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Translation Of Indonesian Cultural Terms In Novel *Cantik Itu Luka* Into *Beauty Is A Wound*

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how cultural terms are translated in Eka Kurniawan's Cantik Itu Luka and its English translation Beauty Is a Wound (translated by Annie Tucker, 2015). Cultural terms, including references to dukun, wayang, and traditional social practices, pose significant challenges in literary translation due to their deep cultural embeddedness. Drawing on Newmark's (2008) translation procedures, this study investigates which procedures are applied by the translator to convey cultural meaning while maintaining textual readability. Adopting a qualitative approach, the analysis identifies six translation procedures: transference, transposition, descriptive equivalence, functional equivalence, cultural equivalence, and couplets. The findings indicate that the translator strategically balances cultural preservation and reader accessibility, with transference and cultural equivalence maintaining Indonesian cultural specificity, while descriptive and functional equivalence facilitate comprehension for target readers. This study contributes to literary translation scholarship by demonstrating how systematic procedural choices enable the effective mediation of culturally bound expressions in contemporary Indonesian literature.

Keywords: Cantik itu Luka, Cultural Terms, Newmark, Novel, Translation, Translation Procedure.

1. Introduction

Translation plays a vital role in facilitating communication across languages and cultures in an increasingly interconnected world. Rather than merely transferring lexical items, translation involves conveying the cultural meanings embedded within language. This challenge becomes particularly salient in the translation of cultural terms—expressions that reflect the values, beliefs, customs, and traditions of a specific society. As Newmark (2008, p. 7) emphasizes,

translation is central to multilingual communication, requiring translators to navigate culturally bound concepts that often lack direct equivalents in the target language.

The translation of cultural terms has become a central concern in translation studies because these terms encapsulate the identity and worldview of a culture. Danila Seleskovitch, cited in Newmark's *A Textbook of Translation* (2008), argues that any concept expressed in one language can be translated into another, provided the cultures involved have reached comparable levels of development. However, this ideal is often challenged in practice, as cultural terms frequently embody unique cultural experiences and social practices that do not have straightforward counterparts in other languages. This creates significant challenges for translators, who must balance fidelity to the source text with accessibility and comprehension for the target audience.

With globalization and the rapid dissemination of literature, media, and technology, the translation of cultural terms has gained even greater prominence. Translators are increasingly called upon to bridge cultural gaps, making the study of how cultural terms are translated both important and timely. Scholars such as Newmark (2008) and Baker (1992) have extensively discussed the difficulties in translating cultural terms, particularly when no direct linguistic or conceptual equivalents exist in the target language. Their work highlights the need for effective strategies to preserve cultural meaning while ensuring clarity and readability.

Previous research has explored various aspects of cultural term translation across different genres and languages. Such studies underscore the value of categorizing cultural terms as a methodological tool to better understand the translation process and its challenges. This issue is especially concerned in the context of Indonesian literature, where cultural terms often reflect local customs, religious beliefs, and regional worldviews that may be unfamiliar to international readers. One of the literary works that is rich in cultural elements is *Cantik itu Luka* by Eka Kurniawan. This novel tells the life of a woman during the Indonesian colonial period, not only describing the struggle for survival, but also introducing various cultural terms that provide a real picture of life at that time. This work has been translated into several languages, including English.

However, translating literary works rich in cultural elements is not merely transferring the meaning. The main challenge is how to maintain the cultural terms in the target language in order for readers to understand and feel the cultural nuances contained in the literary work. Therefore, this study analyzed the translation procedures used to translate cultural meanings in the novel *Cantik itu Luka* using the translation procedures approach from Newmark (2008). This study aimed to determine whether the translator successfully retained the cultural meaning of the source language in the target language.

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2. Methods

Research methods refer to the specific procedures used to collect, analyze, and present data in a study. The primary data sources are Eka Kurniawan's novel *Cantik Itu Luka*, published in Indonesian in 2002 as the source text, and its English translation *Beauty Is a Wound*, translated by Annie Tucker and published in 2015 as the target text. This novel was selected because of its rich use of culturally embedded terms, particularly those related to Indonesia's colonial period. In addition, the text incorporates distinctive elements such as historical fiction, magical realism, and social critique, making it a compelling object of analysis for translation studies.

