

## Exploring the Art of Translation Strategies in Indonesian Culinary Translation

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**Abstract:** Culinary translation challenges translators in rendering the source text into the target language naturally due to the cultural gap, linguistic differences, and the loss of meaning. The literature review explores the studies of translation strategies in Indonesian culinary translation, focusing on three main themes: strategies, challenges encountered, and suggested solutions by employing a qualitative literature-based research method. The review is to examine the translation strategies employed in translating culinary terms. Translators use various strategies in translating culinary terms. However, translating culinary terms requires the cultural knowledge and language proficiency of both the source language and the target language to get the equivalent meaning in the target text. Translators are encouraged to employ translation strategies that are more flexible and focus on the text's purpose and audience.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Translating a text is more than just changing the text from one language into another. It's about comprehending and understanding the meaning, context, and culture, and transferring the message from one language into a new language. As a translator, it is important to think carefully about the words and sentences without leaving their original meaning in the target language that can be understood by the target language audience.

In the act of translation, a translator normally deals with numerous challenges in translating cultural elements. Transferring meaning from one culture to another requires not only linguistic knowledge of both source and target languages but also pertinent information in both cultures. To hold equivalence in meanings, translators often must sacrifice linguistic elements to save meanings.

Translation has become a bridge to understand the messages from one language to another. According to Munday, the process of translation between two different written languages involves the translator changing an original written text (the source text or ST) in the original verbal language (the source language or SL) into a written text (the target text or TT) in a different verbal language (the target language or TL) (2008, p. 5). Translating a script needs the translators' decision in choosing the accurate words to transfer the message with the correct words, so that the translation will convey the original message as the source language (SL). Newmark stated that a translator must have a flair and a feel for his own language. There is nothing mystical about this 'sixth sense', but it is compounded of intelligence, sensitivity, and intuition, as well as of knowledge (2003, p. 4). A translator is sometimes stuck with the limit of the target language's terms that can describe the message of the source language accurately. In this case, a translator needs to use their knowledge, sense, and intuition to find the right strategy in translating the local terms which can be found in the target language (TL).

Baker (1998) discussed the translation problems that arise because of the lack of equivalence at a word level and how the translation strategies deal with them. During the translation process, the translator needs specific strategies in handling the problems in translation from the source language to the target language. As examined by Zilola, the specific strategy of the translator and the techniques he uses in the translation process largely depend on the ratio of TL and SL and the nature of the translation task being solved. The translation strategy is based on a number of fundamental principles, from which the translator consciously or unconsciously proceeds (2021). The translator's specific strategy and the techniques employed during the translation process largely depend on the relationship between the target language (TL) and the source language (SL), as well as the nature of the translation task at hand. The chosen strategy is guided by several core principles, which the translator follows either intentionally or intuitively.

Munday (2008) explains that translation does not involve just changing words between languages but also transferring meaning from one culture to another. Munday stated that translation is deeply influenced by culture and the translator's own cultural background. This view helps us understand that translation is more than just a language exchange. It involves cultural differences. Recipes have been passed from generation to generation as part of the cultural tradition and heritage. Translating a recipe is not just about changing words but understanding the cultural context. Persson (2015, p. 1) considers culturally specific items as "concepts that are specific to a certain culture. These concepts can refer to domains such as flora, fauna, food, clothes, housing, work, leisure, politics, law, and religion, among others." These concepts can be different in every language or culture, so translating them can be an arduous job (Yousefi, 2017).

Some studies have mentioned that culturally specific items need strategies to change from the SL to TL that can be understood by the target audience. Yousefi (2017) stated that when we talk about culturally specific items, the first problem is defining these items. Aixelá (as cited in Ranzato, 2013) considers the first problem in defining a culture-specific reference derives from the fact that, in a language, everything is practically culture-specific, including language itself". Birzanu (2016) stated that the challenges presented by the translation of a cookbook go beyond the terminological issues. One of the problems refers to the availability of ingredients, mainly when the cultural distance between the two cultures involved in the exchange is considerable. He suggested that translators should consider extratextual factors to get a clue in determining translation strategies, such as domestication or foreignization. Neshkovska (2018) mentioned that similarities can be traced in different cultures, but still these concepts and objects might not be equivalent to each other in the end. Translating culturally specific items may face complex challenges to produce TL that can be understood by the target audience without leaving the original meaning from the source text.

