

Domestication and Foreignisation Strategies in Restaurant Menu Translation

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ABSTRACT

Conducted in the framework of two key cultural strategies of foreignisation and domestication postulated by Venuti (1995), this research made an attempt to investigate the strategies used in translation of 40 restaurant menus. It tried to perform a comprehensive analysis of the foreignisation and domestication procedures applied in the translation of food names from Persian into English. After collecting the applied strategies and analysing them, the researcher concluded that foreignisation was the most pervasive strategy in the translation of food names in restaurant menus. At the same time, more inadequate translations were found when the translator resorted to foreignisation translation strategies in comparison with domestication strategies. Moreover, the number of adequate translations in general was significantly more than inadequate ones, which implies the translator's skill in translation. The findings of this present study have implications for translation teachers and students of tourism education.

Keywords: Translation strategy, domestication, foreignisation, restaurant menus, Persian-English translation

INTRODUCTION

Translation, acts as a bridge between different languages and cultures to bring them closer to one another and lead significantly to cross-cultural communication. Catford, who presented the first definition of translation (1965, p.1), believes that the "replacement of textual material in [the] target language" is called translation. Many scholars focus their attention on the cultural and linguistic

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role in translation and they consider this an important element in the translation process.

A translator requires two basic translation strategies, domestication and foreignisation, when translating a text from one culture to another. Domestication and foreignisation translation strategies are terms coined by Venuti (1995). Domestication is a type of translation strategy that uses “a transparent, fluent and invisible style in order to minimize the foreignness of the target text and leading the text to be familiar and recognizable” (Munday 2008, p. 144). Foreignisation refers to a type of translation strategy whereby the translator “deliberately breaks target conventions by retaining something of the foreignness of the original” (Shuttleworth & Cowie 1997, p. 59). The main point of domestication and foreignisation in Venuti’s (1995) model is that it considers the influence of cultural and ideological factors on translation and the influence of translation on the target readers and cultures as well.

A menu is a symbol of the identity and the theme of a restaurant (Lockwood, 2007). The language of restaurant menus involves the use of a simple, informal, personal, friendly and easy-to-read style, in addition to the use of descriptive adjectives, verbs, adverbs and nouns to highlight and exaggerate a situation (Wallace, 1981). Lack of clear and truthful description may cause misleading choices, which is unfair to customers and can cause them never to come back (Kotschevar & Withrow, 2007). The menu as a text is made for a specific purpose and for a specific audience. It has a double function: it is an informative text

that tells the customers what they need to know about the dishes available and at the same time, it is a means of advertising aimed at expressing the restaurant’s image and the culture of the country (Jurate, 2006).

The call for professional translation is due to the fact that translating menus and food terms is not as easy a task as one may think. The difficulty increases whenever there is a cultural gap between the source culture and the target culture (Al Tanero, 2005). Menus are tricky and their translations require not just a knowledge of the two languages but also a deep sense of localisation. This knowledge is necessary because translating foreign food terms can be very difficult (Al Tanero, 2005). Considering the above-mentioned problems and difficulties and the theme of communication in translating menus, filling the cultural gap and preventing misunderstanding is very important. Therefore, taking into account that Iran is a tourist attraction with a variety of food, the present study aimed at working on the English translation of Persian menus to find their potential translation inadequacies.

Many tourists travel to different parts of the world every year and their need for meals is inevitable. Menus are the first and easiest medium that provides tourists with the name of foods and their content. Indeed, as mentioned above, menus are not only a list of dishes and beverages in the context of the first language, but also a medium of defining some aspect of culture in cross-cultural communication. Translation is the building block in this process of cross-cultural communication. Suitable decoding of food names in the

source text and correct encoding in the target text via adequate translation strategies facilitate the target readers' understanding. As highlighted by Kafipour and Hosseini Naveh (2011) and Kafipour et al. (2010), awareness of strategies and their role in teaching and learning can enhance the conscious application of strategies. This, can also foster thinking skills in relation to the reading and comprehending the text content (Karizak & Khojasteh, 2016). This is true for translation and can lead translators to conscious and appropriate use of the strategies in translation.

