

# Systematic Literature Review of Food-Related Translation From 2004 to 2024

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**Abstract**—Despite the wide recognition of food as an essential human necessity and cultural representation of a country in multiple disciplines, its exploration within translation studies remains under-researched. Therefore, a comprehensive review of food-related translation is vital. The current research systematically reviews previous studies on food-related translation in the past two decades (2004-2024) by searching relevant literature in two databases: Web of Science and Scopus. Through pre-defined screening criteria, along with analysis of titles, abstracts, keywords, and full papers (when necessary), 85 pertinent publications were identified and examined in terms of annual distribution, research types, research methods, textual types, and research contents. The main findings suggest that the academic interest in food translation initially peaked around 2015-2016, followed by a period of irregular fluctuations in publication volume, with a notable surge observed in the most recent three years (2022-2024). Furthermore, the results indicate a predominance of empirical research over non-empirical one, with qualitative research being dominant followed by mixed research. Additionally, the findings reveal that research into food-related translation spans a variety of textual types, ranging from early printed restaurant menus and literary texts to more contemporary genres such as audiovisual products, mobile applications, and video games, with a special focus on the exploration of translation strategies employed when rendering dish names from one language to another. This study contributes to the existing literature by identifying the research gaps and trends, as well as providing corresponding recommendations for future researchers to study food-related translation.

**Index Terms**—food-related translation, methodological trends, research gaps, systematic literature review, translation studies

## I. INTRODUCTION

In today's cosmopolitan society, the growing interest in gastronomy has facilitated the booming development of food studies (Chen & Xie, 2024). This is because food, being a basic necessity for survival, growth, and well-being, entails much more than what we eat (Amenador & Wang, 2023). It is also a potent lens for reflecting cultural beliefs, traditions, religion, values, social background (Vidal-Claramonte & Faber, 2017), historical background, and the identities of different nationalities (González-Vera, 2015). Given its importance, significant achievements have been made in studying food mainly from interdisciplinary perspectives of anthropology, sociology, geography, and history (Lawson-Welsh, 2017). However, there is still a lack of extensive research in translation studies when it comes to examining food (Desjardins et al., 2015), which is echoed by Chiaro and Rossato (2015) who stated that “scholars have so far tended to neglect, ignore or overlook the conceptual connections and familiarities between food and language in different societies and cultures” (p. 241). Consequently, a more systematic review is needed to comprehensively identify research gaps and methodological trends in existing scholarly works related to the translation of food.

Compared with traditional literature reviews conducted by selecting materials mostly based on the researchers' own understanding and subjectivity (Wang, 2022), a systematic literature review was carried out in the current research by following the PRISMA framework to examine food-related translation in translation studies within the past twenty years (2004-2024), to maintain objectivity to the maximum extent. The relevant publications were thoroughly examined from five aspects: annual distribution, research types, research methods, textual types, and research contents.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this systematic literature review primarily includes five steps: database selection, inclusion and exclusion criteria, keyword retrieval, data extraction, and data analysis. The details of each step are as follows.

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### A. Database Selection

Regarding the choice of databases, Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus were selected for literature retrieval. The rationale for this choice lies in that WoS is widely acknowledged as a comprehensive database encompassing an extensive array of peer-reviewed journals in the social sciences (Steinhardt et al., 2017), while Scopus is described as the largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature (Wang, 2022), thereby ensuring a more exhaustive search of the literature. Excluding other widely used databases such as Google Scholar was deliberate, as it lacks 'advanced search features' that are essential for efficiently screening process of titles, abstracts, and keywords in a systematic literature review. The keywords employed to search for articles in WoS and Scopus were 'translation' AND 'food'.

### B. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Before launching the review, the inclusion and exclusion criteria have been specified to determine which studies should be considered for inclusion in the review and which ones should be excluded. These criteria help ensure the selection of relevant and high-quality literature. The details of the inclusion and exclusion criteria are shown in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1  
INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
a. The publications must be scholarly journal papers, conference papers, and conference proceedings.	1) Unrelated studies such as publications on subjects of biochemistry, genetics and molecular biology, medicine, agricultural and biological sciences should be excluded. Although the terms "food" and "translation" are contained in titles, abstracts and keywords, the term "translation" here has a specific meaning related to the process of translating genetic information from RNA to protein.
b. The publication must contain "food" and "translation" in its title, abstract, and keywords.	2) Publications that feature "food" and "translation" in the abstract but are not mentioned in the main content should be excluded.
c. The date of publication must be within the range from 2004 to 2024.	3) Certain publication types such as thesis, books, book chapters, and editorials should be excluded.
d. The publications must be written in English.	4) Publications whose full texts are not available online should be excluded.
	5) Studies published in other languages such as French, Portuguese, and Spanish rather than English should be excluded.

