

## Semantic Translation Errors in English Captions of Indonesian F&B Instagram Accounts- A Qualitative Analysis of Persuasive Language

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**Abstract**— This study examines semantic translation errors in English Instagram captions produced by Indonesian food and beverage businesses, with particular attention to how translation choices influence meaning and persuasive function in digital culinary promotion. Grounded in Descriptive Translation Studies and Translation Quality Assessment, the research focuses on naturally occurring social media texts rather than prescriptive translation norms. The data consist of 19 English-language captions collected from three Indonesian food and beverage Instagram accounts. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the captions were analyzed at the level of words, phrases, and clauses to identify four categories of semantic errors: lexical choice errors, pragmatic misrepresentation, meaning distortion, and collocation errors. Frequency distribution was used to support the qualitative analysis and to identify recurring patterns across the dataset. The findings indicate that lexical choice errors are the most prevalent, particularly in captions involving culture-specific food terms and sensory expressions. Although pragmatic misrepresentation, meaning distortion, and collocation errors occur less frequently, this error types demonstrate how even limited semantic inaccuracies can affect communicative clarity and audience perception in short-form promotional texts. This study contributes to translation studies by highlighting the value of examining microtext translation in real digital marketing contexts. Practically, the findings underscore the importance of balancing cultural authenticity with clarity and target-language norms when translating promotional content for international audiences.

**Keywords**— *Error; F&B; Instagram; Persuasive; Translation*

### I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Indonesian food and beverage (F&B) businesses have increasingly relied on Instagram as a platform to introduce local culinary products to international audiences. Instagram captions, as short-form texts accompanying visual content, play a crucial role in shaping how products are perceived across cultures. Based on preliminary observation of several Indonesian culinary Instagram accounts, many English captions appear to emphasize promotional appeal while providing limited semantic explanation of culturally specific food terms. This observation suggests that translation in social media captions involves more than linguistic transfer; it requires careful negotiation between meaning, persuasion, and cultural representation.

In the F&B industry, captions serve a dual communicative function. They describe products while simultaneously persuading audiences by evoking taste, authenticity, and lifestyle associations. For Indonesian culinary products, this function becomes particularly complex when local food names, ingredients, and cultural references are rendered into English. Previous studies in tourism and digital marketing have demonstrated that language choice and readability significantly influence user engagement on social media (Sulaiman & Wilson, 2019; Yu et al., 2025). However, these studies tend to focus on audience response rather than examining how semantic accuracy and cultural framing are constructed through translation in short promotional texts.

From the perspective of translation studies, Instagram captions can be understood as persuasive microtexts with strong pragmatic objectives. This study is grounded in Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS), which emphasizes describing translation as it occurs in real communicative contexts rather than prescribing idealized norms (Toury, 2012). DTS allows naturally occurring Instagram captions to be treated as empirical data that reflect actual translation practices in digital marketing environments. To complement this descriptive orientation, the study also draws on House's (2014) Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) model, which provides analytical tools for evaluating functional adequacy, register, and pragmatic appropriateness beyond surface-level lexical accuracy.

Previous research on social media translation has largely concentrated on machine translation output, particularly automatic translation features provided by platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. These studies consistently report lexical and semantic errors, including literal translations, omissions, and inappropriate word choices (Barongo, 2024; Mehri, 2022). While such findings are valuable, they primarily reflect the limitations of machine translation systems rather than the translation decisions made by human writers who produce captions for persuasive purposes. Moreover, research on Indonesian culinary translation has predominantly examined menus, subtitles, or long-form descriptive texts, where space allows for elaboration and explanation (Amenador & Wang, 2022; Mandagi & Centeno, 2024).

In contrast, Instagram captions operate under strict constraints of brevity and tone, which intensify the impact of semantic choices. Studies on food translation have shown that culture-specific items (CSIs) are among the most challenging elements to translate, as they carry both linguistic meaning and cultural identity (Blažytė & Liubinienė, 2017; Rojas-Rivas et al., 2021). When such items are transferred into English without adequate contextualization, semantic clarity may be reduced and persuasive intent weakened. During the preliminary review of English captions from Indonesian F&B accounts, recurring issues were observed in the treatment of CSIs, sensory descriptors, and collocational patterns, indicating that these challenges are not incidental but systematic.

