

# Preserving Culture through Literary Works and Their Translations

Erlina Zulkifli Mahmud<sup>1</sup>, Taufik Ampera<sup>2</sup>, Inu Isnaeni Sidiq<sup>3</sup>,

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia, [erlina@unpad.ac.id](mailto:erlina@unpad.ac.id)

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia, [taufik.ampera@unpad.ac.id](mailto:taufik.ampera@unpad.ac.id)

<sup>3</sup>Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia, [inu.isnaeni.sidiq@unpad.ac.id](mailto:inu.isnaeni.sidiq@unpad.ac.id)

**Abstract**— Environmental conservation may cover various aspects of life in various activities from solving problems of pollution, creating green ecosystem, to preserving culture. Anybody has its own role in participating this consciously and unconsciously. Their environmental awareness depends on what they do for living. As for authors, their effort to keep our environment safe, harmonious to the surrounding can be implemented in their literary works like novels. What they write about people's behavior, habit, tradition, indigenous teaching of certain societies in their works can be seen in a bigger scope as one of the efforts of conserving environment. The work of writing cultural products in their literary works can give greater impact to other cultures, to the world by the role of translators. What cultural products written in some Indonesian novels regarding an act of environmental awareness and what strategies of translation used to keep preserving these cultural products become the objectives of the research. The results show that strategies chosen by translators may reflect the quality and quantity information provided to the readership, to the world. The more detail information given in the target language the more qualified the cultural products shared.

**Keywords**—environmental awareness, cultural products, translation, strategy of translation

## I. INTRODUCTION

This research focuses on the efforts of preserving culture (as the implementation of individual environmental awareness) using language through literary works. The word preserving is defined as the act or activity of keeping something in an existing and usually satisfactory condition (merriam-webster.com). This can cover all efforts to protect, to maintain anything from extinct, including culture. Preserving culture may not be like preserving natural sources. People may not see that directly as a patriotic act yet it is of great importance as culture deals with identity in human civilization. The act of preserving has something to do with an act of documenting either in pictures or in words.

When talking about words, we talk about language. We use language to document culture which lead to the fulfillment of the functions of language itself; naming (labeling), interaction, and transmitting information [1]. Language has a function to name an object, an action, a behavior, a concept, existing in a community. The name of

an object, an action, a behavior, a concept is a product of a culture. It is a way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expressions, thus acknowledging that each language group has its own culturally specific features [2]. Words which contain cultural products, elements are known as cultural words or cultural terms; geographic and ethnographic terms, words or expressions referring to folklore, traditions, mythology, names of everyday objects; actions, events such as food, dances, and they cover also social and historical terms [3].

When people express their ideas, feelings through words or language in a written work like literary works (novels), they perform two acts altogether; interacting to their readers and transmitting information to their readers who are of the same community. When the same information is transmitted to different communities out of their own using different languages, it involves other activity called translation. Thus the transmission of information as an act of documenting may be performing in the same language and it can also be transmitted to different languages through translation. It is an act of reproducing various kinds of texts including religious, literary, scientific, and philosophical texts in another language and thus making them available to wider readers [4]. Wider readers are what we need in transmitting culture as an effort to preserve it due to the fact that the information transmitted will stay in more than one community. This means that the information will be conserved in the readers' mind. This means that authors involve positively in preserving culture. This act can possibly be strengthened by the role of translators. They can assist transmitting cultures by selecting the most appropriate strategy of translation; that the information given in the source language text will be received by the readers of the target language text qualitatively as well as quantitatively the same.

What cultural elements authors write in their works which can be considered as an act of preservation and how they are presented through words to the same community with the same language (source language) and what strategies are used in transmitting the cultural elements to other communities with different languages (target language) without decreasing the detail of information given

in the source language text are the objectives of this research.

Some researches use language maintenance as the term of preserving culture through words [5] and [6]. Herudjati [6] said that language maintenance is not only a linguistic matter but also the realization in protecting their social and cultural identity. This shows an effort of preserving culture. When this effort is accompanied by other effort using translation to transmit the culture, the result of disseminating will be increasing as more people will have the information, more people will understand better one's culture.

