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**Original article**

## **A comparative study of translation strategies of fast-food advertising texts from English into Persian and Arabic**

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ABSTRACT

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This paper was conducted to compare translation strategies used to translate English fast-food advertisement texts into Persian and Arabic. In this study, the textual analysis of the corpus revealed that while the main translation strategies used to translate English fast-food advertisement texts into Arabic was borrowing and transliteration, in Persian language the most frequent strategies was borrowing, functional equivalence and formal equivalence. The overall finding was inadequate translation of culture-specific concepts in both target languages, which are bound to the source text. Proper translation was suggested for culture-specific concepts through Harvey (2000) major techniques for translating culture-bound terms. The results were in line with Najme Bahrami Nazarabadi study in that the advised approach to translate advertisements was transference and literal translation.

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### **1. Introduction**

Since different kinds of texts need different translation strategies to be translated and as Cook (2001) mentioned "we cannot walk down the street, shop, watch television, go through our e-mail, log on the Internet, read a newspaper or take a train without encountering advertisements"; this paper tried to

make a comparison among translation strategies used to translating fast-food advertising texts from English into Persian and Arabic. Using a corpus of 12 English-language fast-food advertisements and their translated Persian pairs, this article investigated their translation strategies through Harvey's (2000) four major techniques for translating culture-bound terms as functional equivalence, formal equivalence, transcription or borrowing and descriptive translation. Three of these strategies were most frequent: first of all was borrowing, then functional equivalence and the least frequent strategy was formal equivalence.

## 2. Methodology

According to Barron's marketing dictionary advertisement means "Sponsored informational public notice appearing in any of the print communications media that is designed to appeal to a mass audience in order to persuade, inform, promote, motivate, or otherwise modify behavior toward a favorable pattern of purchasing, supporting, or approving a particular product, service, idea, or organization". Translation can be assumed as transferring one language elements into other language elements without changing the meaning or register moreover any addition or omission in message. To translate two languages two cultures also are involved. Cultures and languages are not separable and translating is exactly the implication of them. As Nida (1964) mentioned "differences between cultures may cause more severe complications for the translator than do difference in language structure". To define culture-bound terms according to Harvey (2000) "refer to concepts, institutions and personal which are specific to the source language culture". So to translate advertisements the translators need to have understanding the expectations in both source culture which tend to make a message and target culture which tend to receive the appropriate message.

Four major techniques used to translate culture-bound terms (CBTs) as Harvey (2000) states are:

Functional Equivalence: It means using a referent in the TL culture whose function is similar to that of the source language (SL) referent. As Harvey (2000) writes, authors are divided over the merits of this technique: Weston (1991) describes it as "the ideal method of translation".

Formal Equivalence or 'linguistic equivalence': It means a 'word-for-word' translation.

Transcription or 'borrowing' (i.e. reproducing or, where necessary, transliterating the original term): It stands at the far end of SL-oriented strategies. If the term is formally transparent or is explained in the context, it may be used alone. In other cases, particularly where no knowledge of the SL by the reader is presumed, transcription is accompanied by an explanation or a translator's note.

Descriptive or self-explanatory translation: It uses generic terms (not CBTs) to convey the meaning. It is appropriate in a wide variety of contexts where formal equivalence is considered insufficiently clear. In a text aimed at a specialized reader, it can be helpful to add the original SL term to avoid ambiguity.

And Couplets: it occurs when the translator combines two different procedures. (Newmark, 1988b)

And also as Basem Abbas Al Agha used: transliteration is used to move a word letter by letter from one language to another.

The paper used the corpus, which provided in Basem Abbas Al Agha that gathered from restaurant menus to make comparison the strategies used in Persian and Arabic advertisement translation strategies from English. As mentioned, the main translation strategies for translating culture-bound terms are functional equivalence, formal equivalence, borrowing, and descriptive translation. Although the most frequent strategy in Arabic fast-food advertisements translation was transliterate and loan words in Persian fast-food advertisements translation the most frequent strategy was borrowing then functional equivalence and after that formal equivalence.

