

# Cultural Haunting: The Translation of Culturally Embedded Horror Concept in Indonesian Movie Synopses into English

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## ABSTRACT

Indonesian horror movies are often characterized by their deep engagement with culturally specific concepts forming the narratives. When these films are introduced to international audiences through streaming platforms, the synopses, which are intended to be brief and persuasive, must balance clarity with cultural integrity. This study investigates two key issues: (1) the translation techniques employed to render culturally embedded horror-related concepts from Indonesian into English, and (2) the extent to which these techniques influence the representation of Indonesian cultural identity in the translated synopses. The data are 43 culturally embedded horror concepts and their English translated versions taken from Netflix. Using four stages of ethnography approach as the data analysis technique, the results revealed that the translation techniques used are: established equivalent, literal translation, modulation, generalization, adaptation, and borrowing. Meanwhile, the impacts of the translation techniques on the representation of Indonesian culture are categorized into:

preservation, transformation, and reduction. This study contributes theoretically to the frameworks of translator's decisions on cultural visibility. Practically, it also gives insights on the possible problems and solutions of rendering culturally specific concepts in short, high-stakes texts aimed at global viewers.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Horror genre movies have established themselves as culturally resonant and commercially successful for decades in Indonesia. The horror genre is deeply rooted in indigenous cosmology, animist, tradition, as well as folklores. As a consequence, many Indonesian horror movies make uses of culturally embedded concepts; such as *dukun* (shamanic healer), *santet* (black magic), or *arwah* (restless spirit), as the topics to attract viewers. On the other hand, the advancement of online streaming platforms has allowed local movies to reach global audiences, allowing the distribution of cultural narratives across nations through movie productions.

Online streaming platforms, such as Netflix, typically provide short synopses on each movie, offering the target audiences to have initial impression on what the movie is about. As the movies are targeted for global distribution, translation is crucial. Despite their concise format, these synopses play significant function in capturing the interest of potential audiences. However, the need to convey culturally specific horror concepts, while attracting global audiences, present significant challenges for translators who need to navigate the complex cross-cultural meanings as well as audience expectations.

In the macro level analysis, the translation of these synopses must serve a particular role: to intrigue and engage non-Indonesian audiences while preserving essential narrative and cultural elements. These roles are in line with the Skopos Theory of functionalist approach in translation studies (Vermeer, 1989). Furthermore, translators must therefore consider between domestication and foreignization strategies (Venuti, 2002) by making strategic decisions that affect how Indonesian horror culture is represented abroad. Meanwhile, seen from the micro level analysis, various techniques are applied as attempts to convey meanings and functions, such as generalization, adaptation, or modulation (Molina & Albir, 2002). These techniques, while necessary for accessibility, often involve compromises that risk condensing or distorting the underlying cultural meanings of the source text.

In this study, the unit of analysis is not restricted to individual lexical items but extends to words, phrases, and clauses that encode culturally embedded horror concepts in Indonesian movie synopses. Culturally embedded horror in Indonesian discourse is often conceptual rather than purely lexical. It means that the culturally embedded horror concepts are not always realized through single words but may emerge through multiword that evoke culturally specific beliefs, supernatural entities, or fear-inducing situations. For instance, certain horror concepts, such as *sebuah desa terpencil* (a remote village, which is usually correlated with haunted place) or *sumur keramat* (an old well, sometimes associated with sacred place), are encoded through noun phrases or descriptive clauses that convey culturally situated meanings which cannot be adequately captured at the word level alone. Therefore, this research uses words, phrases, and clauses as units of analysis so that it allows for a more comprehensive examination of how culturally embedded horror concepts are represented and subsequently re-contextualized in English translations. One of the examples is seen in the following short synopsis taken from Netflix:

ST: *Setelah pindah ke sebuah desa terpencil, pasangan muda ini dihantui sosok supernatural yang hendak mengincar janin mereka.* (After moving to a remote village, a young couple, [whose woman is still pregnant], is haunted by a supernatural figure who wants to target their fetus)

TT: A couple moves to **a remote village** for work only to find themselves **hunted by a supernatural entity out to claim their unborn child.**

