

Cultural Translation in Indonesian Horror Movie: Translation of Cultural Words in Mangkujiwo 2

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Abstract. This research aims to identify the types of cultural words, translation techniques, and cultural elements found in the Indonesian horror film *Mangkujiwo 2* (2020), focusing on translations from Indonesian (source language) into English (target language). The study found 20 instances of cultural words and their corresponding translation techniques. The results indicate four types of cultural words: material culture (35%), social culture (20%), ecology (5%), and gestures and habits (40%). Seven translation techniques were identified: adaptation (15%), amplification (25%), pure borrowing (5%), borrowing (25%), description (15%), literal translation (10%), and modulation (5%). The translation of cultural words in films presents unique challenges due to their deep-rooted significance within specific cultural contexts. This study examines the techniques used to translate cultural references in *Mangkujiwo 2*, particularly those rooted in Javanese mysticism, such as spiritual beliefs, rituals, and supernatural entities linked to figures like Ratu Kidul. Drawing on Peter Newmark's (1988) translation theory and Molina and Albir's (2002) framework, the study analyzes how translators preserve the cultural essence of Javanese mysticism for an international audience. The findings reveal that transference and amplification are predominantly used to retain the authenticity of terms like *Kejawen* and ritualistic expressions, while descriptive equivalents help clarify culturally specific concepts. These choices reflect the significant cultural differences between Javanese traditions and English-speaking audiences.

Keywords: cultural words, movie translation, mangkujiwo, translation technique

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Translation is the process of transferring meaning from a source language (SL) to a target language (TL), and plays a crucial role in enabling cross-cultural understanding (Catford, 1965). In the context of audiovisual media like films, translation often takes the form of subtitles, dubbing, or voice-overs, each of which influences the audience's comprehension and emotional experience. Among these, subtitling presents unique challenges, especially when dealing with cultural words, or terms deeply rooted in a particular culture and often lacking direct equivalents in the TL (Newmark, 1988).

The film *Mangkujiwo 2* (2020), which blends Indonesian and Javanese languages, offers a rich case study for exploring such challenges. As a supernatural-political thriller rooted in local myth and tradition, the film contains numerous cultural expressions that are difficult to translate without loss of nuance. Words like *pusaka*, for example, carry meanings beyond their literal translation and embody elements of material culture specific to Javanese heritage.

Language and culture are interdependent; thus, translating culturally loaded terms requires more than linguistic equivalence, it demands cultural sensitivity and strategic decision-making (Ali, 2021; Qassem, 2021). When such cultural gaps are not bridged, the TL audience may misinterpret or fail to grasp the intended meaning (Triwibowo, 2023). This study investigates how cultural terms in *Mangkujiwo 2* are rendered into English through subtitles, and what translation techniques are employed to maintain both semantic and cultural accuracy.

Using (Molina & Hurtado Albir, 2002) framework of translation techniques and (Newmark, 1988) classification of cultural words, this research identifies the strategies used to deal with culturally specific terms in the film. It also highlights the translator's role in choosing between foreignization and domestication, as well as how these choices impact viewer interpretation.

This study is relevant not only due to the linguistic complexity of Javanese, but also because it examines how translation mediates cultural identity in global media. Through this analysis, we aim to provide deeper insight into the practices of translating cultural terms in Indonesian cinema.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Translation is essential in bridging cultural and linguistic gaps, especially in audiovisual media where meaning must be conveyed across languages and contexts. Subtitling is a common technique, but translating cultural words and terms deeply rooted in specific traditions and often lacking direct equivalents remains a major challenge (Baker, 1992; Newmark, 1988). These words are tightly linked with values, customs, and identity, making them difficult to render accurately in another language.

The film offers a compelling case for this kind of analysis. With dialogue in Indonesian and Javanese, the film contains various cultural references that are not easily understood by international audiences. For example, terms like *pusaka*, a sacred heirloom with spiritual value that cannot be simply translated without losing meaning. Subtitles must therefore balance accuracy, cultural resonance, and accessibility.

