

Cultural Translation Strategies of Cultural Elements in the English Version of *Gadis Kretek*: Translating Indonesian Cultural Nuances

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Abstract. This research explores the cultural translation strategies employed in the English version of Ratih Kumala's novel *Gadis Kretek*, which was translated by Annie Tucker as *Cigarette Girl*. Translating a literary work that is deeply embedded in Indonesian culture presents unique challenges, particularly in maintaining cultural authenticity while ensuring that the text remains accessible and comprehensible to international readers. Guided by Lawrence Venuti's (1995) theoretical framework of domestication and foreignization, this study seeks to identify various cultural elements contained in the source text, analyze the strategies applied in their English translation, and evaluate how effectively these strategies preserve the original cultural meanings. The study employs a qualitative descriptive method, focusing on selected chapters that contain a high density of cultural expressions, including traditional customs, idioms, social values, and historical references. Each cultural element is analyzed to determine whether the translator adopts domestication, foreignization, or a hybrid approach in rendering it into English. The analysis reveals that Annie Tucker skillfully combines both strategies: she uses foreignization to retain the local flavor and authenticity of Indonesian culture, while applying domestication to make the text more understandable for global readers. The findings show that domestication and foreignization are applied complementarily to preserve Indonesian cultural identity while maintaining readability, reflecting Venuti's (1995) view that cultural authenticity and accessibility can coexist in literary translation. This research contributes to the field of translation studies by demonstrating how Indonesian literary works can reach international audiences without losing their cultural essence.

Keywords: *cultural translation, translation strategy, domestication, foreignization, Gadis Kretek*

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INTRODUCTION

Translation functions as an essential bridge that connects languages, cultures, and societies through the transfer of knowledge, values, and perspectives. Rather than being limited to a purely linguistic activity, translation also represents a complex intercultural process involving the negotiation of meaning, emotion, ideology, and cultural identity across different social contexts. Bassnett (2014) argues that translation should be viewed not merely as the replacement of words from one language into another, but as a cultural practice that mediates between distinct systems of thought and expression. Similarly, Newmark (1988) defines translation as the process of rendering the meaning of a text from the source language (SL) into the target language (TL) while preserving the author's original intention. Larson (1998) further emphasizes that effective translation requires the adjustment of linguistic forms to suit the grammatical and cultural structures of the target language without losing the core meaning embedded in the source text. These perspectives demonstrate that translation operates simultaneously as linguistic mediation and intercultural communication.

The relationship between language and culture becomes particularly significant in literary translation because literary texts frequently embody the traditions, ideologies, historical experiences, and collective identities of a society. Literary works are not only artistic expressions but also cultural artifacts that reflect the worldview of the communities in which they are produced. Consequently, literary translation involves more than transferring semantic meaning; it also requires preserving the cultural nuances and symbolic dimensions embedded in the original text. Baker (2011) explains that language reflects the worldview of its speakers, meaning that translators must carefully negotiate cultural meanings when rendering literary texts into another language. Translators therefore function as cultural mediators who bridge the world of the author and the world of the reader while maintaining both readability and cultural authenticity.

One literary work that illustrates the complexity of cultural translation is Ratih Kumala's Indonesian novel *Gadis Kretek*, translated into English by Annie Tucker as *Cigarette Girl* in 2015. The novel presents a rich portrayal of Indonesian social life, historical transformation, and cultural identity, particularly through its depiction of the kretek (clove cigarette) industry and the social realities surrounding it. The narrative intertwines personal relationships, historical memory, traditional values, and national identity, making the novel deeply rooted in Indonesian cultural experience. Translating such a culturally dense narrative into English creates considerable challenges because many expressions, customs, and social references

in the source text do not have direct equivalents in the target language. As a result, the translator must determine which cultural elements should be retained, adapted, explained, or modified to ensure that international readers can understand the narrative without losing the cultural essence of the original work.

These challenges are closely related to Lawrence Venuti's (1995) concepts of domestication and foreignization, two influential strategies in translation studies. Domestication refers to the adaptation of the source text to conform to the linguistic and cultural expectations of the target audience, thereby producing a translation that feels familiar and accessible. Foreignization, in contrast, preserves the linguistic and cultural distinctiveness of the source text, allowing readers to encounter foreign cultural elements even when they appear unfamiliar or challenging. Venuti argues that translation choices are not merely technical decisions but also ideological acts shaped by cultural power relations. Domestication may reduce cultural distance but risks erasing cultural uniqueness, whereas foreignization seeks to preserve the "otherness" of the source culture by resisting assimilation into the target culture.

