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# An Analysis of Cultural Elements in the Translation of Peaky Blinders

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## **ABSTRACT**

Translation is an important component to fill the language and cultural divide between various international audiences. This research examined how cultural features in the British series Peaky Blinders were translated into Malay subtitles by Netflix. The proposed study employed the cultural categories developed by Newmark (1988) and the translation techniques proposed by Molina & Albir (2002). A qualitative approach to content analysis was conducted, analysing two selected episodes from Peaky Blinders Season 4. The results demonstrated how all five categories proposed by Newmark were manifested, and among Molina & Albir's eighteen translation techniques, adaptation and literal translation were identified as the two prominent categories. The articles' significance lies in summarising the complex link between 'Language' and 'Culture' in translation. The findings aim to create a better understanding among authors and Audio-visual translators regarding the strategies to translate 'culturally bound expressions'.

**Keywords -** Audio-visual Translation, Cultural Elements, Malay Subtitles, Translation Techniques, Cross-Cultural Communication

# **INTRODUCTION**

Nowadays, translation has proven helpful in various industries, such as communication (Köksal &Yürük, 2020) and business (Blenkinsopp &Pajouh, 2010). However, there has been evidence to show that this tool is not a new form of work and was actually used long before our time (Kumar, 2025). The earliest reference of activities relating to translation is dated as early as 3000 B.C. (Dave & Joshi, 2018). With the help of technology and the need for global communication, it is now a vital part of our everyday activities and work. As of 2023, Google reported that it had broken the threshold of 1 billion users of their translation machine in which around 100B words are translated daily. It must also be noted that there are many more translation applications such as iTranslate and Deepl which boast users of over 200 million and more than a billion people, respectively. This shows that translation can act as a medium for people all around the world to connect regardless of their language and culture (Azzah &Sana, 2025). While these online tools can help, they are not entirely reliable and may not be able to successfully translate a specific text or phrase like a human translator.

One of the most important aspects of translation is that the target text must be done in a manner that still manages to retain the meaning of the source text (Sawant, 2013). However, this may only be achieved at some times as one of the most complex parts that a translator may face during his process is retaining the cultural meaning (Jayasinghe, 2019). This is because some words or phrases may not be able to be transferred effectively from one language to another as they may be unsuitable or carry an entirely different meaning. Therefore, the translator must be knowledgeable and culturally aware of both the source and target language to



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translate the text successfully. They must also understand which translation strategies and procedures are suitable to retain cultural meaning.

#### **Problem Statement**

Previous studies have highlighted the significant influence of culture on the process of translation. Zhang (2018) mentioned in her study that language and culture are inseparable as they influence each other. This view is also shared by Guo (2018), who found that being culturally aware when translating is crucial to translating effectively. Without knowledge of cultural elements in both the source language and target language, it may lead to some words or phrases being unable to carry the intended meaning of the original text. In her study, Morais (. n.d.) states that more than a translator is needed; they must also be bicultural to translate the source text efficiently.

While studies have been conducted to explore the influence of culture on translation, there is a lack of studies which compare the use of strategies and which part of the culture it is trying to translate. Therefore, this study will use Newmark's (1988) cultural category for the cultural aspect, while the translation strategies will be based on Molina & Albir's (2002) eighteen translation techniques.

As such, this study aims to broaden the knowledge of this aspect of translation and will aim to address the gap which is mentioned here. To achieve this, this study will analyse two episodes of the British television show Peaky Blinders and its Malay subtitles which is translated by Netflix.

## **Research Objectives**

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- 1. To identify the cultural elements based on Newmark's (1988) cultural category in the British TV show Peaky Blinders
- 2. To determine which procedures are most employed by the translator of the British TV show Peaky Blinder to translate the source text to the target text.

#### **Research Ouestions**

The research questions of this study are as follows:

- 1. What are the cultural elements found in the British TV show Peaky Blinders based on Newmark's (1988) cultural category?
- 2. What procedures are most employed by the translator of the British TV show Peaky Blinder to translate the source text to the target text?