According to a World Tourism Organisation (WTO) report, the ratio of domestic tourists to inbound tourists in Iran is 10 to 1. One of the factors for low numbers of inbound tourists is rooted in inadequate translation of restaurant menus for tourists, who do not communicate with the target readers because of cultural differences (Nobakht & Piruz, 2008).

Tourist attraction is traced back to the culture of a country. Moreover, every society has its own culture that is influenced by its geography and history. Therefore, the aim of translating restaurant menus is not only to achieve cultural rendering but also to translate the names of the food appropriately from Persian to English. Iran is a tourist spot with a variety of food. Therefore, adequate translation of food names in menus is very important. As far as the researcher knows, most previous studies on this matter, including Hafeth Saleh (2011), worked on the translation of food names from English to their native language. The direction of the

present study is the other way round. This is the novel aspect of the present study as the literature shows that few such studies have been carried out.

The receptor is the final aim of the whole translation process. Hatim and Munday (2004, p. 163) reported on the significant role of the receptor. They considered satisfying the receptor as the main factor that judges the adequacy of translation. In the case of menu translation, it is clear that the aim is to satisfy the receptors' expectations. Therefore, translating food names is very important and necessary. When customers visit a restaurant and the menu offered is understandable and the foreign names are translated correctly, they are likely to place an order and to become regular customers because of the positive feedback. Libman (2009) emphasised the importance of food and beverage translation, saying that, "it would be ideal if you are able to provide your patrons, especially foreigners, with a menu translation ." He demanded a professional translation as an ideal way to increase sales.

The call for professional translation is due to the fact that translating menus and food names is not an easy task. The difficulty increases when there is a cultural gap between the source culture and the target culture. Al Tanero (2005) stressed that menus are problematic and their translation requires not just knowledge of the two languages but also a deep sense of localisation. This knowledge is necessary because translating food names can be very difficult.

Hua Ying (2008, pp. 21–26) suggested the application of the skopos theory for translation of food names. The skopos theory proposed by Reiss and Vermeer in the late 1970s states that the purpose of translation is to determine the shape of the target text. Yung (2008, 24–26) tried to clarify the relationship between the skopos theory and translating food names. He said that a translated menu is expected to achieve four main functions that show the basics of the skopos theory. These are the informative, aesthetic, commercial and cultural functions. A translated menu should keep the characteristics and the style of food for the informative function. Also, it should be done as a work of art (on the basis of the aesthetic function). So, the adaptation technique is used to fill the cultural gap and produce satisfactory translations that can achieve both the commercial and cultural functions and in this situation, translation is considered as intercultural communication. It is hoped that this study can achieve and fulfil this goal.

This study was aimed at investigating different translation strategies used in translating Persian food names into English in restaurant menus based on Venuti's (1995) domestication and foreignisation model in order to explore the inadequate translation of food names in restaurant menus. Ultimately, the present study primarily attempted to uncover any relationship which exists between translation inadequacy and orientation (domestication/foreignisation) of used translation strategies, whether the translators mainly resort to domestication

strategies in the process of translating restaurant menus due to target language cultural determination or whether they use mostly foreignisation as a strategy in the translation of restaurant menus. To fulfil the objectives of this study, the following research questions are investigated:

1. What are different translation strategies used in translating Persian food names into English in restaurants menus?
2. Is there any inadequate translation of food names in restaurant menus?
3. Is there any relationship between translation inadequacy and the orientation (domestication and foreignisation) of the used translation strategies?

Since human beings have existed, translation has been necessary. People communicate in spite of different languages and in some cases, achieve success in proper communication via sign language and the application of onomatopoeic words. However, sometimes communication is lost when there is a lack of equal counterpart words in the two languages (Khojasteh & Kafipour, 2012).