Drawing on Baker's (2018) framework of equivalence and Newmark's (1988) distinction between semantic and communicative translation, this study approaches semantic errors as indicators of tension between form, meaning, and function. Rather than viewing errors solely as linguistic inaccuracies, they are examined in relation to their impact on persuasive effectiveness and audience interpretation. By combining DTS, Error Analysis, and TQA, the study seeks to describe how translation choices in Instagram captions shape semantic clarity and pragmatic force.

Therefore, this research examines semantic translation errors in English captions from Indonesian food and beverage Instagram accounts, with particular attention to how these errors influence persuasive function. The objectives are to identify dominant types of semantic errors, explain their effects on meaning and engagement, and propose translation strategies that balance cultural authenticity with communicative clarity. By focusing on short-form social media texts, this study contributes to ongoing discussions in translation studies while offering practical insights for improving cross-cultural culinary promotion in digital spaces.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The rapid expansion of social media has transformed translation practices, particularly in marketing and branding contexts. Unlike traditional texts, social media captions function as persuasive microtexts that combine informational, emotional, and promotional purposes within strict space constraints. Yu, Hong, and Egger (2025) demonstrate that readability and linguistic simplicity in captions significantly influence user engagement, suggesting that translation quality in short-form texts directly affects audience perception. Similarly, Schwarz (2024) emphasizes that short-form digital texts amplify the impact of lexical and semantic choices, as even minor inaccuracies can alter interpretation and persuasive force.

Within translation studies, this shift has prompted scholars to examine translation beyond accuracy toward functional effectiveness. Sulaiman and Wilson (2019) argue that in tourism and promotional discourse, translation must prioritize communicative intent and audience experience rather than strict linguistic equivalence. This perspective is particularly relevant to Instagram captions, where translation operates simultaneously as cultural mediation and marketing strategy.

Food and beverage translation presents unique challenges due to its heavy reliance on culture-specific items (CSIs), sensory language, and local identity. Blažytė and Liubinienė (2017) note that CSIs often resist direct equivalence because they carry cultural, historical, and emotional meanings beyond lexical reference. In culinary contexts, these meanings are central to persuasion, as food descriptions aim to evoke taste, authenticity, and experience.

Previous studies on menu and food translation confirm that CSIs are frequently transferred through borrowing or literal translation, often without sufficient explanation. Amenador and Wang (2022) found that Chinese–English food menu translations regularly retain original food names, resulting in reduced intelligibility for international audiences. Similar findings are reported by Rojas-Rivas et al. (2021), who emphasize that gastronomic language shapes social representations of food and influences consumer expectations. Mandagi and Centeno (2024) further highlight that while retaining local terms may strengthen authenticity, it risks semantic opacity when not balanced with explanatory strategies.

These studies, however, primarily focus on menus or long-form descriptions. Instagram captions differ significantly in that they require extreme brevity, which intensifies the consequences of semantic ambiguity. This gap underscores the need to investigate how CSIs are handled in short persuasive texts, particularly within social media marketing.

Research on social media translation has increasingly highlighted pragmatic shifts and meaning changes, particularly in user-generated and semi-professional translations. Ding et al. (2021) show that non-professional translators on platforms like Bilibili often prioritize immediacy and cultural familiarity over semantic precision. Barongo (2024) similarly reports frequent meaning shifts in Facebook translations involving culture-specific expressions, noting that pragmatic misrepresentation often occurs when translators assume shared cultural knowledge.

These findings suggest that translation errors in social media contexts are not always accidental but may stem from strategic or intuitive choices shaped by platform norms. However, when captions target international audiences, such assumptions can lead to reduced clarity and weakened persuasive effectiveness. This tension

between localization and error is particularly salient in F&B Instagram captions, where branding goals intersect with cross-cultural communication.

### III. METHOD

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach situated within the framework of Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS). This approach was selected because the research seeks to describe how translation practices are realized in naturally occurring social media texts rather than to evaluate them against prescriptive norms. Instagram captions were treated as authentic microtexts that reflect real translation choices made in a marketing context.