## Significance of Study

Since this study will focus on the relationship between translation and culture, it hopes to contribute to the body of knowledge in this area of language. Since this study will utilise a comparative approach to see which strategies are used to translate cultural elements, it can help shed more light on this issue as there is a lack of studies. The findings of this study can also help translators and language learners to see which strategies are effective so that they can utilise them when translating their documents, particularly in pedagogical contexts. In addition, this study may support cross-cultural communication by highlighting how meaning, values, and cultural nuances can be conveyed more accurately across languages. Hopefully, this study can pave the way for more scholars and researchers to investigate the relationship between translation and culture, as it is an integral part of language which is used by millions daily





#### Scope and Limitation of Study

This study is limited in that it will only focus on the relationship between translation and culture and will not investigate other aspects of translation. It will also only use two theories as the theoretical framework which are: 1. Molina & Albir (2002)'s translation theory and 2. Newmark (1988)'s cultural category. Due to the short time frame, this study will only analyse two episodes of the British television show Peaky Blinders in order to achieve the research objectives.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Theoretical Framework

This study will utilise two theoretical frameworks to help the researcher achieve the research objectives. The two frameworks are as follows:

- 1. Molina & Albir's (2002) translation theory
- 2. Newmark's (1988) cultural category.

# Molina & Albir (2002)'s Translation Theory

The first theoretical framework which will serve as the base of this study is Molina & Albir's (2002) translation theory. They proposed this theory as a definition of translation techniques which is based on two premises:

- 1. The need to distinguish between method, strategy and technique;
- 2. Need for an analysis and functional concepts of translation technique.

This led to them categorising 18 different translation techniques which translators would use to get the equivalence of meaning from the source text to the target text. This theory has proven to be a successful translation theory for many researchers as it can be used to analyse all kinds of texts. Some studies which have used this theory include studies by Faturrahman (2020), who analysed Islamic texts, Sipayung et al. (2021), which compared techniques used by Google Translate and UDictionaryand also by Andriyanie et al. (2016), who used this translation theory to analyse a novel. The eighteen translation techniques which were proposed by Molina & Albir (2002) are provided in the table below.

Table 1: Translation Techniques (Molina & Albir, 2002)

No	Translation Technique	Description
1	Adaptation	Replaces the existing cultural element in target text or replaces the equivalents on both source text and target text cultures.
2	Amplification	Adds more information in target text even though it is not there in original text
3	Borrowing	<ul> <li>Two types of borrowing:</li> <li>Pure borrowing does not change anything in the translation.</li> <li>Naturalised borrowing makes some changes on the level of spelling.</li> </ul>
4	Calque	Literally translates from word to word or from phrase to phrase.





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5	Compensation	Replaces the position of words if original position cannot be used in target text
6	Description	Describes the word or phrase if no meaning is found in target text
7	Discursive creation	Usually used in titles of novels or books in which the target text's equivalent is too far away
8	Established equivalent	Used when an expression in the source language is recognized by dictionaries or language in use as an equivalent in the target language
9	Generalisation	When the exact meaning is absent in target text but the translated word is parallel
10	Linguistic amplification	Adds some information in the target text during interpreting or dubbing.
11	Linguistic compression	Opposite of linguistic amplification in which some information is omitted from source text
12	Literal translation	Used when word or phrase can be expressed word by word
13	Modulation	Replaces the focus of cognitive meaning which appears on source text lexically or structurally.
14	Particularisation	Translate specific and concrete words.
15	Reduction	Makes source information become condensed or reduces some source information in the target text
16	Substitution	Used when gestures and intonation are translated based on target text's culture
17	Transposition	Used when there is a difference in grammar between source text and target text
18	Variation	Used when there is a change in tone, style and dialect.

# Newmark's (1988) Cultural Category

As culture has shown to have an influence on translation, Newmark (1988) introduced his theory in which culturally specific words and phrases should be divided in five different categories. Nida (2002) states that in order for a successful translation process, biculturalism is even more important than bilingualism as some words only have meaning in different cultures. As such, this may lead to some miscommunication or mistranslation when the translator is unable to successfully comprehend what the intended message was. This theory proposes to help overcome the cultural barrier that may exist when translating from one language to another. The categories of culture-specific items are depicted in the table below:

Table 2: Cultural Categories (Newmark, 1988)

Category of Culture-Specific Items	Example
Ecology	Geographical and environmental concepts including flora, fauna, winds, plains etc.