The example is the synopsis of a horror movie entitled *Kuyang*. *Kuyang* is a horror figure in Indonesian folklore depicted as a floating female head with internal organs, believed to hunt pregnant women. The cultural concepts related to horror concept are seen in the parts in bold. According to Molina and Albir (2002), *sebuah desa terpencil* which is translated into its natural equivalent resulting “a remote village”, a place associated with isolation and the supernatural things, shows the application of established equivalent technique. The use of established equivalent retains its lexical as well as cultural functional meaning in both the source and target texts. Meanwhile, the segment *dihantui sosok supernatural* is translated using modulation technique. The word *dihantui* lexically means “be haunted”, but the change to the use of ‘hunted by’ produces a more strengthened suspense, focusing on ‘predatory intent’ rather than ‘passive activity’. Meanwhile, the word *mengincar* which means “to target” is translated into “claim” implying possession and harm. Additionally, *janin* which means “embryo” is translated into “unborn child” using generalization technique, resulting in a more idiomatic and emotionally resonant in English.

The aforementioned examination shows the richness of the cultural concepts contained in the source text. The absence of explanation about what *Kuyang* is, either in the synopsis or in the title, definitely eliminates the cultural nuance of the source text. However, seen from the Skopos theory, the translation version effectively aligns with global horror tropes, i.e. remote village, pregnancy, supernatural threat; confirming that the synopsis supports the genre expectations.

Previous studies related to the translation of horror narratives were conducted in various media. Landais (2016) analyzes the works of French authors. Meanwhile, Maignan (2024) focuses on the Japanese into English translation of horror games by community translators. Similarly, Davis (2022) investigates horror genre in manga. Meanwhile, in the context of Indonesian horror folklore, a study with short movie as the source has been conducted by Dewi et al. (2024) who investigate the translation of Balinese cultural terms in the *Leak* short film. Swetika & Prihantoro (2024) analyze the pronoun translation in an Indonesian horror movie.

Previous studies have positioned horror as a genre rich in culturally embedded concepts that pose significant challenges for translators. These studies have proposed various strategies to handle culturally specific elements in horror-related texts across novels, films, and games. While translation strategies are undoubtedly important in determining the quality of the target text, translation should not be viewed solely through the lens of fidelity and accuracy. Instead, it must also be evaluated in relation to the purpose and intended function of the translated text. In this regard, Skopos Theory (Vermeer, 1989) provides a relevant framework, as it emphasizes the communicative purpose of translation over strict linguistic equivalence.

However, despite growing attention to horror translation, little to no research has addressed the translation of movie synopses, particularly in the context of online streaming platforms. These synopses, while brief and structurally concise, serve crucial promotional and interpretive functions and often carry culturally loaded horror references. The translation of such texts demands a careful balance between cultural specificity and global intelligibility. Departing from this gap, the present study formulates the following questions:

- (1) What translation techniques are used to render culturally embedded horror concepts in Indonesian movie synopses translated into English?
- (2) How do these translation choices affect the representation of Indonesian cultural identity in the global horror context?

This study focuses on a selection of Indonesian horror movie synopses that have been translated into English and published on Netflix. The analysis focuses on culturally embedded horror-related concept, in the forms of words, phrases, or clauses; which are unique to Indonesian folklore and spiritual beliefs. The study is limited to

short synopsis texts due to their function as promotional paratexts, which involve condensed yet loaded cultural and narrative content.