### C. PRISMA Workflow

Concerning the extraction of data, the literature review was carried out following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) workflow. The rationale behind the choice of this approach lies in that it is a commonly used system that offers standardized methods and guidelines for systematic literature review (Wang et al., 2020). The PRISMA flow diagram consists of four key stages: identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and eventual inclusion of selected articles. Figure 1 below illustrates the flow of information across the various stages of this systematic literature review.

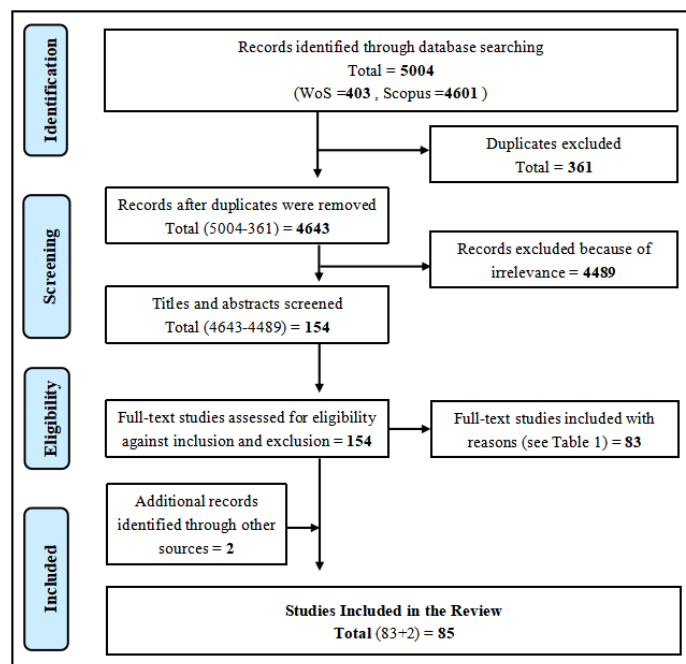


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Chart of the Systematic Literature Review

Illustrated in Figure 1, during the identification phase, a total of 5004 records of studies were initially retrieved, of which 4601 from Scopus and 403 from WoS. The count was reduced to 4643 after duplicates were removed. However, concerning the previously established exclusion criteria, 4489 papers within the domains of biochemistry, genetics, molecular biology, and other sciences were excluded, because the term ‘translation’ refers to the transformation of genes in these fields, and has nothing to do with the linguistic transfer between two different languages. The remaining number of papers featuring both ‘translation’ and ‘food’ in their titles, abstracts, or keywords amounted to 154. Nevertheless, due to the possibility that the two terms ‘food’ and ‘translation’ were isolated words that just happened to be mentioned in the background of the research and may not have been integral to the research content, the articles left in this screening stage can not guarantee the utility of all these papers for the review. Subsequently, a comprehensive assessment of the full texts of these 154 papers was conducted to ascertain their eligibility. Those articles lacking ‘food translation’ as research objectives or research contents were excluded. Eventually, following the three phases of identification, screening, and eligibility assessment, 85 pertinent studies, spanning the years 2004-2024, were included for qualitative analysis.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

With the aim of drawing meaningful conclusions, data were reviewed and synthesized after extracting the eligible papers mainly from five aspects: annual distribution, research types, research methods, textual types, and research contents. The results are based upon data organization and statistics.

#### A. Annual Distribution

Figure 2 presents the yearly trend in the distribution of publications on food-related translation from 2004 to 2024, exhibiting irregular fluctuations rather than a consistent upward trajectory in the past twenty years, which can be roughly divided into four stages. Firstly, between 2004 and 2014, the field recorded minimal scholarly output - only 0 to 3 publications per year. This low level of activity can likely be attributed to the niche nature of food-related translation, which received limited academic attention, as well as to the insufficient interdisciplinary collaboration between translation studies and food sciences during that period. Secondly, the years 2015 and 2016 witnessed a sudden surge in academic publications, with 12 articles in 2015 and 10 in 2016. This proliferation is based on the fact that two international conferences entitled ‘Food and Culture in Translation’ were held in Italy, and special issues on food translation were published in two prestigious journals, namely *The Translator* and *Semiotica* in 2015 and 2016, respectively (Li, 2019). Thirdly, following the peak period, scholarly output experienced fluctuations between 2017 and 2021. Specifically, the annual number of publications declined to a range of 5 to 7 from 2017 to 2019, and then fell sharply to 2 in 2020 and 1 in 2021. The explanation for this phenomenon is likely tied to the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted academic research, conferences, and fieldwork. Lastly, a recovery and renewed growth was observed between 2022 and 2024, with the number of publications increasing to 7 in 2022, 10 in 2023, and 12 in 2024. This upward trend may be linked to post-pandemic recovery with a renewed focus on food systems, as well as the growing need for diversified food-related translation practices nowadays (Chen & Xie, 2024). This demand has been driven by advancements in technology, such as translation memories, computer-assisted translation, machine translation, wiki-