In audiovisual translation, the cultural context often gets lost when the translator fails to consider the underlying cultural values. Language and culture are inseparable; thus, translators must navigate both semantic and cultural layers (Leksananda & Manus, 2023). This study investigates how cultural words in *Mangkujiwo 2* are translated into English and what strategies are used to maintain their meaning in a global context.

Previous research has explored subtitling techniques using frameworks such as Newmark's classification of cultural words and Molina & Albir's model of translation techniques. However, this study distinguishes itself by focusing specifically on the translation of Javanese cultural terms into English in a film subtitled for an international platform like Netflix. These terms are often neglected or poorly translated, leading to misunderstanding or cultural loss.

By analyzing the translation strategies used in *Mangkujiwo 2*, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how culture is mediated through language in subtitled films. It also highlights the importance of choosing techniques such as borrowing, adaptation, or modulation that preserve the original meaning while making the content accessible to a global audience.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design to explore how cultural words are translated through specific strategies in film subtitles. According to (Creswell, 2009; Taherdoost, 2022), qualitative research focuses on the depth and quality of information, aiming to understand underlying meanings, motivations, and how individuals interpret specific cultural expressions within their environment. Qualitative methods are particularly effective for exploring phenomena in-depth, identifying categories, patterns, and trends, and generating insights or hypotheses. Descriptive

qualitative research is commonly used in translation studies to explore linguistic features without manipulating variables, making it suitable for examining the rendering of culture-bound terms in audiovisual media.

As stated by (Sandelowski, 2000; Silverman et al., 2004), descriptive qualitative research involves collecting, organizing, and summarizing data to understand a phenomenon in context. Cresswell (1994:39) also notes that qualitative research not only emphasizes results but also focuses on the processes behind them. In this study, the qualitative approach enables the researcher to examine what, how, and why certain translation techniques are used to render cultural terms in *Mangkujiwo 2*. This approach was chosen for its flexibility, affordability, and suitability for analyzing textual data in real-world contexts—specifically, the subtitled cultural elements in film.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Cultural Words

The following are 20 of data found by the researcher. These 20 data analyzed one by one in detail the types of Cultural word in “*Mangkujiwo 2*”.

Table 1 Cultural Word of “*Mangkujiwo 2*”

Type of Cultural Words	Token	Percentage
Material Cultural	7	35%
Social Cultural	4	20%
Ecology	1	5%
Organization, Custom, Idea	8	40%
Total	20	100%

[Data Analysis]

The most frequently occurring category was Organization, Custom, and Ideas, comprising 40% of the total data. This category includes references to traditional belief systems, local rituals, spiritual ideologies, and hierarchical power structures, all of which are central to the storyline of the film. The film’s narrative centers around mystical practices and ancestral vengeance, which naturally brings out terminology specific to Javanese culture. The appearance of such terms suggests the filmmakers’ intention to remain authentic to the socio-religious atmosphere of the setting.

Material Culture accounted for 35% of the data. This includes culturally specific references to objects, clothing, food, or tools that are visible and tangible elements of daily life. Their presence in the film helps create a more immersive cultural environment, contributing to the setting’s realism and historical grounding. Translating such items often poses a challenge, as the cultural resonance of certain objects may not have direct equivalents in the target language.

The Social Culture category made up 20% of the data. Words in this group typically involve informal speech, community behaviors, or expressions that convey social identity, such as nicknames, terms of endearment, or social status references. In the film, these terms enhance character development and provide insight into relationships and societal roles within the local community.

Lastly, Ecology was the least represented category, with only one instance (5%). Ecological terms in Newmark’s taxonomy often involve culturally loaded references to natural environments like animals, plants, or geographical locations. Although not a dominant focus in the film, the presence of

an ecological term still underscores how natural elements may be symbolically tied to local belief systems or settings in Indonesian cinema.

In summary, the dominance of organizational and ideological terms in the subtitle data confirms the thematic depth of *the film* in reflecting Javanese mysticism and tradition. These findings emphasize the importance of culturally sensitive translation approaches to preserve the integrity and authenticity of local expressions in global media platforms like Netflix.

