

Translating foods, cultures, and identities in multilingual documentaries

A functionalist analysis of Netflix's
cuisine-focused docuseries *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat*

Umberto Faraone

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Preface

La serie degli *Occasional Papers*, nata nel 2005, è una collana dei *Quaderni del Centro di Studi Linguistico-Culturali* (CeSLiC), centro di ricerca attivo presso il Dipartimento di Lingue, Letterature e Culture Moderne dell'Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna, del quale Ana Pano Alamán è responsabile scientifica. Dal 2021, la collana *Quaderni del CeSLiC. Occasional Papers* si è aperta alle *Monografie*, accogliendo studi organici dedicati a specifici ambiti della ricerca linguistica e culturale.

Il presente volume di Umberto Faraone, *Translating Foods, Cultures, and Identities in Multilingual Documentaries. A Functionalist Analysis of Netflix's Cuisine-Focused Docuseries Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat*, interamente redatto in lingua inglese, trae origine da una tesi di laurea magistrale discussa presso l'Università di Bologna e successivamente rielaborata e approfondita anche grazie a una borsa di studio post-lauream del Dipartimento LILEC.

Translating Foods, Cultures, and Identities in Multilingual Documentaries. A Functionalist Analysis of Netflix's Cuisine-Focused Docuseries *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat*.

Il volume indaga la traduzione del cibo e delle pratiche alimentari nel contesto della traduzione audiovisiva, assumendo come caso di studio la docuserie multilingue di Netflix *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat* e, in particolare, la sua versione originale e l'adattamento italiano. Il cibo viene qui considerato non soltanto come oggetto della traduzione, ma anche come sistema di significati sociali e culturali, veicolo di memorie individuali e collettive e spazio privilegiato di costruzione e negoziazione delle identità.

Attraverso un approccio qualitativo e un quadro teorico funzionalista che integra il modello di Christiane Nord con quello, fondato sulla linguistica sistemico-funzionale, di Juliane House, lo studio esamina le strategie adottate per tradurre riferimenti culturali, denominazioni gastronomiche e contenuti multilingui. Particolare rilievo assumono la proposta di un modello di strategie applicabile alla traduzione audiovisiva e l'elaborazione sperimentale di specifiche strategie di localizzazione nel campo della traduzione gastronomica. Il lavoro richiama inoltre l'attenzione sulla scarsità di risorse terminologiche multilingui affidabili dedicate al cibo e alla cucina, aprendo nuove prospettive di ricerca all'incrocio tra studi sulla traduzione, comunicazione interculturale e discorso gastronomico.

Parole chiave / keywords: food translation, cultural identities, audiovisual translation (AVT), multilingual documentaries, functionalist translation theories, localization.

Valeria Zotti
General Editor dei Quaderni del CeSLiC
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In the second place, I would like to express my gratitude to the members of the CeSLiC, for accepting my proposal and giving me the opportunity to publish this work. In particular, I wish to thank Professor Valeria Zotti and the entire editorial board of the CeSLiC for their kindness, patience, and meticulousness. Special thanks are due to the reviewers involved in the process: their invaluable observations challenged me to refine my arguments with greater clarity and precision and helped shape a work that, I hope, does justice to the complexity of the subject under investigation.

I gratefully acknowledge the financial support provided in 2023 by the LILEC Department of the University of Bologna through a post-degree scholarship, which afforded me the opportunity to conduct research abroad and further investigate the subject of this study in preparation for publication. In this respect, I would like to thank the University of Granada, specifically the Department of Translation and Interpretation, for providing access to resources and facilities essential to this research. In particular, I owe a special debt of gratitude to Professors María Isabel Tercedor Sánchez, Catalina Jiménez Hurtado, and Clara Inés López Rodríguez for welcoming me at the University of Granada and for their guidance, encouragement, and supervision during my stay. Likewise, I am also particularly grateful to Professors Ana Pano Alamán and Marina Manfredi for their generous support throughout the exchange period.

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Finally, my deepest gratitude is reserved for my family, whose unfailing support and understanding accompanied me throughout this endeavour. Among them, I would like to dedicate a special word of thanks to my grandmother Elisa for her constant encouragement, affection and unwavering support over the years. This work is lovingly dedicated to her, as a modest way of saying *Grazie, nonna*.

Umberto Faraone
Giffoni Valle Piana (SA, Italy), July 2026

Abbreviations

AVT	Audiovisual Translation
CSR	Culture-Specific Reference
FG	Functional Grammar
SC	Source Culture
SFL	Systemic Functional Linguistics
SA	Source Audience
SL	Source Language
ST	Source Text
TA	Target Audience
TC	Target Culture
TL	Target Language
TQA	Translation Quality Assessment
TS	Translation Studies
TT	Target Text
VN	Voice-off narrator

Introduction

Food and translation have several things in common. Firstly, both are indispensable to human life, with food being an important means to satisfy our appetite and nutritional needs, while translation enables us to break through linguistic and cultural barriers, facilitating the exchange of ideas, opinions, notions, and contents. Secondly, both food and translation embody distinct yet comparable forms of communication, the former employing a non-verbal code primarily made up of tastes, colours, consistencies, shapes, and aromas, while the latter normally relies on the verbal repertoire of spoken and written languages. As forms of communication, food and translation are used to construct, manage, and disseminate people's identities. Indeed, like language, food can be said to possess a lexicon and grammar of its own, and it is imbued with a plethora of social, cultural, identity-related, and contextual meanings that vary from community to community and from person to person (Montanari 2006; Belasco 2008; Balirano & Guzzo 2019a, 2019b).

However, unlike translation, the centrality of food in people's lives as a sign system and a vehicle of socio-cultural symbolism has seldom been researched until very recently. While translation has long enjoyed recognition as an age-old human practice worthy of investigation, with an established tradition¹ and a vast body of literature, food has for a long time been conspicuously neglected and deemed a trivial matter (cf. Chiaro & Rossato 2015). Only in recent years has food come to be seen as a major area of interest and enquiry in the humanities, where research on the topic is still in its infancy. In this respect, Balirano and Guzzo (2019b: xvii-xviii) observe that:

[a]lthough food is obviously vital to community identifications, being it a core element in everyday practices communally used to create and maintain a shared sense of cultural identity, the linguistic interest in food discourses is still, too often, an underexplored theme.

In light of these considerations, the present study seeks to raise awareness of food and food-related practices from a translational perspective, problematising the rendering of culture-bound and region-specific edibles, culinary preparations, and eating habits across languages and cultural contexts. The core of this work is a functionalist translational analysis of the four-episode, food-focused multilingual documentary *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat* (henceforth *SFAH*), distributed by Netflix (2018). The analysis is conducted following a case-study design and employing qualitative modes of enquiry.

The rationale for selecting *SFAH* as our case study lies in the fact that this documentary constitutes a multilingual audiovisual product, wherein food – beyond being celebrated as a cultural signifier and a carrier of personal and collective memories, identities, and social values – acts as a locus of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic encounters. Indeed, Sender-Addressee(s) communication in *SFAH* proves remarkably multifaceted and multilingual, owing to a mosaic of languages and dialects in contact throughout the whole documentary. For this reason, multiple AVT modes are employed in the original (ST) and target versions (TTs) of *SFAH*, generating both *intra*- and *inter*-

¹ As the time-honoured debates on 'word' and 'sense', from Cicero's era onwards, amply demonstrate (cf. Hurtado-Albir 2016; Munday 2016 and later editions).

textual interlinguistic translations aimed at conveying a wide range of foods, cultures, stories, notions, meanings, and identities to the intended audiences.

More specifically, the analysis considers the original version of *SFAH*, addressed to Americans and English-speaking audiences, and its Italian adaptation, titled *Sale, Grassi, Acidi, Calore*, both distributed by Netflix (2018). The study applies a text-focused, qualitative methodology grounded in an integrated functionalist framework, drawing partly on Nord's (2005, 2018) functionalist theory of translation and partly on House's (2015, 2018) SFL-informed model of translation quality assessment, with some important adaptations introduced to suit the purposes of the present research. The case study further incorporates two empirical components designed to address underexplored areas within food localization and AVT. First, the analysis implements a novel, tentative framework of localization strategies, developed on the basis of data collected through interviews with professionals working in the field of food translation, complemented by the researcher's own observations. The resulting experimental model conceptualises food localization through four micro-level translation strategies applicable to the interlingual and intercultural rendering of food-related items. Second, the study employs a tailor-made model for the identification of *intra*- and *inter*-textual lexico-grammatical translation strategies in audiovisual texts. This model openly builds on Malone's (1988) framework of translation strategies, reinterpreting it from an AVT perspective and supplementing it with an original, product-oriented strategy, termed 'Non-translation', developed specifically for AVT and not – to the best of our knowledge – represented in existing AVT-oriented models.

Overall, the case study pursues two main objectives. The first is to explore the linguistic composition of the ST – featuring multiple languages such as English, Spanish, Japanese, Italian, and Farsi – and its *intra*-textual translation patterns. In this process, we set out to identify translation-relevant features in the ST, combining a context-focused and a register-based analysis. Subsequently, we move to examine the translation and localization strategies employed in the *intra*-textual and interlingual rendering of CSRs and food-/cuisine-related terminology, originally presented in languages other than (Standard) English and ultimately translated (*intra*-textually) into English, viz. the language of the ST's intended audience. As part of this objective, attention is also devoted to the AVT modes whereby the ST conveys the interplay of multiple linguistic codes, thereby making the multilingual in-text world accessible to the intended English-speaking source audience (SA). The second objective of this case study concerns the *inter*-textual (ST → TT) interlingual translation of *SFAH*. Specifically, focusing on the Italian adaptation of the docuseries, and sitting within a functionalist translational framework, we scrutinise ST-TT register transfer, alongside the AVT modes used to convey the ST's complex linguistic dimension, as well as its CSRs and food-/cuisine-related terms, to the Italian-speaking target audience (TA). To this end, we conduct both a context-focused and a register-based analysis of the TT, complemented by a close examination of intertextual and interlingual translation and localization patterns. Finally, the results of both analyses – i.e. of ST and TT – are interpreted within the functionalist paradigm of Nord (2005, 2018).

This study is organised into four main chapters.

Chapter 1 opens the book with a critical review of recent research on food and foodways from an interdisciplinary perspective. It integrates insights from Sociology, Cultural Studies, Food Studies, Identity Studies, Diaspora Studies, Sociolinguistics, Contact Linguistics, and Humour Studies, highlighting the centrality of food and food-related practices in human life. The chapter underscores how food functions not only as

sustenance but also as a marker of identity, a medium of social interaction, and a site of cultural negotiation. By examining the varied meanings food conveys in different social, cultural, and linguistic contexts, this chapter lays the conceptual and analytical groundwork for the study, situating the translation of culinary practices within broader debates on culture, communication, and identity.

Chapter 2 provides a critical overview of two key theoretical translation frameworks, namely Nord's (1997, 2005, 2018) *Skopostheorie*-derived functionalist approach and House's (1997, 2015, 2018) SFL-informed translation model. By combining theoretical insight with methodological reflection, this chapter establishes the macro-level analytical tools and the conceptual lenses that underpin the case study analysis of *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat*, preparing the ground for a systematic exploration of translation patterns, situational dimensions, and register transfer, within a functionalist framework that prioritises purpose, expectations, communicative needs, and the interplay between source and target parties.

Chapter 3 opens with an overview of Documentary Studies and factuality, before addressing audiovisual translation (AVT), providing a theoretical framework that highlights relevant conceptual and technical issues in the field, including the transfer modes of revoicing and subtitling. The chapter also offers a critical reflection on culture-specific references (CSRs) and cultural embeddedness, and examines the principles underlying localization, with a key subsection dedicated to an empirical survey on localization in food-focused texts.

Chapter 4 constitutes the focal point of the entire work. It presents the case study outlined above, detailing the material under scrutiny and the research aims pursued. The chapter also provides a comprehensive account of our integrated methodological framework and its application in the qualitative translational analysis of *SFAH*. In particular, our purpose-built "baseline" model and the experimental set of "food localization" strategies are presented in depth, illustrating their use in examining translation patterns, registerial transfer, and culture-specific adaptations in both the source and target versions of the series. For reasons of space, only the results most directly relevant to our analytical objectives are reported and discussed. Overall, the findings yield valuable insights into the way food-centred multilingual audiovisual texts are translated and localized, uncovering patterns that enhance our understanding of linguistic and cultural mediation within the domains of AVT and food translation, while highlighting limitations and avenues for future research.

1. Approaching food from an interdisciplinary perspective

1.1 Food as a social practice

As various sociological studies suggest (cf. Scholliers 2001; Wills *et al.* 2011; Bradley 2016), the roles that food plays in contemporary social contexts are manifold, as are the profound social meanings food has acquired over time. This is due to both the intrinsic, long-standing relationship food has with people's social sphere and to the functions that it performs as a social practice permeating human reality across different geographical, social and cultural contexts. As noted by Delormier *et al.* (2009), collective foods and eating practices are inescapably ingrained in their practitioners' socio-cultural context(s) and often index people's social relations, behaviours, cultures, and experiences. The underlying reason for this strong sociological dimension is that eating habits tend to develop in relation to other people, alongside other routine activities normally occurring in social contexts such as family, work, and school (*ibid.*: 217). In the same vein, adopting a sociological perspective on food, Wills *et al.* (2011: 725-726) maintain that:

[e]ating is a socially constructed practice. Even when eating alone, the manner in which we shop for, grow, prepare, cook and consume food is imbued with the socio-cultural context or contexts within which people exist or have existed [...] [Accordingly] food and eating reflect and help to (re)construct family ideologies, processes and everyday practices. The foods chosen and the eating practices enacted help to create social order and boundaries within families, strengthening bonds and (re)producing group identities.

It is worth noting that, like all social practices, food practices are notably influenced by social factors such as gender, age, and class (Charles & Kerr 1988). These influences are reflected in food choices and consumption, allowing social differences within a social group to be tangibly manifested and reinforced through food and food-related activities.

For example, in traditional families featuring prevailing relations of gender inequality, feeding practices are often considered part of women's duty, thereby serving to establish and maintain gender asymmetry (DeVault 1991; Delormier *et al.* 2009). In this regard, Cairns *et al.* (2010) postulate that gender inequalities are very typical in the food world, where cooking and eating practices provide opportunities for masculinities and femininities to be constructed and negotiated both among the general population and in foodie culture. This can be seen in socially established ideals of femininity, commonly based on dieting rather than indulgence, as well as in the socio-cognitive association of women's cooking and eating with emotions (Lupton 1996). By contrast, men's cooking is traditionally cast as either a hobby, rather than a family duty (Coxon 1983), or a craftsmanship, in the context of professional chef (Fine 1995), thereby representing men's food practices as detached from "feminine" emotionality and as more entrenched with ideals of masculinity rooted in meat consumption and creativity (Cairns *et al.* 2010).

In the same fashion, age plays a paramount role within foodscapes. Research on adolescent eating practices has shed light on the social significance of youngsters' food choices and consumption patterns, showing that diverging age-related eating behaviours within families often function as a tool for representing and shaping social relations and

divisions between parents and children (Wills *et al.* 2005; Backett-Milburn *et al.* 2006). In particular, age-focused studies on eating configurations have shown that children tend to prefer sweet tastes and energy-dense foods, discarding vegetables and foods that are sour or bitter (Cooke & Wardle 2005), whereas older people are more likely to make healthier food choices (Chambers *et al.* 2008). Such preferences engender intergenerational conflicts and frictions, with children and young people refusing to be passive receivers of food norms, thereby transforming food and eating practices into a vehicle for their individual social identification (Wills *et al.* 2011: 726).

For his part, Montanari (2006) explores the social meanings and functions of food and food-related rituals, with particular attention to the social dynamics enacted at the table. He underscores that “[if] the table is the metaphor for life, it represents in a direct and exacting way both membership in a group and the relationships defined within that group” (*ibid.*: 95). Additionally, Montanari insists that “[the] serving of one piece of food rather than another is never casual”, yet it reflects “relationships of power and prestige within the group” (*ibid.*: 97). In this light, food can be understood as a symbolic medium through which social identities and social structures are reproduced and made visible, thereby reinforcing social hierarchies as much as shared identities. Meals, therefore, represent occasions in which inclusion, exclusion, and the negotiation of roles within the community are enacted.

Building on these observations, two important aspects emerge: first, the involvement of food in processes of social identification; second, its role as an indicator of power and prestige within social hierarchies.

Concerning the first aspect, the framework of ‘Community of Practice’ can prove useful in explaining how social identification and group membership can be enacted and manifested through food practices.

In its simplest definition, a community of practice designates “an aggregate of people who, united by a common enterprise, develop and share ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, and values – in short, practices” (Eckert & McConnel-Ginet 1999: 186). The Swiss sociologist E. Wenger devoted particular attention to the study of communities of practice and social identities. He defines identity as a “negotiated experience of self” (Wenger 1998: 150), constructed through mutual engagement within the community and through the negotiation of a shared repertoire of group-specific practices, including routine configurations, ways of communicating, humour, local folklore, and peculiar styles that signal group membership, alongside “a shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world” (*ibid.*: 125-126). In Wenger’s view, “membership in a community of practice translates into an identity as a form of competence”, which allows individuals to discern between “the familiar and the foreign, the obvious and the mysterious, the transparent and the opaque”, based on what is communally learnt, what can be mutually understood straight away, what gives a sense of belonging, and what is negotiable (*ibid.*: 153). Seen through this paradigm, food and foodways constitute group-specific social practices, as each social group exhibits peculiar eating behaviours and ways of using and understanding certain foodstuffs. Consequently, food practices come to function as powerful resources whereby social identities and membership to specific social groups and communities of practice can be constructed and communicated.

As regards the role of food and food practices as markers of class, social power and prestige, Bradley (2016) observes that eating configurations often mirror socio-economic background, insofar as specific edibles and recipes typically denote a sense of class and

distinction. This stance clearly aligns with Bourdieu's understanding of social practices as class-bound, meaning that they stand as indicators of social stratification. In particular, Bourdieu (1986: 73) explains that, in order to define their social position, individuals also rely on non-economic resources that function as "instruments for the appropriation of symbolic wealth socially designated as worthy of being sought and possessed". In Bourdieu's (1984) view, food and eating practices – alongside other routines imbued with symbolic and aesthetic qualities – form 'cultural tastes', carrying socio-psychological connotations derived from their symbolic entrenchment with a given socio-economic status. Consequently, aliments and food preparations come to be perceived as socially loaded with varying degrees of prestige, distinguishing between more and less luxurious food items, preparations and rituals, thereby reinforcing social rank and even facilitating social mobility through their use.

In conclusion, the social significance of food and foodways is anything but negligible. Food occupies a prominent position in humans' social life, marking social roles, gendered identities, age groups, group membership, social relations, power, and prestige, thereby acquiring and transmitting a wide range of significant social meanings.

1.2 Food as a cultural practice

1.2.1 Food and the cultural system

Before addressing food and eating practices from a cultural perspective, it seems appropriate to clarify what is intended by culture, so as to situate food and foodways within the broader framework of cultural practices.

Providing an absolute definition of culture is no mean feat, given that a universally accepted notion is yet to emerge across the disciplines involved in the study of cultures. Indeed, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, literature, and cultural studies have proposed numerous definitions and models so far, each grounded in a particular frame of reference (cf. Katan 2018; House 2018). To address this thorny issue, the current study adopts a broad definition of culture, provided in the *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Semiotics* (Sebeok 1986), which Ulrych (1992: 71) quotes as follows:

Culture is the totality of the signifying systems by means of which mankind, or a particular group, maintains its cohesiveness (its values and identity and its interaction with the world). These signifying systems [...] comprise not only all the arts (literature, cinema, theatre, painting, music etc.), the various social activities and behaviour patterns prevalent in the given community (including gesture, dress, manners, ritual, etc.), but also the established methods by which the community preserves its memory and its sense of identity (myths, history, legal systems, religious beliefs, etc.).

In addition to this definition, let us linger on two frameworks that can reasonably account for the functional organisation of cultures' components, including food and food-related practices.

To begin with, we shall resort to the "Iceberg Theory", as applied to culture by Hall (1990). This model employs the iceberg metaphor to portray the twofold nature of culture, as partially visible and partially hidden. The underlying principle is that, just as the bulk of a floating iceberg lies beneath the surface, so too does much of a culture remain

concealed; therefore, what is directly observable from the outside solely represents the tip of the “iceberg”. This is visually represented in Figure 1-1 below.

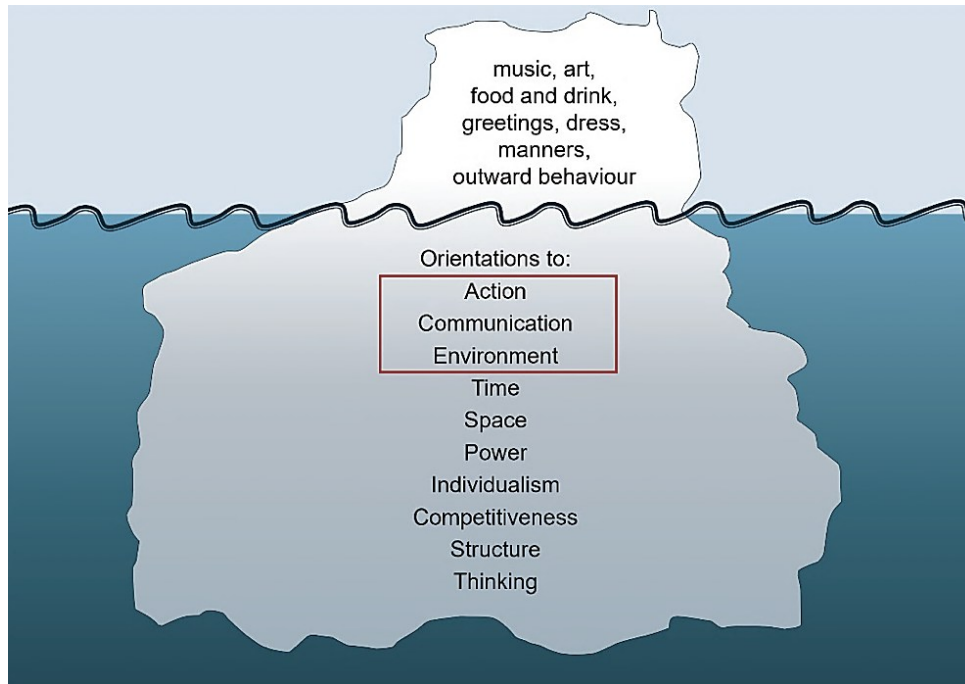


Figure 1-1 The ‘Cultural Iceberg’ (adapted from Katan 1999: 30).

Building on the “Cultural Iceberg”, Brake *et al.* (1995: 34-39, cited in Katan 1999: 29) pinpoint the elements respectively housed in the two layers of the iceberg:

Laws, customs, rituals, gestures, ways of dressing, food and drink and methods of greeting, and saying goodbye [...] These are all part of culture, but they are just the tip of the cultural iceberg.

The most powerful elements of culture are those that lie beneath the surface of everyday interaction. We call these value orientations. Value orientations are preferences for certain outcomes over others.

As is evident from the above, food is overtly included among the tangible components of culture, metaphorically associated with the tip of the iceberg. This perspective supports an understanding of food as a cultural practice, as well as a cultural product and a cultural signifier.

Another framework useful for understanding food as a cultural practice is that of Hofstede. His conceptualisation of the cultural system follows the structure of an onion, hence the name “Onion model” (Hofstede 1991). As shown in Figure 1-2, Hofstede’s framework is organised along two main strata: the outer layer of cultural practices (*viz.* symbols, heroes, and rituals), and a core containing the culture’s values. As Hofstede (1991: 8) stresses, practices are located in the outer strata of the onion for they are tangible elements, whereas their cultural meaning remains hidden and “lies precisely and only in the way these meanings are interpreted by insiders”.

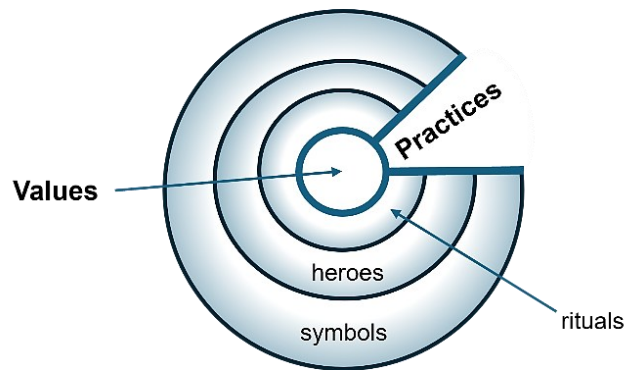


Figure 1-2 Hofstede's Onion Model (adapted from Katan 1999: 27).

For the purposes of this study, we shall concentrate on the outer layer of practices, namely symbols. In essence, symbols constitute “the semiotic signs recognized as belonging to a particular group, such as words, gestures, pictures, objects, dress, and so on”, and that serve to communicate meanings (Katan 1999: 27). Although Hofstede's model does not overtly incorporate food amongst the symbols of culture, it can be argued that food belongs in this cultural layer since it can be communally experienced through the senses (sight, olfaction, taste, touch, and even hearing), making it a tangible medium of cultural experience and exchange. In addition, food items can turn into and be socially recognised as culture-specific items, that is, as elements peculiar to a particular culture's culinary tradition in the way they are prepared, consumed, and conceptualised.

Along these lines, it can be said that food represents a facet of culture to the same extent as drink, taste, and olfaction (Katan 1999: 51). Based on the cultural specificity and the intercultural variability of food preferences and consumption, as well as on people's varying culturally informed cognitive conceptualisations of food and food practices, we can venture to consider food and foodways as fully-fledged cultural signifiers and cultural identifiers, as well as cultural practices, whereby people can manifest their cultural and/or ethnic affiliation and likewise negotiate cultural identities.