translation, and AI-driven translation technology, which invoke technology in various ways to deal with the ever-expanding demand for translated text (Cronin, 2015; Siu, 2024), including translations of food-related texts.

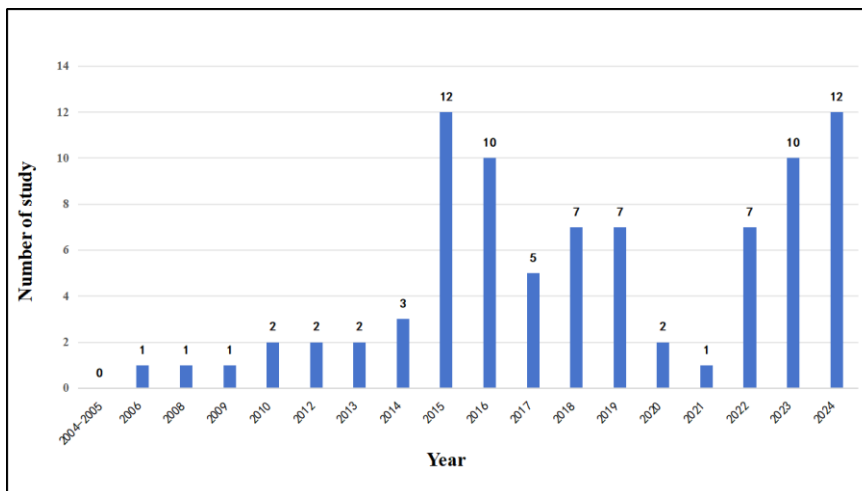


Figure 2. Annual Distribution of Relevant Studies (2004-2024)

### B. Research Types

Drawing on a categorization adopted by Gao et al. (2001) and Li (2020), all collected studies were categorized into empirical and non-empirical studies when conducting this systematic literature review. An empirical study is based on whether its data is systematically collected and analyzed (Li, 2020), while non-empirical studies focus on theoretical analysis and examination of existing literature and concepts (Gao et al., 2001). As shown in Figure 3, out of the 85 relevant studies, 77 were empirical studies, accounting for 90.6%, whereas only 8 articles were categorized as non-empirical studies, making up 9.4%. These results suggest a strong preference for empirical research within the field of food translation studies, as evidenced by numerous case studies (e.g., Ruzaitė, 2006; Gaspari, 2015; Ghafarian et al., 2016; Al-Rousan & Haider, 2022; Shmiher & Naniak, 2023; Inphen, 2024; etc.), thus reflecting a broader trend in translation studies toward evidence-based investigations.

Despite the dominance of empirical research, a limited number of non-empirical, purely theoretical research remains essential in advancing the field of food translation, as they can establish foundational concepts, frameworks, and models that guide empirical studies, and allow for the examination of new and complex issues in food translation without relying on data collection. For example, Cronin (2015) examines the intertwined evolution of food production and translation, highlighting how technological advances are reshaping both fields. The study argues that the technologisation of food production provides valuable insights for the future direction of translation as both a profession and a research domain. Besides, the commentary by Lawson-Welsh (2017) responds to Vidal-Claramonte and Faber's article on food and translation in mestizo writing by exploring how food and translation intersect in cross-cultural contexts. The paper argues that food, like language, functions as a semiotic system that encodes cultural identities and hybridity. Retaining untranslated food-related terms in mestizo literature is framed as a political act that resists dominant languages and power asymmetries.

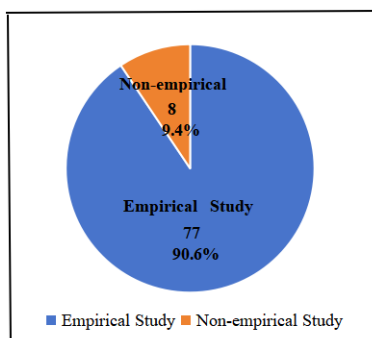


Figure 3. Distribution of Research Types of Relevant Studies (2004-2024)

### C. Research Methods

According to the methods used in the phases of data collection, research design, sample size, and data analysis, empirical studies can be further categorized into qualitative, quantitative, and mixed research. On the one hand, qualitative research is an in-depth exploration process of understanding a social or human problem by analyzing words,

reporting detailed views of informants, and conducting the study in a natural setting (Creswell, 2009). Quantitative research, on the other hand, is characterized by its quantification of data, which relates to research design, several independent variables, and statistical analysis (Henning, 1986; Li, 2020). Moreover, a mixed-methods approach is typically defined as using both qualitative and quantitative approaches simultaneously (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014).

