TRANSLANGUAGING PRACTICE IN THE HUMAN AND AI TRANSLATION OF FOOD MENU

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ABSTRACT

Translanguaging practice is common in food menu naming. This study aims to uncover the translanguaging practices that occur in the food menu naming, food menu descriptions and their translations. For example, "mie goreng seafood" in source language (SL) contains Indonesian words 'mie goreng' and an English word 'seafood' and the structure is following Indonesian noun phrases. Translanguaging practice on public signs such as food menus can be dependent upon the context of the signages, including the locus, time, speakers/creators, and the intended audience. The data were 70 food menu names and their descriptions that were gathered from food stalls around a private university campus in West Jakarta. The food menu names and their descriptions, which were collected under a set of criteria, were then translated into English by a group of students taking a translation class of the above university (hereafter named Human translator) and by Chat GPT (hereafter dubbed AI translator). Thus, the total data were 70 food menu names and descriptions in Indonesian, 70 human translations, and 70 AI translations. The data were then analysed using translanguaging theory and translation theory, to find out how the translanguaging practice can affect the translations of food menu names. This study implies that the translanguaging practices in food naming and translation is necessary to gain wider understanding of the rationale behind the above practices in public spaces, which may be related to not only language, but also another aspect such as the marketability of the product to targeted consumers around the research site.

Keywords: *translanguaging, translation, food menu names, AI Translator*

INTRODUCTION

In culinary businesses, such as cafes, restaurants, or food stalls, providing attractive menus is very essential. Menus can be made more appealing and attention grabbing for a wider range of customers if they are written in English and Indonesian. Mixing languages can make the dishes sound more interesting and modern, therefore increase consumer interest and engagement (Puspa & Alamsari, 2021). Similarly, street vendors in Kuala Lumpur opted for using several Chinese dialects and the English translation because they expected that it would attract their multilingual consumers (Zhu, Ang, & Mansor, 2024).

Young people, particularly university students in Indonesia, mostly understand English. Menus that are written in both English and Indonesian feel contemporary and relevant to the students as cosmopolitan audiences (Pradinta, et al., 2022). Besides the students, menus in both languages are needed should there be foreign visitors to the university. Including English or other widely recognized terms help visitors to understand menu items more easily.

Unfortunately, not all culinary businesses, particularly the small business enterprises (UMKM) around the campus provide food menus in English. This problem can be solved by doing the translation of the food menus, either done by human translators or with the help of GenerativeAI tools such as ChatGPT. ChatGPT has a capability of translating texts and at the same time giving a collection of translations that "vary in wording and structure while conveying the original meaning" (Siu, 2023, p.9). ChatGPT can also provide a contextualized and accurate translation if given the necessary context. Hence, it can also detect inaccurate grammatical items and suggest the correct forms, as well as recommend a particular style of writing. Providing menus in both languages can increase the appeal of the food sold.

Translation is changing from L1 to L2. But in today's world, this definition is not always accurate. In some cases, translations still keep the original ST words. This is a phenomenon of code meshing or the mixing of code in translanguaging. Translanguaging also occurs in the translation as a phenomenon

in food menu naming and description. To see how translanguaging phenomenon occur, this paper sets out with two research questions:

1. How does translanguaging occur in the translation of food menu names and descriptions by students and chatGPT?
2. What kinds of translation strategies are offered by Students and ChatGPT in translating food menu names and descriptions?

Translation Strategies of Food Menus or Names

The translation of food menus requires translators to consider the cultural associations embedded in the names, their meaning and function in the source language (SL) as well as the translatability of terms in the target language (TL) (Setyaningsih, 2020). The cultural element in food menu names is important because it is often difficult to find an exact equivalent for the menu items that belong exclusively to the source culture, which is Indonesia into English.