Comparing to previous researches dealing with cultural words, most of them focus on the process of translating them while this research focus more to the act of preserving culture through translation. Saraswati [7] using the same theoretical reference (Baker's translation strategies, 1992) focuses on the translation of Balinese cultural words into English while this research focuses on the translation of Minangese (local language of Padang people) cultural words. The most current research has been done by a Chinese scholar, Liu [8] who uses the term culture-loaded words instead of cultural words to refer to words, phrases or idioms used to express something unique to a culture. According to Liu, in the process of cultural development, language is not only the carrier of cultural promotion, but also the main way to reflect cultural information. This statement strengthens the fact revealing here that language has an important role in transmitting culture therefore it preserves culture.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The method used in this research is descriptive-comparative method [9]. Data regarding cultural words are taken from a source novel then they are observed based on the cultural words expressed. Using Guerra's classification of cultural terms known as '*realia*' the type of cultural terms are identified.

The next step is the cultural words in the source language are compared with their equivalences in the target language text; are they expressed in the same way, using the same strategies, or are they expressed in a different way. Using Baker's taxonomy, translation strategies used by professional at a word level [10] and [11], the strategies used in describing cultural words are identified. Both data (from the source language and the target language) are then described.

Based on the effort given by the author of the source language and by the translator of the target language, it can be studied if the strategies used by the author and by the translator give a positive impact to the preservation of culture. What strategies are possibly more effective in preserving the culture expressed in words as terms become the finding needed and shared so that authors and translators can create more effort in preserving culture through language in their literary works; novels.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### A. Strategies in Translating Cultural Words

In a case of non-equivalent words like cultural words, there are some options a translator can take in his/her work. Newmark's translation strategies or known as procedures like transference, naturalization, cultural equivalent, functional equivalent, descriptive equivalent, componential analysis, synonymy, through translation, shifts or transposition, modulation, recognized translation, compensation, expansion, paraphrase, omission, couplets, and notes [12] can be an alternative. Nababan's strategies regarding equivalence in translation which consist of three strategies; addition of information, deletion of information, and structural adjustment [13] can also be the option. Since this research focuses not only to the problem-solving in translating cultural words but also on the impact to the act of preserving culture, Baker's translation strategies used by professional translators at a word level (especially translation by a more general word, translation by using a loan word or loan word plus explanation, an translation by paraphrase using a related word) is so far considered to be the most appropriate. It can be identified that all those Baker's strategies mentioned create more use of words quantitatively. This is needed in transmitting information from one language into another language in an act of preserving culture. It can give detailed information which lead to more information; more words. The use of omission and unrelated words for the sake of preserving culture is not possible.

### B. Presenting Cultural Words in Novels as An Act of Preserving Culture

A novel entitled *Negeri Lima Menara* 'The Land of Five Towers' can be considered as a literary work revealing an act of preserving culture and the translation does the work almost equally. When in certain cases the translator needs to omit certain cultural words which is not frequent, it is then replaced by more general words or explanation without loan words.

#### 1. Strategies of Translating Geographic and Ethnographic Terms

No	Source Language Text	Target Language Text
1	Bersama Ayah, aku menumpang bus kecil Harmonis yang terkentut-kentut merayapi <b>Kelok Ampek Puluah Ampek</b> . <u>Jalan Mendaki dengan 44 kelok patah</u>	With Father, I rode a small <i>Harmonis</i> bus that sputtered along a notorious road called <b>Kelok Ampek Puluah Ampek</b> . <u>It was a climbing road with 44 sharp turns.</u>

In data (1) it can be identified the existence of a cultural term categorized as geographic term, a name of a road; **Kelok Ampek Puluah Ampek**. This road is called Kelok Ampek Puluah Ampek due to its natural condition that it has forty four '*ampek puluah ampek*' (in Minangese Language) sharp turns. The information given following the use of this cultural word in Indonesian language "*Jalan Mendaki dengan 44 kelok patah*" transmits information regarding the condition of a road in the area

of Maninjau Lake in West Sumatra. This gives information to Indonesian readers that in certain area in West Sumatra, there is this road with 44 sharp turns which is called **Kelok Ampek Puluah Ampek**. *Kelok* means turn, *ampek puluh ampek* indicates quantity; 44.

The author of the source language has actually performed an act of translating as Kelok Ampek Puluah Ampek is Minangese language and he needs to put the geographic term in his novel written in Indonesian language. The author applies a strategy of translation “translation by using a loan word or a loan word plus explanation”. In the target text, the translator does the same thing. She transfers the geographic term *Kelok Ampek Puluah Ampek* into English and she just translates literally as written in the source text and she adds the term **notorious** as it is exactly the condition of the road seen by everybody, popular in a negative sense; even one single sharp turn can be dangerous, we can imagine this road has 44 sharp turns. With this target text, readers from other communities can have the knowledge about this geographic term quantitatively the same.

