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Cultural Representation in English Culinary Menu Translations to Enhance Tourism in South Sulawesi

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***Abstract*—Culinary tourism has become a significant driver of destination attractiveness, particularly in culturally rich regions such as South Sulawesi, Indonesia. This study examines how cultural representation is conveyed in English culinary menu translations and how it contributes to enhancing tourism experiences. Employing a mixed-method approach, this study integrates qualitative analysis of translation strategies with quantitative data obtained from 27 respondents representing tourists, restaurant practitioners, and language experts. The findings indicate that while English menu translation is perceived as important and generally effective, cultural representation remains insufficient in the translated menus. Common issues include literal translations, lack of cultural explanations, and inconsistencies across menus. Strategies such as borrowing, descriptive translation, and amplification are identified as more effective in preserving cultural meaning while ensuring comprehensibility. The study concludes that culturally sensitive menu translation enhances tourists' understanding, engagement, and overall experiences. This study recommends the development of standardized translation guidelines and the integration of cultural narratives to strengthen culinary tourism in South Sulawesi.**

***Index Terms*—culinary translation, cultural representation, tourism, menu translation, South Sulawesi**

I. Introduction

South Sulawesi is renowned for its rich culinary heritage, which serves as a vital expression of the region's cultural identity and a significant asset for its tourism industry. Cultural identity has been passed down from previous generations to the present to ensure its preservation (Putra et al., 2025). The preservation of such heritage enables communities to sustain long-standing traditions and values that have shaped their collective identity (Saludung & Nahriana, 2020). In this context, traditional cuisine is not merely a form of consumption but also a cultural artefact that embodies historical narratives, local wisdom, and social values embedded within the Bugis-Makassar community.

Language plays a central role in this process, as it functions not only as a medium of communication but also as a reflection of cultural structures, values, and social relationships (Komilovna, 2025; Takwa et al., 2026). Cultural values inherited from the past continue to influence present practices and contribute to shaping future generations. In the era of globalisation, the increasing interaction between cultures has heightened the importance of English as a means of introducing local heritage to international audiences (Amenador & Wang, 2023; Kaharuddin et al., 2023). Consequently, the availability of English translations of culinary menus has become increasingly essential in facilitating cross-cultural communication and enhancing tourists' dining experiences.

However, translation in this context is not a purely linguistic process. Rather, it constitutes a sociocultural practice that involves the negotiation of meaning across languages and cultural systems (Arafah et al., 2025b; Ng et al., 2025). Accurate and culturally sensitive translations are therefore crucial in bridging linguistic and cultural gaps, enabling foreign visitors to understand and appreciate the uniqueness of South Sulawesi cuisine. International audiences interpret messages significantly influenced by cultural nuances, including values, symbolic meanings, and local expressions (Arafah et al., 2026; Nisak & Ishlaiyah, 2025). Failure to convey these nuances adequately may lead to misinterpretation, loss of authenticity, and reduced engagement.

In the contemporary global era, cultural experiences increasingly shape tourism, with gastronomy playing a pivotal role in attracting international visitors. Culinary tourism provides sensory satisfaction and acts as a medium for communicating local identity, heritage, and traditions. In culturally rich regions such as South Sulawesi, Indonesia, traditional cuisine embodies deep-rooted historical and social meanings that extend beyond the mere act of consumption, reflecting the region's unique cultural heritage and fostering a sense of community among its people.

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South Sulawesi has also become a leading destination for gastronomic tourism in Indonesia, renowned for its rich and diverse culinary heritage. Local language is also a cultural product to promote in the tourism industry created by every tribe, including in South Sulawesi (Mofu et al., 2024). Traditional dishes like *Coto Makassar, Pallubasa, Sop Konro*, and *Es Pisang Ijo* have evolved into cultural icons, drawing visitors from various regions and countries. Often, these items are either untranslated or translated literally, resulting in a loss of cultural nuance and reduced comprehensibility for international audiences. This highlights the importance of maintaining cultural representation in translation practices, particularly in the context of tourism. As the local government continues its efforts to position Makassar and its surrounding areas as a competitive global tourist destination, gastronomy plays a pivotal role in providing unique and memorable experiences. For international travelers, engaging with local cuisine often serves as a primary motivation for visiting, making the culinary sector a vital driver of the regional tourism economy (Hall et al., 2003; Richards, 2002).