Therefore, in translating food menus, several translation strategies are employed. Stovianova (2013) mentioned that the most frequently used translation methods are transliteration, loan translation, and descriptive translation. Transliteration is the process of rendering the term in one writing system to another. For example a Chinese dish "mapo toufu" is written as 'mapo tahu' in Indonesian. Transliteration between Chinese and English has been defined as "the phonetic translation by the item's closes corresponding target language sound, which belongs to a natural borrowing between Chinese and English compared to pure borrowing" between the two languages (Song, 2021 as cited in Zhu, Ang, Mansor, 2024). "Transliteration can be categorized into intralingual translation, which implies a verbal interpretation within the same language" (Jakobson, 1959 as cited in Zhu et al., 2024). Loan translation is a phrase borrowed from another language and translated literally word for word. For example, 'nasi ayam ijo' is translated into 'green chicken rice'. Descriptive translation refers to the use of several generic terms to explain the original terms. For example, 'sambal matah' is translated as 'Balinese raw sambal'.

Similarly, Zhu et al. (2024) found that transliteration is the most frequent strategy in translating Chinese food names into English. Specifically, they analysed Chinese (in its original and Romanised scripts) street food names with their translations in English in states, city, and island of Malaysia, namely Johor, Kedah, Malacca, Negeri Sembilan, Perak, Perlis, dan Sarawak, Kuala Lumpur, and Penang. They took photos of only four types of street food noodles (which were iconic) and their translated versions, namely mouse noodle, Hokkien *Mee, Wan Tan Mee*, and *Kueh Cap.* Despite the similarity-they are all noodles, each type belongs to a different ethnic, namely Hakka, Hokkien, Cantonese, and Teochew, respectively. In addition to the collected photos, the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews in Chinese language (about the reasons behind the use of languages) to street food vendors and consumers of the above noodles in Kuala Lumpur. They chose participants who can speak both English and Chinese Mandarin and another Chinese dialect.

The findings indicate that several translation techniques, namely (1) transliteration, (2) literal translation, (3) amplification, (4) omission, and (5) the combinations of the above techniques have been used to translate the four types of noodles names in Chinese into English, which reflects the ". . . diverse ways to introduce . . . foods" which ". . . signifies the non-professional translation . . . based on the vendors' own experiences" as well as ". . . diverse cultures . . . which create unique features of translations of street food names" (Zhu et al., 2024, p.7). Each name was translated with different techniques, with transliteration as the most frequently used technique, and the translation was carried out by the vendors who had neither professional linguistic nor translational background (into English). The translations displayed some linguistic and content changes, for example, additions, omissions, restructuring, and lexical as well as morphological changes. Furthermore, "the more translation that is used sometimes weakens the literal translation . . ." Yet, " . . . this transliteration preference strengthens the differences and diversities of translation" (Zhu et al., 2024, pp.5-6). Cultural influences also played some parts in the translation in that there has not been pure Chinese to English translation; instead, the Chinese words or phrases was influenced by the Malay words.

In their research on the translation of Chinese menu names into English, Amenador, et al. (2024) found 10 translation procedures. These are retention, retention + amplification, literal translation, literal translation + amplification, generalization, particularization, description, intercultural adaptation,

substitution and omission. They indicated that neutralizing strategy is employed more than foreignizing and domesticating strategy. Meanwhile, Al-Rushaidi and Ali (2017) revealed that the following strategies: borrowing, literal translation, using more general words, amplification, reduction and loan word plus explanation are frequently used to translate food menus, specifically from English to Arabic.

Translanguaging

Understanding translanguaging should start from accepting the view that languages are social entities instead of linguistic entities (Otheguy, Garcia, & Reid, 2015). When language is viewed as language English, Indonesian, Japanese, Thai, for example, then they are seen from the former perspective, while when language is perceived as consisting of formulation of sentences and words, the later view is adopted, hence idiolect, which is "the person's *mental grammar* that emerges in interaction with other speakers and enables the person's use of language" (Otheguy, Garcia, & Reid, 2015, p. 289). People's idiolect varies from one to another. Nobody has exactly the same idiolect as others. To distinguish 'named languages' from 'idiolects' the authors gave an interesting analogy through a set of menus belonging to one country or place (for example, Cuban or American menu) and those with no connection to any country. The authors gave an example of idiolects through the communication in their own family, where each member possesses a repertoire of (the named) English and Spanish languages and communicate using them because they exist in their repertoire (not because they want to mix languages).

