

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Can Artificial Intelligence (AI) Translate Arabic Abu-Brand Names with Different Prompts

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ABSTRACT

In addition to "father", أبو "Abu" in Arabic has several meanings, and is used in many contexts, including brand names. Despite their widespread use, there is a lack of studies that focus on the translation of Abu-brand names by Artificial Intelligence (AI). Therefore, this study investigated the translation of Abu-brand names by Microsoft Copilot (MC) and DeepSeek (DS) in terms of accuracy, translation strategies, causes of faulty equivalents and whether stakeholders can depend on AI in translating Abu-brand names. A sample of 100 Abu-brand names was collected and translated by MC and DS using three different tasks. In the three tasks, MC gave literal word-for-word translations of all 100 brand names, where it translated Abu as "father of" and the following noun semantically, whether the prompt specified the phrase type or not and whether each brand name was associated with the product name or not. Like MC, DS gave a literal word-for-word translation of all the brand names in tasks 1 and 2. However, when the product name was added, DS treated the brand names as Proper Nouns and transliterated them all in English regardless of whether they were coined by the manufacturers, business owners or consumers. However, 66% of the transliterations by DS were correctly used, but 34% were not supposed to be transliterated as they were grassroots (folk-coined) brand names, based on the packaging image, not the original English brand name which some consumers find difficult to pronounce and remember as a result, they coin a nickname based on the image on the packaging. Instead, the original English brand name should have been given by AI as an equivalent in the case of grassroots brand-names (Tiger balm instead of Abu Nimr Ointment for أبو نمر مرهم). Other interesting findings were that MC and DS gave identical English equivalents to 83% of the items in tasks 1 and 2. Additionally, DS gave double equivalents to 14.5% of the items in set 1, and faulty annotations/explanations of the brand name that show extraneous inferences and faulty guesses based on kunyas and nicknames that do not match a commercial context. Recommendations for stakeholders and for improving the performance of AI in translating Arabic Abu-brand names are given.

KEYWORDS

Artificial Intelligence, AI translation, Product names, brand names with Abu, Arabic brand names, literal translation, word-for-word translation, transliteration, grassroot brand names, manufacturer-crated brand names

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1. Introduction

Although أبو "Abu" literally means "father", it has many denotative and connotative meanings and is used in general as well as specialized contexts. In Arabic culture, fathers are addressed by the name of their first/oldest child (أبو علي *Abu Sami*). A grandparent, a foster parent or an old person may be called أبو محمد *"Abu Mohammad"* out of respect. A bachelor can be called *Abu~* after his father out of respect or jokingly (أبو صالح *Abu Saleh*, أبو خالد *Abu Khaled*). It is used in proper nouns referring to people's first name (أبو هريرة *Abu Huraira*, أبو لهب *Abu Lahab*, أبو جهل *Abu Jahl*, and in nicknames (أبو العيد for *Eyad*). It appears in names of cities, places and monuments (أبو ظبي *Abu Dhabi*; أبو سمبل *Abu Simbel Temple* in Egypt; أبو الهول *Sphinx*); in animal, plant, insect, bird, and fish names to describe their color, shape or characteristic (أبو حديج *stork*; أبو جلمبو *crab*; أبو الحناء *robin*, أبو bald ibis; أبو مقص *Earwigs*, أبو سيف *sword fish*; أبو بريص *gecko*); in names of fruits and vegetables, (أبو شوشة *leek/shallots*, أبو فروة *chestnut*, أبو صرة *naval orange*). Connotatively, Abu has metonymous and figurative meanings referring to some animals

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أبو صابر) “salt”; أبو زلومة “elephant with a trunk”, to describe bad or good demeanor of a person (أبو نكد *a boy who keeps nagging*; arrogant man أبو الكرم *a man of generosity*). In Colloquial Arabic, it is used to identify an unknown person by describing his/her physical appearance (أبو نظارة *man wearing sunglasses*). In addition, it is used in Islamic contexts (أبو لهب *Satan* مرة) أبو Lahab, *Abu Jahl*); in folk medicine to refer to pathological conditions (أبو دغيم & أبو كعب *mumps*) and names of medicines and ointments used in Colloquial Arabic (أبو نمر *Tiger balm*, أبو فاس *Axe brand*, أبو عضلات *Radian Muscle cream*). When used in medical terms, أبو Abu does not mean *father*, but it is used as a prefix to express the origin, or anatomical location (Al-Jarf, 2017; Al-Jarf, 2025). Additionally, Abu is used in brand names (أبو بنت *Abu Bint/Abu Walad/ Abu Kass* rice). Abu can also mean origin or founder of (أبو الطب *father of medicine*; أبو التاريخ *father of history*).

Despite the multiple uses of أبو Abu in general as well as specialized contexts, very few studies in the literature explored the semantic differences between “parents” and “mother and father” and their occurrence, denotative and connotative meanings in the Holy Quran (Shahrour, 1991); the translation of kinship terms in the Qur’An (Thawabteh, 2012); basic-level translations of kinship terms from Standard Arabic to English (Al Saleem, 2013); the translation of family and kinship terms in Arabic societies (Mohammed, Mohammed & Qassim, 2024); and student translators’ ability to translate Abu-expressions from English to Arabic and Arabic to English (Al-Jarf, 2017). Lately, a study by Al-Jarf (2025) focused on the translation of folk medical terms containing أم Om and أبو Abu to English by Microsoft Copilot (MS) and DeepSeek (DS).

Although issues related to brand names, shop names, product names, street signage and linguistic landscapes have been the focus of many studies in the literature, there is a lack of studies that focus on the translation of Arabic brand names containing أبو Abu to English by Artificial Intelligence (AI). Therefore, this study aims to find out whether AI can correctly translate Arabic Abu-brand names to English. It aims to compare Microsoft Copilot (MC) and DeepSeek (DS) in terms of accuracy of the equivalents given, how they translate Arabic Abu-brand names in isolation, in context and with product identification, the translation strategies they use, the causes of translation errors and whether translation students, manufacturers and business owners can depend on AI in translating Arabic Abu-brand names to English. It also aims to explain the meaning of Abu in Arabic brand names, why Abu is more popular in Arabic brand names than أم Om/Umm.