As for the research methods employed in the collected studies concerning food-related translation, three notable observations can emerge from Figure 4. Firstly, qualitative methods were overwhelmingly preferred by most researchers, constituting 68 out of 85 studies (80%). Its usage surged notably in 2015 with 11 studies and remained high in subsequent years, peaking again in 2024 with 8 studies. This trend highlights a strong inclination toward exploratory, context-driven analyses within the field. Secondly, mixed methods were employed 17 times, ranking second overall. Initially appearing in 2015 with a single study, their adoption was intermittent until 2018, after which their usage steadily increased - reaching a peak of 4 studies in 2024. This pattern indicates a growing recognition among scholars of the benefits of integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches to enhance methodological diversity in food-related translation (e.g., Gaspari, 2015; Oster & Molés-Cases, 2016; Lim, 2018; Marco, 2019; Amenador & Wang, 2022; Haider et al., 2023; Al-Batineh, 2024; etc.). Thirdly, no studies employed purely quantitative methods (0 out of 85) in food-related translation studies. This absence is likely because food translation involves intricate cultural, social, and linguistic elements that are often difficult to reduce to numerical data, which usually requires interpretative, qualitative, or mixed methods to capture their full significance.

In food-related translation studies, researchers commonly employ mixed methods that integrate a descriptive case study for qualitative analysis - aimed at identifying the translation strategies used and the factors that influence their selection - with a corpus-based method for extracting pertinent data and conducting quantitative analysis (Amenador & Wang, 2023). The rationale for the application of a corpus-based approach in Translation Studies primarily stems from the availability of extensive collections of authentic texts (corpora), which allow researchers to use statistical tools to analyze the frequency and distribution of linguistic features, thereby facilitating a more objective and holistic investigation. A typical illustrative example is provided by Marco (2019), who examined how food-related culture-specific items (CSI) are translated from English into Catalan within the Valencian Corpus of Translated Literature. Using corpus analysis via the Corpus Query Processor, the research identifies prevailing translation techniques and the factors influencing their choice. Findings indicate that neutralizing techniques are most common, followed by foreignizing and domesticating techniques. Key influencing factors include the absence of equivalent items in the target culture, levels of institutionalization, the importation of source items, and varying granularity. Similarly, Li et al. (2022) conducted a corpus-based analysis by integrating House's Translation Quality Assessment framework to evaluate how Jane Austen's food depictions are translated and received in Chinese contexts. Using an English Austen corpus alongside a self-built diachronic corpus of Chinese translations from 1935 onward, the study reveals that translating Austen's culinary references requires dynamic strategies that bridge cultural and temporal gaps. Early translations domesticated these references for Chinese audiences, whereas later versions reflect a more contemporary, Western culinary influence.

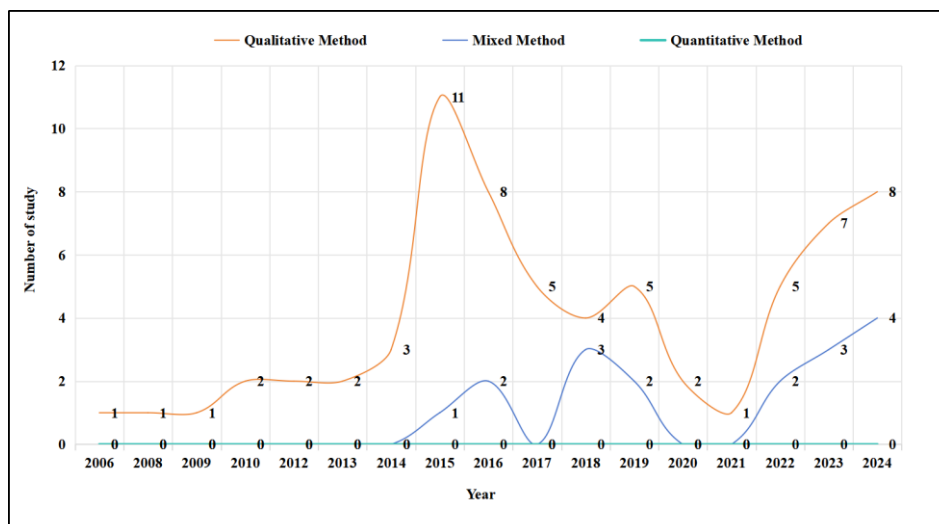


Figure 4. Distribution of Research Methods of Relevant Studies (2004-2024)

