Characters Selection in Transliteration of Chinese Indonesian Names

Lu Xuanyi
Graduate Student of Linguistic Department
University of Indonesia
Depok, Indonesia
lu510228@sina.com

Abstract—The translation of names, especially the translation of celebrities’ names, plays an important role both in Chinese language and culture. Therefore, when we translate other languages to Chinese, people’s names need to be translated, linguistically using transliteration. In the process of translating Indonesian to Chinese, the author often encounters the problem of Chinese Indonesian names’ translation (e.g. Tan Tek Ho), because there is no absolute standard in the field of name translation. Thus, the translated Chinese characters would be significantly different. For example, the transliterated name of Indonesian president Jokowi, it has at least two translations in Chinese with different characters. As the instrument, qualitative data analysis method is used in this research. The author aims to explore how to select Chinese characters and then to build a relatively reliable standard for Chinese Indonesian names transliteration through three aspects of analysis: the repetition rate of the same character in Chinese names, the characteristics of Chinese names and the characteristics of Chinese Indonesian names. The research finds out that selecting high-frequency characters, aesthetic meaning characters, gender-oriented characters and avoiding uncommon characters are the best way to transliterate Chinese Indonesian names from Latin to Chinese characters.

Keywords—transliteration; Chinese Indonesian; name

I. INTRODUCTION

There is a very interesting phenomenon in China that if “Te Lang Pu” is mentioned, almost everyone knows that he is the current president of the United States, but people who are lack of skill in English will not understand who is he if the word “Trump” is mentioned. The author believes that this is because the writing system of Chinese characters used in the Chinese is very different from the writing system of Latin letters. Therefore, in order to achieve the goal of respecting the customs of the target language, it is necessary to translate Latin names into Chinese characters. For example, the modern Chinese people need to use the pinyin as the standard English name, so that the foreigners can pronounce their names correctly. Therefore, unlike the inter-translation between English and Bahasa Indonesia, the people’s names can still use the same words as before, because both of the languages use Latin letters. In the inter-translation between Chinese and other Latin letters, the translation of names is essential.

In the process of translating Indonesian into Chinese, the author often encountered the problems of names’ translation of the Chinese Indonesians. There are no clear codes of practice for the name translation. The Chinese names of Chinese Indonesians are usually spelled in the Min Nan dialects in the books or other materials, such as Tjoe Bou San. For the famous people, their names can be converted into the corresponding Chinese characters. On the contrary, for the less famous people or civilians, their names are hardly to be converted into the corresponding Chinese characters, which increase the difficulty for the author to translate the names to Chinese characters. For those Latin names which cannot be converted into the corresponding Chinese characters, we can only use the transliteration to transform the names from the Latin letters to the Chinese characters.

The existing previous researches on transliteration of people’s names can be divided into two main categories. One is the reference method of how to transliterate foreign names into the Chinese names, results show: the well-known transliterated names cannot be modified, for the names which are transliterated first time, the Chinese social pragmatic habits and aesthetic orientation should be considered for the initial translation. Another is the standardization of how to transliterate Chinese names into foreign names, results show: scholars unanimously agree to use Chinese Pinyin as the standard foreign names for Chinese names. However, neither of the above two categories of studies can solve the problem of converting the Latin names of Chinese Indonesians into the corresponding Chinese characters. Therefore, this paper aims to find out a feasible method for transliterating Latin names of Chinese Indonesians into Chinese characters. The gap from existing literature is to have a relatively reliable standard for the transliteration of Chinese Indonesian names and make the translated names to be normative.

In the author's perception, since there are similarities between Chinese Indonesians and Chinese, there will be some similarities in the selection of characters for naming. Therefore, the author expects to determine the standard of transliterating the names of Chinese Indonesians by analyzing the preferences and tendency of Chinese Indonesians and the commonality of Chinese people to select the characters for naming, so as to improve the accuracy of the transliterated names of Chinese Indonesians and make them to be more in line with the reality.
II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The completion of a paper should be based on the reference to a large number of relevant literatures. In view of this, in order to facilitate the smooth progress of this study, the author divided the relevant literature into three categories, which respectively are the theory of transliteration, the reference method of transliteration of names, and the preference and tendency of naming of Chinese Indonesians.

A. The Theories of Transliteration

Huang Dexin mentioned that the transliteration came along with the appearance of translation and the development of translation, and played an indispensable role in the translation [1]. There should be three steps for the transliteration, which was respectively, “the Source Language (SL) letters are replaced by Target Language (TL) phonological units, and the SL phonological units are translated into TL letters, then the TL phonological units are converted into TL letters” [2]. They provided the complete and clear method for the transliteration.