This research is significant because Arabic brand names with “Abu” often carry a cultural, or symbolic meaning that literal translation misses. Without proper handling, AI might reduce *Abu Walad* to “*Father of the Boy*,” stripping away its identity as a beloved chocolate or cheese brand. It is also significant for avoiding misinterpretation. Many “Abu” names are folk nicknames or visual cues (like *Abu Asad* for Fucidin cream). AI needs to distinguish between literal names (أبو علي *Abu Ali*), brand names (أرز أبو *Abu Ali Rice*) and user-generated nicknames (أبو فاس *for Axe brand ointment*).

This study is significant for improving cross-cultural commerce. Accurate brand translation helps Arabic brands expand globally to ensure that foreign consumers understand what they are buying and to help importers, marketers, and regulators avoid confusion or mislabelling. It is beneficial for numerous stakeholders. It will help AI developers build smarter, culturally adaptive AI translation models, Arabic brand owners will ensure that brand identity is preserved across languages, global consumers get clearer understanding of product origins and meanings, e-commerce platforms will improve product listings and search accuracy, regulators and customs will avoid misclassification of imported goods, and linguists & researchers gain insight into how language and branding intersect and where AI can be used in Arabic brand name translation to English.

Moreover, this study will enhance AI’s cultural intelligence. Arabic is rich in metaphors, idioms, and naming traditions. Researching “Abu” in branding helps AI systems become more culturally aware, not just linguistically accurate. It has real-world relevance. It will highlight how dialects, cultural nuance, and naming conventions pose unique challenges. The focus on “Abu” brand names fits squarely into this gap, where semantic precision meets cultural context.

Furthermore, this study is part of a series on studies by the author which investigated the translation of specialized terms, metaphorical and idiomatic expressions such as the translation of Arabic folk medical terms with om and abu by Microsoft Copilot and DeepSeek (Al-Jarf, 2025g); translation of the Gaza-Israel war terminology by Microsoft Copilot and Google Translate (Al-Jarf, 2025c); DeepSeek, Google Translate and Copilot’s translation of Arabic grammatical terms used metaphorically (Al-Jarf, 2025d); translation of Arabic expressions of impossibility by Microsoft Copilot and student-translators (Al-Jarf, 2025e); translation of zero-expressions by Microsoft Copilot and Google Translate (Al-Jarf, 2025h); a comparative linguistic study of Microsoft Copilot and Google Translate in translating medical terms (Al-Jarf, 2024b); English-Arabic translation of technical terms by Google Translate (Al-Jarf, 2021a & Al-Jarf, 2016); translation educational polysemes in full-text Arabic research articles by Google Translate (Al-Jarf, 2025a); Arabic transliteration of borrowed English nouns with /g/ by Microsoft Copilot and Google Translate (Al-Jarf, 2025b).

On the other hand, this is part of a series of studies in which the author investigated a variety of linguistic, cultural, pragmatic promotional, sociocultural and globalization issues related to product names, shop names and linguistic landscapes such as pan Arab linguistic and translation errors and strategies in bilingual linguistic landscapes (Al-Jarf, 2025f); should Arabic product names be definite or indefinite (Al-Jarf, 2024a); English language representation in Korean linguistic landscapes (Al-Jarf, 2024b); when to translate Arabic and foreign shop names in Saudi Arabia (Al-Jarf, 2024c); semantic and syntactic anomalies in Arabic-transliterated compound shop names in Saudi Arabia (Al-Jarf, 2023); deviant Arabic transliterations of foreign shop names in Saudi Arabia and decoding problems that they cause among shoppers (Al-Jarf, 2022a); promotional, sociocultural and globalization reasons for the dominance of foreign shop names over Arabic names in Saudi Arabia (Al-Jarf, 2022b); and teaching English with linguistic landscapes to Saudi students studying abroad (Al-Jarf, 2021).

2. Definition of Terms

2.1 Microsoft Copilot

Copilot¹ is an AI-powered assistant developed by Microsoft, built on large language model (LLM) technology and enhanced by the Prometheus framework. It was originally launched as Bing Chat on February 7, 2023. Since then, it has evolved into Microsoft Copilot, expanding across platforms, including Edge, and mobile. It serves as Microsoft's primary successor to Cortana, offering a more advanced and versatile interface that resembles tools like ChatGPT, but with deeper integration into Microsoft's ecosystem. It is a general-purpose conversational AI designed to assist users with writing, research, translation, image analysis, and workflow optimization and allows users to analyze and interpret images and documents, generate creative visuals and engage in spoken dialogue and visual analysis. Today, Copilot is embedded in Windows 11 and Microsoft 365, where it assists with tasks such as summarizing, drafting documents, and analyzing spreadsheets.

2.2 DeepSeek

DeepSeek² (DS) is a Chinese AI research company that was founded in 2023 and has since released several AI models, including DeepSeek-V3 and R1, which are available for users for free. DS provides open-source LLMs that operate using advanced neural networks and machine learning algorithms to power its language processing capabilities. Its open-weight philosophy, cost-efficiency, and rapid innovation have positioned DeepSeek as a disruptive force in the global AI landscape, challenging dominant players like OpenAI and Meta. DS algorithms enable its models to adapt, process, and generate text with high accuracy and efficiency. Its neural systems are designed to enhance text understanding, generation, real-time processing and decision-making, making DeepSeek's systems offer a scalable and high-performance alternative that appeals to businesses and developers and researchers.