By analyzing the techniques used in translation (Molina & Albir, 2002) and investigating the implications of techniques using the theories of Vermeer (1989), and Reiss & Vermeer, (2014), this study may contribute theoretically to the discussion on cultural translation in the horror genre by highlighting the impact of translator's decisions on cultural visibility. Practically, it can give contributions to translators, editors, and media localizers about the difficulties of rendering culturally specific concepts in short, high-stakes texts aimed at international viewers. Moreover, the findings may offer broader propositions for the representation of Indonesian cultural personality in transnational media contexts, where translation often involves navigating the tension between cultural preservation and market-driven accessibility. This study, therefore, not only fills a gap in translation studies but also impacts to a more nuanced knowledge of cultural conciliation in global media dialogue.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review section delves into four interrelated fields important to understanding the translation of culturally embedded horror concepts in Indonesian movie synopses. First, it explores horror fiction as a genre deeply rooted in cultural principles and local dreads, displaying how its meanings are context-dependent and often problematic to render in other languages. Second, it discusses the distinctive function of movie synopses as paratextual elements, especially in the digital streaming era, where short and persuasive summaries influence cross-cultural reception. Third, this part explains the theories of Molina & Albir (2002) on the taxonomy of micro-level techniques and Venuti (2002) on the macro-level strategies, to analyze the translation techniques and strategies in translating culturally embedded horror concepts in Indonesian – English horror movie synopses. Finally, the review displays the theory of Skopos (Vermeer, 1989; Reiss & Vermeer, 2014) to highlight the importance of functionalist approach in translation; arguing that successful translation must go beyond accuracy to be in line with the target audiences' expectation in different cultural contexts. These frameworks create the theoretical and analytical base for this research.

### 2.1. Horror Fiction and Cultural Embeddedness

Horror is a genre which is strongly related to cultures. Fear is not common in forms though its function is universal (Tudor, 1989). The aspects that trigger fear is usually influenced by cultural context, such as history, myths, folklore, or even religious belief. Thus, horror narrative is typically difficult to understand by audiences coming from different cultural background since it draws cultural-specific references.

According to Carroll (1990), horror is a genre that uses the portrayal of hideous and transgressive beings to arouse feelings like terror, fear, or dread. These monsters are not, however, culturally indifferent. For examples, supernatural elements with specific connotations derived from local cosmologies, such as *kuyang*, *dukun*, or *santet* are featured in Indonesian horror. Similarly, Tudor (1989) emphasizes that horror is not only a genre with a customary pattern but rather a portrayal of a society's communal fears. Therefore, it can be said that things which scares one culture might not scare another.

The issue of culture-related phenomena always becomes tricky when they need to be translated Hall (1997). According to Landais (2016), horror relies on both "narrative suspense" and "reality effects". Consequently, omitting local allusions or changing the pacing can decrease the impact of the genre. Meanwhile, Maignan (2024), who conducted research on Japanese into English horror game translation, determines how non-Japanese audiences frequently use community-based interpretation to comprehend strange horror formulas. These consequences imply that translating horror is a cross-cultural mediation of emotional and symbolic meaning rather than just a language task.

### 2.2. Movie Synopsis as Cross-Cultural Paratext

Movie synopses function as paratextual elements— concise, promotional texts that supplement a film and shape how the audience interprets and involves with it. According to Genette (1997), paratexts are "thresholds of interpretation": they shape the audience's first impressions, genre anticipations, and willingness to engage with the text. In the digital age, synopses on streaming platforms show a vital role in appealing global audiences within just a few lines, especially in genres like horror where impression and suspense must be implied rapidly.

Synopses must balance brevity, clarity, and genre-marking language to deliver emotional and narrative cues. In horror, this often means indicating danger, supernatural presence, or psychological disturbance; all within limited space. Yet, when translating such synopses, especially across cultures, culturally specific allusions may be lost, simplified, or replaced, affecting not just consideration but also the framing of the movie's uniqueness.

Batchelor (2020) discusses synopses as forms of micro-narratives; compressed texts that still carry the burden of storytelling and persuasion. She underlines that synopses are not neutral but are shaped by market strategies and genre expectations. In the case of horror, cultural elements like *kuyang* or *santet*, often get reduced to generic

phrases like "supernatural entity" or "curse" in English-language synopses. This habit may help accessibility, but risks deleting cultural uniqueness and overgeneralizing the genre's local dimension.

### 2.3. *Micro strategies and Macro strategies in Translation*

It is important to differentiate between macro strategies, the overall orientation toward the target audience, and micro strategies, the specific linguistic choices, in translation procedures when examining the translation of culturally embedded concepts, especially in horror context. Researchers can employ these frameworks to decide how and why translators modify genre clues, emotional manners, and cultural references.