Language is considered a carrier of ideas, making it important to overcome ineffective communication (Arafah et al., 2024a). As international tourism continues to grow, effective cross-cultural communication is essential. One of the most immediate and practical forms of communication is the culinary menu. For foreign tourists, English-translated menus serve as a primary interface for understanding local food offerings. Google Translate, for instance, provides facilities to translate the culinary menus into English (Kaharuddin et al., 2024; Pratama & Putri, 2024). However, translating culinary menus is not a straightforward linguistic process; it involves transferring culture-specific meanings that may not have direct equivalents in the target language. Writing the translation requires adapting to different cultural variations (Kurniasari, 2025).

However, the swift advancement of tourism must be accompanied by the preservation of indigenous identities, as failing to do so can lead to the erosion of local cultures and languages, which are vital components of those identities. Global impacts lead to the erosion of local cultures, including languages (Halil et al., 2024). Meanwhile, language is placed in a central position in cultural studies (Takwa et al., 2024). The safeguarding of the region's cultural heritage and local wisdom is not merely a matter of historical documentation but also a crucial element of sustainable tourism development and multicultural societal strategies (Hasyim & Arafah, 2023). Within the realm of culinary tourism, this implies that the presentation of traditional food to international visitors should transcend the mere fulfilment of culinary curiosity. It should also function as a conduit for conveying the intrinsic Bugis-Makassar values, historical narratives, and local wisdom, given that food is widely acknowledged as a significant marker of social and cultural identities (Dixit, 2019; Katan, 2014).

Development and modernization have a significant impact on how to live and affect certain changes in life (Manugeren et al., 2023). Nowadays, people are able to interact and communicate with anyone in any country (Arafah & Hasyim, 2023a). The availability of internet-based media has provided the users with a public space for exchanging information (Arafah et al., 2023a). To successfully share local knowledge with a global audience, it is important to be able to communicate across cultures. The increasing presence of foreign tourists demands adequate facilities to bridge the language gap, most notably through the availability of accurate English menu books. Language serves as a crucial gateway to authentic tourism, where the proper representation of local Bugis-Makassar expressions can significantly leverage the tourism industry by providing tourists with deeper cultural immersion (Arafin et al., 2022). Furthermore, addressing the various challenges of meaning and cross-cultural communication is essential to avoid misinterpretation and ensure that the true essence of local products is conveyed accurately across linguistic borders (Arafah & Hasyim, 2023b). The impact of this phenomenon can be destructive if the local products are translated literally, leading to a misunderstanding. However, it can also be beneficial if they are introduced to foreign tourists and presented with additional English explanation.

Previous studies have emphasized that ineffective translation—such as literal rendering, lack of explanation, or inconsistency—can negatively affect tourists' understanding and their overall experience. Conversely, well-crafted translations that combine authenticity and clarity can enhance tourists' engagement, curiosity, and willingness to explore local cuisine. This aligns with the concept of experiential and story-driven tourism, where narratives embedded in cultural products significantly influence visitor satisfaction (Latief et al., 2020).

Within this communicative framework, a culinary menu functions as more than a simple list of foods and prices; it is a cultural artefact that conveys the history, native ingredients, and deep-rooted traditions of the community. Unfortunately, errors or inaccuracies in translating dish names often strip away this cultural essence and lead to a significant loss of meaning, particularly when dealing with Culture-Specific Items (CSIs) that lack direct equivalents in the target language (Aixelá, 1996; Baker, 2018). For instance, translating "*Pallubasa*" simply as "Beef Soup" completely eliminates the identity of the roasted grated coconut or *kelapa sangrai*, which is its defining characteristic and a testament to local culinary ingenuity. Some local menus cannot be translated literally since multiple explanations should be included to describe a food (Baa et al., 2023). Relying heavily on such literal translations fails to educate tourists and ultimately diminishes the authenticity of their gastronomic experience.