3. Data Collection and Analysis

A sample of 100 Arabic Abu-brand names were collected by searching Google and Google images for "أبو~", "جبة أبو~", "أرز أبو~", "زيت أبو~", "شاي أبو~", "صابون أبو~", "معجون اسنان أبو~", "بسكوت أبو~", "مرهم أبو~". Only brand names that refer to product names (rice, tea, soap, ointment, cream, cheese, milk, oil, chocolate, tooth paste, battery ... etc) and contain Abu were included. Shop, restaurant, bakery or any other place names containing أبو were not included in the sample. Names in which Abu is used to describe features of a product such as: بسكوت أبو سمسم, بسكوت أبو شوكولاتة, جوال أبو كاميرا, جوال أبو ثلاث كاميرات, بسكوت أبو بصمة were excluded.

The sample included brand names referring to rice (35%); oil and ghee (25%); chocolate, chewing gum and cookies (14%); medicated ointments and creams (6%); toothpaste (4%); beauty products and soaps (7%); tea and milk (6%); cigarettes and batteries (3%).

Arabic Abu-brand names were classified into the following categories: (i) *Manufacturer-created* abu-brand name as أبو تفاعتين *Abu Tuffahtain Blanket*, أبو جمال زيت حبة البركة *Abu Jamal Black Seed Oil*, أبو سيفين شاي *Abu Saifain Tea*, أبو طير أرز *Abu Tayr Rice*, أبو سنبلتين أرز *Abu Sunbulatain Rice*, أبو نخلة زيت *Abu Nakhlah Oil*, أبو بنتين أرز *Abu Bintain Rice*, أبو خروف أرز *Abu Kharuf Rice*, أبو سياره أرز هندي بسمتي *Abu Sayyara Indian Basmati Rice*, أبو قبة أرز *Abu Qubba Rice*, أبو كاس أرز *Abu Kas Rice*, أبو كورة أرز *Abu Kura Rice*, أبو نخلتين أرز *Abu Nakhlatain Rice*, أبو هلالين أرز *Abu Hilalain Rice*. These "Abu" brand names are intentional and official. They are created by manufacturers or importers as registered or commercial identifiers. This mean that these names are Proper Nouns, not descriptive phrases. Even if the name contains metaphorical or symbolic elements, the fact that it is a deliberate brand name means it should be preserved as is in transliteration. In addition, brand names as these are usually transliterated on the package, box or bottle and there is an image of a girl, axe, palm trees, cup, dome and so on. Abu in these brand names means "with" not "father of". (ii) *Owner-created Abu-brand names*. Here the business is named after a respected

¹ <https://copilot.microsoft.com>

² [DeepSeek AI](#)

Moreover, the Arabic brand names were rank-ordered alphabetically, then items with odd numbers were grouped together for tasks 1 & 2; those with even numbers were grouped together and used in task 3. All the Arabic brand names containing Abu in the sample were translated by MC and DS using 3 tasks as follows:

- All equivalents rendered by MC and DS were marked by the author. To be marked correct or, each Abu-brand name has to be treated as a Proper Noun and hence transliterated rather than literally translated, except for grassroot/folk coined brand names for which the equivalents given should be the original English brand names. To find out the strategies that MC and DS used in translating Arabic brand names with Abu in the sample, mistranslations were compiled and subjected to further analysis. The percentage of Arabic brand names translated correctly, those for which MC and DS gave literal translations, transliterated equivalents, an explanation, and variant lexemes, was calculated for MC and DS separately.

4. Results

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أبو اصبعين *Father of Two Fingers*, أبو باب *Father of the Door*, أبو تفاحتين *Father of Two Apples*, أبو جبل *Father of the Mountain*, أبو حميد *Father of the Camel*, أبو حسين *Father of Hussein*, أبو حصان *Father of the Horse*, أبو حمامة *Father of the Dove*, أبو سهم *Father of an Arrow*, أبو ساهم *Father of the Falcon*, أبو صقر *Father of the Falcon*, أبو سيف *Father of the Sword*, أبو عجل *Father of a Calf*, أبو عزيز *Father of Aziz*, أبو مطرقة *Father of the Hammer*, أبو عضل *Father of Muscles*, أبو علي *Father of Ali*, أبو عوف *Father of Awf*, أبو فيصل *Father of Faisal*, أبو قوس *Father of the Bow*, أبو مبخرة *Father of the Incense Burner*, أبو نخلة *Father of the Palm Tree*, أبو نخلتين *Father of Two Palm Trees*, أبو هريرة *Father of the Kitten*, أبو وردة *Father of the Rose*, أبو وليد *Father of Walid*, أبو الفتوح *Father of Victories*, أبو حرارة *Father of Heat*, أبو شوكة *Father of the Thorn*, أبو علم *Father of the Flag*, أبو منارة *Father of the Minaret*, أبو فاس *Father of the Axe*, أبو ميزان *Father of the Scale*, أبو الهول *The Sphinx*.

In 14.5% of the items, DS gave double equivalents as the lexical item that follows Abu is polysemous, i.e., DS gave both semantic meanings, of which one is identical to that given by MC. Examples of the double equivalents given by DS are:

أبو الفتوح *Father of Conquests/Victorious*, أبو حرارة *Father of Heat/Fever*, أبو شوكة *Father of a Thorn/Spine*, أبو علم *Father of a Flag/Banner*, أبو منارة *Father of a Minaret/Lighthouse*, أبو فاس *Father of the Axe / Man from Fez*, أبو ميزان *Father of the Scale/Balance*, أبو الهول *Father of Dread & Sphinx*.

In 17%, MC and DS gave different equivalents of the lexical item following Abu as it is polysemous (أبو كربة، أبو بس، أبو الهول، أبو ولد، أبو سنبلتين، أبو شماغ، أبو غربية، أبو غلمسيس، بن). This means that MC gave one equivalent meaning, and DS gave another equivalent meaning (See Table 1).