The interaction between these two strategies can clearly be observed in Annie Tucker's translation of *Gadis Kretek*. Certain Indonesian cultural expressions are adapted or clarified to facilitate comprehension for English-speaking readers, demonstrating domestication. At the same time, culturally specific terms such as *kretek*, *sesajen*, and *klobot* are often retained in their original forms, reflecting a foreignization strategy intended to preserve Indonesian cultural identity. Tucker's translation therefore demonstrates a dynamic balance between readability and authenticity, suggesting that domestication and foreignization may coexist within the same literary work rather than functioning as entirely separate approaches.

Venuti (1995) primarily emphasizes the concepts of domestication and foreignization as translation strategies for negotiating cultural differences in literary texts. Drawing on broader translation studies perspectives, this study identifies several recurring cultural elements in *Gadis Kretek*, including culturally specific terms, proper names and titles, idioms and proverbs, social and historical references, food and culinary terms, religious and mythological elements, and gestures or body language. These elements are closely connected to the cultural context of the source language and often contain meanings that extend beyond literal interpretation.

These elements are deeply connected to the cultural systems of the source language and frequently carry meanings that extend beyond literal interpretation. Translators must therefore decide whether such elements should be preserved, adapted, substituted, or explained in order to maintain both meaning and readability. Baker (2011) similarly notes that idiomatic expressions, metaphors, and culturally bound references require careful contextual interpretation because they are inseparable from the cultural background of the source community.

The complexity of translating cultural expressions is particularly evident in literary works that rely heavily on symbolism, humor, idiomatic language, and historical references. Munday (2004) explains that cultural translation involves transferring embedded cultural meanings while preserving the emotional and stylistic qualities of the original text. Fernández (2012) also argues that many culture-bound terms lack direct equivalents in other languages, forcing translators to negotiate between borrowing, explanation, adaptation, or substitution. Such difficulties are visible in *Gadis Kretek*, where humor, figurative expressions, and traditional references are closely tied to Indonesian social and cultural contexts. For example, metaphorical expressions involving kretek culture may contain emotional and symbolic meanings that cannot be fully transferred through literal translation alone. In these situations, translators must decide whether to preserve the original cultural structure through foreignization or prioritize accessibility through domestication.

Idiomatic expressions also represent one of the most difficult aspects of literary translation because their figurative meanings frequently differ from their literal interpretations. Translators may employ equivalent idioms in the target language, paraphrase the intended meaning, or provide explanatory renderings depending on the communicative context. Such decisions highlight the translator's role not only as a linguistic converter but also as an interpreter of cultural meaning. Through these strategies, translators attempt to maintain the aesthetic quality, emotional resonance, and cultural significance of the source text while ensuring comprehension among target readers.

Several previous studies have discussed the translation of cultural elements in Indonesian literary works. Miskiyah (2020) analyzed the translation of Javanese cultural words using Newmark's classification and Davies' framework, focusing primarily on translation procedures for cultural terminology. Apandi and Afiah (2019) examined cultural translation in Cirebonese narratives through Newmark's model, while Sihite M. R. (2024) investigated student translators' difficulties in rendering Indonesian short stories into English using Venuti's domestication and foreignization framework. Although these studies provide valuable insights into cultural translation, many of them focus primarily on lexical items or traditional texts and pay limited attention to the ideological implications of translation strategies in contemporary Indonesian literature.

This study seeks to address that gap by examining how Annie Tucker negotiates domestication and foreignization in translating *Gadis Kretek* into *Cigarette Girl*. Unlike previous studies that concentrate mainly on isolated cultural words, this research investigates broader cultural elements, including idioms, social references, historical contexts, and symbolic expressions. By applying Venuti's (1995) framework, the study aims to analyze how translation strategies contribute

to the representation of Indonesian cultural identity in English literary translation and how these strategies shape international readers' understanding of Indonesian culture.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to translation studies that emphasize the cultural dimension of literary translation. By focusing on a modern Indonesian novel that has achieved international recognition, this study demonstrates how translation strategies can preserve cultural identity while simultaneously promoting accessibility for global readers. Furthermore, the study highlights the important role of translators as cultural mediators who negotiate between different linguistic and cultural systems in order to introduce local narratives to international audiences.

Accordingly, this research aims to: (1) identify the cultural elements present in Ratih Kumala's *Gadis Kretek*; (2) analyze the domestication and foreignization strategies used in its English translation *Cigarette Girl*; and (3) evaluate how these strategies influence the preservation of Indonesian cultural meaning in the target text. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, this study explores how translation functions not only as a linguistic activity but also as a cultural and ideological act that shapes the global representation of Indonesian literature.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the translation strategies of cultural elements in Ratih Kumala's *Gadis Kretek* and its English translation *Cigarette Girl*, translated by Annie Tucker. According to Sukmadinata (2009), qualitative research focuses on interpreting meanings and understanding phenomena within their cultural and contextual settings. This approach was considered suitable because the study emphasizes the analysis of culturally bound expressions and the translator's choices in transferring Indonesian cultural nuances into English.