According to Richards and Schmidt (2002, p. 563), translation is defined as "the process of rendering written language that is produced in one language (the source language) into another language (the target language)." Venuti (1995) stated that a translation would be successful and satisfactory if it considered the cultural and social conditions in which the text is translated and read. In 'The

Translator's Invisibility', Venuti (1995) mentioned two terms in translation studies, namely, domestication and foreignisation. Domestication refers to the translation strategy that tries to use a clear and fluent method in translation to decrease ambiguity of the source text to make it understandable and reader-friendly. In addition, it tries to approach and adjust source culture to the target culture whereas foreignisation tries to adjust the reader to the source culture. It tries to facilitate cultural and linguistic differences for readers (Lindfors, 2001). Domestication or foreignisation strategies are concerned with the two cultures, and these strategies exist when there are differences in linguistic and cultural connotations. There is a dichotomy of translation strategies as domestication and foreignisation (Venuti, 1995).

Foreignising a translation requires a translator to get close to the author by adopting the original expressions so as to preserve and convey the foreignness of the source text (ST). The target of translation is not to eliminate the differences of language and culture, but rather to demonstrate those differences. The translator tries to keep some original concepts in the source text that may be incompatible with the reader's traditions or unfamiliar to the target reader. Foreignising translation is centred on the faithful conveying of foreign cultural elements, especially those of the marginal culture (Venuti, 1995). Using this strategy, the translator is expected to maintain the foreign identity of the source text. Also, a foreignised translation gives a reader

more information but tends to increase the difficulty of understanding. Domesticating translation, on the other hand, requires translators to get close to the reader or target text (TT) by taking into consideration the linguistic habits of the target language (TL) and preferring to use the conventional expressions of the target readers (TRs). The translated text should be understandable to the target readers as the source text is understandable to the source text readers (adequate translation). As a result of using the domestication process in translation, the readers of the TT experience easing of cultural shock and are willing to overcome cultural differences between the ST and the TT (Venuti, 1994).

Most of the previous case studies on the translation of menus showed that menu translators were non-professionals who could not fill the cultural gap. The translators mentioned in the studies tried to translate the surface structure of food terms without paying attention to the norms of the Target Text (TT). Therefore, they produced inadequate translations that were not understandable to the Target Readers (TR). The following section briefly reports on a number of previous studies on the translation of menus.

Some of these studies have questioned the use of foreign terminology in food names. Hatim (1988, pp. 18–25) indicated that the use of foreign terminology in food names is an "old phenomenon." There are two views concerning the use of foreign terminology in food names. The first one highlights the importance of the

menu as a means of communication that should meet the expectations of customers from different backgrounds. On the other hand, some scholars consider the use of foreign languages in local food menus an unnecessary act. For example, Eckestein (1983, p. 91) believed that it is not advisable to use a mixture of languages on the menu.

McVety and Ware (1990, p. 45–47) identified the factors that influence menu planning such as nationality, age, level of income and religious restrictions on the part of the customer. Other factors that are related to the meal include flavour, texture, shape and colour. The quality of the menu is determined by all these factors.

In 'Are Menu Translations Getting Worse? Problems from Empirical Analysis of Restaurant Menus in English in the Area', Pouget (1999) collected 14 Spanish restaurant menus translated into English in the 1990s. These menus covered 1113 dishes. First, she asked the restaurant owners about the menu translators to see if they were professional translators (people who translate regularly) or non-professional translators (people whose regular job is not translation). Then, she asked two English native speakers about the clarity of food terms in menus in terms of linguistic content. She wanted them to rate the translation of menus from 0 (impossible to understand) to 5 (completely understandable). Next, she wanted them to determine the cultural elements which cause difficulty in understanding the menus. Finally, she performed a T-test for the linguistic and cultural items which caused difficulty in understanding menus.

The results of the study showed that the translators were mainly non-professional. Therefore, the menus translated in the 1990s were poor in terms of quality and the translators lacked translational competence.

In 'A Comparative Study on Translations of Daily and Banquet Menus', Mandy (2011) collected a number of daily and banquet menus from 10 famous restaurants and hotels in Macao. First, he collected 200 dish names from menus, classified them into different categories and analysed them for better elaboration. Then, he conducted a comparative study on the translations of daily and banquet menus from a cultural perspective. This analysis allowed for the cultural differences between daily and banquet menus and the influence of cultural factors in the translation process to be examined. Next, he investigated the translation of dish names by using domestication and foreignisation as translation strategies and methods. Finally, he tried to find out whether there was a clear tendency towards using domestication in dealing with culturally loaded dish names. The findings indicated that the strategies of domestication and translation methods were mainly adopted in translating both Chinese daily and banquet menus into English.