A popular taxonomy of 18 translation techniques is provided by Molina & Albir (2002) at the micro level. In this taxonomy, Molina & Albir (2002) uses the term 'technique' rather than 'strategy' referring to the ways taken by translators when translating text which are seen from the products of translation. In this research, this theory can explain the local choices that translators make when working with stylistic devices, genre-specific terminology, or phrases that are restricted by culture. For example, a culturally embedded term like *santet* may be borrowed (having identical form *santet*), generalized (as "a curse"), or adapted (as "witchcraft").

At the macro level, Venuti (2002a) defines two major strategies: domestication and foreignization. Domestication causes the text more familiar to the target audiences by smoothing out cultural divergences. Foreignization, by contrast, maintains cultural uniqueness but may create strangeness or space. In horror translation, these macro strategies can influence how local supernatural phenomena are remarked; i.e. whether they stay "other" or are constructed relevant through substitution.

Furthermore, Newmark (1988) also proposes insights into the communicative versus semantic dichotomy. This framework explains that communicative translation focuses on audience understanding. Meanwhile, semantic translation spotlights source-text fidelity. Newmark's perspective interconnects with both Molina and Albir's techniques and Venuti's broader strategies.

In horror texts, translation choices at both levels affect not only meaning transfer but also emotional impact and genre identity. Studies by Landais (2016) shows that poor handling of thrill, rhythm, or cultural metaphors can devalue fear and render the horror ineffectively for target audiences. Therefore, both micro and macro strategies are necessary for a complete understanding of how horror is culturally interpreted.

### 2.4. *Skopos Theory*

Skopos Theory, pioneered by Vermeer (1989), marked a fundamental change in translation studies by proposing that the purpose (skopos) of a translation should regulate the strategies and decisions made by the translator. This functionalist approach argues that translation is not merely a linguistic act but a goal-oriented, communicative activity shaped by the expectations of the target audience and the sociocultural context in which the translation will be used.

According to Skopos Theory, the success of a translation is not measured by its faithfulness to the source text but by its success in fulfilling its intentional function in the target culture. In the case of movie synopses, this purpose often involves gaining audiences, signaling genre, and reviewing content persuasively. Therefore, translation decisions may intentionally highlight marketability, genre alignment, or cultural accessibility over literal equivalence.

This theory is further developed by Nord (1997), Schäffner (2010), Reiss & Vermeer (2014), Reiss (2000), Nord (2022) which focuses on the importance of defining the target audience, medium, and communication objective prior to the start of the translation process. This is especially useful for translating brief paratextual forms, such as synopses, which has commercial purposes.

Skopos Theory aids in the explanation of why translators may generalize distinctive folklore or domesticate specific cultural allusions in horror summary translation. The emphasis is on producing the intended reader reaction, such as mystery, suspense, or horror, rather than just maintaining cultural specificity. When modifying culturally charged horror concepts for global audiences, functionalist approaches also offer a rationale for changes in terminology, tone, or structure.

## 3. METHOD

The present research uses a descriptive qualitative research design to analyze the translation of culturally embedded horror concepts in Indonesian movie synopses into English. The focus lies in interpreting meaning, identifying patterns, and uncovering cultural values reflected in translation choices.

### 3.1. *Data Source and Data*

The source of data are Indonesian horror movie synopses available on Netflix. The data are the culturally horror embedded concepts in the synopses in Indonesian as the source texts and their translated version in English. The

data are in the forms of words, phrases, clauses, or sentences which reflect culturally specific concepts such as folklore, beliefs, supernatural figures, or rituals.

### 3.2. Data Collection Technique

Content analysis was applied as the technique of data collection. Content analysis is appropriate for this study because it allows the researcher to systematically examine the synopses and identify words, phrases, and clauses that convey culturally embedded horror meanings, which are central to the analysis of translation. The synopses were examined to extract relevant linguistic units that reflect cultural horror specific features that pose potential challenges in translation.

