Culinary Translation as Cultural Diplomacy: Evidence from Indonesia's Official Tourism Website *Kemenpar*

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Abstract. This study examined the translation techniques in rendering Indonesian culinary terms into English and to interpret their implications for the representation of cultural identity in tourism discourse. A text-based interpretative approach was used in this study with dataset obtained from the official tourism website of the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, of the Republic of Indonesia (MTCE-RI). Molina and Albir's taxonomy of translation techniques was used, followed by thematic interpretation of their representational effects. This study revealed six techniques: borrowing, literal translation, description, amplification, transposition, and discursive creation. Borrowing became the dominant strategy and frequently combined with transposition to maintain cultural specificity while ensuring grammatical naturalness. This study concluded that translation is an instrument of cultural diplomacy by means of strategic linguistic choices and linguistic negotiation in the target language.

Keywords: Cultural Diplomacy, Ideological Orientation, Translation.

1 Introduction

Cultural diplomacy is as a strategic medium for Indonesia to express its identity as a nation with cultural diversity [1]. Indonesia's cultural diplomacy goes ahead to involve global communities. In this context, global audiences have a pivotal role in cultural exchange processes, especially through their experiences, interpretations, and admiration for Indonesia's cultural wealth. By means of cultural diplomacy, Indonesia aims to build a favorable national image that conveys openness, diversity, and deep cultural heritage, as well as showcasing its national identity internationally.

Culinary occupies a notably important role among the different cultural signifiers in diplomatic representation, as highlighted in research by Mariano-Juárez et al. [2], Levyda et al. [3], and Urdapilleta et al. [4]. Culinary practices do not only function as methods of consumption but also vessels for social values and shared identity. In this regard, the official site of MTCE-RI plays a pivotal institutional function to facilitate tourism and cultural information for global audiences.

The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy's official website occupies a distinctive position within Indonesia's cultural diplomacy apparatus. Unlike informal or commercially driven platforms, a government website functions as an authoritative,

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state-sanctioned channel through which national identity is deliberately constructed and disseminated to international audiences. In this capacity, the website does not merely inform; it performs a representational function, encoding particular values, cultural priorities, and national narratives into every piece of content it publishes. The linguistic choices embedded in its texts, including how Indonesian culinary terms are translated into English, are therefore not incidental but ideologically significant, reflecting the state's intentional positioning of Indonesian culture on the global stage.

Considering this strategic institutional role, this study identifies and classifies the techniques of translation applied to culinary terms on MTCE-RI's website using Molina and Albir's taxonomy, and interpret how these techniques reflect the ideological orientation and cultural diplomacy strategy embedded in the translated texts. Beyond its theoretical contribution, this study offers practical insights for translators, language educators, and cultural mediators involved in producing or evaluating institutional tourism communication.

Some studies, such as Chiaro & Rossato [5], Mahmud [6], Mukminin et al. [7], Yanti [8], and Nisak & Ishlahiyah [9], have examined cultural diplomacy and tourism in Indonesia, yet none of these studies specifically examines how translation techniques function as an instrument of cultural diplomacy within official government tourism platforms. Prior research has focused either on culinary translation in informal or cinematic contexts or on cultural diplomacy without linguistic analysis of translation choices. This leaves a significant gap: the intersection of translation technique analysis and diplomatic representation in state-produced, English-language culinary content remains underexplored. To address this gap, the present study analyzes translation techniques applied to Indonesian culinary terms on MTCE-RI's official website, and interprets their ideological implications for the representation of Indonesian culinary identity in cross-cultural communication. The novelty of this study lies in its dual focus, that it is the first to systematically map translation technique variation in a government culinary tourism website and to interpret these choices through the lens of cultural diplomacy discourse.

2 Materials and Methods

Qualitative research design with a text-based interpretative approach was used to investigate the translation of Indonesian culinary terms within the framework of cultural diplomacy. Saldana's interpretative approach [10] was used in this study. Although the analysis was textual-based, interpretation was required so that this study did not also stand for its thick description, but also interpretative.

2.1 Data Source and Type

The data were taken from six webpages on the official website of MTCE-RI. As an authoritative state webpage, the website provides curated cultural narratives intended for cross-cultural consumption. The dataset consists of written culinary content written in English, in the form of phrasal construction.

2.2 Data Collection

In collecting data, systematic textual observation of six culinary-related webpages on the official tourism website was carried out. The procedure involved three stages. First, relevant pages containing culinary descriptions were identified and compiled. Second, the texts were carefully examined to locate Indonesian culinary terms alongside their English translations. Third, each term and its corresponding translation were extracted and recorded as units of analysis. This systematic procedure was intended to ensure that the dataset accurately reflected the translation of culinary terminology.