As a response to this gap, English is taught through educational fields. To be more familiar with how to translate Indonesian to English, it should be fully understood and mastered (Kuswanty et al., 2023), using both printed media and online materials with technology-based platforms (Anggrawan et al., 2019). Using appropriate methods and technologies can solve the goal of overcoming problems, such as translating (Arafah et al., 2024b). Allocating time to produce good writing is essential, as translation requires an understanding of cultural backgrounds (Mardiana et al.,

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2023). Another source of material for learning the use of language is through literary works (Arafah et al., 2023c). Literature functions as a medium of communication. There are a lot of cultural terms with different cultural backgrounds presented in literary works (Yudith et al., 2024), which can create challenges for readers who may not be familiar with those cultures and require additional context to fully appreciate the nuances of the text. Some literary works are presented in translation versions while still being provided in the local language, which indicates that not every word can be translated and requires further explanation for understanding.

The application of precise linguistic strategies in translation is paramount, as it recognises the gap between the practical need to accommodate foreign tourists and the crucial necessity to preserve culinary identity. According to translation scholars, translators must navigate the delicate balance between making the text accessible to the target audience and preserving the distinct "foreignness" of the source culture (Newmark, 1988; Venuti, 1995). Despite the growing recognition of culinary tourism in Indonesia, limited attention has been paid to the role of menu translation as a tool for cultural representation and tourism enhancement, particularly in South Sulawesi. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by examining how cultural elements are represented in English culinary menu translations and how these representations influence tourism experiences.

II. Literature Review

Translation is increasingly understood not merely as a linguistic activity but as a complex process of cultural mediation. Scholars such as Newmark (1988) emphasize the translator's role in balancing accessibility for the target audience with the preservation of the source culture's distinctiveness, often conceptualized as maintaining "foreignness." This tension is particularly evident in culinary translation, where food items are deeply embedded in cultural identity and local wisdom. While literal translation may enhance surface-level comprehensibility, it often risks erasing cultural nuances, whereas excessive domestication may reduce authenticity and cultural depth, leading to a loss of the original context and meaning that are vital for a true understanding of the dish and its significance within its culture.

Building on this perspective, Venuti (1995) conceptualises translation as a site of ideological negotiation, distinguishing between foreignisation and domestication. Foreignisation seeks to preserve the cultural specificity of the source text, while domestication adapts it to the norms of the target culture. In tourism contexts, foreignisation is frequently deemed more suitable, as it facilitates the preservation of cultural distinctiveness while presenting unfamiliar cultural elements to global audiences. However, recent discussions suggest that neither strategy alone is sufficient; instead, a balanced or hybrid approach is required to ensure both cultural integrity and communicative effectiveness.

Similarly, Baker (1992, 2018) highlights that translation involves not only linguistic equivalence but also cultural interpretation. Meaning is constructed within a socio-cultural context, where the translator mediates between source and target audiences (Asri et al., 2023; Sunyoto et al., 2022). This is particularly relevant in culinary discourse, where food carries symbolic meanings related to tradition, identity, and social practice. Thus, translation in this domain must account for both semantic meaning and cultural significance.

A. Gastronomic Tourism as a Reflection of Cultural Identity

Culinary texts, particularly menus, function as cultural texts that reflect and reproduce local identities. Rather than serving solely as informational tools, menus operate as cultural mediators that shape how local traditions and values are perceived by international audiences (Taqdir et al., 2026). This perspective aligns with broader theories of cultural representation, which emphasis that texts construct meaning through language, symbols, and discourse.