## 2. Strategies of Translating Words or Expressions Referring to Folklore, Traditions, and Mythology

No	Source Language Text	Target Language Text
2	Kenapa hatiku begitu keras? Aku tidak mau menjadi <b>Malin Kundang</b> yang menjadi batu karena melawan ibunya	Why was my heart so hard? I didn't want to become like <b>the boy in the folktale, Malin Kundang</b> , who was turned to stone by opposing his mother.
3	“Budaya <b>marosok</b> . Meraba di bawah sarung. Tawar menawar harga dengan memakai isyarat tangan. “  Peninggalan turun temurun nenek moyang kita kalau berjualan ternak. Harga dan tawaran hanya untuk diketahui pembeli dan penjual.	“ <b>Marosok</b> culture. Signals behind the sarong. Bargaining with the hands.”  “It's the legacy passed down from our ancestors for selling livestock. Prices and offers are only known by the buyer and the seller.”
4	“kita naik <b>inyiak</b> ”. Menurut legenda, <b>inyiak</b> , atau harimau dianggap adalah peliharaan yang patuh kepada orang-orang sakti di Minang. “Tanda orang yang punya <b>inyiak</b> adalah matanya tajam, dan tenang, dan mempunyai jenggot yang tumbuh di tengah leher,” kata Ayah. Kata Ayah, kakeknya punya itu semua.	“We rode an <b>inyiak</b> .” According to legend, <b>inyiak</b> are the pets of sacred Minang people.  “The sign that a person has an <b>inyiak</b> are, their eyes are sharp and calm, and they have a beard that grows from the middle of their neck” Father said. He also said that his grandfather had all of the above.

Data (2) shows that in the source language text, the cultural term as a name in one of Minang folklores **Malin Kundang**, has implicit information that it is about folklore. The author just gave information that the term Malin Kundang was turned into a stone because he opposed his own mother; the author did not specify any more information dealing with the name of folklore in Minang culture, he did not say that Malin Kundang was a name of character in folklore. Meanwhile in the target language text, the translator applied the strategy of translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation; keeping the cultural word *Malin Kundang*, a loan word and adding it with explanation “the boy in the folktale”. In this case, the translator gave the knowledge to her readers that *Malin Kundang* was a name of a character, and it was a boy, in a folktale, who was turned into stone because of opposing his own mother. What the translator has done with her effort to transmit information to her readers about one of Indonesian folklore, a part of Indonesian culture is an act of preserving culture.

Data (3) shows that there is a cultural word referring to a tradition called **marosok** in Minang culture. The author elaborated what this term *marosok* all about from what was the word refer to up to the history of it. The history of this tradition was put out of the text as footnote that it was a tradition or legacy passed down from the ancestors for selling livestock by bargaining behind the sarong with hands. The signals a buyer and a seller use behind the sarong indicate the prices and the offers. His awareness to the existence of culture was revealed in the source language that he would like this information shared to his readers. While in the target language, the translator kept everything the author has done in the source language; taking the cultural term *marosok* as a loan word to be used in the target language and giving explanation in a footnote the way the author of the source language did. She translated all the information literally; nothing change, nothing shifted. This is enough to give information to her readers about this tradition called **marosok**. Both the author and the translator show that they have been the agents of preserving culture, the Minang culture.

Under the same category of cultural term; words or expressions referring to folklore, traditions, and mythology, the cultural term **inyiak** in data (4) shows that it belongs to words or expressions in a mythology. Again, the author elaborated his explanation regarding this term. He used the cultural term in a context then gave an explanation what the term was. Not only that, he also added his information by explaining what were the characteristics of people who have *inyiak* and he closed this information by making a statement that the grandfather of the character in the novel had all; this meant that the grandfather had *inyiak*. The fact indicated that the myth was actually real; sacred Minang people have *inyiak*, a tiger pet which is very loyal to its master. In the translation however, the words tiger and loyal are

omitted. The translator managed to strengthen the act of preserving culture done by the author though not quantitatively the same.