1.2.2 Food is culture

As a matter of common knowledge, edibles generally call to mind a plethora of images, memories, sensations, and cultural representations. Based on our knowledge of the world and of culinary landscapes, when directly experiencing or simply thinking about a certain dish, we typically decode it through a cognitive association between the dish at issue and a given culture, a family tradition, a nation, or even a set of personal and/or shared recollections. The same is likely to occur with the manners of preparing and eating such dish. The reason why these associations take place in our mind is that we burden foods, recipes, cooking procedures, eating tools, and food-related rituals with a broad array of personal and collective cultural meanings; consequently, these elements turn into powerful semiotic resources that enable processes of cultural identification and representation. As Barthes (1961/2013: 24) remarks, food is:

a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behavior [...] When he buys an item of food, consumes it, or serves it, modern man does not manipulate a simple object in a purely transitive fashion; this item of food sums up and transmits a situation; it constitutes an information; it signifies.

In this passage, Barthes utilises a linguistic analogy to characterise food not merely as a source of nutrients or a rewarding sensory experience, but rather as a code of communication with a grammar of its own, wherein ingredients, preparation techniques and eating customs translate into a culture-bound set of signifiers and significations.

To better illustrate how food signifies in a cultural sense, let us consider some examples. We may begin with *nigiri*, which consists of cooked rice topped with a strip of raw fish, usually consumed by lightly dipping it in soy sauce. Assuming that one is familiar with the dish in question, it is inevitable to instinctively relate this dish to East Asian cuisine, specifically Japanese, thereby acknowledging it as a cultural symbol of Japan.

The same is bound to happen with *tortellini*, that is, a ring-shaped stuffed pasta with a filling of meat and Parmesan, customarily served in broth. In this case, the cultural association is with the Italian cooking tradition, in particular that of the Emilia-Romagna region, of which tortellini may be considered the epitome in culinary terms. Thus, tortellini culturally symbolise Italy and Emilia-Romagna.

Yet another example is that of *scones*, which may be described as small, doughy cakes, often enriched with dried fruits or cheese and typically consumed with butter, jam, or cream. In turn, scones represent a tangible expression of traditional British gastronomy and relate specifically to Scotland's pastry tradition. Thus, they culturally embody Scotland and Great Britain and serve as a cultural symbol of these culinary foodscapes.

One last example we would like to linger on is that of *harissa* (or *hareeseb*). It is a Middle Eastern semolina cake soaked in syrup, very popular in Palestinian homes, with a characteristic moist, dense texture and a nutty flavour. This Arabic dessert is also eaten in other countries of the Levant, going under the name of *namoura* in Lebanon and *basbousa* in Egypt. As with the other food examples seen above, harissa does not merely function as a sweet dish but as a cultural marker of Middle Eastern gastronomy, embodying shared traditions across different national contexts. Despite its local variations, it serves to express a sense of belonging and continuity within Levantine culinary culture.

What clearly emerges from all these examples is that food speaks, narrates, and communicates, just like a verbal language. Due to its embeddedness in the cultural context(s) within which it originates and evolves, food functions as a carrier of culture-specific meanings, including beliefs, norms, expectations, and culturally constrained conceptions of taste (Balirano & Guzzo 2019b: xvii-xviii). It is by virtue of such cultural specificity and meaningfulness that food and food-related practices act as prime instruments for the construction and negotiation of cultural identities. In this respect, Montanari (2006: 133) asserts that:

[l]ike spoken language, the food system contains and conveys the culture of its practitioner; it is the repository of traditions and of collective identity. It is therefore an extraordinary vehicle of self-representation and of cultural exchange—a means of establishing identity, to be sure, but also the first way of entering into contact with a different culture.

In the same vein, Garzone (2017: 4) centres on the cultural connotation as well as on the political significance of food and food-related practices, remarking that “food habits constitute traditions and are associated with national, regional and ethnic groups, so they become distinctive elements for such groups”. She underlines that “the association of food with a given culture and with the life of social groups and ethnicities takes on a connotation, a meaningfulness that goes beyond social rules and conventions, and

becomes part of people's personal and ethnic identities" (*ibidem*). Following Meigs (1987), Garzone (2017: 2) clarifies that:

the symbolic value attributed to foods and to procedures and rituals involved in their preparation and consumption is part of the picture, being also strictly associated with taboos or other socially dictated rules concerning food consumption [...] providing evidence as to the degree to which the conceptualisation of food is the result of a cultural construction.

In light of these considerations, it is evident that food cannot be regarded as separate from its specific cultural context, not only because it serves as a symbol through which cultures represent themselves and their values, but also because it is imbued with culture-dependent meanings, expectations, and conceptions. In short, food is culture.

1.2.3 Cuisine and identity

According to Montanari (2006: xi), food can be regarded as a human-made product, since it springs from processes of conquering, transmuting and reinterpreting what is found in nature, with the aim of producing something new and specific to humans. Through the acts of selecting, creating and eating, food becomes invested with symbolic values and thus "takes shape as a decisive element of human identity and as one of the most effective means of expressing and communicating that identity" (*ibid.*: xi-xii).

Centring on the vigorous relationship between food and identity, Belasco (2008: 8) postulates that:

[identity] involves considerations of personal preference, pleasure, creativity, the sense of who and where you are. Identity includes factors such as taste, family and ethnic background, personal memories (the association between particular foods and past events, both good and bad). The cultural aspects of identity include widely shared values and ideas, extravagant notions about the good life, as well as a community's special food preferences and practices that distinguish it from other communities.

Drawing on Farb and Armelagos (1980), Belasco (2008: 15-16) points out that all cultural groups are provided with "an identifiable 'cuisine', a shared set of 'protocols', usages, communications, behaviors, etc." He underlines that the acceptance of some foods as either appetizing and edible or as distasteful and inedible changes substantially from cuisine to cuisine, thus from culture to culture (*ibid.*: 16). In the same vein, Balirano and Guzzo (2019b: xvii) claim that:

flavors that are particularly liked by a given community, can be deemed as unpleasant, or even banned, by others. Some foods are considered taboos by some religions, while they may be the main dish in others. Food is always heavily dependent on context; thus, cultural and social practices will determine whether some food can be accepted or not.

Consistent with Farb and Armelagos (1980) and Rozin (1982), Belasco (2008: 16) acknowledges four major elements that characterise a given cultural group's cuisine: 1) core foods; 2) manipulative techniques; 3) flavour principles; and 4) eating protocols.

‘Core foods’ are the range of specific staple foods that each cuisine normally prioritises; it varies from cuisine to cuisine – thus from culture to culture – according to a range of factors, including local availability, tradition, ideology, religion, and health (*ibidem*). A prime example of core food is meat. Many cultural groups worldwide hold meat as a staple; for them, Belasco (2008: 11) notes, meat consumption often symbolises success and power, as well as a range of other related values. Nonetheless, the classification of meat is not uniform across omnivorous cuisines; indeed, cultural and religious norms lead many societies to prohibit or discourage specific types of meat, such as pork in Judaic and Islamic traditions, or beef in Hindu practice (cf. Klein & Watson 2016). Conversely, some cultural groups consider meat consumption despicable and instead prioritise a plant-based diet, owing to religious beliefs or ideological principles. This is the case of vegetarian and vegan cuisines which typically designate meatless edibles as core foods, reflecting their rejection of animal slaughter and domination.

‘Manipulative techniques’ refer to a cuisine’s preferred ways of preparing food (Belasco 2008: 16-18). These include particulation (viz. cutting, slicing, and mincing), incorporation (mixing multiple elements to obtain a new one, e.g. dough), cooking through dry or wet heat, frying, marinating, dry curing, and fermentation (*ibidem*). Along these lines, we can distinguish between cuisines that traditionally privilege slow cooking in a liquid (e.g. stewing and braising) and those preferring cooking techniques that involve direct heat, such as roasting or barbecuing. Still others may not require any cooking whatsoever (as in raw foodism or some dishes involving uncooked ingredients, such as sashimi and sushi). Likewise, cuisines worldwide show contrasting ways of making similar food items (e.g. bread and bread-like products, cakes, and sweets), which differ in sensory characteristics despite being made out of the same ingredients.

‘Flavour principles’ can be described as the distinctive ways in which cuisines season their foods with a characteristic and identifiable flavouring combination, which becomes a cultural group’s marker of sensorial identity. To exemplify this, Belasco (2008: 18) notes that “culinary identity in parts of China may be expressed through the combination of soy sauce, garlic, ginger, and sesame oil, while a mix of garlic, tomato, and olive oil may signal ‘southern Italian’, and chili, cumin, garlic, and tomato may communicate ‘Mexican’.

Finally, ‘eating protocols’ (or ‘rules for consumption’) relate to the notion that each cuisine possesses its own peculiar etiquette governing how food is to be consumed, which Belasco (2008: 18) likens to Barthes’ (1961/2013) notion of food-related “protocols.” A good example of food etiquette in this sense may be the orderly way people eat the dishes of a given meal. Each group’s cuisine, indeed, has its own conception of a menu, that is to say, what comes first, what to eat next, when to have desserts or sweet dishes, or whether a given dish is to be viewed as a main course or side dish. Another example of culture-dependent eating protocols deals with the tools used for consuming food: the use of chopsticks, cutlery or bare hands is never casual, yet it signifies broader systems of etiquette, identity, and cultural belonging.

The cultural specificity of food becomes even more noticeable when certain culinary preparations come to be collectively understood as traditional symbols of religious and/or cultural celebrations within specific cultural systems.

By way of illustration, let us consider Christmas and Easter. Countries and cuisines celebrating these two festivities hold a long list of characteristic recipes and culinary habits entwined with the celebration of these two religious events. For instance, the Christmas season in Italy is typically marked by the appearance of the traditional *pandoro* and *panettone* in all food shops and bakeries, as these are exclusively available during this time of the

year. Likewise, the Paschal period in Italy is commonly associated with the consumption of the chocolate Easter egg and the typical dove-shaped cake known as *colomba*, although in some Southern Italian regions *pastiera* takes precedence among Easter desserts.

Beyond religious connotations, foods are also culturally understood as indicative of given times of the day as well as special occasions for a specific cultural group. For instance, *caffelatte* (i.e. a frothy milk-coffee beverage) means breakfast for most Italians, whereas spaghetti with tomato sauce would instantly signal lunch. In the same fashion, the English would normally recognise a dish made of eggs, bacon, beans, sausage, mushrooms, tomatoes, and toasts as their ‘full English’ breakfast, yet they are likely to be reluctant to see a soup or a stew as culturally appropriate unless served for dinner. The reason why certain preparations are associated with specific times of the day is to be found in Barthes’ (1961/2013) and Belasco’s (2008) “eating protocols” mentioned before, namely the rules and conventions that each individual culture prescribes as to how food is supposed to be consumed. As Bradley (2016: 17) remarks, “both our national and personal identity are also represented by the way food is eaten in terms of manners and rules”.

As regards special occasions, humans have over time developed and preserved distinctive customs and patterned behaviours regarded as characteristic of life in a given socio-cultural system. These include the celebration of a wide range of culturally and socially significant events, such as personal milestones (e.g. birthdays), socio-cultural achievements (e.g. school and university graduations, marriages, the birth of a child), and meaningful social gatherings (e.g. family get-togethers, friends’ reunions). All of these are commonly marked through food choices, often involving the preparation of culinary specialties not consumed on a daily basis but reserved for special occasions. A prime example would be a birthday cake accompanied by Italian *spumante* or French *champagne*, which in some cultures instantly signal the non-ordinary nature of the event. Another example of “special occasion food” is roasted turkey, that Northern American culture regards as the supreme symbol of Thanksgiving, customarily shared and eaten with relatives or friends.

In addition, food also carries cultural meanings shaped by group-specific superstitions, legends, and folklore. This is certainly the case of *jiaozi*, the celebratory Chinese dumplings eaten on Chinese New Year’s Eve, which symbolise prosperity and wealth within Chinese culture.² Similarly, the New Year’s Eve tradition of consuming *las doce uvas de la suerte* (i.e. the twelve grapes of luck) is commonly believed to bring good fortune and ward off evil spirits in Hispanic cultures,³ whereas Italians eat lentils as a propitiatory, luck-bringing dish at the close of the year.

Another aspect worthy of consideration is the relationship food has with individual and collective memory. Since food constitutes a communal practice permeating innumerable life events, it inevitably encapsulates personal and shared recollections. In this sense, Belasco (2008: 25-27) indicates Marcel Proust’s madeleine as a perfect example of how poignant food memories can trigger deeply ingrained associations, which not only evoke nostalgia but also serve as a means of preserving identities in intergenerational family practices and in contexts of migration and other forms of mobility.

Delving into the study of food and cultural memories, Abarca (2017: 36) maintains that we all possess a “palate’s memory” that “guided by the principles of taste, the senses,

² <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-16631679> (last access 25/03/2021)

³ <https://www.delish.com/food/a69606840/12-grapes-new-years-tradition/> (last access 27/07/2026)

and the body, enables us to recognize the symbolic characteristics associated with significant social and cultural episodic aspects of our culinary subjectivities”. More in detail, the scholar stresses that food-related cultural memories stem from the interplay of distinct types of memory, explained as follows:

[t]he names of dishes signal historical and social memories: cognitive memory. Through foods related to rituals and ceremonies, cultural and spiritual values and beliefs are manifested: episodic memory. It is through the senses—smell, taste, touch, sight, and hearing—that the reproduction of (unwritten) recipes takes place: sensorial memory. It is through habitual bodily movements in the act of watching, dicing, kneading, baking, serving, offering, and sharing food, that culinary subjectivities are performed and displayed: embodied memory (Abarca 2017: 34-35).

By studying the linkage between food and individual and/or collective memories, Abarca (*ibid.*: 39-40) notes, we can not only gain deeper insight into cultural identities as expressed through foods and culinary practices, but also illuminate the migratory trajectories of those who have carried particular tastes and recipes to new lands, thus preserving the historical and cultural continuity of their communities. As the scholar concludes, “food does in fact say something about who we have been, who we are, and who we might become” (*ibidem*).

1.3 Food as a locus of cross-cultural encounters

Many food items and preparations endemic to specific socio-cultural groups’ cuisines do not always remain confined to the borders of their original cradle. Rather, they travel across national and cultural frontiers, entering other physical and cultural spaces as a result of colonisation, migration, diaspora, globalisation, and other circumstances that facilitate contact-induced transcultural exchanges (DuPuis *et al.* 2017; Bandini & Corduas 2019). Accordingly, some foods and recipes may be successfully incorporated in other cuisines over time, losing the geographical and cultural specificity of their origin, as has occurred with potatoes, tomatoes, and more elaborated preparations such as cheesecake.⁴ On the other hand, many food items and dishes may vigorously retain their original national and cultural identity, even when exported or reproduced in foreign territories and cuisines, thereby providing a pathway for locals to engage with the foreign culture and eliciting cross-cultural encounters (Garcia *et al.* 2017; Balirano & Guzzo 2019a).

Considering the role of food in migratory processes in greater depth, Bandini and Corduas (2019: 2) contend that “food and the language of food unavoidably travel across cultures, and transnational food migration becomes a key element in the (re)definition of ethnic identities”. Their argument draws on Möhring’s (2007) stance that food is inextricably entwined with ethnicity, as “specific foodstuffs, as well as cooking and eating practices, form a central part of the definition of ethnic-cultural groups” (*ibid.*: 210). In the same vein, Guzzo (2014) and Balirano and Guzzo (2019b) emphasise that food and language alike play a prominent role in diasporic contexts, as migrants tend to employ food habits and linguistic features related to food (e.g. names of food and eating rituals)

⁴ At present, it is difficult to determine when, where, and by whom cheesecake was invented. Several cultural groups consider it a staple of their respective cuisines, each with distinct recipes, vying for recognition as the original creator.

to form and reinforce their diasporic identities, through which they can display, preserve or adapt their ethnic and cultural affiliation.

In this respect, drawing on Farb and Armelagos' (1980) idea of cuisine as a language taught from birth, Belasco (2008: 16) suggests that, when people move to another country, they are likely to retain the "accent" of their native cuisine, much as they would normally do with patterns of their native language when using the host language (see Clyne 2000; Thomason 2001; Nortier & Dorleijn 2013). As Balirano and Guzzo (2019b: xviii) highlight, this phenomenon is explained by the fact that, like language, food "embodies a form of resistance and abrogation through which cultural continuity is maintained, or conversely, it may be the focal point through which migrant communities find compromise, or even consent, within the host community".

It is worth noting that, in diasporic contexts, members of minority groups from distinct sociocultural and ethnic backgrounds, living side by side in a mixed environment, express their migratory identity through both their native or heritage language(s) and group- and culture-specific eating habits, so as to self-differentiate from other ethnic groups, including the dominant one. Nonetheless, when minority and majority groups engage in dialogue, interaction becomes intercultural as distinct cultures and languages come into contact, fostering forms of cross-cultural adaptation and hybridisation, which can often reflect in language, as with terms related to food and foodways (Guzzo 2014; Balirano & Guzzo 2019b).

In this regard, food-related lexical borrowings, as indicators of diasporic creativity and of mixed identities, are widely examined in many migration-focused linguistic studies. Notable recent investigations include Guzzo (2014) and Guzzo and Gallo (2019) on Anglo-Italian catering businesses in the UK, Bandini and Corduas (2019) on Italian restaurants in Germany, and Matsumoto and Britain (2019) in the Pacific region. With respect to the extensive use of code-switching by Anglo-Italians in food-related contexts, sociolinguistics theorist Guzzo (2014: 162) interprets this phenomenon as "an aid to fully linguistically render those bits of the cultural world which would remain silent or unspoken in another language".

Another crucial issue arising in relation to food as a locus of cross-cultural encounters is that of borders. In a study on the relationship between food and cultural/national borders within the American context, DuPuis *et al.* (2017: 1) describe the act of eating as a "border crossing" practice, in that it allegedly involves a choice between the foods that define *us* and those designating *others*. In this sense, the scholars suggest that "as territories became nations, the act of eating became a metaphor for solidarity, belonging, and exclusion: the line we draw and defend against the outside" (*ibidem*).

In his turn, Montanari (2006) theorises that food constitutes the initial device whereby cultures can meet and communicate. In particular, he observes that:

[e]ating the food of the "other" is easier, it would seem, than decoding the other's language. Far more than spoken language itself, food can serve as a mediator between different cultures, opening methods of cooking to all manner of invention, cross-pollination, and contamination (Montanari 2006: 132).

This observation does not apply solely to conventional migration contexts; it also holds true in those situations where the diasporic agents are the foodstuffs themselves rather than the people that originally produced them. Indeed, owing to the ongoing worldwide food homogenising process, which Inglis (2010: 493) describes as part of the so-called

“global McDonaldization”, most food items and beverages travel freely across national and cultural frontiers, enriching the endemic food repertoire of the receiving cultures and cuisines (Balirano & Guzzo 2019b: xvii). As a result, cultural tastes and cuisines have become increasingly hybridised in recent years, with food playing a pivotal role in bridging cultures together and constantly redefining the fluid boundary between the familiar and the foreign.

For example, many contemporary food stores in Italy offer products such as French *macarons* and *madeleines*, Japanese *miso* and *dorayaki*, Chinese *soy noodles* and *dumplings*, Latin American *pineapples* and *bananas*, North American *peanut butter* and *maple syrup*, Scottish *smoked salmon* and *gingerbread*, and even Maghrebi *couscous*. Clearly, these items do not epitomise traditional Italian cuisine but rather reflect the food cultures of other countries, now brought together through globalisation and contemporary food industries. Consequently, Italians can engage with other cultures through these aliments, experiencing new tastes and textures distinctive of foreign countries and cuisines. Yet, it may also be argued that certain imported foods, though retaining their geographical specificity, have been progressively absorbed into contemporary Italian cuisine to the point of no longer being perceived as entirely foreign. For instance, pineapples and bananas are not cultivated locally but are now routinely used in present-day Italian eating habits; likewise, peanut butter and smoked salmon have recently become familiar elements of the national food repertoire. Ultimately, these processes of incorporation illustrate how the boundaries between “local” and “foreign” food, as well as between cultures and cuisines, are porous and subject to continuous negotiation within globalised foodscapes.

To conclude, given that food is culture- and ethnicity-specific (Möhring 2007) and retains the cultural “accent” of its cuisine of origin (Belasco 2008), and considering that contemporary food cultures are increasingly marked by hybridisation and cross-cultural contaminations as a result of diasporas and globalisation (Inglis 2010; Balirano & Guzzo 2019b), we can view the realm of food as a locus of cross-cultural encounters. In this sense, food and foodscapes function as pathways through which cultures come into contact and mutually engage with one another, giving rise to a range of possible intercultural outcomes.

1.4 Food as discourse

Chocolate has given occasion to profound dissertations, with the object of determining its nature and properties, and to place it in the category of warm, cold, or temperature drinks (Brillat-Savarin 1825/1994).

As one of the earliest food writers of modern times, J. A. Brillat-Savarin, made clear in his seminal work *Physiologie du Goût* (The Physiology of Taste, 1825/1994), food is more than an ever-evolving range of edibles that we ingest for biological needs.

Be it the offspring of nature or of humans’ creativity, food constantly accompanies us and becomes so deeply ingrained in our individual and collective life experiences that it even becomes an object of discourse, circulating in conversations, texts, and cultural expressions. Indeed, ranging from casual conversations to scholarly debates, food enters human discourses in countless ways, as in descriptions of food textures and colours, reflections on food-induced sensations and perceptions, narratives of cooking practices,

or discussions of its nutritional and symbolic values. In short, echoing Brillat-Savarin's words cited above, food gives us occasion to initiate, hold, and conclude conversations.

Nowadays, the presence of food is tangible everywhere, pervading virtually all social environments and media of communication, through verbal means (e.g. the use of food-related words), as well as visual and audiovisual ones (e.g. images and videos of edibles and recipes), both on paper and digital-technological supports alike. In their inquiry into food discourse, that is, the verbal and nonverbal language about food in different contexts, Matwick and Matwick (2019: 2) stress that:

[cooking] has a story, is a story, and inspires new stories, creating a food discourse that intertwines food and language in complex ways [...] From community cookbooks and family recipe cards, through Internet baking blogs and YouTube how-to cook videos, to Instagram sharing of drool-worthy dishes and Facebook cookbook groups, the media thrives in linguistic and visual manifestations of food.

In greater detail, food appears across an extensive range of texts belonging to diverse genres and textual typologies, including newspapers, magazines, brochures, cookbooks, travel guides, memoirs, literary works, scientific texts, and journal articles. Likewise, food figures prominently in television, both on general broadcasting channels and on networks devoted specifically to cooking (e.g. the American *Food Network* and Italy's *Gambero Rosso*). Moreover, food is strikingly omnipresent on contemporary social media: cuisine-focused Facebook pages, Instagram profiles, Twitter accounts, cooking websites, and online blogs are increasingly proliferating. In addition, major streaming platforms such as YouTube and Netflix have also become repositories of food-related content, ranging from documentaries and docuseries to various formats of cooking shows.

In their analytical study on food discourse, Matwick and Matwick (2019) incorporate the distinction that Gee (1990) makes between little 'd' discourse and big 'D' Discourse: the former indicates spoken and written utterances (e.g. talks, narratives, recipes, and anecdotes) which then become part of big 'D' Discourse. As Gee (1990: 142) clarifies, big 'D' Discourses "are ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions and clothes". Thus, analysis at little 'd' level would focus on specific language productions, while the big 'D' level serves to contextualise the discourse and determine its implied socio-cultural significations. Furthermore, Gee (1990: 142) postulates an "identity kit" that each big 'D' Discourse comprises and that dictates directions on how to converse, move, and write in a given social position or role. Matwick and Matwick (2019: 9) explain this identity kit by providing the example of celebrity chefs: working in a socially institutionalised environment, these subjects adopt a "trained" attitude or code in the way they communicate and move, both in the kitchen and in written and spoken discourses, with the aim of self-identifying as celebrity chefs within the celebrity-chef environment.

In their turn, Karrebæk *et al.* (2018) explore food-language relationship and bring to the fore the use of given language patterns in relation to food and food-related practices in food discourses, claiming that:

meals provide the ground and opportunity for language use, from polite conversation to ritual blessings. Food-related activities [...] involve and are shaped by language, from certificates, manuals, and cookbooks to shouted instructions or cordial pleasantries exchanged alongside goods. Overall, food and its uses provide

setting and structure for language, just as language and its uses constrain and inform what food activities are and how they progress (Karrebæk *et al.* 2018: 18).

The involvement of language with food, as Karrebæk *et al.* (2018) note, commences in the early stages of food production, that is to say, in the fields, gardens, farms, factories, and kitchens. Then, it permeates material, documentary, and oral practices of food safety and comes into play in verbal interaction during food services at restaurants, coffee shops, and groceries.

Along the same lines, Blum (2017) discusses language as a vehicle for crafting and bolstering linguistic and visual representations of farmers and agricultural territories involved in Midwest USA's local food production. Through such narratives, local food production and goods are qualified as authentic and morally legitimate, in contrast to dehumanised, large-scale contemporary capitalist food industries and related products.

In the same vein, the studies of Abarca (2007) and Riley (2016) explore the interplay between food and language in food preparation practices situated in the kitchen, where discourse unfolds in the form of stories and conversations shared around the table while food is being prepared.