#### D. Textual Types

In the process of conducting this literature review, it was found that the translation of food-related texts spans a variety of textual types, reflecting the diverse ways in which culinary information is communicated. Some common textual types are displayed in Figure 5. Obviously, the number of literary texts and restaurant printed menus is much higher than other text types in food-related translation studies, ranking first and second with 25 and 20 articles,

respectively. This reflects the traditional focus of translation studies on cultural-artistic expression (literature) and pragmatic-functional communication (menus) (Yu & Geng, 2018). Specifically, the primary focus, on the one hand, is on examining how food and drink-related items are translated within literary texts across diverse socio-historical contexts. The investigation spans several genres, mainly including children's literature (e.g., Hagfors, 2003; Borodo, 2019; Panou, 2022), criminal literature (e.g., Anderson, 2016; Huet, 2024), and diasporic literature (e.g., Karas, 2022; Vidal-Claramonte, 2024). On the other hand, another major focus in food-related translation studies is exploring strategies for rendering dish names, ingredients, and food-related descriptions in restaurant menus across various language pairs (e.g., Petronienė et al., 2019; Pratama, 2023).

As can be seen in Figure 5, the third-ranked text type involving food-related translation is audiovisual products with 13 publications, which is driven by technological and multimedia advancements. However, the earliest retrieved food-related translation in audiovisual media dates back to 2015, corroborating Rossato's (2015) claim that despite extensive research on food as a culture-specific challenge in films and fictional TV series, this topic has not been sufficiently explored across all audiovisual texts. Currently, researchers primarily focus on how to use effective translation strategies for subtitle translation, dubbing and cultural adaptation in animation (e.g., González-Vera, 2015; Minutella, 2023), cookery TV series (e.g., Rossato, 2015), film (e.g., Cavaliere, 2018; Monti, 2019), and reality food competition shows (e.g., Farghal et al., 2023). For instance, Cavaliere (2018) explored the translation of food-related terms in audiovisual media through a corpus-based, descriptive analysis of 25 food-centric films. The research compared translation strategies in English audio scripts with their Italian subtitles. The results reveal that while the basic meanings of food terms are generally preserved, humorous elements often become diluted or lost due to linguistic constraints and inherent untranslatability. It also observes a trend toward foreignization in newer films, suggesting that subtitlers increasingly retain elements of the source language's cultural flavor. In summary, the shift from traditional printed texts to audiovisual products indicates a move toward a more dynamic, multimodal approach in translation research that mirrors global digital media trends.

In addition to being abundantly present in the first three text types, food-related translation is also evident in instructional and technical texts. Specifically, instructional texts comprise those providing instructions for preparing dishes, such as cookery books, recipes, and magazines (e.g., Chiaro, 2008; Chen et al., 2023), while technical texts associated with food science cover food labels, food packaging and food instructions (e.g., Gao, 2015; Yang, 2015). The gap between their numbers (6 publications vs 4 publications) suggests a stronger academic focus on consumer-oriented content over specialized scientific discourse in food-related translation studies. Furthermore, an equal number of articles address food advertising and marketing materials (e.g., Al-Rousan & Haider, 2022) as well as food-related websites (e.g., Sulaiman, 2016), with 3 publications corresponding to each textual type. Both categories share a focus on persuasive communication and cultural adaptation of food-related content. Nevertheless, their relatively low numbers indicate a largely unexplored opportunity for research in global branding and digital consumer engagement. Additionally, research on food-related translation in tourist leaflets and travel brochures (e.g., De Marco, 2015), food delivery apps (e.g., Al-Batineh, 2024), and mobile video games (e.g., Al-Batineh, 2023) is evenly represented, with 2 publications each. These categories converge at the intersection of technology, tourism, and entertainment. However, the limited number of studies suggests that these emerging fields remain under-explored, highlighting the need for further research.

To sum up, the quantity distribution of textual types covering food-related translation reflects a dual emphasis on tradition (e.g., literary texts, restaurant menus) and innovation (e.g., audiovisual products, mobile apps), mirroring broader research trends toward digital and multimedia platforms. With regard to the remaining 7 publications that do not fit into the previously mentioned textual types, most of them are purely theoretical articles in nature. They delve into themes such as culinary identity and representation, translation quality assessment in culinary texts, and the interconnection among food translation, immigration, and national identity. This will be discussed in detail in the following about the research contents of food-related translation.