The data consist of 19 English-language Instagram captions taken from three Indonesian food and beverage accounts: *manglayang.jkt*, *indonesiansflavour*, and *rumahbolenlilit*. These accounts were selected after an initial review showed frequent use of culturally specific food terms and persuasive expressions intended for international audiences. The number of captions was determined based on data saturation, as similar semantic patterns and translation issues repeatedly appeared during the preliminary screening.

Data were collected through documentation by capturing and transcribing captions posted between 2023 and 2025. Purposive sampling was applied to ensure that only captions containing Indonesian culinary references, such as food names, ingredients, or culturally bound expressions, were included. Captions that did not involve translation-related issues were excluded to maintain analytical focus.

Each caption was analyzed at the sentence and phrase level to identify potential semantic translation errors. The analysis followed the principles of Error Analysis and Translation Quality Assessment (TQA), drawing on House's (2014) model and Baker's (2018) equivalence framework. Errors were identified, classified into lexical choice errors, pragmatic misrepresentation, meaning distortion, and collocation errors, and then examined in relation to their impact on persuasive function.

Both qualitative and quantitative procedures were employed. Qualitative analysis focused on contextual interpretation and semantic nuance, while quantitative analysis summarized the frequency and distribution of error types across accounts. During the analysis, particular attention was paid to ambiguous cases where translation choices could be interpreted as either deliberate branding strategies or semantic inaccuracies, acknowledging the subjective boundary between localization and error.

To enhance the credibility of the findings, triangulation was conducted through comparison with established translation theories, expert validation by two bilingual Indonesian-English reviewers, and inter-rater discussion to ensure consistency in error classification. This methodological approach was intended to balance analytical rigor with sensitivity to the contextual and persuasive nature of social media captions.

### IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To clarify how semantic translation errors manifest in the dataset, two tables are presented in this section. Table 1 provides selected examples of translation errors identified in English captions from Indonesian food and beverage Instagram accounts. These examples illustrate how culture-specific food items, collocational patterns, and pragmatic framing are rendered in English, offering concrete textual evidence to support the qualitative analysis discussed earlier.

Table 2 summarizes the frequency and distribution of semantic error types across the three sampled accounts. By presenting the data quantitatively, the table allows for comparison between error categories and highlights patterns that emerged during the classification process, particularly the dominance of lexical choice errors in captions involving culturally bound expressions. Together, the two tables complement the descriptive analysis by linking individual textual instances with broader distributional trends observed in the dataset.

**Table 1. Semantic Translation Errors in English Captions from Indonesian F&B Instagram Accounts**

Date	IG Account	Caption (English)	Source Term (if any)	Type of Semantic Error	Notes/Explanation
March 14, 2025	<i>manglayang.jkt</i>	“Oseng Cue Pete is a mix of stir-fried salted fish (cue) and stinky beans (pete)...”	<i>Cue, Pete</i>	Lexical Choice Error	The terms “cue” and “pete” are left untranslated in the caption, which may cause confusion for readers unfamiliar with Indonesian cuisine. Using clearer equivalents such as “salted

					mackerel” and “stink beans (petai)” would help maintain the local flavor while improving overall clarity.
March 17, 2025	<i>manglayang.jkt</i>	“...waiting for you to finally enjoy. Soft avocado, crunchy coconut...”	“crunchy coconut”	Meaning Distortion	The phrase “crunchy coconut” slightly distorts the original meaning, as coconut flesh is typically not crunchy. The expression likely refers to young coconut strips, suggesting a semantic inaccuracy in the translation.
July 2, 2025	<i>mglayang.jkt</i>	“...the ‘happy soda.’ This fizzy, colorful mix of sweet condensed milk, syrup, and soda...”	<i>Soda Gembira</i>	Pragmatic Misrepresentation	Translating “es soda gembira” as “happy soda” overlooks its cultural meaning as a well-known Indonesian beverage. A more culturally adaptive translation would better preserve its intended connotation.
anAugust 27, 2025	<i>indonesiansflavour</i>	“Beef Rendang is well-known as a very tasty and authentic Indonesian taste - even approved by Padangnese people”	“Padangnese people”	Collocation / Lexical Error	The term “Padangnese” is non-standard in English and may sound unnatural. Using “the Minangkabau people” or “people of Padang” would result in a more natural and accurate expression.
Dec 4, 2025	<i>indonesiansflavour</i>	“Soto Ayam (GLUTENFREE!!!)”	“Gluten-free”	Pragmatic Misrepresentation	Highlighting “gluten-free” may be misleading, as traditional soto ayam is not typically presented using this label, which can distort the intended pragmatic meaning.