Food discourse is also investigated by Guzzo (2014) and Guzzo and Gallo (2019), who adopt a sociolinguistic approach to the analysis of restaurant menus in Anglo-Italian catering businesses in the UK. In these studies, menus are shown to rely on Italian-English interlingual translations as well as on the extensive use of code-switching, which, according to Guzzo (2014: 162-163), functions as a linguistic and cultural strategy to maintain a sense of Italianness and likewise reinforce Anglo-Italian diasporic identities while spreading the Italian food culture in the UK.

Taken together, these food-centred discursive practices reflect what Karrebæk *et al.* (2018: 23) describe as “circulation”, meaning “the distribution and exchange of words and food between food producers and food consumers”. As the scholars note, circulation can occur through multiple channels (e.g. vis-à-vis conversations, food packaging, instructions and manuals, and social media) and across varied contexts (e.g. family gatherings, restaurants, coffee shops, and grocery stores), serving purposes that range from explaining food provenance and preparation to discussing ethical and moral implications, or even fostering a sense of intimacy (cf. McCullen 2011).

As a conclusion to this line of thought, Karrebæk *et al.* (2018: 24-25) observe that food circulates alongside discourses about it, reproducing ideologies and indexing social, cultural, and emotional meanings across local, national, and global arenas. As the scholars note, food and language are consumed together, operating “individually and together as sources of distinction and as resources for adding value”, and “are differentially distributed among producers and eaters, speakers and listeners” (*ibidem*).

1.4.1 Food in non-food-themed discourses

Beyond food discourses, references to food can also emerge in discursive contexts not explicitly centred on food or foodways. This occurs when people use idioms and metaphors in everyday language that invoke food items without the intention of discussing food *per se*.

To better illustrate these language practices, let us consider some examples in Spanish, Italian, and English:

- (1) El nuevo novio de Pablo es un trozo de pan.
[Pablo's new boyfriend is as good as gold.]
- (2) Esos dos chicos están como dos quesos.
[Those two boys are very attractive.]
- (3) Questo tema non è farina del tuo sacco.
[This paper is someone else's handiwork.]
- (4) Che mangiata! Sto pieno come un uovo.
[What an abundant meal! I can't have another bite.]
- (5) This morning's grammar test was a piece of cake.
- (6) As soon as Sarah arrived, her dog went bananas.

Examples (1) and (2) illustrate two food-based metaphors typically used in Spanish. Specifically, the mental images of *un trozo de pan* (= a piece of bread) and *dos quesos* (= two cheeses) serve to liken the subjects of the examples (i.e. 'Pablo's new boyfriend' and 'those two boys') to the cited foodstuffs, merely to attribute certain qualities to them. Similarly, examples (3) and (4) exemplify two food-based metaphorical expressions frequently used in Italian. In particular, the saying *non è farina del tuo sacco* (= it isn't flour of your harvest), featured in example (3), means that one has produced something identical to another person's work, hence a plagiarism. This idiom also exists in Spanish as *no es (harina) de tu cosecha*, holding the same meaning. Example (4) presents the expression *pieno come un uovo* (= full like an egg), which denotes that someone has no room left for additional food; it can also be employed metaphorically to refer to very small or cramped spaces, corresponding to the English expression "there is no room to swing a cat". Lastly, examples (5) and (6) demonstrate English food idioms whose meanings cannot be inferred literally. In (5), the expression "it is a piece of cake" does not refer to an actual cake but a task that is easy to perform. The Italian language has a comparable food-infused expression, viz. *come bere un bicchiere d'acqua* (= like drinking a glass of water), which conveys the same meaning. Example (6) features the idiom "to go bananas", which does not imply that a person or animal searches for bananas or transmutes in such a fruit; rather, it indicates that a subject becomes excited, goes crazy, or loses their temper.

Clearly, these examples represent only a small fraction of the many food-related idioms and expressions found in languages such as English, Italian, and Spanish, demonstrating that food frequently permeates even those discourses that are not explicitly about food.

Another way in which food references appear in discourses not primarily centred on food is through humour. In this respect, Chiaro (2020: 211-212) points out that food has long been used as a humorous device to lampoon people on account of their dietary choices or food fads. In her study, the scholar examines instances of food-based humour targeting Italians, who are constantly caricatured for their food fixation and their strong disapproval of foreign-born innovations applied to their traditional culinary staples. In the first place, Chiaro (*ibid.*: 213) provides some examples of Italian-related food jokes found in online written discourses, such as:

- (7) Q: Did you hear about the Italian chef that died?
A: He *pasta way*.
- (8) Q: What do you call a fake noodle?
A: An *impasta*.

- (9) Q: Where did the spaghetti go to dance?
A: The *meatball*!

These food jokes use linguistic wordplays that hint at commonly known items of the Italian food culture, whose acoustic realisation matches the pronunciation of the implied English words. In particular, example (7) uses *pasta way* for “passed away”, as the phonology of the two phrases is very close, thus both the implied semantic meaning and the cultural allusion are readily legible. Likewise, in example (8), the word *impasta* plays with the acoustic similarity with “impostor” and, at the same time, calls to mind the word “pasta”, which acts as an Italian identity marker. Lastly, example (9) illustrates the use of *meatball* to create a pun based on the interplay between *dance* and *ball* in *meat-ball*, provoking hilarity yet also prompting a cultural association by respecting the proverbial spaghetti-meatball pairing.

It is worth observing that contemporary food-based humour does not solely occur in traditional forms, including newspaper’s cartoons, satirical comedians’ performances, puns, wordplays, and riddles. Rather, food jokes nowadays take place in a range of new, creative multimodal formats, such as gifs and memes, which combine the original verbal puns with visual contents. In this respect, Chiaro (2020: 213) notes that “the visuals now enrich the words that made up the traditional jokes and provide an added dimension to the humour”. By way of illustration, the scholar comments instances of multimodal food jokes that mock the Italian military ineptitude during WWII through depictions of Italian food and food-related items: “World War 2 Italian gravestones replaced by empty pizza cartons, army helmets made with colanders, Italian daggers with spaghetti and hand grenades with mozzarella update the classic Italian military joke by adding an absurd twist” (*ibid.*: 220).

In the same fashion, the Italians are ridiculed on physiological grounds through the circulation of online food memes that juxtapose regular human tissues and Italian foods. As observed by Chiaro (2020: 221-222), the construction of Italianness in these memes hinges on the composition of Italian people’s skin, blood and body parts as made up of lasagne and other Italian culinary staples. While these memes may qualify as dark humour for some, they nonetheless constitute an example of multimodal food discourse where the interplay of culture-specific food images, verbal script, and cultural stereotypes contributes to the construction of cultural images and representations, albeit with the primary aim of eliciting laughter rather than serious reflection.

All in all, whenever people talk about and through food, they are inevitably engaging with identities, cultures, traditions, and meanings, which represent the very dimensions on which metaphors and humour typically rely. In this sense, food references always function as a symbolic resource whereby people articulate social belonging, negotiate linguo-cultural differences, and reproduce (or challenge) sociocultural stereotypes. Ultimately, whether metaphorical, humorous, or otherwise, discourses featuring food references become a privileged site for the construction, performance, and contestation of cultural identities.

2. Functionalist theories of translation

2.1 Christiane Nord and her functionalist approach to translation

In 1997, the German translation scholar Christiane Nord (1997a, 1997b) introduced her own functionalist approach to translation, openly derived from *Skopostheorie*, viz. the general theory of translation originally devised by Vermeer (1978/1983), yet reinterpreted in a more “moderate” form through the integration of new principles and considerations. At its core, Nord’s approach builds on the same assumption as Vermeer’s:

change of function and audience is the general case, not the exception, since the target-culture audience always differs from the source-culture audience, at least with regard to background knowledge, value systems, norms and conventions, etc., which change the function the translated text may have for them (Nord 2013: 202).

Notably, for Vermeer (1987: 29), translating is “to produce a text in a target setting for a target purpose and target addressees in target circumstances”. It follows that the translatory action is no longer dependent on the source text (ST) but rather on the purpose (or *skopos* in Greek) that the target text (TT) is intended to serve in the recipient culture (Nord 2018: 28). This principle, referred to by Reiss and Vermeer (1984/2013: 90) as the ‘skopos rule,’ essentially entails the “dethronement” of the ST so as to fulfil the translational purpose defined by the commissioner as well as by the expectations, communicative needs, and cultural framework of the prospective TT receivers (Vermeer 1987: 541; Nord 2018: 12).

This stance, however, has long been criticised, as Nord (2018: 117) and Martín De León (2020: 200-201) observe, since the ‘skopos rule’ seemingly encourages translators to operate too freely, favouring manipulations. In addition, because in skopos-theory “the demand for fidelity is subordinate to the *Skopos* rule” (Nord 2018: 114, original emphasis) and “the translation should be ‘adequate to’ the requirements of the brief”⁵ (*ibid.*: 34), Skopostheorie has also drawn criticism for its alleged neglect of the ST’s linguistic composition (Munday 2016: 130).

As a way of addressing these longstanding criticisms, Nord advanced her own functionalist approach, formulating the “function-*plus*-loyalty” principle. In greater detail, ‘function’ stands for “the factors that make a target text work in the intended way in the target situation”, whereas ‘loyalty’ designates an interhuman responsibility that binds the translator to the other agents involved in the translation process, namely the ST author, the TT receivers, and the initiator (or commissioner) (Nord 2018: 116). In contrast to “fidelity”, which demands adherence to the ST, ‘loyalty’ implies that “the target-text purpose should be *compatible* with the original author’s intentions” (*ibid.*: 115, emphasis added), so as to limit “the range of justifiable target-text functions for one particular source text” (*ibid.*: 116) and likewise foreground the “legitimate interests” of initiators, target receivers and original authors alike (*ibid.*: 117).

⁵ Within functionalist approaches, the translation ‘brief’ essentially refers to the set of instructions provided to the translator by the commissioner. According to Nord (2018: 56-58), a brief should specify the intended text function(s) of the TT, the targeted audience(s), the anticipated time and place of reception, the medium of dissemination, and the underlying reason for the TT’s production and reception.

Consistent with Skopostheorie, Nord's approach also views language and culture as interdependent and constitutive of a single entity, referred to as 'linguaculture' (Reiss & Vermeer 1984/2013; Nord 2018). Along these lines, translation is not conceived as mere interlinguistic mediation but rather as a cross-cultural negotiation, since it involves the transfer of verbal and non-verbal signs from language to language and from culture to culture (Vermeer 1978/1983: 49). As a human intervention, translation constitutes an intentional, purposeful activity occurring in a given culture-bound communicative situation, whose specificities must be taken in consideration (Nord 2018: 11).

In this view, translation is also regarded as an 'offer of information,' following the idea that any text is an 'offer of information,' whose meanings and functions vary according to its receivers (Reiss & Vermeer 1984/2013: 60-61). Indeed, as Nord (2018: 30) puts it, "[a] text is made meaningful by its receivers and for its receivers", and "each receiver selects the items they find interesting and important". Upon translating, the translator chooses the source-text informational items deemed appropriate for the given translational purpose and conveys them to the target culture. Seen through this lens, the TT becomes a new 'offer of information' in the target culture regarding another 'offer of information' provided in the source culture in another language (Nord 2018: 25).

2.1.1 A model of communicative functions

Being primarily function-oriented, the translation paradigm proposed by Nord revolves around the delineation of the communicative functions that a text can perform. Following Reiss (1971, 1977), Nord resorts to Bühler's (1934) 'Organon model' of communicative functions as the starting point for deriving her own functions model. Specifically, Nord (2018: 39) adopts the three functions of Bühler's model, viz. referential, expressive, and appellative, and integrates a fourth, i.e. the phatic function, drawn from Jakobson's (1960) functions framework. The result is a four-function model, as illustrated in Figure 2-1 below.

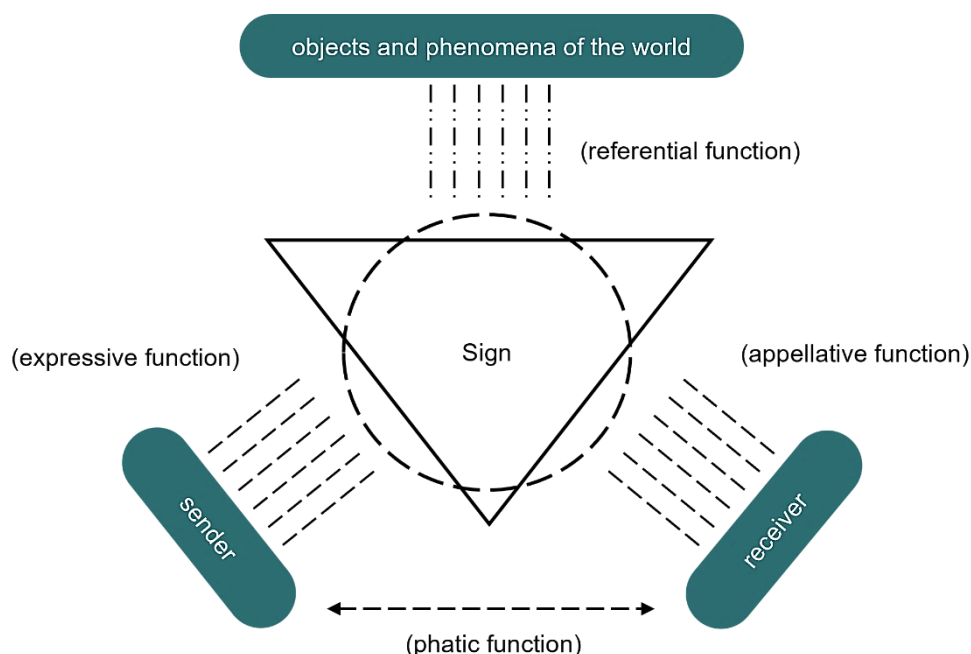


Figure 2-1 Nord's four-function model (adapted from Nord 2006: 47).

These four communicative functions can be analysed into an array of subfunctions and may be performed individually or, more commonly, in synergy with other functions and related subfunctions.

The **referential** function, relating to fictional or real-world items, can be examined according to the characteristics of the referent involved. Thus, we may identify ‘informative,’ ‘metalinguistic,’ ‘directive,’ ‘didactic,’ and other subfunctions (Nord 2018: 39). Linguistically, this function is conveyed through the denotative meaning of the text’s lexical resources, yet its fulfilment depends on text receivers, particularly on their knowledge of the referent. On this point, Nord underlines that:

[t]he function poses problems when source and target readers do not share the same amount of previous knowledge about the objects and phenomena referred to, as is often the case with culture-specific realities or *realia* (Nord 2018: 40, emphasis in the original).

The **expressive** function is linked to the sender’s opinions and attitudes regarding the referent and can be subdivided into several subfunctions, depending on what the sender communicates. For instance:

[i]f the sender expresses individual feelings or emotions (for example, in an interjection), we may speak of an *emotive* subfunction; if what is expressed is an evaluation (perhaps a government decision), the subfunction will be *evaluative*. Another subfunction might be *irony* (Nord 2018: 40-41, emphasis added).

Like the referential function, the expressive function is culture-sensitive, as it operates within a specific value system that must be shared by sender and receiver alike. Yet source senders and target receivers typically belong to different cultures, therefore their value systems are unlikely to coincide. In this respect, Nord notes that:

the expressive function verbalized in the source text has to be interpreted in terms of the source-culture value system. If it is verbalized *explicitly* [...] the readers will understand, even if they disagree. But if the evaluation is given *implicitly* [...] it may be difficult to grasp for readers who do not know on what value system the utterance is based (Nord 2018: 41, emphasis added).

The **appellative** function, in turn, is receiver-oriented and aims to produce a specific reaction or effect in the audience. Nord provides several examples of its usage and objectives:

[i]f we want to illustrate a *hypothesis* by an example, we appeal to the reader’s previous experience or knowledge; the intended reaction would be recognition of something known. If we want to *persuade* someone to do something or to share a particular viewpoint, we appeal to their sensitivity, their secret desires. If we want to *make someone buy* a particular product, we appeal to their real or imagined needs, describing those qualities of the product that are presumed to have positive values in the receivers’ value system. If we want to *educate* a person, we may appeal to their susceptibility to ethical and moral principles (Nord 2018: 41-42, emphasis added).

This function can be realised directly, through imperatives and rhetorical questions, or indirectly, using superlatives, adjectives, and nouns that convey specific qualities (Nord 2018: 42). Poetic language is another device for appealing the audience, as it engages

people's "aesthetic sensitivity" through wordplay, intertextual references, metaphors, and the like (*ibidem*). Moreover, this function is culturally constrained: addressees must possess a given culture-specific set of experiences, knowledge, and values to fully grasp the intended meaning; otherwise, the function's fulfilment may be hindered (*ibidem*).

Finally, the **phatic** function relates to sender-receiver contact and serves to initiate, prolong, or even interrupt communication. It also marks formality and (a)symmetry in the sender-receiver relationship, as Nord (2018: 43) observes. This function operates through linguistic, non-linguistic, and paralinguistic devices, whose interpretation as phatic features depends on the conventional norms within the relevant cultural frame of reference. Clearly, cross-cultural discrepancies may give rise to problems, causing misinterpretations and producing a variety of effects (*ibidem*).

2.1.2 Documentary and instrumental translations

Based on communicative functions, Nord elaborates two functional categories of translation, namely 'documentary' and 'instrumental', which she describes as follows:

[t]he first aims at producing in the target language a kind of *document* of (certain aspects of) a communicative interaction in which a source-culture sender communicates with a source-culture audience via the source text under source-culture conditions. The second aims at producing in the target language an *instrument* for a new communicative interaction between the source-culture sender and a target-culture audience, using (certain aspects of) the source text as a model (Nord 2018: 46, emphasis in the original).

Zooming in on documentary translation, Nord (2018: 46-48) distinguishes four translation typologies, each aimed at producing a TT with a "metatextual" function, that is, a text that signals its reference to another text (i.e. the ST), making the target audience aware that they are reading a translation. These four options differ in focus, rendition method, and purpose. In greater detail:

- **'interlinear' translation** focuses on the mechanics of the source language (SL) as it appears in the ST, and consists in a word-for-word rendering in which the SL words are translated individually while retaining the ST word order, with the purpose of showing the surface elements of one language system by means of another (Nord 2018: 46);
- **'literal' translation** conveys the ST wording while adjusting syntax and idiomatic usage to target norms. It is typically employed in journalistic texts for reporting foreign politicians' speeches, in academic texts for translating literal quotations, or in language classes for studying a language unfamiliar to the students (*ibid.*: 47);
- **'philological' translation** corresponds to the literal rendition of the ST in the target language (TL), supplemented with footnotes or glossaries to explain culture-bound items that appear in the text. It is generally applied to the translation of ancient texts, as in parallel editions of Greek and Latin works (*ibidem*);
- **'exoticizing' translation** refers to the translation method often used for modern works of fiction, in which source-culture items and situations are deliberately retained in the TT as they appear in the ST, while the communicative functions may shift (e.g. what was originally appellative may become informative for the target readers). This approach produces a sense of 'cultural distance' between the ST author and the TL

addressees, who then assume “the part of an observer listening to the conversation of two strange parties” (*ibid.*: 48).

On the other hand, instrumental translation aims to produce a text capable of fulfilling the same functions as an original, while adapting it to the norms and conventions of the recipient culture. In this case, Nord (*ibid.*: 48–49) observes that the translation is designed to read as an original, with readers not necessarily realising that they are engaging with a translated text. This can be accomplished through three options in particular:

- **‘equifunctional’ translation**, mostly associated with the realm of technical texts (e.g. manuals, recipes, touristic and informative texts, etc.), which typically employ standardised formulas and genre-specific textual patterns. Here, the purpose is to achieve the same textual function(s) of the ST, resulting in an ‘equifunctional’ TT (*ibid.*: 48);
- **‘heterofunctional’ translation**, which obtains when it is not possible to preserve the hierarchy of functions in TT as it is in the ST, due to temporal and/or cultural distance. In this case, the goal is to attain a “similar” range of functions in the TT. Prime examples include the children’s versions of *Gulliver’s Travels* and *Don Quixote*, namely fictional texts where “the satirical (appellative) function, which has become obsolete for most modern readers who do not know the original situation, is substituted in rank by reference to an amusing fictional story in an exotic setting” (*ibid.*: 49);
- **‘homologous’ translation**, which usually consists in the translation of poetry and aims to convey “the same, or a homologous, degree of originality as the original with regard to the respective culture-specific corpora of texts” (*ibidem*).

2.1.3 A translation-oriented text analysis

Nord’s functionalist paradigm also incorporates a translation-oriented approach to textual analysis, which essentially unfolds in two main stages. The first stage is the analysis of the text’s external situation. Since a text is “a communicative action which can be realized by a combination of verbal and non-verbal means”, Nord (2005: 16) considers of pivotal importance the inspection of the communicative situation wherein the text is engendered and to which it is inevitably bound. Similarly, Crystal and Davy (1969: 11) define the text’s situation as “that sub-set of non-linguistic events which are clearly relevant to the identification of the [text’s] linguistic feature(s)”.

In Nord’s (2005: 45–87) view, the analysis of a text’s external situation serves to gain insights into:

- where the text is located in **time** and **space**;
- who the **participants** involved are (i.e. senders and audience);
- what the **sender’s intentions** are;
- what the text’s **intended function(s)** is/are;
- what **medium** or channel is used to transmit the text;
- and what the **motive** for text production and reception is.

All of these situational factors also form the basis of the translation ‘brief,’ which, as Nord (2018: 56) remarks, informs the translator about “the conditions under which the target text should carry out its particular functions”, that is, the prospective communicative situation in which the translatory action is to take place – whether or not it coincides with that of the ST.

The next stage is the in-text analysis, which focuses on intra-textual features. In this respect, Nord (*ibid.*: 58) recommends the use of text-linguistic models and pragmatic analysis in order to determine: a) whether translation in accordance with the brief is feasible, b) which source-text features are deemed important for a functional translation, and c) which strategy is most suitable for producing a TT that best fulfils the brief. To this end, Nord (2005: 87-142) pinpoints eight types of intra-textual features that the translator should examine in the ST, namely:

- **subject matter**, identifying whether the text deals with a single topic or a hierarchy of subjects, and whether these are bound to a culture-specific context;
- **content**, analysing how the text generates its meaning, through information units, connotation, cohesion, coherence, and so forth;
- **presuppositions**, assessing the background knowledge required, culture-/genre-specific conventions, redundancies to omit, implicit allusions to explain, etc.;
- **text composition**, determining text rank (independent or embedded), macrostructural signals (chapters, headings, paragraphs, indentations, adverbial clauses in initial position, etc.), microstructural devices (syntactic structures, linkers, suprasegmental features), thematic progression, and genre-depending composition;
- **non-verbal elements**, viz. non-linguistic features (images, graphs, logos, drawings), suprasegmental features expressed graphically (punctuation, capitalisation, italicisation, dash, bold type, etc.), their degree of culture-boundedness and their function(s);
- **lexis**, looking into ‘extra-textual’ clues in word choice (regional, social, and temporal varieties; context- and medium-specific styles and registers), lexical indicators of sender’s attitude or ‘stylistic interests’ (e.g. rhetorical figures, wordplays, stylistic markers, etc.), subject-specific terminology;
- **sentence structure**, namely length and type of sentences (paratactic vs. hypotactic style), order of constituents, syntactic figures of speech (e.g. parallelism, chiasm, rhetorical questions, parenthesis, aposiopesis, ellipsis) and their functions, as well as whether and how to render syntactic deviations;
- and **suprasegmental features**, i.e. the “tone” of the text, such as particular word choices, word order, onomatopoeias, typographical features (e.g. italics, spacing, orthographic variations, quotation marks, underlining, punctuation), and deviations in theme-rheme structures.

After conducting the analysis of the ST at both external and internal levels, and once the translation brief has been carefully considered, the translator can proceed to the realisation of the prospective TT and decide which transfer procedures to apply. In this respect, Nord (2018: 59) recommends a top-down approach, whereby the translator compares the following dimensions:

- **intended textual functions of both ST and TT** → this comparison determines which translation method (documentary vs. instrumental, and respective subcategories) is most appropriate to meet the requirements of the brief (Nord 2005: 77-82);
- **source-text and target-text audiences** → similarities or differences regarding source and target audiences influence whether adjustments are needed in the TT to account for discrepancies in background knowledge (presuppositions), culture-specific genre conventions, and textual-stylistic expectations (*ibid.*: 57-62);
- **time of reception of both ST and TT** → temporal differences may affect deixis and other intra-textual features, such as the use of time-bound language varieties or cultural

allusions that risk appearing temporally distant to the target audience (TA), potentially creating an alienating effect not given in the ST (*ibid.*: 70-74);

- **place of reception of both ST and TT** → divergences in place can generate significant translation challenges at linguistic, sociocultural, and political levels. For instance, the cultural affiliation of the ST's sender and/or addressees may require major adaptation, or even censorship, in the TT's reception context (*ibid.*: 67-70);
- **medium of both ST and TT** → the medium also constrains translation choices. It can determine whether additional explanations of sociocultural references, deemed opaque for the TA, are possible or must be omitted in the TT (*ibid.*: 62-67);
- **the reason for production and reception of both ST and TT** → shifts in this dimension may influence transfer decisions as well as other situational and intra-textual features. The motives behind ST production and reception may not be perceived in the same way by the TA, due to, say, temporal or cultural distance (*ibid.*: 74-77). For example, a satirical work written in the 17th century, such as Quevedo's masterpiece *La Vida del Buscón*, is unlikely to be received by contemporary readers with the same intentions and expectations as those of its original audience.