### 3. Strategies of Translating Names of Everyday Objects

No	Source Language Text	Target Language Text
5	...dan sebungkus <b>rendang</b> kapau yang sudah kering kehitam-hitaman. Ini rendang spesial karena dimasak Amak yang lahir di Kapau, sebuah desa kecil di pinggir Bukittinggi. Kapau terkenal dengan masakan lezat yang berlinang-linang kuah santan	...and a package of dried, blackish <b>rendang –spicy meat</b> . This rendang was special because it was cooked by Amak who was born in Kapau, a small village on the outskirts of Bukittinggi, famous for its delicious food dripping in coconut milk.
6	Apalagi dulu waktu kecil aku ingin sekali belajar <b>silek kumango</b> , salah satu aliran silat Minang yang tumbuh dari lingkungan surau dan dikembangkan oleh Alam Basifat Syekh Abdurahman Al Khalidi di Surau Kumango, Tanah Datar. Yang menarik perhatianku adalah langkah silat ini disimbolkan sebagai langkah Alif, Lam, Lam, Ha dan Mim, Ha, Mim, Dal, yang merupakan huruf Arab dari kalimat Allah dan Muhammad.	Especially when I was little, I really wanted to learn <b>silek kumango</b> , a Minang form of martial arts which arose from a small mosque and was developed by Alam Basifat Syekh Abdurahman Al Khalidi in Kumango, Tanah Datar. What attracted me most were the origins of the steps of this marital art. They symbolized the steps of <i>Alif, Lam, Lam, Ha, and Mim, Ha, Mim, Dal</i> , which are the Arabic symbols to write Allah and Muhammad.

The word **rendang** in data (5) is a cultural term under the category of names of everyday objects; food. The author added the word **rendang** with another word Kapau which refers to a location where the kind of food is from. What the food is about is explained at the end of his lengthy explanation (that the food is made by his mother, and that his mother is from Kapau, and that Kapau is famous for its culinary cooked with rich coconut milk). By using this term, the author not only gave the information what the food called **rendang** is, the kind of **rendang** most likely wanted by people (dry and blackish), but also explained the location of the best **rendang** in West Sumatra; Kapau, and that Kapau is well known not only with **rendang** but also others which are cooked using coconut milk. By doing this, the author revealed his environmental awareness; an act of preserving culture through transmitting the information to his readers in a certain way, a certain strategy.

As in the target language, the translator translated all information literally in the form of what the author made in the source language. This indicates that the translator manages to strengthen the act of the author; preserving culture as the readers of the target language text shared the same information as the readers in the source language.

The term **silek kumango** in data (6) is cultural words under the category of names of everyday object; a name of traditional martial arts called **silat** in Indonesian language, **silek** in Minangese language. The author applied the strategy of translation; translation using loan word plus explanation, although it is written in the source language text as this term is actually Minangese term not Indonesian term. The author transmitted the information to the readers of the source language the history of this traditional martial arts; that it was created in a small mosque 'surau' in a place called Kumango in an area in West Sumatra; that it was created by a respected Islamic leader by the name of Alam Basifat Syekh Abdurahman Al Khalidi, that it was unique as its moves resemble Arabic writing symbols in the words Allah and Muhammad.

The translator translated the term and the information following it literally except that she did not mention that the name of the small mosque is Kumango. However it can be concluded that the translator managed to strengthen the act of preserving culture done by the author. The readers of the target language as well as in the source language get relatively the same information though not quantitatively the same.

### 4. Strategies in Translating Social and Historical Terms

No	Source Language Text	Target Language Text
7	Tiga tahun aku ikuti perintah <b>Amak</b> belajar di madrasah tsanawiyah, ...  1 Panggilan untuk ibu di sebgain besar daerah di Minang	For three years, I'd followed the orders of my <b>Amak</b> 1 to study at an Islamic junior high school, ...  1Amak is a word for mother in most Minang areas
8	Inilah standar gaya <b>ninik mamak</b> —pemuka adat. Ayahku bergelar <b>Katik parpatiah Nan Mudo</b> , dari suku <b>Chaniago</b> .	This was the standard style of traditional leaders. My father bore the title of <i>Katik Parpatiah Nan Mudo</i> from the Chaniago tribe.
9	Kata Amak, Ayah sampai memajang foto ini di papan pengumuman <b>balerong</b> <sup>56</sup>  <sup>56</sup> Kantor wali nagari. Wali nagari adalah jabatan khas di kampung-kampung Minangkabau. Fungsinya hampir sama dengan kepala desa.	Amak said that Father proudly displayed this picture on the <b>balerong</b> <sup>23</sup> announcement board.  <sup>23</sup> Office of the village head.

The term “*Amak*” in data (7) is a part of cultural terms under the category of social term; it is a way to call a mother in Minang culture like “*mommy*” in English. This word is taken into Indonesian source text as a loan word and the author added explanation and put it out of text, as footnote. The translator did the same thing; using footnote to give explanation to the loan word “*Amak*”. By doing this effort the author has performed the act of preserving culture about how a mother is called in Minang culture. The translator managed to strengthen this effort. Both readers, either the source language readers or the target language readers shared the same information qualitatively and quantitatively about how to call a mother in Minang culture.