### 3.3. Data Analysis Technique

The data were analyzed using ethnographic approach (Spradley, 2007), involving four stages: domain analysis, taxonomy analysis, componential analysis, and cultural theme analysis. In the domain analysis, the researcher identified segments of the synopsis containing culturally embedded horror concepts. The selection is informed by theoretical insight as proposed by Tudor (1989) and Carroll (1990). The taxonomy analysis was performed by classifying the translation techniques using the framework developed by Molina & Albir (2002). Besides, the impacts of the applied techniques to the representation of Indonesian cultural identity were analyzed under the theory of Venuti (2002b) and Vermeer's (1989) Skopos. In the componential analysis, the researcher attempted to find the relationship between the selected translation techniques and their potential impacts on the Indonesian culture. The analysis explores patterns in the application of specific techniques and how they contribute to the preservation or dilution of cultural meanings in the target text. The final stage of cultural theme analysis interprets broader cultural values reflected in the translation of horror-related concepts. This includes investigating how translation choices align with the purpose (Skopos) of the synopses and how the goal influences cultural representation.

## 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Result

The findings presented in this section were examined based on the analysis of 16 selected Indonesian horror movie synopses available on Netflix streaming platform. Among those synopses, 43 data of culturally embedded horror concepts were analyzed. The analysis focuses on: (1) the translation techniques, and (2) the impacts of the applied techniques on the representation of Indonesian cultures, specifically in the context of horror genre.

#### 4.1.1. The Translation Techniques Used to Translate Culturally Embedded Horror Concepts in Indonesian Movie Synopses into English

The findings on translation techniques showed that six different techniques are applied, including: literal translation, modulation, generalization, adaptation, borrowing, and established equivalent. The distribution of the techniques is presented in Table 1:

**Table 1.** The Distribution of Translation Techniques

No.	Techniques	Amount
1	Established Equivalent	13
2	Literal Translation	9
3	Modulation	9
4	Generalization	5
5	Adaptation	4
6	Borrowing	3

##### 4.1.1.1. Established Equivalent

Established equivalent is the most commonly applied technique. It is the application of the existing TL expressions that match genre-standard phrases. There are 13 data showing the use of established equivalent, as seen in the translation of *sihir hitam* (lit. 'black sorcery') into 'dark sorcery'. Some other examples are *sumur keramat* translated as 'sacred well', and *sihir hitam* rendered as 'black magic'. These vocabularies maintain both the lexical meaning and the cultural-religious undertones inherent in Indonesian horror narratives. Similarly, other terms such as *ritual terlarang* which is translated into 'forbidden ritual' and *desa terpencil* rendered as 'remote village' are transferred with minimal semantic shift, enabling the target audience to access the core imagery while still retaining the eerie atmosphere of the source text.

#### 4.1.1.2. *Literal Translation*

Literal translation involves a word-for-word rendering of the source text, maintaining both form and meaning when the linguistic structures are compatible. It is applied in cases where the source expressions could be transferred to English without requiring restructuring or conceptual change. In this study, literal translation is applied when the cultural concepts are widely known or readily interpretable in English. For example, the translation of *memanggil jin* into ‘summon a djin’ and *membuat kesepakatan dengan iblis* into ‘makes a deal with a demon’.

#### 4.1.1.3. *Modulation*

Modulation is the second most frequently used technique, recognized in 9 instances. This strategy involves a shift in cognitive category to produce a more natural expression in the target language. Modulation is mostly used when literal translation fails to produce natural translated version or when the target text conceptualizes thing differently than the source languages.

The data analysis shows that modulation is employed to construct a more idiomatic structure in English. For example, *kerasukan* (possession) is translated as ‘a spirit takes hold of her’, shifting from a culturally direct term to a more idiomatic structure in English. Another example is the expression of *dengan darah sebagai bayarannya* (with blood as the reward) is rendered as ‘the price will have to be paid in blood’. The ‘blood sacrifice’ concept which is strongly related to horror archetype was rendered using a more idiomatic expression in English. The application of modulation results in a more natural expression that still keep the intact symbolic meaning of the source text.

#### 4.1.1.4. *Generalization*

Generalization is used in five cases. This technique is applied by replacing a specific term with a more general or neutral one. It is commonly used when the source term lacks a direct equivalent in the target language or when simplification is needed.