2.2 Juliane House: An SFL-informed model of translation

In 1977, the German linguist and translation theorist Juliane House proposed a model for translation quality assessment (TQA), drawing on systemic-functional linguistics (SFL), pragmatics, register theory, discourse analysis, and stylistics. As House herself elucidates, this model was firmly equivalence-oriented and sought to “provide an analysis of the linguistic-discoursal as well as the situational-cultural particularities of originals and translated texts, a principled comparison of the two texts and an evaluation of their relative match” (House 2015: 21).

In its revised and most famous edition of 1997, the model became more firmly grounded in Hallidayan functional grammar (FG), with register and genre analysis of source and target texts placed at the core of its framework. Consistent with its earlier version, the 1997 model still views translation through the lens of equivalence, defined as “the replacement of a text in the source language by a semantically and pragmatically equivalent text in the target language” (House 2015: 63).

The first key aspect of House's approach is her notion of translation as “re-contextualisation”. Specifically, House (2021: 551) assumes that translation is always a “secondary communicative event”, in that it reproduces an already-occurred act of communication for audiences who cannot access the original due to linguistic constraints. Since every text encapsulates a communicative occurrence together with its situational dimensions, translation entails “the movement of text across time and space” and thus constitutes a re-contextualisation: “whenever texts move, they also shift frames and discourse world” (House 2006: 347). This notion derives from House's incorporation of Malinowski's ‘Context of Situation’ (1923) and ‘Context of Culture’ (1935), both of which are central to Hallidayan FG, on which House explicitly builds.

As Taylor (1998: 78) notes, FG rests on the premise that “[e]very communicative act (text of some kind) takes place in a situational and cultural ‘context’”. As for the situational context, Taylor (*ibid.*) observes that:

[a]ll texts are produced and received within a set of circumstances of time, place, purpose, etc. They involve various persons in various roles and are conveyed in a

particular way (spoken, written, faxed, etc.). These elements combine to form the context of situation, which determines the kind of language that will be used.

Following Miller (2005), Manfredi (2008: 52-53) characterises the Context of Culture as “the general ‘belief and value system’, or ‘cultural paradigm’, or ‘ideology’ in which [the text] functions and with which it is aligned, or not”.

These two contexts are clearly interrelated and concur to the production and reception of a text. As Butt *et al.* (2000: 3) underline, “a text always occurs in two contexts, one within the other”, meaning the text’s specific Context of Situation – viz. the immediate and specific socio-pragmatic situation in which the text is being created and/or used – and the ‘outer’ Context of Culture, wherein both the text and its socio-pragmatic situation are produced and interpreted.

In SFL, the Context of Situation is conceptualised as broken down into manageable parts or situational dimensions, i.e. Field, Tenor, and Mode, which link the text to its situation and govern the text’s composition in relation to the situation in which the text is produced. This is visually represented in Figure 2-2 below.

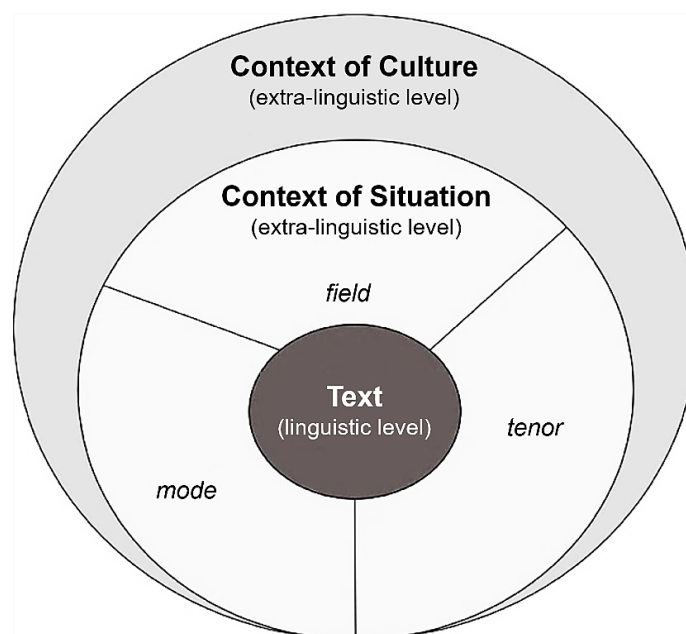


Figure 2-2 Text in Context(s) (adapted from Butt et al. 2000: 4).

From the perspective of the text, Field, Tenor, and Mode constitute the scaffolding of register, understood as the “variety of language used in a particular socio-cultural context for a particular purpose” (House 2018: 185). In Hallidayan SFL, register is seen as the configuration of semantic choices made accessible by the three situational parameters of Field, Tenor, and Mode, each of which corresponds to and realises one of the language’s “semantic metafunctions” (Manfredi 2008: 56):

- Field relates to the **ideational function**, through which language transmits and construes individual and collective experiences, realising experiential meanings;
- Tenor deals with the **interpersonal function**, whereby language expresses the speakers’ attitudes and encodes the sender-receiver relationship, thereby enacting social roles and interpersonal meanings;

- Mode pertains to the **textual function**, concerning the internal organisation of textual-linguistic resources that cohesively create discourse and connect the text to its situation, activating textual meanings.

House's understanding of register thus builds directly on this functional perspective, albeit in a slightly modified form so as to accommodate the requirements of her translation theory. In particular, in House's framework:

Field captures social activity and topic, with differentiations of degrees of generality, specificity or granularity in lexical items. *Tenor* refers to the nature of the participants and the relationship between them in terms of social power, distance and degree of emotional charge. Included here are the text producer's temporal, geographical and social provenances as well as [their] intellectual, emotional or affective stance ([their] personal viewpoint) vis-à-vis the content [they have] expressed and the communicative task in which [they have] engaged. Further, *Tenor* encapsulates social attitude, i.e., different styles such as formal, consultative or informal. *Mode* refers to both the channel – spoken or written (which can be simple or complex) – and the degree to which potential or real participation is allowed for between writer and reader (House 2006: 345, original emphasis).

In addition to register, House (1997, 2018) integrates the category of genre in her translation framework, positioning it between register and the textual function. She justifies this choice by noting that “register descriptions are basically limited to capturing individual features on the linguistic surface” and that “to characterize deeper textual structures and patterns, a different conceptualization, namely Genre, is needed as a category superordinate to register” (House 2006: 346). In House's view, genre “connects texts with the macro-context of the linguistic and cultural community in which they are embedded” (*ibidem*).

In essence, genre is understood as “a socially established category characterized in terms of the texts' communicative purpose” (Baumgarten *et al.* 2004: 89). It links language use to its broader context, specifically the Context of Culture, to which any text systematically relates. As Hatim and Mason (1990/2013: 69) underline, genres “are ‘conventional forms of texts’ which reflect the functions and goals involved in particular social occasions as well as the purposes of the participants in them”. Such conventionality is primarily culture-specific, since each cultural system shapes and prescribes its own genre conventions, recognised and held by its members (*ibid.*: 56).

As House (2006: 346) concludes, the combined analysis of register and genre allows for the identification of the **individual textual function** – in a bottom-up fashion – and provides the basis for deciding whether or not to preserve it when ‘re-contextualising’ the original text for the target-language audience.

It is important to note, however, that House's notion of textual function should not be conflated with language function. Rather, it comprises “an ideational and an interpersonal functional component” and is “defined pragmatically as the application of the text in a particular context of situation” (House 2021: 552). In order to identify a text's individual function, House (*ibidem*) maintains that:

[t]he linguistic correlates of the situational dimensions are the means with which the textual function is realized, and the textual function is the result of a linguistic-pragmatic analysis along the dimensions with each dimension contributing to the two functional components, the ideational and the interpersonal. Opening up the

text with these dimensions yields a specific textual profile that characterizes its function, which is then taken as the individual textual norm against which the translated text can be measured.

In her latest 2018 edition (shown in Figure 2-3 below), House's TQA model is supplemented with the category of Corpus Studies, absent in earlier versions. As House (2018: 96-97) explains, "Corpus studies provide the evaluator with information about whether and how far features of a single text are in line with the norms and conventions of the Genre in the target culture". Another notable revision in this edition concerns Participation, which has been removed from Mode and integrated into Tenor.

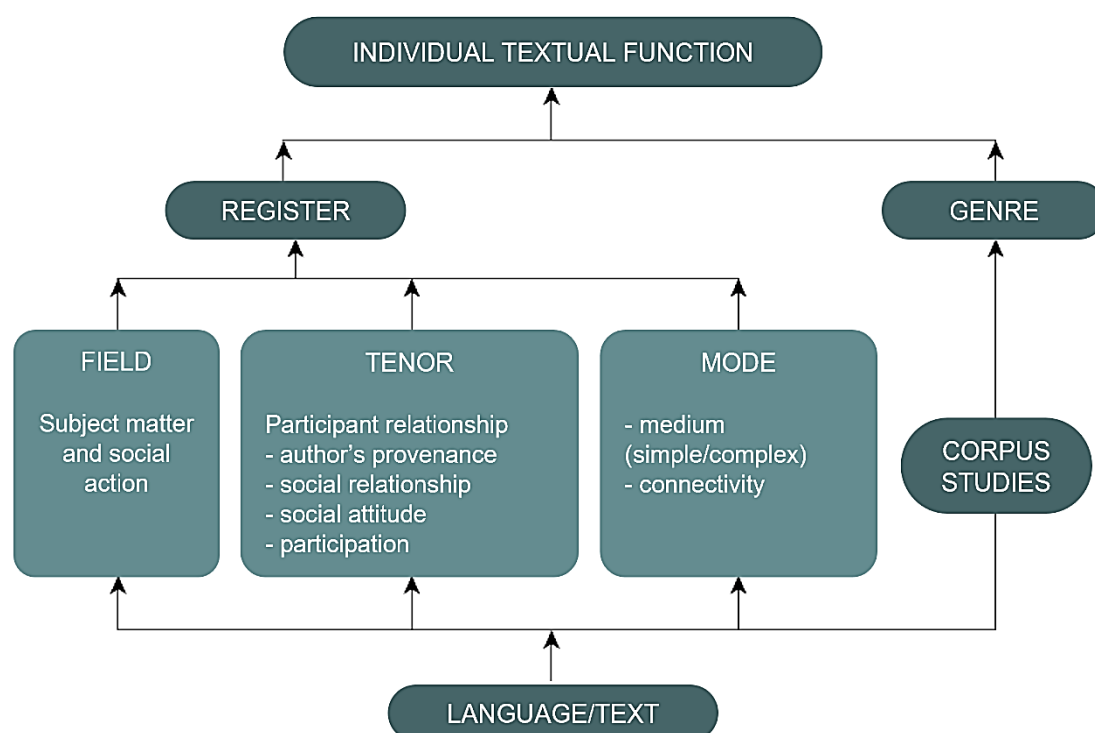


Figure 2-3 An SFL-informed TQA model (adapted from House 2018: 97).

2.2.1 Overt and covert translation

Similarly to Nord, House's translation framework allows for two contrasting translation options, or 're-contextualisation' strategies: overt and covert translation.

An **overt** translation is a 'TT' that presents itself to be a translation. It is not addressed directly to the TA, either because the ST is strongly bound to its original culture, time, and historical context, or because it is a "timeless" text of "general human interest" (e.g. a political speech, a creative work of art, a religious sermon, etc.) (House 2006: 347). Overt translations cannot achieve equivalence at the level of the individual textual function, but only at the level of language, register, and genre, thereby achieving what House (*ibid.*: 348) terms "second-level functional equivalence". In this way, the TT allows the TA to "observe" the original text "from outside" (House 2015: 55, 67).

The main challenge with overt translation concerns the rendering of some features related to Tenor, such as temporal, social, and geographic affiliations that mark in-text language patterns and varieties. In these cases, the difficulty, as House (2018: 91) notes,

lies in the scarcity of suitable “sociolinguistic equivalents”, as with dialects, and whether the chosen forms are adequate or not remains a matter of subjective evaluation.

Conversely, a **covert** translation functions as a text in its own right and reads as a “second original” within the target community. It is addressed directly to the TA because the ST is not particularly tied to its original culture, time, and historical context; therefore, the audiences of the ST and its covert translation have “comparable” or “equivalent needs” (as is the case of touristic texts, computer manuals, scientific texts, economic and journalistic texts, etc.) (House 2006: 347-348). In greater detail, a covert translation “operates in the context, frame and discourse world provided by the target culture, with no attempt being made to co-activate the discourse world in which the original unfolded” (*ibid.*: 348). Therefore, the individual textual function can be preserved in equivalence with that of the ST. The translator’s task is thus to recreate an “equivalent speech event” for the TA, manipulating the ST at the levels of language and register while retaining both genre and the individual textual function (House 2015: 67; 2018: 91).

Clearly, these two translation options imply different roles for the translator. In overt translation, the translator’s presence is visible, and the task is to ensure that the TT enables the TA to gain knowledge of the ST. In covert translation, by contrast, the translator becomes a “betrayeur” of the original text: their task is to remain unseen while altering the ST, so that the TA perceives the TT as an “original” (House 2015: 67). A key tool that facilitates the creation of a “second original”, and thus a covert translation, is cultural filtering.

2.2.2 The cultural filter

The cultural filter constitutes a tool designed to reduce the cultural distance between the ST and the TT, when necessary, by intervening on the ST’s cultural elements so as to meet the needs of the TL audience while maintaining equivalence of textual function in the TT. Put simply, cultural filtering serves to create the impression of an “original”, thereby obtaining a covert translation (House 2015: 56-57). However, House cautions that this tool has limitations and potential consequences. Indeed, when cultural filtering is applied without objective justification, it can result into a “version” instead of a translation (*ibid.*: 57).

In this context, House distinguishes between two types of versions: covert and overt versions. A covert version obtains when the translator makes unmotivated changes to the situational dimensions in order to preserve the textual function, producing significant and unjustified ST-TT mismatches. In short, “[a] covert version is by definition an inadequate translation because the application of the cultural filter is unjustified” (*ibid.*: 59). Similarly, an overt version originates when the translator adds an extra purpose to an overt translation or makes changes such as simplifications, omissions, and additions to address the TT to a different audience (e.g. adapting an adult book for children or adolescents) (*ibidem*).

3. Documentaries, audiovisual translation, culture-specific references, and localization

3.1 Documentaries and factual genres

According to Bordwell *et al.* (2017: 350), genres and our sense of them play a pivotal role in shaping our mind. Indeed, based on our understanding of genre(s), we are accustomed to forming expectations about a given audiovisual product (e.g. a movie, a TV series, a TV show, a programme, etc.) in terms of content, mood, narration style, focus, and the like. In this respect, one of the primary genre-related distinctions we commonly make is between factual and non-factual products. The term ‘factual’, as Hill (2007: 3) notes, generally refers to “non-fiction programmes that make truth claims and are based on facts”, whose content “is perceived as authentic and true to life”. Such products typically transmit knowledge of the world, which audiences ultimately evaluate in terms of objectivity and impartiality (*ibidem*).

More specifically, Franco *et al.* (2010: 25) emphasise that factual products rely on two kinds of evidence in presenting world facts:

[f]irstly, they display visual evidence, the strongest argument of all, through images of events, people, documents, archival footage, anything that is able to convince the viewers visually. Secondly, they display verbal evidence through interviews with generally two types of respondents, experts on the subject being focused on (the voices of expertise) and/or testimonies of the subject being focused on (the voices of experience), or the ordinary people who have been confronted with some kind of experience related to the subject matter.

The factual domain can be conceived as a macro-genre, that is, a container of related subgenres such as documentaries, news programmes, talk shows, political debates, current affairs and investigations, popular factual, and so forth (Hill 2007: 43). However, Hill clarifies that factual categories are often fluid and porous and can merge with one another or even with fiction genres, creating new hybridised factual formats that “sit at the margins of factuality”, such as reality gameshows, emphasising spectacle, emotion and personality, thereby redefining the ‘aesthetic of the real’ (*ibid.*: 213-214).

Zooming in on documentaries, Nichols (2010: 6) cites Grierson’s conception of this subgenre as “the creative treatment of actuality”, before moving on to articulate a tentative, general definition of his own (*ibid.*: 142):

a form of cinema that speaks to us about actual situations and events. It involves real people (social actors) who present themselves to us in stories that convey a plausible proposal about or perspective on the lives, situations, and events portrayed. The distinct point of view of the filmmaker shapes this story into a proposal or perspective on the historical world directly, adhering to known facts, rather than creating a fictional allegory.

As Nichols (2010: 13) argues, documentaries represent – rather than emulate – the world we live in, offering “a particular view of the world, one we may never have encountered before even if the factual aspects of this world are familiar to us”. This representational power is achieved through distinct filmic techniques and modes of engagement that

capture audiences and narrate fact-based stories, often crossing the borders of facts and fiction (Winston 1995; Nichols 2010) to incorporate – one might say – an additional layer of mystery and ambiguity that enhances appeal and sensational impact.⁶

Like other filmic products, documentaries can be of different types, such as general, specialist, observational, investigative, and international (or authored).⁷ With regard to their typical conventions, Nichols (2010: 21) identifies the following characteristics:

the use of a voice-of-God commentary, interviews, location sound recording, cutaways from a given scene to provide images that illustrate or complicate stated points, and a reliance on social actors, or people, who present themselves in their everyday roles and activities.

To these, Nichols (2010: 21) adds an additional characteristic: an investigative mode of narration that follows a ‘problem-solving’ formula. In particular, the film introduces a specific issue, then pursues it through detailed examination, and concludes with a solution or recommendations that audiences are encouraged to adopt as their own.

3.2 Audiovisual translation

Also known as ‘screen translation’, audiovisual translation (AVT) refers to “the practices, processes and products that are involved in or result from the transfer of multimodal and multimedial content across languages and/or cultures” (Pérez-González 2020: 30). Its distinctive feature lies in the multi-semiotic nature of audiovisual texts, which poses challenges not typically encountered in written translation. In particular, as noted by Delabastita (1989: 196), “film establishes a multi-channel and multi-code type of communication”.

In Zabalbeascoa’s (2008: 23) approach, audiovisual texts are seen as prototypically composed of two main categories of signs, namely verbal and non-verbal, conveyed through two communication channels, viz. audio and video, yielding four principal constituents:

- the audio-verbal (words heard),
- the audio-nonverbal (music, special effects, etc.),
- the visual-verbal (words read),
- the visual-nonverbal (images, photography, etc.).

It is worth emphasising that AVT is also labelled ‘constrained translation’ (Titford 1982; Mayoral *et al.* 1988) or ‘subordinated translation’ (Hurtado-Albir 2016: 77). These labels reflect the fact that audiovisual translators are typically required to transpose the source verbal items while leaving the visual-nonverbal components intact. At the same time, translators must ensure that the translated verbal material remains consistent with the on-screen action. Indeed, when significant intercultural discrepancies arise, “most of the time solutions are restricted to manipulations on the verbal plane alone” (Zabalbeascoa 2008: 33). Regarding the transfer methods currently employed in AVT, Pérez-González (2014:

⁶ My claim here is grounded in Nichols’ (2010: 142) observation that documentaries frequently challenge standard definitions and blur the boundaries between fiction and documentary, in order to satisfy not only the audience’s “tell-me-the-truth” expectation but also their desire to be entertained.

⁷ For a detailed description, consult Hill (2007) and Nichols (2010).

11) identifies three main modalities: revoicing, subtitling, and assistive forms of AVT for sensory-impaired audiences (e.g. subtitles for the deaf and/or hard of hearing, and audio description for the blind). For the purpose of the present study, we shall focus exclusively on revoicing – specifically, dubbing and voice-over – and subtitling in the following sections.

3.2.1 Revoicing

3.2.1.1 Dubbing

The term ‘dubbing’ relates to the act and outcome of voice-track replacement in an audiovisual text, in which the original voices of actors are substituted with those of other performers (i.e. dubbers) in a different language. More specifically, building on Cary (1960), Ranzato (2016: 43) notes that:

dubbing is a form of “total translation”, as it requires the translator to take into account not only the semantic and pragmatic aspects of the dialogue and the gestures but also the phonological dimension – intonation, word length and prosody – so that technical lip synchronisation can be attained in a way that conveys the right illusion to the target viewers.

This voice replacement can be carried out in a variety of ways, according to three main synchronisation criteria (Ranzato 2016: 44):

- **‘isochrony’**, which involves matching the length of the target-language utterances with that of the source language;
- **‘phonetic’** or **‘lip synchrony’**, requiring that TL utterances be adjusted to align with the visible mouth movements of on-screen characters;
- **‘kinesic synchrony’**, which entails the adherence to actors’ visible body movements, gestures, and facial expressions.

These synchronisation criteria are of paramount importance, as the implementation of one or more of them determines the **adaptation** procedure, viz. an essential and delicate phase that follows the translation of the screenplay and precedes the dubbing process. In this regard, Hurtado-Albir (2016: 79) emphasises the centrality of adaptation, describing it as “the visual and temporal adjustment of the translated text to the mouth openings, gestures and duration of on-screen actors’ utterances”.^{8 9}

As a rule of thumb, “dubbing creates the illusion that people on screen speak the same language as the viewer’s by hiding the translation act” (Díaz-Cintas & Orero 2010: 442), thereby producing a ‘covert’ translation (in House’s terms), in which the audio-verbal must not conflict with the visual. To achieve this “illusory” effect, the dialogue adapter and other professionals working on the T**T* reshape the translated script so that, upon dubbing, the TL utterances satisfy both the isochrony and the lip-synchronisation requirements, alongside other non-technical considerations.

⁸ My translation from Spanish.

⁹ For a more comprehensive account of adaptation in AVT, see Fois (2012).

3.2.1.2 Voice-over

In the practice of AVT, not all text types demand the “illusory” effect characteristic of dubbing. Many texts, such as those pertaining to the factual realm (see § 3.1), are more likely to call for a transfer method that serves a ‘metatextual’ function, making the TA aware of watching and hearing a translated product. In these cases, the revoicing method typically employed is voice-over, also referred to as “half-dubbing” (Gambier 2003: 173).

As observed by Franco *et al.* (2010), the term ‘voice-over’ has acquired a range of significations across various disciplines. Here, we adopt the designation used in the realm of AVT Studies, wherein voice-over is understood as a transfer method in which “the translating voice is heard on top of the translated voice” (*ibid.*: 18-19).

Technically, the peculiarity of voice-over lies in the fact that it does not fully replace the SL voices with TL ones but rather realises a “partial covering” of the former; hence the term ‘half-dubbing’. As Pérez-González explains, in voice-over:

the original and translated soundtracks *co-exist* and *overlap*. Typically, only the original voice track is audible at the beginning. A few seconds into the programme, however, the volume of the source dialogue or narration is lowered, while the translated voice track becomes acoustically salient until the end. As the original sound remains vaguely audible throughout, this method of pre-recorded revoicing is widely considered to enhance the realism of voiced-over programmes (Pérez-González 2014: 19-20, emphasis added).

The resulting TT not only permits but also compels viewers to perceive the ST, making it evident that the communicative event portrayed on screen originally occurred in another language and for a distinct audience. In this respect, Díaz-Cintas and Orero (2010: 442) argue that “voiceover is an inescapable reminder of the presence of the Other and the need for translation, making it, as well as subtitling, examples of so-called overt translation”. Drawing on Nord’s (2018) translation paradigm, one might venture to add that voice-over constitutes a form of documentary translation, conveying an ‘offer of information’ in the TL for the TA while the original ‘offer of information’ in the SL, intended for the source audience (SA), is still present.

Non-fiction, or ‘factual’, products, such as those presenting the words of experts or testimonies via interviews and archival footage, provide a particularly suitable environment for voice-over, which, like subtitling, “contribute[s] to the appeals of reality, truth and authenticity that factual programmes count on in order to prove that their arguments are right or believable” (Franco *et al.* 2010: 25).

3.2.2 Subtitling

Subtitles, or ‘captions’, are commonly considered the evolution of intertitles¹⁰. Borrowing the words of Pérez-González (2014: 15), we can define subtitles as “snippets of written text superimposed on visual footage that convey a target language version of the source speech” – and often also visual-verbal content, we would add – “delivered in synchrony with the corresponding fragment of spoken language” – or, we argue, the original onscreen script (e.g. a short message, a road sign, the sign of a coffee bar or restaurant,

¹⁰ In the silent film era, speech was conveyed through intertitles, that is, written texts inserted between film shots. Their functions were to narrate the unfolding events, provide contextual information such as dates, locations, and the like, and convey the spoken dialogue in written form (Kapsaskis 2020: 554).

etc.). Díaz-Cintas (2010: 344) underscores that, because of its overt coexistence with the ST,

[s]ubtitling can be seen as a supplement to the original programme, which, unlike in dubbing, remains intact in the target culture for all to watch and to hear. All subtitled programmes are therefore made up of three main components: the original spoken/written word, the original image and the added subtitles.

From a semiotic perspective, Gottlieb (1997, 2004) acknowledges subtitling as a ‘diasemiotic’ or ‘intermodal’ AVT mode, owing to the diamesic variation involved in the process, i.e. the shift from the oral to the written medium or, in Zabalbeascoa’s (2008: 23) terms, from the audio-verbal to the visual-verbal code.

In greater detail, according to Gottlieb (2004), the rendering of verbal messages in another language in audiovisual products can be performed through two main typologies of interlingual transfer: ‘isosemiotic’ and ‘diasemiotic’ translation. The former involves the use of “the same semiotic channel – i.e. channel of expression – as the original, and thus renders speech as speech and writing as writing” (*ibid.*: 219), which can be said to occur in dubbing and voice-over. The second typology, viz. diasemiotic translation, “crosses over from writing to speech, or [...] – as in the case of subtitling – from speech to writing” (*ibid.*: 219-220). The scholar observes that the second transfer typology is ‘diagonal’ and explains that “subtitling – the only type of diasemiotic translation found in the mass media – ‘jaywalks’ from source-language speech to target-language writing” (*ibid.*: 220), thus realising a diasemiotic variation. This notion is visually represented in Figure 3-1 below.