## 3. Borrowing or transcription

Borrowing or transcription includes transliteration, which Basem Abbas Al Agha stated as moving a term letter by letter from source language to target language. When a term transfers from source language to target language text, it is called borrowing. In fast food advertising texts there are some examples as follow:

Source language	Persian translation	Translation strategy	Arabic translation	Translation strategy
Fish fillet combo	مخلوط فیله ماهی	Borrowing	کمبرو سمک فیلیه	transliteration

In this example translating fillet into فیله in Persian language was through borrowing as in Arabic transliterate کمبرو and فیلیه from English terms combo and fillet was done.

Source language	Persian translation	Translation strategy	Arabic translation	Translation strategy
Chicken nuggets combo	مخلوط ناگت مرغ	Borrowing	کمبرو نقت الدجاج	transliteration

Translating nugget into ناگت is an example of borrowing strategy into Persian language.

Source language	Persian translation	Translation strategy	Arabic translation	Translation strategy
New! big chicken fillet	جدیدا! فیله بزرگ مرغ	Borrowing	جدیدا! بیج تشکن فیلیه	transliteration

Similar to the first example, here again fillet translated into فیله in Persian language through borrowing. Still Arabic used two translated terms as big and fillet into بیج and فیلیه.

Source language	Persian translation	Translation strategy	Arabic translation	Translation strategy
Spicy BBQ wings	بال تند با سس باربیکیو	Borrowing	باربیکیو وینجز الدجاج	transliteration

Basem Abbas Al Agha argued the big concern is that the level of transliteration is quite high and has an adverse effect on advertising in Arabic world. To translate BBQ term, both Persian and Arabic languages used borrowing or transliteration. Although the term باربیکیو in Persian was a common term but using descriptive translation is more recommended to reduce the ambiguity of the meaning of the term. Through descriptive translation strategy باربیکیو would be translated into سس تنوری which was more familiar to consumers and they would know first of all BBQ was a kind of sauce and secondly what is its exact taste.

Source language	Persian translation	Translation strategy	Arabic translation	Translation strategy
Double Herfy combo	مخلوط دویل هرفی	Borrowing	کمبرو دیل هرفی	transliteration

In this fast-food advertising text Double and Herfy translated through borrowing translation strategy into دویل and هرفی in Persian. It seemed that using هرفی in Persian translation intended to highlight the foreignness of the product and made it more attractive to consumer.

### 3.1. Functional equivalent

Functional equivalent means using a referent in the target culture. Here are four examples:

Source language	Persian translation	Translation strategy	Arabic translation	Translation strategy
T-Bone steak	استیک با استخوان	Functional equivalence	تی بون ستیک	transliteration

Although the term steak / استیک was a borrowing word at the very first time but it has been so employing which becomes natural in Persian language. The Persian translation of T-Bone steak was استیک با استخوان which was near to the original food because it was not the exact one in Iran and استیک با استخوان made a similar concept to consumer about what the fast-food would look like.

Source language	Persian translation	Translation strategy	Arabic translation	Translation strategy
Tournedo with mushrooms	استیک با سس گوجه و قارچ	Functional equivalence	تورنیدو بالمشروم	transliteration

To translate Tournedo with mushrooms into قارچ و گوجه با سس گوجه و قارچ seemed applicable to Iranian consumers, due to consumers would not know what Tournedo stands for and translating it as a kind of steak made the meaning of fast-food item clear.

Source language	Persian translation	Translation strategy	Arabic translation	Translation strategy
Diana steak	فیله مینیون استیک با سس تند قارچ و خامه	Functional equivalence	ستیک دیانا	transliteration

There were two translations of Diana steak as استیک با سس تند قارچ و خامه and فیله مینیون. The second translation was much more acceptable due to target-oriented approach, adapted for the receipt culture and used descriptive translation strategy. Translating Diana steak as فیله مینیون was not appropriate because the consumer did not know what kind of meat would be served and there was a kind of highlighting the foreignness fast food in advertisement texts.

Source language	Persian translation	Translation strategy	Arabic translation	Translation strategy
Add 4Rs for each large size stuffed crust	2000 تومان بیشتر برای پیترزای خانواده با نان حجیم تر	Functional equivalence	أصف 4 ریال لكل ستافت كرست حجم كبير	transliteration

This advertising text needed to be translated through semiotic in related to the picture of advertisement. There was no clue to find out which item the advertisement stands for unless pointing to the kind of product which was pizza. So using functional strategy was helpful here.