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Material culture	Houses and towns, clothes, foods, and transport
Social Culture	Leisure activities and works
Organisations, customs and activities concepts	Political and administrative terms, religious terms, artistic terms
Gesture and habits	Spitting, hand signs

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research adopted a qualitative approach to achieve the objective of this study. Content analysis was used as it is the most suitable type of method because this method allows the researcher to look at how certain words and sentences are used in certain contexts (Crossman, 2020). As this study analysed cultural context and translation, this approach was deemed the most suitable method.

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

The British television show Peaky Blinders was chosen as the primary sample for this study. Two episodes from season four of the show were chosen to be analysed. A transcript of the Malaysian translated subtitles by Netflix was examined while watching to analyse its cultural elements and to see which translation methods were used the most by the translator. As mentioned earlier, this study utilises two theoretical frameworks: Newmark's (1988) cultural categories and Molina and Albir's translation theory (2002). Whenever a phrase or word is found that is under any of the five categories based on Newmark's theory, it will be tabulated to make sure it is organised and able to be compared to its translated version. While analysing using Newmark's theory, the translation techniques by Molina and Albir (2002) will also be used to determine which of the eighteen techniques was most favoured by the translator

#### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section will present the findings and analysis of two episodes of The British television show Peaky Blinders. The Malaysian subtitles from Netflix will be examined alongside the English script and video based on Newmark's (1988) cultural categories and Molina and Albir's translation theory (2002).

## **Ecology**

According to the Collins dictionary, ecology is "the study of the relationships between plants, animals, people, and their environment, and the balances between these relationships." Newmark (1988) states that this category of culture comprises natural entities such as flora and fauna. In the two episodes of Peaky Blinders, this element was found several times. The ecological elements which were found along with its translated Malaysian version are shown in the table below.

Table 3: Ecology

	Source Text (ST)	Target Text (TT)
1	In the <b>bleak midwinter.</b>	Pada pertengahan musim sejuk.
2	The only way any of you Shelbys will leave this place is <b>on a cloud of smoke</b> like John.	Keluarga Shelby hanya akan pergi dari sini diselubungi <b>asap</b> macam John.
3	Saya datang untuk ambil kuda En. Shelby.	I'm here to collect Mr Shelby's <b>horse</b> .
4	<b>Cold winter</b> in the east, people are not afraid anymore.	Angin Sejuk dari timur, orang dah tak takut lagi.



In excerpt 1, it can be seen that the translator does not fully describe the state of the season in the TT version. In the ST version, the cultural element of midwinter is described as bleak. However, in the translated version, the translator simply uses "pertengahan musim sejuk" which shows a lack of equivalence. In this excerpt, it can be seen that the translator uses reduction as the information is more condensed in the TT. This can be due to a few factors such as the lack of importance or knowledge as Malaysia is not used to the midwinter season. As such, the translator may have felt that it was fine to omit the word "bleak" when translating.

Moving on to excerpt 2, the procedure that was opted by the translator when translating from "on a cloud of smoke" to "asap" is linguistic compression., It can be seen that in the TT version, it was simply described as "smoke" or "asap" which is compressed from the ST version which is described in detail. This was probably used by the translator as linguistic compression allows for the reduction of structure without changing the information when translating (Tkachyk & Sodel, 2017). In excerpt 3, the translator uses literal translation when translating the word "horse". There is no evidence and need of additional information or the reduction of information as "kuda" is a direct translation in the TT's language. In the last excerpt which is excerpt 4, the phrase "cold winter" is translated to "angin sejuk". In this translation, it can be seen that the technique of adaptation is used by the translator. This is used when a cultural element of ST is not found in TT but adapted with an equivalence in the TT's language. In this context, since winter when translated into Malay is "musim sejuk", the translator may have chosen to use "angin sejuk" as it is more suitable and equivalent to "cold winter".