The analysis indicates that generalization is utilized when cultural expressions in the source text express highly specific concepts that are unusual or lack direct equivalents in the target culture. For example, the translation of *santet* (a type of Indonesian black magic) into ‘curse’ which semantically uses a more customary term. Another interesting example is *arwah pesinden* (*arwah* refers to the spirit of the dead, *pesinden* refers to traditional Javanese female vocalist) into ‘singing spirit’. The generalization attempts at producing a more neutral and understandable term for the target audience, despite its less accurate translation. Generalization is also seen in the translation of *siluman* (mythical shapeshifter often with animal traits in Indonesian folklore) into ‘supernatural entity’, where the translation is replaced with a vague and generic term.

#### 4.1.1.5. *Adaptation*

Adaptation is found in four instances. This technique involves replacing a culturally specific element with expression that is functionally equivalent in the target culture. It is typically used when the source element would be unfamiliar or culturally inaccessible to the target audience. The present study shows that the original reference is replaced with one that resonates with genre norms or audience expectations in the target language.

For instance, *dukun* (a traditional healer or sorcerer in Indonesian culture, often associated with both healing and dark magic) is translated into ‘shaman’. The term ‘shaman’ has a similar concept with *dukun*. However, it lacks the local connotation of Indonesian mysticism and syncretic belief systems. On the other hand, the adaptation is able to simplify the culturally embedded concept in the term *dukun* for global audiences.

Another culturally embedded horror concept is seen in the translation of *pembawa keranda* (coffin bearers) into ‘ghostly pallbearers’. In this case, *pembawa keranda* refers to real-life ritual participants in Indonesian funeral traditions, particularly in rural or Islamic communities. Meanwhile, ‘pallbearers’ is Western funeral tradition, usually performed in Christian or secular funerals. In order to create equivalent tone, the word ‘ghostly’ is added in the translated version. The translation results in a more acceptable global horror narrative that can be understood by the target audiences.

Other interesting case about adaptation is found in the translation of *memanggil kembaran mereka masing-masing* into ‘summons their doppelgängers’. The source text term is related to *Jin Qorin* which refers to a Javanese myth telling about a person’s spiritual twin that invisibly follows and influences them throughout their life. This complex concept is translated into German-origin word ‘doppelgänger’, which is idiomatic and evocative in English horror.

#### 4.1.1.6. *Borrowing*

Borrowing technique is identified in three data. This technique retains the original source-language term in the translation. The data analysis shows that borrowing is used to maintain proper names, including the name of places:

*Watu Karang and Gede*, as well as the name of a mythical figure *Kromoleo*. often used to preserve culturally specific names, terms, or concepts that do not have an equivalent in the target language. Borrowing acknowledges the target text to uphold cultural elements in their original form.

#### 4.1.2. The Impacts of the Applied Techniques on the Representation of Indonesian Cultures

To assess how the applied translation techniques influence the representation of culturally embedded horror concepts, this study categorized the impacts into three types: preservation, transformation, and reduction. These categories reflect the extent to which the cultural meaning and identity embedded in the source text are retained, altered, or lost in the English translations. The distribution of the impacts of the applied techniques on the cultures are seen in Table 2:

**Table 2.** The Distribution of The Impacts of the Applied Techniques on the Representation of Indonesian Cultures

No.	Cultural Impacts	Amount
1	Preservation	28
2	Transformation	9
3	Reduction	6

##### 4.1.2.1. Preservation

Preservation refers to instances in which the cultural meaning of the original horror-related concept remains intact in the translation. Out of the total data analyzed, 28 cases are categorized as preservation. This impact often occurs when the translation retains either the original term or a direct, culturally transparent equivalent. Some of the examples are the translation of *sumur keramat* into ‘sacred well’, *sihir hitam* into ‘black magic’, *ritual terlarang* into ‘forbidden ritual’, and *jin* into ‘djinn’ (genie). Preservation conveys the spiritual, mystical, or cultural associations portrayed in the source text, enabling the target audience to gather a faithful representation of Indonesian supernatural beliefs and horror imagery.