The study focused on identifying cultural elements in the novel and examining how these elements were translated using domestication and foreignization strategies proposed by Venuti (1995). Through close textual analysis, the research interpreted the effectiveness of the translation by examining whether the cultural meanings, contextual nuances, and readability of the source text were maintained in the target text. Therefore, the analysis was not limited to categorizing translation strategies but also explored how the translator balanced cultural preservation and accessibility for international readers.

The primary data of this study consisted of Ratih Kumala's Indonesian novel *Gadis Kretek* (2012) and its English translation *Cigarette Girl*, translated by Annie Tucker (2015). However, the analysis did not cover the entire novel. To maintain a focused and manageable scope, the researcher applied purposive sampling by selecting Chapter 8 and Chapter 14 of the Indonesian version, which correspond to

Chapter 12 and Chapter 17 in the English translation. These chapters were intentionally chosen because they contain a significant number of cultural elements relevant to the objectives of the study, particularly culturally bound expressions, social references, and idiomatic language that reflect Indonesian cultural identity.

The data selection focused specifically on cultural elements categorized under Venuti's (1995) framework, including culturally specific terms, proper names and titles, idioms and proverbs, social and historical references, food and culinary terms, religious and mythological elements, as well as gestures and body language. Cultural expressions were identified through close reading, annotation, and comparative textual analysis between the source text and the target text. Each selected datum was analyzed to examine how domestication and foreignization strategies were applied in the translation process.

To support the analysis, secondary data were obtained from books, journal articles, and previous studies related to translation studies and cultural translation. These secondary sources were not treated as equal data to the primary text but were used as theoretical and analytical references to interpret the translation strategies found in the novel. Venuti's (1995) theory of domestication and foreignization served as the main analytical framework for examining how cultural elements were translated, while previous studies were used to compare findings and strengthen the interpretation of cultural translation practices. Therefore, the secondary data functioned as supporting references that guided the analysis of the primary data, particularly in understanding how Indonesian cultural identity was represented and negotiated in the English translation.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of three steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The researcher systematically identified, categorized, and interpreted excerpts representing seven cultural elements: culturally specific terms, proper names, idioms, social and historical references, food, religious elements, and gestures. The identified cultural elements were classified using Newmark's (1988) cultural categories, while the translation strategies applied to these elements were analyzed through Venuti's (1995) domestication and foreignization framework to examine how Indonesian cultural nuances were represented in the English translation. Findings were presented in tables to highlight patterns between domestication and foreignization. Trustworthiness was maintained through triangulation, thick description, and continuous verification of interpretations. This methodological framework ensured that the study provided valid, credible, and insightful contributions to understanding how Indonesian cultural nuances are represented and negotiated in English literary translation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings and discussion of the study entitled *Cultural Translation Strategies in the English Version of Gadis Kretek: Translating Indonesian Cultural Nuances*. The discussion not only identifies the cultural elements found in the novel but also analyzes how these elements were translated into English and how the selected strategies influenced the preservation of Indonesian cultural meanings.

The analysis focuses on Ratih Kumala's *Gadis Kretek* (2012) and its English translation *Cigarette Girl* (2015), translated by Annie Tucker. The findings are organized based on three main aspects of the study: the identification of cultural elements, the translation strategies employed, and the effectiveness of these strategies in conveying cultural nuances to international readers. This study identifies seven categories of cultural elements in Chapters 8 and 14, namely:

- (1) culturally specific terms,
- (2) proper names and titles,
- (3) idioms and proverbs,
- (4) social and historical references,
- (5) food and culinary terms,
- (6) religious and mythological elements,
- (7) gestures or body language.

Beyond presenting the data, this discussion also examines representative translation examples to understand why particular strategies were preferred and how they reflect the translator's approach in balancing cultural authenticity and readability. For instance, culture-bound terms such as *kretek* and *kebaya* were maintained in their original forms to preserve Indonesian cultural identity and introduce local cultural concepts to foreign readers. In contrast, several idiomatic expressions were translated using domestication to produce more natural and comprehensible meanings in English. These examples demonstrate that the translator applied translation strategies selectively, according to the cultural significance and communicative function of each expression.

Each category reflects the richness of Indonesian culture represented through the novel's narrative, characters, and settings, providing insight into how literary translation negotiates between cultural preservation and accessibility for international audiences. The findings of the cultural element analysis are summarized in the table below, followed by qualitative discussions of selected translation examples to provide a deeper interpretation of the translator's cultural mediation process.