In 'Mediating Culinary Culture: The Case of Greek Restaurant Menus', Grammenidis (2008) dealt with the linguistic and functional characteristics of restaurant menus. He focussed on the translation strategies used to deal with cultural diversity and the relationship between these strategies and the type and function of the text to be translated. The results of the study showed

that in most cases the strategies used in translating menus did not lead either to a functional equivalent or a professionally satisfactory target text. However, the deficiencies recorded were due to the inadequate abilities of those who provided the translations rather than to the fact that translation was practised from the mother tongue to a foreign language. Finally, he concluded that translating is often viewed as a simple process of reproducing linguistic surface structures in another language. This attitude points, among others, to a lack of professionalism, the impact of which is considerable – customer dissatisfaction – and ultimately, reduces upon the mediating translation mission.

Vorajaroensri (2002) studied translation strategies used in translation of menus in Thailand restaurants by focussing on the frequency of techniques employed in different restaurant menus and also the frequency of all methods utilised in the menus. The researcher finally reported that there were 24 translation techniques used in these menus. He further concluded that the most frequent translation was cultural substitution (39.5%), along with literal translation (25.9%) and also loan words with explanation (17.5%); paraphrase translation technique with pertinent words and impertinent words were not employed at all. There are some other studies that are in some way related to the present one although not directly. Since they are about different translation strategies, mentioning them can be a great help for expanding the understanding of strategies.

Roekmongkhonwit (2006) ran a study of Baker's (1992) translation strategies utilised in a travel document from Thai into English. In this study, it was noticed that all in, seven translation methods were used: translation along with paraphrase and a pertinent word (25%), translation with cultural substitution (18.75%), translation with omission (17.70%), translation with loan words or loan words followed by explanation (14.58%), the paraphrase translation with unrelated words (11.45%), translation using general words (8.33%) and translation with expressive words (4.16%). He then reported that translators translated this document using of pertinent words with close equivalents so that they could retain and convey the message of the source text. Additionally, Hatim (1997) referred to the concept of adjustment that included certain techniques such as addition, omission and cultural substitution. These techniques can be very useful to clarify the intended meanings. Blum et al. (1997) emphasised the need to add certain aspects by the translator whenever it is difficult to get accurate literal translation. Still, translators should not try to be helpful through over-translation because interpretative translations may lead to mistranslation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design in this study was qualitative. However, descriptive and inferential statistics were also used to answer the research questions. The sample consisted of 40 Persian menus with English translation. The menus were collected

through purposive sampling. Thus, the menus collected were from restaurants frequently visited by tourists such as Sufi, Tin, Darvish, Sharze, Shater Abbas and Chamran in Shiraz. In this study, the Persian restaurants menus were examined alongside their English equivalents to identify the strategies applied in their translation and to find out if the appropriate strategies were applied.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics was applied to answer the first research question i.e. What are the different translation strategies used in translating Persian food names into English in restaurants menus? Table 1 shows the frequency of translation strategies used under the two main categories of foreignisation and domestication.

Table 1
Frequency of Domestication and Foreignisation Translation Strategies

Strategy	Frequency	Percent
Foreignisation	140	80.0
Domestication	35	20.0
Total	175	100.0

Table 1 shows that overall, the foreignisation strategy was used 140 times (80%) while the domestication strategy was used 35 times (20%) in the translation of restaurant menus. To see if descriptive statistics in Table 1 were statistically significant, a chi-square test was run.

As seen in Table 2, the obtained chi-square (63) was significant ($p=0.001<0.05$),

which means that the foreignisation strategy was significantly used more frequently than the domestication strategy in restaurant menus. Thus, the foreignisation strategy was the dominant strategy used in the translation of restaurant menus from Persian into English.