Gastronomic tourism has emerged as a central component of the global tourism experience, where food serves as a medium for expressing cultural identity (Richards, 2002; Hall et al., 2003). Culinary experiences enable tourists to engage with the symbolic and social meanings of a destination, contributing to authenticity and visitor satisfaction (Dixit, 2019; Katan, 2014).

In South Sulawesi, traditional cuisine embodies local wisdom and historical narratives that reflect the values of the Bugis-Makassar community. These culinary practices function as representations of collective identity, requiring accurate and meaningful translation to facilitate cross-cultural understanding.

B. Culture-Specific Items (CSIs) in Culinary Discourse

The translation of culinary terms inherently involves Culture-Specific Items (CSIs), which present challenges due to their strong cultural embeddedness. Aixelá (1996) defines CSIs as elements that lack direct equivalents in the target language. Similarly, Baker (2018) identifies non-equivalence as a central issue in translation, particularly when dealing with culturally bound concepts, which can lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations in the target language if not addressed properly.

Culinary expressions represent a significant category of CSIs, as they encapsulate local ingredients, preparation techniques, and cultural meanings. In South Sulawesi, terms such as Coto and Pisang Epe carry meanings that extend beyond literal descriptions. Improper translation may lead to semantic reduction, transforming culturally rich expressions into generic representations that fail to convey the unique culinary traditions and cultural significance associated with terms like *Coto* and *Pisang Epe*.

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Beyond linguistic equivalence, the issue of CSIs (culturally specific items) is closely related to how cultural meaning is represented in texts. As studies on representation have shown, texts function not merely as neutral conveyors of information but as instruments that shape how social and cultural meanings are constructed and interpreted by audiences (Taqdir et al., 2025). In this sense, the translation of culinary items does transfer lexical meaning and reconstructs cultural identity within a new linguistic context. Research has shown that oversimplification or inadequate representation of cultural elements can distort meaning and reduce cultural authenticity. Therefore, translation strategies must incorporate cultural awareness and interpretative sensitivity.

C. Translation Strategies in Tourism Communication

To address the challenges posed by CSIs, translators must employ deliberate and context-sensitive strategies. Newmark (1988) outlines several procedures for translating cultural terms, including borrowing, descriptive equivalents, and literal translation. Borrowing retains the original term, thereby preserving cultural identity, but may reduce comprehensibility if not accompanied by explanation, such as providing a brief definition or context for the term to help the audience understand its significance. Conversely, literal translation often produces linguistically acceptable but culturally inadequate results (Iksora et al., 2022), as seen in problematic renderings such as “Brother Soup” for Sop Saudara or “Banana Smackdown” for Pisang Epe.

Venuti’s (1995) framework further emphasizes the need to balance foreignization and domestication. In tourism communication, a hybrid strategy is often considered the most effective, combining borrowing with descriptive or explanatory elements. This approach allows translators to maintain cultural authenticity while facilitating understanding for international audiences (Arafah et al., 2023b). Moreover, such strategies contribute to positioning local culinary products as culturally distinctive and appealing within global tourism markets, which can enhance the overall attractiveness of the destination and encourage more visitors to experience the local cuisine.

In addition to textual strategies, recent research multimodal approaches in culinary translation. The use of visual aids, contextual descriptions, and narrative elements can enhance comprehension and engagement. Effective strategies may therefore include descriptive translation, transliteration with contextual notes, and the integration of visual or narrative elements to convey cultural meaning.

Culinary translation plays an important part in shaping tourists' perceptions and experiences. As menus function as cultural artefacts, the quality of translation directly influences tourists’ understanding, trust, and willingness to engage with unfamiliar dishes. Poor translation may lead to confusion and hesitation, whereas culturally informative translations can enhance curiosity, decision-making, and overall satisfaction.

D. Authenticity and Storytelling in Culinary Tourism

Authenticity is a central concept in tourism studies, particularly in relation to cultural and culinary experiences. Contemporary tourists increasingly seek meaningful and authentic encounters rather than standardized consumption. In this context, culinary products are not only consumed but also interpreted as narratives of place and identity.