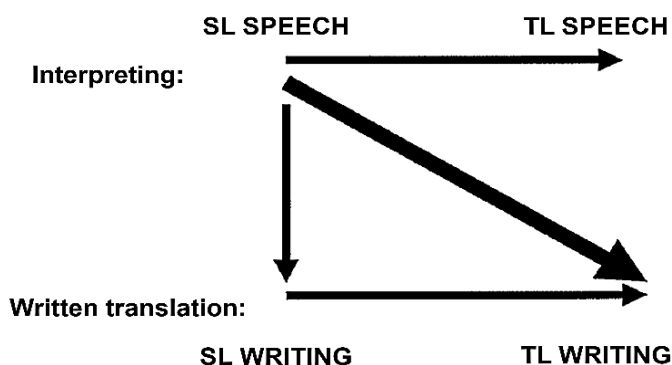


Figure 3-1 Subtitling as diasemiotic translation (adapted from Gottlieb 2004: 220).

There are a few distinctions to make when it comes to subtitles. Díaz-Cintas (2010: 346-347) highlights technical and linguistic criteria. From a technical standpoint, we distinguish between ‘open’ and ‘closed’ subtitles, based on the possibility of tuning on or off the captions to the viewer’s preference, which is only possible with closed subtitles. From a linguistic perspective, we distinguish between ‘interlingual’ and ‘intralingual’ captions.

It is interesting to note that, drawing on Jakobson’s (1959) triadic model of translation, interlingual subtitles qualify as both *inter*- and *intra*-lingual translation (as well as intersemiotic, given the implicit diamesic variation typically involved in subtitling). This is because, besides the interlinguistic rendering, subtitling – like dubbing – requires an **adaptation** stage in which the subtitler operates textual adjustments to meet time and

space constraints, yielding a condensed and streamlined TL rendition of the SL speech (De Linde & Kay 1999; Pérez-González 2014).

Beyond technical constraints, linguistic challenges also play a major role in subtitling. As Gottlieb (1998/2001: 247) points out, “the speech act is always in focus”, meaning that “intentions and effects are more important than isolated lexical elements”. Therefore, subtitlers must privilege the essence of utterances, instead of aiming for equivalence, making frequent use of strategies of ‘Condensation’ and ‘Reduction’, that are typically employed in captioning (Díaz-Cintas 2010: 346). Another persistent challenge is that of linguistic variation. Audiovisual texts often present geographical and sociolinguistic features, alongside non-standard speech patterns, accents, colloquial traits, and register variation (De Meo 2019). In most cases, the strategy of ‘Standardisation’ is the go-to, thus neutralising linguistic variation in subtitles (Díaz-Cintas 2010: 346).

3.3 Culture-specific references

Like other products of human activity, texts are generally imbued with cultural allusions, that is, elements endemic to or evocative of specific cultures. The academic literature addresses such elements under various labels, such as ‘*realia*’, ‘culture-specific items/references’, ‘culture-bound items/references’, ‘cultural allusions/connotations’, and so forth (Ranzato 2016: 53). More specifically, cultural elements are generally studied in relation to the concepts of ‘cultural specificity’ and ‘cultural embeddedness’, which concern the asymmetry in notions and world/life experiences across distinct cultural and linguistic communities. As Djachy and Pareshishvili (2014: 8) argue,

the system of linguistic meanings, in any language, represents the outer as well as inner world of a person, i.e. encompasses practical experience of a group of people speaking the same particular language. If the practical experience of groups of people speaking different languages is the same, so are the notions expressed in these languages.

By ‘notions’, Djachy and Pareshishvili (*ibid.*) intend the background information, such as “specific historic facts and information about the state structure, the peculiarities of the geographic environment, concepts of ethnography and folklore”, which are verbally conveyed through *realia*, that is, words and expressions designating the material culture of a given country or community. Interpreting both the referent and the meaning(s) of such culture-related terms requires familiarity with the relevant cultural frame of reference; otherwise, cultural opacity or distance arises between the culture-specific item at issue and the observer from another cultural environment. In this regard, Ranzato (2016: 58) observes that “[t]he fruition of cultural elements is based on shared experiences”, and when the bits of a cultural world are not communal or qualify as ‘opaque’ from the target perspective, major difficulties are likely to emerge in translation.

Within Translation (and AVT) Studies, many scholars have devoted attention to this issue. Amongst them, Chiaro (2009: 156) proposes the term ‘Culture-Specific References’ (CSRs) – which this book adopts – to denote

[those] entities that are typical of one particular culture, and that culture alone, and [that] can be either exclusively or predominantly visual (an image of a local or national figure, a local dance, pet funerals, baby showers), exclusively verbal or else both visual and verbal in nature.

However, commenting on Chiaro's view, Ranzato (2016: 58) rejects the claim of 'cultural exclusivity', noting that "on many occasions cultural elements may belong to more than one culture". Instead, she emphasises the 'cultural embeddedness' of texts, particularly audiovisual ones, drawing on Pym's (2010: 107-131) notion of 'textual belonging'. In greater detail, she contends that:

films are the product of a specific context, and this is evident not only in the verbal language used but also in the components that make part of the image: geographic place, historical period, dress code, non-verbal signs of communication, cinematographic conventions, editing, formal qualities, and so on. Thus the concept of *belonging* refers to a complex network of relations which links the original film to its context of production. This raises the issue of cultural specificity and of its transfer into another sociocultural universe (Ranzato 2016: 58, emphasis added).

On this basis, Ranzato (*ibidem*) concludes that "[t]he task of the translator is then to loosen the 'bonds of belonging' of a text to its original culture and to find strategies to embed it in the TC [target-culture]", thereby facilitating – we would add – the target audience's access to and engagement with the text and the layers of cultural meanings it conveys.

3.4 Localization

Localization is a relatively recent phenomenon, emerging in the late 20th century, when the world was rapidly transforming into an increasingly globalised and internationalised marketplace. In this context, translation came to be seen as a 'market reality', no longer conceived in a 'one-to-one-language' mode but in a 'one-to-many-languages' fashion, responding to the need to render texts and products simultaneously for multiple markets (Pym 2014: 117).

On a theoretical level, however, the understanding of localization presents divergent perspectives, as researchers have approached the concept in different ways, emphasising distinct aspects. On the one hand, localization is broadly characterised as:

the linguistic and cultural adaptation of a product (product is widely understood as any type of product, i.e. a book, a film, a website, software, etc.) to a particular country, region and language" (Maumevičienė 2012: 109).

On the other hand, localization is viewed more narrowly as the translation and adaptation of instruction manuals and digital content to a specific 'locale', defined as "a set of linguistic, economic, and cultural parameters for the end-use of the product" (Pym 2014: 117).

From a linguistic standpoint, Maumevičienė (2012: 113) notes that localization is far from a recent phenomenon, as it involves adjusting a text or a product for a specific linguaculture. This can be said to mirror Schleiermacher's (1813/2004) translation principle of 'moving the writer to the reader', which in localization becomes 'moving the *product* to the *end user*'. Similarly, localization aligns with Venuti's (2008) 'domestication' strategy, whereas in O'Hagan and Ashworth's (2002) terms, we may speak of 'culturalisation'. The 'skopos' paradigm also supports the rationale of localization, as adapting a product to the target culture seemingly adheres to the 'skopos rule' (cf. Nord 2018). In the same vein, localization can be compared to House's (2018) concept of 'cultural filtering'.

From a more technical standpoint, localization involves multiple stages and functions as a collaborative process in which translation intersects with other disciplines, such as product design, engineering, marketing, telecommunication, and computer science (Jiménez-Crespo 2020). A key component of localization is ‘internationalization’, which Pym (2014: 117) defines as “the preparation of material so that it can be translated quickly and simultaneously into many languages”. This process entails taking the item to be localized and neutralising culture- and language-specific features, such as date formats, time conventions, hotkeys, numbers, currencies, punctuation conventions, colours, measurement units, paper sizes, and the relevant legal, fiscal, safety, and environmental standards (Pym 2014: 118-119). The objective is “generalizing [the] product so that it can handle multiple languages and cultural conventions without the need for re-design” (*ibid.*: 119-120). Only after this ‘internationalised’ version is prepared can the product be localized effectively.

By way of illustration, Maumevičienė (2012: 117-118) cites the translation of English books for the USSR:

[a]ny book that was translated from English into Russian, Lithuanian or any other language of the Soviet Union countries had to be prepared in such a way that the translations could be handled in multiple languages and cultural norms, without any manifestations of free will, independence or freedom. Negative remarks about communism were not allowed, and collectivism had to be glorified against dark and wild capitalism. Thus, before translation, books were read and adapted by the deletion of certain places or the provision of some explanations.

Similarly, audiovisual texts constitute a fertile ground for localization. As Maumevičienė (2012: 118) observes, “films are also released into many languages at the same time”, following a ‘one-to-many’ localizing paradigm: indeed, they often endure internationalisation-like processes during production, followed by target-oriented adaptations in dubbing and subtitling.

3.4.1 Localization in food-themed texts

The rationale of localization also appears in the translation of culinary and food-related texts, where it often functions as a translation strategy. In a personal conversation with Antonia Mattiello¹¹ (October 2021), it emerged that texts centred on food and beverages (e.g. recipe books, cooking manuals, leaflets for kitchen tools, cocktails guides, etc.) or containing food references within broader discourses (e.g. travel guides and even literary works) frequently require the translator’s intervention to adapt them to a specific locale. This process, which many Italian translators and publishing professionals commonly refer to as ‘localization’, may result in subtle or significant changes.

In practice, localizing cultural elements in food-centred texts – such as an ingredient unavailable in the target locale, or one lacking a clear target-language or target-culture equivalent, or even an edible that is tabooed in the recipient culture – implies adapting such elements to the culinary standards, preferences, and availability of the target locale. Such adaptation might involve replacing the edible at issue with one accessible in the

¹¹ Antonia Mattiello is an Italian translator, editor, and food writer, and is one of the authors of *Vegano Gourmand* (www.veganogourmand.it), that is, an online and printed container of recipes and articles devoted to plant-based cuisine.

target culture, chosen either for similar organoleptic characteristics or for its alignment with local tastes and preferences. Moreover, food-related texts often include technical information, such as temperature scales (Celsius vs. Fahrenheit) and measurement systems (by volume, density, weight, etc.), which need to be adjusted to the conventions of the recipient locale (Kerseboom 2010: 35-37).

The most challenging aspect of food translation generally lies in rendering ingredients that are endemic to specific places and cultures and that are difficult to source elsewhere. In this respect, recipes can be regarded as prime examples of food-related texts in which ‘Substitution’ of ingredients is required more often than ‘Conservation’ (*ibid.*: 33), losing the cultural connotation in favour of target-oriented “equivalence”, as long as – one must clarify – the purpose of the TT is to ensure the replicability of the recipe for the TA.

Nonetheless, finding equivalents for culture- or region-specific ingredients is no mean feat. Substitutions are relatively subjective and demand considerable culinary expertise, not to mention the fact that by altering recipes the translator risks jeopardising the final result as well as the author’s creative authority and originality.

In a dialogue with Lucia Corradini¹² (February 2021) it emerged that localization is often the “go-to” strategy when translating culture-specific food, although always in line with the purpose and readership of the TT. Taking the example of dairy, and specifically heavy cream,¹³ Corradini commented that a translator has two main options: (a) non-localization, by retaining the source-culture item in the TT as it is in the ST; or (b) localization, either by (b₁) replacing it with a comparable product available in the target locale or (b₂) proposing a method to obtain a substitute.

To have a clearer picture of Corradini’s indications, let us illustrate how such procedures may operate, taking heavy cream as the element to be translated in a recipe from English into Italian.

By applying option (a), involving the retention of the SC item in the TT as it appears in the ST, the resulting strategy would correspond to Malone’s (1988) ‘Carry-over Matching’ or Vinay and Darbelnet’s (1958/1995) ‘Borrowing’, both consisting in transferring the SL term into the TT. Accordingly, the English-language ‘heavy cream’ would simply remain ‘heavy cream’ in Italian. This option does not involve localization, as the SC item is not adapted to the Italian locale but carried over unchanged, thereby creating a ‘foreignizing’ effect that ‘sends’ the TL reader ‘abroad’ (cf. Venuti 2008: 15-16).

Localization through option (b₁), as noted above, would involve substitution with a similar product available in the target local. In the case of heavy cream, a good localization in Italian would be *panna fresca al 40% di grassi* [= fresh cream with 40% fat] or *panna fresca da montare* [= fresh cream for whipping]. This choice stems from the fact that heavy cream essentially corresponds to a fattier version (around 40% fat) of regular cream, which in Italy is commonly known as *panna fresca*. The latter usually contains around 35% fat, making it both versatile and suitable for whipping. Other main cream varieties available in Italy include *panna da cucina* [= cooking cream] and *panna da montare* [= whipping cream], which generally contain lower fat percentages (approximately 20-23% and 30-31%, respectively). Therefore, *panna fresca* represents the cream product most

¹² Lucia Corradini is a prolific Italian translator, specialised, among other areas, in translating food-centric texts into Italian for various Italian publishing houses, including Corbaccio, L’ippocampo, and Biblioteca Culinaria.

¹³ Heavy cream is not present in Italy’s culinary tradition and thus lacks an official Italian-language translation.

closely resembling English-language ‘heavy cream’ that Italian consumers can readily source domestically.¹⁴

The other localization pathway, relating to option (b₂), would imply recreating heavy cream with products available within the Italian locale, suggesting a preparation method that can be easily followed. For instance, by mixing whole milk (3,6% fat circa) with melted butter (80% fat circa), in a 2:1 ratio,¹⁵ or by adding some mascarpone cheese (70% fat circa) to *panna fresca* (35% fat circa), Italian people can produce their own, home-made version of heavy cream. From a translational perspective, the English → Italian interlingual transfer of ‘heavy cream’ may employ either Malone’s (1988) ‘Carry-over matching’ or ‘Equation’, both of which are then supplemented with an explanatory note (‘Amplification’, in Malone’s (1988) framework) that may indicate what heavy cream is and how to obtain it. For instance, the Italian rendition may be: (1) *heavy cream, una tipologia di panna più grassa che si può ottenere aggiungendo del mascarpone alla panna fresca* [= heavy cream, a cream variety that is fattier than regular cream, that can be obtained by adding and mixing some mascarpone to regular cream]; or (2) *panna ad alta percentuale di grassi, che si può ottenere aggiungendo del mascarpone alla panna fresca* [= highly fat cream, that can be obtained by adding some mascarpone to fresh cream].

While the first solution (option ‘a’) involves non-localization and proves to be more suitable for a knowledgeable Italian readership who is already familiar with heavy cream, the other solutions (options ‘b₁’ and ‘b₂’) seek to locate the ‘T’ within the cultural frame of the ‘TA’, sacrificing – or making less obvious, depending on the rendition realised – the cultural connotation of the foreign ingredient at issue. However, if the translation aims primarily to inform rather than to instruct, i.e. the text yields insight into the source culture’s culinary tradition and serves as an ‘offer of information’ about a typical dish as well as the culture within which the dish is embedded (as in travel guides), the cultural connotation must be retained through the use of translation strategies deemed appropriate.

Localization can also involve omitting unnecessary cultural allusions. Mattiello, for instance, pointed to expressions such as ‘Greek feta cheese’, ‘Italian eggplant’, and ‘flat-leaf Italian parsley’. She explained that, unless the text clearly requires geographical precision (e.g. feta cheese from Greece only or aubergines strictly produced in Italy), such national/cultural markers may be omitted, since they risk conveying unintended patriotic overtones. Furthermore, in Italian usage, parsley – simply known as *prezzemolo* in Italy – does not require any specification about its leaves, highlighting how over-specification can distort cultural nuance. At any rate, Mattiello concluded, the text’s communicative intentions and the ‘TA’ dictate whether to keep the cultural allusion or not.

Ultimately, the use and understanding of localization as a translation strategy in the realm of food translation remains a thorny issue, partly due to the lack of dedicated research. Therefore, more systematic research needs to be undertaken on this topic, in order to clarify how localization can be theorised and operationalised as a micro-level translation strategy in this domain.

¹⁴ Fat percentages in cream products sold in Italy may vary depending on the brand. The percentages reported here are based on the cream products manufactured and marketed by Parmalat, available at: <https://www.parmalat.it/magazine/dieta-sana/il-tuo-aiuto-in-cucina/la-panna-contiene-grassi-saturi> (last access 27/05/2026).

¹⁵ The method involving whole milk and melted butter to make heavy cream is drawn from here: <https://www.donnad.it/in-cucina/intorno-ai-fornelli/cosa-mangi/cos-e-la-heavy-cream-e-come-sostituirla> (last access 27/05/2026).

In the following chapter, we introduce and apply our experimental model of localization strategies, empirically designed for use in food translation. Conceived as a systematic framework for localization in food-themed contexts, the proposed model tentatively organises localization into a set of micro-level translation strategies.

4. A functionalist translational analysis of *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat*

4.1 Material and context

Our translational analysis focuses on the American food-themed docuseries *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat* (hereafter *SFAH*), released in 2018 and available on the streaming platform Netflix in nearly 200 countries since its release. Its Italian adaptation, considered in this study as the TT, has been localized with the title *Sale, Grassi, Acidi, Calore*.

Produced by Jigsaw Productions, an American company of award-winning documentary filmmakers, the show consists of four instalments centred on a transcontinental, cuisine-focused journey undertaken by the US-based chef Samin Nosrat. The journey takes her through Italy (episode 1), Japan (episode 2), Mexico (episode 3), and finally back to California (episode 4). Each instalment is devoted to, and named after, one of the four titular cooking-related elements on which the show is structured, with the primary objective of highlighting their use in ingredients and culinary practices endemic to the cultures and traditions of the distinct geographies explored. In particular,

- **episode 1**, titled “Fat”, explores the role of important fats in northern-central Italian foods and recipes, including olive oil, Genovese *pesto* and *focaccia*, *Parmigiano Reggiano*, *ragù*, and typical cured meats;
- **episode 2**, titled “Salt”, looks at different forms and uses of salt in traditional Japanese culinary staples, such as *Moshiro* salt, soy sauce, *miso*, *dashi*, and *tai meshi*;
- **episode 3**, titled “Acid”, delves into the cooking tradition of Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico, specifically the use of different acidic foods, such as *naranja agria*, in typical local dishes, including *pavo en escabeche*, *salsa*, and *tacos*, as well as acidic honey types;
- **episode 4**, titled “Heat” and set in Berkley, California, discusses the importance of heat in distinct cooking methods and recipes, including the Iranian *tabdig*.

As for its audience, the docuseries appears to be aimed at a broad public of culinarians and food enthusiasts of all levels, but also travel aficionados, with arguably no age restrictions or gender-specific biases. This aligns with its explicitly stated purpose of introducing viewers to the four cardinal elements of good cuisine.

It is worth noting that, before the documentary aired on Netflix, Nosrat was already relatively well known to the American public, or at least to American cooking devotees, both because she had published her acclaimed cookbook *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat: Mastering the Elements of Good Cooking* in 2017,¹⁶ which served as the direct inspiration for the documentary, and because of her monthly column in *The New York Times Magazine*.

Moreover, as Nosrat explains in an online article by Hannah Giorgis for *The Atlantic*,¹⁷ the show was intended to convey more than one central message. First, it promotes a “cooking philosophy” that goes beyond the encyclopaedic culinary knowledge, framing food and recipes as bridges that connect people across backgrounds,

¹⁶ The book *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat: Mastering the Elements of Good Cooking* (2017) by Samin Nosrat is a best-seller and multiple award winner. It was also published in Italian in 2019 with the title *Sale, grassi, acidi, calore: I quattro elementi della buona cucina*, translated by Maria Silvia La Luce for Guido Tommasi Editore.

¹⁷ Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2018/10/samin-nosrat-salt-fat-acid-heat-netflix/572731/> (last access 29/05/2022).

imbued with individual stories, identities, and memories. Second, it advances the idea that good cooking is universal to all cultures and geographies and can be distilled into four key elements to be playfully combined into culinary masterpieces. Third, it rests on the conviction that good cooking is accessible for everyone, provided that there is sufficient guidance, willingness, inspiration, and knowledge. These three assumptions constitute a conceptual and practical foundation for the series, which simultaneously functions as a multimodal “how-to” guide for home cooks and an uplifting travelogue for cultural and travel enthusiasts.

Additionally, Giorgis points out that the documentary offered Nosrat the opportunity to reach a far wider audience than she had previously attained through other media, such as cooking classes and even her recently published, award-winning cookbook. Indeed, Netflix’s *SFAH* has been distributed across nearly 200 nations, targeting both Anglophone as well as non-English-speaking audiences. To this end, the show underwent interlingual translation and adaptation in the form of dubbing and subtitling for various locales, including Italy, France, Spain, Germany, Latin America, and Canada, among others.

4.2 Research aims and questions

The rationale for selecting Netflix’s *SFAH* as the object of a qualitative translational analysis in this case study lies in its nature as a multilingual audiovisual text wherein food is foregrounded and celebrated not only as a cultural identifier and a vehicle of personal and collective memories, identities, traditions, beliefs, and meanings, but also as a locus of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic encounters. Indeed, the discourse on food in *SFAH* unfolds across multiple languages and locations, engaging members of diverse sociolinguistic communities and ethnic backgrounds. Accordingly, Sender-Addressee communication proves to be highly multifaceted and heterolingual, featuring a mosaic of languages and dialects in contact. For this reason, the docuseries required the use of various AVT modes in both its original version (ST) – which is both an original and a translation – and its target versions (TTs), thereby engendering *intra*-textual as well as *inter*-textual interlingual translation in order to convey the broad panorama of foods, cultures, stories, notions, meanings, and identities showcased in *SFAH* to the intended audiences. In our view, this product is particularly deserving of investigation from a translational perspective and, more specifically, from a functionalist standpoint.

The objectives of our analysis are manifold. First, as we are dealing with a multilingual audiovisual text, our initial concern will be to examine the ST’s linguistic composition in order to identify translation-relevant textual properties that characterise its register. Particular attention will be given to CSRs and food/cuisine-related terminology, as well as to the varied sociolinguistic panorama that shapes the in-text world in each episode and influences Sender-Receiver communication.

Second, as the ST employs *intra*-textual translation owing to its multilingualism, we shall focus on the strategies used to interlingually render the segments originally produced in a language other than that of the intended ST’s audience, i.e. English.

Third, our analytic lens will shift to the TT, namely the Italian adaptation of the docuseries. At this stage, we shall scrutinise the *inter*-textual (ST → TT) interlingual rendition of the translation-relevant lexical items identified in the ST analysis, viz. CSRs and food/cuisine-related terminology, concentrating on the translation strategies implemented as well as on the various AVT modes employed.

In sum, our research questions, which we shall endeavour to address, are the following:

1. As regards *intra*-textual translation in the ST, are there mismatches¹⁸ in the rendition of CSRs and food/cuisine-related terminology? If so, should these be classified as translation errors, or as the result of micro-textual procedures dictated by linguistic and cultural discrepancies, or rather as stylistic choices? Are there instances of textual segments left untranslated and retained in the foreign language?
2. In terms of translation typology, how can the ST be classified at the macro-functional level? Does the outcome have an impact on Participation?
3. As for *inter*-textual (ST → TT) translation, are there mismatches in the interlingual rendition of CSRs and food/cuisine-related terminology? If so, should these be considered translation errors or, rather, as “justifiable” deviations from the ST resulting from linguistic and cultural discrepancies? Are there instances of ‘authorial intervention’?¹⁹ Are there TT segments left untranslated and retained in the foreign language? If so, how does this affect Participation?
4. In terms of translation typology, how can the TT be qualified from a functionalist, skopos-informed perspective? Does it constitute a documentary translation? If so, what effect(s) does it produce on the target viewers?

4.3 Methodology

The methodology adopted in this case study follows a text-focused functionalist approach, employing qualitative modes of enquiry. In greater detail, we fully concur with Oyalı (2015: 59) that “[f]unctionalist approaches are flexible and general enough to account for a wide range of translational situations”. Furthermore, we believe that Nord’s (2005, 2018) *Skopostheorie*-derived translation theory and House’s (2015, 2018) SFL-informed translation framework are well-suited to this task and can operate synergistically as a “merger”, incorporating additional insights and empirical modifications, thereby resulting in an integrated functionalist framework.

Within this framework, two analytical tools are implemented, working in tandem. The first is a “baseline” model of lexico-grammatical translation strategies, openly derived from Malone’s (1988) set of translation strategies which have been empirically reinterpreted from an AVT perspective and supplemented with an original, product-oriented strategy. The second tool is an experimental model of localization strategies, devised by the author as a way to address existing gaps in the fields of food localization, conceptualising localization in the form of micro-level translation strategies.

¹⁸ It is worth noting that in Translation Studies different scholars have addressed translation “errors” or deviations from the ST message in the TT, providing different approaches and terminologies. The term ‘mismatches’ was proposed by House (1997, 2015, 2018) to indicate changes between ST and TT found within the dimensions of Field, Tenor, and Mode, as well as at other levels, such as genre and individual textual function. Vinay and Darbelnet (1958/1995) spoke of ‘servitude’ and ‘option’, discerning between obligatory changes stemming from SL-TL discrepancies and non-obligatory modulations resulting from the translator’s preferences. Similarly, Catford (1965) introduced the term ‘shifts’ in translation to denote linguistic changes occurring between ST and TT, distinguishing between ‘level shifts’ and ‘category shifts’. In this book, we utilise the term ‘mismatches’ as our integrated theoretical framework aligns with House (2018). For further information on this specific matter, consult Manfredi (2008) and Munday (2016 and later editions).