Tables 4.1 Cultural elements analysis

No	Cultural Element Type	Example(s) from Source Text	Chapter / Page
1	Culturally specific terms	kretek, tingwe, kebaya, formula saus baru, mas, kursi anyaman rotan.	Ch. 8/ P 137,138,145,149 CH 14/P 251
2	Proper names and titles	Idroes Moeria, Pak Joko, Dasiyah, Rukayah, Roemaisa, Soedjagad, pitulungan 777, Djakarta, Kota M, Pak Trisno, Kudus, Gunung kawi, Yogyakarta, Malang, Mbah Djoego, Djagat Raja.	Ch 8/ P 137,138,141,142,144,145 Ch 14/P 248
3	Idioms and proverbs	seperti bunga yang disibak dari Semak, pergi dengan bersungut-sungut, meluap-luap girang, rumah yang tak beratap, kosong melompong, menyinggikan senyum, meroket, seperti kembang sepatu, tangan kosong, bertengkar seperti kucing dan tikus, senyum mengembang, sekuntum kuncup yang mengembang, putrinya telah jadi kembang.	Ch. 8 /P 142,147,149,153,154,157,
4	Social and historical references	pribumi, PKI, 17 Agustus, bapak, Roro Mendut, orang jawa, perempuan china, bermata sipit, kakek buyut,	Ch. 8/ P 137,141,143,144,146,153, Ch14/P 257,251,
5	Food and culinary terms	pecel, tumpeng nasi kuning, tape ketan, sirih, gudeg krecek, ayam utuh yang dipanggang,	Ch. 8/ P 146,154, Ch 14/ P 241,250
6	Religious and mythological elements	Gunung Kawi, tirakat, pohon dewadaru, ritual minum teh poci, kembang setaman, sesembahan.	Ch. 8/ P 138,145,146
7	Gestures and body language	mengangguk kecil, tersipu sambil mengangguk, hati kami berbunga-bung, terpana,	Ch. 8/ P 142,143,156, Ch. 14/ P 249

Translation Strategies Applied

In translating the cultural elements of Ratih Kumala's *Gadis Kretek* into its English version *Cigarette Girl*, the translator strategically employs Venuti's (1995) concepts of domestication and foreignization to balance readability and cultural authenticity. Domestication functions as a means of adapting the source text to the linguistic and cultural norms of the target audience. This approach involves replacing or modifying culture-bound expressions, employing familiar equivalents, simplifying culturally dense items, and adjusting idiomatic or context-specific language to ensure coherence and fluency. Through domestication, the translator enhances the accessibility of the text, making it more comprehensible to international readers. However, this strategy can also result in the partial loss of the source text's cultural identity, as certain nuances may be diluted in favor of naturalness and readability. Conversely, foreignization maintains the cultural and linguistic essence of the original work by deliberately retaining unfamiliar expressions and context-specific terms. This approach encourages readers to encounter and appreciate the distinctiveness of Indonesian culture, preserving the cultural "foreignness" that defines the source text's identity.

In operational terms, these two macro-strategies are manifested through a series of micro-techniques, including preservation, cultural specificity, literal translation, simplification, adaptation, and cultural substitution. Preservation involves maintaining original cultural terms without alteration, while cultural specificity emphasizes the uniqueness of Indonesian expressions and customs. Literal translation renders text word-for-word without structural modification, and simplification aims to reduce linguistic or cultural complexity for clarity. Adaptation replaces an element with one that performs a similar communicative function in the target culture, and cultural substitution introduces culturally equivalent items that are more familiar to English-speaking audiences. These techniques collectively illustrate the translator's negotiation between fidelity to the source culture and the communicative needs of the target audience. The subsequent comparative analysis demonstrates how these strategies function in practice, revealing the translator's nuanced approach to balancing cultural preservation and textual accessibility within the cross-cultural transfer of meaning. The results of the cultural element analysis are presented in the table below.

Tables 4.2 Translation strategies analysis

No	Source Text	Target Text	Cultural Element	Translation Technique	Translation Strategy
1	"Kretek Merdeka!"	"Independence kretek"	Culturally specific term	Preservation	Foreignization