**Table 2. Frequency and Distribution of Semantic Translation Errors by Instagram Account**

IG Account	Captions	Total Errors	Lexical	Pragmatic	Meaning	Collocation
<i>manglayang.jkt</i>	19	10	7	1	1	1
<i>indonesiansflavour</i>	9	5	4	1	0	0
<i>rumahbohlenlilit</i>	17	4	3	1	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

As illustrated in the two tables, lexical choice errors emerge as the most frequent type of semantic error. This pattern reflects the inherent difficulty of rendering culture-specific Indonesian food terms into English without additional explanation. Although pragmatic misrepresentation, collocation errors, and meaning distortions occur less frequently, their impact should not be underestimated, as they can significantly affect clarity, naturalness, and persuasive force. When viewed alongside the qualitative examples, these findings suggest that semantic errors in Instagram caption translation are not incidental, but rather recurring tendencies that directly influence both communicative effectiveness and marketing appeal within Indonesian food and beverage accounts.

This section presents the results of a semantic error analysis of 45 Instagram captions translated into English from three Indonesian culinary accounts: *manglayang.jkt* (19 captions), *indonesiansflavour* (9 captions), and *rumahbohlenlilit* (17 captions). The analysis is grounded in Descriptive Translation Studies (Toury, 2012), which allows the captions to be examined within their social media context. To identify and categorize translation errors, this study draws on Error Analysis (Ellis, 2019; James, 1998) and Translation Quality Assessment (House, 2014). Furthermore, Newmark's (1988) distinction between semantic and communicative translation, together with Baker's (1992) model of equivalence, provides the basis for classifying errors into lexical choice errors, pragmatic misrepresentation, meaning distortion, and collocation errors.

### Lexical Choice Errors

Lexical choice errors emerged as the most dominant category in the dataset, accounting for 14 out of 19 identified cases (74%). Their consistent appearance across the analyzed Instagram accounts points to a recurring issue in the translation of Indonesian culinary terms into English, rather than isolated or accidental mistakes. Most of these errors involved culture-specific items (CSIs), including *cue*, *pete*, *honje*, *kecombrang*, and *perkedel*. These terms were frequently left untranslated, rendered using non-standard expressions, or presented without any explanatory gloss, which limited their accessibility to international audiences.

In several instances, culinary terms appeared without sufficient contextual support. For example, *kecombrang* was mentioned in captions without translation or descriptive cues, making it difficult for non-Indonesian readers to associate the term with *torch ginger bud*. A similar issue was observed with branded product names such as *Bolen Lilit*, which were transferred directly into English captions without clarification, leaving readers unaware that the term refers to a pastry made of layered dough with local fillings. In such cases, the lack of contextualization reduced the communicative value of the captions.

Another recurring issue concerned the use of non-standard demonym, most notably “*Padangnese people*” to refer to *Orang Minangkabau*. Although the intended meaning was generally understandable, the form does not align with conventional English usage, where expressions such as “*the Minangkabau people*” or “*the Minangkabau*” are more natural. These instances reflect what Baker (2018) describes as a failure of lexical equivalence, in which direct transfer from the source language does not successfully convey meaning to the target audience.

From the perspective of Translation Quality Assessment (House, 2014), the absence of explication weakens the functional adequacy of the captions. In the context of marketing, captions serve not only an informative function but also a persuasive one, appealing to readers’ curiosity, sensory imagination, and cultural interest. When key lexical items remain unclear to readers unfamiliar with Indonesian cuisine, the promotional potential of the post is reduced. This effect was particularly evident in captions that introduced dishes solely by name—such as *perkedel*—without descriptive modifiers or visual support. By contrast, captions that combined foreign terms with partial explanations (for instance, *tempeh chips* alongside *tempe kripik*) provided clearer access to meaning.