Menus can therefore function as storytelling devices that communicate the origin, history, and cultural significance of dishes. The concept of story-driven tourism emphasizes the role of narrative in enhancing visitor engagement and emotional connection. By incorporating cultural explanations into menu translations, restaurants can transform dining experiences into opportunities for cultural learning and immersion.

E. Research Gap

Although previous studies have examined translation strategies (Newmark, 1988; Venuti, 1995; Baker, 2018) and the role of gastronomy in tourism (Richards, 2002; Hall et al., 2003; Dixit, 2019), these two domains have largely developed in parallel rather than in an integrated manner. Existing research on culinary translation tends to focus on linguistic accuracy and equivalence, while studies on gastronomic tourism emphasis experiential and cultural dimensions without systematically addressing the role of language and translation.

Moreover, limited empirical research has explored how cultural representation in menu translation is perceived by different stakeholders, including tourists, restaurant practitioners, and language experts. This gap is particularly evident in the Indonesian context, where culinary diversity is high but standardized translation practices remain underdeveloped.

Thus, a critical gap exists in understanding how translation strategies for culture-specific culinary items function as mechanisms of cultural representation and how they influence tourism experiences in real-world contexts. This research fills this void by amalgamating translation theory and tourism studies via a mixed-methods approach. By analyzing both translation strategies and stakeholder perceptions, this research aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of culinary menu translation as a form of cultural communication and its role in enhancing tourism experiences.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study employs a mixed-method approach with a qualitative-dominant orientation supported by quantitative data. The qualitative component focuses on analyzing cultural representation in English culinary menu translations,

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particularly in relation to culture-specific items (CSIs) and translation strategies. Meanwhile, the quantitative component examines stakeholders' perceptions of translation quality and its impact on tourism experiences.

This design is considered appropriate as it enables the study to integrate textual analysis with user perceptions, providing a more comprehensive understanding of menu translation as both a linguistic and socio-cultural phenomenon.

B. Research Context and Participants

The study was conducted in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, a region known for its rich culinary heritage and cultural diversity. Traditional dishes such as Coto Makassar, Pallubasa, and Sop Konro are widely recognized as cultural icons, making the region an appropriate context for examining culinary translation in tourism.

The participants consisted of 27 respondents selected through purposive sampling. They represent key stakeholders in culinary tourism, including tourists, restaurant or café managers, translators, and language practitioners. This diversity allows for a broader perspective on how menu translation is perceived and evaluated.

C. Data Collection

Data were collected through two primary sources. First, English-translated culinary menus from selected food establishments in South Sulawesi were gathered as textual data for analysis. Second, a structured questionnaire was distributed online to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from respondents.

The questionnaire included closed-ended items using a five-point Likert scale to measure perceptions of clarity, cultural representation, accuracy, and impact on tourism experience. In addition, open-ended questions were included to capture respondents' insights regarding translation challenges and suggestions for improvement.

D. Data Analysis

The analysis was conducted using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Qualitative analysis was applied to the menu texts and open-ended responses using thematic analysis, focusing on identifying translation strategies and patterns of cultural representation. The analysis was guided by Newmark's (1988) classification of translation strategies—such as borrowing, descriptive translation, and amplification—as well as Venuti's (1995) concepts of foreignization and domestication.

Quantitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, and mean scores. The Likert scale (1–5) was interpreted as follows: 4.21–5.00 (strongly agree), 3.41–4.20 (agree), 2.61–3.40 (neutral), 1.81–2.60 (disagree), and 1.00–1.80 (strongly disagree). This analysis was used to identify general trends in respondents' perceptions.

E. Validity and Ethical Considerations

To ensure the credibility of the findings, data triangulation was applied by combining textual analysis and questionnaire results. The questionnaire items were developed based on established theories in translation and tourism studies to ensure content validity.

All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and participated voluntarily. Their responses were kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes.