Table 1: Variant Lexemes Given After Abu by MC & DS

MC	DS
• أبو بنت <i>Father of a Girl</i>	• أبو بنت <i>Father of a Daughter</i>
• أبو ولد <i>Father of a Boy</i>	• أبو ولد <i>Father of a Son</i>
• أبو كربة <i>Father of Baldness</i>	• أبو كربة <i>Father of a Bowl/Goblet (a nickname)</i>
• أبو بس <i>Father of "Just" (possibly slang)</i>	• أبو بس <i>Father of a Kiss (a term of endearment)</i>
• أبو سنبلتين <i>Father of Two Ears of Grain</i>	• أبو سنبلتين <i>Father of Two Earrings (a nickname)</i>
• أبو غربية <i>Father of Gharbiya (a region)</i>	• أبو غربية <i>Father of the WaterSkin (a nickname)</i>
• أبو شماغ <i>Father of the Headscarf</i>	• أبو شماغ <i>Father of the Shemagh (a nickname for someone known for wearing or selling the traditional headdress)</i>
• أبو غلمسيس <i>Father of Golgotha (possibly Coptic reference)</i>	• أبو غلمسيس <i>Father of Glamsis (This appears to be a proper name, likely "Father of [son named] Glamsis")</i>

In addition to giving the English semantic equivalent, DS gave an explanation/annotation such as saying that the equivalent is a nickname (29%) as in: أبو تفاحتين *Father of Two Apples*, أبو حمامة *Father of a Dove*, أبو سهم *Father of an Arrow*, أبو سهمين *Father of Two Arrows*, أبو عجل *Father of a Calf*, أبو مبخرة *Father of an Incense Burner*, أبو نخلة *Father of a Palm Tree*, أبو نخلتين *Father of Two Palm Trees*, أبو وردة *Father of a Rose*, أبو شوكة *Father of a Thorn/Spine*, أبو منارة *Father of a Minaret/Lighthouse*, أبو سنبلتين *Father of Two Earrings*, أبو كربة *Father of a Bowl/Goblet*.

In 17%, DS explained that Abu+ Noun is a kunya: أبو حميد *Father of Hamid*, أبو راشد *Father of Rashid*, أبو سلمان *Father of Salman*, أبو عزيز *Father of Aziz*, أبو علي *Father of Ali*, أبو عوف *Father of Awf*, أبو فيصل *Father of Faisal*, أبو وليد *Father of Walid*. In Arabic culture, fathers are called after the name of their eldest son (a respectful or affectionate nickname), so such brand names are similar to kunyas. In these examples, أبو *father* denotes literal parenthood (e.g., أبو حسين). Interpreting Abu + Noun in the brand names in the sample by DS as traditional kunyas or nicknames would be misleading.

It is noteworthy to say that, 75% of the explanations given by DS are faulty and extraneous inferences of what the Abu + Nouns are, as in the following:

- أبو اصبعين *Father of Two Fingers (a nickname, often for someone with a hand injury)*
- أبو باب *Father of a Door (a nickname, could refer to a doorman or someone associated with a significant door)*
- أبو جبل *Father of the Mountain (a nickname for a large or imposing person)*
- أبو جمل *Father of a Camel (a nickname for someone who owns or is associated with camels)*
- أبو حسين *Father of Hussein (a kunya, meaning he has a son named Hussein)*
- أبو حصان *Father of a Horse (a nickname for a horse owner or breeder)*
- أبو سيف *Father of a Sword (a nickname for a warrior or swordsman)*
- أبو سيوف *Father of Swords (a nickname for a great warrior)*

- The explanations/annotations rendered are faulty guesses because they are based on the use of kunyas and nicknames in a general, not a commercial context. DS made symbolic association with objects, traits, or professions (e.g., أبو سيف), physical characteristics or personal history (e.g., أبو غلمسيس, أبو اصبعين). These explanations fall short because they assume literal or cultural meanings without taking the commercial context into consideration. They miss the marketing angle, where “Abu” is used to personify a product or service.

4.2 Translation of Arabic Abu-Brand Names by Specifying Context

In the second task, the author asked MC and DS to translate the same set of Arabic Abu-brand names by mentioning that they are brand names only. Interestingly, MC and DS gave the same translations as when the prompt did not specify anything. Both MC and DS translated them semantically, not as brand names used in a commercial context.

4.3 Translation of Arabic Abu-Brand Names by Specifying Context & Product Name

In the third task, the author asked MC and DS to translate set 2 (items with the even numbers) of Arabic Abu-brand names by specifying that the phrases are brand names and that each is followed by the product for which it stands. Again, MC gave literal word for word translation of all the brand names with Abu translated as father of and the following noun semantically as in أبو القاسم زيت *Father of AlQasim Oils*, أبو بكر زيت برفاين *Abu Bakr Paraffin Oil*, أبو فتاحتين بطانية *Father of Two Apples Blanket*, أبو سيفين شاي *Father of Two Swords*, أبو زهرة زيت *Father of the Flower Oil*, أبو شنب زيت *Father of the Mustache Oil*, أبو طير رز *Father of the Bird Rice*, أبو سعد صابون *Father of Saad Soap*, أبو عوف *Father of Awf Biscuits*, أبو عوف شوكولاتة *Father of Awf Chocolate*, أبو غزالة أرز بسمتي بنجابي *Father of the Gazelle Punjabi Basmati Rice*, أبو الهيل أرز *Father of Cardamom Rice*, أبو حصة أرز *Father of Hussein Rice*, أبو حسين رز *Father of Juhayna Rice*, أبو جهينة أرز *Father of Two Girls Rice*, أبو سلطان أرز *Father of Sultan Rice*, أبو سنبلتين أرز *Father of Two Ears of Grain Rice*, أبو شحاط أرز *Father of the Slipper*, أبو سيارة أرز هندي بسمتي *Father of Small Ears Rice*, أبو علي أرز *Father of Arish Rice*, أبو غربية أرز *Father of Gharbiya Rice*, أبو قبة أرز *Father of the Dome*, أبو هلالين أرز *Father of Two Palm Trees Rice*, أبو نخلتين أرز *Father of the Ball Rice*, أبو كورة أرز *Father of the Cup Rice*, أبو كأس أرز *Father of Two Crescents Rice*, أبو نمر مرهم *Father of the Print Gum*, أبو طبخة علك *Father of the Axe Ointment*, أبو فحم معجون أسنان *Teeth of Father Charcoal Toothpaste*, أبو حماة معجون *Father of the Tiger Ointment*, أبو شوكة وملعقة سمن *Father of Fork and Spoon*, أبو يس دخان (سجائن) *Father of the Dove Toothpaste*, أبو عسكري معجون أسنان *Father of the Soldier Toothpaste*, أبو أسد مرهم *Lion Father Ointment*, أبو وردة كريم الشعر *Father of the Rose Hair Cream*, أبو ولد كندر شوكولاتة *Father of the Boy Kinder Chocolate*, أبو عضلات كريم العضلات *Muscle Cream Father of the Horse*, أبو ولد بسكوت *Father of the Boy Biscuit*, أبو جبل شوكولاتة *Father of the Mountain Chocolate*, أبو ملعقة شوكولاتة *Father of the Spoon Chocolate*.

