



**A SOCIOLINGUISTIC EXPLORATION OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE
TRANSLATION OF STREET FOOD NAMES IN MALAYSIA FROM
CHINESE TO ENGLISH**

By

ZHU HONGXIANG

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
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Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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August 2024

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The research problem that is to be addressed in this study revolves around the challenge of inconsistency in the non-professional translations of street food names by food vendors. Drawing on a sociolinguistic approach, this study aims: (1) to identify the cultural elements in Chinese street food names in Malaysia; (2) to examine the translation techniques on the street food names in Malaysia from Chinese to English; and (3) to explore the reflection of cultural diversity in the translation of street food names in Malaysia from Chinese to English.

This study is a qualitative case study in which the translation of Chinese street food names in Malaysia is the case. Chinese street food names refer to street foods eaten by Chinese Malaysians. The research settings cover Penang, Perak, Perlis, Johor, Kedah, Malacca, Negeri Sembilan, Sarawak, Sabah, Selangor, and Kuala Lumpur. A purposive sampling method is employed to

collect street food names in Malaysia. The sampling size is 4,214 name pairs with translation, including 2,199 noodle foods, 711 rice foods, and 1,304 others. Ng et al.'s (2015) category of food nomenclature is adopted to identify the cultural elements and Marco's (2019) model of translation techniques are used to examine how these street food names are translated. The diverse cultures in translation are explored based on the pronunciations of elements in translated street food names and the geographical names in translation that can mark the origins of the foods.

The findings of the analysis revealed that: (1) the cultural elements are identified based on ingredient, cooking method, food attribute, commemorative aspects, good names and their combinations; (2) the translation techniques—borrowing, literal translation, neutralisation, amplification, intracultural adaptation, intercultural adaptation, and omission—are used; and (3) the diverse cultures are reflected by amplification and literal translation of commemorative aspects—especially geographical names and national names—borrowing of the cultural elements based on regional pronunciation and intracultural adaptation of using elements of third cultures.

Keywords: Chinese; cultural diversity; Malaysia; sociolinguistics; street food; translation techniques

SDG: GOAL 4: Quality Education

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**EKSPLORASI SOSIOLINGUISTIK TENTANG KEPELBAGAIAN BUDAYA
DALAM PENTERJEMAHAN NAMA MAKANAN JALANAN DI MALAYSIA
DARIPADA BAHASA CINA KEPADA BAHASA INGGERIS**

Oleh

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Masalah penyelidikan yang diutarakan dalam kajian ini berkisar mengenai cabaran ketakkonsistenan dalam terjemahan tidak profesional bagi nama makanan jalanan oleh vendor makanan. Menggunakan pendekatan sosiolinguistik, kajian ini bertujuan: (1) untuk mengenal pasti elemen budaya dalam nama makanan jalanan bahasa Cina di Malaysia; (2) untuk meneliti teknik terjemahan ke atas nama makanan jalanan di Malaysia daripada bahasa Cina kepada bahasa Inggeris; dan (3) untuk meninjau cerminan kepelbagaian budaya dalam terjemahan nama makanan jalanan di Malaysia daripada bahasa Cina kepada bahasa Inggeris.

Kajian ini merupakan kajian kes kualitatif di mana kajian kes ialah terjemahan nama makanan jalanan bahasa Cina di Malaysia. Nama makanan jalanan bahasa Cina merujuk kepada makanan jalanan yang dimakan oleh orang Cina Malaysia. Seting penyelidikan ini meliputi negeri Pulau Pinang, Perak, Perlis,

Johor, Kedah, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Sarawak, Sabah, Selangor, dan Kuala Lumpur. Kaedah persampelan purposif telah digunakan untuk mengumpul nama makanan jalanan di Malaysia. Saiz persampelan ialah 4,214 nama berpasangan beserta terjemahan, termasuk 2,199 makanan mi, 711 makanan nasi, dan 1,304 lain-lain. Kategori nomenkatur makanan Ng et al. (2015) telah diguna pakai untuk mengenal pasti elemen budaya dan model teknik terjemahan Marco (2019) telah digunakan untuk meneliti bagaimana nama makanan jalanan tersebut telah diterjemahkan. Budaya yang berbeza dalam terjemahan telah ditinjau berdasarkan sebutan elemen nama makanan jalanan dan nama geografi dalam terjemahan yang dapat menandakan asal makanan tersebut.

Penemuan analisis memperlihatkan bahawa: (1) elemen budaya merangkumi bahan masakan, kaedah memasak, atribut makanan, aspek komemoratif, nama barangan dan kombinasi mereka; (2) teknik terjemahan ialah pinjaman, terjemahan literal, neutralisasi, amplifikasi, adaptasi intrabudaya, adaptasi interbudaya, dan merupakan teknik yang digunakan; and (3) budaya tersebut telah tergambar melalui pengamplifieran dan terjemahan literal aspek komemoratif—terutamanya nama geografi dan nama kebangsaan—pinjaman elemen budaya berdasarkan sebutan regional dan adaptasi intrabudaya menggunakan elemen budaya ketiga.

Kata Kunci: bahasa Cina; kepelbagaian budaya; Malaysia; sosiolinguistik; makanan jalanan; teknik terjemahan

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|-----------|
| ABSTRACT | i |
| ABSTRAK | iii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | v |
| APPROVAL | vii |
| DECLARATION | ix |
| LIST OF TABLES | xiv |
| LIST OF FIGURES | xvi |
| CHAPTER | |
| 1 INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 1.1 Background of the Study | 1 |
| 1.1.1 Sociolinguistics and Translation | 1 |
| 1.1.2 Food, Translation and Culture | 5 |
| 1.1.3 Sociolinguistic Context in Malaysia | 9 |
| 1.1.4 Street Food Translation in Malaysia | 14 |
| 1.2 Problem Statement | 18 |
| 1.3 Research Objectives | 26 |
| 1.4 Research Questions | 27 |
| 1.5 Scope of the Study | 27 |
| 1.6 Significance of the Study | 29 |
| 1.7 Conceptual Framework | 32 |
| 1.8 Operational Definition | 33 |
| 1.9 Structure of the Thesis | 36 |
| 1.10 Conclusion of the Chapter | 38 |
| 2 LITERATURE REVIEW | 39 |
| 2.1 Introduction | 39 |
| 2.2 Street Food | 39 |
| 2.3 Non-professional Translation | 45 |
| 2.4 Cultural Elements in Nomenclature of Food Names | 52 |
| 2.5 Translation Techniques on Food-Related Items | 56 |
| 2.6 Cultural Diversity in Language Studies | 60 |
| 2.7 Theoretical Foundation on Food Translation | 65 |
| 2.8 Research Methods on Food Translation | 71 |
| 2.9 A Sociolinguistic Approach to Translation | 76 |
| 2.10 Theoretical Framework and Justification | 83 |
| 2.11 Conclusion of the Chapter | 86 |
| 3 METHODOLOGY | 87 |
| 3.1 Introduction | 87 |
| 3.2 Research Design | 87 |
| 3.3 Samples | 91 |
| 3.4 Data Collection Procedures | 95 |
| 3.5 Data Analysis Methods | 102 |