These observations suggest that the primary issue lies not in the use of foreign culinary terms themselves, but in the lack of contextualization accompanying them. This finding has important implications for the broader research question concerning how translation strategies shape the effectiveness of Indonesian culinary marketing on Instagram. As noted by Newmark (2007), a semantic approach that retains the source-language term while offering a brief explanation—such as *kecombrang* (*torch ginger bud*)—can help balance authenticity and comprehensibility. Such strategies align with contemporary localization practices, where maintaining cultural identity while ensuring intelligibility can enhance audience engagement and strengthen brand positioning. In this sense, the prevalence of lexical choice errors reflects a missed opportunity: rather than distancing international readers, captions could use glosses or hybrid forms to inform, attract, and engage a global audience.

### Pragmatic Misrepresentation

Pragmatic misrepresentation was identified in three out of the 19 analyzed captions. This type of error occurred when the communicative purpose or cultural nuance of the source text was altered in a way that could potentially mislead or confuse the intended audience. One clear example is the literal translation of *es soda gembira* as “*happy soda*.” Although the translation is linguistically accurate, it fails to convey the nostalgic and culturally embedded associations of the drink in Indonesian society, thereby weakening its expressive appeal for international readers.

A similar shift in pragmatic emphasis can be observed in captions promoting *soto ayam* with the emphatic label “*GLUTENFREE!!!*” While the statement may be factually correct, the framing introduces a Western-oriented nutritional perspective that is absent from the source text. As a result, the focus moves away from the dish’s cultural and culinary identity toward a health-related discourse that was not originally intended. The third instance of pragmatic misrepresentation involves the inconsistent use of untranslated Indonesian terms in English captions, which implicitly assumes a level of cultural knowledge that many non-Indonesian readers may not possess.

From a theoretical perspective, these cases illustrate what House (2024) describes as a mismatch in pragmatic meaning within translation quality assessment. Rather than producing the intended interpersonal effect, the target texts modify the message in ways that disrupt its original function. This observation also aligns with Newmark’s (1988) concept of communicative translation, which emphasizes the need for the target text to elicit a response comparable to that of the source text. When the pragmatic intent is not aligned with the expectations and background knowledge of the target audience, the persuasive force of the caption is diminished.

These findings have important implications for the broader research question. As culinary Instagram captions are designed not only to inform but also to engage and attract viewers, pragmatic misrepresentation can significantly reduce their marketing effectiveness. For international audiences, captions that oversimplify cultural references (such as “*happy soda*”), impose culturally incongruent frames (such as “*GLUTENFREE!!!*”), or rely on insider knowledge through untranslated terms may hinder engagement rather than enhance it. This underscores the importance of pragmatic sensitivity in culinary translation: effective captions must convey not only lexical meaning, but also culturally appropriate framing to achieve meaningful cross-cultural appeal.

### **Meaning Distortion**

Meaning distortion was identified in only one of the 19 analyzed captions, making it the least frequent error type in the dataset. However, despite its low occurrence, this type of error carries notable semantic and interpersonal consequences. The case appeared in the translation of *Es Teler*, where the coconut component was described as “*crunchy coconut*.” This wording overstates the sensory quality of the ingredient, as the coconut flesh used in this dish is typically soft or tender rather than crunchy. Consequently, the translation creates a sensory image that does not accurately reflect the actual texture of the dish, potentially shaping misleading expectations for the reader.

From the perspective of Error Analysis, this instance can be understood as a misinterpretation of meaning, in which an inappropriate sense of a lexical item is selected (Khalil, 2020). Baker’s (2018) discussion of lexical equivalence further clarifies this issue, emphasizing that equivalence should be determined not only by dictionary definitions but also by context-specific usage. In this case, the translator’s choice overlooked the culinary context, where texture-related adjectives play a crucial role. In food-related discourse, descriptors such as *crunchy*, *soft*, *tender*, or *chewy* are not interchangeable, as they directly shape the reader’s mental and sensory perception of the dish.

Although this error was limited to a single caption, its implications are nevertheless significant. Even isolated instances of meaning distortion can undermine semantic accuracy and weaken the effectiveness of promotional communication. Inaccurate sensory descriptions risk misleading audiences and may negatively affect consumer expectations. This finding highlights the importance of heightened lexical sensitivity in culinary caption translation, where seemingly minor choices—particularly those involving sensory language—can have a disproportionate impact on the persuasive function of marketing content.