This study is a literature review which is subject to certain limitations. It focused mainly on the studies about translating Indonesian culinary from Indonesian to English, which may not reflect translation strategies used in other types of texts or languages. The findings show that the translators used several strategies to translate Indonesian culinary items into English. These include adapting the names of dishes to make them easier for target recipients to understand, explaining unfamiliar terms instead of translating them directly. The choice of strategy often depends on how familiar the target audience is with Indonesian dishes and the purpose of the translation. Thus, the interpretations and conclusions must be viewed within the limits of the themes and context discussed.

## **2. METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative, literature-based research design to investigate translation strategies applied in the translation of Indonesian menus and recipes into English. The data corpus comprises scholarly publications that analyze the translation strategies applied in translating Indonesian dishes in the menu, in the recipe, and other works, like novels or TV series, as identified in the identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (themes) within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Content analysis, as explained by Krippendorff (2013), is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use. Both methods helped to understand how translation strategies are used when translating Indonesian dishes in the menus and recipes into English.

This study analyses the results from the papers gathered from the searches that focus on the three aspects: (1) the type of strategy employed by the translators, (2) the challenges encountered by them, and (3) the suggestions from the authors/researchers of the papers. To systematically examine the papers, a Literature Review Matrix (LRM) was developed. The LRM included key categories such as author, year of publication, title, research objective, methodology, main findings, and other important notes. By organizing the data in the matrix, the LRM presents a clear comparison across studies. Based on the information collected in the matrix, several main themes were identified from the papers.

This study collected research papers written by other researchers about translation strategies in translating Indonesian menus and recipes into English. Yet, there are few articles about the translation of Indonesian recipes. About 15 research papers related to translation strategies in translating recipes, especially translation strategies applied in

Indonesian dish recipes, are investigated by employing thematic analysis and content analysis to find out the strategies applied in Indonesian recipe translation.

First, Google Scholar, an online database, was used to search the articles published between 2010 and 2025. Keywords used were “recipe”, “translation”, “translation strategies”, “culinary”, “cooking”, “recipe translation”, and “Indonesian dishes”. The search was set to a custom range between 2010 and 2025, which found 16,700 articles. Using a search engine like Google Scholar or Research Gate is necessary and effective in finding the required articles based on the categories or keywords. After reading the abstract and checking their relevance, the list was narrowed down to 15 articles. Only articles that focused on the translation strategies of Indonesian menus and recipes were included, as shown in the Literature review matrix (LRM) table.

After determining 15 articles that discussed the translation strategies applied in translating recipes, the articles were classified into groups in LRM. Each group is categorized by specific themes to manage the data systematically. The groups consist of translation strategies, challenges in translating recipes, and suggestions from the researchers. Each theme was examined based on the similarity of the content of the articles. The data collected from the LRM were identified and discussed to determine the similarities and differences in each strategy applied and to assess the effectiveness of translation strategies in translating recipes. Then, interpreting the results in relation to cultural and linguistic factors in determining the translation strategies employed.

As this study is a literature-based research, employing both thematic analysis and content analysis provides a deeper examination of the data by uncovering key themes that reflect the findings of the translation strategies and perspectives in the selected research papers on translating recipes. Content analysis organizes the data by examining how certain ideas occur. These methods provide a more comprehensive view of the information, capturing both the detailed meaning and overall patterns, while also enhancing the clarity and reliability of the findings.