| | | |
|----------|---|------------|
| 3.5.1 | Cultural Elements in Nomenclature of Street Food Names | 103 |
| 3.5.2 | Translation Techniques of Street Food Names | 105 |
| 3.5.3 | Cultural Diversity in the Translation of Street Food Names | 107 |
| 3.6 | Trustworthiness of the Research | 109 |
| 3.7 | Pilot Study | 111 |
| 3.7.1 | Justification of Applying Ng et al.'s (2015) Category of Food Nomenclature | 111 |
| 3.7.2 | Justification of Applying Marco's (2019) Model of Translation Techniques | 113 |
| 3.7.3 | Justification of Sampling Method | 114 |
| 3.8 | Ethical Considerations | 115 |
| 3.9 | Conclusion of the Chapter | 117 |
| 4 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION | 118 |
| 4.1 | Introduction | 118 |
| 4.2 | Cultural Elements in Street Food Names | 118 |
| 4.2.1 | Ingredient | 121 |
| 4.2.2 | Method+Ingredient (MI) | 122 |
| 4.2.3 | Attribute+Ingredient (AI) | 124 |
| 4.2.4 | Commemorative Aspect+Ingredient (CI) | 127 |
| 4.2.5 | Commemorative Aspect+Method+Ingredient (CMI) | 129 |
| 4.2.6 | Attribute+Method+Ingredient (AMI) | 133 |
| 4.2.7 | Attribute+commemorative aspect+ingredient (ACI) | 136 |
| 4.2.8 | Commemorative aspect+method (CM) | 139 |
| 4.2.9 | Other Categories | 140 |
| 4.2.10 | Good Name-Based Category | 141 |
| 4.2.11 | Discussion and Summary | 144 |
| 4.3 | Translation Techniques | 145 |
| 4.3.1 | Borrowing | 146 |
| 4.3.2 | Literal Translation | 149 |
| 4.3.3 | Neutralisation | 150 |
| 4.3.4 | Amplification/Compression | 153 |
| 4.3.5 | Intracultural Adaptation | 154 |
| 4.3.6 | Intercultural Adaptation | 156 |
| 4.3.7 | Omission | 157 |
| 4.3.8 | Discussion and Summary | 159 |
| 4.4 | Reflection of Cultural Diversity | 161 |
| 4.4.1 | Chinese Cultures Reflected through Borrowing | 163 |
| 4.4.2 | Asian, European and American Cultures Reflected through Literal Translation | 164 |
| 4.4.3 | Asian Cultures Reflected through Neutralisation | 165 |
| 4.4.4 | Asian and European Cultures Reflected through Amplification | 166 |

| | | |
|----------|--|-----|
| 4.4.5 | Asian Culture Reflected through Intracultural Adaptation | 168 |
| 4.4.6 | Discussion and Summary | 169 |
| 4.5 | Conclusion of the Chapter | 171 |
| 5 | CONCLUSION | 172 |
| 5.1 | Summary of the Study | 172 |
| 5.2 | Major Findings of the Study | 173 |
| 5.3 | Implications of the Study | 175 |
| 5.4 | Contribution of the Study | 178 |
| 5.5 | Limitations of the Study | 180 |
| 5.6 | Recommendations of the Study | 182 |
| 5.7 | Conclusion of the Chapter | 183 |
| | REFERENCES | 185 |
| | APPENDICES | 210 |
| | BIODATA OF STUDENT | 217 |
| | LIST OF PUBLICATIONS | 218 |

LIST OF TABLES

| Table | Page | |
|--------------|--|-----|
| 3.1 | Forms of Street Food Names | 91 |
| 3.2 | Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria of Data | 92 |
| 3.3 | Distribution of Street Food Names | 95 |
| 3.4 | Data Collection Procedures | 96 |
| 3.5 | A Schematic Figure of Three Levels of the Coding Process | 103 |
| 3.6 | Ng et al.'s (2015) Category of Food Nomenclature | 104 |
| 3.7 | Translation Techniques on Food Names Based on Marco (2019) | 105 |
| 3.8 | Demographic Information of Two Groups of Chinese Malaysians | 108 |
| 3.9 | Distribution of Nomenclature of Chinese Street Food Names | 112 |
| 3.10 | Distribution of Translation Techniques of Street Food Names | 113 |
| 4.1 | Distribution of Cultural Elements in Street Food Names | 119 |
| 4.2 | Distribution of Cultural Elements in the Nomenclature of Street Food Names | 120 |
| 4.3 | Distribution of Category of Ingredient | 121 |
| 4.4 | Distribution of Category of method+ingredient | 122 |
| 4.5 | Distribution of Category of attribute+ingredient | 125 |
| 4.6 | Distribution of Category of Commemorative aspect+ingredient | 127 |
| 4.7 | Distribution of Category of Commemorative aspect+method+ingredient | 130 |
| 4.8 | Distribution of Category of attribute+method+ingredient | 134 |
| 4.9 | Distribution of Category of attribute+commemorative aspect+ingredient | 137 |
| 4.10 | Distribution of Category of Commemorative aspect+method | 139 |
| 4.11 | Distributions of Other Categories | 140 |

| | | |
|------|---|-----|
| 4.12 | Distribution of Good Name-Based Category | 142 |
| 4.13 | Distributions of Translation Techniques | 146 |
| 4.14 | Distribution of Borrowing in Street Food Names | 147 |
| 4.15 | Distribution of Literal Translation in Street Food Names | 149 |
| 4.16 | Distribution of Neutralisation in Street Food Names | 151 |
| 4.17 | Distribution of Amplification in Street Food Names | 153 |
| 4.18 | Distribution of Intracultural Adaptation in Street Food Names | 154 |
| 4.19 | Distribution of Intercultural Adaptation in Street Food Names | 156 |
| 4.20 | Distribution of Omission in Street Food Names | 158 |
| 4.21 | Distribution of Cultures Reflected in Translation Techniques | 162 |
| 4.22 | Cultures Reflected through Borrowing | 163 |
| 4.23 | Cultures Reflected through Literal Translation | 165 |
| 4.24 | Cultures Reflected through Neutralization | 166 |
| 4.25 | Cultures Reflected through Amplification | 167 |
| 4.26 | Cultures Reflected through Intracultural Adaptation | 168 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| Figure | Page |
|---|------|
| 2.1 Theoretical Framework | 84 |
| 3.1 Images of Four Forms of Street Food Names | 91 |
| 4.1 Hor Fun vs. Kuey Teow | 155 |
| 4.2 Mint vs. Holy Basil | 156 |
| 4.3 Dong Fen vs. Mian Xian vs. Vermicelli | 157 |



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Translation in society is situated within a broader scope of interdisciplinary studies, in that translation studies, cultural studies and sociology are involved. Translation in society has been given a specific name called “translation landscape” (Lees, 2021; 2022a). Researchers have investigated translation landscapes in different societies (Gu, 2022; Gu & Almana, 2023; Gu & Manan, 2024; Koskinen, 2012; Lee, 2022; Lees, 2021, 2022a, 2022b; Liao & Chan, 2022; Magdaléna & Ingrida, 2019; Napu, 2024; Song, 2020, 2021, 2022a, 2022b, 2023; Wang, 2022; Yuan & Hou, 2023). However, there is a limited number of studies regarding the translation landscape in Malaysia. Therefore, this study aims to reveal the translation problem in Malaysian society.

1.1 Background of the Study

This chapter outlines the background of the study, statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, scope and significance of the study, conceptual framework, limitations of the study, operational definition, and structure of the thesis.

1.1.1 Sociolinguistics and Translation

There is indeed a growing awareness that globalisation has altered the face of social, cultural and linguistic diversity in societies all over the world. Diversity has become habitual and part of the everyday human landscape (Wessendorf, 2014). As one of the forms of sociocultural diversity, language is observable

because every language arises from the need for communication of the individuals of a given society (Sánchez, 2007). This means that language cannot be separated from its society and that society influences the way its members speak it. Thus, sociolinguistics concerning “language as a social and cultural phenomenon” (Trudgill, 1983, p. 32) provides an approach to show an increasingly diverse society.

Translation operates as a site where various languages and cultures interact, as well as a creative force capable of enabling linguistic and cultural changes and renewals (Rizzo, 2008). Translation studies are at the “interface” of other disciplines (Duarte et al., 2006)—including literary and cultural studies, history, and sociology. Cronin (2013) argues that our present age should be termed the “translation age,” as translation offers a lens through which to view the transformation of communication in rapidly evolving societies. Therefore, translation plays a role in reflecting cultures and society. However, “there have not been many systematic attempts to develop a sociolinguistic theory of translation, or to engage with the field of translation studies” (Angermeyer, 2022, p. 3). The application of sociolinguistics in translation has the potential to reveal the sociocultural conditions through translation.

Translation involves mediating an existing message through moving backwards and forwards between source and target (House, 2014). The definition of translation is expanded in a trans-disciplinary fashion in a multicultural society, especially in cosmopolitan cities. Translation refers to not only the traditionally shift between source language and target language at the

linguistic level, but also means the creation of a linguistic “contact zone” where “disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other” (Pratt, 1992, p. 4). Translation exemplifies “the subtle relations of a variety of languages or language variants that vie to express the supposed same message” (Song, 2021, p. 3). To conclude, rather than traditional linguistic shift, translation is becoming a third culture allowing the diverse languages’ comparisons and melting.

