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Translation Strategies in Translating Restaurant Menus from Turkish into English

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ABSTRACT

Over the centuries translators have faced linguistic and cultural challenges between different languages and cultures. When cultural challenges taken into consideration, translating menus and food terms is a problematic issue nearly in all languages. Food names are sometimes preserved, or changed when translating them. Sometimes new words are created and while translating food menus, some translation strategies are used. The aim of this study is to investigate the strategies used in translation of nine restaurant menus in 4 cities in Türkiye, and to perform a comprehensive analysis of the strategies applied in the translation of food names from Turkish into English. The names of the restaurants were not given so that they could be secret. The findings reveal that the main problems of translating menus are related to proper names, culture-specific concepts and ambiguous and semantically related terms. Davies' classification of translation strategies is used for the practical part of the research and all the instances are analyzed under seven headings: preservation, addition, omission, globalization, localization, transformation and creation. The study concludes that the attentive reading of the source text and the good knowledge of linguistic and cultural aspects of menus on the part of translators will help to solve the problems of translating food terms and to produce satisfactory target texts having no errors.

Keywords: Translation, Translator, Restaurant Menus, Translation Strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

"In general terms, the concept of 'culture' can be agreed to consist of shared values, shared beliefs and practices, customs and traditions, artistic expressions, symbols, norms like written or unwritten rules, artifacts, fiction or heroes, religious issues, cuisine sports and language" (Kuleli, 2020: 620). Food culture is a fact that reflects the environment in which a society lives and that is transferred from generation to generation. Menus, i.e. food names, on the other hand, is a mirror of food culture so good translated menus are necessary both to give the correct information about the food and to reflect the source culture in a better way. Jurate (2006: 257-271) points out that a menu as a text is made for a specific purpose and a specific audience, and it has a double function: it is an informative text that tells the customers what they need to know about the dishes available and a means of advertising aimed at expressing the restaurant's image and the culture of the country.

Saleh (2011: 21-22) states that translating menus creates many problems due to either linguistic or cultural factors such as the difference in vowel system, non-equivalence and sensitive terms or taboos, and that such problems increase the difficulty of translating menus and highlight the need for solutions through using the appropriate translation procedures and strategies. Culture-specific concepts (CSCs) is one of the most important problems in translating menus. Baker (1992: 21) defines a CSC as "a concept which is totally unknown in the target culture and the concept in question may be abstract or concrete; it may relate to a religious belief, a social custom or even a type of food." The translation of CSCs in restaurant menus has always been an important issue for translators.

2. TRANSLATION STRATEGIES FOR CULTURE-SPECIFIC CONCEPTS

The primary strategies of translation are either source oriented like borrowing or target oriented such as adaptation and cultural substitution (Saleh, 2011: 24). CSCs are a very specific group of references that cause many problems in translation and require both linguistic and cultural competence for translators. Different translation strategies can be used to produce the target text of similar value as that of the source text. Petrulionè (2012: 44) states that terminology to define translation strategies for CSCs is not unified and because specifics vary from one source to another, there is no single opinion when and which translation strategy should be used.

Newmark (1988: 95) discusses the translation of 'foreign' cultural words and categorizes them as follows:

1. *Ecology* (flora, fauna, winds, plains, hills)
2. *Material culture* (*artefacts*) (food, clothes, houses and towns, transport)
3. *Social culture* (work and leisure)

4. *Organizations, customs, activities, procedures, concepts* (political and administrative, religious, artistic)

5. *Gestures and habits*

Newmark (1988: 97) points out that food is for many the most sensitive and important expression of national culture and food terms are subject to the widest variety of translation procedures, and various settings such as menus – straight, multilingual, glossed; cookbooks, food guides; tourist brochures; journalism increasingly contain foreign food terms. Newmark (1988: 81) introduces different strategies for translating CSCs and his taxonomy includes transference, naturalization, cultural equivalent, functional equivalent, functional equivalent, descriptive equivalent, componential analysis, synonymy, through translation, shifts or transpositions, modulation, recognised translation, compensation, paraphrase, couplets and notes, additions, glosses.