¹⁹ ‘Authorial intervention’ here refers to unmotivated ST-TT mismatches, falling within the category of ‘option’, as in the ‘servitude vs. option’ parameter put forth by Vinay and Darbelnet (1958/1995).

This complex methodological framework is further discussed in the following subsections. Accordingly, the analytical work performed on both the ST and the TT selected for our case study is systematically subdivided in stages and presented as follows.

It is worth stressing that the analysis, in its entirety, is conducted manually, including the transcription and annotation of the verbal content relating to the chosen ST and TT, which will constitute our dataset for the multi-stage, text-focused translational analysis. For reasons of space and authorship rights, the dataset is not included in the Appendix.

4.3.1 A translation-oriented ST analysis

The point of departure of our multi-stage translational analysis is represented by the analysis of the ST. This will be carried out in two stages: (a) an external analysis, aimed at gathering information about the extra-textual factors at play in the textual environment; and (b) a register analysis, designed to investigate the in-text world of the ST.

In the first stage, we shall draw on Nord's (2005: 43-83) framework for the examination of the ST's extra-textual dimensions, i.e. the external factors operating in the text environment. Our focus will be on the following extra-textual factors:

- who transmits the text (**author/sender**) and to whom (**audience**);
- what for (**sender's intentions**);
- the **medium** whereby the text is transmitted;
- the **time** and **place** of text production and reception;
- the **motive** underlying text production and reception;
- and the textual communicative **function**.

The second stage of the ST analysis addresses the in-text world, specifically the linguistic dimension. In detail, we shall inquiry into the audio-verbal components (i.e. spoken language) and the visual-verbal ones (i.e. written manifestations of language visible on screen).

From an analytical viewpoint, we shall follow House's (2018: 86-97) SFL-informed model, with some adjustments. In particular, we will examine the register along the dimensions of Field, Tenor, and Mode, analysing each episode individually with regard to Field and Tenor, while Mode will be assessed across the whole documentary as a whole.

Beginning with Mode, our analysis will focus exclusively on Medium, highlighting the distinct verbal codes (e.g. speech and writing) found in the text under scrutiny, as well as the various permutations of language activity. For this purpose, we will draw on Gregory and Carroll's (1978: 47) Mode model, with slight modifications, as illustrated in Table 4-1 below.

Table 4-1 Our model for Mode analysis.

Medium	Mode variation	
Oral (audio-verbal means)	Spontaneous	conversing
		monologuing
	Non-spontaneous	‘reciting’
		the speaking of what is written
Written (visual-verbal means)	To be spoken	
	To be spoken as if not written	
	Not necessarily to be spoken	to be read (e.g. superimposed scripts, local signage)
		to be read as if heard (e.g. open/closed subtitles)
		to be read as if overheard (as if thought)

Afterwards, we shall move to the inspection of Tenor, which, unlike House (2018), will focus solely on the Author’s geographical, temporal and social provenance, here renamed as the “Sociolinguistic-communicative dimension”.

As for Field analysis, our attention will be directed towards lexicogrammatical features of interest from a translational standpoint, such as CSRs and food/cuisine-related terminology.

It is important to note that our ST is both an original and a translation. Consequently, it encompasses various types of oral and written linguistic manifestations, such as original speech, voice-over, and subtitles, which cannot be separated. Therefore, the register analysis at this stage will consider intratextual (and interlingual) translation as an integral part of the ST.

4.3.2 Analysis of intratextual translation strategies

At this stage, we will specifically analyse the intratextual ($ST_0 \rightarrow ST$)²⁰ translation present in the ST. First, we will identify the audiovisual transfer modalities employed. Next, we will closely examine the micro-textual strategies used to intra-textually render specific oral and written textual segments, originally produced in a source language other than English, into the language of the ST’s viewers, i.e. English. For this second part, we shall apply our tailor-made “baseline” model of translation strategies (described in § 4.3.4 below) and, for selected items, we shall also incorporate our empirically designed model of localization strategies (illustrated in § 4.3.5 below).

²⁰ As the source text simultaneously functions as both an original work and a translated product, this study distinguishes between two versions of the source text with respect to intratextual translation. Specifically, ‘ ST_0 ’ refers to the original audiovisual text prior to the incorporation of intratextual (AVT) translations, thus preserving the communicative events as they originally occurred, without the linguistic and cultural mediation introduced through AVT. By contrast, ‘ST’ denotes the final version of the source text containing hard-coded intratextual translations; this is internationally distributed and treated here as the source text (ST) for the purposes of the present analysis.

4.3.3 A comparative (ST-TT) translational analysis

At this stage, we shall concentrate on the TT, namely the Italian adaptation of *SFAH*, with the scope of addressing intertextual (and interlingual) translation through a comparative ST-TT translational analysis. This analysis will be conducted in two stages.

We begin by scrutinising the outer context of the TT, following the same rubric of extra-textual factors adopted with the ST. The aim here is to look for pragma-communicative and situational permutations that might have been operationalised in the translation process as well as in the choice of the TT function.

Subsequently, we look at register transfer, primarily exploring the intertextual (ST → TT) transmission of Field-related items, such as CSRs and food/cuisine-related terminology, in each episode. As for Mode and Tenor, these dimensions will be examined in relation to the AVT modes employed in the transfer process (e.g. dubbing, voice-over, and open subtitles), paying particular attention to the rendering of the “Sociolinguistic-communicative” dimension of the ST within the TT’s Tenor, as well as to variations in the TT’s Medium and Participation within Mode.

4.3.4 Our “baseline” model of AVT strategies

For the analysis of intratextual and intertextual translation, we shall implement a tailor-made model – hereafter referred to as ‘baseline’ model – which will serve to identify lexico-grammatical translation strategies. More specifically, the baseline model openly builds on Malone’s (1988) framework of translation strategies, reinterpreting certain aspects from an AVT perspective and incorporating a novel strategy derived from personal considerations. As Malone’s original model was not specifically designed for AVT, we shall also refer to two AVT-specific models, namely those proposed by Gottlieb (2009) and Ranzato (2016), with which our baseline model is compared in order to validate its applicability for AVT analysis.

It is worth noting that the reason for employing a custom-made model, rather than a ready-made one, lies in our conviction that a product-oriented heuristic tool can better accommodate our analytical needs and objectives.

The resulting baseline model is presented in Table 4-2 below, where “our strategies” are explained and compared with those of the other models cited above.

Table 4-2 Our ‘baseline’ model of translation strategies for use in AVT.

Malone (1988)	Gottlieb (2009)	Ranzato (2016)	Our strategies	Explanation of our strategies
Carry-over matching	Retention	Loan	Carry-over matching	Verbatim retention of the ST item in the TT exactly as it is in the ST.
Equation	Literal translation	Official translation, Calque	Equation	Matching a ST segment into the most straightforward counterpart there is in the TL, through cognates (i.e. direct equivalents) and calques.
Amplification	Specification	Explication	Amplification	Addition of further elements to the source counterpart in the TT, as a way of filling the gaps in the knowledge of the TT audience.
Substitution	Generalization,	Generalisation by Hypernym,	Substitution	Replacement of ST element with a TL element that is neither a

	Substitution	Concretisation by Hyponym, Substitution, Elimination, Lexical Recreation, Creative addition		grammatically nor semantically equivalent, but rather with a solution that the translator provides for a range of reasons and purposes (e.g. to enhance comprehension and readability; to pragmatically render idiomatic expressions; or for reasons of rhyme, cultural differences, and absence of an obvious TL equivalent). Examples of ‘Substitution’ include shifts in rank (e.g. from noun to verb, or vice versa), paraphrasing, cultural substitution, and rewriting (≠ ‘Reordering’) of a ST chunk in the TL, deviating to varying degrees from the originally intended meaning.
Reduction	Omission	Elimination	Reduction	Omitting specific ST bits, deemed unnecessary or redundant in the TT, either for technical reasons (to yield a more streamlined TT) or for SC-TC discrepancies (e.g. omission of cultural allusions not substituted by TL counterparts).
Divergence	--	--	Divergence	Choosing between the different renditions potentially available in the TL for one ST item (e.g. <i>pe-stare</i> → pound, beat up, crush, grind, etc.).
Convergence	--	--	Convergence	A paradigmatic richness in the SL cannot be rendered via direct or “ready-made” TL equivalents (e.g. <i>tu, lei, voi</i> → you).
Diffusion	--	--	Diffusion	Due to SL-TL discrepancies, the TL rendition is structurally more expanded than the SL one.
Condensation	--	--	Condensation	Due to SL-TL discrepancies, the TL rendition is structurally tighter than the SL one.
Reordering	--	--	Reordering	Syntactic relocation of textual items in the TT, for reasons of grammaticality (e.g. the order of constituents is different in the TL) and/or comprehensibility (e.g. modulating the syntax in TT to enhance readability), or else for stylistic purposes.
--	--	--	Non-translation	A non-intervention on the part of the dubber or subtitler; as a result, the ST chunk remains intact for all to hear or read, uncovered by any revoicing or subtitling.

For the sake of clarity, let us elucidate some points, starting with ‘Carry-over matching’ and ‘Equation’. When words remain unchanged in the transfer from the ST into the TT, as in the case of loanwords that have been integrated in the vocabulary of the TL, identifying the translational strategy employed can become ambiguous. In some instances, it may seem appropriate to speak of ‘Equation’ if the loanwords qualify as “officially recognised” equivalents in the recipient linguaculture. This applies, for example, to *tofu*, *sushi* and *umami*, which have been borrowed by both English and Italian via transcription. Similarly, Italian words such as *pizza*, *pesto*, and *mozzarella* are widely used as “official” equivalents of such foods in other languages.

In this respect, Ranzato (2016: 85) proposes the ‘Official translation’ strategy, likening it to Newmark’s (1988) ‘Recognised translation’, Leppihalme’s (1994) ‘Standard translation’, and Pedersen’s (2005) ‘Official equivalent’. Specifically, Ranzato notes that:

[a]lthough including ‘official translation’ in the number of strategies may be objectionable, as the term which is ‘officially’ translated is actually transferred by using one of the other strategies in the list (i.e., loan, calque, substitution, etc.), I believe it is important to set this operation apart from the others in a category of its own, as the use of a recognised term, a term which is already available in the TL, involves a different kind of *modus operandi*, on the part of the translators, from any of the others. This is in fact a non-strategy or, better, a ready-made strategy. It may involve a certain amount of research on the part of the translator to find the established equivalent of an element in the TC. As a result, the use of this strategy usually contributes to create an impression of thoroughness in a translation and favours the prompt response by the TA to the associations triggered by the element (Ranzato 2016: 85, original emphasis).

While we concur with Ranzato’s reasoning, we argue that, in the realm of food translation, determining whether a TL rendition of a given SC foodstuff constitutes a ‘Loan’ or an ‘Official translation’ (using Ranzato’s strategies) can be challenging. In today’s globalised world, where markets circulate edibles from diverse regions and foster food-induced hybridisations, the perception of a food item as either foreign or integrated into a given linguaculture remains, in our view, a subjective matter. Even from a purely linguistic perspective, distinguishing between ‘Equation’ or ‘Carry-over matching’ (in Malone’s terms) is difficult when the SL and the TL denominations of culture-specific foodstuffs coincide, whether because one language originally borrowed the term from the other (as a loanword) or because both SL and TL labels derive from a third language. On these grounds, we conceptualise ‘Carry-over matching’ as an inter-*textual* – or inter-*message*, in the case of intratextual translation – transfer, rather than a purely linguistic operation, whereas ‘Equation’ is treated as an inter-*linguistic* (SL → TL) lexico-grammatical operation.

Another point to discuss is the distinction between ‘Reduction’ and ‘Non-translation’. From an AVT-oriented standpoint, we define ‘Reduction’ as the omission of parts of an ST message (e.g. one or more words within a sentence or entire sentences) in the TT for various reasons, including cultural filtering, technical constraints, and censorship. The effects of this strategy vary: when employed to address technical constraints in dubbing or subtitling, the omission is generally imperceptible to the TA, resulting in a streamlined TL rendition. In cases of censorship, our notion of ‘Reduction’ entails the direct removal of the omitted sequence in the TT, mirroring its canonical implementation in written translation (cf. Malone 1988).

By contrast, our notion of ‘Non-translation’ represents a “non-strategy”, producing a non-mediated (thus a direct) transfer of the ST message into the TT. In such cases, the original message crops up in the TT exactly as it is in the ST, for all to hear or read, with no input from dubbers or subtitlers. Examples of ‘Non-translation’ include the full retention of ST’s hard-coded visual-verbal elements (e.g. superimposed scripts, local signage, onscreen messages, etc.) in the TT, either because they did not require translation (e.g. they were already presented in the TL, functioning as foreign-language elements for the SA in the ST) or as a result of arbitrary choices. Similarly, ‘Non-translation’ may be applied to in-text situations involving multiple languages, leaving foreign utterances untranslated (i.e. uncovered by any dubbing, voice-over, or subtitling) when the language coincides with that of the TA.

4.3.5 Our experimental model of localization strategies

Alongside our baseline model, we shall employ a complementary set of strategies that has been empirically developed by the author of this work as an attempt to provide a systematic framework for localization in the form of micro-level translation strategies, grounded in empirical data (see § 3.4.1). Conceiving localization as a linguistic-textual operation aimed at situating the TT within the prospective recipient locale in which the text will be disseminated, we propose a set of four distinct strategies specifically designed for rendering food elements in translation contexts. These are illustrated in Table 4-3 below.

Table 4-3 Localization strategies for use in food translation.

Our strategies	Explanation
Total localization	It obtains when an SC item is discarded, thereby abandoning the allusion to the SC, owing either to the absence or paucity of such an item in the target locale, or to taboos, ideological constraints, or religion-depending stances that would prevent its use in the recipient context. In such cases, the translator may simply omit the item or, alternatively, substitute it with a TC item that best fills the gap in the text, while preserving textual integrity, accommodating the specificities of the target locale, and meeting the expectations of the end users.
Adaptive (or ‘horizontal’) localization	It occurs when the cultural connotation is retained by replacing the original SC item with another SC item that proves to be more familiar to the TA, while still sharing characteristics that closely resemble those of the original item.
Partial localization	It is realised when only the technical information is localised to target-specific standards (e.g. measurement systems, temperature conventions, etc.), while the source item to which the technical information is attached is translated through ‘Equation’ or ‘Carry-over matching’.
Zero localization	It consists in retaining the SC item exactly as it is, including any technical features attached to it.

This model will be employed as a subsidiary analytic tool alongside our baseline model, with the purpose of enriching the analysis of translation strategies applied in the rendering of CSRs and food items, thereby adding a localization-oriented perspective.

4.4 Analysing the ST and its intratextual translation

4.4.1 External analysis

The analysis of the ST's external (contextual) dimensions has yielded interesting results. These are orderly collected in Table 4-4 below.

Table 4-4 External source-text analysis of *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat*.

Sender(s)	<u>Main sender</u> : the US chef Samin Nosrat. <u>Second-level senders</u> : the people of different speech and cultural communities, interacting with the main sender in various situations.
Audience	English-speaking viewers, primarily Americans; mostly food enthusiasts, and culture/travel aficionados; not necessarily kitchen adepts or food specialists; no age restrictions or gender-related biases spotted.
Sender's intentions	<u>Prime intentions</u> : educational and informative, viz. introducing the viewers to the titular elements of good cooking, while tempting them to master such elements so as to become better, more intuitive cooks. <u>Secondary intentions</u> : in Giorgis' article for <i>The Atlantic</i> , ²¹ Nosrat states that the docuseries was thought to serve as a conduit for "shifting the broader landscape of food media" and exploit food as "a tool for bringing people together, for telling stories about people, for telling stories about culture".
Medium	Audiovisual text, transmitted digitally through audiovisual devices (PC, tablets, smartphones, Smart TV, and the like) having an Internet connection and a Netflix subscription to access the content at issue.
Place and time of production / reception	The docuseries was filmed in Italy, Japan, Mexico, and California (USA), and produced by Jigsaw Productions, a team of American-based documentarians. The show premiered on Netflix in October 2018 and has since then been distributed in all countries where Netflix operates and where the content is made available, starting from the USA.
Motive for production / reception	The documentary was produced after the great success of Nosrat's 2017 award-winning cookbook, which inspired the homonymous docuseries. Therefore, we may speculate that Netflix offered Nosrat the opportunity to capitalise on the public attention generated by the enthusiastic reception of the cookbook and proposed the production of the series. Viewers are likely drawn to the series due to Nosrat's established credibility from her bestselling cookbook, the immersive exploration of global cuisines, and the accessibility afforded by Netflix's international platform.
Text function	Netflix classifies <i>SFAH</i> under the sections "Documentaries", "Documentaries on travels and adventures", and "TV series based on books". Looking into the in-text world, the series positions itself as a combination of the 'foodie guide' and 'travelogue' subgenres. <u>Overall predominant function</u> : referential = the series showcases and describes culture-specific items, foods, cooking methods, and the like, with explicit informative and didactic aims. <u>Secondary dominant function</u> : appellative = the series seeks to persuade the audience, through both verbal means (e.g. adjectives) and non-verbal means (tantalising images), that the content is worth learning (= educative

²¹ Retrieved from: <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2018/10/samin-nosrat-salt-fat-acid-heatnetflix/572731/> (last access 29/05/2022).

	aims) and experiencing (= they should apply the cooking techniques demonstrated or visit the locations featured on screen).
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4.4.2 Register analysis

Along the dimension of Mode, the ST features a rather complex Medium, as language activity is realised through both oral (audio-verbal) and written (visual-verbal) means.

The oral means encompass spontaneous speech, such as onscreen conversations and monologues, and non-spontaneous speech, namely the voice-off narration, whose lines were written beforehand and then recited. Regarding written means, the ST displays a wealth of superimposed scripts in the form of titles and subtitles: titles can be defined as “written-to-be-read”, whereas subtitles qualify as “written-to-be-read-as-if-heard”. In particular, subtitles are open in nature and mostly realise interlingual translation, with fewer instances of intralingual translation. Additionally, other visual-verbal means, also “written-to-be-read”, appear in local signage, i.e. the onscreen-visible totality of road signs, shop windows, commercial signs, posters, printed clothing (bearing names of locations, institutions, and businesses), and even labels and packages of edibles.²²

In terms of Tenor, the Sociolinguistic-communicative dimension features a multitude of interactants of diverse speech and cultural communities, particularly in episodes 1, 2, and 3. Many engage in code-switching between their L1 and their L2 or a foreign language, and vice versa (e.g. Italian → English, English → Italian, English → Spanish, Spanish → English, etc.), while others remain monolingual. This multilingual landscape has several implications, such as the need for open captions, which engender diamesic variation (i.e. oral → written) and, combined with other written means (e.g. titles and local signage), make Sender(s)-Audience(s) communication in the ST highly multifaceted, multimodal, and plurilingual.

Given this intricate in-text communicative-linguistic environment, the results of Tenor analysis are considered alongside Medium specifications, so as to provide a clearer and more accurate picture. Results are shown in Table 4-5 below.

Table 4-5 The ST’s Tenor and its Sociolinguistic-communicative dimension.

Episode 1	• (<i>spoken</i>) Western-accented Standard AmE,²³ in the speech of the series protagonist and off-screen narrator Samin Nosrat; • (<i>written</i>) Standard AmE, in superimposed scripts, i.e. titles, onscreen graphics, interlingual (IT>EN) subtitles and intralingual (EN>EN) ones; • (<i>spoken</i>) geographically accented varieties of Italian, in the speech of locals, with Ligurian, Tuscan, and Emilian phonetic and morpho-phonological traits; • (<i>written</i>) Standard Italian, in local signage and some titles; • (<i>spoken</i>) Italian-influenced L2-varieties of English, used by some locals, with varying proficiencies and degrees of Italian colouring in their pronunciation;
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²² The elements we consider here as ‘local signage’ correspond to what Landry and Bourhis (1997: 25) term the ‘linguistic landscape’ of a place, namely “[t]he language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings”. However, as Gorter (2006: 1) observes, this term is often understood as equivalent to a variety of concepts in the literature, which may lead to potential misunderstandings. For this reason, we opted for the term ‘local signage’, while extending its meaning to encompass additional referents.

²³ ‘AmE’ stands for American English, abbreviated for the sake of space, in line with Melchers *et al.* (2019: 72-84).

	• (<i>spoken</i>) English-infused L2-variety of Italian, used by Samin with the locals, manifesting systematic errors that indicate either defective language learning or limited knowledge of Italian.
Episode 2	• (<i>spoken</i>) Western-accented Standard AmE, spoken by the series protagonist and narrator Samin as well as the American-born food writer Nancy Hachisu; • (<i>written</i>) Standard AmE, in superimposed scripts, i.e. titles, onscreen graphics, interlinguistic (JA>EN) subtitles and intralinguistic (EN>EN) ones; • (<i>written</i>) Standard Japanese, in local signage; • (<i>spoken</i>) varieties of Japanese, with “presumed” geographical and/or social inflexions, as heard in occasional short excerpts from local TV programmes as well as in the speech of locals, including the chef Yuri;²⁴ • (<i>spoken</i>) Japanese-influenced L2-variety of English, used by Yuri, arguably an EFL speaker, with a marked Japanese colouring in phonology; • (<i>spoken</i>) L2-variety of Japanese, spoken by the American-born food writer Nancy with the locals.
Episode 3	• (<i>spoken</i>) Western-accented Standard AmE, in the speech of the series protagonist and off-screen narrator Samin Nosrat; • (<i>written</i>) Standard AmE, in superimposed scripts, i.e. titles, onscreen graphics, interlinguistic (ES>EN) subtitles and intralinguistic (EN>EN) ones; • (<i>spoken</i>) Standard Mexican Spanish, in the speech of locals, marked by some identifiable Mexican-Yucatecan phonological features, such as yeísmo,²⁵ seseo,²⁶ and the aspiration of /x/;²⁷ among other things, with no deviations from the standard grammar detected; • (<i>written</i>) Standard Spanish, as in some titles and in local signage; • (<i>spoken</i>) non-native variety of Spanish, used by Samin, marked by the intrusion of Italian and English language elements, denoting a rudimentary knowledge of Spanish; • (<i>spoken</i>) L2-varieties of English, as in the speech of some locals, such as Rodrigo and Regina, who presumably speak English as a foreign language, showing varying proficiencies and degrees of Mexican “markedness” in phonology.
Episode 4	• (<i>spoken</i>) Western-accented Standard AmE, in the speech of the series host and off-screen narrator Samin and in that of locals, including Chez Panisse’s head chef, the butcher, the illustrator, and other interactants; • (<i>written</i>) Standard AmE, in local signage and superimposed scripts, i.e. titles, onscreen graphics, interlinguistic (Farsi>EN) and intralinguistic (EN>EN) captions; • (<i>written</i>) Standard French, in local signage;

²⁴ We are prudently and consciously using the label “presumed” here, given our lack of sufficient proficiency in Japanese to determine whether the local speakers employ regionally or socially marked sociolinguistic varieties or rather standard Japanese in their speech within the episode.

²⁵ “Yeísmo” is the term commonly used in Spanish dialectology to refer to the pronunciation of the graphemes <ll> and <y> as a palatal approximant [j], resulting from the loss of the phonemic distinction between /j/ and /ʎ/ (respectively corresponding to <y> and <ll>) in many varieties of Spanish, such as Mexican Spanish and other American “Spanishes” (cf. Muñoz-Basols *et al.* 2016: 373, 382).

²⁶ “Seseo” is the term that in Spanish dialectology designates the usage of the phoneme /s/ instead of /θ/ when pronouncing the nexuses -za, -ce, -ci, -zo, -zu (as in *zapato*, *centro*, *cirujano*, *zorro*, *zumó*). This phenomenon is typical of many Spanishes, including Mexican Spanish, whose speakers are prone to use a pre-dorsal /s/ (Muñoz-Basols *et al.* 2016: 382).

²⁷ Consistent with Muñoz-Basols *et al.* (2016: 383), Yucatecan speakers tend to utter the voiceless velar fricative /x/ as a voiceless pharyngeal fricative [ħ]; e.g. *cajón* [ka.hón], *México* [mé.hi.ko].

	• (<i>written</i>) Standard Italian, in local signage; • (<i>written</i>) Standard Dutch, in local signage; • (<i>spoken</i>) L2-variety of English, in the speech of Shahla (Samin's Iranian-born mother), who speaks Farsi as her L1 and English as her L2, with a slight colouring in pronunciation; • (<i>spoken</i>) Farsi, as in one line by Shahla; • (<i>written</i>) Farsi, as in one title; • (<i>spoken</i>) Japanese, in some concluding scenes taken from episode 2; • (<i>spoken</i>) Italian, as in some concluding scenes from episode 1.
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Turning to Field, the ST exhibits a profusion of lexical items pertaining to the semantic domain of food and cuisine in various languages, in particular:

- **“culture-free” edibles:** tomato, bacon, olive oil, milk, pickles, turkey, lime, kale, salt, lard, caramel, soy sauce, etc.;
- **culture-/region-specific foods, dishes, and condiments:** *stracchino*, *soppresata*, *kombu*, *dashi*, *tai meshi*, Red Cow Parmesan, *cochinita pibil*, *recado*, *pho*, Taggiasca olives, *finocchiona*, *porchetta*, *katsunobushi*, *tahdig*, *guacamole*, *tikin xic*, *habanero*, etc.;
- **cooking-related verbs and preparation/conservation methods:** browning, *remojar*, *salatura*, *pestare*, *asar*, char, *julienne*, grilling, *salamoia*, nixtamalization, *curtido*, etc.