Translation Techniques

Table 2 Translation Techniques of “Mangkujiwo 2”

Types of Translation Techniques	Token	Percentage
Adaptation	3	15%
Pure Borrowing	1	5%
Amplification	5	25%
Borrowing	5	25%
Description	3	15%
Literal Description	2	10%
Modulation	1	5%
Total	20	100%

[Data Analysis]

This study identified 20 instances of cultural words in Mangkujiwo 2 that were rendered into English using a range of translation strategies, following the framework of Molina and Albir (2002). The analysis revealed that Amplification and Borrowing emerged as the most frequently employed techniques, each accounting for 25% of the data. This indicates a balanced translation approach aimed at both preserving the cultural essence of the source text and ensuring clarity for the target audience.

Amplification was commonly used when culturally loaded expressions required additional explanation in the English subtitles. This strategy expands on brief or ambiguous terms in the source language to provide contextual clarity, particularly when there is no direct cultural or lexical equivalent in the target language. By elaborating the meaning, the translator ensures that international viewers can fully grasp the cultural nuances embedded in the dialogue.

Borrowing, including both pure and adapted forms, was also prevalent. While Pure Borrowing appeared in only 5% of cases, where a term was transferred unchanged into the target language, general Borrowing was more widely applied. This technique retains the original cultural word, sometimes with minor modifications, allowing the subtitle to preserve the local flavor and introduce culturally specific terms to the audience without compromising comprehension.

In 15% of the cases, translators employed Description and Adaptation. Description entails translating a cultural term by explaining its function or meaning within the cultural context. This helps the target audience understand practices, objects, or ideas that may not exist in their own culture. On the other hand, Adaptation involves substituting a cultural term with one that has a more familiar equivalent in the target language ensuring the message is culturally relatable, even if the original specificity is reduced.

Literal Description, used in 10% of cases, represents a more direct, word-for-word approach. While it may appear rigid, this method can be effective when the original term is self-explanatory or contextually clear. The least employed technique was Modulation, found in only one case (5%). This

strategy involves a shift in viewpoint or structure, offering an alternative expression in the target language that conveys the intended meaning while aligning with its linguistic norms.

In summary, the data demonstrate that the translation of cultural terms in *Mangkujiwo 2* involved careful negotiation between semantic fidelity and cultural accessibility. The dominant use of amplification and borrowing suggests that the translators prioritized both the retention of cultural identity and the facilitation of viewer understanding. This reflects a nuanced application of translation techniques, tailored to the linguistic and cultural intricacies of the film's Javanese-Indonesian setting. Such strategies are crucial in subtitle translation, where space is limited but meaning must be preserved.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the translation of cultural words in the subtitles of *Mangkujiwo 2*, focusing on how culturally specific terms were rendered from Javanese and Indonesian into English. Using Newmark's classification of cultural terms and Molina and Albir's model of translation techniques, the analysis identified both the types of cultural expressions present and the strategies employed by the translators.

The findings revealed that the most frequently occurring cultural word types were those related to organization, custom, and ideology, followed by material culture. These categories reflect the deep cultural roots of the film's narrative, which revolves around traditional beliefs, mystical practices, and political power structures. The translator's task, therefore, extended beyond linguistic conversion to cultural mediation, ensuring that international audiences could access the underlying meanings embedded in these terms.

In terms of translation techniques, amplification and borrowing emerged as the dominant strategies, indicating a thoughtful balance between explanation and preservation of cultural identity. Amplification enabled the translator to clarify culturally dense expressions, while borrowing allowed the retention of authentic terms that have no direct equivalents in English. Other techniques such as adaptation, description, and literal translation were applied with varying frequency, depending on the context and complexity of the source term.

The study underscores the importance of culturally sensitive translation practices, especially in audiovisual media where space is limited and every word carries weight. Subtitling films like *Mangkujiwo 2* for a global audience requires not only linguistic competence but also cultural awareness and interpretive skill. Ultimately, this research contributes to a growing body of knowledge on how translation can function as a tool for cultural exchange, enabling local narratives to resonate meaningfully across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

For future research may expand on this work by examining audience reception or comparing subtitle versions across different languages and platforms. As Indonesian cinema continues to gain global visibility, the role of translation in shaping how culture is perceived abroad will only become more significant.

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