Veerpal Kaur, Amandeep kaur Sarao and Jagtar Singh mentioned that transliteration was defined as a process to generate the words from the SL to the TL [3]. The reverse process is known as backward transliteration. “Transliteration has four applications: (1) information is present in selected number of languages, (2) effective knowledge transfer across linguistics requires bringing down language barriers, (3) plays an important role in cross-lingual applications, and (4) can be used in various Government or Private Offices to transliterate nouns” [4].

B. The Reference Methods of Names’ Transliteration

Kang Zhihong pointed out in the study that the translation of names was actually the renaming across the languages [5]. This situation gives the first translator a considerable degree of freedom, but then the renaming has some certain constraints from many aspects, and one of the important restraining factors is from the social linguistic habits of TL and certain aesthetic orientation. Xu Mei asserted in the article The Rules on Wording of Chinese Names that Chinese people tend to select the characters with good meanings in all ages, because the Confucianism and traditional culture have been deeply rooted in the Chinese people’s minds [6]. It is also stipulated that there is a gender or in selecting the characters for the naming of male and female. In addition, in the investigation on the characteristics of name wording of people in the Dongyou Town of Fujian province, Yu Fang & Pan Wen found that there is a tendency towards convergence among the selections of people’s name wording, and a small number of characters constituted a large number of people’s names, that is, there were many characters used at high frequency [7]. Xu Mei also pointed out that the wording of Chinese names was closely related to the Times [6]. This leads to a lot of duplicate names in the same area at the same time.

C. The Preferences and Tendencies in The Naming of Chinese Indonesians

Qian Dianxiang and Li Dianchen ever analyzed and compared the wording of names among the people in mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and the overseas Chinese [8]. The samples of overseas Chinese were mostly from Malaysia and Indonesia, so the research results were of great reference value. The results showed that the people from the above three regions had the tendency towards the convergence for the naming, and they tended to choose the given names with the double characters instead of duplication of names; trended to reflect the national culture and show the gender differences. Wu Mei studied on the Chinese names in Indonesia, her research showed that the younger generation of Chinese Indonesians’ names are far-reaching influenced by Indonesian culture, but the older generation of Chinese Indonesians’ names still have strong Chinese elements [9]. Sunny Lie has the same view, she believed that names can reflect negotiation of larger-scale political and historical conditions [10]. Wu also pointed out that the Chinese Indonesians were the most likely to ask the beauty of meaning and the reflection of gender orientation for the names, much higher than those who asked for the other requirements for names.

III. METHOD

As the instrument, qualitative data analysis method is used in this research. The collection of data comes from the previous research’s basis [7-9]. The author collected the data of name wording of the people in the Dongyou town of Fujian province, overseas Chinese and Chinese Indonesians. In order to verify the credibility of previous data, the author also collected the names around in a total number of 32. Using all these data, the author made three groups of analysis, respectively, the rate of character repetition, the meaning of the name and the gender orientation of the name, and analyzed the word preference of naming, in order to explore how to select the characters when transliterating the names of Chinese Indonesians.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Transliteration plays an important role in the Chinese translation. There are many names transliterated in the Chinese language, but the standard is not in a uniformity. For example, there are two main translations for Susilo, the former Indonesian President, namely ‘Su Xiluo苏西洛’ and ‘Su Xinuo苏西诺’. Jokowi, the current President of Indonesia, has two popular translations. One is ‘Zuo Kewēi佐科威’ and the other is ‘Zuo Kewēi佐科维’, but the more popular translation is ‘Zuo Kewēi佐科威’. For those Chinese Indonesians, most of their names are unable to be found the corresponding Chinese characters, such as Yap Hong Tjoen, Tan Tek Ho, Oey Tek Li, etc. Therefore, the following discussion is about how to select the right characters to transliterate the names of Chinese Indonesians.

According to the survey data of Yu Fang & Pan Wen, among the people in Dongyou town of Fujian province, there are 1,565 Chinese characters constituting 37,411 names, and the top 100 characters used most frequently are used for 47,461 times, with a high repetition rate of characters [7]. Refer to this data, we may know that there are many names with repeated characters in the same area and era. In order to verify this situation, the author surveyed the names of people around her and found that many words were used frequently. The author
randomly selected the names of people around her with the pronunciation of ‘chao’, ‘yang’, ‘yu’ and ‘xue’ (respectively for 8 persons) to study the repetition rate of characters. As shown in the table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>The Chinese meaning in the dictionary</th>
<th>The meaning in China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chao</td>
<td>Surpass; higher than the general standard;</td>
<td>Exceed others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yang</td>
<td>Vast, prosperous; ocean</td>
<td>Extensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yu</td>
<td>Jasper</td>
<td>Beautiful and precious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xue</td>
<td>Snow</td>
<td>Beautiful and pure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The Characters Being Analyzed Are Selected From The High-Frequency Characters in table 1.