To collect the data, the study used documentation and note-taking methods. First, both versions of the novel were carefully read to identify the cultural terms. Then, the identified terms were highlighted and noted. Lastly, the Indonesian and English versions were compared to examine how the cultural elements were addressed in the target language.

For analyzing the data, the study adopted a descriptive qualitative approach to provide a detailed and comprehensive examination of the cultural terms and their translations. The theory guiding this analysis was Newmark's (2008) translation procedure approach, which outlined the strategies used to render cultural terms into the target language. The analysis involved identifying passages containing cultural terms, followed by applying Newmark's procedures to understand the procedures employed in the translation process.

The data in this study was presented using the informal method, meaning that the results were conveyed through descriptive explanations aligned with the cultural terms identified in the novel *Cantik itu Luka*. The data was presented in the form of a table to ensure clarity, with the analyzed data highlighted in bold.

3. Findings and Discussion

Newmark defines translation procedures as strategies used to translate smaller units of a text, such as words and phrases, in contrast to translation methods, which focus on the overall structure of a sentence or the entire text. Throughout the novel *Cinta itu Luka* and its translation, several translation procedures proposed by Newmark are applied by the translators to convey the cultural terms from the source language, Indonesia, to the target language, English. Below is the further explanation on the procedures applied.

A. Transference

According to Newmark (2008), transference is a translation procedure in which a source language (SL) word is directly transferred into the target language (TL) without modification, a process also known as borrowing. This procedure is commonly applied to cultural terms in order to preserve their authenticity and retain the original word's cultural resonance, sound, or imagery for target readers. The following section presents sample data that are analyzed further.

Table 1. Data Transference Procedures

Number of Data	SL	TL
1	Si ***kyai*** segera berlalu, berdoa meminta ampun dan tak pernah datang lagi.	The **Kyai** quickly prayed for mercy, moved along, and never came again.
2	Orang-orang pribumi sering mendongenginya banyak cerita, tentang ***wayang*** dan ***buta***, dan ia suka karena mereka doyan tertawa.	She liked them because they told her many fantastic tales about **wayang** and **buta**, and they loved to laugh.

Data 1

In data 1, the word **Kyai** is borrowed in the translation instead of being replaced with an equivalent English term. According to Online Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), **Kyai** refers to a respected religious scholar, particularly in Javanese culture, often associated with leading or teaching in *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools).

The decision to use transference rather than translating **Kyai** into words like imam, scholar, or cleric is to ensure that the cultural and spiritual significance of the term is retained. This procedure may not fully capture the specific social and religious role of a kyai within the Javanese Islamic tradition. By preserving the term, the translator maintains the cultural identity and authenticity of the text.

Data 2

In Data 2, the words **wayang** and **buta** are retained in the target language (TL) using the transference procedure. **Wayang** refers to the traditional Indonesian shadow puppet, a cultural and artistic practice of Javanese and Balinese culture. On the other hand, **buta** refers to a giant-like creature or evil spirit in *pewayangan* stories and is often portrayed as an antagonist. These terms are very specific to Indonesian culture and tradition. If translated literally into English, such as shadow puppet for **wayang** or giant for **buta**, much of the cultural meaning and nuances would be lost, as these terms have specific meanings in Indonesian culture that cannot be easily conveyed with literal translation. By retaining the words in their original form, the translator preserves the cultural nuances of the text and allows the reader to become familiar with the cultural elements of the source language.

B. Transposition

According to Newmark (2008), transposition is a translation procedure that involves modifying the grammatical structure of the source language (SL) to fit the target language (TL). This procedure typically involves changes in things like plural to singular nouns, as well as adjustments to the syntax or grammatical structure to make the translation sound more natural. This change used to create the translation that sound natural even if it can be directly translated. Here is an example of transposition:

Table 2. Data of Transposition Procedures

Number of Data	SL	TL
3	Ia sering berdandan menirukan perempuan-perempuan itu, dengan **sarung yang melilit ketat.**..	*... and they would dress her up in their* **tight sarongs** ...
4	Mereka bergerombol di balik belukar ceri dan jarak dan di kebun pisang, sambil **menggulung ujung sarung, menggendong anak, menenteng sapu lidi, dan bahkan berlepotan lumpur sawah**.	**Rolling up the edges of their sarongs, carrying children, clutching broomsticks, or stained with mud from the fields**, they gathered behind cherry shrubs and jatropha trees and in the nearby banana orchards.