Beyond food terminology, the ST also contains the following lexical items:

- **endemic animal and plant species:** *Hondawara*, *Meliponas*, *Tai* Red Snapper, *Vacche Rosse*, *Cinta Senese* pigs, *Róbal*, etc.;
- **ethnographic references:** units of measures (euro, *peso*, dollar, kg, *etto*, Fahrenheit degrees, etc.);
- **geographical references:** names of cities and nations;
- **references to local shops, restaurants, factories, and institutions:** Chez Panisse, *Badia a Coltibuono*, *Moshio* salt factory, First Light, etc.

4.4.3 Analysis of the intratextual (ST₀ → ST) translation strategies

The ST under scrutiny, which is both an original and a translation, relies exclusively on open subtitles to intratextually translate the textual segments originally expressed in a language other than the ST's language, i.e. English. However, the use of open captioning turns out to be uneven, leaving many foreign-language messages untranslated and thus invoking our 'Non-translation' strategy. Specifically, the local signage presented in languages other than English demonstrates the absence of any mediating intervention, as exemplified by the following visual-verbal messages:

- | | | |
|------|--|---------|
| (10) | Coccoli, ideali da riempire (con ricotta, crudo, stracchino) € 1,00 l'etto | (ep. 1) |
| (11) | Fresco, Puro Pecora dell'Amiata € 7,50 al kg | (ep. 1) |
| (12) | Porchetta calda | (ep. 1) |
| (13) | Badia a Coltibuono | (ep. 1) |
| (14) | Taqueria: Pavo asado, relleno negro, carne asada, empanizado | (ep. 3) |
| (15) | Taqueria: Tacos de barbacoa, tacos dorados, flautas | (ep. 3) |
| (16) | Recado negro especial para chilmole y relleno negro | (ep. 3) |

- (17) Achiote especial para pavo, pollo asado, mondongo y cochinita pibil (ep. 3)
 (18) Sabarot – depuis 1819 – Cèpes séchés – Eekhoortjesbrood Porcini (ep. 4)

It is worth noting that episode 2 also contains untranslated local signage. This, however, has not been included above due to the analyst's limited command of Japanese and its writing systems.

Within the dimension of Tenor, the distinct spoken varieties of Italian, Japanese, and Spanish have been rendered into Standard American English via interlingual open subtitles. Non-native varieties of English spoken by local speakers are likewise captioned and standardised through intralingual open subtitles, although this is only noted in episodes 1, 2, and 3.

As for the intratextual translation at the level of Field, 'Equation' and 'Carry-over matching' emerge as the most frequently utilised strategies for conveying CSRs and food terminology, via open captioning. Let us look at some examples from episode 1, wherein intratextual translation follows the Italian>English direction:

- (19) (SL) Olive Taggiasche → (TL) Taggiasca olives
 (20) (SL) Focaccia → (TL) Focaccia
 (21) (SL) Pesto → (TL) Pesto
 (22) (SL) Parmigiano → (TL) Parmesan
 (23) (SL) Pecorino → (TL) Pecorino
 (24) (SL) Finocchiona → (TL) Finocchiona
 (25) (SL) Soppressata → (TL) Soppressata
 (26) (SL) Porchetta → (TL) Porchetta
 (27) (SL) Capocollo → (TL) Capocollo
 (28) (SL) Cinta Senese → (TL) Cinta Senese

In detail, examples (19) and (22) are interlingually rendered from Italian (SL) into English (TL) through 'Equation', while all other examples employ 'Carry-over matching'. Most TL renditions qualify as official translations in English, as with *Taggiasca olives*, *Focaccia*, *Pesto*, *Pecorino*, and *Parmesan*, whereas other references are less likely to be familiar to the SA. Nonetheless, these references – like most food-related CSRs in the episode – are accompanied by visual cues when mentioned, facilitating comprehensibility. From a localization perspective, the intratextual translation of episode 1 produces 'Zero localization' in the rendering of culture-specific foods, as the examples above demonstrate. Indeed, no forms of cultural adaptations are observed, leaving the original cultural allusions intact.

Episode 2 exhibits similar translational patterns in conveying CSRs from Japanese into English, as illustrated in the following examples:

- (29) (SL) Hondawara → (TL) Hondawara
 (30) (SL) Moshio → (TL) Moshio
 (31) (SL) Sashimi → (TL) Sashimi
 (32) (SL) Miso → (TL) Miso
 (33) (SL) Koji → (TL) Koji

- (34) (SL) Moromi → (TL) Moromi
- (35) (SL) Dashi → (TL) Dashi
- (36) (SL) Katsuobushi → (TL) Katsuobushi
- (37) (SL) Kombu → (TL) Kombu
- (38) (SL) Tai → (TL) Tai red snapper

As is evident in the examples above, ‘Carry-over matching’ is the predominant strategy, with the notable exception of (38), which utilises a couplet consisting of ‘Carry-over matching’ and ‘Equation’, probably to enhance the level of informativity in the ST. Terminological research, however, has indicated that the culturally significant Japanese fish *tai* (scientifically known as *Pagrus major*) seems to be typically referred to as “sea bream” (OECD 2008: 206), “red sea bream” (*ibid.*: 187), or “Japanese sea bream”²⁸ in English, while no reliable references to “red snapper” as the translant of *tai* have been found. In the absence of conclusive information, it remains unclear whether the English-language rendition in (38) constitutes a mistranslation or reflects common usage in American and Anglophone contexts. From a localization perspective, these scrutinised examples realise ‘Zero localization’, as the CSRs are preserved intact in the TL, with the semi-exception of (38) which could be tentatively interpreted as a “sub-form” of ‘Adaptive Localization’, operationalised through the “Equated” part of the interlingual subtitle, presumably to align such translation with how the TC denotes the intended CSR.

In episode 3, the abundance of CSRs and names of edibles is mostly translated, from Spanish into English, through ‘Carry-over matching’ and ‘Equation’, as shown in the following examples:

- (39) (SL) Maracuyá → (TL) Maracuyá
- (40) (SL) Limón dulce → (TL) Sweet lemons
- (41) (SL) Grosella → (TL) Gooseberries
- (42) (SL) Naranja agria → (TL) Sour orange
- (43) (SL) Pavo en escabeche → (TL) Turkey in escabeche
- (44) (SL) Recado → (TL) Recado
- (45) (SL) Chile habanero → (TL) Habanero chili
- (46) (SL) Panuchos → (TL) Panuchos
- (47) (SL) Salbutes → (TL) Salbutes
- (48) (SL) Miel Tajonal → (TL) Tajonal honey
- (49) (SL) Colmenas de meliponario → (TL) Meliponario hives

²⁸ By searching for the entry ‘Japanese sea bream’ via Google, the top results include *Pagrus major* on Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pagrus_major, last accessed 04/10/2025) as well as various webpages that associate ‘sea bream’ with the qualifier ‘Japanese’ (as in ‘Japanese sea bream’) – presumably used as a geographic or culinary marker, rather than an established naming practice – or, in some cases, with the original fish name (i.e. *tai*), rendered through transliteration. Interestingly, among the results, there is also a Wikipedia page (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gymnocranius_euanus, last accessed 04/10/2025) dedicated to *Gymnocranius euanus*, where this species is likewise referred to as *Japanese sea bream* and classified within the Lethrinidae family. This information, however, conflicts with OECD’s (2008: 206–207) definition of *Tai*, which identifies the fish as belonging to the Sparidae family rather than to Lethrinidae; therefore, the information reported on Wikipedia cannot be regarded as correct.

(50) (SL) Tikin xic → (TL) Tikin xic

In particular, ‘Equation’ is applied in (40), (41) and (42), whereas (39), (44), (46), (47), and (50) employ ‘Carry-over matching’. Both strategies are combined as a couplet in (43), (45), (48), and (49), respectively retaining the culture-specific nature of: the recipe in “Turkey in *escabeche*”,²⁹ the spicy vegetable in “*Habanero* chili”,³⁰ the honey type in “*Tajonal* honey”,³¹ and the hives and their endemic inhabitants in “*Meliponario* hives”.³² On this basis, the result of these strategies can be interpreted as producing ‘Zero localization’, since cultural specificity has been consistently retained in the TL.

Lastly, in episode 4 no food-relevant intratextual translation is observed, as the episode is predominantly in English.

It should also be noted that several instances of mistranslation have been identified throughout the series, as in:

- | | | |
|------|---|---------|
| (51) | (SL) Amabile → (TL) Lovable | (ep. 1) |
| (52) | (SL) Salume → (TL) Salami | (ep. 1) |
| (53) | (SL) Ojas de la yerbabuena → (TL) Peppermint leaves | (ep. 3) |
| (54) | (SL) Pimientas de tabasco → (TL) Black peppercorns | (ep. 3) |

Let us briefly dwell on these examples. In (51), the use of ‘Equation’ results in a semantic mismatch that could have been avoided through the strategy of ‘Divergence’. Indeed, the Italian adjective *amabile* translates into English as either “lovable” (= a character trait) and

²⁹ As explained in the episode, *pavo en escabeche* constitutes a culinary staple of Yucatecan cuisine. What characterises the dish as an *escabeche* is the brief preliminary marination of the turkey in an acidic, aromatic mixture known as *recado* in Spanish. This process not only imparts flavour to the meat but also tenderises it prior to cooking. The marinade is traditionally prepared with a variety of ingredients and spices holding particular significance in Yucatecan food culture, including sour oranges (*naranjas agrias*). As shown on screen, the dish also incorporates meatballs, roasted chili peppers, and pickled red onions, the latter prepared by soaking the onions in the *curtido*, an acidic marinade made with sour-orange juice that helps soften and flavour them. Once cooked, the turkey is served together with all these accompaniments, either on a plate or in tortillas, allowing the combination of flavours and textures to characterise the dish as a distinctly Yucatecan culinary preparation.

³⁰ According to the Encyclopedia Britannica (<https://www.britannica.com/plant/habanero>, last access 31/07/2026) and Wikipedia (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Habanero>, last access 19/08/2026), *habanero* represents a peculiar chili pepper variety primarily cultivated in Yucatán. It is renowned for its distinctive pungency and intense spiciness, as well as for being a characteristic ingredient of Mayan and Yucatecan cuisines.

³¹ The Spanish word *Tajonal*, here applied to honey, derives from the name of the flower known as *flor de tajonal* in Spanish and *Viguiera dentata* in botanical literature, commonly referred to in English as sunflower goldeneye. This wildflower species is native to neotropical areas, including Mexico, where it has traditionally served as forage plant for Yucatecan bees, with its nectar contributing to the production of the so-called *miel tajonal* (i.e. *tajonal* honey) (Enríquez-Nolasco et al. 2022; Ortiz Fernández et al. 2023; Marchese 2024).

³² *Melipona* is the name given to a genus of stingless bees, collectively called *meliponines*, that are traditionally farmed in parts of Central and South America, particularly in Yucatán. The cultivation of these bees, known as meliponiculture (in contrast to the apiculture of European *Apis* bees) serves both the production of Melipona honey and the conservation of stingless bee species. The term *meliponario* refers to the apiary-like structure or the designated area where *Meliponini* (the stingless bees) are kept and managed, in the context of traditional Maya meliponiculture. For more information on Yucatecan Melipona honey, meliponiculture and meliponarios, see Bratman (2020), Ortiz Fernández et al. (2023), and Marchese (2024).

“sweet” (e.g. *vino amabile* = sweet/dessert wine). In this case, the SL adjective was used to denote the sweetness of the oil; therefore, ‘Divergence’ would have been the appropriate strategy, as it enables to single out the contextually fitting rendition from the two options available in the TL.

In (52), the Italian noun *salume* (= a hypernym for cured meats) is mistranslated as “salami”, which in Italian back-translates as *salame* (= a hyponym of *salume*, namely a specific type of cold cuts, i.e. cured sausage). Clearly, ‘Substitution’ was arbitrarily applied here, replacing the intended SL referent with another of similar characteristics – probably more immediate for the SA – while retaining the SC allusion. From a localization standpoint, this can be viewed as an instance of (unjustified) ‘Adaptive localization’.

In (53), the Spanish *yerbabuena* is incorrectly rendered as “peppermint” in English, thus realising a ‘Substitution’. Terminological research has shown that *yerbabuena* (or *hierbabuena*) refers to a specific variety of mint known in English as “spearmint”, characterised by its low menthol content, in contrast to “peppermint” which has a strikingly higher menthol content. This mistranslation therefore alters the intended referent as well as the recipe itself.

In (54), the use of ‘Substitution’ neutralises of the CSR *pimienta de tabasco* (i.e. a characteristic spice of Yucatán) into “black peppercorn”, instead of using its English equivalent “allspice”, via ‘Equation’.³³ From a localization perspective, ‘Substitution’ here produces a ‘Total localization’, bringing about the total loss of the CSR.

It should also be emphasised that many CSRs were not intratextually translated via subtitles, as they were pronounced orally by the senders (especially by Samin) while speaking in English, thereby realising a long series of instances of code-mixing.

4.5 Analysis of the TT and the intertextual (ST → TT) translation

4.5.1 External analysis

Following the rubric utilised with the ST in § 4.4.1 and described in § 4.3.1, the examination of the TT’s extra-textual dimensions yielded the results shown in Table 4-6 below.

Table 4-6 External analysis of the Italian adaptation of *SFAH* (i.e. the TT).

Sender(s)	Same as the ST.
Audience	Italian-speaking viewers. Food aficionados and cultures/travels enthusiasts, yet not necessarily kitchen adepts or food specialists. No age restrictions or gender-related biases are spotted.
Sender’s intentions	Congruent with those of the ST.
Medium	Same as the ST.

³³ According to the *Diccionario enciclopédico de la Gastronomía Mexicana* (<https://laroussecocina.mx/palabra/pimienta-de-tabasco-pimienta-gorda-o-pimienta-de-jamaica/>, last access 27/07/2026), the Spanish term *pimienta de tabasco*, also known as *pimienta gorda* and *pimienta de Jamaica*, and botanically classified as *Pimenta dioica*, denotes a Mexican spice belonging to the Myrtaceae family. On Wikipedia (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allspice>, last access 19/08/2026), this referent is named “allspice” in English and is described as dried, peppercorn-looking berries whose flavour resembles a combination of cinnamon, nutmeg, and clove – likely accounting for the English name “allspice”. This information is confirmed in *The Encyclopedia of Herbs & Spices* (Ravindran 2017: 25-30), where allspice is identified with Mexico’s *pimienta de tabasco*, as well as with other regional/vernacular denominations in other languages.

Place and time of production / reception	Presumably invariant to those of the ST.
Motive for production / reception	Not given. It can be speculated that the ST was adapted for the Italian locale because the content was deemed potentially appealing to Italian viewers.
Text function	As with the ST, Netflix includes the Italian adaptation of <i>SFAH</i> in the following sections: “Documentaries”, “Documentaries on travels and adventures” and “TV series based on books”. <u>Overall predominant function: referential</u> (same as the ST) = the series showcases and describes culture-specific items, foods, cooking methods, and the like, with overtly stated informative and didactic aims. <u>Secondary dominant function: appellative</u> (same as the ST) = the series seeks to persuade the audience, through both verbal means (e.g. adjectives) and non-verbal means (tantalising images), that the content is worth learning (= educative aims) and experiencing (= they should apply the cooking techniques demonstrated or visit the locations featured on screen).

From a functionalist standpoint, a change worth of consideration occurs in the TT. Although the two predominant functions (i.e. referential and appellative) remain the same when considering the docuseries as a whole, a closer examination of each episode reveals that:

- in **episode 1**, what was originally intended to be primarily informative for the SA becomes mostly appellative for the TA, as the content of the episode focuses on Italy’s most iconic foodstuffs (e.g. olive oil, pesto, focaccia, cured meats, home-made egg pasta, etc.), with which the Italian audience is likely already familiar;
- in **episode 4**, what was in all likelihood intended to be largely appellative for the SA becomes almost exclusively informative for the TA, given that the SC food items and other CSRs in the episode are likely to be unfamiliar to Italian viewers.

For the remaining two episodes, set respectively in Japan and Mexico, no functional changes are expected in the TT. Thus, what was intended to be mostly informative for the SA should remain virtually unchanged for the TA.

4.5.2 Register transfer and AVT modes in the TT

As noted in the registerial analysis of the ST, the in-text world of *SFAH* features a wide range of CSRs and food words (within Field), conveyed through a mosaic of languages in contact (observed along the dimension of Tenor) that makes use of diverse channels, thereby engendering distinct Medium configurations within Mode. Likewise, the Italian adaptation of *SFAH*, which constitutes our TT in the present analysis, exhibits an equally intricate composition. For analytical clarity and expository convenience, we will address register transfer (ST → TT) by focusing on two Medium-related categories of means in the TT: oral-verbal and visual-verbal.

Beginning with the oral-verbal means, the Italian adaptation of *SFAH* relies on three AVT modes: dubbing, voice-over, and open captions. More specifically, the AVT configuration in the TT appears to follow a specific linguistic parameter that becomes evident when examining the language distribution of the ST and TT, thus integrating

Tenor analysis with the audiovisual transfer modes employed. For a clearer overview, let us see Table 4-7 below.

Table 4-7 Language distribution in ST and TT and AVT modalities employed.

ST		ST-related AVT	TT		TT-related AVT
L1 ₁	American English	--	L1 ₁	Standard Italian	EN>IT dubbing (VN)
					EN>IT voice-over
L1 ₂	L2 Englishes	EN>EN open subs (except for ep. 4)	L1 ₂	Standard Italian	EN>IT voice-over
			L2	L2 Englishes	EN>IT open subs (except for ep. 4)
L2	Italian	IT>EN open subs	L1 ₃	Italian	--
L3	Japanese	JA>EN open subs	L3	Japanese	JA>IT open subs
L4	Spanish	ES>EN open subs	L4	Spanish	ES>IT open subs
L5	Farsi	FA>EN open subs	L5	Farsi	FA>IT open subs

As can be observed above, in the TT, dubbing is uniquely applied to the voice-off narrator (abbreviated as VN in Table 4-6), whose lines are fully revoiced from American English into Standard Italian in all episodes. As for the “talking heads” (i.e. the onscreen-visible characters engaging in monologues and dialogues), those speaking American English in the ST are voiced over into Standard Italian in the TT. With regard to L2 English-speaking “talking heads”, the TT presents some inconsistencies, as the use of voice-over alternates with open subtitling, albeit only sporadically, except in episode 4, where L2 English-speaking interactants (e.g. Samin’s Iranian-born mother) are unvaryingly voiced over into Standard Italian. Finally, the Japanese- and Spanish-speaking “talking heads”, respectively appearing in episodes 2 and 3, are translated in the TT by rendering them into Standard Italian via open subtitles.

Moving on to visual-verbal means, which include superimposed scripts (e.g. titles) and local signage, their translation in the TT follows a different pattern.

As for titles, language transfer in the TT seems to take into account a distinction between titles fulfilling a ‘metacommunicative’ function and those performing a merely phatic one. In the former case, drawing on Nord (2005: 112), we refer to “metacognitive utterances”, namely all the titles whose function is ‘organizational-delimitative’, in the sense that they serve to (a) signal the inclusion of a single text in a textual unit of higher rank (e.g. an episode as part of a series), or to (b) delineate and inform about the distinct in-text situations within a given episode. In the second case, i.e. phatic-functioning titles, we refer to scripts that appear on screen, in the form of titles, solely to visually-verbally emphasise keywords concurrently uttered through oral-verbal means (e.g. by the voice-off narrator).

The TT under scrutiny exclusively translates the first categories of titles, that is, those with a metacommunicative function, using open subtitles to render them from various SLs into Standard Italian. Conversely, phatic-functioning titles are left untranslated, as their verbal content is already conveyed orally by the voice-off narrator.

The remaining visual-verbal means, namely hard-coded local signage, are retained untranslated in episode 1 – where they originally appear in Italian in the ST, thus matching the TL in the TT – as well as in episodes 2 and 3, whose respective local signage employs Japanese and Spanish languages. The only episode where local signage is linguistically

mediated is episode 4: here open captions are leveraged to translate into Italian only the English-language verbal messages visible and readable on screen.

4.5.3 Analysis of the intertextual (ST → TT) translation strategies

As previously noted, the audience of the TT (i.e. the Italian viewership) differs from that of the ST (i.e. Americans and other English-speaking addressees). This means that the local signage in episode 1 – originally given in Italian and containing numerous CSRs – becomes automatically accessible by the TA without the need for linguistic mediation, thereby exemplifying our ‘Non-translation’ strategy. This tactic, however, appears to be applied also to the treatment of local signage in the remaining episodes, with only the last displaying the use of open subtitles to translate the signs of local shops and restaurants, car stickers, and similar hard-coded written elements. By contrast, in episodes 2 and 3, the local signage remains untranslated and linguistically inaccessible for the TA, as such verbal elements are given in a language other than the TA’s language (i.e. Italian).

At the oral-verbal level, ‘Non-translation’ proves to be extensively applied in episode 1, as most utterances are originally delivered in Italian (and/or Italian language varieties) and therefore do not necessitate any AVT. In the translated segments, rendered via dubbing and voice-over, the TT exhibits a frequent use of ‘Carry-over matching’ in conveying CSRs into the TL, as illustrated in the following examples:

- (55) (ST) Norcini → (TT) Norcini
- (56) (ST) Prosciutto → (TT) Prosciutto
- (57) (ST) Lardo → (TT) Lardo
- (58) (ST) Soppressata → (TT) Soppressata
- (59) (ST) Guanciale → (TT) Guanciale
- (60) (ST) Sbriciolona → (TT) Sbriciolona
- (61) (ST) Ricotta → (TT) Ricotta
- (62) (ST) Ragù → (TT) Ragù

Needless to say, these renditions – obtained through ‘Carry-over matching’ at the lexicogrammatical level – can be easily explained by the simple fact that the referents they refer to belong to the *realia* of Italian cuisine and were already cited in the ST using their original denominations, which were “borrowed” from the foodstuffs’ “native” language (i.e. Italian). The same denominations have been reused in the TT as they represent the official names of such culinary elements in the TA’s language.

Other culture-specific food items have been rendered through different strategies:

- (63) (ST) Spaghetti carbonara → (TT) Spaghetti alla carbonara
- (64) (ST) Red cow Parmesan → (TT) Parmigiano Reggiano
- (65) (ST) Wheels → (TT) Forme di parmigiano

In (63), ‘Equation’ results in the official TL (and TC) translant of the ST item, which is also the original denomination of such dish in the Italian linguaculture.

By contrast, in (64), the TT employs the ‘Substitution’ strategy, while the literal translation of the ST item would be either “Parmigiano Vacche Rosse” (via ‘Equation’)

or “Parmigiano di Vacche Rosse” (via ‘Diffusion’). This substitution results in a generalisation in the TT, as the TL rendition “Parmigiano Reggiano” functions as a superordinate term encompassing both conventional Italian Parmesan – known in Italy simply as *Parmigiano Reggiano* and representing the most widely consumed variety of Parmesan across the peninsula – and the Red Cow Parmesan variety, known in Italy as *Parmigiano Reggiano Vacche Rosse*. The latter is a breed-specific variety of Parmesan, produced exclusively from the milk of the native *Reggiana* (‘Red Cow’) cattle breed.³⁴ This variety is considerably less familiar to Italian consumers, especially outside the Emilia-Romagna region; this may explain why the TT substitutes the originally intended culture-specific food item with a close and more easily recognisable one.

Finally, in (65), ‘Divergence’ is utilised to single out and convey the intended meaning of *wheels* as “forms of cheese”, coupled with ‘Amplification’ (viz. the addition of ‘*di Parmigiano*’, meaning ‘of Parmesan’) to provide a more informative and semantically accurate TL rendition.

In these examples taken from episode 1, we may argue that there is ‘Zero localization’ involved, except in (64), where we might venture to speak of ‘Adaptive localization’. In this case, indeed, the generalisation of the originally intended cheese type with a more broadly consumed one that bears a great degree of cultural and semantic proximity allows the TA to access the reference while preserving the original cultural connotations, albeit at the expense of semantic and terminological accuracy. In this respect, it is worth noting that, later in the text, the cheese type in question is further contextualised, with the audience being introduced to the “Red Cow” cattle breed and to the processes through which its milk is collected and transformed into the final product.

Moving to episode 2, ‘Carry-over matching’ emerges as the predominantly employed strategy for transferring CSRs, closely reflecting the patterns observed in the intratextual translation of examples (29)–(37). By contrast, other CSRs are rendered via ‘Substitution’, yielding particularly interesting results. Let us consider the following examples:

- (66) (ST) *Tai* → (TT) Pagello occhialone / Orata giapponese
- (67) (ST) Rice balls → (TT) Polpette di riso / Palline di riso
- (68) (ST) Seven-spice powder → (TT) Un po’ di spezie

Beginning with (66), *Tai*, i.e. Japan’s distinctive red-skinned fish, is ‘substituted’ with “Pagello occhialone” in the TT via open subtitles, resulting in a semantic mismatch. This solution is also inconsistent within the episode, as the same referent is later translated as “Orata giapponese” via voice-over. Terminological research showed that *Tai*, technically known as *Pagrus major*, has no universally recognised equivalent in Italian and is generally referred to as *Pagro* or *Orata giapponese* on Italian-language webpages. In this regard, the Ministerial Decree n. 19105 on the Italian taxonomy of commercially relevant fish species

³⁴ As reported on the Italian-language webpage of “Consorzio Vacche Rosse” (‘Red Cow Parmesan consortium’), Red Cow Parmesan (*Parmigiano Reggiano Vacche Rosse* in Italian) and conventional Parmesan (*Parmigiano Reggiano* in Italian) differ in the milk used for production: the former is made exclusively from the milk of the native *Reggiana* (‘Red Cow’) breed, whereas the latter is predominantly produced from Italian *Frisona* (‘Friesian’) cows. While both are protected under the same PDO designation (called DOP – *Denominazione di Origine Protetta* in Italian), Red Cow Parmesan is also marketed under the certification of the “Consorzio Vacche Rosse”. For further information, see <https://www.consorziovaccherosse.it/parmigiano-reggiano-vacche-rosse/caratteristiche/> (last access 21/07/2026).