IV. Finding and Discussion

A. Respondent Profile

A total of 27 respondents participated in this study, representing diverse stakeholder groups, including tourists, restaurant practitioners, translators, and language experts. This composition provides a broad perspective on culinary menu translation from both user and professional viewpoints.

As shown in Table 1, the majority of respondents fall within the 20–40 age range (66.67%), indicating that the data are largely drawn from individuals within the most active demographic in tourism. Travel and cross-cultural interaction generally engage this age group more, making their perceptions particularly relevant to the study of culinary tourism and communication.

Table 1
Distribution of Respondents by Age

No	Age Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	< 20 years	1	3.70%
2	20–30 years	10	37.04%
3	31–40 years	8	29.63%
4	41–50 years	6	22.22%
5	> 50 years	2	7.41%
	Total	**27**	**100%**

B. Perceptions of English Culinary Menu Translation

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The quantitative findings indicate that respondents generally hold positive perceptions of English culinary menu translation. Mean scores across key variables range from 3.80 to 4.30, reflecting agreement to strong agreement regarding the importance and effectiveness of translated menus in tourism contexts.

TABLE 2
SCORES OF RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

No	Statement	Mean Score	Interpretation
1	Menu translation helps in understanding the food	4.30	Strongly Agree
2	The menu reflects local culture	4.10	Agree
3	The menu translation is accurate	3.90	Agree
4	The translation is easy to understand	3.80	Agree
5	Translation influences interest in trying the food	4.20	Strongly Agree

The highest mean score is observed for the statement that menu translation helps in understanding the food (M = 4.30), indicating that respondents strongly recognise its functional role in facilitating comprehension. A similarly high score is found for the influence of translation on interest in trying the food (M = 4.20), suggesting that translation quality contributes to shaping culinary curiosity and decision-making.

The perception that menus reflect local culture is also rated positively (M = 4.10), although slightly lower than other indicators, indicating that cultural representation is present but may not yet be fully optimised. Meanwhile, accuracy (M = 3.90) and ease of understanding (M = 3.80) receive comparatively lower scores, pointing to potential limitations in clarity and linguistic precision.

These findings suggest that while English menu translation is perceived as effective, improvements in clarity and cultural representation are necessary to enhance its role in supporting meaningful tourism experiences.

C. Cultural Representation and Translation Strategies in Menu Translation

The analysis of culinary menus indicates that translation practises vary considerably in representing cultural elements and communicating meaning to international audiences. Across the data, four dominant strategies were identified: borrowing, literal translation, descriptive translation, and hybrid strategies. Each of these reflects a different approach in balancing cultural preservation and communicative clarity.

Table 3 presents selected examples of menu items and their corresponding translation strategies, illustrating how cultural meaning is either preserved, reduced, or enhanced in the process of translation.

TABLE 3
CULTURAL REPRESENTATION AND TRANSLATION STRATEGIES

Menu Item	Original Term	English Translation	Strategy	Cultural Representation
Sarabba	*Sarabba*	Special Makassar Spices Drink	Hybrid	Strong
Gado-gado	Gado-gado	Indonesian salad of boiled vegetables served with peanut sauce	Descriptive	Strong
Nasi Goreng	Nasi Goreng	Fried Rice	Literal	Moderate
Mie Goreng	Mie Goreng	Fried Noodles	Literal	Moderate
Rica-rica	*Rica-rica*	–	Borrowing	Weak
Parape	*Parape*	–	Borrowing	Weak
Es Kopi Skema	*Es Kopi Skema*	–	Borrowing	Weak
Pisang Goreng	Pisang Goreng	Banana fritter	Literal	Moderate
Kikil Soup	Kikil	Kikil soup (with explanation)	Descriptive	Strong
Nasi Goreng Arum Pala	Nasi Goreng	Fried rice cooked with special Arum Pala spices	Hybrid	Moderate–Strong

The findings show that borrowing is frequently used to preserve local culinary identity, particularly for culture-specific items such as *Sarabba*, *Rica-rica*, and *Parape*. While this strategy maintains authenticity, its effectiveness depends on the presence of additional explanatory elements. When borrowing is used without explanation, as seen in *Rica-rica* and *Parape*, the result is limited accessibility for international audiences, reducing the communicative value of the menu.