2.3 Data Analysis

The analysis adopts Molina & Albir's taxonomy of translation techniques due to its descriptive and product-oriented orientation, which is particularly suitable for examining observable translation choices in institutional texts [11]. The taxonomy enables the classification of translation solutions based on their operational characteristics without imposing prescriptive judgments.

The analytical process was conducted in several stages. Initially, the extracted culinary terms were organized according to their linguistic and cultural features. Each source–target pair was then examined to identify the translation technique employed, following the categories proposed by Molina and Albir [11]. This stage allowed for the mapping of technique variation across the dataset and the identification of dominant translation patterns. In the final stage, the findings were subjected to interpretive analysis to reveal the representation of cultural diplomacy in the determined translation techniques.

3 Results

The data collection process identified six translation techniques used to render 24 datasets (see Table 1). A closer operational examination shows that each dataset may involve more than one translation technique. However, in this study, the identification of the primary technique is determined based on the appropriateness and the substantive dominance of a given technique in shaping the translated form.

The findings reveal six techniques: borrowing, literal translation, description, amplification, transposition, and discursive creation. Borrowing emerges as the dominant technique, while literal translation, description, and amplification are applied to only one or two datasets. This variation is not merely a matter of correctness or accuracy; rather, it reflects contextual considerations regarding why particular datasets require specific translation techniques.

Indonesian culinary translation products demonstrates a degree of syntactic consistency. Elements of the original syntactic structure are generally preserved, although instances of transposition occur due to structural differences between Indonesian and English. For example, in Indonesian noun phrases such as *nasi liwet*, the English rendering becomes *Liwet* rice. Structurally, this translation involves a transposition between the modifier and the head noun.

Borrowing is also frequently found in the data. The translation of *nasi liwet* as *Liwet rice* illustrates two concurrent translation phenomena: the borrowing of a culture-specific lexical item and syntactic transposition. The borrowing process preserves the phonological form of the source term, maintaining its original resonance. This observation aligns with Chen findings that borrowing retained the formal aspects of the source text without altering its literal or figurative meaning [12]. Borrowing may occur when no equivalent concept exists in the target language. Similarly, Mackevic & Tcaciuc suggested that loan words frequently arise in the translation of technical or culture-specific terminology [13].

Table 1. Dataset display

No.	Source Text	Target Text	Techniques
1.	Soto Kadipiro	Soto Kadipiro	Borrowing
2.	Ayam Kampong	Ayam Kampong	Borrowing
3.	Soto	Soto	Borrowing
4.	Ayam Goreng Kalasan (Kalasan Fried Chicken)	Ayam Goreng Kalasan (Kalasan Fried Chicken)	Literal translation
5.	Kremesan	Cruncy condiment	Description
6.	Ayam (Chicken) Betutu	Ayam (Chicken) Betutu	Amplification
7.	Ayam Betutu	Ayam Betutu	Borrowing
8.	Ayam Woku	Ayam Woku	Borrowing
9.	Woku Belanga	Woku Belanga	Borrowing
10.	Woku Daun	Woku Daun	Borrowing
11.	Ayam Taliwang	Ayam Taliwang	Borrowing
12.	Ayam Pop	Ayam Pop	Borrowing
13.	Semur Ayam Betawi	(Betawi Chicken Stew)	Borrowing & transposition
14.	mangut lele	mangut lele	Borrowing
15.	Dawet	Dawet	Borrowing
16.	Cendol	Cendol	Borrowing
17.	Sate payau	payau satay	Borrowing & transposition
18.	gence ruan	gence ruan	Borrowing
19.	Ayam cincane	Cincane chicken	Borrowing & transpostion
20.	Nasi bekepor	Bekepor rice	Borrowing & transposition
21.	nasi liwet	Liwet rice	Borrowing & transposition
22.	Nasi uduk	Uduk rice	Borrowing & transposition
23.	gangan asam	Kutai sour gangan	Discursive creation
24.	Pisang Gapit	Banana pinch	Discursive creation

The dataset conveys key insights on translation from the perspective of Molina & Albir: consistency of techniques and ideological direction. In this study, a significant use of borrowing indicates that translators retain culinary specific lexicon instead of substituting them with similar terms in the target language. This decision indicates a problem-solving approach where the translator emphasizes cultural familiarity and genuineness. Rather than making the terms familiar for quick comprehension, the translators seem to create an interpretive space that encourages global readers to experience the unfamiliarity of the culinary tradition.

The regular mix of borrowing with transposition, observed in phrases like *uduk rice* or *bekepor rice*, shows an attempt to harmonize cultural preservation with grammatical suitability in English. This hybridization indicates a mediated translation practice where readability is preserved while retaining the cultural markers found in the original term. In the meantime, employing description and amplification indicates instances of audience recognition, implying that translators foresee possible deficiencies in the reader's cultural framework and react by clarifying specific meanings. These patterns suggest that the translation of culinary terms is influenced by a mixed ideological approach: one that concurrently maintains cultural uniqueness, promotes structural fluency, and aids reader understanding (readership).