##### 4.1.2.2. Transformation

Transformation refers to cases where the original concept is retained in general meaning but reframed, reworded, or culturally adjusted in a way that alters the original nuance or worldview. This is observed in 12 data. Transformation typically results from the application of modulation or adaptation strategies, which changes the form or cognitive perspective of the source term. For example, the translation of *pembawa keranda* into ‘ghostly pallbearers’, *kerasukan* into ‘a spirit takes hold of her’, and *mengincar janin mereka* into ‘out to claim their unborn child’. Although the horror element is preserved, the Indonesian cultural specificity is either partially reinterpreted through Western horror conventions. Consequently, the translation remains effective in narrative function but reflects a different cultural angle.

##### 4.1.2.3. Reduction

Reduction refers to instances in which culturally specific information was generalized, diluted, or removed in the translation, resulting in a loss of cultural detail or identity. This phenomenon is found in 8 data. Some of the examples are the translation of *santet* into ‘curse’, *pesinden* into ‘singing spirit’, and *makhluk jahat* into ‘malevolent presence’. Reduction category strips the cultural references from their localized context and replace them with broad or neutral terms, which may be more accessible to global audiences but at the cost of cultural richness. The supernatural and cultural depth embedded in the original expressions becomes less visible or culturally anonymous in the target language.

#### 4.2. Discussion

##### 4.2.1. The Relations of Translation Techniques and Cultural Interpretation

The componential analysis conducted in this study reveals that the translation of culturally embedded horror concepts is significantly influenced by the choice of translation technique. Using the framework of Molina & Albir (2002), this research identifies how specific techniques correspond to the degrees of cultural preservation, transformation, or reduction. The correlation between the two variables is presented in Table 3:

**Table 3.** The Relations of Translation Techniques and Cultural Interpretation

Translation Techniques	Cultural Impacts		
	Preservation	Transformation	Reduction
Literal Translation	9	-	-
Generalization	-	-	5
Modulation	3	5	1
Adaptation	-	4	-
Borrowing	3	-	-
Established Equivalent	13	-	-

Recent studies further reinforce the significance of the choice of technique in conveying cultural meaning. For instance, Maignan (2024) emphasize that translation in culturally rich genres like horror is a site of negotiation between global genre conventions and local cultural expressions. Similarly, Nurhidayah & Nababan (2023) argue that literal and borrowing techniques maintain cultural imagery when dealing with folklore and supernatural phenomena. These findings support the patterns observed in this study, where literal translation and borrowing frequently align with cultural preservation.

Established equivalent is the most common technique used which results in the predominantly preservation of the cultural interpretation. Literal translation is also associated with preservation of cultural concepts. Similarly, borrowing, though used less frequently also contributes to preservation by retaining culturally specific terms. These choices reflect what Venuti (1995) calls “foreignization,” where the translator resists assimilation into the dominant TL culture and instead highlights the cultural origins of the ST. Besides, this finding is also supported by O’Hagan & Mangiron (2013), who argue that borrowing enhances narrative immersion and cultural texture in digital media.

Meanwhile, modulation is found in 9 cases and is often used to shift the perspective or emotional tone of the original text. In some instances, such as *kerasukan* rendered as ‘a spirit takes hold of her’, the core idea is preserved while the expression is softened for idiomatic fluency, as the translator reconceptualizes *kerasukan* into an expression that aligns with conventional English narrative norms. In other cases, such as *mengincar janin mereka* translated into ‘out to claim their unborn child’, the predator-like aggression is replaced with symbolic possession, subtly transforming the horror tone. This technique supports readability and emotional resonance, aligning the translation with genre conventions. This corresponds with the findings by Maignan (2024), who observed similar modulation patterns in the cultural translation of Japanese horror games, where translators reshape local spirits and concepts to align with global horror language.

Generalization is identified in 5 instances and consistently leads to a reduction or loss of cultural specificity. This technique is used to simplify culturally rich terms. While these choices may improve comprehension for target audiences unfamiliar with Indonesian traditions, they strip away important layers of cultural and contextual meaning. Landais (2016) also reports similar effects in horror fiction, showing how generalization reduces symbolic density in culturally rooted fear expressions.