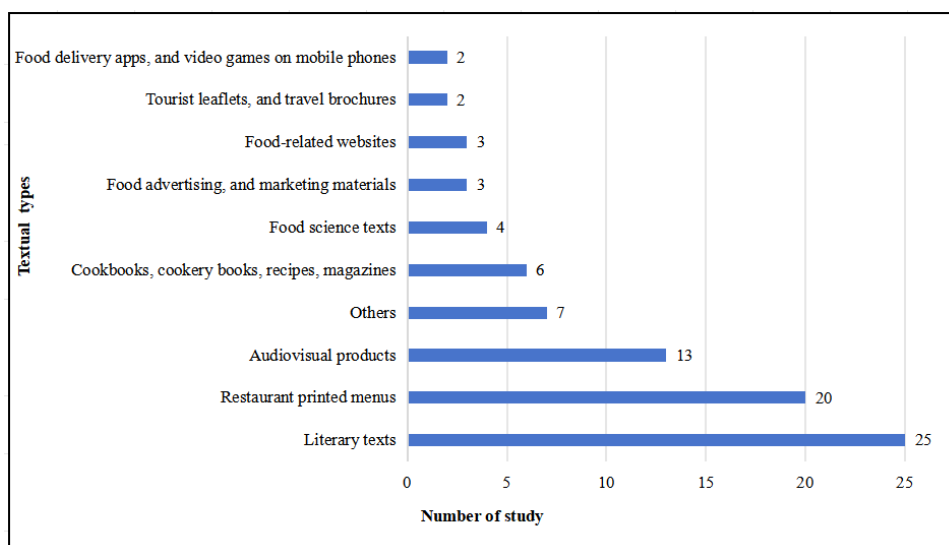


Figure 5. Distribution of Textual Types of Relevant Studies (2004-2024)

### E. Research Contents

In terms of the main research contents covered in food-related translation, its exploration encompasses a diverse range that can be roughly classified into eight categories. As shown in Figure 6, the predominant focus is on the examination of translation strategies employed when translating food-related elements from a source language into a target one. This is the most foundational aspect, addressing the various methods translators use when rendering dish names, descriptions, and culturally laden expressions in food-related texts (e.g., Liao, 2015; Petronienè et al., 2019). Compared with a small portion of studies concentrating exclusively on translation strategy, a greater number of food-related translation studies also probe into the underlying reasons and influencing factors that affect the selection of certain strategies (e.g., Marco, 2019; Amenador & Wang, 2022). For instance, in the translation of culture-specific items in a Chinese-English food menu corpus, Amenador and Wang (2022) found that neutralizing strategy was adopted more frequently than both foreignizing and domesticating strategies. This decision was affected by several factors, including the metonymical or metaphorical use of culture-specific items, brand considerations, the polysemous nature of the source culture-specific items, the level of cultural distinctiveness, and potential misconnections between the source text and target text items. Understanding these factors provides insight into why translators select different strategies in varying contexts and how external elements, such as audience expectations, influence these decisions.

Besides, food translation plays a significant role in reflecting national identity by capturing the unique culinary traditions, flavors, and cultural aspects associated with a particular country. A case in point is that mestizo writers utilize food to symbolize the conflicting identities and values between their culture and the more dominant culture (Vidal-Claramonte & Faber, 2017). Furthermore, the dynamic interplay between food and migration is also frequently investigated in food translation studies (e.g., Karas, 2022; Vidal-Claramonte, 2024). This is because, in the context of migration or exile, specific food items often become 'agents of memory' (Möhring, 2024). Additionally, some researchers examine the relationship between food, language, translation, and culture from a broader global perspective (e.g., Chiaro & Rossato, 2015; Garzone, 2017). These studies look at how food is not merely a physical entity but also a cultural symbol that carries embedded meanings, how language encodes these cultural nuances, and how translation mediates this relationship.

Illustrated by Figure 6, the application of dish name translation in language learning and teaching is another focus in the area of food-related translation (e.g., Graziano, 2019; Chen et al., 2023). Serving as practical tools for teaching vocabulary, cultural context, and translation techniques of dish names, the combination of these two different fields aims to enhance students' language skills and cultural awareness by introducing and discussing the translation of dish names in the context of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), English as a Second Language (ESL), or English for Specific Purposes (ESP). In addition to their literal meanings, some metaphorical expressions pertinent to food pose unique and intriguing challenges for translators. This is because different cuisines and culinary practices carry distinct cultural values, leading to significant differences in food-related metaphors. As a result, translating metaphorical expressions associated with food has become a research topic in some translation studies (e.g., Kou & Liang, 2022).