The second mostly used translation strategy of fast-food advertising texts from English into Persian was functional equivalence. This strategy fulfilled the requirements of target language, culture, and consumers fairly well.

### 3.2. Formal equivalence

The third strategy to translate fast-food advertising texts was formal equivalence it means a word-for-word translation.

Source language	Persian translation	Translation strategy	Arabic translation	Translation strategy
Pepper steak	استیک تند	Formal equivalence	ستیک بالحر	transliteration

Using the most common meaning of each word to translate Pepper steak into استیک تند in Persian sound proper and showed the precise taste of fast-food item to consumer.

Source language	Persian translation	Translation strategy	Arabic translation	Translation strategy
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Super chicken combo	مخلوط جوجه مخصوص	Formal equivalence	كمبو سوبر تشكن	transliteration
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Translating Super chicken combo into Persian as مخلوط جوجه مخصوص through formal equivalence strategy could show the ingredients of fast-food item and also its specialness by translating Super into مخصوص.

Source language	Persian translation	Translation strategy	Arabic translation	Translation strategy
Chili chicken combo	مخلوط مرغ تند	Formal equivalence	كمبو تشلى الدجاج	transliteration

Chili chicken combo translated as مخلوط مرغ تند into Persian. It implied that, formal equivalence strategy could transfer the message successfully in this case. All in all, formal equivalence which was used to translate a part of fast-food advertising texts from English into Persian was correctly chose and remarked the formal aspects of the source text in target text effectively.

The most frequent translation strategy of fast-food advertising texts from English into Persian was borrowing then functional equivalence and after that formal equivalence.

### 3.3. Culture-specific concepts

There were some cultural differences, which were not taken into consideration in some instances that stated in the following examples.

Source language	Persian translation	Arabic translation
Hamburger	همبرگر	هامبورجر
Hotdog	هات داگ	هوت دوج

To translate culture-specific concepts from English into Persian and Arabic, both target languages preserved the source language term in act. But the term Hamburger caused some misleading ideas in Arabic culture furthermore, Hotdog caused some misunderstanding in Persian language. According to Basem Abbas Al Agha the term Hamburger which was translated into Arabic as هامبورجر cause a problem; in Arabic preserved meat of pig and Arab consumers think that the meat of Hamburger is made of pig, but in fact it is not. So transliteration into Arabic did not communicate effectively because of cultural barriers. The transliteration of Hotdog into Persian language caused some misunderstanding because Hotdog in Persian language provokes the concept of سگ داغ, which has no eatable meaning to Iranian consumer. Besides سوسیس درستنه could be a correct equivalent.

According to Nida (1964) "The role of the translator is to facilitate the transfer of message, meaning and cultural elements from one language into another and create an equivalent response from the receivers. The message in the source language is embedded a cultural context and has to be transferred to the target language". Translating is not just changing the source language terms by target language terms without analyzing the meaning of each word in its context and considering its effect on specific language and culture.

## 4. Conclusion

According to Basem Abbas Al Agha the problem of transliteration did not help Arab customers at fast-food restaurants to select food items. Arab speakers whose English was poor may refrain from ordering items if they cannot understand what the items mean. It seemed that in Arabic using loan words was a preferable translation strategy to emphasize the foreignness of the advertised product but did not communicate effectively. Otherwise, to translate fast-food advertising texts from English into Persian it was possible to use borrowing terms, functional equivalence, and formal equivalence. The most frequent strategy, which was used, was borrowing which in some cases led to some problems for consumers for

choosing the fast-food item such as باربیکیو and need description to make it clear. Meanwhile many of the borrowing terms became natural in target language and culture like فیله. The second frequent translation strategy was functional equivalence as Weston (1991) described it as "the ideal method of translation". When translators employed functional equivalence, they exactly consider target language and target culture, which here includes fast-food consumers to let them know what they would face with. The least frequent translation strategy was formal equivalence. Up to a point that, fast-food products were mostly imported to Persian culture and language there was a great need to employ borrowing terms and using functional equivalence. Therefore, formal equivalence was the least frequent translation strategy, which was used. All things considered, it seemed that in translating fast-food advertising texts from English into Persian target language and culture which include consumer understanding was much more considered than Arabic. There was not much effort to emphasize on foreignness of fast-food products. In Persian translation the most important aim was to make correct perceive for the consumers from what they read and chose.

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