#### **Material Culture**

Material culture generally refers to objects and materials such as houses and towns, clothes, foods, and transport (Newmark, 1988). An excerpt displaying this element of culture is shown in the table below.

Table 4: Material culture

	Source Text (ST)	Target Text (TT)
1	Have your contracts of employment in your hand!	Pegang kontrak kerja awak.
2	We need to get both these <b>photographs</b> into pubs and on street corners.	Kita perluedarkan <b>foto</b> ini di pub dan di tepijalan.
3	Tell him to bring a gun small enough to fit in the chamber pot,	Minta dibawakan pistol kecil yang muat dalam ketur
4	Fire for melting silver, canal to get it away.	Api untuk mencairkanperak, terusan untuk mengangkutnya.

In the first excerpt that found the culture element of material culture, it can be seen that adaptation was used as the translation technique. In the ST version, the phrase 'your hand' was simply translated to 'pegang' as it is adapted into the TT's language. This can also be said the same for "contract of employment "which is translated into "kontrakkerja". It can be implied that the translator uses this method to make it suitable for TT readers. This is because adaptation is defined as "changes translators need to make in the source text so that it is suitable for readers the target readers' needs and situation" (Khazrouni, 2017).

In excerpt 2, the word 'photographs' was translated into 'foto'. The method that was chosen by the translator in this part is borrowing. This is naturalised borrowing in which there are some changes in the level of spelling. Since this is a fairly straightforward word, this method was chosen by the translator. In excerpt 3, the translator uses adaptation to translate the word 'chamber pot'. This is because "ketur" is the closest equivalent of this word in the TT's language.

In the last excerpt, it can be seen that the method of particularisation based on Molina & Albir's (2002) theory was chosen by the translator. This is when specific and concrete words are translated to retain its meaning and in the context of this study, also its cultural element. The phrase "Fire for melting silver, canal to get it away"





is translated to "Api untuk mencairkan perak, terusan untuk mengangkutnya.". This technique is the opposite of generalisation where only general terms are used when translating (Setyaji et al, 2019).

#### **Social Culture**

Newmark (1988) categories social culture into two groups: work and leisure. These can be words or phrases pertaining to many things such as the name of music, games or work terms and definitions. This cultural element was found several times and is tabulated below:

Table 4: Social Culture

	Source Text (ST)	Target Text (TT)
1	All those in favour of the reinstatement of Mrs Elizabeth Gray, to the position of Shelby Company Limited Company Treasurer,	Semua yang setujudengan pengambilan semula. Elizabeth Gray sebagai Bendahara <b>Syarikat</b> <b>Shelby Berhad</b> ,
2	I run a factory full of black leg non-union labour.	Saya urusan kilang yang <b>ada pemberontak kesatuan pekerja.</b>
3	This is a matter of <b>national security.</b>	Ini urusan <b>keselamatan negara.</b>
4	What would you like to drink, <b>Constable?</b> Whisky. And, actually, it's <b>Sergeant.</b>	Nak minum apa, <b>konstabel?</b> Wiski. Sebenarnya, saya <b>sarjan.</b>

In the first excerpt, the title of "Shelby Company Limited Company Treasurer" was translated to "Bendahari Syarikat Shelby Berhad". It can be seen that the translator uses two techniques based on Molina and Albir's (2002) theory. The first technique used is literal translation as all the words have an equivalent and direct translation in the TT's language. The second technique used is compensation as the arrangement of words has to be rearranged in order to make sense. By using these two methods, it allows the translator to successfully translate the above excerpt.

As for excerpt 2, the translator uses the strategy established equivalent to retain the general meaning from the ST. This is because "full of black leg" does not have a direct translation in the TT's language. As such, by using "adapemberontak", it allows the translator to resin the general meaning of this term. This is also the case for "non-union labour" which is translated into "kesatuanpekerja". This method is suitable as an established equivalent can only be used if both languages have similar expressions (Prajoko, 2020).