The notion of language as a linguistic entity (idiolect) will help one understands translanguaging, which has been defined as "*the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages"* (Otheguy, et al., 2015, p. 281). Thus, translanguaging implies a freedom to use one's idiolects from their repertoire without having to always seriously think that one idiolect is English, Indonesian, French etc. although factually, in bilingual or multilingual setting one often needs to decide which idiolect they need or must use because the social context demands it. For example, many individuals speak more than one idiolect, e.g., Indonesian, English, and Javanese (the named languages), but they can only do translanguaging with others who also have similar idiolects (Indonesian, English, and Javanese), and not in a situation where their interlocutors only speak one idiolect, English for example. Hence, the concept of translanguaging involves "acts of feature selection" in the bilinguals' repertoire (Otheguy, Garcia, & Reid, 2015, p. 281)

Translanguaging in Public Areas

Translanguaging is a popular strategy to market meals and drinks in many linguistic landscapes. Da Silva and Kwary (2022) in their study on the linguistic landscape of Gambir train station, Jakarta (henceforth, GTS) found the translanguaging practices in Food and Beverage establishment, which were abundant in the area due to the changing function of GTS from a place for travelling to a friendly place for hangout. In a similar vein, Da Silva, Tjung, Wijayanti, and Suwartono (2021) showed that the use of idiolects on signs in Malioboro shopping street, Yogyakarta is not uncommon although translation is hardly found. However, one could expect to find English is used for non-traditional food, and Indonesian for traditional food. Visitors would expect to read more signs in both Indonesian and English rather than in Indonesian alone. On the other hand, Helal's (2024) study of five commercial districts in Grand Tunis, Tunisia, found that "advertising Tunisian street food, is written in English, Tunisian Arabic, and Standard Arabic, and transliterated in both Roman and Arabic scripts" (Helal, 2024, p. 994), indicating that street food has been considered to be consumed by global consumers, who do not always speak Tunisian Arabic or Standard Arabic. Translanguaging also occurs in wordplay and it "has the potential to create a unique, particular, and authentic flavor . . ." among "big international commercial names" (Helal, 2024, p. 995).

Translanguaging in Translating (Untranslatable) Food Names

Ciribuco (2020), acting as an Italian language teacher and researcher, focused on what goes beyond some untranslatable food names in a class for migrants in Perugia, Italy. He made research notes and collected recordings of the class' discussions around food of the students' origins (mostly from African countries). The discussion involved translanguaging as students have diverse language and cultural backgrounds. Most of the students spoke African dialects, French, and English. Thus, students flexibly

moved from the African dialects, to French, English, and Italy (the learned language) in order to find out how to say a particular food or edible object (in their origin languages) in Italian. He highlighted the class' discussion on how to say *kélén-kélén* (in African French) in Italian. He came to a conclusion that "Food and foodways have a complex relationship with nature and the material resources available in a given space . . ." (Ciribuco, 2020, p. 109), which means that translating food names is not a simple task, for many cases, because they are not always available in all places. Even when they are, people may have known and used it in different ways, according to the nature and culture of the place. In other words, different names of the same food or an edible plant "correspond to different experiences of the plant, and different communicative needs" (Ciribuco, 2020, p. 111). For example, in one place a certain leaf is part of the people's diet, but in another it is used for making textile, hence *kélén-kélén*. Thus, sometimes untranslatability is not merely a matter of being unable to translate words or expressions in one language, but also the culture and experiences attached to them, hence the foodways (Ciribuco, 2020). Ciribuco (2021) also conducted a similar study, but this time he focused on how *okra* was explained in the community gardening project held by an NGO for the African asylum seekers in Perugia, Italy. The conversations recorded during the ethnographic work showed that both the NGO staff and asylum seekers played a role as a "mediator between different cultures and foodways" when discussing *okra* or explaining it to Italians (Ciribuco, 2021, p. 29).

METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method to analyse the translations of food menu names and their descriptions. The translations were done by students and ChatGPT. To get the data, we assigned 7 groups of students (5 students in each group) to go to several food stalls/small restaurants around West Jakarta. Each group was tasked to note down 10 food menu names and their descriptions from each food stall. Later, they were asked to translate the food menu names and descriptions into English. These translation activities were counted as the assignment for the translation course and the students were given scores for their translations.

The collected data consist of 70 food names and 70 descriptions of food menu in source text (ST), and their equivalent translations by human translator – the students (HT) in target text (TT). The ST data were then translated again using ChatGPT (CT). Thus, the total corpus of translation was 420 data. To analyze the data, first, we categorize the translations based on the code choice combinations. We found six categorizations, namely English only, Indonesian only, English-Indonesian, English-Japanese, Japanese, English-Japanese-Indonesian. Secondly, we analyzed the data based on the strategies used by students and ChatGPT to show the preference of each translator.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In food menu names and descriptions, three languages are used: English, Indonesian, and Japanese. Based on the language combination, the food menu names can be classified into six types.

Table 1. Code meshing in menu names translation

Codes	Students' Translation		ChatGPT Translation	
	Menu names	Description	Menu Names	Descriptions
English	**49**	**57**	**43**	**43**
Indonesian	**1**	**0**	**0**	**0**
English+Indonesian	**8**	**3**	**17**	**17**
English + Japanese	**9**	**9**	**10**	**10**
Japanese	**1**	**0**	**0**	**0**
English + Japanese + Indonesian	**1**	**1**	**0**	**0**
Total	**70**	**70**	**70**	**70**

Table 1 shows the comparison of code combinations in the translation of food menu names and their descriptions. Since the source text is in Indonesian, naturally most translations are in English. However,

students used English more than ChatGPT in the translation. Consequently, ChatGPT maintains certain Indonesian words in the translations, so 17 terms use English and Indonesian while the students only use this combination for 8 terms. Interestingly, some Japanese food names are kept in their original forms either by students or ChatGPT.

Below are several samples of the translations of food menu names and descriptions. Only three language combinations are discussed here.

English-Indonesian

There are eight student translations and 17 ChatGPT translations that combine English and Indonesian words in the translation.

Data 1. Sambal matah
ST: Nasi ayam cinta sambal matah
HT : *Lovely fried chicken* and rice with *matah chili paste*
CT: **Chicken rice** with *matah sambal* (Balinese raw sambal)

The food menu 'nasi ayam cinta sambal matah' consists of steamed rice with fried chicken topped with 'sambal matah'. The word 'cinta' itself is the brand name of the food stall, so it does not relate with the rice and the chicken. Since the students are already familiar with the food, their translations fit best with the original meaning. In contrast, ChatGPT translation is not really accurate because 'chicken rice' can be interpreted as 'rice cooked with chicken' like a traditional Singaporean dish, not rice with chicken. Meanwhile, for 'sambal matah' the students combine both languages matah and chili paste. Matah is a kind of ground chili paste from Bali. Thus, ChatGPT translates 'sambal matah' into 'matah sambal' with additional explanation 'Balinese raw sambal' between brackets.

Data 2. Melinjo crackers
ST: Sayuran rebus dengan saus kacang dan emping melinjo
HT : Vegetables with peanut sauce and served with *melinjo crackers*
CT: Boiled vegetables with peanut sauce and *emping melinjo* (fried crackers)

This is a description of 'gado-gado', a kind of Indonesian style salad. There is no equivalent for 'gado-gado' in English. In the translation, the students omitted the word 'rebus' (boiled) so it can be interpreted that the vegetables are raw or fresh. The problem here is 'emping melinjo' that is translated as 'melinjo crackers' by the students and 'emping melinjo' by ChatGPT. 'Melinjo', scientifically known as Gnetum gnemon, is a tree native to Southeast Asia and western Pacific. While 'emping' is a type of crispy and savory cracker made from melinjo fruit. Since there is no equivalent for both terms, these terms are still kept in the translation.

English-Japanese

Japanese food is quite popular in Indonesia, particularly among young people or the students. Therefore, when the menu names are in Japanese, they do not need to translate them.

