

# Standardization of E-C Translation of Foreign Name and Its Countermeasures

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**Keywords:** Standardization; Foreign name; Translation; Publication; Translation standard

**Abstract:** It is very important to standardize the translation and application of foreign names. However, due to the complexity of the translation and application of foreign names, the E-C translation and application of foreign names are confusing. The translation and application of foreign names is a problem that translators and journalists in China must face. A variety of standardization problems related to E-C translation of foreign names include: the E-C translation and application of foreign names are mixed, non-standard, lack of content, lack of authority and so on. This causes many difficulties for translators and journalists when they use the foreign names. The corresponding measures to solve problems can include as the followings: referring to dictionaries, comparing and verifying, following corresponding national standards, and creatively standardizing the translated names.

## 1. Introduction

People have made a lot of achievements in the E-C translation and application of foreign names. Undoubtedly, it plays a very important role in the normalization and standardization of E-C translation and application of personal names. Many kinds of dictionaries and standards compiled according to these principles play an important role in the E-C translation and standard application of foreign names. Many dictionaries are with a foreign name list or a special method of translating foreign names, and there are some special dictionaries of translation of foreign names in China. However, there are many problems in the E-C translation or E-C translation methods in various dictionaries, which lead to the translators to take painstaking efforts to verify many dictionaries, but can not find the accuracy of the translated names because the translated names in different dictionaries are quite different. The journalists are often confused about how to make the right choice of translated foreign names. This paper sorts out the criteria that translators and journalists may face in relation to foreign names, and puts forward some suggested strategies.

## 2. Common problems about the E-C translation of foreign names

### 2.1 Standards are Confused

Currently, there are three types of "standards" that people can refer to when translating and applying foreign names in China. 1) the "name transliteration table" or "name appendix" attached to the authoritative dictionaries; 2) special dictionaries of E-C translation of foreign names compiled and published by authoritative departments; 3) relevant publications of translated names.

The most popular authoritative dictionaries in China include The English-Chinese Dictionary chief-edited by Lu Guxun [1], and Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary compiled by A.S. Hornby and translated by Li Beida [2]. The "reference standard" of E-C translation of foreign names given in these dictionaries is very messy and inconsistent. For example, Alice, an English common name Alice, Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary gives the translation "*ai li si*"[2](1835), and in accordance with the Chinese transliteration rules in The English-Chinese Dictionary, Alice including three syllables/*æ* /, / *li* /, / *s* /, which Chinese characters can be chosen as "*a*"、"*li*"、"*si*"[1](2236).

Special dictionaries of E-C translation of foreign names are compiled and published by authoritative departments include:

1) A Manual of E-C translation of English Name, was first published in 1973, authored by Xin Hua, and published in 2007, authored by the E-C translation office of Xinhua News Agency. It is, indeed, a "handbook", as the title suggests, it is often used as an authoritative guide for the definitive E-C translation of official publications. The manual, including more than 60,000 surnames and Christian names, supply the phonetic information of personal names in the pronunciation dictionaries in the UK and the US. [3]

2) A Dictionary of E-C Translation of Foreign Name is compiled by a special team. The most important feature of this dictionary is the citation of authority and comprehensive collection of names all over the world. It, based on Webster's Biographical Dictionary and other books, contains over 100, 000 of the most used last names and given names in the world. First name and last name are arranged in Latin alphabetical order. Before the Chinese translated names, language or country are indicated in square brackets. [4] For example, Alice is arranged like this: Alice[ying, fa]ai li si[de, xi, pu, yi]ai li sai[4] (24), which shows the different usages in England, France, Germany, Spain, Portugal, and Italy.

From various publications, people can also see the translated names of some well-known foreigners, which will make people a deep impression. And people will use such translated version foreign names. However, the translated versions of many publications are diverse, which will make people difficult to choose from. For example, there are, at least nine Chinese versions of Phillip, which appear in our national publications: Philip, Philip, Philip, Philip, Philip and Philip. There are at least six Chinese versions of famous German philosopher Baumgarten. [8] Moreover, some well-known foreigners' names have been wrongly translated. Henry Norman Bethune was translated partly, and his surname was used in most publications only. The famous American novelist H. E. Stowe was translated as "Mrs. Stowe".

It is not hard to see that there is a great deal of inconsistency in the dictionaries by comparing the compilation instructions in popular dictionaries and the special E-C translation of foreign names dictionaries. There are too many "standards" in different dictionaries, which will make translators and journalists at a loss. It is easily said that the dictionaries are the source of E-C translation of foreign names.

## 2.2 Standards Are Not Rigorous

The standards in some dictionaries reveal information to translators that such standards need not be strictly enforced. "This table is a reference of special names such as transliterated names and place names. Some names which have been translated by convention may follow the custom. In case of any ambiguity in the context, the names can be replaced by an appropriate one." [1] (2236) In addition, most dictionaries only give the original name, without phonetic symbols. This makes it impossible for the translators to know what the correct pronunciation is, and it is impossible to check it by referring to the "English Chinese transliteration table" given in other dictionaries.

Even there are contradictions in one dictionary. i.e. the same name has two pronunciations in a dictionary. For example, in McMillen English-Chinese Dictionary for Advanced Learners, Caroline can be pronounced as [kærəlain] or [kærəlin] [6] (1464) .

Some names have different pronunciation in British English and American English. For example, in McMillen English-Chinese Dictionary for Advanced Learners, Cecil, is given two pronunciations as [sesəl] in British English and [s i:səl] in American English, and the Chinese version should be "Sai Xi Er" and "Si Xi Er" respectively. However in the dictionary, there is only one "Sai Xi Er" [6] (1466) .