On the contrary, DS recognized the difference between translating descriptive phrases as in the first 2 tasks (section 4.1 & 4.2 above) and considering Abu-brand names with the product associated with them as Proper Nouns. Hence, DS rendered an English transliteration of all of the brand names in set 2. However, DS could not distinguish between manufacturer and owner-created brand names coined by the producers, manufacturers and business owners, and grassroots/folk-created brand names (nicknames coined by common people/consumers for foreign products). Taking this into consideration, 66% of the transliterated brand names are manufacturer-created brand names, constitute 30%, and owner-created brand names constitute 36%. The following are examples of manufacturer-created brand names:

أبو سيفين شاي *Abu Saifain Tea*, أبو جمال زيت حبة البركة *Abu Jamal Black Seed Oil*, أبو تافتين بطانية *Abu Tuffahtain Blanket*, أبو خروف أرز *Abu Bintain Rice*, أبو نتين أرز *Abu Nattin Rice*, أبو الهيل أرز *Abu AlHil Rice*, أبو نخلة زيت *Abu Nakhlah Oil*, أبو طير أرز *Abu Tayr Rice*

Abu Kharuf Rice, أبو سنبلتين أرز *Abu Sunbulatain Rice*, أبو سيارة أرز هندی بسمتي *Abu Sayyara Indian Basmati Rice*, أبو قبه أرز *Abu Qubba Rice*, أبو كاس أرز *Abu Kas Rice*, أبو كورة أرز *Abu Kura Rice*, أبو نخلتين أرز *Abu Nakhlatain Rice*, أبو هلالين أرز *Abu Hilalain Rice* (30%).

These "Abu" brand names are intentional and official - created by manufacturers or importers as registered or commercial identifiers. This means that these names are proper nouns, should be transliterated, not translated and they function as brand identities, not descriptive phrases. Even if the name contains metaphorical or symbolic elements, the fact that it is a deliberate brand name means it should be preserved as it is in transliteration, because translation would distort the name and confuse consumers. Use of transliteration would avoid semantic misinterpretation. For example, translating أبو شنب زيت as "*Father of Mustache Oil*" would be misleading and even awkward. It aligns with global branding norms: Just like *Pepsi* or *Nivea* are not translated, *Abu Awf* or *Abu Kas* should remain intact as well. Abu-brand names in the examples herein are published by the manufacturer as an official English version of the brand (e.g., *Abu Kas* is marketed as *Abu Kass*). The transliterated name is even printed on the packaging.

Similarly, DS transliterated brand names coined by and named after the owner as in:

أبو شحات أرز *Abu Shhat Rice*, أبو زهرة زيت *Abu Zahra Oil*, أبو جهينة أرز *Abu Juhayna Rice*, أبو القاسم زيوت *Abu AlQasim Oils*, أبو عوف *Abu Sa'd Soap*, أبو سعد صابون *Abu Sa'd Soap*, أبو شنب زيت *Abu Shanab Oil*, أبو بكر زيت برفاين *Abu Bakr Paraffin Oil*, أبو عوف شوكولاته *Abu Awf Biscuit*, بسكوييت *Abu Awf Chocolate*, أبو الذهب أرز *Abu AlDhahab Rice*, أبو عوف شوكولاته *Abu Ghazala Punjabi Basmati Rice*, أبو عريش أرز *Abu Araysh Rice*, أبو علي أرز *Abu Ali Rice*, أبو غربية أرز *Abu Gharbiya Rice*, أبو حصه أرز *Abu Hussein Rice*, أبو حسين أرز *Abu Hussein Rice*, أبو سنييه أرز *Abu Snaina Rice*, أبو سلطان أرز *Abu Sultan Rice*, أبو حصة أرز *Abu Hissa Rice* (36%).

In these examples, "Abu + Name" is used as a brand owner identifier. It is not metaphorical nor symbolic. It is referential, pointing to the actual founder, owner, or figurehead behind the brand or company. This usage is common in Arabic-speaking countries, where naming a business after a respected individual - especially using a kunya - is a way to convey trust and familiarity, signal family ownership or legacy and create a personal connection with consumers. For example: أبو سعد صابون > *Abu Sa'd Soap* refers to soap produced by or brand under someone known as Abu Sa'd; أبو عوف شوكولاته > *Abu Awf Chocolate* is a product line from the Abu Auf company in Egypt. So, in the case of such brand names, transliteration is essential because they represent real people or registered brand entities. They should be treated as Proper Nouns, and hence transliterated, not translated, to preserve their original form across languages. Translating أبو الذهب أرز as "*Father of Gold Rice*" would be incorrect and misleading. The correct rendering should be *Abu Al-Dahab Rice*, to maintain the brand identity.