Davies (2003: 73) discusses translation strategies under seven headings:

- ✓ *Preservation*: It is used when there is no close equivalent in the target language so that translators decide “to maintain the source text term in the translation.” It is a procedure when a source language word is transferred into the target text in its original form.
- ✓ *Addition*: The addition of a lexical element in the process of translating is usually used when certain semantic components of the source language do not have formal equivalents. Thus, one or more words can be inserted in the target language for this reason.
- ✓ *Omission*: It is the opposite phenomenon to addition. Davies (2003: 80) states that this strategy is used when the translator can find no adequate way of conveying the original meaning, or it may be reasoned where the translator could have provided some kind of paraphrase or equivalent.
- ✓ *Globalization*: Newmark (1988: 83) describes globalization as “the process of replacing culture-specific references with ones that are more neutral or general, in the sense that they are accessible to audiences from a wider range of cultural backgrounds.”
- ✓ *Localization*: This strategy is opposed to globalization. Newmark (1988: 82) mentions three categories under the heading of localization: transference, naturalization and cultural equivalent. Petruţioné (2012: 47) states that the first two strategies are very similar and they can be called transliteration and transcription to avoid repetition. Newmark (1988: 83) defines the third strategy, i.e. cultural equivalent, as replacement of a cultural word in the SL with a TL one “even though they are not accurate.”
- ✓ *Transformation*: Davies (2003: 86) points out that transformation can be used where the modification of a CSC seem to go beyond globalization or localization, an alteration or distortion of the original.
- ✓ *Creation*: It is used where translators have actually created CSCs not present in the original text (Davies, 2003: 88).

3. METHOD

This research is a descriptive study. Nine different restaurant menus from four different cities in Türkiye were selected and the food names in menus were studied in terms of Davies’ translation strategies. Menus were named as M1, M2, M3, etc so that the names of the restaurants can be secret.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Preservation

As cited above, *preservation* is a procedure when a source language word is transferred into the target text in its original form. The following examples illustrate it:

1. M1: Kabak borani

Translation: Zucchini, yoghurt and walnuts ‘borani’

As it is seen in this example, the word ‘*borani*’ is preserved since there is neither the word ‘*borani*’ nor this kind of food in the target language.

2. M1: Fırında helva

Translation: Tahin ‘Halva’ oven baked

In this example too, preservation strategy is used because there isn’t the word ‘*halva*’ in English. In 1 and 2, CSCs are provided in quotes according to Turkish rules for symbolic titles.

3. M4: Pilav üstü döner

Translation: Doner with rice

This example shows that *'doner'* is preserved but it is written as “*döner*” since there is no letter “ö” in English. The translator prefers the CSC “*doner*” since it is known nearly all over the whole world.

4. M9 : Çoban salata

Translation: Çoban salad

In this example, the word *'çoban'* is preserved but it cannot be understood by a foreigner, so it could be better to use the word *'shepherd salad'* since it can be found in English dictionaries.

5. M9 : Piliç Beğendi

Translation: Chicken Beğendi

In example 5, the word *'beğendi'* is preserved, because it is a kind of Turkish food and there is not an equivalent of this word in English.

4.2. Addition

If one or more words is inserted in the target language in the process of translating when certain semantic components of the source language do not have formal equivalents, the strategy “addition” is used. The

following examples illustrate the strategy of ‘addition’ used for translation of CSCs:

1. M5 : Spaghetti Bolones

Translation: Spaghetti with Bolognese sauce

In Example 6, the strategy ‘addition’ is used due to a difference in the background knowledge of target readers. There will probably be those who do not know Bolognese, so the word *'sauce'* is added to clarify that *'Bolognese'* is a kind of sauce.

2. M2 : Havuç Dilim Baklava

Translation: Pistachio Baklava ‘Havuç Dilimi’

In Example 7, *'Pistachio Baklava'* is added in the translation because the word *'Havuç Dilimi'* does not mean much for foreign people, so it is clarified by adding *'Pistachio Baklava.'*

4.3. Omission

In translation, some words are omitted to avoid repetition, which is called ‘omission’. The following examples illustrate the strategy of ‘omission’:

1. M3 : Sade omlet

Translation: Omelette

In this example, the word *'sade'* is omitted since a foreigner can understand that *'omelette'* without another word is a plain omelette, therefore the adjective *'sade'* is not necessary.

2. M3 : Yaban mantarlı risotto

Translation: Risotto with mushroom

In Example 9, the word *'yaban'* is omitted because the food name can be understood without *'yaban'*. The adjective *'yaban'* is not necessary.

3. M6: Pilav üstü döner

Translation: Doner with rice

In Example 10, the adjective *'üstü'* is not necessary so it is omitted. The adjective *'üstü'* means ‘on’ in English. Everybody knows that *doner* is put on the rice. So translator doesn’t find it necessary.

4.4. Globalization

This strategy is equal to functional equivalent and it requires the use of cultural-neutral word (Newmark, 1988: 83). Examples of CSCs that have been translated using the strategy of globalization are presented below.

1. M6 : Tavuk şiş

Translation: Chicken kebab

Example 11 contains the word ‘*kebab*’ instead of ‘*şiş*’. The word ‘*kebab*’ is a more general word which defines lots of kind of food made from meat and almost everybody knows ‘*kebab*’.