Data 3

In Data 3, the word **sarung** is translated literally as **sarong** in the target language (TL). In Indonesia, a **sarung** is a large piece of fabric sewn at both ends to form a tube-like shape, commonly worn for casual wear at home, religious ceremonies, weddings, or as part of traditional attire. Although the translator retains the term **sarong**, there is a noticeable shift in both the noun and grammatical structure in the translation.

In the source language, the phrase **sarung yang melilit ketat** consists of a singular noun (**sarung**) followed by a relative clause (**yang melilit ketat**). However, in the target language, it has been shifted into the plural noun (**sarongs**) with the adjective (**tight**), resulting in **tight sarongs**. This structural adjustment is an example of transposition, where grammatical elements are modified to make the translation sound more natural in the TL. Such shifts help maintain clarity and readability for the target readers.

Data 4

In Data 4, there are slightly grammatical shifts in the translation from the source language to the target language using transposition procedure. First, In the SL noun words **sarung**, ***a*nak**

sapu lidi, and **sawah** are all in singular form. However, in the TL, these words have been shifted into their plural forms as **sarongs**, **children**, **broomsticks**, and **fields**. By shifting to plural nouns, the translation accurately reflects the larger collective group involved in the story.

Another important structural change is in the placement of the verb **bergerombol** or gathered. In the SL, it appears at the beginning of the sentence and showing the action first. However, in the TL, the description of actions (**rolling up their sarongs, carrying children, clutching broomsticks, and stained with mud**) is presented before the verb **gathered**. This reordering made the translation sound more natural without changing the main idea

C. Descriptive Equivalence

Descriptive equivalence is a translation procedure where a word or phrase from the source language is explained or described in the target language. This procedure is useful when the source language refers to something very specific or culturally unique, which does not have an equivalent in the target language. Here is the example of descriptive equivalence.

Table 3. Data of Descriptive Equivalent Procedures

Number of Data	SL	TL
5	Tentunya kalian lupa melemparkan kepala sapi sehingga **Ratu Kidul** penguasa laut enggan membagi ikan untuk kalian lagi," kata Sang Shodancho sambil tertawa kecil...	I think you guys probably forgot to do the cow's head throwing ritual, and that's why **the queen of the South Seas** isn't sharing her fish with you anymore," said Shodancho with a chuckle...
6	Ia juga kembali pada hobi lamanya mengembangbiakkan **ajak-ajak** menjadi anjing-anjing rumahan.	He also returned to his old hobby of breeding and domesticating **wild dogs**.

Data 5

Data 5 showcases the use of descriptive equivalence in translating the term **Ratu Kidul**. In Javanese mythology, **Ratu Kidul** is a sacred spirit who is believed to be the ruler of the Southern Sea, specifically the Indian Ocean and has control over its waves. This is a culturally significant figure in Javanese tradition.

In the translation, the term **Ratu Kidul** is translated as **the queen of the South Seas**. The translator uses descriptive equivalence by providing a clear description of **Ratu Kidul** so that the

target language readers can better understand the cultural reference. This procedure is more effective for readers who may not be familiar with Javanese mythology rather than directly translated into ***ratu kidul,*** as the description helps convey the meaning without confusion.

Data 6

Data 6 illustrates the use of descriptive equivalence in translating the Indonesian term **ajak-ajak**. In Indonesian, **ajak-ajak** refers to wild dogs that typically live in the forest. In the target language, the term **ajak-ajak** is translated as **wild dogs**. The translator employed descriptive equivalence by providing a term that explains the meaning of **ajak-ajak** in a way that is more understandable to English-speaking readers. The choice of **wild dogs** helps convey the idea of dogs that are live in the forest, which is the essential meaning of **ajak-ajak** in the source language.

D. Functional Equivalence

As stated by Newmark (2008), functional equivalence is a translation method that replaces a culturally specific term with a neutral or unrelated cultural word in the target language. It emphasizes the function of the word and often simplifies or expands its meaning to ensure clarity for the target audience. Here is the example of functional equivalence.