Data 3. Onigiri
ST: Onigiri Kodaigiri Kurimi Tamago
HT : Onigiri kodaigiri kurimi tamago
CT: Onigiri with shrimp and egg

Onigiri are Japanese rice balls, typically shaped like triangles, and often wrapped in nori (seaweed). Onigiri can be found in many food stalls and mini markets in Indonesia. Onigiri can be filled with different fillings such as tuna meat, chicken, or beef and covered with special sauce. This food name 'onigiri kodaigiri kurimi tamago' is not translated by the students, but it is explained as 'onigiri with shrimp and egg' by ChatGPT. It only maintains the word 'onigiri' to keep the original sense.

Data 4. Kaarage mentai
ST: **Karage** dengan nasi, **saus mentai** dan salad
HT : **Battered fried chicken** with rice and **spicy mayonnaise sauce** with salad.
CT: **Karaage** with rice, **mentaiko sauce**, and salad.

In the description about 'karage mentai', the students translate 'karaage' as 'battered fried chicken' while ChatGPT keeps its original form 'karaage' assuming that it is already well-known. Meanwhile, 'saus mentai' is translated as 'spicy mayonnaise sauce' by the student and 'mentaiko sauce' by ChatGPT. In this sample, ChatGPT uses a borrowing strategy with the assumption that most people know what 'karaage' and 'mentaiko' mean.

Indonesian

Data 5. Gado gado
ST: Gado gado dharmawangsa
HT : Gado gado dharmawangsa
CT: Gado gado (Indonesian mixed salad with peanut sauce) dharmawangsa style

Gado gado is a kind of Indonesian salad. As a food menu name, it is untranslatable because it is a culture specific term. Therefore, the students did not translate it, while ChatGPT keeps the original terms for 'gado-gado' with additional information between brackets. 'Dharmawangsa' is a location in which the 'gado-gado' is sold, thus it is also not translated. ChatGPT, however, added the word 'style' to emphasize the type of 'gado-gado'.

English- Japanese- Indonesian

Data 6. Nasi liwet
ST: Onigiri dengan nasi liwet dan daging pedas US cita rasa nusantara
HT : **Onigiri** with **liwet rice** and spicy beef US, taste of Nusantara
CT: **Onigiri** with **seasoned rice** and spicy US style meat with Indonesian flavors

This is the translation of the description for 'onigiri daging pedas liwet'. In the translation, the students used three languages, Japanese for 'onigiri', English and Indonesian for 'nasi liwet' becomes 'liwet rice'. Nasi liwet is a traditional Indonesian dish, where rice is cooked in coconut milk, chicken broth and spices. Thus, this menu is a fusion between Japanese and Indonesian, by making 'onigiri' from 'liwet rice'. Without explanation, foreigners might not understand what 'liwet' is. However, ChatGPT only translates 'liwet' as 'seasoned rice', which is not quite accurate and does not convey the intended meaning. Thus, for this translation, both translators do not achieve satisfactory translation.

Discussion

Translanguaging in food names is avoidable as food travels around the world (Ciribuco, 2020). Travelling people bring with them their origin food and its culture. Often times, the original names of the food should remain untranslated because of the complexity of translating the food names including the cultures and experiences attached to them (Ciribuco, 2021). Moreover, today's young customers who are the targeted consumers of the food stalls which became the research objects are familiar with translanguaging as they flexibly move from one idiolect to others due to a much wider access to multilingual sources. Translanguaging in translated food names or menu then would result in uncommon, interesting, and attractive 'imagined' tastes from the potential customers' view (Helal, 2024).

Translating food menus involves more than converting words from one language to another. Like a dish preparation, translation of food names requires careful handling of cultural, linguistic, and culinary nuances to ensure clarity, appeal, and authenticity for diverse audiences (Chiaro & Rossato, 2015). In both of the above activities, a cook and a translator "must examine the original recipe or text, find the right ingredients or words, and consider strategies that will make the dish or script appealing to readers or diners" (Chiaro & Rossato, 2015, p. 238). In this study, some common strategies of translation are found.