Figure 1. Menu 6

2. M7: Ege Usulü Ahtapot

Translation: Traditional Octopus

In Example 12, the word ‘*traditional*’ is used instead of ‘*Ege usulü*’ because the word ‘*Ege usulü*’ isn’t known outside Türkiye, so the translator uses a more general word, ‘*traditional*’.

4.5. Localization

‘Localization’ is the opposite of ‘globalization’. As cited above, it is used to avoid loss of effect. Newmark (1988: 82) classifies localization under three headings: transference, naturalization and cultural equivalent. Petruioné (2012: 47) states that the first two strategies are very similar and, to avoid repetition they can be called transliteration and transcription. The following examples show the using of localization.

1. M1: Pastırmalı humus

Translation: Pastrami hummus

In example 13, the source text contains words of Turkish origine and the translator translates them literally but the word ‘*humus*’ isn’t known by most foreigners. Another option for the translator to avoid translation loss, even though there is the word ‘*humous*’ in some dictionaries, could be the usage of addition which suggests translation as *mashed chickpeas with tahini*.

2. M1: Porçini mantarlı risotto

Translation: Porcini mushroom risotto

The word *Porçini* in the source text is a kind of mushroom and it is translated literally. Another option for the translator to avoid translation loss could be to explain in brackets as “*a kind of mushroom*”.

3. M1: Balık simit

Translation: Deep fried fish simit

In this example, the word *simit* is a Turkish origine word and it is translated literally. Another option for the translator to avoid translation loss could be the usage of addition which suggests traslation as *Turkish bagel*.

4.6. Transformation

Davies (2003: 86) considers transformation as an alteration or distortion of the original. The following examples illustrate the usage of transformation.

1. M8: Dil menüer

Translation: Sole fish menuer

In Example 16, the word *menüer* in the source text is transformed and written as *menüer*. There is no word ‘*menüer*’ in English dictionaries and the translator doesn’t translate the word and alters it. Another option for the translator to avoid translation loss could be the usage of addition which suggests translation as *a kind of souce* in brackets.

2. M8: Kadayif

Translation: Kadayif

In Example 17, the word *kadayif* in the source text is transformed and written as *kadayif* in the target text. There isn’t the word ‘*kadayif*’ in English dictionaries. The translator preserves the term and writes as *kadayif*. Another option for the translator to avoid translation loss could be the usage of addition which suggests translation as *a kind of Turkish dessert* in brackets.



Figure 2. Menu 8 – Page 2

4.7. Creation

As mentioned above, the strategy ‘creation’ is to create CSCs not present in the target text. The following examples illustrate the usage of ‘creation’.

1. M3: Sandviç döner

Translation: Rotating sandwich

In Example 18, the word *döner* in the source text is not translated and a new but wrong word (rotating) is created by the translator. Another option for the translator to avoid translation loss could be the usage of addition which suggests translation as *Doner sandwich*.

2. M4: Kazandibi

Translation: Bottom of win

In Example 19, the word *kazandibi* in the source text is translated as *bottom of win*, i.e. a new word is created. Another option for the translator to avoid translation loss could be the usage of addition which suggests translation as *pudding with a caramel base*.

3. M9: Fırın Sütlaç

Translation : Oven Milk Dessert

In example 20, the translator creates the word ‘*oven milk dessert*’ since there is not a the word ‘*sütlaç*’ in English, but the word is not clear. Another option for this word could be ‘*rice pudding*’ which is known by almost every foreigner.

5. CONCLUSION

Translation is one of the means of intercultural communication and has a role of mediation not only between languages but also between cultures. . Translating restaurant menus from Turkish into English is not an easy task because it creates big challenges and problems either linguistically and/or culturally. According to Saleh (2011: 96), the main problems of translating restaurant menus include brand names, proper names, slogans, CSCs, ambiguous

food terms and taboos, and non-equivalence is a primary source of problems in translating food menus especially the odd names of dishes with which translators, even professionals, are unfamiliar. Since the main problem with the translation of food names is about CSCs, different strategies are used in translating CSCs. Davies (2003: 73) discusses translation strategies under seven headings: preservation, addition, omission, globalization, localization, transformation and creation.

The study was in fact an attempt to investigate the translation of Turkish food names into English in Turkish menus and to check their adequacy or inadequacy on the basis of the translation strategies of culture-specific concepts. It was found that the strategy 'preservation' was the most used in translation

of CSCs in restaurant menus. However, the preservation of a word sometimes fails to satisfy; in that case, explaining it in brackets could be more suitable.

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