In the third excerpt, literal translation is used when translating the phrase "national security" to "keselamatan negara". This excerpt is straightforward as both words have their own equivalent in the TT's language. In the last excerpt, the two words "Constable" and "Sergeant" are translated into "konstabel" and "sarjan" respectively. Since this is a title of a person, it is a must that the translated version retains the same meaning. This was achieved as the translator uses borrowing to translate the two titles.

## **Organisations Customs, Activities, Procedures**

In this cultural category, Newmark (1988) describes concepts such as political and administrative terms, religious terms, artistic terms in this study, this cultural element was found a couple times as shown in the table below:

Table 5: Organisations Customs, Activities, Procedures

	Source Text (ST)	Target Text (TT)
1	In the words of my sinful Catholic mother,	Seperti <b>ibu Katolik</b> saya kata,



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2	And listen to the <b>sweet voice of Jesus</b>	Dengarlah seruan <b>Jesus.</b>
3.	Two f***** no good Italians heard about the vendetta,	Dua orang Itali yang dapat tahu tentang dendam itu yang ingin cuba mendapat nama.

In the first excerpt, the translator translates the phrase "my sinful Catholic mother" to "ibuKatoliksaya". In this example, there are two techniques used based on Molina and Albir's (2002) theory. The first technique used is borrowing as the word "Catholic" is directly translated to "Katolik". This is naturalised borrowing as there is a change in spelling. The second technique used is reduction as there is a reduction in information in the TT. The translator does not translate the word "sinful" which leads to reduction.

In excerpt 2, it is similar to the first excerpt as two of the same techniques are used when translating from the ST to TT. However, there is a slight difference in that it uses pure borrowing as opposed to naturalised borrowing as Jesus is spelled the same for the TT as well. As for the reduction, the translator omits the word "sweet" in the TT. This technique is used by many translators as while it reduces the number of elements in the TT version, the important information and meaning is still retained (Djohan& Lestari, 2021).

In the last excerpt, the word "vendetta" is unable to be directly translated as there is no equivalent of that word in the TT's language. As such, the translator uses the description technique by translating it to "dendam itu yang ingin cuba mendapat nama" which describes what the vendetta means.

#### **Gesture and Habits**

Gestures and habits is the last category based on Newmark's (1988) theory. This is an important aspect of culture as not all cultures use the same hand gestures and body language. Some hand signs in one culture may be commonly used but, in another culture, that same hand sign may be deemed offensive. Gestures and habits which were found in the analysis are stated here in the table.

Table 6: gestures and habits

	Source Text (ST)	Target Text (TT)
1	Have your contracts of employment in <b>your hand!</b>	Pegang kontrak kerja awak.
2	Please raise your hands.	Sila angkat tangan

In the first excerpt, the word "pegang" in the TT was enough to translate the meaning of "Have your contracts of employment in your hand!". This is because the "pegang" is simply understood to be referring to holding something in your hands. This gesture is translated by the translator by using the adaptation technique. This is because the translator knows that other techniques may be unsuitable for this translation.

In the second excerpt, literal translation was used to translate "Please raise your hands" to "Sila angkat tangan". This is straightforward as this gesture or habit is common in all cultures. In the context of the scene above, they were asked to raise their hands to vote. Since this is also done in the TT's culture, literal translation is a suitable method.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the findings affirm that effective translation can successfully convey cultural meanings between source and target languages. This is crucial as translation has shown to be a useful tool for diplomacy and communication that transcends borders (Shahmerdanova, 2025). In this study which analysed the British television show Peaky Blinders, all five of Newmark's (1988) cultural categories were found in the translation





by Netflix from English to Bahasa Melayu. The cultural elements were also analysed using Molina & Albir's (2002) theory on translation techniques. It was found that two methods were equally favoured by the translator as adaptation and literal translation was equally used during the translation process.

While this study has shed more light on the relationship between translation and culture, it is clear that more studies should be conducted on this part of language as there is a close relationship between the two entities (Elyildirim, 2008). If this happens, it can help the translation industry to grow further and function more effectively.

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