It is worth mentioning that, with ongoing technological progress and the rise of multimedia, scholars are increasingly examining the multimodal dimensions of food-related translation (e.g., Al-Batineh, 2024; Chen & Xie, 2024). Specifically, in addition to investigating the translation strategy for dish names, researchers are now exploring the integration of text and images in both printed restaurant menus and mobile app menus. Take Chen and Xie's (2024) study as an example. They explore Macao's unique foodscape and hybrid culinary cultures through the translation of

Macanese cuisine. Employing a corpus-assisted multimodal approach grounded in intersemiotic translation and multimodal theories, the study builds a self-constructed database of cuisine translations. It analyzes dish names to examine ingredients and cooking methods, and then investigates the translation strategies used across Portuguese, English, and Chinese. The multimodal analysis reveals how verbal and visual elements interact to highlight specific ingredients, cooking techniques, and the visual appeal of dishes, ultimately conveying the diverse and integrated culinary culture of Macao while enriching food translation research.

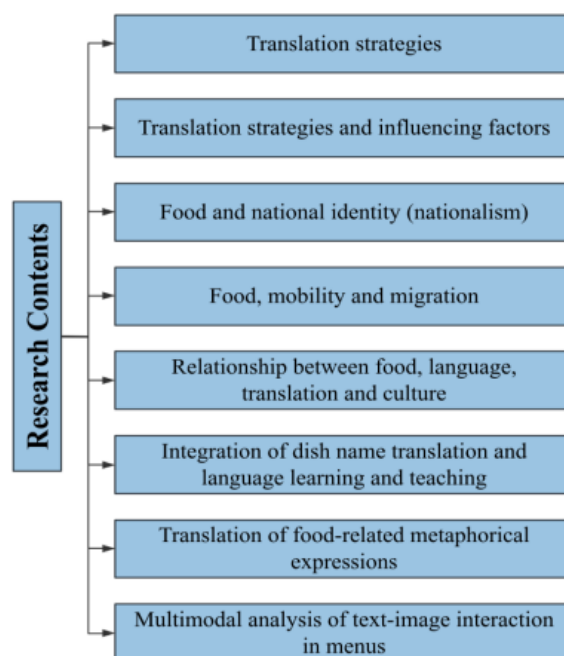


Figure 6. Categories of Research Contents of Relevant Studies (2004-2024)

Based on the discussions of research findings above, the existing literature on food-related translation from 2004-2024 was reviewed in a systematic way, including annual distribution, research types, research methods, textual types, and research contents. Therefore, the current study contributes to consolidating the current body of knowledge on food-related translation, identifying gaps in the literature, and providing practical recommendations for future researchers and practitioners.

#### IV. GAPS AND FUTURE AGENDA

Despite the considerable progress achieved in the field of food-related translation over the last two decades, there are still gaps in the existing body of research. In this section, these research gaps in food-related translation identified through the current systematic review will be elaborated from the following three aspects. Additionally, corresponding recommendations will be proposed to address these gaps and guide future research.

##### A. Gaps in Annual Distribution of Publications

As shown in Figure 2, the annual publication trend in food-related translation reveals an erratic pattern rather than a steadily increasing number over the past twenty years. This instability suggests that food-related translation is not considered a hot topic with much academic appeal, which received comparatively limited attention from researchers, especially between 2004 and 2014, resulting in insufficient exploration of the subject. Accordingly, it is essential for scholars themselves to acknowledge the profound importance of food. As Garzone (2017) emphasizes, “food and eating are not only part of the biological processes aimed at sustenance, but comprise a set of products and actions that reflect culture, values, identities, ethnicities, and religions, and works as a system of communication” (p. 214). Recognizing this multifaceted role is beneficial for inspiring researchers to adopt interdisciplinary approaches and innovative methodologies to explore the translation of food-related texts.

Moreover, as previously mentioned, the significant increase in the number of publications during 2015 and 2016 was closely linked to international conferences and special journal issues focusing on food-related translation. This surge clearly demonstrates the powerful impact that external academic events can have on research productivity. In view of this, it is advisable for academic institutions and professional organizations to regularly host conferences, workshops, and seminars specifically dedicated to food translation. Such curated academic events offer a vital platform for scholars to share their research findings, engage in in-depth discussions, and exchange innovative ideas, thus stimulating their sustained interest in the realm of food translation studies.