Adaptation is identified in 4 cases and typically results in the transformation of local cultural references into more globally familiar concepts. For example, *pembawa keranda* is translated as *ghostly pallbearers*, replacing a culturally specific funerary figure with a Western horror archetype. Though the supernatural tone is retained, the original cultural nuance is altered to fit international genre expectations.

Overall, the data suggest a pattern: preservation tends to occur through literal translation and borrowing; transformation through modulation and adaptation; and reduction through generalization. These findings indicate that the translator’s choices are shaped by more than linguistic equivalence, i.e. they are guided by how horror and culture are constructed and received across languages.

**4.2.2. Functional Perspective: Skopos and the Purpose of Translation**

While the previous section focuses on the relation between techniques and cultural meaning, this section applies Skopos Theory, (Vermeer, 1989) to explain why such techniques are used. According to Skopos Theory, translation is a purposeful activity, and the techniques chosen must serve the function of the target text in its specific context.

In the case of Netflix horror movie synopses, the primary function is to attract and engage a global audience. These synopses are not merely summaries, i.e. they are marketing tools meant to quickly communicate the essence of the story, evoke curiosity, and match genre expectations. This commercial and persuasive skopos justifies the use of strategies that prioritize clarity, familiarity, and emotional impact over cultural depth. For example, the generalization of *santet* into ‘curse’ may result in cultural loss, but it serves the function of making the synopsis immediately understandable to international viewers unfamiliar with Indonesian mysticism. Similarly, the adaptation of *pembawa keranda* into ‘ghostly pallbearers’ replaces a local funerary concept with a more globally recognizable trope, aligning with genre conventions in Western horror.

Even preservation-oriented techniques, such as the use of ‘sacred well’ for *sumur keramat*, fulfill a Skopos-based purpose. Though established equivalent technique, the term remains eerie and mysterious, sustaining the emotional tone expected in horror narratives. Likewise, modulation technique, such as ‘a spirit takes hold of her’, enhance readability and emotional resonance, which are essential for viewer engagement.

These choices reflect Nord’s (1997, 2022) idea that translators are cultural mediators. Their task is not only to transfer meaning but also to adapt it to the expectations, norms, and genre constraints of the target context. In the realm of global streaming platforms, these constraints are shaped by marketing goals, time limitations, and viewer familiarity with horror tropes.

This functionalist view helps explain why transformation and reduction are not necessarily errors or failures. Rather, they are strategic adaptations to fulfill the Skopos of the translation task. As such, the translator’s role becomes one of negotiations between cultural fidelity and functional effectiveness, especially when dealing with highly culturally embedded material such as horror-related notions.

Together, the findings of this study reinforce that translation techniques are influenced by both cultural ideology and functional necessity. The translator’s choices shape how Indonesian horror is represented, not only linguistically, but culturally and commercially, on a global stage.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The present study investigates the translation of culturally embedded horror-related concepts in Indonesian movie synopses into English, focusing on the translation techniques used and their impact on cultural representation. The findings revealed that literal translation and borrowing are the most commonly used techniques and are generally effective in preserving Indonesian cultural elements. On the contrary, modulation and adaptation often result in transformation, while generalization contributes to cultural reduction.

These findings prove that translation choices are not only linguistic but also cultural and functional. Applying Skopos Theory highlights that many of the transformations and reductions observed are purposeful and aligned with the communicative function of the synopses, i.e. to attract global audiences through clarity, emotional appeal, and genre familiarity.

Finally, the study highlights the roles of the translator as a cultural mediator, negotiating between cultural fidelity and functional effectiveness. In the global streaming context, this negotiation directly shapes how local horror traditions as well as Indonesian cultural distinctiveness are portrayed on the international stage.

Future research could expand the area of this study by researching audience reception of translated horror content to better understand how international viewers interpret culturally embedded concepts. In addition, comparative studies across different streaming platforms or between genres (e.g., horror vs. drama or comedy) may offer insights into how translation strategies shift depending on thematic content and platform-specific demands. Researchers could also explore the collaborative processes behind synopsis translation, including editorial or marketing interventions, which may influence the translator’s decision-making. Finally, incorporating multimodal analysis, considering visual and auditory cues alongside textual translation, may enrich our understanding of how horror and cultural meaning are conveyed across languages and media.

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