It can be found from the table 2 that the high-frequency characters used in the people's names all have the beautiful and positive meanings in China.

The five ones which do not reflect the gender orientation are Fan Chaoyu, Yang Chaoyue, Liu Yang (male), Liu Yang (female) and Huang Xueqing. It can be seen from table III that most Chinese people chose the names that reflect the gender differences of men and women.

The conclusion from table 2 and table 3 is that Chinese people like to choose the words with the beauty of meaning for naming, reflecting the difference between male and female. This is consistent with the preference of naming of Chinese Indonesians surveyed by Wu Meiyi [9]. Therefore, the author believes that when selecting the characters for the transliteration of names of Chinese Indonesians, it is necessary for them to show the beauty of meaning and gender. This can explain why ‘Zuo Kewei (佐科威)’ is more popular than ‘Zuo Kewei (佐科维)’. Because the character ‘wēi’ is more aesthetic and masculine than ‘维wéi’.

Liu Feng reported that since 2003, China's Ministry of Education and the State Language Commission have been working on a Table of Wording of Names to regulate the people's names, according to the report by the People's Daily Online [11]. One of the main points of the specification is not to use the rare characters. Therefore, it is necessary to avoid using unfamiliar characters in the transliteration of names. Firstly, the probability of occurrence is very small, secondly, it is easy to mislead the people, and the misidentification of words is counterproductive to the transliteration. This does not bring the convenience to the readers, but increases the difficulty in reading.

After the above discussion and analysis, the author selected three names mentioned before in this paper to give their transliterations based on the analysis results in this above, as shown in the Table IV.

It can be seen from table 1 that the repetition rate of characters in the Chinese names in the same pronunciation is very high.

This is not surprising as there are many characters in the same pronunciation in Chinese, but not all of characters are suitable for the names, so this greatly reduces the choice of words for naming. Therefore, the author believes that selecting the high-frequency characters when transliterating the names of Chinese Indonesians will make the transliterated names to be closer to reality.

According to the data of paper by Wu Meiyi, she selected 109 Chinese Indonesians as the sample, 87 of whom required the beauty of meaning, accounting for 79.82% of the total number, which was much higher than other people who asked for the beauty of form and sound, etc [9]. At the same time, the number of people who asked the names to reflect the gender was as high as 107, accounting for 98% of the total number. It can be seen that the Chinese Indonesians attached great importance to the requirement of whether the name resembles the gender. In addition, Xu Mei pointed out that the naming of female of the pure Chinese also tends to the characters with the meanings of ‘beauty and kindness’, while the men tend to use the words with the meaning of ‘masculinity’ [6]. In order to verify the above views, the author continued to analyze with the 32 name samples whether the naming of Chinese values the meaning (table 2) and whether it reflects the male and female tendency (table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>The Repetition Rate of Characters in the Same Pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chao</td>
<td>Li Chao, Fan Chao, Zheng Chao, Hu Chao, Zhang Chao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yang</td>
<td>Feng Yang (Male), Feng Yang (Female), Feng Yang (Female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yu</td>
<td>Liu Yu, Yang Yu, Zhang Yu, Lan Yu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xue</td>
<td>Guo Xue, Su Xue, Yao Xue, Liu Xue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen from table 2 that most Chinese people chose the names with high repetition rate. The repetition rate of chao, yang, yu and xue is 100%.
All selected characters meet these three points: high-frequency, gender-oriented and aesthetic meaning.

According to this method, a good name can be transliterated relatively quickly and accurately. Usually a good name will be spread and widely known, which can form a consensus on the name, so that the translation of the name can be standardized and consistent.

V. CONCLUSION

In the above, the author has analyzed the repetition rate of words in the Chinese names, the similarities of naming of the Chinese and the Chinese Indonesians, and made the research achievements in how to help the wording of transliteration of names of the Chinese Indonesians. The following conclusions and suggestions can be obtained:

- When transliterating the names in the Chinese Indonesians, if the words are in the same pronunciation, to select the appeared high-frequency characters as the transliteration of the names.
- If the words that do not have the same pronunciation, firstly to distinguish the gender, select the characters with the gender orientation, and then select the characters with fine and positive meanings as the transliteration of names.
- To avoid using the uncommon or highly-difficult characters.
- In the transliteration, translators should also make a mark to indicate that the word has been transliterated.

REFERENCES