The expansion of translation has influenced translation professionalisation as “the boundary between the professional translator and the amateur is no longer clear” in the translation (O’hagan, 2009, p. 115). Bilingual and multilingual people could also translate in order to satisfy their communicative needs. Communication across languages can sometimes occur outside the setting of professional translation. It can be facilitated by voluntary, unpaid translations. With technological progress and the resulting explosion in communication, translation activity has expanded beyond its traditional scope. New and growing forms of community translation operate outside the professional realm. Non-professional translation emerges afterwards, and substantial differences exist between the two kinds of translations. Non-professional translation also refers to amateur, natural, language brokering, *ad hoc*, informal, and unprofessional translation. According to Antonini et al. (2017), the features of non-professional translators are: not having specific training in translation, being bilingual (or knowing the language pairs for the translation), not being recruited for the work as it is done voluntarily, not being paid for the work, and finally not following any specific code of ethics or set of

standards of practice.

As opposed to professional translation, the non-professional practices are generally “characterized by the translator’s lack of guidelines and remuneration, resulting in translations that do not conform to professional standards” (Leksawat, 2022, p. 117). The professional translation is often followed by the guidelines of government. The translation projects are often authorised by the government, and these translations are carried out by professional translators. Of particular note is that “non-professional” is different from “unprofessional,” which focuses more on quality assessment, while “non-professional” tends to “refer non-judgmentally to the fact that a given profession or activity is carried out by laypeople, i.e. people who are not qualified in that profession” (Antonini et al., 2017, p. 6). “In the face of rapidly changing and expanding communication demands, the prevalence of non-professional translation across a wide variety of settings can no longer be ignored” (Gómez, 2020, p. 200).

Throughout history, non-professional translators and interpreters have been crucial in promoting trade, business, cultural, and religious exchanges (Pym, 2014). However, in a few areas where less official intervention is exercised, the linguistic reality has received relatively scant attention (Shang & Zhao, 2017). These less official translations are no doubt the non-professional practices that also need to be paid attention to. In reality, non-professional translations are visible in many aspects. These aspects are seen in non-professional subtitles or fan subtitles (Orrego-Carmona, 2016), crowdsourced

translation (Mesipuu, 2012), translation landscape in public signs (Lees, 2021), and food-related advertisements or menus (Pouget, 1999) etc. While the focus concerns more on translation quality compared to professional translations and receptions of audiences, a sociolinguistic analysis is also necessary for these non-professional translations.

1.1.2 Food, Translation and Culture

Cultures can be defined at global, national, and regional levels and can be characterised by multiple dimensions such as age, gender, religion, education, and socioeconomic status (Ojalehto & Medin, 2015). These dimensions help identify the similarities and differences based on the particular cultural background. Global, national, and regional cultures provide the definition of culture from either a spatial or geographical perspective. Place-bound taste is not homogenous; rather, it has a characteristic of regional direction. This highlights the significance of place or area in relation to food (Avieli, 2005). As a result, considering place might highlight the geographic connections between place and culinary speciality. These place-bound foods, or foods bearing the name of their place of origin in them, highlight the cultural vestiges of the food and their links to particular cooking or eating practices. Food and place are linked in this mobile age, creating a sense of affiliation or territory that is felt upon consuming a certain meal (Lin & Waley, 2022). Thus, place identity and food are closely interrelated; place stands for both a geographical concept and a sense of belonging in foods.

Food is an illuminating case of culture, as it is not only the cornerstone of life and indispensable for our health and well-being, but is also considered “a way of decoding the unconscious attitude of a society” (Nützenadel & Trentmann, 2008, p. 1). Daily food consumption could help in revealing the mystery of a particular society. The role food plays is expanding to “a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behaviour” (Barthes, 2013, p. 24). These are all the reflections of cultural aspects through eating habits or a series of representations of foods. In sum, food means more than simple nourishment; it was a means of connecting communities, furthering culture, and maintaining resilience (Ertürk, 2022). Therefore, food has potential connections with community, society, and culture.

Food is omnipresent in translation studies—from literature to society—thus signifying its immense cultural value since cultures and societies are built upon food (Keeling & Pollard, 2009). Food-related items are often culture-specific and can therefore be regarded as a potential source of translation problems (Marco, 2019). Translation related to food-related texts has been regarded as an interesting topic since food-related texts are connected with social life and history. Thus, food translation has become an important site for examining the issues of language, translation and cultures. However, food terminology translation has been considered a peripheral area of professional translation and thus “not worthy of analysis” and/or academic attention (De Marco, 2015, p. 2). This reveals that food translation is still a dark zone, as translation scholars “have so far tended to neglect, ignore or overlook the conceptual connections and familiarities between food and language in different societies

and cultures” (Chiaro & Rossato, 2015, p. 241). The literature evidence indicates that “less than one percent of academic translation-based articles are food-related” (Li et al., 2022, p. 202). This could reveal that food translation is a potentially valuable but under-researched area. There is a growing need to assess the food, given “the omnipresence of food and eating in every domain of life, and [...] a growing need for the translation of texts related to food” (Chiaro & Rossato, 2015, p. 242).

The change of lifestyle and rapid pace of life in modern society have resulted in more food consuming choices. This reflects that food-related translation is not confined to literature, governmental files, and subtitles, but also the streets within the society. Street foods are a nearly universal phenomenon of urban life seen in many countries (Haryani et al., 2007). Winarno and Allain (1991) define street food as a wide range of ready-to-eat foods and beverages sold that are sometimes prepared in public places — notably on streets. It is generally sold in single-serve portions, contrary to restaurants; this is because it is prepared and sold by street vendors at a specific point of sale in a public place or by mobile vendors only on special occasions such as village trade fairs, festivals, or open-air concerts (Alfiero et al., 2019). Recently, some of the vending place has been reorganised “from street hawkers to hawker centres” (Huat, 2015, p. 36), which has removed the “street” element out of street food due to the hawkers now being stationary.

Even though street foods are a nearly universal phenomenon of urban life in many countries, they are often ignored in food language related studies. The reasons why they are often overlooked might be because the locations of street food vending are usually installed in designated market areas or semi-permanent sites in less-developed regions (Henderson et al., 2012), and due to this industry being often offered to persons with little education and training (Latham, 1997). The seemingly casual environment tends to lead to food safety issues and low education concerns. However, there are two reasons why street food should be taken into consideration when concerning language studies. First, today, street food is found all over the world. The communication for eating street food is more and more frequent since street food is consumed daily by 2.5 billion people worldwide (Morano et al., 2018). The prevalent trend for street food globally manifests that street food has become a universal phenomenon that brings peoples and communities closer, thus connecting each other through communication. Besides, the role of street food is increasingly growing nowadays. Street food has been gentrified and elevated to the realms of haute cuisine (Chiaro & Rossato, 2015). This means that although street food originates from the less-developed streets with lower price, it has the potential to climb into the larger world stage and attain global attention.

This is especially significant in Southeast Asia where street food is a traditional practice embedded in its cultures and relied upon as a supplier of food, jobs, and income in many places (Henderson, 2019). The street food vending legally in Malaysia can date back to the Hawkers By-Law in 1979 that was enacted

by City Hall, a local authority in charge of food vending in Kuala Lumpur. This was subsequently replaced by the Licensing of Hawkers and Stalls By-Law of 1989 (George, 1991). Nowadays, Malaysia is hailed for its street food, which is regarded as a food paradise by tourists and consumers alike. The open-air food markets are commonly known as “hawker stalls,” which are an arguably distinctive element of Malaysian culinary tradition (Jalis et al., 2009). Street food in Malaysia has already garnered much attention and fame around the world. Street food tours in Penang (a state of Malaysia) is included into the city’ stop attractions on Trip Advisor (Greenspan, 2018). Therefore, street food in Malaysia has the potential to become a translation text to link food, translation, and culture.

