

Taste-describing Terms in East Asia

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동아시아의 맛 표현 용어

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Abstract

The author scheduled to prepare a multilingual (Japanese-Korean-Chinese) vocabulary of dietary culture. In the preliminary stage, the words of taste perceptions were compiled and examined; thereafter, the relevant terms were defined, and a model of the trilingual vocabulary of taste perceptions was prepared.

Introduction

Though the roots of Japanese, Korean, and Chinese, which are three main languages of East Asia, are not coincidental, the region covered by these languages is known as 'kanji bunkaken' (a cultural area using 'kanji' (Chinese scripts)).

'Kanji' invented by ancient Chinese people was brought to the Korean Peninsula and the Japan Islands in the 4th or 5th century. At that time, Korean and Japanese languages had not their own scripts, and a great effort was expended to apply 'kanji' to the description of their languages. Therefore, the concepts defined by a 'knaji' are not always identical between these languages.

The careless use of 'kanji' throughout East Asia leads to the incorrect transfer of information. One of the way to overcome this problem is the conversion from a word to the relevant term supported by the concept and definition, and the preparation of multilingual vocabularies and thesauri. The author scheduled to prepare a multilingual (Japanese-Korean-Chinese) vocabulary of

dietary culture. In the preliminary stage, the words of taste perceptions were compiled and examined; thereafter, the relevant terms were defined, and a model of the trilingual vocabulary of taste perceptions was prepared.

The Taste Perception throughout East Asia

A number of Japanese, Korean, and Chinese words of taste perceptions were compiled, examined, and summarized as shown in Table 1. The romanization ('pinyin' system) of 'kanji' used in the Chinese language is based on ISO International Standard 7098⁽¹⁾; the transliteration of 'han-geul' scripts used in the Korean language is based on an ISO draft proposal submitted by the Korean Bureau of Standards⁽²⁾; and the romanization of Japanese is based on ISO Draft International Standard 360.2⁽³⁾.

Generally, The taste perceptions concern so closely with human life that their presentations are native-born, but foreign-born. One of the characteristics of the native-born words is the ambiguity of their meanings, and, in the field of science and technology, they must be changed into the relevant terms supported by the con-

Table 1. The Equivalence of the Presentations of Taste Perceptions in East Asian Languages

Chinese (zh)		Korean (ko)		Japanese (ja)	
adj.	→ noun	from zh	native	noun	← adj.
風味表現	甘 → 甘味 gānwèi	→	감미 gam-mi	단맛 dan-mas	← 달다 dal-da
	酸 → 酸味 suānwèi	→	산미 san-mi	신맛 sin-mas	← 시다 si-da
	鹹 → 鹹味 xiānwèi	→	짠미 jjan-mi	짠맛 jjan-mas	← 짜다 jja-da
	苦 → 苦味 kǔwèi	→	고미 go-mi	쓰맛 sseun-mas	← 쓰다 sseu-da
	鮮 → 鮮味 xiānwèi	→		구수한맛 gu-su-han-mas	← 구수하다 gu-su-ha-da (감칠맛 gam-chil-mas)
	辛 → 辛味 xīnwèi	→	신미 sin-mi	매운맛 mae-un-mas	← 맵다 maeb-da
	澁 → 澁味 sèwèi	→	삼미 sab-mi	뽀은맛 ddeorb-eun-mas	← 뽀다 ddeorb-da
	淡 → 淡味 dànwèi	→	담미 dam-mi	싱거운맛 sing-geo-un-mas	← 싱겁다 sing-geob-da
	美 → 美味 měiwèi	→	미미 mi-mi	좋은맛 joh-eun-mas	← 맛 있다 mas-iss-da
	香 → 香味 xiāngwèi	→			
		→ noun	noun	← adj.	
		→	감미 kan-mi	아마사 amase	← 아마い amai
		→	酸味 san-mi	すっぱさ suppasā	← すっぱい suppai
		→	鹹味 kan-mi	しおからさ siokarasa	← しおからい siokarai
		→	苦味 ku-mi	にがさ nigasa	← にがい nigai
		→	うま味 uma-mi		うまい umai
		→	辛味 sin-mi	からさ karasa	← からい karai
		→	澁味 ju-mi	しぶさ sibusa	← しぶい sibui
		→	淡味 tan-mi	うすさ ususa	← うすい usui
		→	美味 bi-mi	おいしさ oisisa	← おいしい oisii

cepts and definitions. This results that foreign-born terms, of which concepts and definitions are relatively clear, are used as scientific and technical terms. One of the recent examples is 'surimi' (fish paste) which is used in English technical journals. In the case of taste-describing terms, as shown in Table 1, China-born terms are preferably used; but the presentations of taste perceptions are so abstract that most of their definitions cannot help containing the names of food commodities inducing the relevant taste perception.