### **Collocation Errors**

Collocation errors were identified in two of the 19 analyzed captions, both involving word combinations that sounded unusual in standard English. One example is “*Kangkung Crispy*,” which reflects Indonesian word order rather than the more idiomatic English expression “*crispy water spinach*.” Another case appears in the description of *sate ayam* using the phrase “*light peanut sauce*.” Although the meaning is generally understandable, the expression is less natural than “*mild peanut sauce*,” which better aligns with common English collocational patterns. In both instances, the captions remain comprehensible, yet the unnatural phrasing slightly reduces fluency and weakens their persuasive appeal.

From a theoretical perspective, these cases correspond to Baker’s (2018) concept of collocational equivalence, which emphasizes that successful translation requires sensitivity to habitual word combinations in the target language. When source-language patterns are transferred too directly, the resulting text may appear non-native, even if the individual words are accurate. In line with House’s (2014) Translation Quality Assessment model, such collocation errors affect the text’s functional adequacy by disrupting fluency and diminishing its suitability for

promotional purposes. Newmark (2007) similarly associates these issues with over-literal translation, where semantic accuracy is prioritized at the expense of idiomatic and stylistic naturalness.

Although collocation errors occur less frequently than lexical choice errors, their impact on culinary Instagram captions should not be underestimated. In a marketing-oriented context, fluency and appeal are central to audience engagement. Awkward or unnatural collocations can distract readers, subtly undermine the account's professional image, and reduce the overall persuasive effect of the caption. This finding reinforces the importance of aligning translations not only with meaning but also with the conventional usage patterns of the target language.

Taken together, the analysis shows that lexical choice errors (14 out of 19 cases) remain the most prevalent, underscoring the ongoing challenge of translating Indonesian culture-specific items into English without sufficient glossing or adaptation. Pragmatic misrepresentations (3/19) highlight difficulties in maintaining appropriate cultural framing for diverse audiences, while meaning distortions (1/19), though rare, demonstrate how incorrect sense selection—particularly in sensory language—can mislead readers. Collocation errors (2/19) further emphasize the need to observe idiomatic patterns in order to preserve naturalness and fluency.

Viewed through the lens of Descriptive Translation Studies (Toury, 1995), these findings reflect common translational practices in the context of Instagram captioning. At the same time, Error Analysis and House's TQA framework help explain how such practices affect semantic accuracy and communicative effectiveness. The predominance of lexical-level difficulties points to the importance of consistent strategies such as glossing, explication, and cultural adaptation. In practical terms, enhancing semantic and pragmatic clarity in caption translation is essential for improving both accuracy and audience engagement in digital culinary promotion.

## **Discussion**

The findings of this study indicate that semantic translation errors in English Instagram captions of Indonesian food and beverage (F&B) accounts are systematic rather than incidental. Lexical choice errors emerged as the most dominant category, particularly in the treatment of culture-specific items (CSIs) such as food names, ingredients, and locally embedded expressions. This pattern suggests that many caption translations prioritize surface-level transfer of Indonesian terms while offering limited semantic mediation for international audiences.

This finding resonates with previous studies on culinary and tourism translation, which consistently report that CSIs present the greatest challenge in cross-cultural communication. Amenador and Wang (2022), for example, found that food-related CSIs in Chinese–English menu translations were frequently transferred without adequate explanation, resulting in reduced intelligibility for foreign readers. Similarly, Mandagi and Centeno (2024) observed that literal retention of local culinary terms often preserves authenticity but risks semantic opacity when not accompanied by descriptive strategies. The present study extends these findings by demonstrating that similar issues persist in Instagram captions, where textual brevity and persuasive intent further intensify the impact of lexical inaccuracies.

Pragmatic misrepresentation, although less frequent, reveals another layer of complexity in caption translation. In several instances, translations altered the communicative framing of the original Indonesian captions, either by neutralizing cultural connotations or by imposing external perspectives that were absent from the source text. The translation of *es soda gembira* as “happy soda,” for instance, illustrates how literal equivalence can obscure culturally embedded meanings associated with nostalgia and local identity. This observation aligns with Barongo’s (2024) findings on social media translation, which highlight that pragmatic shifts often occur when translators assume shared cultural knowledge that the target audience may not possess.