No	Source Text	Target Text	Cultural Element	Translation Technique	Translation Strategy
2	"tingwe"	"tingwe"	Culturally specific term	Preservation	Foreignization
3	"kebaya"	"kebaya"	Culturally specific term	Preservation	Foreignization
4	"formula saus baru"	"a new sauce formula"	Culturally specific term	Literal translation	Domestication
5	"mas"	"mas"	Culturally specific term	Preservation	Foreignization
6	"kursi anyaman rotan"	"woves rattan chair"	Culturally specific term	Literal translation	Domestication
7	"Idroes Moeria"	"Idroes Moeria"	Proper name/title	Preservation	Foreignization
8	"Pak Joko"	"Pak Joko"	Proper name/title	Preservation	Foreignization
9	"Dasiyah"	"Dasiyah"	Proper name/title	Preservation	Foreignization
10	"Rukayah"	"Rukayah"	Proper name/title	Preservation	Foreignization
11	"Roemaisa"	"Roemaisa"	Proper name/title	Preservation	Foreignization
12	"Soedjagad"	"Soedjagad"	Proper name/title	Preservation	Foreignization
13	"pitulungan 777"	"lucky 777"	Proper name/title	Simplification	Domestication
14	"Djakarta"	"Djakarta"	Proper name/title	Preservation	Foreignization
15	"Kota M"	"M town"	Proper name/title	Simplification	Domestication
16	"Pak Trisno"	"Pak Trisno"	Proper name/title	Preservation	Foreignization
17	"Kudus"	"Kudus"	Proper name/title	Preservation	Foreignization
18	"Gunung kawi"	"Gunung kawi"	Proper name/title	Preservation	Foreignization

No	Source Text	Target Text	Cultural Element	Translation Technique	Translation Strategy
19	“Yogyakarta”	“Yogyakarta”	Proper name/title	Preservation	Foreignization
20	“Malang”	“Malang”	Proper name/title	Preservation	Foreignization
21	“Mbah Djoego”	“Mbah Djoego”	Proper name/title	Preservation	Foreignization
22	“Djagat Raja”	“Djagat Raja”	Proper name/title	Preservation	Foreignization
23	“seperti bunga yang disibak dari semak”	“this flower peeking out from behind a leaf”	Idioms and proverbs	Simplification	Domestication
24	“pergi dengan bersungut-sungut”	“left in huff”	Idioms and proverbs	Idiomatic translation	Domestication
25	“meluap-luap girang”	“overflowing with great delight”	Idioms and proverbs	Idiomatic translation	Domestication
26	“rumah yang tak beratap”	“a house without a roof”	Idioms and proverbs	Literal translation	Domestication
27	“kosong melompong”	“soon lay bare and deserted”	Idioms and proverbs	Idiomatic translation	Domestication
28	“menyunggingkan senyum”	“a coy smile”	Idioms and proverbs	Cultural Substitution	Domestication
29	“meroket”	“skyrocketed”	Idioms and proverbs	Literal translation	Domestication
30	“seperti kembang sepatu”	“like a hibiscus flower”	Idioms and proverbs	Literal translation	Domestication
31	“tangan kosong”	“empty handed”	Idioms and proverbs	Literal translation	Domestication
32	“bertengkar seperti kucing dan tikus”	“fighting like cat and dog”	Idioms and proverbs	Literal translation	Domestication
33	“senyum mengembang”	“a bold and glowing smile”	Idioms and proverbs	Cultural substitution	Domestication

No	Source Text	Target Text	Cultural Element	Translation Technique	Translation Strategy
34	"sekuntum kuncup yang mengembang"	"like a flower bud in bloom"	Idioms and proverbs	Cultural substitution	Domestication
35	"putrinya telah jadi kembang"	"had grown into a beautiful woman"	Idioms and proverbs	Cultural substitution	Domestication
36	"pribumi"	"pribumi"	Social and Historical references	Literal translation	Domestication
37	"PKI"	"PKI"	Social and Historical references	Preservation	Foreignization
38	"17 Agustus"	"August 17"	Social and Historical references	Literal Translation	Foreignization
39	"bapak"	"papa"	Social and Historical references	Preservation	Foreignization
40	"Roro Mendut."	"Roro Mendut"	Social and Historical references	Preservation	Foreignization
41	"Perempuan cina"	"a Chinese women"	Social and Historical references	Literal translation	Domestication
42	"bermata sipit"	"china descent"	Social and Historical references	Adaptation	Domestication
43	"kakek buyut."	"kakek buyut"	Social and Historical References	Cultural Specificity	Foreignization
44	"orang jawa"	"javanese"	Social and Historical references	Literal translation	Domestication

No	Source Text	Target Text	Cultural Element	Translation Technique	Translation Strategy
45	“tumpeng nasi kuning”	“cones of yellow rice”	Food and culinary terms	Cultural Substitution	Domestication
46	“tape ketan”	“tape ketan”	Food and culinary terms	Cultural Specificity	Foreignization
47	“sirih”	“sirih”	Food and culinary terms	Literal translation	Domestication
48	“gudeg krecek”	“gudeg krecek”	Food and culinary terms	Cultural Specificity	Foreignization
49	“pecel”	“pecel”	Food and Culinary Terms	Cultural Specificity	Foreignization
50	“ayam utuh yang di panggang”	“whole roast chickens”	Food and Culinary Terms	Literal translation	Domestication
51	“Gunung kawi”	“Gunung kawi”	Religious and mythological elements	Preservation	Foreignization
52	“tirakatan”	“fasting and offering”	Religious and mythological elements	Adaptation	Domestication
53	“pohon dewadaru”	“dewadaru tree”	Religious and mythological elements	Literal translation	Domestication
54	“ritual minum teh poci”	“teapot ritual”	Religious and mythological elements	Adaptation	Domestication
55	“kembang setaman”	“a plant”	Religious and	Simplification	Domestication