Literal translation is commonly applied to general food categories such as Nasi Goreng and Mie Goreng, which are rendered as "Fried Rice" and "Fried Noodles." Although this strategy ensures immediate comprehension, it tends to simplify the original meaning and does not convey the distinctive culinary characteristics embedded in the source culture. As a result, cultural representation is partially reduced, even though functional understanding is achieved.

In contrast, descriptive translation provides a more comprehensive representation of cultural meaning. This strategy includes additional information that explains the composition or cultural context of a dish, as illustrated in the translation of Gado-gado as "Indonesian salad of boiled vegetables served with peanut sauce." Such descriptions enhance clarity while simultaneously introducing cultural elements to the reader, allowing for a more profound understanding of the dish.

A more balanced approach is observed in hybrid strategies, where borrowing is combined with descriptive elements. For example, *Sarabba* is translated as "Special Makassar Spices Drink," preserving the original term while offering an

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explanatory description. Similarly, menu items such as “Fried rice cooked with special Arum Pala spices” retain local identity while improving comprehensibility. This combination appears to be the most effective strategy, as it maintains cultural authenticity while ensuring accessibility.

The analysis also reveals that translation practises differ depending on the type of establishment. More locally orientated venues tend to rely heavily on borrowing and informal naming, whereas restaurants with a broader target audience employ descriptive and hybrid strategies more consistently. For instance, the menu from Arum Pala demonstrates a more structured approach, combining Indonesian terms, English translations, and explanatory descriptions. This layered strategy reflects an attempt to accommodate both local identity and international understanding.

The chosen strategy closely relates to the effectiveness of menu translation, according to the findings. Borrowing alone tends to preserve cultural identity but limits comprehension, while literal translation facilitates understanding but reduces cultural depth. Descriptive and hybrid strategies, on the other hand, provide a more balanced representation by integrating clarity with cultural meaning. These results highlight the importance of strategic translation choices in ensuring that culinary menus function not only as informational texts but also as mediums of cultural communication in tourism contexts.

D. Common Issues in Menu Translation

The analysis of culinary menu translations reveals several recurring issues that affect the clarity and effectiveness of communication, particularly in conveying cultural meaning to international audiences. These issues are closely related to the choice of translation strategies identified in the previous section and reflect inconsistencies in how cultural elements are represented across different menu types, such as the use of literal translations versus more adaptive approaches that consider the target audience's cultural context.

One of the most prominent issues is the use of literal translation, which, although advantageous in conveying general meaning, often results in the reduction of cultural specificity. For instance, common dishes such as Nasi Goreng and Mie Goreng are translated as “Fried Rice” and “Fried Noodles.” While these translations are easily understood, they fail to communicate the distinctive characteristics of Indonesian cuisine, including its use of specific spices, preparation methods, and cultural context. In some cases, literal translation also leads to unnatural or overly rigid expressions, such as “Fried rice cooked with special Arum Pala spices,” which may be grammatically acceptable but does not reflect natural English usage in menu contexts.

Another significant issue is the lack of cultural explanation, particularly in cases where borrowing is used without additional descriptive support. Menu items such as *Rica-rica*, *Parape*, and *Es Kopi Skema* are presented without any explanation, making them inaccessible to international customers who are unfamiliar with these terms. While borrowing helps preserve the original linguistic form, the absence of contextual information limits its communicative function. As a result, these items may fail to attract or inform potential customers, reducing the effectiveness of the menu as a tool for cultural communication.

Inconsistency in translation practises also emerges as a recurring problem. Within the same menu, some items are translated descriptively while others are left untranslated or translated literally. For example, *Sarabba* is accompanied by an explanatory description, whereas other culturally specific items such as *Rica-rica* are not. This inconsistency creates uneven levels of comprehension and may confuse readers, as there is no clear standard guiding the translation approach. The variation in strategies suggests that translation decisions are often made without a systematic framework, resulting in a lack of coherence across menu items.