1.1.3 Sociolinguistic Context in Malaysia

Malaysia is a federal constitutional monarchy located between Thailand in the north and Indonesia in the south. Malaysia is divided into two geographical areas: West Malaysia, which is located on the Malay Peninsula south of Thailand, and East Malaysia, which is located in the northern part of the island of Borneo. East Malaysia consists of two states: Sarawak, with Kuching as the administrative capital, and Sabah, with Kota Kinabalu as the administrative capital. Malaysia comprises 13 states and three federal territories (Kuala Lumpur, Labuan, and Putrajaya) with roughly 32.7 million inhabitants as of 2022. Malaysia has a pre-independence history of Dutch, British and Japanese colonization (Asmah, 1992), and is presently composed of three major ethnic groups: Malay, Chinese, and Indian. Its population consists

mainly of Malays and other Bumiputras¹ (69.9%), Chinese (22.8%), Indians (6.6%), and others (0.7%), together with small populations of Indonesians, Nepalis, Filipinos, and Europeans (Statista, 2023).

Malaysia is a country with rich linguistic diversity. It is estimated that approximately 134 languages are spoken in Malaysia (Simons & Fennig, 2018). The principle languages in West Malaysia are Malay, English, varieties of Chinese (Mandarin, Cantonese, Hakka, Hokkien, and others), and Indian languages (Tamil, Punjabi, Malayalam, and others). In addition, there are dozens of minority languages spoken all over the country on the peninsula, as well as on the island of Borneo, where the two states of Sabah and Sarawak are located. In East Malaysia where Sabah and Sarawak lie, indigenous languages such as Kadazan-Dusun, Bidayuh, Kelabit, Bajau, and Iban are also commonly spoken (Ghazali, 2010). Malaysia is a heterogeneous society consisting of many communities, each with their own typical cultures and language varieties. As described by a metaphor as “rojak,” a mixed fruit-and-vegetable salad, the jumble of languages spoken in Malaysia is obvious (Tay, 2020). For example, two Hakka speakers may speak Hakka, but also switch to English, Malay, Bahasa Pasar², or any other languages in which they are familiar with. This “language salad” illuminates the notion that the languages spoken in Malaysia are therefore a hotchpotch—including Malay, Chinese,

¹ The native aborigines, such as Ibans and Kadazans. The term “bumiputra” (sons of the soil) refers to the ethnic groups considered to be the original inhabitants of Malaysia. These include the various Dayak tribal groups of Borneo and the aboriginals of the peninsula, known as Orang Asli, plus other smaller groups (Coluzzi, 2022).

² Bahasa Pasar, a market language or colloquial Malay, refers to a simplified Malay which is used by non-Malays in daily communication (Vollmann & Soon, 2020).

Tamil, and other languages.

There are two legal documents that address language issues in Malaysia. The first one is the 1957 Federal Constitution of Malaysia, which defines the status of Malay as the national language of Malaysia. The second one is the Language Act of 1967, which proclaims that Malay is the national language and sole official language in Malaysia. As instituted in Article 152 of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia, *Bahasa Melayu* is the country's sole national and official language, and is used as the language of administration, education, and the law courts; meanwhile, English, the former colonial language, acts as the unofficial language and is taught in schools and extensively used in many commercial sectors. The Federal Constitution also provides language rights for non-Malay ethnic groups, and thus, Mandarin Chinese and Tamil are taught in schools; the former is regarded as an ethnic language for the Chinese community, while the latter is for the Indian community. In addition, both the Chinese and Indian communities retain their community languages for social interactions. The Chinese speak Hokkien, Hakka, Cantonese, Hainan, and Teochew, while the Indians use Tamil, Hindi, Telugu, Malayalam, and Punjabi. Chinese and Tamil schools have been playing important roles in maintaining the Chinese and Tamil languages (Sam & Wang, 2011). Mandarin Chinese was used as the main medium of instruction in Chinese-medium primary schools while for the Indians, Tamil was taught in Tamil-medium primary schools (Gill, 2014).

Though the Federal Constitution mandates Bahasa Melayu as the country's sole official and national language regarding language policy, as a contemporary linguistically diverse nation, there are no laws or sanctions against other languages being used (Ong & Troyer, 2022). This multilingual society reveals that language rights are given to all ethnic groups—including the Chinese—to speak their own dialects and mother tongues (Ong, 2020). Traditionally, the Chinese community is organised mainly along dialect and kinship lines (Ramsey, 1987). Albury (2017) showed that the Chinese community have brought a plethora of heritage languages³—including Cantonese, Hokkien⁴, Hakka, and Foochow—into Malaysia. Within the Chinese community in Malaysia, many at present are shifting from speaking their community languages to the language of wider communication (Mandarin Chinese) due to the influences of globalisation, job opportunities, and the rise of China in the economic world (Wang, 2016). Carsten (2005) stated that “Mandarin is considered the language of education and officialdom, suitable for more formal occasions, but not the language of chatting with friends or closing a business deal” (p. 226). These indications show that both Mandarin Chinese and Chinese dialects co-existed within Chinese Malaysian society. These Chinese Malaysians maintain Chinese dialects for many generations,

³ The term “heritage language” refers to “the language associated with one’s cultural background and it may or may not be spoken in the home” (Cho et al., 1997, p. 106). In this study, Chinese heritage languages are those Chinese dialects.

⁴ The Hokkiens and Teochews originated from virtually the same geographic area in China and the languages they spoke were mutually comprehensible, being two sub-varieties of the Southern Min dialectal group (Li, Saravanan, & Ng, 1997, p. 371). Although the dialects of Hokkien and Teochew are nearly the same in spellings, the tone of Teochew is heavier than that of Hokkien. Therefore, the dialects of Hokkien and Teochew are considered similar (Interview). Both Cantonese and Teochew foods are established ethnic foodways of Guangdong province, the southern region of China in the Pearl River Delta. The former, taking the capital city Guangzhou as the center, is renowned for Cantonese style *dim sum* and clay pot braising dishes (*bou zai*). The latter is more prevalent in harbour villages, where seafood is more accessible (Wang, 2022).

and the dialects and Chinese characters are commonly used in family, community, or vending domains. In a case of shop names in Coluzzi's (2020) study, as far as Chinese is concerned, it is normally written in Chinese characters; however, the names are often Romanised partly to highlight the ethnic origin of the shop owner, which is in most cases Cantonese or Hokkien. Chinese characters and Romanized forms are often used as Chinese markers.

The studies of Mandarin Chinese and Chinese dialects in Malaysia have aroused much attention. The focus of these studies includes Mandarin (Carstens, 2018; Wang, 2015) and Chinese dialects, in which examples of Chinese dialects are Cantonese, Foochow (Ong & Ting, 2022; Ting & Ting, 2021), Hakka (Wang, 2017; Ting, 2018; Ting & Hoo, 2022; Vollman & Soon, 2020), Heng Hua, Hokkien (Ting & Teng, 2021), and Teochew (Wang, 2016). These studies show that Mandarin Chinese and Chinese dialects in Malaysia are an ongoing focus.

This language status in the ethnic Chinese community in Malaysia is related to the language in China due to immigration history. Mainland China has a highly heterogeneous linguistic context, and the Chinese language has at least "2,000 more or less distinct dialects or subdialects" used among the Han Chinese (Li, 2006, p. 150). There is a general consensus among Chinese linguists that Chinese varieties fall into seven main dialect groups, each with its own subdialects: (1) Mandarin (北方方言 *Bei fang fang yan*, which is spoken in northern, northwestern, and southwestern parts of China); Mandarin Chinese is a standardised variety of *Bei fang hua*, which it takes as its

phonology, and uses standardised Chinese characters as its orthography; (2) *Wu* (吴语, *Wu yu*, which is spoken mainly in *Shanghai* and the southeastern provinces of *Jiangsu* and *Zhejiang*); (3) *Yue* (粤语 *Yue yu*, which is spoken mainly in the southern provinces of *Guangdong* and *Guangxi*); (4) *Min* (闽语, *Minyu*, which is spoken mainly in *Fujian* province—in *Taiwan* and Southeast Asia, *Min* is commonly known as Hokkien); (5) *Xiang* (湘语, *Xiang yu*, which is spoken in *Hunan* province); (6) *Gan* (赣语, *Gan yu*, which is spoken in *Jiangxi* province), and (7) *Kejia* (Hakka) (客家话, *Ke jia hua*⁵, which is mainly found in small enclaves in different provinces in southern China—notably *Guangdong*, *Guangxi*, *Fujian*, and *Sichuan*). The language groups in China reveal the linguistic and cultural diversity due to these sub-languages and sub-cultures. Among the various linguistic groups, the *Min* (Hokkien), *Yue* (Cantonese), and *Kejia* (Hakka) speaking communities are the most numerous in Malaysia (Platt, 1977). The food language is also part of language use in Chinese Malaysian society, where Mandarin Chinese and Chinese dialects are commonly used and sometimes they are mixed in use. Thus, it poses challenges to identify the elements in food names. Besides, the dialects used also bring about the cultural speciality of certain groups. Thus, it is also necessary to consider dialect-based influence in translation techniques.