To answer the second research question (Is there any inadequate translation of food names in restaurants menus?), the researcher interviewed five tourists/native speakers of English in Shiraz in order to find out if they understood the translated food names in restaurant menus and if they considered the translated food names as adequate or inadequate translation. Some examples of the data collected are as follows:

For foreignisation/literal translation, the translation of زرشک پلو با مرغ to “Barberries with rice and chicken” is considered an adequate translation. Murat, 36 years old, a Turkish tourist, said that he was familiar with this food as it was available in Turkish cuisine, and he ate this dish in Turkey. Another example of this strategy is the translation of چلوکباب to “A mutton kebab with poached rice.” Jenny, a 43-year old German tourist, claimed that this translation was inadequate because it was absurd and meaningless for her and she did not understand it and there was no equivalent in her culture and language. She understood the word “kebab” and she knew that it was invented by Middle Easterners, but she did not know what “mutton” was, and the tour guide had to explain to her. In her opinion, the best translation was “chelo kebab” or “kebab koobideh”.

As an example of foreignisation/literal translation with explanation, the translation of باقالی پلو با ماهیچه to “Baghela mahicheh (Lambs shanks, rice with baby lima beans)” and the translation of کباب برگ to “Lamb barg (Lamb fillet marinated in saffron oil)” are considered adequate translation. David and his wife, both 52 years old and from Norway, said that in their opinion the best translation was one that included a brief description of the ingredients in different languages and provided information on the cooking method.

As an illustration for foreignisation/zero translation, the translation of خورشت قیمه to “khoresht Qeymeh,” was regarded as inadequate translation by Bob, 40, who was a Canadian tourist. He did not understand the translated food names because there was no description of what it was nor of how it was prepared. He knew that “khoresht” means “to eat” in Persian which denotes stews in Persian cuisine typically served with polo (cooked rice), but there was no equivalent for “Qeymeh” in his language. The second example for this strategy is the translation of سبزی پلو to “Sabzi polo,” which is considered as an adequate translation. Bob understood the food name translation because he was familiar with this food; moreover, it was explained in Persian that “sabz” means green, and “sabzi” can refer to herbs or vegetables and “polo” is a style of cooked rice, known in English as “pilaf”.

For foreignisation/literal translation with explanation, Julia, 41 years old, believed that the dish names such as دمپخت that was translated to “Dampokht (made lamb meat),”

چلوخورشت سبزی that was translated to “chelo khoreshte sabzi (rice-bean-vegetable-meat)” and حلیم بادمجان that was translated to “Halim bademjan (eggplant, meat, retail rice, curd, onion)” were adequate translations because the translation provided enough information including cooking method and raw materials along with information and description of ingredients, so she could easily know what the dish contained. In her language, she said, “dampokht” refers to rice cooked in a single pot, while “khoresht” was a type of stew usually prepared with meat or combined with fresh or dried vegetables. She continued that in her language, “chelo khoreshte sabzi” refers to fresh herb and lamb stew and “halim bademjan” refers to an eggplant.

Finally, as an example of domestication strategy, the translation of کباب دنده گوسفندی to “shish kebab (Lambs fillet with bone, vegetables, French fries)” and the second example, the translation of شاتوبریان to “chateaubriand” were considered adequate translation. Daniel, a 43-year-old Bulgarian translator, stated that the translation was adequate and he could easily understand what the dishes contained because information was provided on how the food or beverage would taste.

Table 3
Frequency of Adequacy of Translation

Strategy	Frequency	Percent
Adequate	118	67.4
Inadequate	57	32.6
Total	175	100.0

According to the answers provided by the tourists/native speakers, 118 out of 175 translated food names were recognised as appropriate whereas 57 out of 118 were found inappropriate or inadequate. To see if this difference was statistically significant, a chi-square test was run. As depicted in Table 4, the obtained chi-square (21.26) was significant ($p=0.001<0.05$), which means that the appropriate or the adequate translations were significantly more frequent than the inappropriate or inadequate translations in restaurant menus.

To answer the third research question (“Is there any relationship between translation inadequacy and the orientation (domestication/foreignisation) of used translation strategy?”), Table 5 provided the descriptive statistics that presented

detailed information about the adequacy and inadequacy of strategies applied in the translation of food names in restaurants with regards to the type of strategy applied.