Table 1. Fifteen Featured Studies

Categories	Subcategories	Studies
Types of Strategies	a. translation techniques	Kamalia, et al. (2024) Amanah, et al. (2023) Pratama, et al. (2025)
	b. Adaptations in menus and fiction	Mahmud, et al. (2020) Setyaningsih (2020)
Challenges encountered	a. Lost and Gain in CSIs	Tiwiyanti, et al. (2017) Farkhan, et al. (2021)
	b. Multimodal and Visual Constraints	Sugiharti, et al. (2024) Setianingrum, et al. (2019)
	c. Cultural Density in Traditional Food	Surya, et al. (2022)
Suggestions	a. Translating Indonesian culinary for a Global Audience	Kemala et al. (2021) Chiaro et al. (2015)
	b. Culinary strategies in tourism Text	Arifin (2019) valerian (2021)
	c. Culinary context for educational contexts	Diahnisa et al. (2023)

By examining a selection of research papers (Table 1), this study aimed to evaluate translation strategies employed in translating recipes and to understand how cultural meanings are either retained or modified in translations. This analysis also looks at the challenges the translator encountered and the suggestions from the authors. Additionally, this study contributes to future research by providing insights into how

translation strategies are employed across cultures and their impact on the audience's understanding.

### 3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Translating is a complicated and challenging process since it requires knowledge of both the source language and the target language to get the most equivalent messages for the target audience. Translation is a tool to communicate or transfer messages from one language to another. Communication is successful when the messages can be decoded by the audience. In the communication process, the source encodes the message and transfers the message through a channel, and then the receiver decodes the message. Yet, there is noise that can distract from the communication, and the message fails to decode. As in the communication process, a translation process needs to overcome the noise, which will make the transferring message process in the target language fail. Munday (2008) mentioned that the translator once again is the key player in the process of cultural communication and production of the *translatum*. Therefore, the translators need to use the appropriate strategies in transferring the message into the target language. The *st* being collected. The collected literature is the studies on translation strategies in Indonesian culinary terms, which are categorized into three themes: (1) the type of strategy employed by the translators, (2) the challenges encountered by them, and (3) the suggestions from the authors/researchers of the papers.

The first theme reviews the various strategies used in translating culturally specific items, especially Indonesian culinary items, either menu or recipes, from the source language to the target language. Researchers used qualitative descriptive research in analyzing the translation strategies to give detailed information about strategies that can be used in translating text from the source language to the target language. The first theme is classified into 2 subcategories, which are translation techniques and adaptation in menus and fictions.

A study by Kamalia (2024) analyzed the translation techniques used for food recipes from the internet, focusing on developing a translation that considers the cultural background and language style of different online cooking resources. The findings show 70% of the data used literal translation techniques without considering the cultural context. The study also identifies the use of descriptive and borrowing techniques to complement the limitations of literal translation. Yet, the result of the translation is less accurate in conveying the exact meaning to the audience. Another study by Amanah (2023), which also investigated translation techniques for recipes in a cookbook, reveals that more techniques are applied, such as adaptation, literal, amplification, *calque*, and description techniques that created the translation in the target language sounds natural. The translator is successfully capturing the essence and the naturalness of the original text in the target language.

Pratama (2024) examined the translation techniques applied in a bilingual cookbook that focuses on Indonesian culinary terms translated into English. The findings of this study exposed that transference, literal translation, transposition, equivalence and adaptation are applied in translating the culinary terms. The transference, which reached 42% of the translation technique applied, helps in transferring the cultural identity and uniqueness of the dish in the translation text. These three studies applied a qualitative approach to reveal the appropriate translation techniques that can be applied in translating culinary terms. The findings reveal that the cookbooks are translated better than the recipes on the internet. Plonska (2014) in his study examined the differences in translation approaches between nonprofessional translators and professional



translators, finding that the nonprofessional translators tend to translate word by word, while the professional translators pay attention to the overall meanings and check their translations to avoid errors in translation.