As shown in Fig. 1, "gan", "tal-da", and "amai" existed in the China Continent, Korean Peninsula, and the Japan Islands, respectively, in the 4th or 5th century. The sweetness-inducing commodities in this time were

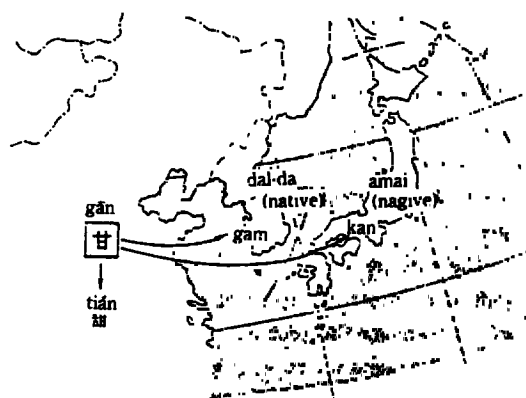


Fig. 1. The Transfer of "gan", a Chinese script presenting "Sweet", in the 4th Century

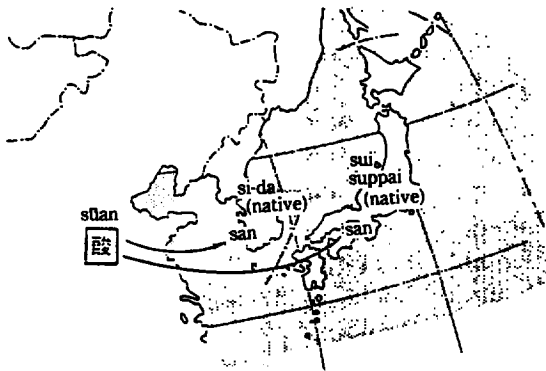


Fig. 2. The Transfer of “ (suān)”, a Chinese Script Presenting “Sour Taste”, in the 4th Century

‘ame’ (a sweet jelly containing maltose), ‘amazura’ (a sweet extract of an ivy), ‘amazake’ (a sweet drink made from fermented rice), etc. for Japanese (ja), ‘yeos’ (a sweet jelly containing maltose), ‘ggul’ (honey), etc. for Korean (ko), and ‘gan-cao’ (an extract of a licorine), ‘jiang-mi-jiu’ (a sweet drink made from fermented rice), etc. for Chinese (zh). The ISO International Standard 5492⁽³⁾ on the vocabulary of sensory analysis refers to sucrose in the definition of sweetness, and the present representative of sweetness-inducing commodities in the East Asia is also sucrose. Therefore, it seems that the technical terms (China-born nouns equivalent to these adjectives) are synonymous. In the case of sour-

Table 2. A Model of the Multilingual Vocabulary of Taste Perceptions (Nouns), Based on ISO 5492

ja	甘味	kan-mi	ja	うまい	uma-mi
ko	감미	gam-mi	ko	鮮味	xiān-wèi
zh	甜味	tiān-wèi	zh		
en (ISO)		sweetness	en		‘umami’
fr (ISO)		sucrosite	fr		‘umami’
(JIS / DP)	しよ糖などを代表とする物質によつてひきおこされる味覚		(JIS / DP)	グルタミン酸ナトリウム、5’-イノシン酸ナトリウムなどを代表とする物質によつてひきおこされる味覚	
(ISO 5492)	The organoleptic attribute of pure substances [sucrosé, etc.] or mixtures which produces the sweet taste.				
ja	酸味	san-mi	ja	辛味	kara-mi
ko	산미	san-mi	ko	신미	sin-mi
zh	酸味	suān-wèi	zh	辣味	lā-wèi
en (ISO)		sourness	en		pungency
fr (ISO)		aigreur	fr		pungence
(JIS / DP)	くえん酸、酒石酸などを代表とする物質によつてひきおこされる味覚		(JIS / DP)	トウガラシを代表とする物質によつてひきおこされる口内感覚	
(ISO 5492)	The organoleptic attribute of pure substances [citric acid, tartaric acid, etc.] or mixtures which produces the acid taste.				
ja	苦味	ku-mi	ja	澁味	sibu-mi
ko	고미	go-mi	ko	삼미	sab-mi
zh	苦味	kǔ-wèi	zh	澁味	sè-wèi
en (ISO)		bitterness	en (ISO)		astringency
fr (ISO)		amertume	fr (ISO)		astringence
(JIS / DP)	キニーネ、カフエインなどを代表とする物質によつてひきおこされる味覚		(JIS / DP)	シブガキのタンニンなどを代表とする物質によつてひきおこされる口内感覚	
(ISO 5492)	The attribute of pure substances [kaki tannins, sloe tannins, etc.] or mixtures which produces the astringent sensation.				

ness, "suan" (zh), "si-da" (ko), and "sui or suppai" (ja) are equivalent (Fig. 2.), and the relevant technical terms seem to be synonymous.