No	Source Text	Target Text	Cultural Element	Translation Technique	Translation Strategy
			mythological elements		
56	"sesembahan"	"pilgrimage"	Religious and mythological elements	Adaptation	Domestication
57	"terpana"	"struck with wonder"	Gesture and Body Language	Cultural Substitution	Domestication
58	"tersipu sambil mengangguk"	"blushed and nodded"	Gesture and Body Language	Cultural Substitution	Domestication
59	"mengangguk kecil"	"a small nod"	Gesture and Body Language	Cultural Substitution	Domestication
60	"hati kami berbunga-bunga"	"hearts pounding"	Gesture and Body Language	Idiomatic translation	Domestication

Domestication is more commonly employed in the translation of *Gadis Kretek* than foreignization, although both strategies play significant roles in conveying the novel's rich cultural context. The analysis reveals that, out of 60 identified cultural elements, 32 instances were translated using domestication, while 28 instances applied foreignization. This relatively small numerical difference indicates that the translator sought a balanced approach between readability and cultural preservation. Nevertheless, the dominance of domestication demonstrates a tendency to prioritize the accessibility and fluency of the English version for international readers. Despite this, foreignization remains essential in maintaining the authenticity and cultural integrity of the source text. A closer examination of the data highlights the patterns and tendencies in the application of these translation strategies throughout the novel, providing deeper insight into how cultural nuances are negotiated in the translation process.

Translation Strategies and Cultural Representation

This section discusses how the translation strategies used in *Gadis Kretek* and its English version *Cigarette Girl* were interpreted in terms of their ability to preserve cultural meaning and readability. In this study, "effectiveness" does not

refer to statistical measurement but to the qualitative interpretation of how successfully the translated expressions conveyed Indonesian cultural nuances while remaining understandable for target readers. The analysis was conducted through close textual comparison between the source text and the target text by examining whether the translated expressions maintained essential meaning, reflected cultural context, and produced natural expressions in English.

The findings indicate that domestication was more suitable for idioms and figurative expressions because it improved clarity and readability for English readers, while foreignization was more effective in preserving the authenticity of culturally specific terms, food names, and socio-historical references. Rather than functioning as opposing strategies, both approaches complemented each other in negotiating cultural preservation and accessibility. The interpretation of effectiveness was further supported by expert validation to ensure that the analysis remained contextually and culturally appropriate.

The validator's analysis indicates that the translation of cultural elements in the English version of *Gadis Kretek* generally succeeds in preserving the cultural and historical nuances embedded in the source text. Material culture terms such as *kretek*, *tingwe*, *kebaya*, and *kursi anyaman rotan*, as well as culinary expressions including *pecel*, *tumpeng nasi kuning*, and *gudeg krecek*, are retained through literal transfer and borrowing strategies, allowing the ethnographic identity of the source culture to remain visible in the target text. Similarly, socio-political and historical references such as Idroes Moeria, Pak Joko, Kudus, Yogyakarta, Gunung Kawi, PKI, pribumi, and perempuan Chindo maintain their historical specificity without being replaced by culturally neutral equivalents. However, the validator also identified a noticeable shift in the translation of idioms, metaphors, and proverbs, particularly in expressions such as *seperti bunga yang disibak dari semak* and *bertengkar seperti kucing dan tikus*. Although these expressions remain semantically comprehensible in English, the translation tends to reduce their emotional resonance and cultural depth, indicating the limitations of transferring culturally embedded figurative language across linguistic contexts.

Comparison of Translation Strategies Validated by Expert Triangulation

The results of expert triangulation demonstrate a well-balanced implementation of translation strategies. The preservation strategy (foreignization) was applied to culturally bound items such as *kretek*, *tingwe*, *kebaya*, Idroes Moeria, Pak Joko, and Gunung Kawi. Drawing on Venuti's concept of foreignization and Newmark's principle of cultural retention, this approach was highly effective in maintaining cultural authenticity, particularly for terms without natural English equivalents. Literal translation (domestication), exemplified by *kursi anyaman rotan* → *woven rattan chair* and *rumah yang tak beratap* → *a house without a roof*, proved

effective in conveying meaning clearly while adhering to English syntactic norms, aligning with Venuti's domestication and Nida's formal equivalence.