(issued on 22/09/2017) specifies that *Pagrus major* (i.e. *tai*) should be called *Pagro maggiore* in Italian. Nevertheless, it remains unclear whether this designated Italian term preserves the cultural allusion to Japan or simply refers to a similar fish species native to the Mediterranean Sea rather than the Pacific Ocean.

In (67), the intratextual (ST₀ → ST) English translation “rice balls”, provided via open subtitling for a recurrent Japanese utterance,³⁵ is rendered in the Italian TT in two distinct ways: “polpette di riso” [= rice meatballs] and “palline di riso” [= rice balls]. From a translational perspective, the first solution constitutes a ‘Substitution’, whereas the second is an ‘Equation’. With respect to *polpette di riso*, this translation may be considered a sub-form of ‘Total localization’, as the TT rendition conforms with the TC’s customary naming of “balls” of food as ‘meatballs’, as in *polpette di riso* [= rice ‘balls/meatballs’], *polpette di carne* [= “proper” meatballs, made with meat], *polpette di melanzane* [= aubergine/eggplant meatballs], *polpette di pesce spada* [= swordfish meatballs], etc.

Finally, (68) provides another instance of ‘Substitution’, which results in the loss of the CSR through the generalisation of the intended referent. Specifically, *seven-spice powder* lacks a plausible Italian-language equivalent;³⁶ accordingly, the audiovisual translator(s) opted for ‘Substitution’, producing an unavoidable mismatch which nonetheless remains contextually appropriate while realising a ‘Total localization’.

Episode 3 similarly exhibits extensive use of ‘Carry-over matching’, as can be seen in the following examples:

- (69) (ST) Ceviche → (TT) Ceviche
- (70) (ST) Sopa de lima → (TT) Sopa de lima
- (71) (ST) Cochinita pibil → (TT) Cochinita pibil
- (72) (ST) Escabeche → (TT) Escabeche
- (73) (ST) Recado → (TT) Recado
- (74) (ST) Tikin xic → (TT) Tikin xic

As with other instalments, episode 3 also contains translation errors, primarily resulting from ‘Substitution’. Let us consider the examples that follow:

- (75) (ST₀) Pimientas de tabasco → (ST) Black peppercorns → (TT) Grani di pepe nero
- (76) (ST) Kale → (TT) Cavolo nero
- (77) (ST₀) Potes de miel → (ST) Bits of honey → (TT) Pezzetti di miele

³⁵ As noted elsewhere, the author does not possess sufficient proficiency in Japanese to fully access the content of all utterances produced in this language in the ST₀. Consequently, the present analysis has been limited to the intratextual (ST₀ → ST) English translation of such speech events and, in the few instances where it was possible, to the transcription of the elements that could be identified from the original Japanese speech.

³⁶ It is not certain what type of ‘seven-spice powder’ is used in the recipe shown on screen. However, as the episode in question is set in Japan and centres on Japanese cuisine, it may be speculated that the spice blend in question is the Japanese *shichimi tōgarashi* (七味唐辛子). According to Norman’s *Herb and Spices The Cook’s Reference* (2015), this Japanese spice mix, also known as seven-flavour chilli or simply *shichimi*, contains ground (red) chilli flakes, ground *sanshō* (i.e. the Japanese cultivar of Sichuan pepper, with a lemongrass-like aroma), black and white sesame seeds, dried tangerine or orange peel, flakes of *nori* (seaweed), and poppy seeds. It may also contain ginger, yuzu peel, and other seaweed types.

Example (75) replicates what was previously observed in (54), namely a ‘Substitution’ that causes the loss of the CSR, specifically the Yucatecan spice *pimienta de tabasco*. In the ST, this item is intra-textually localised as “black peppercorn” in English, instead of *allspice*, and subsequently rendered in the TT as “grani di pepe nero” [= black peppercorns] in Italian, rather than as *pimento* or *pepe garofanato*.³⁷ Consequently, a ‘Total localization’ is produced, as well as a semantic mismatch.

In (76), another semantic mismatch arises due to ‘Substitution’, as the image of kale appearing on screen clashes with the TT rendition “cavolo nero” [= black cabbage]. From a terminological perspective, ‘kale’ may refer to two related vegetable types: *Brassica oleracea acephala* (i.e. *cavolo nero* in Italian) and *Brassica oleracea sabellica* (viz. *cavolo riccio* in Italian), which significantly differ in leaf shape and colour. However, the type of kale normally mentioned in American contexts is a superfood corresponding to *cavolo riccio* in Italian, whose leaf morphology and colour match the kale shown on screen.

Lastly, in (77), the TL rendition “pezzetti di miele” reiterates the mistranslation previously obtained in the intratextual translation of the Spanish term *potes de miel* as “bits of honey”. In Spanish, *pote* denotes “jar”; therefore, it refers to a container rather than a portion of something (in this case, honey), as is clearly visible on screen. Moreover, the honey depicted and discussed in the scene is visibly in a liquid state; hence, bits or pieces of honey are nowhere to be found.

As regards episode 4, let us focus on the following translations:

- (78) (ST) First Light → (TT) Un taglio molto sano
- (79) (ST) New York (steak) → (TT) Un altro pezzo di costata
- (80) (ST) Marbling → (TT) Marezzatura
- (81) (ST) Brisket → (TT) Punta di petto
- (82) (ST) Tahdig → (TT) Tahdig
- (83) (ST) 425 ° F → (TT) 220° C
- (84) (ST) Za’atar → (TT) Za’atar

Commencing with (78), “First Light” refers to a New Zealand-based meat cooperative that produces and exports 100% grass-fed Wagyu beef, a cattle variety known for lower intermuscular fat and higher intramuscular fat, which results in better marbling and a nuttier flavour.³⁸ The TT rendition “Un taglio molto sano” [= a very healthy cut/piece of meat] is semantically inaccurate from a translational perspective: here, ‘Substitution’ is clearly employed, introducing authorial intervention in the TT and producing a ‘Total localization’ of the item.

Similarly, in (79), ‘Substitution’ is applied in the TL rendition of “New York (steak)”, generalising the originally intended item as “another steak cut” in the Italian rendition, with a consequent loss of the accuracy and technicality that the ST conveys.

³⁷ In *The Encyclopedia of Herbs & Spices* (Ravindran 2017: 25), allspice is identified with Mexico’s *pimienta de tabasco* and is translated into Italian as *pimento*, *pepe della Giamaica*, and *pimento inglese*, of which the first Italian-language translantant may appear to be the most suitable in this context. The Wikipedia entry on ‘Pimenta dioica’, i.e. the botanical name of this spice (https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pimenta_dioica, last access 19/08/2026), additionally lists the Italian denomination *pepe garofanato*, which is the product name employed by the Italian spice company Italpepe, alongside *pimento* (<https://ital-pepe.com/prodotto/pepe-garofanato/>, (last accessed 19/08/2026).

³⁸ Information retrieved from: <https://www.firstlight.farm/nz/about/> (last accessed 27/07/2026).

The use of ‘Equation’ could have retained the precise the TL equivalent *bistecca di controfiletto*, and, time constraints permitting, it could have been coupled with ‘Carry-over matching’ to indicate the item’s name in the SC, enhancing technicality in the TT, as in: *Questa è una New York steak, una bistecca di controfiletto*.

For their part, examples (80) and (81) exhibit the use of ‘Equation’ with two technical meat-related terms: “marbling” (i.e. intramuscular fat) and “brisket” (i.e. a specific beef cut). These are interlingually rendered through their respective TL cognates *marzatura* and *punta di petto*.

In (82) and (84), ‘Carry-over matching’ preserves the culture-bound items “Tahdig” (viz. an Iranian rice dish) and “Za’atar” (i.e. a Middle Eastern spice blend) in the TT, since, in the scenes where they appear, both items are presented and explained as culinary *realia* from other cultures. Accordingly, ‘Zero localization’ is produced.

Finally, example (83) illustrates a clear case localization through ‘Substitution’. Here, the Fahrenheit temperature used in the ST, which is customary in the United States, is converted into Celsius in the TT, i.e. the standard scale in Italy. This adaptation procedure can be said to fall within the category of ‘Partial localization’.

4.6 Interpretation of results

As the translational analysis showed, the ST and its Italian adaptation display a series of mismatches in the rendering of CSRs and food/cuisine-related terminology, some of which are clearly identifiable as translation errors, while others seemingly represent a deliberate attempt – we believe – to localise the scrutinised *realia* to the recipient locales, namely (primarily) the American viewers for the ST and the Italian audience for the TT.

Such a *modus operandi*, however, appears to clash with the intentions of the main sender, Samin Nosrat, whose overtly stated goal is to introduce audiences to the extensive food panorama explored in the series and, in so doing, instruct the viewers on how such edible masterpieces are made and utilised in their respective cuisines of origin. If these intentions are to be interpreted, within a functionalist framework, as the “skopos” to be attained in both the intratextual (ST₀ → ST) and intertextual (ST → TT) translation of the series, we can then claim that such a skopos is not fully respected. Further, since *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat* was conceived as a documentary on diverse culturally relevant foods with a predominant referential function, we expect that the translation of such a text be as accurate as the original message, if not more so, and that the topic-specific referents around which the text revolves be conveyed transparently and unambiguously for the audience to recognise and/or learn about.

Turning to the intratextual translation of the ST, the exclusive employment of open subtitles gives rise to a documentary translation in which, using Nord’s (2005, 2018) terminology, the multilingual ‘offer of information’ of origin is accompanied by a TL ‘offer of information’ about the original ‘offer of information’. In other words, following House (2015, 2018), source audiences are presented with an “overt” translation, where SL messages and their TL (i.e. English) renditions coexist and are transmitted concurrently to the ST’s intended viewership.

This has direct consequences for Participation, that is, the involvement of the addressee(s) in the text to ensure that it functions in the desired way. In particular, the intricate in-text sociolinguistic dimension and the “heterolingualism” of the whole docuseries were made accessible to source audiences through intratextual translation in

the form of open captions, rendering the product “TL-oriented”,³⁹ that is to say, communicatively congruent with the language of the ST’s target audience, i.e. English.⁴⁰ Consequently, both the semantic accessibility of the docuseries for its English-speaking viewers and Participation depend largely on viewers’ willingness and ability to read the open captions throughout the series; otherwise, they cannot access the oral-verbal content delivered in languages other than English. Conversely, the source audience must be familiar with the languages featured within the ST’s Tenor dimension in order to access the oral-verbal content directly, without having to rely on open captions. Either way, Participation plays a pivotal role in this audiovisual product because it activates Sender(s)-Addressee(s) verbal communication in all the numerous in-text situations employing a language other than that of the SA.

It should be noted, however, that many verbal contents underwent no translation procedure. This is particularly the case for hard-coded local signage, which was deliberately retained in the various source languages (i.e. Italian, Japanese, and Spanish) of the docuseries. Consequently, from a visual-verbal perspective, Sender(s)-Addressee(s) communication is hindered unless the SA is familiar with these languages and can interpret the untranslated visual-verbal messages.

Likewise, the TT qualifies as a documentary translation, although it employs multiple AVT modes, each producing a subtly different effect in translatory terms. In particular, the use of dubbing for the voice-off narrator yields a rather “covert” translation – in House’s (2015, 2018) terms – at the oral-verbal level, as the original English voice is completely replaced by an Italian-speaking one, leaving no trace of the SL speech. By contrast, voice-over and open subtitling retain the original voices for all to hear, delivering an “overt” translation which inevitably reminds the TA that what they are watching and hearing is a conversation occurring between two distinct parties from different SCs. This is the case in episodes 2 and 3, where the interplay of voice-over and open captioning inescapably fosters a sense of “cultural distance” as well as a feeling of being an external, third-party observer of a text originally addressing a different audience. This a sensation is reinforced by the constant presence of local signage, which is left untranslated in these two episodes. The same scenario unfolds in episode 4, where, besides the translation of the audio-verbal content, chiefly via voice-over, also the visual-verbal messages of the local signage are rendered in Italian, specifically through open captions. While this may promote accessibility for the TA, it simultaneously emphasises the text’s translated nature.

In light of these considerations, we can affirm that, from a functionalist point of view, the TT constitutes an “exoticizing” documentary translation, in which Participation continues to play a crucial role, albeit in a slightly different way than in the ST. Furthermore, by incorporating the data gained from the external analysis of the ST and the TT, we can also assert that the exoticizing nature of the Italian adaptation (i.e. the TT) is determined by the variation in Audience (SA → TA), which in turn entails a shift in the textual-pragmatic function that each episode performs in the target setting. More

³⁹ Following Neubert (1968), Nord (2005: 57) classifies texts as “specifically SL-oriented”, “SL-oriented but not only SL-oriented”, “not specifically SL-oriented”, and “TL-oriented”. Since Netflix’s *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat* (2018) incorporates intratextual translation to render its multilingual content accessible to its English-speaking target audiences, the ST may be regarded as “TL-oriented”, in the sense that the verbal content originally produced in a language other than English has been made communicatively accessible to the documentary’s intended audience. In this case, the TL (of the ST) corresponds to the language of the source audience, namely English.

⁴⁰ Except for hard-coded hyper-sentences (such as titles), which are retained in multiple languages (Italian, Spanish, and English) in the ST.

specifically, in episodes 1 and 4, what was originally intended to be informative for the SA has become primarily appellative in the TT for the TA, and vice versa. In episode 1, the ST's "foreign" Italian in-text world becomes familiar to the TA; therefore, the cultural references and most of the textual content come to exert an appellative-evocative function for the Italian viewership. A mirror outcome is observed in episode 4, where the cultural allusions and food terminology familiar to the SA (i.e. the American) become "alien" to the TC, therefore the original appellative-evocative function becomes predominantly referential-informative in the recipient cultural setting. As for the two central episodes, however, the ST and the TT show no change at the textual-pragmatic function level, as the cultural references they contain are foreign to both the SA and the TA.

Conclusion

The present study has sought to provide insights into the translation of food and food-related practices, within the context of AVT. Focusing on translation processes in a food-themed, multilingual docuseries through a functionalist lens, we have examined and problematised the translation of culture-bound and region-endemic foods, recipes and eating practices in a cooking-centred text. By adopting a case-study design and employing qualitative modes of enquiry, we conducted a detailed examination of the original version (i.e. the ST) and the Italian adaptation (i.e. the TT) of Netflix's *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat* (2018), with the aim of achieving several analytic objectives: assessing *intra*-textual and *inter*-textual translation choices and their adherence – or *loyalty*, in Nord's (2005, 2018) terms – to the Sender's intentions (understood here as part of the translation *Skopos*), as well as evaluating Register transfer and the distinct AVT modes employed in the ST and TT to convey and manage food references, identities, cultural allusions, and multilingualism.

The results of our case study primarily show and confirm that using tailor-made, product-oriented methodological tools for textual and translational analyses – particularly for scrutinising translation choices in both *intra*- and *inter*-textual renditions of multilingual audiovisual texts such as *SFAH* – can effectively accommodate the researcher's analytic aims and pave the way for a broader interpretation of the mechanisms underlying the examined materials. Our integrated functionalist methodological framework proved particularly fruitful in addressing the multilingual audiovisual product under scrutiny and in analysing its verbal content, allowing us to identify, with precision, data relating to both the external and internal worlds of the ST and TT. This approach enabled us to uncover, with a high degree of accuracy, the distinct textual mechanisms that constitute the intricate linguistic dimension of the docuseries, thanks to the integration of an SFL-informed perspective – derived from House (2015, 2018) – into a functionalist translation framework drawn from Nord (2005, 2018).

Regarding the empirical components, we are confident that the results obtained from applying both our 'baseline' model of AVT strategies and our experimental 'localization strategies' framework contribute meaningfully to the current literature.

Firstly, the application of our 'baseline' model for identifying AVT strategies – explicitly based on Malone's (1988) framework yet reinterpreted from an AVT-oriented perspective, introducing new insights and the novel strategy of 'Non-translation' – yielded significant findings and proved effective in analysing all the *intra*- and *inter*-textual translation patterns considered. Nevertheless, despite its demonstrated clarity and usefulness in this case study, further research is strongly recommended to assess its wider applicability within the broader field of AVT, especially regarding our revised 'Reduction' strategy and our empirically devised notion of 'Non-translation', which, we believe, warrant further exploration on a larger selection of audiovisual texts, comparing originals with their revoiced and/or subtitled adaptations.

Secondly, the implementation of our experimental 'localization strategies' model proved viable and beneficial, yielding a localization-oriented interpretation that, in our view, sheds better light on the translational patterns and choices operationalised in the *intra*- and *inter*-textual translation of observed Field-related items of *SFAH*. However, the limited size of the material examined in this case study precludes definitive conclusions. Some results, in fact, suggest that our model does not fully capture what we have problematised as "sub-forms" of 'Total' and 'Adaptive/horizontal' localization (see § 4.4.3 and § 4.5.3). Accordingly, for a more comprehensive understanding of the

refinements required to enhance its accuracy and consistency, as well as to better evaluate the model's overall efficacy, it is advisable that these preliminary results be followed by further analyses of a wider range of food-themed translated materials. Future research would also benefit from applying our model across a variety of genres and textual typologies (e.g. documentaries, recipes, autobiographies, novels, TV series, etc.), so as to determine whether it is broadly applicable to diverse food-focused texts and other documentary forms, or whether genre-specific adjustments may be necessary.

Finally, a major limitation encountered in our case study must be acknowledged. The translational analysis of *SFAH* – both *intra-* ($ST_0 \rightarrow ST$) and *inter-textual* ($ST \rightarrow TT$) – has brought to light a critical issue that extends beyond our immediate scope but nonetheless deserves attention: the scarcity of rigorously compiled multilingual dictionaries of food and cooking terminology. As is often the case with the translation of specialised texts, which typically require mastery of field-specific notions and lexicon, the translation of food-centred texts necessitates access to language-for-specific-purposes bilingual (and/or multilingual) dictionaries capable of reliably defining the technical vocabulary used in the culinary domain. However, much like other micro-languages – such as the language of art and cultural heritage (see Pano-Alamán & Zotti 2020) – the language of food and cuisine remains, to our knowledge, largely devoid of *ad hoc* terminological resources. This gap becomes especially evident when dealing with culture-bound and region-endemic edibles, whose officially recognised translantants in other linguacultures remain uncertain in absence of trustworthy terminological references. From a translational standpoint, the scarcity of reliable lexicographical tools entails a considerably greater effort on the part of translators to identify plausible TL equivalents and appropriate solutions. This often requires extensive consultation of printed and online encyclopaedias, thematic blogs and articles, parallel and/or comparable corpora, and other reference materials from which translators must extract relevant information and infer how the term in question is conventionally referred to in other linguacultures. Unsurprisingly, this process does not guarantee that the inferred translantant is the correct one rather than a mistranslation.

A clear example of this issue, drawn from *SFAH*, concerns the translation of the Japanese fish *tai*, intratextually rendered as “*Tai* red snapper” for the English-speaking audiences (in the ST), while the Italian adaptation uses two different translantants: *Pagello occhialone* and *Orata giapponese*. In the absence of reliable, food-centred terminological resources, determining whether the translations provided in the ST and TT for the Japanese *tai* were accurate required extensive cross-referencing and verification, involving multiple online and printed dictionaries, encyclopaedias, image-based searches (via Google Images), and other reference materials. Ultimately, a Ministerial Decree on the Italian denominations of commercially relevant fish species, retrieved from the website of the *Ministero delle politiche agricole alimentari e forestali* (Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry), enabled us to establish that *Pagrus Major* (the scientific name of the Japanese *tai*) is officially rendered as *Pagro Maggiore*, whereas no definitive evidence was found regarding its official English designation.

All in all, the findings of this study provide new insights and additional evidence regarding the translation of food and foodways, while also highlighting issues and challenges specific to this field that, as noted above, remain in need of further research and experimentation. It is our hope that this work will help raise awareness of the significance of food and food practices from a translational perspective and ultimately

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serve as a foundation for future investigations on the cross-lingual and cross-cultural conveyance of food references and their cultural allusions.

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Appendix – Food and cooking-related references in *SFAH*

Table 5-1 Results from the ST's food- and translation-oriented Field analysis.

Epi- sode	Food-infused CSRs acting as cultural markers	Non-culture-specific food references	Region-specific animals and commercial establishments	Technical food terminology
1	“Coccoli”, “Ricotta”, “(Prosciutto) Crudo”, “Stracchino”, “porchetta”, “Parmigiano Reggiano” “DOP”, Ragù, Gelato, Olive Taggiasche, Champagne, Pastasciutta, Focaccia, Pesto, Parmigiano, Pecorino, Prosciutto, Pancetta, Salumi, Soppressata, Guanciale, Spaghetti (alla) Carbonara, Finocchiona, Sbriciolona, Red Cow Parmesan, Ricotta, “Puro pecora dell’Amiata”, Porchetta, Capocollo	Bacon, Lard, Olio, Burro, Lardo, Carciofi, Fegatini	Chez Panisse, Cinto Senese, Norcini, Vacche Rosse, Badia a Coltibuono,	(n.) fat, (adj.) amabile, (n.) salamoia, (n.) mortaiolo, (v.) pestare, (v.) sfarinare, (v.) sgranare, (v.) schiacciare, (n.) guancia, (n.) spalla, (n.p.) cured meats, (n.) curds, (n.) whey, (n.) salatura, (n.p.) salting room, (n.) wheels (of cheese), (n.) salatoio, (n.) Tyrosine, (n.) Umami, (n.) etto, (n.) kg (chilo), (n.) beef, (n.p.) pasta all'uovo, (n.p.) grano tenero, (n.p.) grano duro
2	“Fleur de sel”, “Pink rock salt”, Hondawara, Moshio salt, Edamame, Sashimi, Soy sauce, “Diamond Crystal Kosher salt”, Miso, Koji, Rice koji, Miso soup, Moromi, Mirin, Tai Meshi,	Seaweed, Caramel, Marple, Unis (sea urchins), Pickles		(n.) salt, (n.p.) mild salt, (n.p.) rice balls, (n.p.) short ribs, (n.p.) wrist rag, (n.) marinade, (n.) Umami, (v.) brasing, (n.p.) short ribs, (v.) sizzle, (v.) browning

Epi- sode	Food-infused CSRs acting as cultural markers	Non-culture-specific food references	Region-specific animals and commercial establishments	Technical food terminology
	Dashi, Katsuobushi, Sauerkraut, Miso eggs, Kombu, Seven-spice powder, Tai (red snapper)			
3	Sour cream, Ceviche, Sopa de lima, Cochinita pibil, Maracuyá, Chili, Limón dulce, Naranja agria, Salsa, Pavo en escabeche, Escabeche, Recado, Pimientos de tabasco, Chiles, Curtido, Pho, “Taqueria”, “Pavo asado, relleno negro, carne asada, empanizado”, Tomatillos, Chilaquiles, Guacamole, Habanero sauce, “Chile habanero”, “Tacos de barbacoa”, “Tacos dorados”, “Flautas”, “Taco”, Corn tortilla, “Panucho”, “Salbutes”, Habanero, Miel tajonal, Melipona honey, Melipona yucatánica, Scaptotrigona pectoralis, Cephalotrigona sexm- niae, Tikin xic, “Recado negro”, “Chilmole”, “Relleno negro”, “Achiote”, Pollo asado, Mondongo,	Cranberry sauce, Mandarinas, Piña, Grosella, Bisteces, Pavo, Vinagre, Yerbabuena, Clavo, Canela, Ajo, Alcaparras, Aceitunas, Risotto, Tomatos, Lime, Kale, Saladette, Róbalo, Sea bass, Pavlova	Puerco, Meliponas (bees), Meliponario	(n.) acid, (v.) remojar, (v.) marinar, (n.p.) beef stew, (n.) meatballs, (v.) asar, (v.) browning, (v.p.) hacer el cur- tido (encurtir), (n.) nixtamaliz- ation, (v.) ground up, (n.) masa, (n.p.) potes de miel, (n.) julienne, (v.) char,

Epi- sode	Food-infused CSRs acting as cultural markers	Non-culture-specific food references	Region-specific animals and commercial establishments	Technical food terminology
	Recado rojo, Annatto achiote seeds, Achiote paste, Chiles serranos			
4	“Kalamata”, “Brisket”, Brisket, Feta, Tahdig, Wagyu Beef, Buttermilk-marinated roast chicken, Thanksgiving turkey, Za’atar, Maldon salt, Kosher salt, “Coarse kosher salt”, “Morton iodized salt”, “Diamond Crystal Pure and Natural Kosher Salt”, “Maldon Sea Salt Flakes”, Canola oil	Rib eyes, Iodised salt, Sea salt flakes, Saffron	Chez Panisse, First Light	(n.) heat, (n.) steaks, (n.p.) paring knife, (n.p.) buck knife, (v.) grilling, (adj.p.) medium rare, (n.) browning, (n.) chuck roast, (n.) marbling, (n.p.) New York steak, (n.) short rib, (n.) chuck, (v.) roasting, (v.) simmering, (v.) sautéing, (n.p.) air browning, (n.p.) Maillard reaction, (n.) vinaigrette

*Inverted commas are used to signal visual-verbal content appearing in local signage.