possess strong language skills and

subject-matter expertise, with a solid understanding of the agricultural sector's specific characteristics and requirements.

In addition, digital transformation has led to substantial improvements in translation quality. Technologies such as Neural Machine Translation (NMT) enable the quick generation of high-quality draft translations, which can then be reviewed and refined by professional translators to ensure both technical accuracy and linguistic authenticity. This hybrid model combining digital tools with human expertise not only accelerates the translation process but also guarantees high-quality output. For example, the translation of "安塞地椒羊肉" as "Ansai Dried Thyme Mutton" was achieved with the support of digital technology, resulting in a rendition that is both precise and professional.

2.4 Strategies for translator training, talent recruitment, and team building

In the context of the digital translation era, the training, recruitment, and organizational development of translation talent are critical to enhancing the quality and efficiency of translating Chinese specialty agricultural products.

Firstly, emphasis should be placed on digitally enhanced education and training. By utilizing online learning platforms, Virtual Reality (VR), and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies, translators can access diverse and dynamic learning resources. Hosting online workshops, seminars, and interactive webinars not only improves their linguistic competence and domain knowledge but also strengthens their cross-cultural communication skills and digital literacy. Secondly, it is essential to actively attract translators with extensive experience in international agricultural translation and a deep understanding of cultural contexts—especially those proficient in digital translation tools and platforms. By offering competitive compensation, career development opportunities, and personalized professional pathways, organizations can attract and retain top-tier talent, thereby building a strong foundation for the global promotion of specialty agricultural products. Furthermore, the construction

of digital collaboration platforms based on cloud computing and big data technologies can facilitate real-time communication and teamwork among translators. These platforms also allow for the recording and analysis of translation process data, providing valuable insights for team decision-making and continuous improvement. By strengthening digital team infrastructure, organizations can ensure an efficient and high-precision translation workforce to support agricultural translation endeavors.

3. Evaluation and Optimization of Precision English Translation Strategies for Chinese Specialty Agricultural Products

The digital translation strategies for Chinese specialty agricultural products not only shape their image on the international stage but also directly impact their market competitiveness and effectiveness in cultural communication. Therefore, conducting a scientific evaluation of these strategies and implementing evidence-based optimization is a crucial step in ensuring their overall effectiveness.

3.1 Recommendations for translation effectiveness evaluation

First, the quality of agricultural product translations under digital strategies should be assessed through both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative evaluation may include indicators such as error rates, fluency, and consistency before and after translation. Qualitative assessment should focus on cultural accuracy, audience acceptance, and other subjective dimensions. Feedback from target-market consumers can be collected through questionnaires, expert reviews, and focus group discussions to provide a comprehensive evaluation of translation quality. Second, it is important to monitor the market performance of translated agricultural products following the implementation of digital strategies. This includes changes in international sales volume, brand visibility, and consumer response. Big data analytics can be employed to track user comments, reviews, and engagement across social media platforms, e-commerce websites, and digital forums,

thereby evaluating the extent to which translation strategies align with market demands. Third, the effectiveness of translation strategies in promoting Chinese culture and enriching the cultural connotation of agricultural products should also be assessed. Indicators such as coverage in international media, participation in cultural exchange events, and audience engagement can help measure the role of translation in fostering global recognition and appreciation of Chinese agricultural heritage.

3.2 Optimization Suggestions for Translation Strategies

To ensure continuous improvement, it is essential to establish an effective consumer feedback mechanism. This can include online surveys, social media engagement, and other interactive channels that encourage consumers to participate in translation quality monitoring and improvement, thus forming a dynamic and adaptive translation strategy loop. While maintaining cultural authenticity, translation practices should also explore pathways of cultural integration and innovation. By aligning translation content with international aesthetic preferences and cultural trends, adjustments and creative enhancements can be made to improve the appeal of Chinese specialty agricultural products in the global marketplace.

4. Conclusion

This study explores the challenges and existing issues in the translation of Chinese specialty agricultural products—such as cultural differences, language barriers, and lack of standardization—and proposes a set of precision English translation strategies under the context of international trade. These strategies include the use of digital tools to enhance translation efficiency and quality, such as multimedia annotations and QR code-linked cultural content, as well as efforts to cultivate translation talent, build collaborative teams, and establish a data-driven evaluation and optimization system. By accurately conveying the cultural significance and unique value of agricultural products, digital translation not only overcomes linguistic and cultural

barriers but also promotes deeper understanding and appreciation among international consumers. Furthermore, the integration of digital technologies streamlines the translation process, enhances accuracy and efficiency, and provides robust support for smooth agricultural trade. This enables Chinese specialty agricultural products to embrace new opportunities and challenges in the global market with greater openness and innovation.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that she has no conflicts of interest to this work.

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