Although DS could identify when brand names should be treated as Proper Nouns, it could not distinguish which types of Abu-brand names to transliterate and which ones not to transliterate. DS overgeneralized the transliteration strategy to grassroots or folk-coined brand names (34%), where consumers create vernacular brand names based on packaging imagery, often because the original foreign name of the product is difficult to pronounce, unfamiliar, or simply not memorable. Grassroot brand names are a form of cultural shorthand, often passed by word of mouth, and reflect how language adapts to daily life. Here, DS failed to connect the Arabic grassroots or folk-coined brand names with the original foreign name of the product as in the following examples:

- أبو فاس مرهم *Abu Fas Ointment* instead of Axe brand.
- أبو طبعة علك *Abu Tabaa Chewing Gum* instead of Bubble gum.
- أبو نمر مرهم *Abu Nimr Ointment* instead of Tiger balm.
- أبو بس بوب كات *Abu *Bass (biss) Bobcat* (likely a piece of machinery like a skidsteer loader) instead of Bobcat.
- أبو فحم معجون اسنان *Abu Fahm Toothpaste* instead of Capitano Charcoal Toothpaste.
- أبو حمامة معجون اسنان *Abu Hamama Toothpaste* instead of Closeup.
- أبو بس دخان (سجائر) *Abu *Bass (biss) Cigarettes* instead of Craven A.
- أبو شوكة وملعقة سمن *Abu Shouka wa Mal'aqa Ghee* (Ghee with [a picture of] a fork and spoon) instead of Delico Ghee.
- أبو عسكري معجون اسنان *Abu Askari Toothpaste* instead of Email Diamant.
- أبو اسد مرهم *Abu Assad Ointment* instead of Fucidin.
- أبو وردة كريم الشعر *Abu Warda Hair Cream* instead of Kenrosa.
- أبو ولد كندر شوكولاتة *Abu *Walid (walad) Kinder Chocolate* instead of Kinder Chocolate.
- أبو عضلات كريم مسكن للالم *Abu *Adhulat (Adhalat)* for a Pain Relief Cream instead of Radian massage cream.
- أبو حسان كريم العضلات *Abu Hisan Muscle Cream* instead of Rofenac.
- أبو ولد بسكوت *Abu *Walid (walad) Biscuit* instead of Teashop.
- أبو جبل شوكولاتة *Abu Jabal Chocolate* instead of Toblerone.
- أبو ملعقة شوكولاته *Abu Mal'aqa Chocolate* (Chocolate with a spoon) instead of Dolcrem.

Linguistically, "Abu + Noun" becomes a folk label for a product because they are coined based on a picture on the packaging, (a tiger, spoon, wheel, a muscular man, a lion, a soldier ... etc), or a symbolic association (e.g., strength, speed, luxury). Grassroot/folk-brand names are not official trademarks, but have become functional identifiers in local markets. So, when someone says أبو فاس, they mean *Axe Brand Universal Oil*, because the packaging features a picture of an axe. Therefore, transliterating these names as Proper Nouns (Abu Fas) can be misleading in formal contexts like product catalogues, medical prescriptions, international trade and legal documentation. Instead, AI should identify the original brand name (e.g., *Axe, Closeup, Toblerone, Double Spearmint* ... etc.), use that as an equivalent and may note the local nickname if relevant for clarity. For example, اشترى مرهم أبو فاس should be "*He bought Axe Brand Universal Oil (locally known as Abu Fas)*".

5. Discussion

5.1 Meaning of Abu in Arabic Brand Names

In Arabic, أبو Abu in brand names as أبو نمر - أبو عضلات - أبو فاس does not mean "father of" in the genealogical or metaphorical sense. It is functioning more like a marker of association or a visual branding device, closer to "with" or "characterized by", especially when tied to visual cues (images) or product packaging. For example, أبو قوس (Abu Qaws) is a condensed milk brand featuring a bow image and أبو عجلة (Abu Ajala) is a soap brand with a wheel image. In these cases, "Abu" functions as a label or identifier tied to the image on the packaging. It is a colloquial and a commercial usage that plays on the familiarity of the "Abu" structure to make the product memorable. The term becomes a visual-semantic bridge, not a literal or cultural kunya. It is a stylistic device that conveys familiarity, identity, and even humor. It has several functions:

- It gives the brand a character or persona. Example, *Abu Walad* (Father of the Boy) doesn't imply a literal father - but evokes a friendly, family-oriented image, often used for chocolate, cheese and biscuit.
- It has folkloric and cultural resonance. "Abu" taps into the Arab tradition of nicknaming, where people are known by their association with something, like *Abu Fas* (Father of the Axe) for a pain balm. It creates a memorable identity that feels rooted in everyday language.
- Abu-brand names are characterized by catchiness and market appeal. أبو Abu is short, punchy, and easy to remember. It is often paired with a visual or emotional cue that sticks. It is flexible - used for everything from rice (*Abu Hessa*) to batteries (*Abu Bas*).
- أبو Abu is about identity (giving the brand a face or character), familiarity (making it feel local), relatable, and trustworthy, symbolic (suggesting strength, quality, or a unique trait) and humor (sometimes it is just playful or ironic).
- Brand language often evolves into functional shorthand in everyday speech. for instance, the rice brand أبو سيوف (*Abu Suyuf*, or "*Abu Swords*"). The packaging features swords, and over time, "*Abu Suyuf*" has become a recognized product name. When a customer says, "*Give me two أبو سيوف*," the shopkeeper immediately understands it refers to two bags of that specific rice brand. No one is thinking about warriors—they're thinking about rice. This is a prime example of semiotic branding. The image of the swords anchors the brand visually and the name أبو سيوف anchors it verbally. Together, they form a mnemonic device that is easy to remember and use.
- In Arabic Abu-brand names, packaging holds linguistic authority. It is the final word. When a manufacturer prints a name like "*Abu Kass*" in English on the product, that becomes the official brand name, regardless of its meaning in Arabic. This principle is especially critical in contexts such as retail catalogs, international trade, e-commerce listings, and legal documentation. The packaging dictates the name to be used, not linguistic interpretation.
- There is a semantic shift of أبو in colloquial branding. In expressions like أبو فاس > with an axe (based on the logo) > *Axe Brand Universal Oil*; أبو عضلات > with muscles > *Radian massage cream*; أبو نمر > with a tiger > *Tiger Balm* أبو is not functioning as a metaphor for origin or causality. It is functioning as a visual shorthand, a folk label, or even a mnemonic device based on the image on the package. These grassroot or folk-coined brands have no Standard Arabic equivalents, are not grammatically derived from kinship metaphors, are entirely context-dependent, and are often tied to product recognition rather than linguistic logic. أبو is used as a branding cue, and are especially tied to visual logos.
- Many Abu-brand names are not informal nicknames or folk labels; they are official, registered brand identities. When names as أبو كاس > *Abu Kass Rice* & أبو بنت > *Abu Bint Rice* appear in both Arabic and English on the packaging, they signal intentional transliteration by the manufacturer. These bilingual labels are standardized and serve to ensure brand recognition across diverse markets, particularly where consumers speak multiple languages. Just like Nestlé or Heinz, these names are treated as proper nouns. Translating them (e.g., "*Father of the Cup*" for Abu Kass) is incorrect and misleading. Instead, they must be transliterated exactly as shown on the packaging. AI systems and translators should always defer to the packaging as the authoritative source.