##### B. Gaps in Research Types and Research Methods

According to Gambier and Van-Doorslaer (2013), empirical research has been an essential part in the field of Translation Studies. This is supported by the dominance of empirical research in food-related translation as shown in Figure 3. However, there is a clear need for more non-empirical, theoretical studies, as “even empirical research generally is based on theoretical assumptions and/or supposed to develop or refine theories” (Gambier & Van-Doorslaer, 2013, p. 53). In light of this, future researchers are expected to focus on developing robust conceptual frameworks, models, and foundational theories that can guide empirical investigations on food-related translation. On the other hand, as argued by Saldanha and O’Brien (2014), “good empirical research needs to be based on conceptual research, to be useful, needs to be supplemented by evidence” (p. 18). In other words, empirical and non-empirical research complement each other and are equally important. Consequently, scholars engaged in food-related translation in the future can blend empirical and theoretical methodologies to enrich the field by not only validating theoretical models with real-world data, but also revealing nuances that pure empirical research might overlook, such as abstract cultural, ethical, or linguistic dimensions of food translation.

Regarding the gaps in research methods, while qualitative methods have largely prevailed in the field of food-related translation, it is observed that many researchers adopting qualitative methods failed to offer a full description of their research procedures, such as research design, the rationale for sample selection, and data collection procedures. Take menu translation as an example. Most researchers often fail to explain why they chose one restaurant’s menu over another, the reasoning behind a particular sample size, or when data saturation was achieved. In this sense, the lack of detailed methodological explanation makes qualitative studies less transparent compared to quantitative ones, which can inevitably lead to analysis that relies heavily on the researcher’s subjective judgment and potentially introduces bias. Given this, it is recommended that future researchers could adopt mixed methods to enhance the reliability of research findings, especially the usage of a corpus-based approach in translation studies, which has become a research area of growing interest along with the advent of large-scale corpora and the development of language processing software tools (Feng, 2016). For instance, using a corpus-based quantitative approach to identify common patterns in terms of linguistic features, frequency, and usage of specific terms in different contexts in large-scale corpora, while exploring specific instances of translation strategies and cultural elements in food-related texts in greater detail using qualitative methods. This dual approach could mitigate the limitations of purely qualitative methods by providing a more balanced and objective foundation for data analysis.

### *C. Gaps in Textual Types and Research Contents*

Another noticeable research gap is the uneven distribution of textual types related to food translation. Although conventional printed materials, namely literary texts and restaurant printed menus, have been the primary focus (Rossato, 2015), audiovisual products have become indispensable in various aspects of daily lives, and have gained extensive prevalence in society due to the rapid development of multimedia (Abu-Rumman et al., 2023). As a consequence, it is suggested that future research could diversify by broadening the range of textual types and embracing digital and multimedia research. More specifically, researchers are supposed to examine the challenges and strategies for food-related translation in emerging textual forms, such as TV cookery shows, mobile apps, food-related websites, and even mobile video games. On top of this, the distribution of textual types shows a stronger focus on consumer-oriented texts (e.g., cookery books, recipes) compared to specialized technical texts (e.g., food labels, packaging). In view of this, future studies should aim to bridge this gap by conducting comparative analyses, thereby enriching the understanding of both everyday and technical aspects of food translation. In addition, as global interactions and cultural exchanges continue to expand, international travel and tourism among countries are experiencing a rapid expansion. Therefore, it is advisable to study translations of promotional materials covering food-related contents, such as culinary tour guides, and travel brochures.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study launched a systematic literature review of previous studies on food-related translation retrieved from Scopus and WoS in the past two decades (2004-2024). The relevant publications were examined from annual distribution, research types, research methods, textual types, and research contents to uncover the research status and identify research gaps. The major findings reveal that scholarly attention to food-related translation experienced irregular publication fluctuations, and is dominated by empirical studies - primarily qualitative, with mixed methods following - across a diverse range of texts from early printed materials to modern audiovisual media, with a particular focus on the translation strategies for dish names. Serving as a comprehensive synthesis of existing literature, this systematic review contributes to the academic understanding of food translation and provides a foundation for further exploration and advancements in the field.

While this systematic review holds significant academic value, it inevitably has some limitations. Firstly, only English-language articles collected from Scopus and WoS were considered in this research. Consequently, excluding other databases such as Google Scholar, CNKI, and ProQuest, is likely to miss relevant studies, particularly those published in non-English languages or less mainstream journals. Future researchers can expand the scope of coverage to include more publications written in different languages from a broader range of databases. Secondly, focusing solely on articles from the past two decades is inadequate for comprehensively understanding the historical evolution of food-

related translation, as the concepts of ‘food’ and ‘translation’ have long-standing roots. A more complete review of how food-related content is translated across different times and countries should be provided by encompassing a broader time range in future studies.

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