The translation technique on the culinary terms involves a complicated negotiation process regarding how the meaning, form, function, and cultural values of the original text are still maintained, altered, or reshaped in the target language. This negotiation takes place within a broader context. Instead, it functions within a structure of cross-cultural dialogue that demands a compromise between clarity for global viewers.

In terms of meaning, translating culinary terms presents the translator with conceptual challenges that frequently lack direct counterparts in the target language. Several studies, such as Wijaya [14], Suwandojo et al. [15], and Thio et al. [16], explained that numerous Indonesian culinary terms relate to cooking methods, regional ingredients, or eating customs deeply embedded in particular socio-cultural settings from both micro and macro perspectives. When these terms are translated into English, the translator does not merely switch linguistic labels but also explores how these ideas can be understood by global audiences.

In addition to meaning, linguistic structure also plays an important role in translation negotiation. Syntactic frameworks, naming conventions, and the phonological qualities of culinary terms often reflect elements of regional identity. This study indicates that two trends can be observed in this respect. Firstly, when techniques like borrowing preserve the linguistic structure of the source text, the translated version retains a strong link to its cultural roots. Secondly, when the language structure is modified to align with the norms of the target language, an adjustment occurs to improve readability. These tendencies show that translation is not merely swapping words but a rearrangement of the connection between form and function in a different communicative setting. Certain parts of the dataset in this study utilize a descriptive method with brackets, necessitating extra information from the source text in the target text, as Prasaja affirmed that comprehensive details should be referenced in the translated material [17].

The text's communicative function also influences the course of translational negotiation, ensuring the target text fulfills this requirement. In tourism marketing language,

culinary terms serve more than just as reference points. They also function as persuasive tools that create cultural attractiveness. A research by Hazaea et al. revealed seventy percent of the content on the tourism promotional site *VisitSaudi* utilizes persuasive language and accompanied by images to enhance the attractiveness for tourists [18].

Like Goodarzi & Mehrpour's study in 2024 about translation complexity on cultural spheres, the cultural values embedded in culinary terms also add another layer of complexity to the translation process [19]. Reasonably, culinary is not just a physical product but also a social practice that includes value systems in particular communities. When translating culinary terms, aspects of these values must be reconciled to make sure the clarity in the TL. This aspect adds to the intricacy of culinary translation. A significant translation process can arise in the translation of cooking recipes, which necessitates precision and effectiveness in translation [20]. From our perspective, translation serves as a way to express cultural identity without minimizing it to just a linguistic product.

4 Discussion

4.1 Borrowing – Dissemination and Global Sounding

Borrowing can be seen as a method that maintains the lexical structure of the source language in the target text without complete semantic replacement [21]. Instead of simply translating a word, borrowing preserves the morpho-phonological features of the original word as a symbol of cultural identity. Through this process, culinary expressions stay linguistically rooted in the source language while also functioning within the communicative framework of the target language. Consequently, borrowing positions culinary terms as culturally rooted entities that move across language borders without complete assimilation.

In this research, borrowing mainly surfaces in the preservation of original terms with little to no orthographic alteration. The names of dishes and food ingredients remain unchanged as complete lexical elements, even when incorporated into the grammatical structure of the target language. This enables the borrowed term to act as a recognizable foreign component that stays accessible in cross-linguistic interaction. The existence of these terms creates a hybrid textual dimension where the target language incorporates aspects of the source language into its expressive range. This hybridity is not accidental; it represents a conscious approach to maintain the prominence of cultural particularity within a global communication context.

This research suggests that the main role of borrowing in culinary translation is strongly associated with the spread of cultural knowledge. By maintaining the original terms, the translated terms indicate that the referent has a level of cultural specificity that cannot be simplified into a universal equivalent. Culinary terms serve as indicators of authenticity. The borrowing process indicates naturalized borrowing in the textual layer (spelling), yet remains distinct in phonological aspects because of foreign speakers' proficiency in pronouncing Indonesian spoken words. A similar occurrence is noted in Zhu & Ang research regarding the transliteration of Malaysian Chinese street food

names [22]. They determined that transliterating pudding as *pu´ding* constitutes a naturalized borrowing: the spelling is unchanged while the pronunciation differs. In promoting tourism, the approach allows readers to engage with local terms firsthand, thus broadening the scope of cultural understanding through language exposure. In this regard, borrowing acts as a medium through which cultural references are transmitted rather than diminished.