From data (8) we can find three social terms; *ninik mamak*, *Katik parpatiah Nan Mudo*, *Chaniago*. The author transferred those three words from Minangese language. The explanation about *ninik mamak* was given directly after the term; a traditional leader in Minang culture and this leader was given a title *Katik Parpatiah Nan Muda*, and more information followed that this traditional leader whose title *Katik Parpatiah Nan Muda* is from one of Minangese tribe called *Chaniago*. The translator put this information in the target language text with the same style literally. The effort of the author in the source language text to preserve the culture regarding social titles has been strengthened by the translator. The readers of the target language share the same information as the readers of the source language.

The term *balerong* in data (9) is a cultural word under the category of social terms regarding institution in Minang culture. The explanation about this term was given out of text as footnote. The author shared the information about another name for the term; *kantor wali nagari* and followed by more information regarding the leader of the institution *wali nagari* that this position occurs in the villages in Minang and this position is similar to the head of the village. While in the target language, the translator paraphrased the information in the footnote, still used it in the form of footnote though some information are missing. The effort done by the author of the source language by mentioning this cultural term in his work can be considered as an act of preserving culture. In the target language, the cultural term is transferred as a loan word and has also been given an explanation regarding what the term is all about. In that way, the translator managed to strengthen what the author has done; preserving culture.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The cultural words or terms discussed in this research involve the four categories of cultural terms ‘*realia*’ of Guerra: from geographical and ethnographic terms, words or expressions referring to folklore, traditions, and mythology, names of everyday objects, to social and historical terms. There are more than nine cultural words have been collected for this research but for the frame work of this research, it is limited only to nine data which are studied. The nine data represent all categories of Guerra’s cultural words. It can be concluded that what the author has revealed in his literary work; novel, is an act of preserving culture as the readers of the source language have been transmitted with explanation as well as cultural terms which they may have no knowledge before. This act has been strengthened by the effort of the

translator when keeping the cultural terms as loan words and translating the information shared by the author of the source language literally with not too much shift made; not much omission. In this case of preserving culture, the quantity of words given in the information explaining the cultural terms are expected to be the same. Reducing the detail in the explanation will decrease the knowledge about the information following the cultural terms.

Baker’s strategy of translation that is most likely to be the most effective way as an act of preserving culture is translation using loan word or loan word plus explanation. This due to the facts that when a cultural word is transferred to the target language, it transmits the local color of the source language to the readers of the target language. We can see that the translator follow the strategies used by the author in the source language text with limited omission.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] D. Mulyana, *Ilmu Komunikasi*, First. Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya, 2016.
- [2] Newmark, *A Textbook of Translation*, 1st ed. Prentice Hall International (UK) Ltd, 1988.
- [3] F. A. Guerra, “Translating culture: problems, strategies and practical realities,” *[Sic] - a J. Lit. Cult. Lit. Transl.*, no. 1.3, pp. 1–27, 2012.
- [4] C. M. Braçaj, “Procedures of Translating Culture-Specific Concepts,” vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 476–480, 2015.
- [5] D. Nirmala and U. Diponegoro, “JAVANESE CULTURAL WORDS IN LOCAL NEWSPAPERS,” no. April 2016, 2017.
- [6] I. Seminar, L. Maintenance, and M. Program, “IF JAVANESE IS ENDANGERED, HOW SHOULD WE MAINTAIN IT? Herudjati Purwoko Diponegoro University,” no. 1, pp. 22–30, 2011.
- [7] R. Saraswati, “The Translation Strategies in Translating Balinese Cultural Words into English,” *J. English Lang. Cult.*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 110–119, 2014.
- [8] F. Liu, “Translation Strategies of Culture-Loaded Words in Publicity Materials under the Background of ‘the Belt and Road,’” pp. 839–847, 2019.
- [9] C. R. Kothari, *Research Methodology\_ Methods and Techniques*. Jaipur: New Age International Publishers, 2004.
- [10] M. Baker, *In Other Words: A coursebook on translation, second edition.*, 3rd ed. Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2011.
- [11] Z. Owji, “Translation Strategies: A Review and Comparison of Theories,” *Transl. J.*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2013.
- [12] H. Mashhady, M. Pourgalavi, and M. Fatollahi, “Newmark’s Procedures in Persian Translation of Golding’s,” *Int. J. English Lang. Transl. Stud.* 3(1), 57-69. Retrieved from <http://www.eltjournal.org>, vol. 3, pp. 57–69, 2015.
- [13] Nababan, “Equivalence in Translation: Some Problem-Solving Strategies,” *ProZ . com Transl. Artic. Knowledgebase*, 2008.