Table 1 doesn't show the circulation of "xian-wei" (zh), because this was not recognized as an individual taste perception until the 19th century. It is not clear when this matter was recognized, but the modern Chinese textbooks of cooking techniques describe "xian-wei" (zh) as one of primary tastes, and many Chinese books introducing traditional condiments use "xian-wei" (zh) as a taste characteristics. "Umami" (ja), a taste induced by monosodium L-glutamate etc., was recently recognized as a primary taste by the efforts of many taste investigators. "Umami" (ja) and "xian-wei" (zh) seem to be synonymous, because both definitions are similar. In Korea, any "umami"-inducing commodity was not shown for long time, and the relevant Korean term has not been found out as yet. A Korean scientist recommends "gu-su-han-mas" (ko) as a term of the com-

mon taste perception induced by soybean products, and another suggests "gam-chil-mas" (ko); but there is no consensus.

The author examined about other taste perceptions, and prepared a model of the multilingual vocabulary (see Table 2), in which the synonyms in English and French were referred to.

Generally, the taste perceptions are classified by adding strength-related adverbs to adjectives. In the Korean language, this classification is carried out by modifying a part of an adjective, instead of using adverbs. The synonymy of three languages on "sweet" is shown in Table 3. This Table was prepared by the examination of bilingual dictionaries and the interviews with Korean scientists, but it is not conclusive. Probably this classification is extremely personal, and is used freely under the ambiguity of concepts.

The Standardization of the Terms of Taste Perceptions

In European countries, national standards on the vo-

Table 3. The Equivalence of the Presentations of Sweetness Perception (Adjectives) in East Asian Languages

Korean	Japanese	Chinese	English
달다	あまい	甜	is sweet/sugary/sweet-flavored
달디달다	非常にあまい / あまつたるい	-	--
달달하다	--	甜	--
달콤하다	ほどよくあまい / てごろな あまきだ / とろんとあまい	甜	is sweetish/is sweet-flavored/ has a sweet flavored/is sweet
달금하다	ほどよくあまい / すこしばかり あまい / すこしあまつたるい	甜	= 달콤하다 곱
달롭하다	あまつたるい / あまくておいしい	甜	sweetish
달큼하다	ややあまい / あまつたるい	甜	= 달롭하다
달짝지근하다	すこし甘味がある	甜甜的	is rather sweet/is pleasantly sweet
달착지근하다	(달짝지근하다の激音形)	微甜	= 달짝지근하다
달차근하다	(달착지근하다の省略形)	微甜	= 달짝지근하다
들찍지근하다	すこし甘味がある	稍甜 / 甜甜	is somewhat sweet/is not sweet enough
들척지근하다	(들찍지근하다の激音形)	微甜	somewhat sweet
들지근하다	(들척지근하다の省略形)	-	somewhat sweet
들끔하다	多少あまい / ややあまい	稍甜	is sweetish/is unpleasantly sweet
들크무례하다	--	带点甜味的	--
들부례하다	少々あまい / すこしあまい / すこし甘味がある	有些甜/稍甜的	-
달콤삼삼하다	あまくてあつさりしている / あつさりとあまい	甜而淡	--
달보드레하다	あつちりあまい / すこしあまい	有些甜	--

cabulary of sensory analysis were legislated (e.g. BS 5098⁽⁵⁾, NF VOO-150⁽⁶⁾), and furthermore an ISO International Standard 5492⁽³⁾ based on these national standards was circulated. In Japan, a national standard on the methodology (JIS Z 9080)⁽⁷⁾ is only circulated, but no standard on the vocabulary exists. The improvement of such inconvenience has lead to the preparation of a draft proposal of the vocabulary standard in early 1987.

The ISO International Standard 2788 on thesaurus establishment (8) proposes that the use of adjectives should be avoided as far as possible. The adjectives are the main descriptions of taste perception, and many standards on the vocabulary of taste perception don't accept this proposal. But the aforementioned draft proposal may not refer any adjective, because of avoiding the complication resulted from adjectives used as words.

Conclusions

(1) A number of Japanese, Korean, and Chinese words of taste perceptions were compiled and examined, and the relevant terms were defined.

(2) A model of the trilingual vocabulary of taste perceptions was prepared.

(3) A JIS draft proposal containing the vocabulary of taste perceptions was prepared.

요 약

일본, 한국, 중국의 식문화에 관한 용어들을 조사 비교하

였다. 우선 맛의 인지를 표현하는 용어들을 수집 조사하고 이어서 삼개국 용어중에 서로 관계가 있는 단어들을 모으고 정의하였으며 맛 인식표현에서 삼개국 용어모형을 수립하였다.

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