The first strategy is *description or giving descriptive equivalence*. This strategy provides a clear explanation of the dishes, ingredients or cooking methods. For example, the food 'kripik kentang balado' is translated by the students as 'potato chip glazed with Indonesian sweet chili sauce' and by ChatGPT as 'potato chips with sambal balado seasoning'. This strategy is rendered as the most frequently used strategy in translating food menu names, ensuring that unfamiliar items are understandable to the target audience (Sumardiono & Triwidyahening, 2023; Tang, et al., 2021; Pratama, 2023).

The second strategy is *borrowing or transference*, which is retaining the original terms, sometimes with added explanations. This strategy is usually done for untranslatable, unique or culture specific items. The data in this study show that culture specific items such as *mentai, sambal, matah, terasi, liwet, opor, soto* are kept in their original forms. Students as well as ChatGPT retained the words in the translation. However, ChatGPT often gives added explanations between brackets after the terms. For example: 'sambal matah' (Balinese style raw sambal). This strategy is used to help preserve authenticity of the food menus (Pratama & Putri, 2022; Tang et al., 2021; Rushaidi & Ali, 2017; Ciribuco, 2020). Besides food names, borrowing is also used for brand name translations. Brand names such as 'Tawan, Dharmawangsa, Tugu Muda' were not translated and kept in their original forms.

The next strategy is *reduction and expansion*. This means adjusting the amount of information- either by simplifying or elaborating on the dish description. Reduction or omission is especially done by ChatGPT. For example, 'nasi ayam ijo' is translated as 'green chicken rice'. This translation is ambiguous as it can be interpreted as 'chicken rice that has green color' or 'rice with green chicken', both of which are incorrect translations of 'nasi ayam ijo'. The students, having known the context and the food, translate it as 'rice with chicken in green chilli paste', which can be considered as an expansion strategy. Reduction and expansion strategy helps tailor the menu to the audience's needs (Pratama & Putri, 2024; Pratama, 2023).

The last strategy is *neutralization or using more general words*. This strategy demystifies culture specific items by explicitly rendering their meaning. This is especially done by ChatGPT for Japanese food names. For example, 'onigiri kurimi tori truffle' is translated as 'onigiri with truffle chicken and shrimp'. ChatGPT gives the translation of 'kurimi' as 'shrimp' and 'tori' as 'chicken', while maintaining the term 'onigiri' as it is more well known. Neutralization strategy makes menus more accessible and projects a welcoming image (Amenador & Wang, 2022; Amenador & Wang, 2023).

Effective menu translation relies on a mix of descriptive, borrowing, reduction and neutralization strategies. Therefore, code meshing used in the translation is tailored to the type of cultural items and the target audience, which in this study are the students. As the consumers of these dishes, students are able to provide more readable and acceptable translation. Sumardiono & Triwidyahening (2023) mentioned that descriptive strategy as used by the students generally improves their translation quality and user experience. On the contrary, ChatGPT translations, lacking context and background, often produce ambiguous and unclear translations.

CONCLUSION

Providing menus in two languages is important to draw the attention of consumers, both local and international consumers. Code mixing or translanguaging practice in the menu translation can make the dishes sound more interesting and modern. It will also make the menus easier to understand and avoid misunderstanding.

In this study, we found six types of translanguaging combinations in the translation of food menus. They are English, Indonesian, English + Indonesian, Japanese + English, Japanese, Japanese + English + Indonesian. Compared to student translation, ChatGPT used more code combinations in its translation particularly regarding the translation of food menus with specific Indonesian names.

Consequently, ChatGPT used more retention strategies in translation in relation to the students. Both translators used a retaining/borrowing strategy for cultural specific items, but ChatGPT often gives additional descriptions after the terms. However, in some cases, ChatGPT translations are inaccurate because it only relies on the text input. On the contrary, students can give more accurate translations of food menus because they know the context and see the actual dishes.

In conclusion, translation of food menus is necessary for attracting wider consumers and it can be done with the help of AI tools such as ChatGPT. However, the translations should be further edited or improved by people who have experienced the food or understood the source culture.

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