Idiomatic translation and cultural substitution, such as *pergi dengan bersungut-sungut* → *left in a huff* and *menyunggingkan senyum* → *a coy smile*, were found to be highly effective in maintaining tone, emotional nuance, and narrative flow while conforming to target language conventions, in line with Nida's dynamic equivalence and Venuti's domestication strategy. Adaptation and simplification, seen in *pitulungan 777* → *lucky 777* and *ritual minum teh poci* → *teapot ritual*, made culture-bound concepts more accessible to non-Indonesian readers, although with slight reductions in cultural depth. The use of mixed strategies for items such as *tape ketan*, *gudeg krecek*, and *kakek buyut* (retained with brief explanation) illustrates an effective balance between cultural preservation and readability.

Gestures and body language translations, such as *mengangguk kecil* → *a small nod* and *tersipu sambil mengangguk* → *blushed and nodded*, were likewise effective in conveying culturally embedded etiquette and emotional subtext, enhancing character portrayal. Overall, the application of foreignization successfully preserved the cultural depth of tangible items and proper names, while domestication ensured clarity and fluency in idiomatic expressions. The balanced integration of both strategies maintained cultural integrity and textual readability. Validator feedback confirmed alignment with Venuti, Nida, and Newmark's theoretical frameworks, underscoring this study's valuable contribution to the literary translation of Indonesian culture into English.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the translation of cultural elements in Ratih Kumala's *Gadis Kretek* into its English version *Cigarette Girl* reflects a complex process of cultural negotiation rather than a simple linguistic transfer. The translator selectively applied domestication and foreignization strategies depending on the communicative purpose, cultural significance, and contextual function of each expression. This indicates that translation decisions were strongly influenced not only by lexical equivalence but also by ideological and cultural considerations regarding how Indonesian identity should be represented to international readers. In this regard, the findings support Venuti's (1995) argument that translation is fundamentally a cultural and ideological act in which translators determine the visibility of the source culture within the target text.

The predominance of foreignization in culturally specific terms such as *kretek*, *kebaya*, *tingwe*, *gudeg krecek*, and *Gunung Kawi* suggests that the translator intentionally prioritized cultural authenticity and ethnographic representation. These expressions were retained because they contain historical, symbolic, and socio-cultural meanings that cannot be fully replaced by English equivalents without

reducing their cultural depth. For instance, the term *kretek* does not merely refer to a cigarette product but also represents Indonesian industrial history, social identity, and local tradition. Translating it simply as “clove cigarette” would make the expression more understandable linguistically, yet it would simultaneously eliminate the cultural resonance embedded in the original term. Therefore, preservation through foreignization became the preferred strategy because it allowed the translator to maintain the cultural uniqueness of the source text.

This finding strongly aligns with Venuti’s (1995) concept of foreignization, which emphasizes preserving the “foreignness” of the source culture to resist excessive assimilation into target-language norms. Through this strategy, the translator positioned Indonesian culture as something visible and legitimate within English literary discourse rather than adapting it completely to Western cultural expectations. The translator’s decision to retain original cultural expressions also reveals an approach that values cultural representation over full linguistic naturalization. In other words, the translator appears to treat the novel not only as entertainment literature but also as a medium for introducing Indonesian cultural identity to global audiences.

The preservation of proper names and socio-historical references such as PKI, *pribumi*, Pak Joko, and Yogyakarta further reinforces this cultural orientation. These terms are closely connected to Indonesian historical memory and social hierarchy; therefore, replacing them with generalized English expressions would potentially weaken their ideological and contextual significance. This finding is consistent with Newmark’s (1988) argument that culturally bound items should be maintained when they represent unique cultural realities that have no direct equivalent in the target language. The translator’s choice demonstrates awareness that literary translation involves transferring not only meaning but also cultural worldview and historical context.

However, while foreignization was dominant in culture-specific references, domestication was more frequently employed in translating idiomatic expressions, metaphors, and emotional language. Expressions such as *pergi dengan bersungut-sungut*, translated as *left in a huff*, and *bertengkar seperti kucing dan tikus*, translated as *fighting like cat and dog*, illustrate how the translator prioritized readability and communicative effectiveness for English readers. These idiomatic renderings were preferred because literal translation would likely sound unnatural, awkward, or semantically unclear in English. As Baker (2011) explains, idioms are deeply rooted in cultural context, making direct translation highly problematic because figurative meanings cannot always be interpreted through lexical equivalence alone.

The translator’s use of domestication in figurative expressions indicates an effort to reproduce equivalent emotional effects rather than preserving the original linguistic structure. This reflects Nida’s concept of dynamic equivalence, which focuses on producing a similar response among target readers rather than

maintaining formal correspondence. For example, the translation of *menyunggingkan senyum* into *a coy smile* does not replicate the literal wording of the source text, yet it successfully conveys emotional nuance and characterization in a way that feels natural for English-speaking audiences. This suggests that the translator considered reader reception and narrative fluency as essential components of literary translation.