Mahmud (2020), in his study, examined the translation strategies in translating an Indonesian Dish in a fiction book based on Baker's taxonomy and stated that it needs a mix of not only Baker's translation strategies but also other translation strategies to have the closest equivalent translation in the target language. Setyaningsih (2020) studied the translation of Indonesian dishes in the menu in 5 hotel restaurants in Surabaya using Kwiecinski's classification using descriptive translation studies. Setyaningsih (2020) explained that Kwiecinski classified four groups of translating cultures which are: exoticizing procedures (borrowing), rich explicatory procedures (inserting extra terms), recognized exoticism (accepted translation), and assimilative procedures (functionally equivalent target terms). The study found that most food name translations belong to the rich explicatory group and discussed that the use of literal translation, with the addition of side dishes and cooking techniques, makes the translation result in TL longer and more informative than in SL. It is concluded that the best strategy in translating Indonesian dish names should consider functional translation by describing the appearance and provide information about the food, to give useful information about the food.

The studies in this theme revealed that translators used literal translation, adaptation, and transference to translate culinary terms in Indonesian recipes and food terms. The translators also kept the original names but added a description. Other words are translated to match in TL, so the target audience understands the meaning. These studies identified that the strategies employed helped to make the translation clear, but sometimes missed the cultural meaning. However, these studies involved small sample sizes which cannot represent the appropriate techniques for translating culinary terms. To achieve a more comprehensive understanding, a larger sample size and analyzing the user response would enhance the findings to a thorough understanding of translating strategies.

The second theme reviews the challenges encountered by translators when translating culinary terms. The studies used qualitative research and discourse analysis methods in investigating the challenges that occurred in the process of translation. The second theme is classified into 3 subcategories, which are loss and gain in CSIs, Multimodal and Visual Constraints, and Cultural Density in Traditional Food.

Tiwiyanti (2017) investigated how translators faced the loss in translating Cultural Specific Items (CSIs). She identified that there are two kinds of losses in translating CSIs: inevitable loss, which happens due to the difference between the language systems, and avertable loss, which happens when the translators fail to find the proper equivalence. Although the translators have adequate knowledge in both languages, the cultural gap between the languages leads to a loss in translation. Therefore, they suggested that the translators apply translation strategies. Fakhran (2021) studied the translation strategies used in the translation of food-related culturally specific items from a cooking show on Netflix. The findings showed not only the strategies employed but also the challenges in translating culinary terms, which are non-existent cultural specific items in TL, different degrees of institutionalization, imported CSI, false friendship, and the source culture foodstuff that belongs to a third culture. Therefore, the translator needs to be aware of the problems in translating food-related CSI and choose the appropriate strategies to transfer these items into the target language.

Sugiharti (2024) studied the combination of writings and images (multimodal text) to construct meaning. The study has revisited some similar studies in making meaning using

a multimodal approach. The study found that translators need to integrate writing and images to help the target audience understand the meaning due to the cultural gap in both languages. It helps the translator to introduce unfamiliar items to the target audience. Setianingrum (2019) also discussed the translation errors in the cooking instructions for instant noodles. The study revealed that there are 3 major errors based on counting, which are omission, mistranslation, and syntax and cohesion.

Surya (2022) identified cultural density in traditional food. The study explored the variety of Indonesian Sambals as condiments for all dishes. There are 110 different varieties of Sambal with different ingredients and cooking methods. It showed that culinary terms are various, and it can be a challenge for translators when translating into the target language.

The second theme captures the obstacles faced in translating Indonesian Culinary terms, especially when target language doesn't have the match words due to the cultural gap and the existence of the items. The translations lose important meaning. There is also a challenge of combining visuals with the text, as the image sometimes doesn't match the instructions. However, this study provided limited empirical evidence to support the findings about the challenges encountered by the translators. To achieve a more comprehensive understanding, this research proposes more examples of applying the translation strategies in the real-world context and case studies.

The third theme reviews the suggestions in translating culturally specific items, like culinary terms. The studies used a qualitative research method through text analysis. The third theme is classified into 3 subcategories, which are Translating Indonesian culinary for a global audience, culinary strategies in tourism text, and culinary context for educational contexts.

Kemala (2021) figured out the difficulty in finding equivalent words or terms in English. Therefore, the study suggested translation strategies for translating cultural words. The suggestions are that translators should have a comprehensive knowledge of both the source language and the target language, and translators should be careful in translating cultural words or any kind of text. Chiaro (2015) analysed the translation strategies in several studies to find a solution for translating culinary terms. Yet, this study explored the conceptual aspects of translating culinary terms without applying to real cases.