5.2 Translating Arabic Abu-Brand Names With and Without Specifying The Phrase Type and Product

Results of the current study showed that both MC and DS failed to recognize the Arabic Abu-brand names in set 1 and translated them word for word. Even when the prompt mentioned that the phrases are brand names, MC and DS also failed to recognize them as brand names and gave the same word-for-word translation as in the first task, in which the type of phrases was not mentioned in the prompt at all. Even when the prompts mentioned that the phrases were brand names and added the

product with which each brand name is associated, MC still failed to give correct English equivalents and translated all the brand and product names word-for-word. Unlike MC, DS considered the phrases in the third task as Proper Nouns and transliterated them all in English regardless. Only 66% of the brand names were correctly transliterated as they were the manufacturer and owner-coined brand names. The other 34% which were grassroots or folk-coined brands and should not have been transliterated. Rather, the original foreign brand name should have been provided.

It seems that when there is no context or when the context given is not sufficient, AI performs a linguistic analysis, but when the brand context is defined, this helps DS (but not MC) in cultural and commercial recognition. It is like the difference between translating “Apple” as a fruit vs. recognizing it as a tech company. Same word but totally different implications.

When MC was asked to translate the Abu-brand names without context, it relied primarily on linguistic and semantic analysis: It broke down the grammar and root words, to give the most accurate literal meaning. MC pulls from a general corpus of language knowledge and common usage. But when the author told MC and DS that the phrases are brand names, DS tapped into a different layer of understanding - one that includes commercial databases, product catalogs, marketing language, user-generated content (like forums, reviews, and social media), and cultural branding patterns which MC failed to identify.

5.3 Why AI failed in Recognizing Abu-brand Names

Most AI models are trained on formal Arabic corpora, linguistic glossaries and parallel translation datasets. But they often lack brand-specific corpora tied to packaging, colloquial naming conventions based on logos and multimodal reasoning (image + text), corpus exposure to packaging language and cultural annotation that links colloquial usage to commercial products. Without these, AI may default to literal translation or miss the associative logic and visual entirely. Colloquial brand names in Arabic use أبو as a visual-semantic bridge, not a metaphor, Standard Arabic cannot capture this usage, and AI must be guided by contextual cues. Product packaging plays a central role in meaning-making, especially in low-literacy or oral contexts. MC may detect that أبو فاس is metaphorical, and that it may refer to a remedy, but unless MC is trained on brand associations or folk usage patterns, it might not immediately map it to *Axe Brand Universal Oil* without additional cues. In addition, there are corpus gaps in folk usage. Common Abu-brand names used in colloquial Arabic are often underrepresented in parallel corpora, absent from formal marketing glossaries, and are highly regional or brand-specific. So MC may not always retrieve the exact English equivalent unless it is widely documented or explicitly linked in training data.

5.4 Why MC and DS Gave Many Identical Faulty English Equivalents

Finding of the current study revealed that MC and DS gave many identical English equivalents to the Arabic Abu-brand names especially when asked to translate the first set without specifying the type of phrases and even when the prompt mentioned that the phrases were brand names for several reasons: First, both MC and DS are working from a shared linguistic and cultural foundation. Both conduct a literal translation of common structures as in the phrase “Abu + noun” follows a predictable pattern in Arabic, translating it as “Father of + noun” is the most direct and widely accepted default method. Since both systems are trained on large corpora of Arabic-English texts, MC and DS are likely to converge on the same literal output - especially for straightforward phrases like: أبو سيف > *Father of Sword* & أبو عضلات > *Father of Muscles*. Second, MC and DS use similar training data sources. It seems that MC and DS have been exposed to parallel Arabic-English datasets, including Wikipedia, product catalogs and user-generated content. So when the input is clean and the cultural context is strong, convergence is expected.

5.5 Comparison of AI Translation of Abu-Brand Names and Other Metaphorical Expressions

Results of the current study indicated that MC could not give correct equivalents to any of the 100 Arabic Abu-brand names in the sample (0%). This is the first type of structure with which MC has the utmost difficulty. MC and DS performance in translating folk medical terms containing أم Om & أبو Abu, expressions of impossibility, Gaza-Israel war terminology, grammatical terms used metaphorically, and zero expressions and medical terms was much better than connecting brand names with their corresponding equivalents. This is because of how AI models are trained, what they prioritize, and where they falter. In translating folk medical terms involving أم and أبو, MC and DS were more successful than translating brand names. Even though the folk medical terms are obsolete, MC and DS translated them with higher accuracy. Medical folk terms also have relatively fixed meanings across dialects and time. For example: أبو صفار almost always refers to *jaundice*. Folk medical terms appear in medical glossaries, folk medicine archives, and parallel corpora used to train AI models. Their meanings are less context-dependent, making them easier for AI to match with high confidence. However, it was noted that MC and DS had similar difficulties transferring the meaning the same terms with Abu referring to medication and brand names in the folk medical term study and in the current study (Al-Jarf, 2025b; Al-Jarf, 2025c; Al-Jarf, 2025d; Al-Jarf, 2025e; Al-Jarf, 2025f; Al-Jarf, 2024a; Al-Jarf, 2024b; Al-Jarf, 2021a; Al-Jarf, 2016a).