1.1.4 Street Food Translation in Malaysia

This research focuses on the translation of street food in Malaysia. Unlike the

⁵ Spoken by Hakka people, “guest people” mostly in southern China (Chen, 1999; Coblin, 2000).

majority of previous research, this one does not assess the quality of the translation or offer recommendations for improving it at the end. The purpose of this research is to offer an additional cultural perspective on the intricacies involved in translating street foods in Malaysia. As Schäffner (2012) pointed out, modern translation studies are no longer concerned with examining whether a translation has been ‘faithful’ to a source text. Instead, the focus is on social, cultural, and communicative practices — on the relationship between translation behaviour and sociocultural factors. This study attempts to focus on the translation of street food eaten by Chinese Malaysians in Malaysia—specifically, the street food names of translation since “names by themselves are typical instances of language use in society” (Ang & Lam, 2015, p. 1). The street foods in this study refers to those eaten by Chinese Malaysians in Chinese communities and Chinese hawker centers. Modern sociolinguistics, at its heart, views “the language used by ordinary people in their everyday affairs” (Labov, 1972, p. 69) as its primary object of study. Drawing on a sociolinguistic approach, this study focuses on three aspects; cultural elements in street food names, translation techniques for the identified cultural elements, and the reflection of cultures in translation versions. It is hoped to have deep insights into the translations for street food names and the specialty of Malaysia. In this sense, this study is actually an interdisciplinary research in which translation, sociolinguistics, and cultural studies are all included.

There are two aspects that need to be explained. First, the translation is from Chinese to English. Chinese language (华语Hua yu) in this study refers to

Mandarin Chinese and Chinese dialects. Though Chinese language in Malaysia is a branch of global Chinese, it should be noted that Chinese language in Malaysia is not always the same as Chinese language in China—which is in the process of inheritance and development. As Wang (2019) stated, the Mandarin Chinese spoken by Chinese Malaysians is a localised variety of Mandarin with a heavy influence from Cantonese, Hokkien, and other Chinese dialects. Similarly, Chinese people (华人 Hua Ren) in this study—different from a geographical concept related to China—refer more to the ethnic Chinese group in Malaysia.

Second, the English seen in this study may not be standard English, but instead its Romanised form; this is because the translations are done by non-professional street food vendors. The community languages are often spoken within ethnic Chinese groups for existence continuation purposes. It is often the case that these community languages are nonstandard and have no orthographic system for written development (Ong & Said, 2021). Bolton (2010) pointed out that multilingual users of English are “typically always adaptable, always pragmatic, and always ready to adjust to new economic opportunities and lifestyles” (p. 465). It reflects that the use of English among them is sometimes creative and different from standard English. Thus, the target languages in the translations seen in this study may be standard English, non-standard English, and other Romanised languages. As Vollmann and Soon (2020) note, standard English, as taught in schools, is also adapted by speakers in a localised version, a new dialect or even semi-creole (a mix of languages)—a vernacular sometimes called ‘Manglish’ (Malaysian English).

There is no doubt that non-standards are varieties of English, though they lack the prestige of the standard varieties (Crystal, 2002). In other studies, given that the Roman alphabet in Singapore is primarily associated with the English language, Romanisation can be seen as Englishisation (St. André, 2006). In a similar vein, Wang and Xu (2018) noted that if a Chinese shop name in the Roman alphabet is embedded in the text of English or Malay, it is regarded as either English or Malay.

The complexity of this study is twofold. First, it is the complexity of examining translation techniques due to non-fixed translation by non-professional food vendors. Different techniques may be used in a name. Therefore, the category of translation techniques is sometimes based on the cultural elements. In some cases, it is based on the whole name of the street food.

Second, the different cultures and subcultures reflected in the translation through the geographical names and the pronunciation based on Chinese dialects are also a challenge. Some from the older generation have also shifted to speaking Mandarin Chinese with their grandchildren in order to ensure they are able to communicate in both home and family domains (Wang, 2017). Besides, people in Malaysia can mostly speak several languages and the languages or dialects they speak may be a fusion due to the language contact. The fact that most speech communities are to some extent socially and linguistically heterogeneous is a complexity that makes research far more difficult to any linguist wishing to describe a particular variety (Trudgill, 1983). This identification process requires both long-term and multiple verification. In

some cases, there is no clear boundary between one Chinese dialect and another.

1.2 Problem Statement

The translation of food menus is regarded as one of the best solutions to both increase the chance of a clients' choice in restaurant and the efficiency for restaurant owners themselves (AmirDabbaghian, 2014). The translation of foods, menu, or names, is a complement to clarifying the foods and serves as an attractive measure for broadening the scope of customers at home and abroad. Thus, an acceptable translation of foods is necessary for the restaurants and destinations. This acceptable translation is often target-oriented to promote cross-cultural communication. If the menu is not translated into a tourist's own language, the consequences can range from simple laughter to undesirable nasty misunderstandings, religious, and even health issues (such as allergies), which can have (and do) have a damaging effect—not only for the restaurant, but also for tourist destination allure and even the local economy (Fuentes-Luque, 2017). It seems that a unified target-oriented translation is used as a guide and has reached a consensus in food translation.

However, the diverse translations are often seen in different fields. For example, in relation to the translation of proper names, Chan (2018) argued that the Chinese translation of proper names has varied in both the Mainland and Hong Kong due to several historical reasons and differences in transliteration. In one of his cases, Australia is translated as 澳大利亚 *Ao Da Li Ya* in the mainland and 澳洲 *Ao Zhou* in Hong Kong. This shows that the

translation is not consistent in these two communities. From Chan's (2018) study, translations in the mainland are standardised and systematic, while those in Hong Kong are more flexible. As for brand names, the four approaches to translating from Chinese to English—*Pinyin*, literal translation, transliteration and coinage—resulted in different translations (He & Xiao, 2003).

These studies relate to the translation of names, including brand names and place names. They note that translations vary for one or a group of particular names. These issues arising from the studies on the translation of names raise a research problem as these different translation practices show that there are no fixed standards for translation. Negatively, these different translations for names might lead to conflict. In the case of Tong (2018), a small group of angry adults in Hong Kong took to the streets to protest the treatment of a cartoon character. They decided to unify the different Chinese translations of the beloved Pikachu—the iconic mascot member of the 'Pokémon' franchise—according to the Mandarin transliteration.

The challenge of inconsistency is not only evident in the translation of the above names, but also in the translation related to food names. For example, in Li's (2019) example, 麻婆豆腐 (Mapo tofu) has been translated to "Mapo Tofu (Sautéed Tofu in Hot and Spicy Sauce)," "Ma-Po Tofu (Ground pork and chunks of tofu in spicy bean paste)," and "Ma Po Tofu." Li et al.'s (2022) example showed that "mince pies" have been variously translated as "豬排" (pork steak), 細饅首 (steamed buns), 肉餅 (meat pies), 肉末餡餅 (mince fillings

pies), and 餡餅 (fillings pies).