Table 4. Data of Functional Equivalence Procedures

Number of Data	SL	TL
7	Banyak orang belum pernah melihat Si Cantik, kecuali ketika ia masih kecil saat orang-orang membantu ibunya melahirkan dan saat si **dukun bayi** berkeliling kampung mencari ibu susuan.	Most people had never seen Beauty, except for when she was a little baby and **the midwife** had circled the village looking for a wet nurse.
8	Mungkin dari para **jongos** atau tetangga menceritakannya.	Maybe the **houseboys** or the neighbors had told her.

Data 7

In Data 7, the term **dukun bayi** is translated into **midwife** using the functional equivalence translation procedure. In Indonesian culture, a **dukun bayi** is a traditional birth attendant who not only assists with childbirth but also provides postnatal care, such as bathing,

massaging, and guiding the baby's early development. Additionally, **dukun bayi** often incorporates spiritual and herbal practices in doing their practices.

However, in the target language (TL), there is no direct equivalent that fully captures the cultural and spiritual aspects of a **dukun bayi**. Instead, the translator uses the term **midwife**, which refers to a professional who assists with childbirth and postnatal care, aligning with the primary function of a **dukun bayi**.

Data 8

In Data 8, the Indonesian term **jongos** is translated into **houseboys** using the functional equivalence translation procedure. According to the Online Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), **jongos** refers to a male domestic servant or house helper. The term taken from the Dutch word "*jonges*," meaning "young men," and was commonly used during the Dutch colonial period in Indonesia to describe low-ranking male workers or errand boys in wealthy households.

In the target language (TL), the translator uses **houseboys** to retain the function of **jongos** as a household servant while also emphasizing the male gender by including "**boys**." Although **houseboys** may not fully capture the cultural connotation of **jongos**, it effectively conveys the main role of the term in a way that is familiar and understandable to English-speaking readers.

E. Cultural Equivalence

Cultural equivalence refers to a translation strategy in which a term from the source language is replaced by a closely equivalent term in the target language that has a similar function or cultural connotation than a direct translation. Here is the example of cultural equivalence.

Table 5. Data of Cultural Equivalence Procedures

Number of Data	SL	TL
9	Ia melakukannya juga pada upacara pemakaman seorang nelayan yang mati dihantam ombak, melakukannya juga ketika para nelayan mengadakan **syukuran**...	He also did this at the funerals for fishermen who died under the pounding waves, and when the fishermen held their **blessing ceremonies**...
10	Bagaimanapun, Kliwon lebih menampakkan sebagai **anak badung** daripada sebagai bocah komunis yang disiplin	Really, Kliwon seemed more like **a prodigal son** than a disciplined young communist.

Data 9

In data 9, **syukuran** can be considered as holding celebration to express gratitude to God. Usually done in order to avoid bad luck or death to recover from disease. The target language using **blessing ceremonies** which convey the same terms as the source language even though slightly different tradition but the TL convey the same meaning as the SL.

Data 10

In data 10, according to Online Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), **anak badung** means *anak nakal atau bandel*, which means mischievous or stubborn. In the target language it is translated as **prodigal son** which means a child who carelessly wastes money or resources in a wasteful and unwise manner, cited from Merriam- Webster Dictionary. Although the literal meanings of **anak badung** and **prodigal son** are not exactly the same, the choice of **prodigal son** aligns better with the character of Kliwon in the story. Kliwon is not only mischievous but is also portrayed as someone who engages in reckless spending or stealing money and using it to hire prostitutes. This behavior aligned the cultural and moral connotations of **prodigal son**.

F. Couplets

Couplets refer to the use of two distinct translation procedures applied simultaneously to address a single translation difficulty, especially when dealing with culturally specific terms. This approach allows translators to preserve the original meaning while making the term more accessible to the target audience. Here is the example of couplets.