Arifin (2019) investigated the translation strategies of Indonesian English-specific cultural words in tourism texts. The findings showed that four translation strategies are employed, which are translation by cultural substitution, translation by loanword with explanation, translation by borrowing, and translation by loanword. The study suggested that translators need to employ various translation strategies for producing equivalent, readable, and acceptable translation works. Valerian (2021) discussed the use of translation strategies in translating Indonesian culture-bound words in two Indonesian tourism website articles. This study found that most words are translated with a loanword with an explanation strategy. The remaining words are translated using the cultural substitution strategy and the general word strategy. Valerian (2019) concluded that the use of the loan word strategy is to keep the original culturally bound word to keep the original meaning.

Diahnisa (2023) investigated the culinary context for the educational context used by international students who learned Indonesian at Universitas Negeri Sebelas Maret, Solo. This study aims to identify various conversational languages that occur in the introduction of Indonesian Culinary food. Recording 69 dialogues with BIPA students talking about culinary terms, this study found out that the students acquire a form of non-

formal Indonesian language that is influenced by the Javanese language when conversing about various food name and their tastes.

The studies in the third theme offer practical suggestions for translating culinary terms better. The studies suggested keeping Indonesian food names original, especially when the dishes carry cultural meaning, and adding an explanation if needed. This keeps the cultural values and helps the target audience understand. Imami (2021) mentioned that language and culture are two things that cannot be separated because culture affects language and language affects culture. Furthermore, Imami (2021) added that language is not the main aspect (only the medium) in the translation process, but the main aspect is culture, which must be translated. In translating culturally specific items, the main challenge is to preserve the cultural meaning in the target language that is acceptable to the audience. The studies suggested that the translators should have adequate comprehensive knowledge of the culture and language of both the source language and the target language. The translation should apply translation strategies since culturally specific items need to be translated carefully. Yet, the studies employed a small sample size to explore the suggestion for translating culinary terms. Recognizing the need for a more comprehensive understanding, more examples of the culinary translation in different genres would add more understanding in exploring the suggestion of translating culinary terms.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The literature review presents that translation of culinary terms requires strategies to overcome the complexity of translating culturally specific items due to the linguistic differences, cultural gap, and the potential loss of meaning. Translators may find it difficult to find the similarities in the target language without missing the context from the SL. Therefore, finding suggestions in translating culinary terms will contribute to the quality of translation.

The literature review examined that the literal translation, adaptation, and transference are used in translating culinary terms. The translation of culinary terms may keep their original meaning, but they are added with descriptions to make it clear. Yet, these strategies cannot be applied to all culinary translations. Culturally specific items need to be understood contextually in the source language, so it can help translators in rendering the culturally specific items in the target language without losing their meaning for the target audience.

Lack of linguistic knowledge in both English and Indonesia can be a challenge in culinary translation. Translators will find difficulty in transferring the meaning as equivalent as the source text. Having cultural knowledge of both countries can help translators in employing the translation strategies when dealing with non-existing culturally specific items in the target language and non-existing terms in the target language. Translators need to be careful in the decision-making of translating culturally specific items to ensure those meanings are clear in the target language.

To deal with these issues, it is recommended that translators explore and enrich cultural awareness and carefully decide strategies based on the context and the audience's needs. This may need cultural research, adding footnotes, and discussing with the native speakers when necessary. Based on Nord's model (2005), the translator is not seen as the sender of the ST message; the translator is seen as a culture text producer and sender (as cited in Guzel, 2023). Translators are encouraged to employ translation strategies that are more flexible and focus on the text's purpose and audience.



The reviewed studies offer valuable insights into employing translation strategies in translating culinary terms, the challenges encountered by translators, and suggestions for translating culturally specific items. For further studies, expanding the scope by analysing a broader and more diverse range of culturally specific items across various texts would contribute to a deeper and more practical understanding of cultural translation in a real-world context.

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