Specifically to food translation in Malaysia, in policy, the Malaysian government does not provide requirement for food translation, which means that the translation practice is the individual behaviour of each vendor or group. In a practical situation, as an example showed, a food name 炒粿条 *chao guo tiao* (a stir-fried rice noodle food) has been variously translated to “Char Kuey Teow” (in Hokkien/Teochew), “Chao Kuey Teow” (in Cantonese), “Chao Guo Tiao” (Chinese Pinyin), “Kuetiau Goreng” (Institute of Language and Literature) and “Kuey Teow Goreng” (Department of Statistics Malaysia). This diverse phenomenon in food names reflects the language fusions of Romanised forms in a Malaysian context. This results in the translations not being able to coordinate and unify with each other—leading people to not know what to do and not knowing which official names to listen to (Li, 2021). Consequently, diverse translation versions in foodscape may lead to the misunderstandings as the foreigners may believe it a poor translation and cannot identify the food itself. Thus, it can affect tourism and local businesses in Malaysia.

There are three aspects for this problem. The first is the components of the cultural elements in the original text. There are different naming methods for the same food in accordance with that terminological problems stem from different ways of naming (Marco, 2019). For example, different Chinese-speaking regions have different naming methods for butter: 黄油 *Huang You* (yellow grease) in mainland China, 牛油 *Niu You* (cow grease) in Hong Kong, and 奶油 *Nai You* (milk grease) in Taiwan (Yue, 2014). In a Singaporean case,

the naming methods for guava (番石榴 *fan shi liu*) and pineapple (黄梨 *huang li*), differ from those used in Taiwan (芭乐 *ba le* and 凤梨 *feng li*, respectively) (St. André, 2006). This situation also exists in Chinese society in Malaysia. In personal names, the family name of 陈/陳 *Chen* in Malaysia has different written forms, *Tan* in Hokkien and Teochew, *Chin* in Hakka, *Ting* or *Ding* in Foochow, and *Chan* or *Chun* in Cantonese⁶. This reflects the diversity of the naming methods and naming methods for cultural elements in source text are not a unified form.

The second aspect turns to the non-professional translations. Most translations are required based on certain translation guidelines or theoretical foundations while non-professional translation on food names makes the translation techniques full of randomness. Professional translators would be familiar with different translation techniques and instruments, which is why some scholars find that professional translators produce better translations as they master “the techniques of translation, research and documentation” (Lee-Jahnke, 2005, p. 81). In reality, translating food menus is not often considered standard work and always is a problematic issue; as Ghafarian et al. (2016) indicated, menu translations were mostly performed by non-professionals and could not fill the cultural gap. According to Fuentes-Luque (2017), menu translation is seldom included in formal translation training programmes; furthermore, not many translation companies seem to offer menu translation services from a professional point of view. Thus, the translation of street food

⁶ 知乎 *Zhi Hu*. 你说的陈是什么陈? Tan, Chan, Chin, Ting? 大马华人的姓氏你真的搞得懂吗? Available at: <https://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/333394774>; My China Roots. Chen Surname Origins. <https://www.mychinaroots.com/surnames/detail?word=%E9%99%88>.

names is often conducted by non-professional food vendors or other laymen who translate the names based on their own realisation and preference. The lack of professional translation services in Malaysia particularly exacerbates the problem, as these translations do not follow a standard translation criteria.

Third, the challenges in translating food-related terminology, according to González-Vera (2015), include both linguistic and non-linguistic factors. This complication stems from the fact that “texts originating from a culturally diverse society might not be grounded in one particular culture” (Seong & Soon, 2001, p. 27). Both in source text and target text, the food term formation processes are not only linguistic and social activities but also cultural activities through which people from different cultures interact by negotiating and communicating different beliefs, priorities, and values about food (Li, 2021). As Nord (2005) argued, in modern multicultural societies, it cannot be regarded that a town or street represents a single homogeneous culture. For these vendors or the translation producers, who are mostly Chinese, they are from different clan origins when being traced back to immigration. They hold their own language and language variations, which reflects that this Chinese community is not a pure Mandarin Chinese-speaking society, whereas languages and dialects of each nation coexist. It is to these potential problems arising from cultural aspects that are manifested through language. Therefore, when translating in a multicultural society, it is unsurprising that translators are faced with the challenge of depicting diverse cultures or sub-cultures. This emphasizes the significance of culture in both food language and translation.

For research material, there is a gap in studies regarding the translation of street food names specifically. Literature showed that numerous articles investigated how food item translation has been dealt with, often focusing on food terms from literary translation (Oster & Molés-Cases, 2016; Moropa, 2018; Marco, 2019), audiovisual translation (Rossato, 2015), restaurant menus (Fuentes-Luque, 2017; Ghafarian et al., 2016; Graziano, 2017; Li, 2019), tourism websites (Sulaiman, 2016), or guidebooks (Reynolds, 2016). This may be because of the conventionally believed lower status of street food and its simple locations, limited environment, and potential nutritional issues. Nevertheless, based on Chiaro and Rossato's (2015) study, street food has been gentrified and elevated to the realms of haute cuisine. There is a need to fill this study gap in regard to street food name translation. The exploration of street food translations has potential to understand the complexity of food translation. Because these street food names are translated based on the vendors' perceptions without any uniform guidelines. Thus, these grassroots translations could provide diverse translations by vendors.

As for the available literature, scholars often identified the cultural elements in food names through the nomenclature. For example, Ng et al.'s (2015) category of food nomenclature proposed five main elements: ingredients, cooking methods, food attributes, commemorative aspects, and good names. However, this food nomenclature framework seen in previous studies has not been applied to street food names.

During the past decades, scholars proposed translation techniques to tackle the translation problem of food names or menus. For instance, Marco (2019) proposed a framework between English and Catalan—which are borrowing, literal translation, neutralisation, amplification or compression, intracultural adaptation, intercultural adaptation, and omission. Amenador and Wang (2022) adopted retention, literal translation, neutralisation (description, particularisation, and generalisation), amplification or condensation, intracultural adaptation, substitution, and omission for Chinese text to English. However, there is less of a one-size-fits-all taxonomy in food translation, and the existing model has not applied the translation of street food names by non-professionals.

A few studies on food translation attempts to examine the factors that influence the translator's choice of particular techniques (Amenador & Wang, 2022; Marco, 2019). For example, Marco (2019) identified the factors that influenced the choice of strategies to include varying degrees of institutionalization, different levels of granularity, and the source text item that has been transferred into the target culture—with the correlation between the translator's choice of strategy and the factors influencing them as being weak in most cases. However, no studies specifically focused on the cultural factor in food translation. This factor arises from the studies on personal names in Malaysia contexts (cf. Cheng, 2008), which shows that the Malaysian multicultural environment affects the naming differences. Considering that the relationship between food, culture, and translation remains under-researched (Chiaro & Rossato, 2015; Desjardins et al., 2015), this study focused on the

cultural factor on translation. Considering cultural factor in translation could reveal the diverse translations from a sociocultural perspective, instead of standing at the translation equivalence or translation quality.

To date, scholars have recognised the widespread increased interest in food and gastronomy at a global level. The volume of translated food-related texts has been hugely amplified (Chiaro & Rossato, 2015; Li, 2019; Rossato, 2015); this means that food-related items in translation are garnering more and more attention. However, the complex translation by non-professionals on street food names and the reflection of culture remains under-researched. The reasons for this may stem from three aspects. The studies focused either on fast food or restaurant food and decided to neglect street food. Since street food has appeared in restaurant menus, it can be believed that street food that is recognised as restaurant food could be analysed. Besides, the majority of these studies focused more on translation techniques while a very limited number of them focused on the connection between food and culture within translation; this is because the translators mostly tend to make sense of the food names for the consumers by using techniques and bridging the cultural gaps. Finally, the phenomenon of the translation of food names has location constraints due to these translations often being related to social environment.

Therefore, it is necessary to conduct more studies to explore the translation phenomenon on food names or menus. Such studies can have qualitative analysis in order to gain a deep insight of the particular food translation phenomenon. This study adopts a case study (street food names in Malaysia)

to examine the issue of translation, food, and culture. Accordingly, the cultural elements in food names are first identified. Furthermore, the translation techniques will be examined to see how street food names are translated in a Malaysian setting, even though the translations are based on the ignorance of the food vendors. Finally, cultural diversity is examined following the translation techniques to understand how cultural diversity is reflected. By such knowledge on this issue, this study aims to show that the diverse translations of street food names in Malaysia are influenced by different cultures from Malaysia and beyond. A sociolinguistic exploration reveals that the diverse translations are not translation errors but the reflection of multicultural society. Thus, it will also provide grounds for other applications of translation and cultures when translating other type of items in Malaysia.