At the same time, the domestication strategy also reveals the translator's awareness of the limitations of literal translation in cross-cultural communication. Indonesian idiomatic expressions often contain symbolic associations that may not exist in English cultural systems. Therefore, adapting them into familiar English idioms becomes necessary to maintain narrative coherence and emotional accessibility. Nevertheless, the findings also indicate that some degree of cultural nuance was inevitably reduced during this process. Expressions such as *seperti bunga yang disibak dari semak* lost part of their poetic imagery when translated into a more simplified English expression. This confirms Baker's (2011) view that figurative language is among the most difficult cultural elements to preserve fully in translation because aesthetic meaning is strongly tied to cultural perception.

The findings additionally reveal that the translator did not rigidly separate domestication and foreignization as opposing approaches. Instead, both strategies were combined flexibly according to textual needs and cultural priorities. This balanced application demonstrates that successful literary translation requires contextual decision-making rather than reliance on a single strategy. Foreignization was mainly preferred when cultural authenticity and identity were central to the meaning of the expression, whereas domestication became preferable when clarity, readability, and emotional comprehension were prioritized. Such flexibility reflects the translator's role as a cultural mediator who continuously negotiates between preserving source-culture identity and ensuring accessibility for target readers.

This finding supports previous studies conducted by Miskiyah (2020), who found that cultural preservation is frequently applied in translating Javanese cultural terms, and Sihite et al. (2024), who observed that translators often combine domestication and foreignization when translating Indonesian literary texts into English. However, unlike those previous studies, the present research demonstrates more explicitly that translation strategies also reflect ideological positioning regarding cultural representation. The translator's choices in *Cigarette Girl* reveal an intention to maintain Indonesian cultural visibility while simultaneously ensuring that the narrative remains globally readable. Therefore, the study contributes to translation studies not only by identifying translation strategies but also by explaining how those strategies function as forms of intercultural negotiation and representation.

Furthermore, the findings challenge the assumption that domestication and foreignization must operate separately. The relatively balanced use of both strategies indicates that literary translation can preserve cultural identity without sacrificing readability. This supports Venuti's (1995) argument that the two strategies should not necessarily be viewed as binary oppositions but rather as complementary approaches that may coexist within the same translated text. The translator's balanced strategy in *Cigarette Girl* demonstrates that Indonesian cultural expressions can remain visible and meaningful even when certain adaptations are necessary for international comprehension.

From a broader perspective, this study contributes to the understanding of how translation participates in the global circulation of Indonesian literature. Through selective foreignization, Indonesian culture becomes visible to international audiences, while domestication allows the narrative to remain emotionally accessible and communicatively effective. Consequently, translation functions not merely as language transfer but as cultural representation that shapes how global readers perceive Indonesian society, traditions, and historical experiences.

Overall, the findings indicate that Annie Tucker adopted a culturally sensitive and reader-oriented translation approach. Her translation strategy demonstrates a careful balance between preserving Indonesian cultural authenticity and facilitating readability for English-speaking audiences. The integration of domestication and foreignization ultimately enables *Cigarette Girl* to function both as a literary work and as a medium of intercultural communication that introduces Indonesian cultural identity to a broader global readership.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the cultural translation strategies used in *Gadis Kretek* and its English version *Cigarette Girl* by focusing on the identification of cultural elements, the analysis of translation strategies, and the evaluation of their effectiveness. The findings demonstrate that the translation process involved a careful negotiation between preserving Indonesian cultural identity and ensuring accessibility for international readers. The presence of various cultural elements in the novel reflects the richness of Indonesian culture and highlights the challenges of transferring culturally bound meanings into another language.

The study reveals that the translator applied domestication and foreignization strategically according to the function and cultural significance of each expression. Foreignization was mainly used to maintain the authenticity of Indonesian cultural references and to introduce local cultural values to global audiences, while domestication helped create a more natural and comprehensible reading experience for English readers. These choices indicate that the translator

did not merely transfer language but also acted as a cultural mediator who balanced cultural preservation with readability.

Furthermore, the findings support Venuti's (1995) theory that domestication and foreignization can work together in literary translation rather than functioning as opposing approaches. The translation of *Gadis Kretek* into *Cigarette Girl* demonstrates that cultural identity can still be preserved without reducing the clarity and acceptability of the target text. In this way, the study contributes to translation studies by showing how literary translation can facilitate cross-cultural understanding while maintaining the uniqueness of the source culture.

Finally, this research suggests that future studies should explore cultural translation strategies in other Indonesian literary works and examine readers' responses to translated cultural expressions in order to gain a deeper understanding of cultural mediation in global literature.

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