From the perspective of Translation Quality Assessment, such pragmatic shifts reduce functional adequacy by weakening the persuasive intent of promotional texts. House (2014) emphasizes that successful translation must account for interpersonal and contextual meaning, not merely propositional content. In the context of culinary marketing, where emotional appeal and cultural resonance play a central role, pragmatic misrepresentation may inadvertently diminish the attractiveness of the product. This supports Rojas-Rivas et al.’s (2021) argument that gastronomy is deeply intertwined with cultural representation, and that mistranslation can affect not only comprehension but also affective engagement.

Meaning distortion and collocation errors were less prominent in the dataset, yet their presence remains significant. Cases such as the description of *es teler* as “coconut crunchy” demonstrate how inaccurate sensory descriptors can mislead audience expectations. Previous studies on food discourse have similarly noted that sensory language carries persuasive power and directly influences consumer perception (Amenador & Wang, 2022; Rojas-Rivas & Cuffia, 2022). Collocation errors, such as Indonesian-influenced word order in English phrases, further reduce textual naturalness and signal non-native production, echoing Baker’s (2018) discussion of collocational non-equivalence.

An important observation during the analysis is that not all deviations can be interpreted unequivocally as errors. Some translation choices appear to function as intentional branding strategies, particularly in captions that retain Indonesian terms to emphasize cultural authenticity. This ambiguity reflects the blurred boundary between

localization and semantic deviation in marketing discourse, a point also noted by Ding et al. (2021) in their study of user-generated translations on social media. Recognizing this boundary is crucial, as overly rigid error classification may overlook the strategic motivations behind certain translation choices.

Overall, the findings of this study complement and extend previous research on translation in digital and culinary contexts by highlighting how semantic and pragmatic issues operate within short-form promotional texts. While earlier studies have largely focused on menus, subtitles, or machine translation outputs, this research demonstrates that human-written Instagram captions face comparable challenges, compounded by constraints of space, tone, and persuasive intent. Integrating strategies such as glossing, explicitation, and culturally sensitive adaptation may therefore enhance both semantic clarity and persuasive effectiveness without undermining cultural identity in Indonesian F&B social media promotion.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study examined semantic translation errors in English Instagram captions from Indonesian food and beverage (F&B) accounts by analyzing a corpus of 19 captions. The findings indicate that lexical choice errors, particularly in the treatment of culture-specific items, constitute the most prominent challenge in cross-cultural culinary promotion on social media. Rather than occurring randomly, these errors form recurring patterns that reflect the complex negotiation between cultural authenticity and semantic accessibility in short-form promotional texts.

When viewed in relation to previous studies on culinary and tourism translation, the results of this research both confirm and extend existing insights. Similar to earlier findings that highlight the difficulty of translating food-related cultural references (Amenador & Wang, 2022; Mandagi & Centeno, 2024), this study demonstrates that such challenges persist beyond menus and long-form descriptions and are equally salient in Instagram captions. However, the present study contributes a more nuanced understanding by showing how the brevity, persuasive intent, and branding orientation of social media texts intensify the impact of even minor semantic deviations.

An important contribution of this research lies in its recognition of the blurred boundary between translation error and strategic localization. The analysis of the 19 captions revealed that certain translation choices, while semantically problematic, may function as deliberate branding strategies intended to preserve cultural identity. This observation supports and refines arguments in previous social media translation research (Ding et al., 2021; Barongo, 2024) by emphasizing the need for evaluative frameworks that account for both communicative effectiveness and marketing intent.

From a theoretical perspective, this study reinforces the relevance of integrating Descriptive Translation Studies with Error Analysis and Translation Quality Assessment when examining digital microtexts. By applying these frameworks to Instagram captions, the research expands their applicability to contemporary promotional discourse. Practically, the findings suggest that strategies such as glossing, explicitation, and culturally sensitive adaptation can enhance semantic clarity and persuasive appeal without diminishing cultural authenticity.

Although this study is limited by the size of its corpus, the analysis of 19 captions provides sufficient depth to reveal meaningful patterns in translation practice. Future research may build on these findings by examining larger datasets, comparing different social media platforms, or investigating audience reception of translated culinary content. In doing so, further studies can continue to explore how translation mediates cultural representation and persuasion in digital food marketing.

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