1.3 Research Objectives

To solve the problem of the inconsistent translation of street food names due to non-professional translation and its cultural reason, the research objectives are specifically:

- (1) To identify the cultural elements in Chinese street food names in Malaysia;
- (2) To examine the translation techniques on the street food names from Chinese to English in Malaysia;
- (3) To explore the reflection of cultural diversity in the translation of street food names from Chinese to English in Malaysia.

1.4 Research Questions

Leading with the “what,” “how,” and “why,” this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- (1) RQ1: What are the cultural elements in Chinese street food names in Malaysia?
- (2) RQ2: How are the cultural elements translated from Chinese to English in Malaysia?
- (3) RQ3: How is cultural diversity reflected in the English translation of street food names in Malaysia?

The investigation into these questions may present a broad picture of the translation in Malaysia by non-professionals and unveil the cultural diversity of various ethnic groups in Malaysian society.

1.5 Scope of the Study

For the research setting, this study is conducted in Malaysia in order to collect a sufficient amount of data until data saturation. The focus on Malaysia stems from the fact that not only is the country hailed for its varied street food, but also due to its multicultural identity; this provides an abundant supply of diverse street food and environments for researchers to investigate the translation situation. This means that data collection is conducted around Malaysia and is not generalised to other places.

This study, with a sociolinguistic approach, focuses solely on the cultural factor on translation and not on gender, policy, and other sociolinguistic factors. This

is because culture is the prominent aspect in sociolinguistics. This social context or background within a community is more about history and ethnicity, whose practices fall into the culture category. Furthermore, this study focused on cultural diversity in translation while not showing cultural loss. Previous studies have found that non-translation, Chinese *Pinyin*, and transliteration techniques could result in cultural loss (cf. De Marco, 2015; Fuentes-Luque, 2017). The cultural loss is out of the scope of this study.

This study focused only on data of the written names of street food whereas other forms such as pictures and colours are not covered. This restriction is justified on the basis that many street food names have limited spaces, and their owners often lack the abilities to create formal menu and sign designs with attractive pictures. Even some of the written names are written with simple red lacquer by the owners. It is difficult to treat street food names in this study in the same vein as restaurant menus with their many expressive forms and intricacies. Besides, the food name is also a powerful element to represent culture. Compared to the fancier decorations, such as pictures and colours, the food name by itself is the original element that is ultimately being sold and being transferred as a brand culture. Names are known to be a crucial element for brand communication and are used as the first tool to convey product information to consumers (Snodin et al., 2017). Thus, confining the study to just the foods' written names does not equal the valueless or out-of-date expression of food.

Finally, this study focuses on Chinese street food names and their English translated versions. This is because English has become the primary international language, or lingua franca, in almost every field of society. In the Chinese-Malaysian community, the use of English also prevails. Chinese here refers to the Mandarin language. Mandarin Chinese is often used in the Chinese community and foods that are eaten by Chinese Malaysians. This means that street food names written by Chinese with translated English are included; this even includes the foods written by Chinese but originate from other countries, such as 东炎 *Dong Yan* (Tomyam, a family of hot and sour Thai soups. 'Tom' refers to the boiling process and 'yam' means mixed).

1.6 Significance of the Study

In the research field of translation, this study contributes to the non-professional translation. The phenomenon of non-professional translation has existed for a long time in people's daily life. Facing the complex situation of translation zones, a traditional focus on professionals is no longer sufficient to address the complexity of real-life situations of translating (Pérez-González & Susam-Saraeva, 2012). Focusing on the non-professional translation provides a version to view the translation practice. In this study, it is the non-professional translation that results in the complexity of the translation of street food names in Malaysia by different levels of bilingual food vendors who are laymen in the field of translation.

In research material, this study contributes to the food translation studies by extending food scope and specifically focuses on street food in translation.

Street food is consumed by many people and is close to people's daily lives. Reviewing the literature on street food reveals that there is paucity in previous studies that focus on translation of street food; thus, introducing street food as a specific material into translation studies expands the study of the overall food translation. This study directs attention towards the down-to-earth street food through the view of translation. Meanwhile, street food from the linguistic and translational fields is also a new insight for street food. Therefore, the move of translating street food fills the gap of food translation and street food studies.

In a research context, this study contributes to the understanding of translation outside the source and target territories for scholars. The different translation phenomenon in Malaysia provides another landscape, which opens the perceptions of scholars who are interested in translation and cultural studies. Most translation studies between Chinese and other languages remain within the territory of mainland China, Taiwan, or Hong Kong. This study provides insight for understanding the translation of Chinese street food outside China (in Chinese Malaysian society). The translation of Chinese street food in Malaysia is diverse and reflects the regional cultural retention in the multicultural Malaysian society. This will raise more understanding for translation studies for Chinese food translation, especially in Asian countries.

This study also contributes to theoretical understandings. Firstly, it provides a new angle—a sociolinguistic approach—for food translation studies, which incorporates sociolinguistics and translation. The way for translation with a sociolinguistic approach lays a solid foundation for the development of

theorising translation and society together. A sociolinguistic approach to the analysis of food names means that the social context within which the street food names have been produced—and its reflection in the language used—needs to be examined carefully for its significance (Hudson, 1996). Secondly, it deepens the model of translation techniques. For example, it is found that the borrowing technique is achieved by not only traditionally Chinese *Pinyin*, but also more Chinese dialects.

In practice, street food names represent authentic material in people's daily life—understanding these food names has considerable practical value. Ordering foods based on translated names together with the Chinese names can be one of the references for understanding the nomenclature, the cooking styles, or the origins of certain types of foods. Translation version reveals the cultural diversity, which preserves the cultures of the nation, region, or clans. Furthermore, this study contributes to the heritage of Chinese dialects. The extinction of languages may cause serious concerns for sociolinguists and the general public alike, but the disappearance of regional varieties of languages, often referred to as 'dialects,' has not been considered to be as significant (Schilling-Estes & Wolfram, 1999). As Chinese heritage languages (Ong & Ting, 2022), "the continuous use of Chinese dialects is linked to showing appreciation to their ancestors" (Ong, 2020, p. 2). Thus, the study also helps to preserve and promote cultural heritage by correctly translating names of foods that have historical significance. Finally, sociolinguistic findings from this study will shed light on the coexistence and influence of different languages and dialects in a multicultural environment. Therefore, the findings could

inform policy development and support more consistent and culturally appropriate translations in the Malaysian food industry.

1.7 Conceptual Framework

This case study is on the translation of Chinese street food names to English, followed by the core concepts: cultural diversity, translation techniques, and cultural elements. Thus the relationship between food language, translation and culture are reflected. The conceptual framework of this study is represented below (see Figure 1.1).

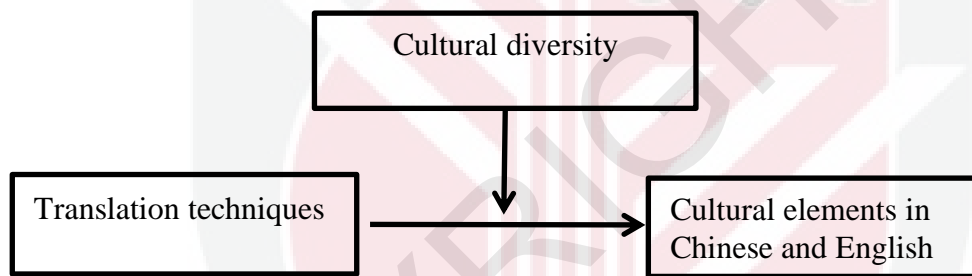


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

As Figure 1.1 shows, this study centred on the translation of street food names from Chinese to English. The cultural elements in Chinese street food names are identified. Cultural diversity as a mediation to some extent affect the translation techniques. Therefore, in the translation of street food names from Chinese to English, translation techniques (as 'how') play a role in the cultural elements (as 'what') while the cultural diversity (as 'why') plays a role in the choices of translation techniques. Further, the cultural diversity included Chinese cultures, such as Hokkien, Hakka and Cantonese sub-cultures and non-Chinese cultures, such as Malay, Japanese, Singapore and European

cultures.