## 2.3 Standard Are Lack of Content

Although there are many large-scale dictionaries in China, some foreign names are not found in them. For example, internationally renowned translation theorist Susan Bassnett cannot be found in many popular dictionaries in China.

## 2.4 Standards Are Not Mandatory

When translating foreign names, people often regard some rules and special dictionaries as the authoritative ones, for examples, the table of E-C translation of foreign names at the end of some large-scale dictionaries and the special dictionary of E-C translation of foreign names, making them as the "standards". However, the present "standards" are only written instructions by some dictionary writers, which are not mandatory one.

China has issued a number of standards to regulate pronunciation and Chinese characters, for example, on December 27, 1985, Table of Pronunciation of Special Words in Mandarin was jointly promulgated by the National Language and Writing Commission, the National Education Commission, and the National Radio and Television Department. In 2012, the National Language Committee and the National Education Committee jointly published Basic Rules of Chinese Phonetic System (national standard) GB/T 16159-2012. The National Administration of Technical Supervision issued International System of Units and Its Application (GB3100-93) in December 1993. Usage of Punctuations (GB/T 15834-2011) was first published in 1995 and revised in 2011. On November 25, 2008, Guide for E-C Translation and Writing for Foreign Place Names (GB/T 17693.1-2008) was promulgated. Since many specific terms expressed places are also personal names, this guide has a positive reference to the E-C translation of foreign names. The above are the national standards, which are the legal documents. However, there is no national standard for the E-C translation of foreign names.

## 3. Countermeasures

### 3.1 Seek Reasonable "Standards" with Relevant National Standards

Although some authoritative dictionaries can not give a reasonable answer or even contradict each other for a name, the translators can judge a more reasonable standard if they compare and verify the relevant information more carefully. The translators should be careful to E-C translation of foreign names when translating some very rigorous texts, and they must look up the names in different dictionaries and national standards at the same time.

Although there are no national standards for E-C translation of foreign names, the translators should follow the relevant national standards, which can guide people in some ways to translate foreign names. For example, people can refer to Guide for E-C Translation and Writing for Foreign Place Names (GB/T 17693.1-2008) when translating foreign names.

At the same time, relevant departments should organize and coordinate relevant human resources to formulate and issue national standards for E-C translation of foreign names as soon as possible, so that the translators can have clear standards to follow.

### 3.2 Referring to Relevant Research Results to Creatively Standardize the E-C Translation of Foreign Names

For the E-C translation of foreign names, people should draw on the relevant research results and constantly promote the practice and research of foreign names E-C translation. For example, the related achievements such as the combination of foreign surname and first name and the usage of punctuation can be provided as the references for the E-C translation of foreign names.

On the other hand, people can summarize the methods and principles used in the E-C translation of foreign names in different industries, and creatively standardize the existing methods of E-C translation of foreign names. For example, the E-C translation of foreign names appears in different texts in politics, economy, culture, education, sports and science and technology. However, people in different fields have different methods and principles when translating foreign names, and have formed relatively fixed methods and principles respectively. In some literature academic texts, people just use E-C translation of foreign names, and in some of academic texts, people use the English forms of foreign names, and in some special texts, people use the English forms of foreign names first and follow with the Chinese characters in brackets. People need to summarize the methods and principles that people in different fields use in translating foreign names, and carefully

compare their rationality and functionality, then to provide a standard one based on theories.

### **3.3 Authorities Timely Release New Translation Standards**

The authority has some credibility, so it helps to standardize the new translation. According to a report in International Herald Tribune, Xinhua News Agency set up a translation office in the early 1950s, to handle the E-C translation of foreign names around the world. In the 1960s, China's Premier Zhou Enlai personally instructed that "the E-C translation of foreign names should be attributed to Xinhua News Agency". [7]From that time on, the E-C translation of foreign names should be adhered to Xinhua News Agency in China, and the E-C translation of foreign names in some international documents also be adhered to Xinhua News Agency in China.

New names are often generated by newsmakers. With the rapid changes in politics, economy, culture and technology in the world, the names of new figures in different fields may become a new E-C translations problem. For each new name, the authority should organize experts to conduct research as soon as possible, and give the new translated name, and publish it timely on various media, so as to publicize it widely and guide people to know and use the standard translated names.

### **3.4 Strengthen Basic Teaching to Improve Translators' Literacy**

The translated name is created by the translator. The translator's accurate and flexible E-C translation plays an important role in the standardization of translation of foreign names, so it is necessary to improve the translator's E-C translation quality. In particular, it is important to strengthen the knowledge for English majors, as they are most likely to become the main force of the new generation of E-C translation of foreign names. It is a good way to standardize the E-C translation of foreign names, by improving the beginners' quality of the E-C translation of foreign names. Moreover, the specific methods of E-C translation of foreign names can be list in the E-C translation textbooks, specially introducing the problems, standards and methods of E-C translation of foreign names.

## **4. Conclusion**

In translation practice, people can translate foreign names by consulting the authoritative dictionaries and specialized dictionaries. However, the standards in relevant dictionaries may encounter problems such as being confused by the reference standards, unrigorous standards and non-content standard. It is difficulty to translators, journalists and publishers to deal with the E-C translation of foreign names. People should adopt active countermeasures to deal with the corresponding problems. With the concerted efforts, people will definitely improve E-C translation of foreign names.

## **Acknowledgements**

The research has been supported by research fund from Xi 'an International Studies University (Fund No. 16XWA05), research fund from China National Open Education (Fund No. G18A3818Z), and 2018-2019 research fund of the Chinese Culture Going out Collaborative Innovation Center of Beijing Foreign Studies University (Fund No. CCSIC2018-YB02)

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