According to Table 5, 87 out of 140 foreignisation translation strategies (62.1%) were recognised as adequate translation and 53 out of 140 (37.9%) were found to be inadequate. In the domestication translation strategy, 31 out of 35 strategies (88.6%) were identified as adequate translation and four out of 35 (11.4%) were inadequate translation. This difference was found significant by the chi-square test as seen in Table 6 ($P<0.05$). Therefore, the domestication strategy contained more adequate translation than the foreignisation strategy. It can be concluded that the foreignisation strategy leads to more inappropriate translation of food names.

Table 4
The Chi-Squared Test for Comparing the Adequate and Inadequate Frequencies

Statistics Strategy	Observed N	Expected N	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.
Adequate	118	87.5			
Inadequate	57	87.5	21.26	1	0.001
Total	175				

Table 5
Adequacy of Translation of Two Translation Strategies

Translation Strategy	Adequacy	Adequate	Inadequate	Total
Foreignisation	Freq.	87	53	140
	Percent	62.1	37.9	100.0
Domestication	Freq.	31	4	35
	Percent	88.6	11.4	100.0
Total	Freq.	118	57	175
	Percent	67.4	32.6	100.0

Table 6
The Chi-Squared Test for Comparing Adequate and Inadequate Frequencies

Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.
7.74	1	0.005

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study was in fact an attempt to investigate the translation of Persian foods names in Iranian restaurants to check on their adequacy or inadequacy on the basis of foreignisation and domestication strategies. The first finding of the study was that both foreignisation and domestication strategies along with their varying subtypes were utilised in translating the restaurants' Persian food names but with different rates. To be more exact, the study signified that foreignisation strategies had been used significantly more than domestication strategies. Notwithstanding all the above-cited findings and discussion, one point should not be overlooked. It is the fact that translation is a multi-faceted and complicated process. In a similar vein, Venuti (1995) contended that a translated work is valid as far as it is successful in entrenching a logical relationship between cultural and social conditions under which the work was produced. To put it another way, the translation of a culture into another culture often involves more than a simple selection of what should be translated and what should not (Zare-Behtash, 2009). As Venuti (1996) contended, domestication and foreignisation are heuristic terms and they should not be regarded as binary oppositions. They are likely to make changes in meaning at different times and places.

Domesticating and foreignising practices are often considered consistent with two kinds of translation: transparent and resistant translation (De Linde & Neil, 1999). In the former, contextual factors are regarded as reflecting the writer; it appreciates the foreign text as original, authentic and correct and devalues the translated text as digression and wrong and insists on the process of removing its lower position via a fluent process (pp. 26–27). The latter is in accord with a feature of discontinuity in the sense that it can highlight that difference more effectively by reminding the reader of the merits and demerits in the work (p. 36).

In accordance with this preference of foreignisation over domestication, some experts and researchers assert that foreignisation is a favourite approach especially for the translation of texts related to foreign travellers due to a set of merits including presenting different cultural and historical points of the source text, explanation of the culture and traditions of the source text and also describing the balance between different languages and cultures (Venuti, 1995; Shuttleword & Cowie, 1997; Yang, 2010). Foreignising translation, based on its definition, asks a translator to get close to the author by adopting the original expressions so as to preserve and convey the foreignness of the ST. The target of translation is not to eliminate the differences of language and culture, but rather to demonstrate these differences. The translator intentionally goes beyond the target norms by keeping some of the foreignness of the source text.

The translator's choice in the foreignisation strategy is a kind of cultural digression on the part of TL norms to entrench the linguistic and social discrepancies of the target text. Foreignisation-based translation is centred on the faithful conveying of the foreign cultural elements, especially the marginal culture (Venuti, 1994). Similarly, foreignisation is source language-culture-orientated translation strategy that is opposite to domestication. Foreignisation strategy keeps the value and foreignness of the source culture in the target text to promote cultural communication so that target language readers can feel an alien experience when reading the translated food names. Furthermore, foreignisation leads to a piece of text that might not be baffled with the SL text or even a text jotted down basically in the TL (Baker 1998, p. 4). Finally, it should be stated that strategy awareness will help learners, teachers, and translators to use them consciously and more frequently which will enhance learning and teaching (Jafari & Kafipour, 2013; Yazdi & Kafipour, 2014; Moazen, et. al., 2016) and translation quality.

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