1.8 Operational Definition

In this section, the definitions of some technical terms are presented. These definitions will attract the readers and lead to the main issues of this study.

- (1) Cultural elements: cultural elements in translation studies have been variously referred to as cultural references (or referents), culture-specific items, realia or culturemes (Marco, 2019). Food-related cultural elements are defined as those food- or drink-related items that refer to realities that either do not exist as such in the target culture or reveal significant mismatches across cultures (Marco, 2019). In this study, cultural elements in street food names refer to those food names or parts of a food name that are specific in source texts.
- (2) Chinese languages: Chinese languages refer to Mandarin Chinese and Chinese dialects (Li & Duff, 2008). “The dialects of the Chinese sub-groups are not written languages but the Chinese characters are the same no matter which variety of spoken Chinese is used” (Ting & Pua, 2015, p. 118). In this study, standard Chinese is referred to as Mandarin in Malaysia, Singapore and Canada, and *Putonghua* in China. The dialects of Chinese sub-groups include Foochow, Hakka, Hokkien, Teochew, Hainan, and Cantonese.
- (3) Clan: made up of kinship-bound families (Yen, 1981), a clan is a group formed with a patrilineal blood relationship based on a common ancestor at its core (Sun, 2005). According to Acs and Dana (2001), Chinese clan associations possessed the function of affiliation with one’s dialect group. Chinese clan jetties in Penang have been integrated into the UNESCO world heritage list (Bideau & Kilani, 2009). In this study, clan refers to a group that holds the same dialect and shares the same origin.

- (4) Cultural diversity: Cultural diversity refers to the presence of various cultural groups with distinct values, traditions, customs, languages, and lifestyles within a broader community, organisation, or society. In this study, cultural diversity is reflected through languages, especially the language markers with geographical names, clan names, and pronunciations of a specific cultural group.
- (5) Dialect: dialect can be viewed as distinctive linguistic features of a language used by a given group of people within a particular geographical location to communicate (Petyt, 1980). In China, dialect written with 方言 *fangyan*, also called regional speech, is preferable to refer to any of the Chinese regional language varieties. The term “Chinese topolect” is used to differentiate mutually unintelligible regional languages—such as Cantonese, Hokkien, and Hakka—from Mandarin (Carstens & Ang, 2019). In this study, the term “dialect” is still used, referring to variants of the Chinese language on the local level, especially the language varieties from Hakka, Cantonese, and Hokkien related to the migration of southeastern China.
- (6) English: there are major varieties of English (e.g., British, American, Australian, Indian, etc.) and new varieties of Asian English (e.g., China English, Hong Kong English, and Vietnam English). In the Malaysian context, Standard English is generally equated to Standard British English (cf. Morais, 2000). However, there is no single named language without any varieties, and languages and language varieties are constantly changing as they are used as English (Otheguy et al., 2015). In this study, English refers to a collective concept that includes standard and non-standard English or Romanised languages.
- (7) Food translation: food translation refers to the translation of food items, recipes, and textual representations of food events (Cronin, 2015). The names of foods reflect the daily beliefs and culture of the Chinese people since the Malaysian Chinese’s ancestors migrated (Ng et al., 2015). In this study, food translation is confined in items/names of Chinese street food in Malaysia.

- (8) Mandarin: there are different terms—such as *Guo Yu* (national language), *Han Yu* (the language of the Hans), *Putonghua* (the common language), and Mandarin—for standard Chinese. This is sensitive in word choice since there is not only ethnic Chinese but also indigenous Malays, the Indians, and other ethnic groups. In multicultural Malaysia (in this study)—it uses Mandarin or Mandarin Chinese to refer to the standard Chinese.
- (9) Non-professional: the term “non-professional” is used for the first time in relation to interpreting by Knapp-Potthoff and Knapp (1987), who see a non-professional interpreter as one who “at the same time functions as a transmitter of the message of S_A and S_B and as a mediator between conflicting viewpoints, assumptions, and presuppositions” (Knapp-Potthoff & Knapp, 1987, p. 183). In this study, non-professional translation refers to the translation carried out by “individuals not only without formal training in linguistic mediation but also working for free” (Pérez-González & Susam-Saraeva, 2012, p. 151).
- (10) Street food: street food is widely defined as ready-to-eat foods and beverages prepared and/or sold by vendors or hawkers—especially in the streets and other similar places by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (FAO, 2017), and sold on the street proper—from trucks and in small brick-and-mortar storefronts (Parasecoli, 2021). In this study, street foods specifically refer to the foods sold by individual vendors or hawkers in the streets or hawker centres; street food here refers to food eaten by Chinese Malaysians whereas the vendors might not be Chinese people and the foods may not be of Chinese origins such as Udon Noodle (Japanese stir fried noodles).
- (11) Translation technique: translation techniques are “procedures to analyse and classify how translation equivalence works” (Molina & Hurtado, 2002, p. 509). In comparison, translation strategy consists in “the procedures (conscious or unconscious, verbal or nonverbal) used

by the translator to solve problems that emerge when carrying out the translation process with a particular objective in mind” (p. 508). In this study, the translation technique is different from strategy mainly in scope and its unconscious action due to the non-professional nature is in reference to a concrete strategy to look into how street food written in Chinese is translated into English.

- (12) Transliteration: transliteration refers to the culture-specific items that are translated by its closest corresponding target language sound—it can also be referred to as phonetic translation (Liang, 2016). In this study, transliteration was used in parallel to natural borrowing. Besides standard Chinese *Pinyin*, transliteration means that Chinese dialects, such as Hokkien and Cantonese, are written using Romanised alphabets according to their respective pronunciation (Said & Ong, 2019b).

1.9 Structure of the Thesis

This study consists of five chapters, which are as follows. Chapter One introduces the background—with respect to sociolinguistics and translation, food translation, and culture—in a sociolinguistic context in Malaysia. Furthermore, it states the research problem, as well as the research objectives and questions. It also points out the scope, highlights the significance of the study, covers the conceptual framework, and lists the study’s limitations. Finally, the definition of key terms is presented.

Chapter Two contains the literature review of existing studies of street food and non-professional translation. Then, it reviews the food names from nomenclature and translation techniques, and cultural diversity in language studies that are in line with the three presented research questions. It also

reviews the theoretical foundation and research methods on the translation of food names. After reviewing the sociolinguistic approach in translation, the theoretical framework is constructed.

Chapter Three discusses the research design, sample, data collection, and data analysis pertaining to the research questions. The research design shows the nature of the study and research approaches. The sample illustrates the sample type, sampling method, and sample size. The data collection stage shows the collection procedures. The data analysis is divided into three parts according to the three research questions. Lastly, trustworthiness of the research, pilot study, and ethical considerations are shown.

Chapter Four presents the results of the study—interwoven with discussion of the data in relation to the research questions. This chapter identifies the cultural elements in nomenclature of street food names, explores the translation techniques used in cultural elements, and examines how diverse cultures are reflected through translation techniques.

Finally, Chapter Five offers the conclusion of the study by outlining the major findings, implications, contributions, and recommendations for further studies. The major findings will respond to the diversity problem stated in Chapter One. The implications are given from aspects of translation studies, cultural studies, Chinese studies, and pedagogy. The contributions are proposed, both in theoretical and practical aspects. Lastly, recommendations are shown to enlarge this research.

1.10 Conclusion of the Chapter

Chapter One serves as an introduction to the current study. A broad picture is drawn in the background, showing sociolinguistics and translation and leading to street food translation in Malaysia. Three concepts—cultural elements, translation techniques, and cultural diversity—are introduced as the focus of this current study. The scope, significance, and limitations are also demonstrated to fulfil the introduction. In the next chapter, previous studies related to the focus of the current study will be elaborated on.

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