In addition, even though DS gave faulty English equivalents to Arabic Abu-brand names on tasks 1 & 2 as it rendered word-for-word translation, it showed accuracy and deep understanding of lexical meaning when it yielded double equivalents to each polysemous lexeme following Abu, despite the limited context (Abu + Noun). Here DS outperformed Google Translate which made mistakes in recognizing polysemous words in full text educational articles and could not select the equivalent that best suited the educational context (Al-Jarf, 2025a).

In translating أبو Abu-phrases by AI, accuracy is not just about language – it is about domain, context, and corpus design. AI performs better when terms are stable, well-documented, and semantically anchored. The core dilemma in AI translation is that recognizing Abu-phrases is not the same as resolving them. AI often identifies the metaphorical structure - like أبو فاس but it does not always match it directly with their common English equivalents unless prompted with enough context or specificity. This reflects how AI models are trained to preserve semantic transparency before committing to equivalence.

As mentioned earlier, Abu-brand names used in colloquial Arabic are often underrepresented in parallel corpora, absent from formal marketing glossaries and are highly regional or brand-specific in which case MC may not always retrieve the exact English equivalent unless it is widely documented or explicitly linked in the training data to brand associations or folk usage patterns, it might not immediately map it to Axe Brand Universal Oil without additional cues.

5.6 Comparison of AI and Human Translation of Om and Abu Expressions

Results of the current study demonstrated that MC and DS failed to render correct English equivalents to Arabic Abu-brand names when the brand names were *not* marked as brand name, when they were marked as brand names and even when they were marked as brand names and associated with the product which they represent. MC failed on all three tasks as it rendered literal word-for-word translations, DS successfully recognized the sample as brand names, considered them Proper Nouns and transliterated them according. Compared to the performance of MC and DS, human translators in (Al-Jarf, 2017) performed somewhat better than MC in all tasks, and better than DS in tasks 1 and 2 but DS performed better than translation students in recognizing Arabic Abu-brand names and treating them as Proper Nouns. In prior studies by the author, student translators could translate less than 20% of the أم & أبو expressions on the test correctly. They left many items blank, and literal translation was the most common strategy by students, similar to MC and DS in the current study. Arabic and English expressions that are similar in English and Arabic were easy for students to translate. But those where there is no on-to-one correspondence between Arabic expressions and their English equivalents were difficult to translate and many were left blank. This means that familiarity, in the case of students and MC and DS plays a significant role in rendering correct equivalents.

6. Recommendations

Language is layered. So, when it comes to brand names, especially in advertising and marketing, surface meanings can be deceptive and may be mistranslated by AI. A phrase that sounds folkloric might be a clever piece of marketing. Brand names with Abu mimic traditional kunyas to evoke personality or identity. But they subvert the meaning by tying it to visual branding, not familial or symbolic association. Abu+noun is a form of semantic borrowing, where the cultural weight of “Abu” is repurposed for marketing. This is a type of cultural resonance where Arabic speakers are used to “Abu” names, so Abu-brand names feel familiar. They represent visual anchoring where the image reinforces the name, making it easier to remember and a kind of playful ambiguity. Therefore, providing an accurate English equivalent to Arabic Abu-brand names by AI as those in the current study, depends on the following: (i) AI’s training data. If it includes regional e-commerce, social media, or informal speech, it might recognize “Abu Fas” as Axe Oil. (ii) Context awareness. Without explicit cues in the prompts, many AIs (including Copilot & DeepSeek) may default to literal translation, especially if the brand name looks like a kunya or nickname. (iii) Named entity recognition. Some systems, like DeepSeek, are optimized to treat these as Proper Nouns, but may not link them to the original foreign brand, unless they are trained on that mapping. So, unless AI has been trained on localized brand aliasing, it may not automatically know that أبو نمر refers to *Tiger Balm* or that أبو جيل is *Toblerone chocolate*. In the case of grassroots brand names, AI should use the original brand name when known, avoid transliterating folk names unless the context demands it (e.g., quoting a customer). It should annotate where necessary to enhance understanding. This is especially important in brand names that use medical contexts (e.g., ointments, creams), or commercial translation and cross-border marketing.

In translating Arabic Abu-brand names, translation students, manufacturers, business owners should distinguish manufacturer-created brands that should be considered Proper Nouns and hence transliterated and folk-coined brand names for which an original foreign brand name exist, in which case this kind of brand names should neither be transliterated, nor translated but should be substituted by the original brand name that exists in the foreign language.

The corpus that AI uses to translate or transliterate phrases in L1 and their equivalents in L2 should be expanded to include Arabic Abu-brand names and their English equivalents and vice versa. Brand names should be included in the AI training data so that AI can distinguish phrases used in a general context and those used in a commercial or advertising context.

The intersection of visual branding, colloquial naming, and semantic drift in Arabic Abu-brand names presents unique challenges for AI. When أبو is used as a branding cue - especially alongside visual logos - AI must rely on multimodal reasoning (image + text), corpus exposure to packaging language, and cultural annotation linking colloquial usage to commercial products. Without these, AI may default to literal translation and miss the associative logic entirely. Standard Arabic cannot fully capture this branding usage. Contextual cues from packaging are essential, particularly in low-literacy or oral markets where visual recognition drives meaning.

Finally, when translation students, manufacturers, and business owners use AI to translate Abu-brand names, they should mention in the prompts the kind of phrases AI is going to translate/transliterate together with the product name associated with each brand name. They can also ask AI to annotate the equivalents given to make sure they are accurate.

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