Table 6. Data of Couplets Procedures

Number of Data	SL	TL
11	"Aku jadi **gundik**. Kelak kau panggil aku Nyai Iyang."	"I'm going to become his **concubine**. You can call me **Nyai Iyang**."
12	... namun ia lebih suka menghabiskan upah dan waktunya dengan berjudi dan pulang dalam keadaan mabuk **arak**.	... but he preferred to spend his wages and time gambling and stumbling home drunk on **arak wine**.
13	Hal yang sama diberlakukan untuk semua bis yang masuk maupun tidak ke terminal bis, untuk semua kios di pasar, untuk semua perahu yang mencari ikan ke laut, untuk semua tempat pelacuran dan kedai minum,	They collected a "tax" from the shop owners, all the buses that entered the terminal and even those that didn't, all the kiosks in the market, all the fishing boats, all the brothels and beer gardens, all the ice and coconut oil factories, and even all

	untuk pabrik es dan minyak kelapa, dan bahkan untuk setiap **becak** dan **dokar**.	**the becak rickshaws** and **horse-drawn carriages**.

Data 11

In Data 11, the first procedure used is cultural equivalence, applied in translating **gundik** into **concubine**. According to Online Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), **gundik** refers to *istri tidak resmi atau selir*. The English term **concubine**, as defined by Merriam-Webster Dictionary, refers to a woman who cohabits with a man without being legally married. This translation effectively conveys the function and social status of a **gundik** in a way that is understandable to English-speaking readers while preserving its historical and cultural connotations.

The second translation procedure used is transference, or loanword for the term **Nyai** in **Nyai Iyang**. In Indonesian culture, **Nyai** is a title traditionally given to a concubine, especially during the Dutch colonial period when indigenous women who became mistresses of European men were often called **Nyai**. Since this term has no direct equivalent in English, the translator borrowed **Nyai** in the target language to preserve its cultural and historical relevance.

Data 12

In Data 12, the translation of **arak** into **arak wine** applied transference and functional equivalence procedures. The first procedure is using transference in the word **arak**. **Arak** is a traditional distilled alcoholic beverage commonly found in Indonesia, particularly in Bali and made from the fermented sap of palm trees and mixed with grains or fruits. borrowing ***arak*** allowed readers to recognize it as a local or traditional drink rather than a generic alcoholic beverage.

The second procedure is functional equivalence through the addition of **wine** in the target language. While arak is not technically wine, the translator uses this term to clarify its function as an alcoholic beverage, making it easier for the target audience, who may not be familiar with **arak**. The choice of **wine** helps convey that arak is a fermented alcoholic drink, even if its ingredients and production process differ from conventional wine.

Data 13

Data 13 showed the use couplets procedure. In this case, the Indonesian term **becak** is translated as **the becak rickshaw**. The term **becak** refers to a three-wheeled bicycle that is pedaled by a person, commonly used as a form of public transport in Indonesia. On the other hand, a **rickshaw** is typically a two-wheeled cart, which is pulled by a person on foot and often

carrying one or two passengers and usually with a foldable cover for shade or protection, cited from Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary.

Although both terms refer to a type of transport, there is a difference in how they operate. **becak** is pedaled, while **rickshaw** is pulled by a person. The translator provided a description with **rickshaw** to help readers understand the cultural context. The use of transference and descriptive equivalence allows the target language audience to connect the image of a rickshaw with the specific Indonesian **becak**, which may not have a direct equivalent in English.

Also, the term **dokar**, which refers to a horse-drawn carriage, is also translated through descriptive equivalence. The translator uses the phrase **horse-drawn carriage** to describe **dokar**. In this case, the translator using description to ensure the target audience understands what the term refers to, even though both **dokar** and **horse-drawn carriage** essentially convey the same idea.

4. Conclusion

The translation of cultural terms plays a vital role in preserving the cultural identity and worldview embedded in literary texts. This study examined how cultural terms in Eka Kurniawan's Cantik Itu Luka are rendered in its English translation Beauty Is a Wound, using Newmark's (2008) translation procedures. The findings demonstrate that translators strategically balance cultural fidelity and readability by employing procedures such as transference, descriptive equivalence, and cultural equivalence to retain Indonesian cultural elements while ensuring accessibility for international readers.

The study highlights the complexity of translating culturally rich literature and underscores the importance of systematic translation strategies in mediating cultural meaning. Future research may extend this inquiry to other literary genres, language pairs, and comparative contexts to further explore how cultural meanings are negotiated across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

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