In addition to its informative function, borrowing also creates what could be termed a worldwide auditory impact. Terms retained in their original form convey meanings of uniqueness and cultural individuality that set them apart from the standard vocabulary of the target language. This impact aids in creating culinary imagery as a distinct cultural experience. Incorporating local terms into English texts creates a discursive space where the source language gains visibility in global narratives. In contrast to this study, Hasanah identified that *the madrasah* illustrated the borrowing technique [23]. This phrase is distinctive, noting that madrasah is a borrowed term from Arabic that has been integrated into Bahasa Indonesia.

Since it relates to particular importance, borrowing also includes an emotional aspect linked to collective feelings. Global sentiment establishes lexical units in a language as micro-collective expressions regarding an object. Benu et al. discussed culinary signboards using local and foreign language as medium of authenticity and modernity [24]. Those signboards were placed in the area of Kupang City, Indonesia. While none of the studies examine the referral system's impact on boosting Indonesian culinary-mediated translation within global sentiment, especially on social media, we are eager to present a simple graphic illustrating the approximate trends of two representative culinary elements from our data sourced from Instagram. This query yields over 5,000 posts for *#kulinersoto* and 40,200 posts for *#kulinerayam*. A research by Rani et al. highlighted how food photography influences the way cuisine is perceived [25]. The research identified cultural signifiers and cognitive processing as two essential discourses influencing the perception of cuisine. This indicates that food is a cultural symbol, whereas cognitive processing involves association. Translation via borrowing thus aids in fostering an emotional bond between worldwide audiences and the cultural items being depicted.

4.2 Transposition and Discursive Creation

Transposition is changing grammatical categories or syntactic structures from the SL to the TL [26]. This technique focuses on modifying language structure to align with the grammatical rules of the target language. In translating culinary terms, transposition usually occurs when the internal sequence of elements in a phrase needs to be rearranged to create constructions that sound natural in English. Unlike borrowing, transposition transfers the syntactic structure of the SL into the TL although one of the elements (usually the Head) is not translated in the target language, such as *Nasi Liwet* – *Liwet* rice.

The formal manifestation of transposition is particularly visible in the relationship between head and modifier within nominal phrases, i.e., head is placed after modifier in English [26]. In Bahasa Indonesia, the structures that assign prominence to specific

elements are frequently reconfigured to align with English syntactic patterns. This procedure involves restructuring syntactic connections to enable culinary vocabulary in order to operate grammatically in the target text. In practice, transposition demonstrates the translator's recognition of systemic variations between languages and signifies a conscious attempt to adjust for these differences while preserving the cultural references inherent in the terms. Consequently, structural adjustment acts as a way to preserve cultural content within a linguistically unified structure.

Structural differences among languages should not be viewed merely as a technical limitation in translation. This divergence must be acknowledged and verified prior to the commencement of translation [27]. When translators modify phrasal structures, they partake in a creative process that connects two language systems through intentional design. This creativity is not random; it is influenced by the text's communicative needs. Utilizing structural differences as an asset instead of a hindrance, translation creates expressions that are comprehensible while maintaining the precision of cultural reference. In this context, transposition illustrates how structural modification can exist alongside cultural consistency.

Like transposition, discursive creation adds another layer to the translation's communicative practice. In practice, discursive creation entails crafting new expressions that do not directly match the source language's form but are designed to achieve an equivalent communicative impact. In culinary translation, this approach is significant when original terms need interpretive expansion to resonate with global audiences. A research by Hisaan et al. revealed an innovative use of language for culinary marketing with slogans such as *bestie-approved* and *nge-hits* [28]. They believed that the slogans were important for connecting with consumers on an emotional level.

The joint role of transposition and discursive creation as communication tools is clear in their ability to connect linguistic variations. These methods aim to convey precise information while preserving the cultural uniqueness within to the terms. The joint role also shows that effective communication in translation does not only rely on semantic equivalence but also on the strategic arrangement of form and discourse.

This communicative approach is especially important in the promotion of Indonesian cuisine. Translated culinary tourism writings aim not only to provide information but also to capture interest and generate curiosity. Transposition aids in establishing a natural linguistic rhythm that enables readers to absorb information without structural interruptions. Simultaneously, discursive creation facilitates the formation of descriptive expressions that can evoke the reader’s imagination regarding the culinary experience being showcased, while discursive creation enables the development of descriptive formulations capable of stimulating the reader’s imagination of the culinary experience being presented. These techniques enhance the persuasive potential of the text by aligning linguistic clarity with evocative representation.

5 Conclusion

This research shows that the translation of Indonesian food terms in formal tourism communication serves as a space where language use and cultural representation meet.

The prevalence of borrowing, often backed by transposition and enhanced through discursive techniques, indicates a conscious effort to uphold cultural uniqueness while ensuring communicative ease. From Molina and Albir's taxonomy, the translated culinary terms in the governmental website portrays consistency of techniques and ideological direction, where certain negotiation happens.

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