Current menu translation practices are not yet fully optimised to balance cultural representation and communicative clarity, as these issues indicate. While certain strategies successfully preserve cultural identity, their effectiveness depends on consistent and context-sensitive application. Without such consideration, translation may either obscure cultural meaning or fail to provide sufficient information for international audiences.

E. Impact on Tourist Experience

The findings indicate that the quality of menu translation has a direct and meaningful impact on tourists’ experiences, particularly in terms of comprehension, interest, and decision-making. Quantitative results indicate that respondents generally perceive English menu translation as important in helping them understand food items and encouraging them to try local dishes. High mean scores for statements related to clarity and influence on food choice suggest that translation plays an important part in determining tourists' engagement with local cuisine.

However, actual translation practices observed in the menu data do not uniformly support this positive perception. The presence of untranslated terms and literal translations often limits tourists’ ability to fully understand the dishes. For instance, menu items presented solely in their original forms, such as *Rica-rica* or *Parape*, may create confusion for international visitors who lack cultural familiarity. In such cases, the absence of explanatory information reduces the communicative effectiveness of the menu and may discourage tourists from selecting unfamiliar dishes.

Conversely, menu items that include descriptive or hybrid translations tend to facilitate better understanding and increase interest. Descriptions that explain ingredients, preparation methods, or cultural context provide additional cognitive support, allowing tourists to make more informed choices. This is consistent with respondents’ preferences for clear and informative translations, as reflected in their agreement that translation influences their willingness to try local food.

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The findings also suggest that translation functions not only as a linguistic tool but also as a mediating factor in the overall tourism experience. When menus successfully integrate cultural information with accessible language, they contribute to a more meaningful interaction between tourists and local culture. In contrast, inadequate translation—whether through excessive literalness or lack of explanation—can create barriers that limit cultural engagement.

The results demonstrate that effective menu translation enhances tourists' understanding, supports decision-making, and increases their interest in local cuisine. This highlights the importance of adopting translation strategies that balance clarity and cultural representation, ensuring that culinary menus serve not only as informational guides but also as gateways to cultural experience.

V. Conclusion

This study examines how cultural representation is conveyed in English culinary menu translations and how it influences tourism experiences in the context of South Sulawesi. The findings demonstrate that menu translation plays a crucial role not only as a linguistic tool but also as a medium of cultural communication.

The results reveal that translation practices vary across establishments, with four main strategies identified: borrowing, literal translation, descriptive translation, and hybrid strategies. Descriptive and hybrid approaches emerge as the most effective strategies for balancing cultural preservation and communicative clarity. In contrast, borrowing without explanation and literal translation tend to limit cultural representation and reduce accessibility for international audiences.

The analysis also identifies recurring issues in menu translation, including the overuse of literal translation, lack of cultural explanation, and inconsistency in translation practices. These issues highlight the absence of a systematic approach in translating culture-specific culinary items, resulting in uneven levels of comprehension and cultural engagement.

From the perspective of users, the findings indicate that English menu translation significantly influences tourists' understanding, interest, and decision-making. Clear and culturally informative translations enhance engagement with local cuisine, while inadequate translations may create confusion and reduce the attractiveness of unfamiliar dishes. This study emphasizes the necessity of employing translation strategies that combine clarity with cultural profundity. Culinary menus should not be treated merely as informational texts but as cultural interfaces that facilitate meaningful interaction between tourists and local culture.

In terms of contribution, this study bridges the gap between translation studies and tourism research by providing empirical evidence on how translation strategies affect cultural representation and user experience. It also offers practical implications for restaurant practitioners and translators, emphasising the necessity of more consistent and culturally sensitive translation practices. Future research may expand the scope by involving a larger number of participants, incorporating cross-regional comparisons, or exploring the role of digital menus and multimodal translation in shaping tourism experiences.

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